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Psychosocial Educational Effectiveness Criteria and Their Relation to Teaching in Primary Education

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Gadeyne, E., Ghesquière, P., & Onghena, P. (2006). Psychosocial Educational Effectiveness Criteria and Their Relation to Teaching in Primary Education. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 17(1), 63-85.

Abstract :

The links between student psychosocial functioning and academic achievement have been studied widely in recent years. The authors of this Belgian study looked into the potential link between certain characteristics of teachers and the psychosocial adjustment of students. Two research questions were raised:

- (1) To what extent do classes differ with respect to student academic achievement (mathematics skills, reading and spelling) and psychosocial adjustment (behavioural problems)?
- (2) To what extent can teachers' attitudes and practices explain these differences?

Methodology

The initial sample of this two-year longitudinal study involved 379 students enrolled in 24 grade-one classes across eleven schools in a rural Flanders region in Belgium. The teachers of these students also took part in the study.

Standardized tests were administered to students at the beginning and end of the school year to measure mathematics, spelling and reading skills. Researchers had teachers complete the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) to assess the presence of behavioural problems among students, as well as questionnaires to assess teachers' attitudes (Teacher's Educational Orientation Questionnaire, Appraisal of Impact on Pupils Questionnaires, and Implicit Theory of Intelligence Measure) and classroom practices (Care for Pupils with Learning Problems Questionnaire).

Main Results

In reference to the first research question, results highlighted a significant class-level variance in the behavioural problems and academic performance of students. The presence of internalizing behavioural problems (e.g., withdrawal, anxiety, depression), as opposed to externalizing behavioural problems, best accounted for these differences. Mathematics achievement best explained across-class differences in academic performance.

In reference to the second research question, results did not lead to the conclusion that teachers' attitudes and practices explained the across-class differences in mathematics, reading and spelling skills.

However, researchers were able to establish a link between behavioural problems and teachers' views on the role of intelligence in education as one of the attitudes considered in this study. Indeed, teachers who viewed intelligence as a fixed, trait-like entity were more likely to report less behavioural problems in their classrooms than teachers who viewed intelligence as a malleable entity that can be changed and developed.

Researchers were also able to establish a link between behavioural problems and teachers' practices. Teachers who opted for differentiation teaching practices were more likely to report behavioural problems in their classrooms than teachers who preferred using traditional teaching practices.

Therefore, this exploratory study suggests that particular teachers' attitudes and practices can be partly linked to students' psychosocial adjustment abilities. Lastly, when interpreting these results, consideration must be given to the fact that across-class differences in behavioural problems are based solely on teachers' perceptions.

Links :

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Key Words :

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