

Full Length Research

ROLE OF COGNITIVE EDUCATION IN INFLUENCING ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR

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On the journey from childhood to adulthood, it is clear that majority of the changes occurring in the lives of individuals stem from understanding the changes and conceptualizing the issues which they are encountering. Different times in an individual's life present different challenges. Steinberg (2007) indicates that all human development experts and theorists agree that the most difficult of these developmental stages is adolescence. There are expected competency demands which will in turn provide an ideal platform not just for self efficacy but also successful functioning. Cognitive education is based on the basic principles on expanding the thinking processes of the individual so that they develop the right skills and competencies to maneuver particular stages in life.

Keywords: Cognitive education, adolescence, adaptation, self efficacy and academic facilities.

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INTRODUCTION

This study employed interview schedules on a selected number of high school students. Selection was based on institutions which in their own capacity have employed one form of cognitive education. The idea was to determine if indeed cognitive education plays any role in adaptation and behavior changes among adolescents. The study concluded that in self Cognitive education expands the ability of the student to think for themselves thereby improving their own decision making capacity while at the same time brining about a greater emphasis on adaptation. Students exposed to cognitive education therefore had lower chances of engaging in delinquent behavior or being cited for unnecessary mischief in school. However, in the large scheme of matters, it seems that cognitive education may not have a serious effect on performance. While some students may perform better after being exposed to cognitive education, it is not clear that cognitive education singly plays a role in the same. The study recommends the use of cognitive education to

allow for a smoother transition to adolescence.

In order to adapt to adolescent changes, it is vital for the individual to not only develop formal patterns of operations but also the skills to apply the same. According to Bandura (2006) this is the basis of applying cognitive education. Teachers are not only required to teach the students the subject matter but also ensure that the same students develop a sense of learning. That is, students are able to learn how to learn. In essence this allows them to be more open towards new experiences which in turn ensure easier adaptation to various stimulations around them. Blakemore and Choudhury (2006) cite that the main problem for adolescents is that they often lack the ability to engage formal operations. The brain lacks the maturation with which they can use to adapt to the environmental stimulation. Cognitive education applies various principles in which the learner acquires the right skills to engage their own mental capacity. They therefore have no need for alternative and

secondary sources of efficacy; they are able to see the current experiences not as a challenge but rather as a learning experience.

According to Goodenow (2003) cognitive education allows the individual to engage hypothetical– deductive reasoning. For adolescents decisions are often based on emotions, which are found to be the basis of wrong decisions and unacceptable behavior. The prevalence of mental problems such as depression among teenagers can be traced to the inability to properly reason out hypothetical situations. When adolescents are able to reason things scientifically and in a rational manner, they are able to develop their own foundation of self efficacy.

METHODOLOGY

Research design: the study employed a descriptive research design. According to Smith (2007) this research design is ideal in making attempts to understanding the concepts of a matter. Descriptive research design focuses on a singular phenomenon and allows comparison of two or more variable. In this case, the study used the two variables that is, adolescent behavior and cognitive education. The descriptive research design provided an opportunity for an in-depth understanding of the relationship between cognitive education and adolescent adaptation to changes happening in their lives.

Sampling: the study employed a probability random sampling. The first selection was based on the selection of a school which would form the basis of the study. Senior schools have continually encouraged and employed cognitive education. This provides an ideal ground to understand the role which cognitive education has played in shaping adolescent behavior. The second stage, involves selection of students who have been exposed to cognitive education. A random sampling technique was used to select 215 students. Each of these students was exposed to an interview with the researcher, where main measurements such as performance and behavior were taken to determine the effect of cognitive education

Interviews: A research assisted interview schedule is employed, which allowed the students to measure their own adaptation to adolescence. The interview schedule made use of a semantic scale measuring the behavior on a scale of 1-7. The assisted interviews were then recorded, scaled and indexed into an SPSS file. Using SPSS, the researcher then ran some correlation and regression analysis which in turn allowed the researcher to compare the variables determining not just the existence of such relationship but also the strength of the same.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Cognitive education and beliefs in family functioning

Cognitive education is not only focused on bringing forth the subject matter but also ensures an all round students. Teachers focus on ensuring that students are able to learn how to manage their own relationships. Majority of the studies in the past on family functioning have focused on dyadic relationships. On the other hand, the role played by adolescents is quite low on the same. The study showed that students in the centre have gathered the right skills to engage and manage family relationships.

65% of the students indicated that they had not aggressively quarreled with their parents in the past one week and 43% in the past one month. This shows an ability to communicate with their parents openly. 60.5% further showed that they had not been punished in the past five weeks at homes and a further 43% in the past one month. Finally, a majority of the students 78% indicated that they had no trouble communicating that is, passing a message and being understood by fellow members in the household.

Cognitive education and behavior adaptation

Students were asked to compare and measure their own behavior using school records. Majority of the students in the school felt that they were quite independent and less prone to delinquent behavior. 75% indicated that they had not been cited for absenteeism in the past one month. 64% showed that they had not reported to the principal's or guidance office due to behavior adjustment problems. The students had developed their own sense of self efficacy which allowed them to enjoy a high standard of behavior unlike other adolescents.

Cognitive education and authority

Perhaps the biggest concern for parents and schools at large is the constant disobedience of adolescents when it comes to authority. It seems that when teens reach adolescence they automatically develop a desire to repress and work against the relevant authorities in their lives. Whether it is parents or teachers, delinquency often begins as an opposition to authority, (Catalano et al. 2004). 67% of the respondents indicated that they had not had trouble with their teachers in the past one week. The number decreased but still remained relevant when it was measured in the past one month that is, 51%. Further analysis showed that the students that is, 54% felt that the relevant authorities had always listened and communicated effectively to them. On a measurement of

between 1-7, respondents indicated that communication skills mastered in the cognitive education curriculum were effective in ensuring they communicated effectively.

Cognitive education and performance

45% of the respondent's performance had improved significantly in the past one year. Continued exposure to the cognitive education curriculum however showed that 35% of the students had developed relevant science and technology skills. Students have been able to note that they do not exist in isolation but rather can be resolved through proper rational thinking. Pajares and Urdan (2006) indicate that adolescents are able to critically think through and evaluate various information because cognitive education allows the adolescents to organize their own information and themselves, responsibly and effectively. However, it still remains unclear whether cognitive education in itself improves memory, confidence and other aspects that are important in ensuring high performance. It is clear however, that some improvement can be attributed to cognitive education.

CONCLUSION

King and Kitchener (2004) correctly define the role of cognitive teaching and education. These same principles have been upheld by the study. The first principle of cognitive teaching is teaching or education for thinking. This aspect of teaching emphasizes the importance of strategic thinking and decision making. In this case, teenagers are encouraged to think for themselves and independently, negating subjective values and emotions for the benefit of rational thinking. On this basis therefore, teenagers become less aggressive, less emotional and wild instead becoming more rational and thoughtful. In a manner of speaking, this aspect of cognitive education emphasizes and promotes faster brain maturity. It provides an avenue through which educators can circumvent irrational thought and emotion. The second principle promotes teaching of thinking. This encourages students to emphasize on the process of learning. The experience of adolescence is therefore not viewed as a challenge or something to be feared and overcome, but rather a process of new opportunities for learning.

Adolescents are therefore more motivated to learn from the process and gain new experiences. The final stage revolves around relationships, where students are taught to consider the thoughts and thinking process of others. In this level, they are able to understand not just their own peers but also figures in authority and family. What has formerly been considered to be a major issue in adolescence, relationships that characterized by strife and aggressiveness instead become positive relationships which are a good supportive platform for greater growth. In conclusion with cognitive education, adolescents are able to develop a greater understanding of the workings of the world, and the relationships thereof. Quick adaptation becomes a reality rather than an unachievable dream.

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