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THE INFLUENCE OF SUPPORTING UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES' MOTIVATION AND CREATIVITY ON THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS' SUCCESS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY

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Abstract. *The aim of the article is to reveal the interrelationships between the processes of motivation and creativity in the academic environment which could be used to support the success of the educational institution, and thus in the development of society.*
For the purpose of obtaining information, a questionnaire survey was carried out in 2019 focused on decisions on academic motivation and creativity. The sample consisted of n = 90 respondents working at one of the universities in Slovakia. The main finding was the confirmation of hypothesis HA: The development of creativity and motivation is influenced by similar factors.
The output of the article is a proposal for a model of connecting key elements of effective decision-making on the development of creativity and motivation in the academic environment which would reflect on the rapidly changing environment. The educational institution can be described as creative only if the individual elements and processes in the university environment are creative. Members of the academic environment thus directly influence not only the development of the institution but also the development of young people and thus society.

Keywords: *academic motivation, academic creativity, teachers and managers, research, development of society.*
JEL Code: *M12 Personnel Management, I23 Higher Education.*

Introduction

Motivation is generally a complicated phenomenon (Reeve, 2009; Kim & Chu, 2011; Beck, 2021). It touches, it forms respectively, the basis of the personality of each individual and each (social) group. Scientists and practitioners from all over the world devote attention to it for many decades, trying to reveal its matter of fact and better understand the mechanisms of its functioning. Namely, „motivation or internal states play an important role in initiating behaviour, selecting actions to perform, and orienting the actions to achieve desired goals" (Alarcón, 2021).

Motivation is a reflection and explanation of internal cognitive-energetic events, giving the behaviour of human beings a dimension of justification, pro-social significance, and usefulness. Motivation is the basic force starting, maintaining, and completing the effort of each individual. Because the motivation of employees and managers of organizations, companies, firms, institutions, communities, etc. generates performance and all purposeful efforts throughout the economy, motivation needs to be improved. In doing so, the basis of effective motivation is an efficient motivating of individuals and groups. However, motivating is not easy because: „Employees of different positions differed in terms of motivation and motivational profiles" (Kcharchenko, 2021, p.156).

Especially in difficult periods, when it is necessary to motivate new ideas, bold solutions, unique values, i.e., to motivate for creativity, the topic of correct *motivation and creativity of higher education staff* emerges. In fact, motivated university teachers, scientists, and managers are able to pass their enthusiasm and creative thinking patterns to their students. In this way, they can gradually disseminate motivation and creativity to the whole economy.

Creativity, as the second phenomenon explored in the article, represents a unique concept, property, skill, talent, process, as well as the result of the creative activity of individuals and groups. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of fostering creativity and innovation in higher education due to higher education's critical role in individuals' information age (Abu Shokeedem, 2020). Like motivation, creativity is full of different meanings and contradictions too. According to Panja: „Being creative in one's profession often holds its objective treatment to the concept of creativity which is understood to be an expression of the individual talent in a form which is not controlled by the individual itself; rather it is understood to be performed by somebody who is beyond the individual" (Panja, 2018).

Usually, the literature devotes sufficient research space to the creativity of higher education students. However, the creativity of higher education staff is much less explored. Even, the study of the motivation of academy staff in relation to their creativity is absent in the literature. For this reason, *the article's aim* is to analyse, synthesize and generalize theoretical views on both research concepts, related to the environment of a modern university.

Methodology of the Research: The empirical part presents the results of a questionnaire survey conducted on a sample of n = 90 academic employees and managers. It focuses on exploring the interdependencies between perceived motivation and creativity. The article concludes with two partial models that are designed as recommendations for more meaningful motivation for creativity in higher education.

Motivation and creativity in the academic environment

When considering *academic motivation,* scientific studies are the most strongly devoted to student motivation (e.g., Kiliç, Kiliç & Akan, 2021), their demotivation (e.g., Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021), or a-motivation (e.g., Ratelle et al., 2007).

However, more and more attention is being paid also the motivation of pedagogical, scientific, administrative, and managerial staff of higher education. In this view, the motivation to teach (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021) and motivation to research (Hermida, 2021) is often searched. Currently, also the motivation to philanthropy and donor (Conley & Shaker, 2021), motivation to sustainability in higher education (Blašková et al., 2019), teacher's motivational role, and motivational practices (Yang & Wyatt, 2021), etc. are searched.

Wasserman & Wasserman introduce a new concept, i.e., potential motivation: "It is the maximum effort an individual would be willing to exert to satisfy a motive and is distinguished from motivation intensity which refers to the amount of effort actually expended to reach a goal or satisfy a motive… the expenditure of effort in obtaining the same goal can vary considerably" (Wasserman & Wasserman, 2020, p.85). It can be deduced that just the possible, available will and preparedness of academic staff, i.e., their overall motivation capacity decides how much energy the lecturers and scientists input to the teaching and research. It determines the amount of personal insert, non-traditional methods, and creativeness they transfer to the work done.

This means that **linking the motivation with the creativity** of higher education staff is extraordinarily important. *Academic creativity* can be considered the process of introducing new knowledge or ideas (Wang & Netemeyer, 2004) implemented in teaching and research

(Rahimnia et al., 2019). According to Shah et al., creative work performance in higher education is related to higher on-the-job or off-the-job organizational support (Shah et al., 2020).

Universities as intellectual and creative organizations have to put their managerial emphasis on developing an atmosphere and conditions characteristic by/for the "academic freedom concept and phenomenon" (Ponomareva & Ponomarev, 2021). Even, Marginson deals with the radical-creative imagination and identifies the core elements of academic self-determination as agency freedom, freedom as power, and freedom as control (Marginson, 2008). Because creative thinking and creative behaviour are affected by skills, attitudes, motives, and personality traits (Hooi Lian & Awawdeh, 2020), academic creativity has to be supported by appropriate leadership (Youngquist, Line & Pyle, 2019).

Standardly, academic creativity can be explained or measured in many ways and approaches. For example, the number and impact factor of publications are standardly accentuated (by ministries of many countries, especially when providing the new accreditation for a study program, faculty, or university). Paradoxical is when evaluating and getting various national or international grants or funds for scientific efforts (projects), the future, i.e., potential scientific creativity and responsibility are judged that is based on the number and quality of previous scientific outputs.

On the other hand, Mould, Vorley & Roodhouse consider with emphasized the commercialization and technology transfer of academic research in England: „Entrepreneurial university... seeks to protect and commercialize creative intellectual property" (2009). In this view, also Moraru highlighted that the number of academic papers and citations is less important than the creative involvement of teachers and students in solving industry problems (2018).

University teachers can create an engaging environment that encourages students to take a deep approach to learn – in this way, they help students in developing their cognitive skills, competencies, and practices that are essential for professional practice (Hermida, 2021). However, the essential creative work – mission – of the academic staff itself is probably the most complicated, i.e., effort/work of creative practitioners (Strange, Hetherington & Eaton, 2016) within the university (e.g., writers, constructers, disclosers). To produce the creative outputs in higher education (papers, studies, books, monographs, models, patents, etc.) needs the strong motivational reviving; the creativity has to be motivated, i.e., increased, improved, appropriately oriented, and harmonized with other 'gifts', intelligences or competences of the individual.

In this perspective, the academic staff's motivation and the academic staff's creativity are linked mutually and connected closely. Simply stated: they have to be searched commonly.

Methodology

For the purposes of this article, the authors defined several research questions focused on the area of motivation and creativity, from which the H_A hypothesis subsequently emerged. The questions were abbreviated to QM (questions about motivation) and QC (questions about creativity). These issues include:

QM1: What factors influence the academic environment members' motivation?
QM2: What factors positively influence the academic environment members' motivation?
QM3: Which factors are the most important for the academic environment members in terms of effectiveness in supporting motivation?

QC1: What factors influence the academic environment members' creativity?
QC2: What factors positively influence the academic environment members' creativity?

The main hypothesis focused on examining the interrelationships between factors influencing motivation and those influencing creativity. The authors' assumption was related to a similar influence of these factors on both processes (motivation and creativity). *Figure 1* shows the link between the defined questions, the hypothesis, and also the problem of low motivation to be creative in the university environment. The wording of the hypothesis is as follows:

HA: The development of creativity and motivation is influenced by similar factors.

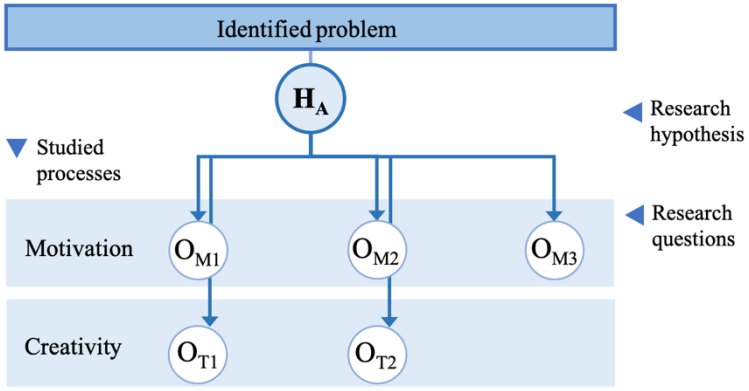

Figure 1. Relationships between research questions and hypotheses
Source: own elaboration

As was mentioned above, the research questions were examined using the method of sociological questioning, via the questionnaire survey technique. This survey was conducted in 2019. The basic sample consisted of university teachers and research staff. In order to be able to confirm the defined authors' assumptions in a short time, the selection of the real research sample was narrowed down to those respondents who work at the University of Žilina in Žilina, specifically at the Faculty of Management Science and Informatics. All employees or managers were contacted at this workplace without any difference. From this research, specific findings emerged that can be used as a basis for future in-depth analysis on a larger, expanded sample.

The size of the basic sample was determined based on documents from the personnel department of the Faculty of Management Science and Informatics – the number of employees to 1 January 2021, the number represents 124 employees. The real research sample size (answers obtained) is 90 respondents with a tolerable error of 5.43% (Raosoft, 2020). The created questionnaire survey contained 20 questions, which included closed questions with a scale or defined options, as well as open questions where respondents could express their opinion or suggestions for improvement. For the purposes of evaluation, several questions were selected, the essence of which was related to the process of motivation, creativity, and decision-making. The analysis of specific questions was chosen in relation to the defined research questions.

Results – Descriptive statistics

In the initial examination, respondents were divided into several categories according to basic characteristics *(Table 1).* The sample consisted of 61.11% men and 38.89% women, the

most represented was education at the level of PhD., the average age of respondents was 48 years and the average number of years of experience was 23 years.

Table 1. Basic characteristics of respondents
Source: own elaboration

Characteristics		[%]
Sex	Male	61.11%
	Female	38.89%
Education	Vocational school	0.00%
	Secondary education	10.00%
	Higher education – first and second degree	15.56%
	PhD.	43.33%
	doc.	21.11%
	prof.	10.00%
Average age		48
Average number of years of experience		23

QM_1 and QM_2: Following the first research question, the respondents' opinions on the elements influencing their motivation were evaluated from the point of view of frequency *(Table 2).* The university managers and employees chose the pre-defined elements that contributed the most to the change in their motivation (positive or negative). The factor *„gradual maturation and personality development"* was the ranked highest with a frequency of 43.33%.

Regarding the second research question, we noticed that some of the factors may have a negative effect on respondents' motivation. This is exactly the factor *„long-term fatigue, stress, and burnout"* that was ranked second in with frequency of 34.44%. This finding can also be interpreted through the following model situation: if the motivation of teachers is significantly influenced by this negative factor, it is important that the faculty and university focus on creating an environment and processes that will minimize these impacts.

The third place in terms of frequency is occupied by the factor *„health and state of health".* Its impact on motivation can be analysed in terms of both positive and negative impacts (31.11%). The model situation can be defined as follows: if the health of a member of the academic environment (manager, employee) is "broken", such a person will be stressed, and his motivation will decrease. On the other hand, it can be assumed that if the health condition of a member of the academic environment is in order, he will have enough energy and his motivation will be supported.

Table 2. The frequency of elements that contributed the most to the change in the motivation of teachers
Source: own elaboration

Options		Frequency	[%]
1.	Gradual maturation and development of one's personality	39	43.33%
2.	Long-term fatigue, stress, and burnout	31	34.44%
3.	Health and health condition	28	31.11%
4.	Significant success at work	23	25.56%
5.	Awareness of one's qualities and benefits	22	24.44%

QM$_3$: In an effort to answer the third research question, we decided to focus on the analysis of the real application of motivational tools in relation to their effectiveness. Respondents from the point of view of the tools' application for the support of motivation in the largest representation marked the factor *„providing personal bonuses and rewards"* (with a frequency of 75.56%). Subsequently, the factor *„providing space for independence"* came at second place (with a frequency of 67.78%). Respondents consider *„applying threats and sanctions"* to be the least used motivational tool in the academic environment, which is a positive element of this environment *(Table 3).*

In third and fourth place in the ranking of the tools that were applied in real environment, are *„correctness from the superiors and management; and creating good relationships and atmosphere".* These two factors were simultaneously identified as the most effective. It can be stated that the respondents consider *„the correctness from the superiors and the management"* as the most effective motivational tool, which received *700 points* in the total score. Based on a comparison of the actual application and effectiveness of motivational tools in the academic environment *(Table 3)*, it can be stated that the first four most effective motivational tools were and are applied in the academic environment according to the respondents.

Table 3. Really applied motivational tools and their effectiveness
Source: own elaboration

Options		Application of tools		Effectiveness of tools – Frequency
		Frequency	[%]	
1.	Providing personal bonuses and rewards	68	75.56%	667
2.	Providing space for one's independence	61	67.78%	662
3.	Creating good relationships and atmosphere	54	60.00%	699
4.	Correctness from the superiors and management	53	58.89%	700
5.	Expressing a praise	50	55.56%	535
6.	Expressing an interest in one's opinions	46	51.11%	549
7.	Option of further development and education	44	48.89%	439
8.	Providing the necessary information	44	48.89%	523
9.	Enabling career growth	39	43.33%	423
10.	Involving employees in decision-making	32	35.56%	438
11.	Criteria for evaluating one's work performance	30	33.33%	410
12.	Applying threats and sanctions	6	6.67%	422

However, in further examining the effectiveness of the motivational factors, the most important tools can also be mentioned among those that have already been identified as effective *(Table 4).* In this case, *„creating good relationships and atmosphere"* (109 points) and *„correctness from the superiors and management"* (106 points) are in the first two places of the order of importance. The following were included: granting personal allowance and rewards; providing space for your independence; and a compliment.

Table 4. The order of the most important factors in terms of effectiveness, sorted by frequency
Source: own elaboration

Options		The number of most important factors			Total score
		The highest	Medium	The lowest	
1.	Creating good relationships and atmosphere	15	23	18	109
2.	Correctness from the superiors and management	21	15	13	106
3.	Personal bonuses and rewards	26	4	15	101
4.	Providing space for one's independence	10	11	14	66
5.	Expressing a praise	4	9	4	34

QT_1 and QT_2: In relation to creativity and the factors that influence it in the academic environment, the opinions of the respondents were also surveyed *(Table 5).* The most important factors influencing the change of university staff's creativity were: *„pleasant working environment"* with a percentage of 75.56%, *„good relationships and teamwork at work"* (52.22%), and *„important person"* (48.89%).

Table 5. The frequency of elements that contributed the most to the change in teachers' creativity
Source: own elaboration

Options		Frequency	[%]
1.	Pleasant working environment	68	75.56%
2.	Good relationships and teamwork at work	47	52.22%
3.	Important person (parent, teacher, friend)	44	48.89%
4.	Harmonious family life	43	47.78%
5.	Good friends	32	35.56%
6.	Long-term fatigue, stress	28	31.11%
7.	Health problems	26	28.89%

Results – Relationship analysis

H_A: When examining the interrelationships, it was necessary to create *a uniform categorization of factors* from the perspective of the established hypothesis. The questions in the questionnaire survey were divided into separate areas, which i.e., included the area of motivation and creativity. Within the area of motivation, respondents had to evaluate the motivational effects *(Table 2)* and in the area of creativity, they had to evaluate the influences that affect their creativity *(Table 5).* To ensure clarity for respondents, the names of the factors were different, but for comparison purposes, it was necessary to create a new categorization based on the significance in which potential correlations were revealed.

The first step in creating the presented categorization was *to define five categories*, in which, according to their importance, two factors from two selected areas of influence (motivation and creativity) were included. These categories include: *(1) a pleasant working environment and success at work; (2) failures and negative impact of the environment; (3) friends and family; (4) stress, fatigue, and health problems; (5) personal development.*

Subsequently, for the two factors falling into one category, values representing their designation or non-designation by the respondents (values 0 or 1) were calculated, thus expressing *the sum for the specified category.* The resulting recalculation contained values of 0, 1, or 2, with a value of 2 indicating the designation of both factors by the respondent, a value of 1 indicating only one of the two factors, and a value of 0 expressing no designation in the

given category. These values were evaluated as *the strength of the influence of the given category* on motivation or creativity, where value 2 represented the strongest influence.

After the presented step, the relationships between categorized factors were examined. Using the statistic software, the calculation of the chi-square test was performed with a permissible error of 5% and a confidence interval of 95%, while the dependence was confirmed if $\chi^2 > c$; $c = 9.488$ at χ^2 (4). The dependence between all categories and their influence on motivation and at the same time on creativity was statistically significant *(Table 6).*

Table 6. Statistical significance of the influence of categorized factors on motivation and creativity – from the teachers' point of view
Source: own elaboration

Impact on motivation	Chi-square test	Impact on creativity
Pleasant working environment and success at work	χ^2	9.556
	P-value	0.049
	Significance	yes
Failures and negative impact of the environment	χ^2	23.469
	P-value	<0.001
	Significance	yes
Friends and family	χ^2	15.926
	P-value	0.003
	Significance	yes
Stress, fatigue, and health problems	χ^2	32.263
	P-value	<0.001
	Significance	yes
Personal development	χ^2	10.103
	P-value	0.039
	Significance	yes

81.48% of respondents from those who stated that the first categorized factor *„pleasant working environment and success at work"* affects their motivation, are inclined to the fact that it also affects their creativity. Taking a specific view of the respondents who stated that the presented factor has the strongest influence on their motivation (frequency at value 2), up to 75% of them stated that this factor has the strongest influence on their creativity.

The overwhelming majority of respondents stated that the second categorized factor *„failures and negative impact of the environment"* do not have a positive effect on supporting their motivation (75 respondents). As many as 78.67% of respondents are inclined to the fact that this factor does not affect the support of their creativity. Although the above statement concerning the second factor is reversible compared to the findings of the first factor, it supports the assumption that respondents' motivation and creativity are influenced by similar factors.

Among the respondents who are motivated by the factor *„friends and family",* up to 73.68% stated that this factor also affects their creativity. A statistically significant difference was identified in comparison with those respondents who are not affected by this factor. Regarding the fourth categorized factor, which is *„stress, fatigue, and health problems",* 43 respondents stated that it affects a negative change in their motivation. 65.12% of respondents are inclined to the fact that the same factor also affects the negative change in their creativity.

The significance of the relationship between the category of factors *„personal development"* and its impact on motivation and impact on creativity was also statistically confirmed. In the case of employees, this category includes two separate factors, which are: *sufficient leisure time and an art school, course, or training.* In a detailed examination of this categorized factor, it can be stated that 67 respondents out of the total number (n = 90) do not consider this factor to be important for increasing their motivation. 85.07% of respondents, whose motivation is not influenced by this factor, are inclined to the fact that it does not affect the support of their creativity.

The above findings, resulting from a detailed analysis of the frequency of individual responses, *confirms the validity of the H_A hypothesis* for those factors where the statistical significance of the dependencies was confirmed *(Table 6),*

Discussion

The key importance of the creative environment is also supported by Anjum et al., who argues that it is the university environment that can create unique conditions that inspire members of this environment to increase their enthusiasm and creativity (Anjum et al., 2021).

An integral part of the presented recommendations is also *the mutual relations between individual elements and processes.* These relationships can be described as continuous and bidirectional feedback. The opinions of many authors also agree that providing quality feedback is a multifaceted and complex activity. Bi Ying et al. describe the constructive feedback of teachers as a crucial element in promoting the students' authenticity, autonomy, competencies, and motivation (Bi Ying Hu, 2021).

From the perspective of the success of the organization as a whole, Urdan and Kaplan also argue that it is essential to support employees in discovering new contexts and developing new skills. As a result, members of the academic environment will be encouraged to have an inner understanding of success and are more likely to be more involved in the implementation of the solution and more determined to overcome potential obstacles (Urdan & Kaplan, 2020).

Conclusions

The aim of the present article was to identify the interrelationships between the processes of motivation and creativity within the academic environment. The intention was to use these links to support members' motivation for creativity of the university environment. The development of employees should subsequently lead to the support of the success of the educational institution, which will thus bring higher value to end customers (in this case students), thus supporting the development of the company.

In order to reveal the mentioned relationships between the processes, a detailed analysis was performed. By studying literary sources, conducting interviews, as well as a questionnaire survey directly in the university environment, it was possible to draw the main findings. Based on the examined relationships and the results of the analyses, it can be stated that the H_A hypothesis was confirmed. This finding can be used *to support motivation and creativity,* where similar factors could be chosen when deciding to support these processes. Thus, it is clear that in a university environment, there should be support for motivation to be creative, which can be realized by appealing to a series of pre-selected factors.

That is why we further focused on a procedural view that would help to involve these aspects in the functioning of university practice. The partial models created so far (concerning the interrelationships between the processes of motivation, creativity, and decision-making), which have been analysed through previous research, have been logically linked. This could

create *a model of linking key elements of effective decision-making on the development of creativity and motivation in the academic environment (Figure 2).*

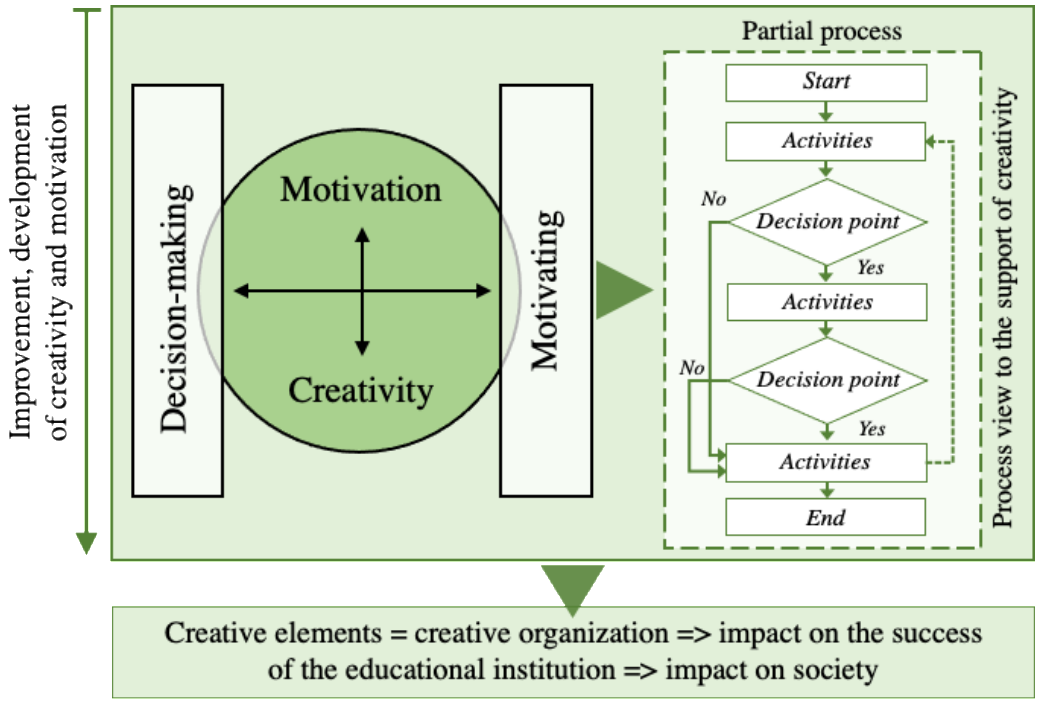

Figure 2. Linking key elements of effective decision-making on the development of creativity and motivation in the academic environment
Source: own elaboration

The model above is the authors' recommendation for *promoting creativity in the academic environment.* The identified relationships between the elements will contribute to the improvement and development of this environment members' creativity and motivation. It will be possible to characterize the individual elements as creative, which will make the organization as a whole more creative, and thus the premise of its future success will be fulfilled.

The proposed model also includes the generally illustrated partial process. This process is an example of *the logical sequence of steps* that should be used in the actual implementation of decisions to support motivation and creativity. Therefore, this section was elaborated in detail using a recommendation in the form of a model called *Recommended process of the support of creativity (Figure 3).*

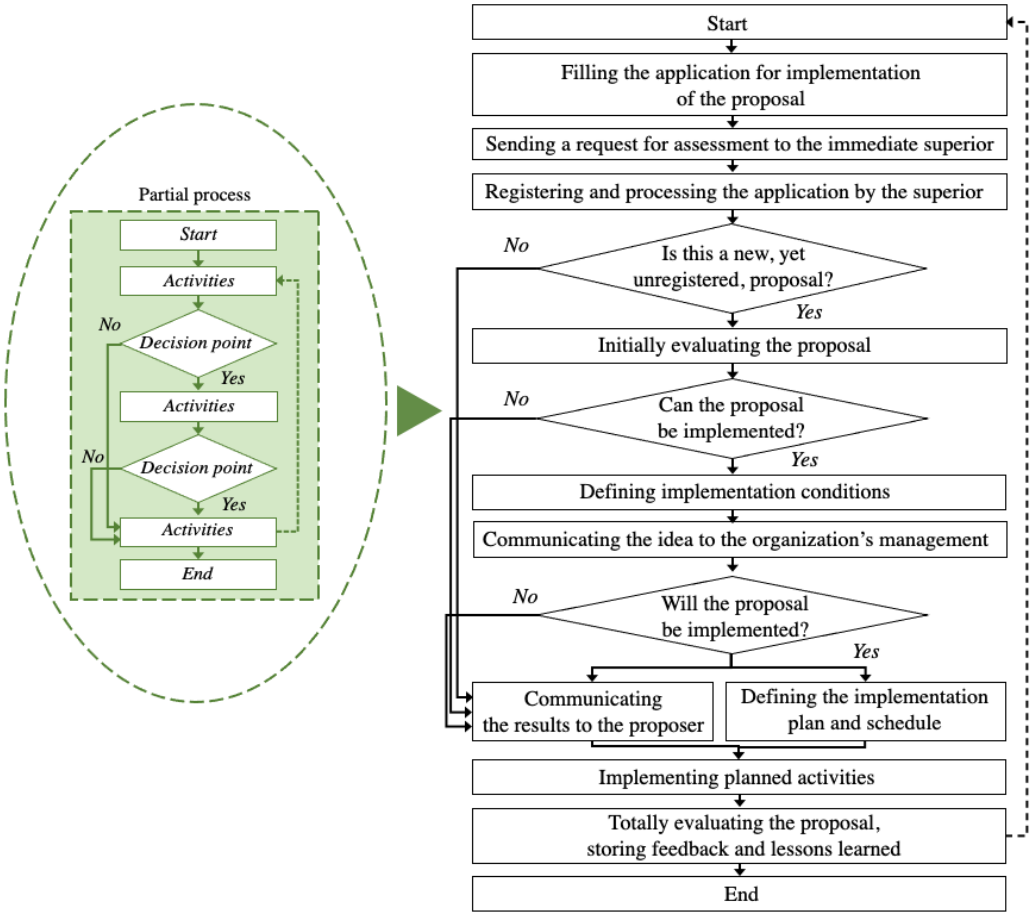

Figure 3. Recommended process of the support of creativity
Source: own elaboration

In conclusion, the university should focus on supporting the motivation of its employees to enrich and support its environment, increase the productivity and gain a competitive advantage. As the factors supporting motivation are directly linked to the factors that support creativity, it is clear that there will also be indirect support for creativity. However, this indirect effect on the promotion of creativity should be used and the promotion of creativity should also be set up through targeted decision-making.

In this way, through the direct support to members' creativity and motivation of academic environment, as well as through a well-thought-out decision-making process, *a motivating impact on students will be achieved.* It is assumed that students, as young people who focus on their first work experience during this period of their lives, will support the development of society as a whole with their enhanced creativity.

However, the future focus of the presented research could also focus on the expansion of the research sample across other universities in Slovakia. Furthermore, the extended results could be compared with other countries in order to fulfil the objective generalization of results internationally.

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