The Effect of Locus of Control and Classroom Climate on Motivation in the Classroom: An Ecological Approach to Personality and Action.

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Abstract

There is long-standing research tradition within educational psychology investigating the role of motivation in academic outcomes. There have been fewer investigations to develop a comprehensive model that includes the effects of personal and environmental variables on both action and on the development of attitudes and personality traits related to motivated behaviour. This thesis aims to integrate several such approaches within the context of a developing model of action and personality (Krampen, 1988), the Rotter tradition of social learning theory, and Bandura's more cognitive approach to motivation.

In order to explore the utility of this action-theoretical model of personality a number of measures of motivation, person and environmental variables were administered to a group of Year 12 students from 4 English classes in each of 3 different schools. These measures included a new multi-dimensional locus of control instrument which incorporates a measure of self-efficacy. These data were analysed for between-group differences by school, class-within school, sex, classroom climate and locus of control cluster. A major aim was to check for interaction effects between personality and environmental measures, particularly as they impact on motivated behaviour.

The environmental factors had a more powerful effect on motivated behaviour than the personality measures. In particular that aspect of classroom climate measured by the 'affiliation' scale appears to be critical in relation to motivation. Results are discussed in terms of their contribution to the further development of the proposed interactive model, and in terms of their implications for educational practice and further research.

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