

Predictors and Outcomes of Academic Self-Concept among Non-Formal Primary School Pupils in Ruaraka Division, Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

The primary school pupils' performance in national public exams is skewed towards the poorer mean scores. The lowly performance has been mainly ascribed to school ecological aspects and minimum research has been carried out on psychological influences which may account for pupils' academic achievement. The purpose of the present investigation was therefore to explore some predictors and outcomes of academic self-concept among pupils in non-formal primary schools. Specifically, the selected predictors of academic self-concept were pupils' perception of teachers' expectations, academic buoyancy and pupils' internal/external frames of reference. Academic achievement and academic engagement were studied as outcomes of academic self-concept. Further, gender differences in both academic self-concept and academic achievement were studied. Carl Rogers' theory of personality development formed the theoretical framework. The study adopted an ex post-facto research design. The target population was all the 2014 class 8 pupils comprising of 2,706 pupils (1,272 boys and 1,434 girls) in non-formal primary schools in Kasarani District, Nairobi County and the accessible population was 1, 715 class 8 pupils in Ruaraka Division. The sample consisted of 367 pupils' from 10 non-formal schools. Stratified, systematic and purposive procedures were used in the selection of schools and participants. Research instruments included pupils' questionnaire, school records and academic self-concept ladders. Perception of Teachers Expectation Scale and Academic Buoyancy Scale were adapted to measure perception of teachers' expectations and academic buoyancy respectively. Academic Self-Description Questionnaire II was adapted to measure pupils' Internal/External frame of reference while School Engagement Scale and Students Engagement Instrument were adapted to measure pupils' academic engagement. The questionnaire was piloted on 30 pupils from two schools. Pupils' academic achievement was measured by use of examination records obtained from the schools. Both descriptive and inferential procedures were employed to analyze the data. The results provided indication that pupils' perceptions of teachers' expectations, academic buoyancy and internal/external frame of reference significantly predict academic self-concept. Further, academic achievement and academic engagement were significant outcomes of academic self-concept. However, the most critical predictor of academic self-concept was internal/external frame of reference and the most significant predictor of academic achievement was academic self-concept. Significant gender differences were found in academic self-concept and they were in favour of the male gender, but there were no significant gender differences in academic achievement. A key implication of the study was that teachers, parents and other stakeholders in education should collaborate in creating favourable school and home environments for nurturing the development of academic self-concept among pupils. The study recommends training of teachers in diversity of issues and sensitivity when handling pupils so that they remain optimistic, motivated and successful through development of positive academic self-concept.

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