

COMMENTARY

HOW DOES SELF-EFFICACY AFFECT PERFORMANCE OF LEARNER?

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All types of attribution based on which learners make their judgement (i.e., self efficacy), about academic success or failure or about a specific task usually affect their performance and their capabilities to deal with different realities.¹ It is perhaps the most distinctive capability of self-reflection. Many of the cognitive theorists have defined it as a meta-cognitive capability. This judgement influence learners choose what to do, how much effort to be invested in the activity, how long to carry the phase of disappointment, and whether to approach the task anxiously or with assurance.²

How does individual's judgement (self-efficacy) fluctuate?

In the given scenarios the self-efficacy can be seen fluctuated depending upon the situation the learner encounters. The attributional process fits well to analyse them and provide a modern day concept to which presenters attribute their academic success or failure.^{2,3}

“It always happens with me only. Either the multimedia fails or there is power outage or students go haywire in my session without any reason. I must be a very jinxed and unlucky person. I really worked hard for this lecture presentation but all my efforts went in vain due to battery failure of multimedia remote control.”

Looking at the above scenario in the light of attribution theory, it reflects that the learner attributes the locus of control of an outcome, i.e., failure, to external.⁴ He relates his failure to factors as luck, which is unstable and uncontrollable. The scenario reflects negative emotions (affective response) due to external failures. The outcome as a failure, in turn, affects the self-efficacy of the participants and effects his engagement with future presentations. However, verbal persuasion and increasing psychological states of mind can help influence learner self-efficacy levels to carry out the task positively in future.⁴

“I knew you will like my presentation. My friend makes wonderful power point presentations. He did this favour to me. After all it is important to acknowledge your friends' support”.

The defined scenario elicits positive affective response, such as gratitude, by the participant and shows that the outcome has caused with external unstable and controllable factor (i.e., friend's help). This aptitude of the friend (vicarious experience) perhaps boost the confidence and judgement of the learner which enables him to perform this similar task with confidence next time.²

“It was a very difficult group of learners! Had it been my class of 4th year students, I would have done a brilliant job”.

The learner seems unsatisfied with the task and relates his failure (outcome) to internal, unstable and uncontrollable cause (i.e., personal interest). These attributional configurations give rise to negative emotion as dissatisfaction and affect the self-efficacy level of the learner. Yet, the ability of the participant for judgment could be improved by improving psychological states of mind (i.e., judging self-capability based on the messages received).⁴

“Teaching is a very challenging job! It's just too tough.”

The defined case reflects failure. The locus of control attributed to the outcome seems to be external with stable and uncontrollable factors, as task difficulty. The affective response shows negative emotion of the participant with built-in uncontrollable challenges. The self efficacy of the learners at this mode can be improved by verbal persuasion², that is convincing the learners that they have all the capabilities that will enable them to achieve what they want to seek.

“Thank you indeed for your compliments. I worked pretty hard to prepare this topic and rehearsed it well before presenting it here. If I make it a regular practice, all my teaching sessions can become both informative and interesting.”

The above situation indicates success of the learner and projects confidence as an affective response. He links and attributes his success to internal factors as typical effort which is stable and controllable.⁴ The previous performance attainments positively raises the efficacy appraisal of the learner and predisposes the participant to engage himself in challenging tasks.² He will retain and carry the task for a longer time despite of the initial failures.

Societal effects and recommendations

Medical teachers are often faced with students that have developed attributions which decrease their self efficacy. What teacher hasn't had a student who thought that bad luck was the reason for failing, or students that cheat and pass a test instead of putting in the effort studying? At times there have been

conflicts between faculty and students that have even escalated to violence. As a result teachers give up on these troubled students thinking that they are not intelligent enough. The decrease in self efficacy of students cumulates to the decrease in the standard of the institutions and contributes to the alarming dropout rate. In most cases these students may be helped and their performance increased. Attribution theory may be applied to health education in six ways:⁵

1. Development of beneficial relationships between faculty and students.
2. Development of correct attributions.
3. Alteration of incorrect attributions.
4. Altering the focus of attributions.
5. Attributing characteristics to the individual.
6. Maintenance of perceived personal effectiveness.

The faculty development of medical teachers to recognise these students and help them live up to their potential may thus increase the standard of students and improve health care.

Conclusively, all types of attribution based on which learners make their judgement (i.e., self efficacy), about academic success or failure will affect their capabilities to deal with different realities.¹ This judgement influences learners to choose what to do, how much effort to be invested in the activity, how long to carry the phase of disappointment, and whether to approach the task anxiously or with assurance.² Nevertheless, learner's own performance is the most influential source of raising self efficacy. They can raise their efficacy

levels by inspecting on their successes achieved and neglecting their failures. Moreover, vicarious experience might uplift learners' efficacy levels and is an effective source of motivation that new tasks performed by their peers enables them and strengthen their beliefs to accomplish the objective. Likewise, convincing and enabling learners that they have all the capacities to achieve what they seek might raise their efficacy levels.^{1,2} Learners should engage themselves in the strategic, step-by-step learning and should attribute their academic success or failure with the presence or absence of strategic approaches. The key to academic success is the effort. Practically effort can be translated into sufficient time allocation and devising learning strategies to accomplish the academic tasks. Learners should therefore not to play the blame game of making others and themselves responsible for their success or failure. They can surely improve the outcomes by adjusting the approaches.²

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