The Application of Pygmalion Effect in Classroom Education

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Abstract—The Pygmalion effect is the phenomenon whereby higher expectations lead to an increase in performance. The expectations of teachers showed a very powerful predictive relationship with student behaviour. High expectations of teachers create a better atmosphere for student learning. The Pygmalion effect can influence student achievement and offer the support to help students achieve their goals.

Keywords—Pygmalion effect; expectation; classroom education

I. INTRODUCTION

The Pygmalion of Greek myth was a sculptor. He carved an ivory statue. The statue was so beautiful that he fell in love with it. The statue came to life and they went on to marry. The Pygmalion effect refers to the phenomenon in which the greater the expectation placed upon students the better they perform. The Pygmalion effect is a type of self-fulfilling prophecy where if you think something will happen, you may unconsciously make it happen through your actions or inaction.

Psychological research on Pygmalion effect began with Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson. In the classic study “Pygmalion in the Classroom”, psychologists Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson describe an experiment in which certain teachers had been informed that they had exceptionally intelligent students. Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson conducted an experiment in which teachers at an elementary school were informed that twenty percent of the students in the school who were showing unusual potential for intellectual growth and they would bloom academically within the year. These students were selected randomly with no relation to the initial test. When the students were tested eight months later, it is discovered that the randomly selected students who teachers thought would bloom scored significantly higher. The studies showed that the expectations of experimenters for their behavior could operate as self-fulfilling prophecies. Self-fulfilling prophecies were first defined by sociologist Robert K. Merton in 1948. The following five-step model explains how the self-fulfilling prophecies work:

- The teacher forms expectations.

Based upon these expectations, the teacher acts in a differential manner.

- The teacher’s treatment tells each student what behavior and what achievement the teacher expects.

If this treatment is consistent, it will tend to shape the student’s behavior and achievement.

- With time, the student’s behavior and achievement will conform more and more closely to that expected of him or her.

II. THE APPLICATION OF PYGMALION EFFECT

In brief, the Pygmalion effect is the idea that if someone is told that they can do better, they will. Many researchers have been studying the Pygmalion effect in many fields. From existing studies, we can outline the way the Pygmalion effect occurs as follows:

- A teacher’s high expectation influences his attitude toward his students.

Such attitude has positive effects on students’ self-expectancy.

- The students’ enhanced self-expectancy then improves their performance.

Marva Collins, one of the most extraordinary educators of the 20th century, offers an example of the Pygmalion
In a study of the Pygmalion effect on essay assignments assessments, it is found that there is a Pygmalion Effect for handwriting. The mean score of student essays were handwritten in a legible style was higher than the identical essays written in an illegible style. The illegible handwriting was regarded as a male student, even if written by a female student. The legible handwritings received higher scores and handwriting played an important role for the final scores. It is obvious that something other than the student’s ability influenced their scores. It was shown that top students were given more attention, more response opportunity, more feedback, and more consideration by their teacher compared to underachievers.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study shows that teachers should enhance expectations for students. Teacher instruction capability should be improved and teachers should get more training. The Pygmalion effect can influence student achievement and offer the support to help students achieve their goals.

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REFERENCES

