
NEWSLETTER

Who Matters, Teacher or Parents?

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PUBLISHED in *Tsinghua Journal of Education*, the study examines the influence of parents and teachers on students' academic performance in Chinese through a survey of more than 4,000 students in grades 3 to 6. Based on the achievement goal theory, this study constructs a theoretical model of the relationship between students' perceived achievement goals and their academic achievements in Chinese and takes learning style as a mediator variable to explore the influence of students' perceived achievement goals from teachers and parents on their academic achievements in Chinese. The research question of this study is: How do students' perceived achievement goals from parents (Including acquisition goals, referring to students' perceived parental hopes that they should develop new skills, improve their abilities and acquire new knowledge; Results goals, referring to students' perceived high parental standards in terms of scores and rankings) and achievement goals from teachers (Including acquisition goals, referring to the students' perception that the objective of learning emphasized by teachers is to cultivate skills and abilities; Avoidance goals, referring to the students' perception of teachers' request for their avoidance to show low ability; Targeted goals, referring to students' perceived requests for high performance from teachers to exhibit their abilities and talent) affect students' academic performance in Chinese?

Research Methods:

This study takes more than 4,000 students in grades 3-6 as sample, using students' academic achievements in Chinese, learning style, goal perception and family factors as research tools, to explore the impact of parents' and teachers' goals perceived by students on their learning style and academic achievements in Chinese and the mediating effect of learning style.

Research Results:

- Correlation analysis among variables indicates: (i) There is a significant positive correlation between students' academic achievements in Chinese and surface learning style, parents' expectations, teachers' acquisition goal, teachers' targeted goal and parents' results goal at the level of 0.01. (ii) There is a significant

negative correlation between students' academic achievements in Chinese and physical capital and teachers' avoidance goal at 0.01 level. There is a significant positive correlation between students' academic achievements in Chinese and deep learning style, and a significant negative correlation between students' academic achievement in Chinese and cultural capital at 0.05 level.

- This study uses structural equation model to model variables that affect students' academic performance and draws the following conclusions: Surface learning style ($\beta = 0.175$, $P < 0.001$) and perceived acquisition goals from teachers ($\beta = 0.148$, $P < 0.001$) have significant positive influence on students' academic achievements in Chinese. Students' perceived parental acquisition goals ($\beta = -0.101$, $P < 0.05$) have a significant negative impact on students' academic achievements in Chinese. Students' perception of acquisition goal from teachers ($\beta = 0.211$, $P < 0.001$) and parental acquisition goal ($\beta = 0.63$, $P < 0.001$) have a significant positive impact on surface learning style. There is an interaction between students' perceived parental acquisition goal and perceived acquisition goal from teachers ($\beta=0.506$, $P < 0.001$). Parents' expectations interact with students' perception of acquisition goal from teachers ($\beta = 0.171$, $P < 0.001$). Parents' expectations have a significant positive effect on students' perceived parental acquisition goal ($\beta = 0.157$, $P < 0.001$), surface learning style ($\beta = 0.071$, $P < 0.001$) and academic achievements in Chinese ($\beta = 0.111$, $P < 0.001$). Students' perception of acquisition goal from teachers and parental acquisition goal has an impact on academic achievements in Chinese through the mediating effect of surface learning style.
- There are two ways to influence students' academic performance in Chinese, and the results of the effect test are as follows: i) Teachers' acquisition goal \rightarrow students' surface learning style \rightarrow academic performance in Chinese, the effect value is 0.037, 99% confidence interval is [0.015, 0.054]; ii) Parental acquisition goal \rightarrow students' surface learning style \rightarrow academic achievements in Chinese, the effect value is 0.11, 99% confidence interval is [0.045, 0.16]. The results indicate that the two paths are not completely valid mediation effect, and acquisition goals from teachers have a more direct impact on students' academic achievements in Chinese than parental acquisition goal.

Based on the above analysis, the following conclusions are reached: i) Achievement goals from teachers and parents can predict students' academic achievements in Chinese. However, whether there are other mediating variables needs to be further examined. ii) Compared with parents, teachers have a

stronger direct influence on students' academic performance, which suggests that in improving students' academic performance, teachers should take the initiative. iii) Compared with teachers, parents have stronger influence on students' motivations and strategies, which suggests that parents should play a more direct and important role in the cultivation of students' learning styles. Their influence on students is implicit and internalized, focusing on thoughts, behaviors, and methods. iv) Surprisingly, parental acquisition goals have a significant negative impact on students' academic performance in Chinese, which may be attributed to the fact that emphasis on academic achievements can cause excessive stress to children. Further research is needed in this regard. v) There should be a clear division of responsibility between parents and teachers in home-school partnership to achieve students' healthy and comprehensive development.

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