
Title	Engaging students in the classroom and school: How students' self-efficacy beliefs and teacher support matter to support positive youth development
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Engaging Students in the Classroom and School: How Students' Self-efficacy Beliefs and Teacher Support Matter to Support Positive Youth Development



By *Chong Wan Har*

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Active engagement in school is critical if students are to do well in school and adapt to the demands of school life. Those who attend school regularly, manage their studies well, adhere to school rules and are active in afterschool activities generally perform better. Indeed, student engagement is a known key summary marker of the quality of students' experiences in school that contribute to learning and achievement.

Student engagement is multi-faceted and includes affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects. Affective engagement involves a student's feelings towards school belonging and building positive relationships with peers and teachers in general. Behavioural engagement describes basic behaviours that are involved in class and school participation such as school attendance and completing

homework. Cognitive engagement are internal indicators involving self-regulation and having goals for learning. We reason that students who perceive a sense of school belonging and positive attitudes toward class and teachers in general (affective engagement) and are able to regulate their academic-related activities (cognitive engagement) are likely to attend school regularly, make school-related preparation and less likely to present at-risk behaviours (behavioural engagement)

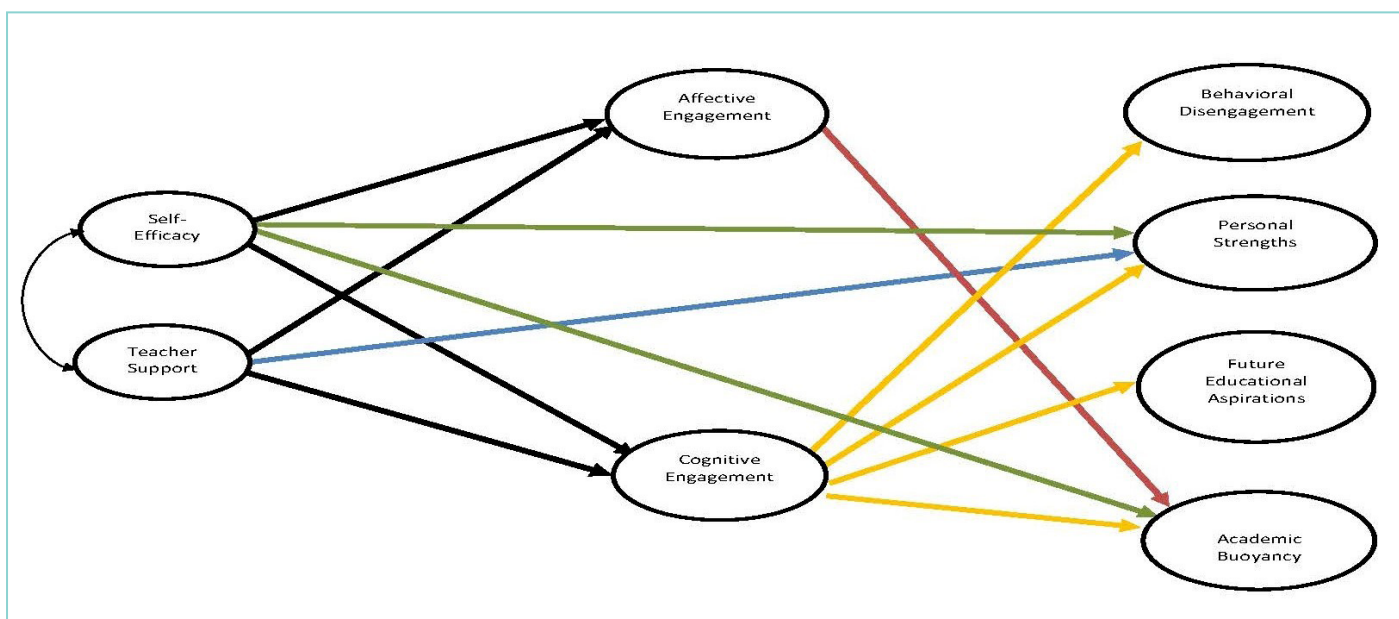
Teacher support and students' self-efficacy contribute in important ways to productive student engagement in class and school, and have been linked to a range of achievement-related outcomes. In the classroom, teachers play a central role for transmitting knowledge, training and preparing students in their academic work. However, students' self-beliefs are equally important in influencing their performance. Those who believe they have the capability to appraise and calibrate their efforts are likely to do better in academics. Such self-efficacy shapes their thinking, feeling, behaviour and motivation in their studies.

Meaningful success in school should encompass more than achievement-related factors and consider competencies students already possess such as personal strengths and skills that foster school adjustment. In this study, the positive competencies we looked at are students' affective strengths, future educational aspirations and academic buoyancy. We think that those who are able to regulate their emotions (affective strengths), have positive future expectations (future educational aspirations) and the ability to cope with daily school-related struggles (academic buoyancy) thrive better in school.

The purposes of this study are to explore:

1. if students' perceptions of teacher support for learning, and their self-efficacy contribute to specific positive student competencies and behavioural engagement; and
2. whether affective and cognitive engagement strengthen the roles of teacher support and student efficacy in bringing about positive student outcomes.

We conducted a student self-report with 3776 Singapore Secondary 1 and 2 students from 11 schools. ►►



Findings

Both teacher support and student efficacy contribute to student competencies. However, in comparison to teacher support, student efficacy has a greater positive impact. Similarly, affective and cognitive engagement work in different ways to impact student outcomes. Cognitive engagement has more indirect effect compared to affective engagement. It fosters behavioural engagement and all other student competencies. That is, students who are more self-motivated, have the capacity to self-manage, and adopt goals for learning are more likely to behave in ways that suggest engagement in school-related activities. On the other

hand, affective engagement has an indirect influence only on academic buoyancy.

What Do These Mean for Practice?

In the classroom, while it remains important for teachers to strive towards building a stable, supportive and positive relationship with students, they can work on strengthening students' cognitive abilities so that the latter can engage in more productive ways. These include ensuring students learn how to set school-related goals for themselves and develop the necessary skills to self-manage their studies. These cognitive competencies would in turn strengthen their self-efficacy.

At the school level, school leaders need to reconsider current ways of fostering school participation particularly for students who are low-achieving. These pathways are not only important to foster a positive sense of school belonging, but the sense of connection helps students to “hang in” and persist with daily struggles in school life.

How to Cite

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