Self-concept, Hope and Achievement: A look at the relationship between the individual self-concept, level of hope, and academic achievement

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Abstract: A review of the available literature reveals a link between factors of an individual self-concept, their level of hope and achievement. Hope can be the impact on an individual confidence in his or her ability to perform a behavior that will lead to a goal. Differences between students and teachers' perception were evidence of the teachers unwillingness to admit that they have negative feeling towards low achieving students. Students and their teachers agreed that low-achieving students get more teachers help and support and less pressure. With regard to praise and criticism, however, teachers and student held opposing view. Hence, students' perception of their treatment were found to be related to teacher expectancy as well as to students' school self-concept. The study also aimed to identify achieving students who did nit receive special consideration. The particular aspects of self-concept investigated were global self-concept, and the related domain specific areas of social, family/home and scholastic self-concept. Teacher ratings of pupil self-concept were also obtained to identify whether there were significant discrepancies between how children perceived themselves and how they were perceived by teachers

What is Self–Concept/

Self-concept is generally asserted to be a product of all the belief and evaluation one has about oneself and includes one's behavioral tendencies (Burn, 1982; John Hattie, 1992). It has often been described as having two main components, these being a descriptive and an evaluative element (Marsh & Craven, 1997) The descriptive component is that which is concerned with one's beliefs about onself, and is often referred to as self-image (Burn, 1982). It is a cognitive appraisal (John Hattie,1992). Which may be either objective or subjective, true or false (Burn, 1982). Sel-image can range from belief statements such as "I am tall", "I am generous", or "I am Malaysian", to "I am a teacher". They are generalized descriptions reflecting the consistent and habitual, way we have come to perceive ourselves" (Burn, 1982). Hattie (1992) point out, however, that not all our description are part of our self-concept, as some may "relate to other aspect of our living" . Burn's breath comes from this assertion that description are all things which distinguish the person from others making him/her unique, and thus are potentially infinite. (1982).

To a concise definition, Shavelson defined self-consept as one's self perceptions that are formed through experience with and interpretation of one's enviroment. Thay are influenced especially by evaluation by significant others, reinforcement, and attribution for one's own behavior (1976).

Structure of Self-Concept

One of the difficulties in studying self-concept is that one is not merely looking at a single broad psychological attribute. Rather, there are many different dimention to self-concept. When we talk broadly self-concept as an overarching phenomena, one is referring to global self-concept (Marsh & Craven, 1997). As Shavelson (1976) suggested a "hierarchical model in which general self-concept appeared at the apex and was divided into academic and non-academic self-concept at the next level". As an individual's academic self-concept is enchanced, this is seen to have a positive affect on global self-concept. Indeed changes in global self-concept are seen to deepend upon changes in specific lower-level aspect (Marsh & Craven, 1997). Shavelson in an attempt to clarify

his definition he identified seven vital features to a definition of the construct of self-concept:

1. It is organized structure
2. It is multi-dimentional, with each dimension reflecting an individual or group' "self-referen category system".
3. It is hierarchical, with personal behaviour in specific situation at the base, broad inferences about the self in the middle, and global/generak self-concept at the apex.
4. General self-concept is stable, but as one descent the hierarchy, self-concept becomes more situation specific, and thereby less stable.
5. Self-concept becomes increasingly multidimensional as one grows polder.
6. Self-concept has both a descriptive and an evaluation aspect, and individuals may weight dimensions differentally.
7. Self-concept can be differentiated from others construct such as achievement or fitness.

(Shavelson & Bolus, 1982)

Factors contribute a positive/negative self-consept

A positive self-concept thus can be equated with positive evaluation, self respect, self-esteem, self-acceptance; a negative self-concept becomes synonymous with negative self-evaluation, self-hatred, inferiority and lack of feelings of personal worthiness and self-acceptance. (Burns, 1972)

Self-concept is not an innate characteristic, rather it is   learned through experince and sensory input (Burns, 1982) . But it is a product of an individual's evaluations of him/herself and enviroment. Despite the apparently inward looking nature of self-concept, it is not a phenomena which is formed in isolation but the expectations and evaluation of others are crucial to its formation (John Hattie, 1992)

Factors contribute to the development of an individual self-concept.

With the onset of adolescence there is an increase of elements that affect the shaping of goals-oriented behaviors (Jarvinen & Nicholls, 1996). It is at this time that an individual begins to spend less amounts of time with their family and more time with their peers. The satisfaction with these peer relationships is important to the development of a good self-concept. Adolescents are more likely to have higher levels of self-esteem and academic achievement if they are accepted by their peers. Those who are less accepted tend to be at greater risk for problems in later social and psychological functioning (Parker & Asher, 1987). Academic performance and educational aspiration have also been shown to have an affect on self-concept (Richman, Clark & Brown, 1985).

Difficulties during adolescence can result in adolescent depression, however it is known that the majority of teen are able to get through this period of development with a positive sense of personal identity (Power, Hauser & Kilner, 1989). As it is a phase of life characterized by change in every aspect of individual development, from social to biological. Negative reaction to the normal onset of puberty can have a serious effect on the perceived body image and self-esteem of a young adolescent.

Adolesecnt who report having anxiety and depression along with other symptoms like feeling sad, lonely and worthless are considered to have what is known as depression syndrome (Peterson, et al., 1993). For large number of the teens who experience depressive symptoms, the feeling may just be a temporary response to the change they are experiencing. Synmpton like this emphasized the need for parent, teachers and counselor to pay close attention. Help can be offered in the early stage, which can leseen the chances of more serious problems in the future (Taylor, Miller & <oltz, 1999)

One of the core caharacteristics of depression is a sense of hopelessness (Beck, Weissman, Lester & Yrexter, 1974). Synder, et. al defines hope as a cognitive set that is composed of agency (goal-directed determination), and pathways (planning of ways to meet goals). These components add up to the capacity for subjective evaluation of goal-related capabilities.

The componen of hope are similar in comparison to the the motivational theory of efficacy and outcome expectancies (Bandura, 1977, 1982); where efficacy refers to an indiviudual confidence in his or her ability to perform a behavior that will lead to a desired outcome (agency) and outcome refers to the belief that a certain behavior will produce a certain outcome (pathway). Higher level of hope lead to greater perception og agency and pathways as people consider their goals. When compared with the specific area of college academic achievement, the result suggest that success in achievement appears to be related to higher hope (snyder, et. al)

Students' Perceptions

Students' perception of differential teacher behavior, that is differences in teachers' behavior with respect to good and poor students. It is well known that students' motivation to learn is influenced by their daily experiences in the classroom. On the basis of classroom experience, students set their expectation for future learning. Students who has a positive expectation will show greater persistence at difficult task and, if given a choice, will look for more challenging tasks than students with low expectation.

Weinstein (1989) found that teachers differed in their degree of differential behavior as perceived by their students; the teacher behavior being related to student variables and teachers' expectations for their students. Low achieveing students got less opportunity and choice and encountered less academic demand from their teachers than high academic achievers; at the same time they received more negative feedback and more "work and rule-oriented treatment". Perceptions of the teachers behavior and the relation between students and teachers' perception having a possibility that teacher behavior is explained differently by students and teachers. Thay use use different cognitive schemata to frame the phenomenon of differential teacher behavior.

As far as teachers and the students concerned, both agreed that differential behavior as far as learning support and pressure, low achievers received more learning support and les pressure from their teachers. With regard to emotional support , teachers and students did

not agree as students perceived higher emotional support for the high achiever, whereas the teachers indicated that they, gave more emotional support to low achievers.

Teacher Expectancy and Students' Self – Concept

As far as the study involved, investigated the links between teachers exoectation and students' efficacy belief, was found not correlated. Students efficacy beliefs, however, were associated with teacher behavior, more so on a between-classroom level of analysis than on a within-classroom level. Classroom with high rates of criticism by the teacher showed lower students' efficacy beliefs. This showed link between teacher initiations and student efficacy belief emerged on a within-class level. The link between teacher expectancy and students' perception of their own treatment was investigated with high-vs low differential treatment classrooms. Teachers' expectations only correlated on a within class level with students' perceived own teatment. High expectation students perceived to receive more work and rule orientation, higher expectation, opportunity and choice, and less negative feedback and teacher direction than did low-expectation students. The pattern of correlation in low-vs. high-differential classroom was different, indicating that the degree of differential teacher behavior played a role.

In particular, the attitude of regular class teacher and the learning enviroment they create can play a major role in the development of self-concept. For many primary school children the school frequently provides the first occasion where they are accountable for their thoughts and actions, and where they may measure themselves against their peers (Winne et al., 1982). Only children with learning disabilities are at risk of developing poorer self-concept than their normal achieving peers in such situation, as schools are failure prone learning environments (Bryan & Pearl,1979: Leonardari, 1993: McWhirter, McWffirter & McWhiter, 1985, Serafica & Harway, 1979). Some studies suggest that teacher, comparison of student performance maybe a particular source of difficulty, with regular class teacher likely to give more negative feedback to children with learning skill, and more likely to increase disciplinary intervention. Studies also found that teachers which have a lower evaluation of such students than the students have themselves.

The child's family could play a significant role in this process, with Philip (1987) finding that parental feedback may influence and sustain inaccurate perceptions of academic abilility. Apart from that, behavior has been reported for motor learning difficulties by Causgrove and Watkinson (1994), who found that children in primary 5 and 6 had higher physical self perception when their motor performance was poorer

The discrepancy between student and teacher perception of self-concept may also relate to an underlying cognitive dysfunction, which hampers the students ability to accurately self-evaluate their own performance, especially in social situation (Slite, Weiss & Bell, 1985). Such students may be less sensitive to emotions displayed by peers and adults (Bachara, 1976; Bryan &Byran 1978; Lerner, 1989) and may have more difficulty in interpreting social events (Bender & Wall, 1994; Holder & Kirkpatrick, 1991; Pearl & Cosden, 1982; Saloner & Gettmiger, 1985; Silverman & Zigniond, 1983 Spafford & Grosser, 1993). This lack of perception may increase the possibility that such students would not be aware of their general and social shortcomings.

The degree of sensitivity to social situation may also help explain the generally lower self-concept rating because of heightened awareness of failure. Therefore it must for students to perceive social competence and intelligence to be of greater importance, which could make them aware of peer group and teacher perception of their ability. Another possible reason for the discrepancy between students and teacher ratings of self-concept for children with their lesson could be the favourable learning enviroment created by special assitance or special class placement. Teachers expressed a negative reaction towards virtually every students who display attention and behavior problems, contribute to developed a negative expectation that the students would not perform as well.

Generally students with a low learning ability are likely to have a lower self-concept than their normally achieving peers needs to be qualified. There are a variety of factors which may influence the degree to which a negative self-concept develop. There are also a variety of domain of self-concept, only some of which may be affected. Factors such as the nature and intensity of special assistance, the degree of previous failure and the sex of

the student may all as well to be considered in developing a program which enhances both social and emotional skills as well as academic skills.. If remedial assistance is given, but the childs self-concept is lowered because of devaluation by the regular class peer group, then a cycle may develop of lower self-concept, leading to lowered motivation, firther and learned helplessness (Chapman, 1988).

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