

THE EFFECTS OF BELIEFS ABOUT SELF ON CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of self-efficacy and intelligence on performance on examinations. As reported by Gist (1987), an experience of mastering a task or ability (e.g., examination) is one way to influence self-efficacy. This study suggests that personal self efficacy regarding examinations is very important to student success at first, but that over time other factors negate this advantage. For example, the student's initial view of their intelligence can impact their performance on examinations. However, an effective and positive learning experience during the course can increase performance and minimize the impact of their perception of his or her intelligence on their performance on examinations.

Dweck (2000) reported that there are two frameworks for understanding intelligence and achievement. The first view is the theory of fixed intelligence or entity theory which states that intelligence is a fixed trait and is portrayed as an entity that dwells within an individual and it cannot be changed (Bandura & Dweck, 1985). Based on this theory, students worry about much of this fixed intelligence they have because if they do not have enough of this trait, then their capabilities and potential for achievement and success are limited.

On the other hand, a second view of ability has a very different definition of intelligence, the theory of malleable intelligence. This theory postulates that intelligence is not a fixed trait that an individual is born with; rather, it is something that can be cultivated through learning. Thus, this view has been labeled an "incremental theory" of intelligence because intelligence is portrayed as something that can be increased through one's efforts (Bandura & Dweck, 1985).

Self-efficacy is an important construct within Bandura's (1982) Social Cognitive Theory. It refers to the confidence of an individual regarding his or her capability to perform a particular task. Self-efficacy has been shown to positively relate to both performance (Gist & Mitchell, 1992) and to satisfaction (Gist et al., 1991). Self-efficacy regarding examinations in a class should be positively related to both performance on the examinations as well as satisfaction with the exams and possibly also with the class as a whole.

We assessed the effects of students' beliefs about the self on classroom performance through collection of data on student exam scores over time.

Students were given extra credit to fill out an online survey regarding their perceptions of themselves. Scores were then recorded for each of the students, names kept anonymous, for examinations at three points in the semester. These exam scores were matched up with the perceptions of the students.

These results suggest that self-efficacy on examinations does make a difference in actual student performance on them, but that this effect is reduced and perhaps eliminated over time by other factors in a class. In the short run, this type of confidence in performing a task can give students an advantage over others who are less confident.

These results also found that specific measures of student self perception are much more accurate than general measures. General confidence in one's abilities did not predict examination success. Similarly, general ideas of fixed or malleable intelligence had no influence.

References Available on Request