Thinking about engagement: Time for a clearer discussion

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Thinking about engagement: Time for a clearer discussion

Sport Psychology

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Introduction

- Background
  - The current global, fast-changing economic world requires knowledgeable workers who can synthesize and evaluate new information, think, critically, and solve problems (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).
  - An entrepreneurial and enterprising spirit and resilience in the face of adversity are desired outcomes of secondary and pre-university education (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2009).
Introduction (Cont.)

- Question
  
  - How can educators assist students in achieving the desired learning outcomes?

- A possible answer
  
  - One of keys to achieve the desired learning outcomes would be to promote students’ engagement in learning.
Engagement

- The concept of *engagement* has attracted increasing attention in recent years as

  A leitmotif in research that attempts to identify the factors that enhance academic achievement and resilience, and protect adolescents from drop-out and delinquency (Fredicks et al., 2004; Skinner, Kindermann, Connell, & Wellborn, 2009).
Conceptual issues

- **Example 1**
  - The names for the engagement construct and corresponding definitions have been varies across studies (e.g., *academic engagement, school engagement, student engagement*).
  - Any construct loses its scientific utility if it is defined too broadly (Fleming & Courtney, 1984).
Example 2

- Despite the myriad conceptualization of engagement and the inconsistent terminology, engagement has been constantly described as a multidimensional construct.

- However, the number and types of engagement dimensions differ across studies (e.g., Appleton et al., 2008).
Components of Engagement

Engagement is usually described as consisting of two or three components.

- E.g., Engagement is defined in three ways (e.g., Appleton et al., 2008):
  - Behavioural engagement
  - Emotional engagement
  - Cognitive engagement
Components of Engagement

- **Behavioural engagement** — the idea of participation (e.g., involvement in activities) and following the rules.
- **Emotional engagement** — positive and negative reactions, including interest, values and emotions.
- **Cognitive engagement** — psychological investment in learning and strategic learning (e.g., willingness to make the effort, self-regulation).
Conceptual issues (Cont.)

- **Research on engagement**
  - The majority of educational research has focused on behavioural engagement, which is more observable (Appleton et al., 2008; Fredicks et al., 2004).
  - Less research has focused on emotional and cognitive engagement.
  - Research on cognitive and emotional engagement should be advanced by overcoming difficulties with their measurement (Appleton et al., 2008).
Methodological issues

- Measures of engagement
  - Conduct measures (e.g., completing homework and complying school rules) and self-report surveys for behavioural engagement (Fredicks et al., 2004).
  - Observation techniques for behavioural and cognitive engagement (e.g., Stipek, 2002).
Methodological issues (Cont.)

- Potential problem with observational measures
  - The ideas of commitment or investment is critical the common understanding of the term engagement (Fredicks et al., 2004).
  - However, it is difficult to distinguish the degree of behavioural, emotional, or cognitive engagement with current existing measures (Fredicks et al., 2004).
Methodological issues (Cont.)

- Potential problem with observational measures
  - It is strongly desired to develop a measure that can assess the quality of engagement adequately.

I have recently started research projects to develop such a measure.
Thank you for your attention!

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