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Academic achievement and its relation to family background and locus of control

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**Academic Achievement and its Relation to Family
Background and Locus of Control**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

by

Mohammad Khayyer, B.A., M.A.

Graduate School of Education
1994

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Academic Achievement and its Relation to Family Background and Locus of Control

Abstract

The relationship between academic achievement and locus of control is considered with some key demographic and familial factors that can affect both academic achievement and locus of control. The size of the effects of each of these factors on both academic achievement and locus of control was investigated. The effect of academic-achievement feedback on the locus of control was also considered.

Six primary public schools, in the Illawarra region, New South Wales, were selected by stratified random sampling. In each school, one class in each year (3, 4, 5 and 6) was selected to provide subjects, consisting of 502 students, 235 boys and 267 girls. Four kinds of instruments were administered to the subjects of the study: a demographic and family background questionnaire, a locus-of-control questionnaire (Nowicki-Strickland), a reading-comprehension test (TORCH) and a mathematics test (PATMATHS). In order to investigate the effects of academic-achievement feedback on locus-of-control attitude, two of the six schools, were selected randomly. In one of these schools the general results of students' academic achievement were used as group achievement feedback, while in the second school the group feedback was not administered. Group-achievement feedback appeared to influence locus-of-control attitude subsequently.

The results of the study showed that the girls' academic achievement was significantly higher than the boys' academic achievement. No significant difference was found between the locus-of-control means of boys and girls. The academic achievement significantly increased with SES from low to high levels. Also, the internal locus-of-control attitude increased with SES from low to high levels. The academic achievement of the English-speaking students was significantly higher than the academic achievement of the non-English-speaking students. Also, the non-English-speaking students had a more external locus-of-control attitude than English-speaking students. Also, the results showed that the locus of control of students receiving encouraging feedback for both tasks (reading comprehension and mathematics) shifted towards internality, while the locus of control of other groups who received encouraging-discouraging or discouraging-discouraging feedback, did not change significantly.

Locus of control, socioeconomic status, grade, sex, and language background had significant direct effects in determining academic achievement, while grade, socioeconomic status and language background had significant direct effects in determining locus of control. Neither mother's work patterns nor family size had significant effects on academic achievement or locus of control.

Although the results showed that locus of control is the best predictor of academic achievement, it cannot be concluded that locus of control is the cause of academic achievement.

Some implications are indicated for educational policy.