Promoting students’ engagement in school: Effects of the eclectic communication model

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Abstract

This investigation includes a quasi-experimental study whose purpose was to analyze the effects of the use, by teachers, of a communication intervention program supervised by the school psychologist, on students’ engagement in school and on their academic performance. The sample involved 7th and 9th grade students, in a total of four classes, two of those forming the experimental groups (n = 52) and the other two the control groups (n = 47). Student Engagement in School-A Four-Dimensional Scale (SES-4DS) was used to assess engagement. The eclectic communicational program was applied to the experimental group whereas the control group was subject to the formerly existent teacher-student relationship. In each of the 4 classes, the operation was preceded by a pre-test using the SES-4DS scale as well as of assessment tests to measure their performance in mathematics and in Portuguese language. The experiment lasted for 6 and half months during the school year. At the end, the above mentioned scale was applied again and performance tests were performed once more. The results indicated the effectiveness of the communication intervention program on students’ engagement and on their performance, thus being consistent with previous studies. An implication is that psychologists and teachers, working together and taking an intervention perspective, may play an important role in projects to promote students’ engagement as well as their grades.

Key-words: student engagement in school; interpersonal communication; teacher-student relationship; teachers’ effectiveness.

Students’ engagement in school is defined as the experience of centripetal connection of the student to the school in particular dimensions: cognitive, affective, behavioural and agency (Veiga, 2012; 2013). It has been operationalized as the extent to which students are committed to school and motivated to learn (Simons-Morton & Chen, 2009; Veiga et al., 2013). Teachers’ practices and support, opportunities to participate, curricula, positive relations, and classroom environment are frequent aspects referred in available literature, and appear positively related to the students’ behaviour and academic performance (Smith, Gruenewald, & Yeh, 2010).

Although there are several studies underlining the relationship between the teacher and the students’ engagement, there is a lack of specific studies about teachers’ inter-personal communication as a previously trained skill and its effects on students.
References


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