

The Development Of Learner's Self-Concept As A Function Of Education Quality In Secondary Schools In The Drc

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Abstract

Many schools in the Democratic Republic of Congo face the challenge in fostering educational quality due to learner's negative self-concept. The use of traditional teaching methods and destructive feedback provided by most of teachers to learners greatly reduces learners' self-concept in secondary schools, leading to failure and school dropout. However, scientific discourses in education reveals that learner's self-concept is a key fact resulting to the learner's motivation to learn. Learner's self-concept is relevant at secondary school level in enhancing education quality, especially when it leads learner's better outcomes. The present article reflects the role of the learner's self-concept and some strategies to develop it at secondary school level for educational quality attainment in DRC.

Keywords: Self-concept, destructive feedback, educational quality

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I. Introduction

Self-concept is an important learners' influential factor controlling their learning process at the secondary education level (Postigo et al., 2022, p. 1). The present article is an attempt to find out how learner's self-concept contribute to the quality of secondary education and how it can be fostered at the secondary level for the learners' further education and in their life context.

Context

The possibility that learning achievement can greatly be influenced by emotion has considerably stimulated research on education in recent years (Saban & Saban, 2022, p. 3). Theory based hypotheses applied to real world leads to the understanding of socio emotional process linked to learning outcome in educational attainment and positive self-regard (Burnett, 1998, p. 108). Unfortunately, in the Sub-Saharan part of Africa in general and particularly in the DRC, lack of learner's self-esteem and social interaction is on the basis of low achievement and school drop out (Ngamaba Kayonda Hubert et al., 2021, p. 179). The lack of learning community is also a fact reducing the quality of education for learners' lack of intrinsic motivation to cope with peer in sharing knowledge. So, the present paper attempts to highlight the relevance of self-concept including mechanism to foster it at the secondary educational system level.

Research problem

School achievement is greatly associated with self-concept (Zimbabwe Open University, PO Box1119 et al., 2014, p. 3). Unfortunately, the emotional and behavioural school engagement has decreased in the modern world (Bakadorova & Raufelder, 2017, p. 1). In the DRC for instance, low rate of self-concept is linked to the learners' social environment, institution and incompetent teachers using traditional methods and providing destructive feedback (Ewamela et al., 2016, p. 240). Discrimination and negative assessments are also factors decreasing learners' self-concept in secondary schools of the DRC. Consequently, low value of self esteem becomes a psychological factor of disengagement in the learning process (Ewamela et al., 2016, p. 244).

Research questions

Attempting to grasp the issue on learners' self-concept at secondary school level, the questions below will shed the light on my investigation:

- How does self-concept as a dimension of quality prepare students for life
- What is the relevance of self-concept for the learning community?
- What are needed strategies to shape the quality of education at secondary education level with regard to learner's self-concept?

II. Theoretical Background

The present section is centered on four aspects. Key concepts constitute the first focus. The second turns on self-concept as a dimension of educational quality for learner's future sustainability. The third discussion focuses on the role of self-concept for the learning community. The last discussion tackles strategies to shape learner's self-concept at secondary education level.

Description of key concepts

Learner's self-concept involves grasping his self-creativity, self-confidence including social interaction. The inter-connectivity of the above terminology are the core of the present part.

Self-concept

Self-concept is the learner's perception of his/her ability associated with variables such as educational results, intelligence, psychological maturity, motivation and maturity (Postigo et al., 2022, p. 2). Interaction between environment including relationship with teachers and peers and personal factors are key components for the school engagement (Bakadorova & Raufelder, 2017, p. 2). Previous research sets that emotional school engagement and process is set at the beginning of the 8th and 9th grade in the secondary school (Bakadorova & Raufelder, 2017, pp. 5–6) as discussed in the theory of educational quality II in the fifth module of the IMPEQ master program.

There is a clear relationship between the constructs self-concept and learning strategies. Learners with positive self-concept tend to use a deep and reflected approach to learn yet learners with low self-concept use surface approach (Ewamela et al., 2016, p. 4). So, students perceptions on their learning are predicted by their previous experience.

Self-confidence

Self-confidence is defined as being at peace with oneself, accepting himself as he is, namely, it is a positive sense of oneself. It is important for an individual's health and psychological well-being as it helps to be successful in personal and professional life (Saban & Saban, 2022, p. 51). Optimistic learners are self-confident and self-assured able to develop good feelings towards themselves and are aware of their abilities to interact with their environment (Saban & Saban, 2022, p. 53). In order for the learner to feel competent and autonomous, intrinsic motivation through self esteem raises his/ her goal setting and achievement ability in the learning process (Egmond et al., 2020, p. 844) for the task fulfillment.

Learner's social attraction

Learning process needs love, trust and interaction with social environment (Saban & Saban, 2022, p. 52). psychological constructionists argue that the formation and development of academic self-concept are affected by both personal and contextual variables. Thus, social-cultural factors become significant given that learner's self-efficacy is constructed through a process of social comparison of the learner's competence with others' or with the class-group (Postigo et al., 2022, p. 2). Fostering positive climate in the learning environment and the learner's background play essential role for the learner's intrinsic motivation to learn and to interact with peers.

Self-concept as a quality dimension for learner's sustainable future

Learners' self concept does not only affect the learner's school achievement but also his/her future life. Both academic achievement and self-concept engage the learner's reflection about their capabilities and potentials to further develop their skills in the classroom first and in their future life (Roth et al., 2022, p. 2). Intrinsic motivation is directly linked to self-creativity enabling the learner to connect school knowledge to real life (Roth et al., 2022, p. 3). Learners with positive self-concept are self-confident and actively engage in interactive situations for a productive environment (Roth et al., 2022, p. 9). Self-effectiveness enables secondary school students to manage their own learning and provide them with the knowledge needed to make decisions about why and how to study or to evaluate the quality of the work they do and thus, capable of developing and deploying the complex thinking skills needed to develop the concepts of democracy through successful interaction with others (Jacobs, 2016, p. 85). Through self-concept, students will learn not only to help themselves, e.g., by being able to find a good paying job, but will also see learning as a means of benefiting society. In this way, students, individually and collectively, contribute to society's ability and willingness to overcome the problems confronting them and the other (Jacobs, 2016, p. 85). self-concept economic, social and democratic outcome sets the reflection on its practicability at the secondary system level for preparing learners for successful future life as will be fully grasped in the following section of the present seminar paper.

Role of self-concept for the learning community

Self-concept is understood to influence learner's achievements and performance. In a creativity-enhancing learning environment whether in individual or group work extrinsic motivators should be reduced to provide students with space to creatively engage with science learning content (Patel-Junankar, 2017, p. 3). Positive self-concept relevance to the learning process is highlighted through the students self-assessment arising self-confidence to actively participate to peer sharing knowledge. Students with high and positive self-concept act as open individuals, competent to act efficiently in learning community (Patel-Junankar, 2017, p. 2), unlike students developing negative self-concept in their learning process. In order to enhance learners' achievements at schools and built a future society based on democratic virtues, the need arises at the secondary education level to focus on needed practices to enhance learners' positive self-concept as will be stated in the following section.

Strategies to shape secondary education quality with regard to self- concept

Cultural definition of needs, competencies, tasks and behavioural thoughts accompany each stage of age. Adolescent years are particularly characterized by changing opportunities due to societal effects (Skoe & Von der Lippe, 2005, p. 81). Transitional school greatly impacts learner's self-concept through stressful shift from one cycle to another. The decline of elementary school and the shift to a new system arises new beliefs on the new learner's setting. Intrinsic conflict inside the learner highly increases through implicit comparison with past school achievement and with new peers. Thus, the need to foster positive learning climate become crucial for the learner to construct positive self-concept within transitional school. Self-concept is a key fact for the learning engine. Fostering learner's freedom offers opportunity to learners to develop positive self-concept and self-efficacy to become self-reliant. Positive classroom climate offers adequate environment stimulating internal motivation to learn. Destructive feedback, failure lack of learner's encouragement reduce the learners' self-concept on their ability to learn (Krogull et al., 2014, p. 48). So, shaping educational quality at secondary school level need to focus on a set strategies including learner centered methods, feedback, scaffolding and teacher-learner relation. The four strategies are key nodes of the present section.

Learner centered teaching methods

Learner-centered approach to teaching creates an environment that speaks to the heart of learning (Patel-Junankar, 2017, p. 4). It originates from constructionist theory assessing that humans are receivers and interpreters who construct meaning from their prior experience (Patel-Junankar,2017,p.4). These active methods enhance the learners' motivation, attitude, autonomy, self-efficacy and beliefs about their learning (Kassem,2018,p.134). The core advantage of student-centered educational method is the development of problem solving skill through a self-directed learning and self-reflection t as a life time habit and team work skills. Students observe the problem and learn about the solution, compared to traditional lecture based learning, thus, learning becomes useful to the real world, encouraging and motivating how to learn, engage students learning similar to real world (Ali, 2019, p. 73).

Feedback

Feedback is plays an essential role to enhance learner's self-concept and motivation. Providing feedback to learners develops positive or negative self-concept as an outcome (Chung & Yuen,2011, p. 23).Therefore, providing individual constructive developmental feedback to learners impacts on their self-assessment and self-regulation in their learning process. That feedback should include clarifying clear standards for good performance to facilitate the learner's self-assessment and encouragement of positive motivation and self-esteem (Chung & Yuen, 2011, p. 24). The effects of feedback can influence how the underlying causes of success or failure are interpreted. So, the interpretation of feedback by the learner significantly affects his/her acquisition of self-regulation and self-efficacy (Chung & Yuen, 2011, p. 24).

Scaffolding

In educational discourse, scaffolding metaphor is a temporary framework to support learners when assistance is needed and is removed when no longer needed (Lajoie, 2005, p. 542). Cognitive apprenticeship and competence construction take time, so pedagogical methods have to model cognitive skills and strategies to assist them to reach their goals. Once learners demonstrate competence, support is reduced and they are left to learn autonomously to acquire new knowledge and apply it in their context (Lajoie, 2005, p. 543). Overall, School climate influences the learner's self-concept. School climate thus refers to the quality and characters of everyday life experienced by the teachers and learners. The climate include norms, goals, expectations, values, interpersonal relationships. Positive learning climate fosters learners' development and competence-based strategies to contribute to a productive and democratic society as self-concept outcome.

III. Methodology

In order to investigate the development of the learner's self-concept qualitative method has been used in this paper. This method uses descriptive data to generate and understand phenomena (Techo Vincent Powoh, 2016, p. 3). It is also the use of sample to serve for purpose investigation rather than statistic representations (Carter & Little, 2007, p. 4). The use of this method has been relevant for this investigation since the goal is to describe the means to which self-concept is developed in schools at secondary system level. A sample of twelve secondary school teachers from six schools in Butembo city has been used to participate to the semi-structured interview to provide data in order to come up with the result as presented in the fourth chapter of the present article. It is important to notice that DRC is one of the French speaking countries; this justifies the use of French in data presentation in the present article. So, I have resorted to translation from French to English for data analysis for the result presentation.

IV. Result

The present section of the article is the result presentation. In attempt to reach this result, semi structured interview has been designed to twelve secondary school teachers from six different schools in Butembo. These teachers have been anonymised using letters of alphabet from A to L. So, the result is presented within the following themes: The role of learner's self-concept at secondary school level, self-concept as a means to enhance learning community and strategies to enhance learner's self-concept at secondary school level. After data analysis, result provided by the interviewed is presented as follows:

The role of learner's self-concept at secondary school level

The twelve interviewed teachers were unanimous on the role of learner's self-concept as enhancing learner's self-confidence for better school achievement. For instances, "Le concept de soi est important car il développe la confiance en soi chez les apprenants" (Interviewed A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, G, K, L). Some of the teachers asserted the role of self-concept as enhancing learners' potential in achieving their goals for their sustainable life. In this view, E claimed: "Le concept de soi des apprenants contribue a leur préparation de la vie future dans l'optique ou ils ne se laisseront jamais tant qu'ils ne soient pas au bout de leur vise". Within this theme, participants highlight the contribution of the learner's self-concept to their future life.

Self-concept as a means to enhance learning community

Data analysis on self-concept as a means of learning community enhancement revealed that five out of twelve interviewed teachers focused on the mutual knowledge sharing among learners through self-concept. They proved the learners' autonomy, self-responsibility and self-creativity as resulting from the learners' self-concept. In this perspective, D argued "Le concept de soi permet aux apprenants de développer leur créativité et faire comprendre la matière aux autres". However, seven teachers did not recognise self-concept as enhancing mutual sharing of the knowledge among learners. For example, C claims "Le concept de soi permet à

l'apprenant de dependre de lui-meme pour son apprentissage". Within this theme, teachers do not share the same view on the learners' learning community.

Strategies to enhance learner's self-concept

Data analysis on strategies to enhance learner's self-concept showed that five teachers asserted the use of active and participatory methods as fact to increase learner's self-concept. For instances, B said "*La stratégie selon moi qui pourra permettre d'améliorer le concept de soi chez les élèves est que l'on doit arriver a leur former par eux-memes, le savoir doit venir d'eux; on doit aussi leur montrer qu'ils sont très intelligents*". These data highlight the role of active and participatory methods in rising learner's self-concept. The same view is shared by teacher E, K, C and L.

Regarding the use of constructive feedback, three teachers are aware of the role of the constructive feedback in raising learner's self-concept, Three teachers are aware that constructive feedback is needed to enhance learner's self-concept for quality educational development in secondary school. In this perspective, H says "La facilitation de l'enseignant par une bonne explication via le feedback developpe la confiance en soi des apprenants". E and F share the same understanding claiming that constructive feedback is a tool for learner's self-concept enhancement.

Data analysis on scaffolding revealed that two teachers stressed scaffolding as a tool for learner's self-confidence development within secondary school. For this case, G said "Ecouter les apprenants, les orienter et leur donner un exercice personnel leur permettent de bien evoluer. E and A share this view when they say "L'enseignant doit multiplier les devoirs adaptes a chaque apprenant".

Briefly, interviewed teachers recognised the role of learner's self-concept with some gaps. For example, some do not stress the use of active and participatory techniques, others do not focus on the constructive

feedback and some are not aware of scaffolding as a strategy enhancing learner's self-concept at secondary school level.

V. Discussion Of The Result

The present paper has been a grasp on learner's self-concept at the secondary educational system level. The major purpose sake to examine how self-concept shapes the educational quality by preparing learners for life and the needed strategies to enhance learner's self-concept at secondary school. Previous researchers highlighted self-creativity, problem-solving skills and democratic concern as learner's self-concept future outcome (Roth et al., 2022, p. 3). In the same way, interviewed teachers have focused on the use of active and participatory technique leading to learner's self-creativity and autonomy in learning for self-concept development (**A, E, K, C and L**). So, learner centered methods, feedback and scaffolding practices are components through which the learner construct self-concept as intrinsic tool for self-involvement in the learning process. Fostering positive learning climate is the major fact of self-concept and a key component in the learning engine for learners' achievement at secondary school level (Krogull et al., 2014, p. 44) and for their future life.

However, though some secondary school teachers are aware of the role of self-concept as a dimension of educational quality, gaps are still found at the use of active and participatory techniques, constructive feedback, the use of learning community and scaffolding. This greatly reduces learner's self-concept within secondary school learners and leads them to failure and school dropout.

VI. Conclusion And Perspectives

The focus of the present section is the summary of the article, the suggestions for practice and for further research on self-concept in education.

Summary

Learning for future life builds on learner's intrinsic motivation. Positive self-concept results in economic, social and political outcome (Jacobs, 2016, p. 86). The educational quality at secondary educational system is attained through learner centered practices including constructive Feedback and scaffolding as learners' individual support. Enhancing learner's self-concept undertakes positive learning climate within secondary schools based on positive interrelationships between teachers and learners and learners with peers.

Suggestions

Enhancing learner's self-concept involves different educational stakeholders' reflection including policy makers, principals, teachers and learners.

For policy maker: Designing curriculum should reflect learner's context and need to increase self-involvement in his learning process. For principals: Instructional leadership should reflect the role of autonomy and the power regulation to ensure cooperation at the school. For teachers: Fostering positive learning climate is a key to enhance positive learner's self-concept through self-assessment, self-reflection and self-efficacy through active and participatory teaching methods and constructive feedback.

For learners: Self-responsibility is needed to learn autonomously and develop self-creativity for better future life.

The research on self-concept is still an important field in the present century. Further researchers might investigate on learner's practices fostering self-concept, Strategy to provide feedback to develop self-concept and many issues for the educational quality with regard to self-concept.

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