

# Peculiarities of students' academic motivation under two-tier system of education in Russia

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## Abstract

The article contains the results of the experimental research which purpose is to study the peculiarities of students' academic motivation under two-tier system of education established in Russia. In order to achieve this aim we used and elaborated the normative value technique that enables us to differentiate known and existent educational motives. It was revealed that the distinctions between bachelors, magisters and masters existed only in the structure of their motivational orientation. Students, trained in the magistracy, have the emphasized orientation not only on diploma but also the orientation to cognitive interest, self-knowledge and self-development, which mostly works as known or unstable situational orientation.

*Keywords:* academic motivation of bachelors, magisters, masters; the normative value technique.

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## 1. Introduction

The research actuality is required by the presence of the social needs – to put Russian educational system under world standards preserving the best national traditions. The case is that the introduction of two-tier system of education in many aspects is mediated by psychological conditions – above all patterns of students' motivation. On account of this there is a problem of peculiarities of academic motivation of bachelors and magisters in comparison with masters. The salvation of the problem will improve efficiency of vocational training and in addition to this will lower level of students' emotional intensity during the innovative period.

The article covers the results of the specially conducted experimental research which purpose was to study the peculiarities of the academic motivation of students mastering knowledge and skills of different academic grades (bachelor, master and magister). By the peculiarities of the academic motivation we mean the orientation nature of the key motives range (orientation only on a result, on a desired mark or, in addition, on self-development) and the motives' efficiency rate (if they play role of known motives only or also of the existent ones). Three maturity levels of the academic motivational component (high, medium and low) are based on these two criteria. High maturity level of the academic motivational component requires existent motives and a wide range of their orientation, both on a mark and on self-development. Medium maturity level of the academic motivational component pertains to

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narrow-orientated students: only on a desired mark. Low maturity level of the academic motivational component is characterized by broad or narrow orientation of the key motives range functioning as known ones. A level of academic motivation maturity is determined through the way in which a type of key motives range and students' behaviour are linked. If the motives content is matched by the behaviour content and they are socially approved (are a purpose of the educational activity), then it is the highest level of academic motivation development. If the motives comply with the behaviour content but are limited by the need in a good mark it is the medium level. If the motives of the behaviour choice are inconsistent with the students' acts (motives are only known), then development of the academic motivational component is at the low level (Gerasimova, 2006).

As a certain diagnostic technique we applied the specially designed normative value technique which enables us to acquire all necessary data on the main features of the students' academic motivation: its object, efficiency rate and degree of stability. It implements a value pragmatist approach to psychodiagnostics of value and semantic personality formation (Zalessky, 1994) and includes three types of diagnostic tasks: 1) a questionnaire which reveals ideas of students mastering knowledge and skills of different academic grades in respect to the content of certain academic motives as well as the type of the key motives range stimulating them to study 2) a system of tasks for value - semantic orientation while preparing a graduation thesis which makes it possible to assess the type and extent of students' motivational orientation stability; 3) a questionnaire to analyze criteria for their own assessment of graduation thesis successfulness which helps to determine the orientation and students' behaviour stability rate within such educational activity. By comparing orientation and stability rate of students' ideas expressed in respect to the educational activity motivation, on one hand, and criteria for their own assessment of its successfulness, on the other hand, it is possible to define the connection of a certain key motive and behaviour (if they are consistent or inconsistent) and assess the motive efficiency rate, its role in behaviour regulation (we deal with only known motive or also existent).

142 students of Belgorod State University were engaged in the study: 42 bachelors of the fourth year, 50 masters (5<sup>th</sup> year students) and 50 magisters of the second year. Such students are chosen as each group is mastering knowledge and skills of a certain academic grade where preparation of a graduation thesis is especially significant. In addition, these graduating students have almost learnt educational programs applicable to each grade and are sufficiently experienced in performing various types of educational and professional activities as well as participating in different forms thereof. It enables us to test a hypothesis for nature and peculiarities of the motivational academic component during the transition to two-tier system of education rather rigorously.

Let us now address the most interesting data received during the empiric research. First we consider the data giving an answer to the following question: What kind of motives do students deem to be motivating? (See Table 1).

Table 1. Students distribution depending on the type of academic motives stimulating them to study (in %)

Groups	Diploma	Approval	Social Identification	Cognitive Interest	Self-Knowledge	Self-Assertion	Self-Development
Bachelors	92	-	17	34	17	25	67
Masters	87	14	20	34	47	27	40
Magisters	80	-	14	60	47	27	74
Total	87	5	17	43	37	27	61
Number of Students							

The table shows that the most powerful motive for bachelors is diploma (92%), then comes self-development (67%), cognitive interest (34%) and self-assertion (25%) while "follow the crowd" social identification and self-knowledge are the least significant (17% and 17%, respectively). According to the masters, they are mostly stimulated to learning by diploma orientation (87%) followed by self-knowledge (47%) and self-development (40%), then cognitive interest and self-assertion (34% and 27% respectively) and "follow the crowd" social identification (20%) and approval (14%) appeared to be the least important. Other motivational hierarchy is attributed to magisters as they push diploma orientation (80%) to the foreground and then self-development (74%) followed by cognitive interest (60%) and self-knowledge (47%) while self-assertion and "follow the crowd" social identification have the least significance (14% and 27%, respectively).

So, for all 3 groups of tested persons, regardless of the education level, the motive of diploma orientation is the most important one in education, and the motives of self-assertion, "follow the crowd" social identification and

approval are of less importance. At the same time there are some distinctions. So, the motive of self-development prevails among magisters and bachelors. Cognitive interest is higher among magisters as compared to masters and bachelors, among which the interest is not so high or is at the same level. And the motive of self-knowledge prevails among magisters and masters. Generally speaking it should be noted that motivation attributable to a group of magisters may promote education efficiency to greater extent.

Let's consider the group of data, characterising the type of motivational orientation attributable to bachelors, masters and magisters, which in the opinion of the students themselves is fundamental for their educational activity. We would like to remind you, that while studying the educational motivational component it is expedient to specify not separate educational motives, but a range of key motives, many motivational ranges becoming single oriented in the structure thereof. From this point of view, two groups of motives and respectively two types of key motives ranges may be specified. One group of motives is outwards oriented, result-oriented (getting desired marks, approval, self-assertion, status in the group), while another group of motives is inwards oriented, towards the personality (on the cognitive interest, self-knowledge, self-development) besides being result-oriented. The first group of motives, focused on result orientation only (getting desired marks) – will be referred to as “narrow” type of key motives range. The second group of motives, focused on two orientation options (not only result orientation, but also self-development orientation) - will be referred to as “broad” type of key motives range. The type of key motives range orientation (narrow or broad) determines the orientation of the educational motivational component (See Table 2).

Table 2. Students distribution depending on the type of motivational orientation (in %)

Groups	“Narrow” Result Orientation Only	Broad Orientation: Both Result Orientation and Self-Development Orientation
Bachelors	17	83
Masters	34	66
Magisters	20	80
Total number of students	24	76

It is clear from the table that a broad type of motivational orientation, both result orientation and self-development orientation (76%) is attributed to the overwhelming majority of the total number of tested persons. And the broad motivational orientation in the course of education is attributable mostly to bachelors and magisters as compared to masters.

We would like to remind you that to study the stability of the students' intentions in respect of the certain type of educational motivational orientation, we used the system of tasks relating to value and semantic orientation while preparing graduation thesis. The results are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Students distribution depending on the type and rate of their motivational orientation stability in the course of education (in %)

Groups	Stable “Broad” Orientation: Both Result and Self-Development Orientation	Stable Narrow Result Orientation Only	Unstable, Situational Motivational Orientation
Bachelors	25	50	25
Masters	34	33	33
Magisters	40	27	33
Total number of students	33	36	31

The table shows that the situation with the type of students' motivational orientation when engaged in academic activities is different as compared to the questionnaire. So, in the group of bachelors most tested persons (75%) proved to have either narrow motivational result orientation (50%) or unstable situational motivational orientation (25%). And only 25% of the students belonging to such group proved to have stable broad motivational orientation, when engaged in academic activities.

In the group of masters most students showed either stable, narrow motivational orientation or unstable, situational motivation (33% and 33% resp.). However the number of masters having broad motivational orientation exceeds the number of bachelors having broad motivational orientation – 34%.

The best results as related to the nature and stability of the motivational orientation when engaged in academic activities have been found among the magisters. In this group 40% of tested persons have stable broad motivational orientation, both result and self-development orientation. However, most students belonging to such group (60%) have either narrow or unstable motivational orientation.

This brings up the question what role in regulation of behavior of the students belonging to different groups (bachelors, masters, magisters) has the prevailing type of motivational orientation specified by us. Does it remain at the level of known orientation, or is it at the same time the existent motivational orientation? So it is necessary to introduce one more group of data, regarding the criteria for students' own assessment of educational performance (Table 4).

Table 4. Students distribution depending on the type of criteria for their own assessment of educational performance (in %)

Groups	Criteria Representing the Motivational Result Orientation Only	Criteria Representing Both Motivational Result Orientation and Motivational Self-Development Orientation
Bachelors	75	25
Masters	40	60
Magisters	34	66
Total number of students	24	76

Analysis of students distribution (bachelors, masters and magisters) depending on the nature of the criteria for their own assessment of educational performance revealed that the overwhelming majority of tested persons (76%) demonstrated criteria for their own assessment of performance, illustrating broad type of motivational orientation. It is most typical of magisters and masters. Criteria illustrating narrow type of motivational orientation, on the contrary, are most typical of bachelors.

To determine the efficiency rate of the students' motivational orientation when engaged in academic activities we compared 2 data groups as related to each tested person: data regarding the type of the students' motivational orientation and data regarding the criteria for students' own assessment of educational performance. If the results obtained using two techniques coincided, we qualified such type of motivational orientation (narrow or broad) as existent one, and if they did not coincide we qualified such type of motivational orientation as known motivational orientation. Table 5 contains the relevant data.

Table 5. Students distribution depending on the efficiency rate of the type of motivational orientation, being fundamental for academic activity (in %)

Groups	"Broad" Orientation: Both Result and Self-Development Orientation		"Narrow" Result Orientation Only		Unstable, Situational Motivational Orientation
	Known	Existent	Known	Existent	
Bachelors	9	16	-	50	25
Masters	15	21	26	14	33
Magisters	13	26	21	-	33
Total number of students	12	21	15	21	31

It is clear from the table that the motivational orientation attributed to the overwhelming majority of the total number of students (79%) is low efficient for academic activities: being at the level of known motivation (27%), or narrow existent motivational orientation (21%); or the students show unstable situational motivational orientation (31%).

In the group of bachelors only 16% of total 83% of tested persons, which proved to have "efficient" broad motivational orientation when engaged in academic activities, have it at the level of the existent motivation. Moreover, this group of tested persons contains the greater percentage of students having narrow existent motivational orientation (50%). 21% of total 66% of masters, who originally announced intention to focus not only on the result but also on self-development, when engaged in academic activities did not change their position. But narrow existent motivational orientation is attributable to them to lesser extent (14%) as compared to bachelors. And

although broad existent motivational orientation is attributed to 26% of magisters of the total percentage of tested magisters (80%), but the bachelors and masters having such motivation are less in number.

So, in the conditions of transition to two-tier system of higher education in Russia the character of academic motivation of bachelors, magisters and masters is formed spontaneously, in an empirical way. As a result there is a contradiction between the public requirements to the vocational training objectives and peculiarities of personal meaning, the students themselves put into such process. Actually, the academic motivation of the majority of bachelors, magisters and masters is characterized by orientation on diploma (48%), or an unstable situational motivational orientation (31%) (Regardless of the academic grade). High level of development of academic motivation i.e. broad existent orientation not only on the result but also on self-development (introduction of rational scientifically based work methods and realizing its meanings) is attributed to 21% of students of the total number of tested persons. And we haven't revealed any statistically significant differences between student groups: only 19% of bachelors, 21% of masters and 26% of magisters have scientific research motivation, being the objective of educational activity in higher education institutions.

The assumption that the main distinctions between bachelors, masters and magisters are found only in the structure of their motivational orientation proved to be true. The students, trained in the magistracy, have shown broad orientation not only on the result (good marks, diploma) but also on cognitive interest, self-knowledge and self-development to the greater extent, which nevertheless in most cases functions at the level of known motivation, "benevolent" intention or unstable situational motivational orientation.

In future to study this problem we are planning to use the possibilities of constructive experiment, to extend the subject of research by revealing the reasons of insufficient motivational readiness of students and working out certain means of its correction.

## **References**

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