A Study on the Self-Efficacy and Expectancy for Success of Pre-University Students

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Abstract

Pre-university students enrolled in a private university need high self-efficacy and expectancy for success to overcome problems associated with language requirements, course duration, assessments, and study skills. The purpose of the study was to examine the self-efficacy and expectancy for success of 105 pre-university engineering and business students from a private university in Sarawak. Self-efficacy was assessed by General Self-Efficacy Scale, while expectancy for success by Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale. A three-way analysis of variance revealed no significant group, gender, or age differences in self-efficacy. Findings showed that pre-university engineering and business students tended to have more similarities rather than differences in their self-efficacy. Significant group differences were found in three aspects of expectancy for success: Success in projects undertaken, ability to solve own problems, and success in personal life. Findings reflected that engineering students had higher expectancy for success in terms of doing projects, solving problems, and attaining personal success than business students. Significant age differences were found in expectancy for success in five aspects. Results indicated that older students had more favorable expectancy for success than younger students. Students might become increasingly more optimistic and confident with the passage of time, partly due to greater exposure toward learning and significant life experiences. Items with high percentages of agreement were also recorded for both scales. Implications and recommendations were made based on significant differences and items that had high percentages of agreement.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Expectancy for success, Pre-university students

Introduction

Impact of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is people's beliefs about their capabilities to attain goals. Individuals with high self-efficacy perceive that they are capable of taking the necessary steps to solve problems (Bandura, 1991; Nevid & Rathus, 2007; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995; Rathus & Nevid, 1995). Believing that they can effect change, they have control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Assured of their capacities, they consider difficult tasks as challenges rather than threats, setting meaningful goals and striving to achieve them. Besides increasing and sustaining their efforts when difficulties arise, they also relate failure to insufficient effort, knowledge, or skills. Ability to exert control over threatening situations allows them to accomplish personal goals, reduce stress, and avoid depression.

In contrast, individuals with low self-efficacy often avoid challenging tasks and show weak commitment to goals. Instead of trying to overcome problems or failures, they dwell on personal weaknesses, obstacles, or adverse outcomes. Having low aspirations and slow to regain a sense of

control, they slacken in the face of failure. As they often associate failure with low aptitude, they lack faith in their own capabilities and are vulnerable to stress and depression.

To exert control over a challenging new environment that differs vastly from secondary school and show strong commitment to academic goals, pre-university students need to demonstrate high self-efficacy. Lecturers, on the other hand, need to know how self-efficacy affects pre-university students to boost their self-esteem, and ultimately, academic performance. In general, self-efficacy affects one's thought and behavior, motivation, affective development, and choices (Nevid & Rathus, 2007; Rathus & Nevid, 1995).

Self-efficacy influences the thought and behavior of pre-university students in many ways. For instance, those with high self-efficacy are able to predict events and develop appropriate ways to control those that affect their lives. In addition, they assume tasks in which they have high self-efficacy, but avoid those in which their self-efficacy is low. Committed to achieving difficult goals, they often visualize success scenarios that lead to positive behavior and outcomes. In brief, the stronger students' self-efficacy is, the higher the goals they set, and the firmer their commitment becomes.

Second, self-efficacy influences pre-university students' motivation, including their causal attributions, outcome expectancies, and cognized goals. As aforementioned, students with high self-efficacy attribute their failures to insufficient effort instead of low ability. They hold expectations that certain actions will produce certain valued outcomes. Expecting positive results, they will do only the tasks they believe they are capable of, rejecting those they believe are beyond their capacity. They are also motivated by explicit, challenging goals. Self-satisfying goals, acting as incentives, direct their behavior. In brief, self-efficacy influences the goals students set, how much effort they expend, how long they persevere, and how resilient they are in overcoming obstacles.

Third, self-efficacy has an impact on pre-university students' affective development (coping behavior, sense of control, and social behavior). Coping efficacy affects how much stress, anxiety, or depression students experience in unpleasant situations. Control efficacy gives them the confidence to deal with new environments and overcome disturbing thoughts and potential threats. Both coping efficacy and control efficacy in turn enable them to reduce stress, anxiety, and avoidant behavior. Social efficacy, on the other hand, enables students to establish meaningful relationships that are essential to reduce stress, anxiety, or depression. It promotes pro-social behavior (helping others, sharing information, and being considerate and cooperative). It also discourages moral disengagement (making excuses for negative behavior, avoiding responsibility, and blaming others).

Fourth, self-efficacy affects the choices (course, career, etc) of pre-university students. Students usually choose environments and activities they believe can maximize their potential. By making challenging choices, they are able to develop different competencies, interests, and social networks. Self-efficacy is particularly influential in terms of career choice and personal development. The higher students' self-efficacy, the more career options they consider, and the more personal success they experience.

Impact of Expectancy for Success

Expectancy for success is the belief that one is able to obtain desired goals, solve problems, and commit to long-term career goals. It reflects people's optimistic predictions about their personal future. Such optimistic thinking in turn has a favorable impact on their physical and psychological well-being, as it boosts their self-esteem and self-worth (Nevid & Rathus, 2007; Rathus & Nevid, 1995).

Students with high expectancy for success tend to be internally focused, demonstrating better academic performance and ability to delay gratification than those with low expectancy for success. Goal- and achievement-oriented, they perceive themselves as being in command of their academic and social destiny, exhibiting high aspirations and expectations for success. They attribute their success or failure to their own efforts, reflecting their self-assertiveness, and strong sense of self.

In contrast, students with low expectancy for success tend to attribute their success or failure to external factors, such as destiny, luck, or ethnicity. Low expectancy for success is associated with

academic under-achievement; students feeling powerless over their achievement often attribute their failure to such external factors as favoritism, social injustices, and other obstacles.

Significance of the Study

Pre-university students enrolled in a private university need high self-efficacy and expectancy for success to overcome problems associated with language requirements, course duration, assessments, and study skills. The medium of instruction at private tertiary institutions is usually English, but many pre-university students completed high school in their own national language (for example, Malay, Chinese, Arab, Japanese, or Tamil). Further, pre-university courses are very intensive; to promptly complete their program, students usually have to take six to seven courses in a 14-week semester, which again requires high self-efficacy and expectancy for success.

In addition to at least three assessments for every course, they have to sit six or seven final examinations. No longer spoon-fed with notes and model answers as in secondary school, pre-university students need high self-efficacy to develop independent study skills and critical thinking skills essential for academic success. Unfortunately, independent learning and problem-solving skills are rarely emphasized in Malaysian schools, which tend to be exam-oriented and authority-centered.

To better help pre-university students make a smooth transition to a new learning environment, there is a need to gain insight into their beliefs about their intellectual and psychosocial capabilities. Awareness on pre-university students' self-efficacy and expectancy for success leads to the implementation of more effectual instructional and motivational techniques that foster desired learning outcomes and graduate attributes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the self-efficacy and expectancy for success of pre-university students enrolled in a private university in Sarawak, Malaysia.

Methodology

Subjects

The sample consisted of 105 pre-university students enrolled in a private university in Sarawak where more than 500 pre-university students enrolled full-time every semester. It comprised 54 (51.4%) male students and 51 (48.6%) female students, with a mean age of 18.2 years. Subjects were taking pre-university courses in either business or engineering that aimed to teach fundamental skills in academic writing, research, and report writing. Thirty-three (31.4%)) were taking foundation engineering courses and the other 72 (68.6%) foundation business courses. As enrolment for each course comprised as many as ten groups of 25, the researchers decided to randomly select four groups to obtain data.

Subjects were expected to develop the following graduate attributes: They would be capable of operating effectively and ethically in work and community situations. They would also be adaptable to, and aware of, the local and international environments in which they would be contributing. Finally, they would be entrepreneurial in innovating and developing their business, workplace, or community.

Subjects' overall performance in the courses was indicated by the final grade. To ensure quality and consistency, their tests, projects, and final examinations were approved by a moderator, and subsequently, the head of school. Co-marking was carried out on all the tests and projects by course lecturers to maintain quality assurance. For tests and projects, five randomly chosen scripts were co-marked each time. The final examination was co-marked by course lecturers based on five randomly chosen scripts; another five randomly chosen scripts were cross-marked by the convener.

Instruments

General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) and the Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale (Fibel & Hale, 1978; Hale, Fieldler, & Cochran, 1992) were used to measure self-efficacy and expectancy for success, respectively.

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) consists of 10 items based on a Likert scale (4=Exactly true; 1=Not at all true). It required five minutes to complete. A composite score can be obtained by summing up the responses to all 10 items. It assesses a general sense of perceived self-efficacy and to predict subjects' ability in coping with daily hassles and adaptation after experiencing all kinds of stressful life events. The items refer to successful coping in terms of challenging tasks and adversity in various domains of human functioning, implying an internal-stable attribution of success.

Reliability of the GSE was based on samples from 23 nations, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .76 to .90. Its validity was reported in several studies; it was positively correlated with positive emotions, dispositional optimism, and work satisfaction, but negatively correlated with anxiety, depression, and health problems.

Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale (GESS) consists of 30 items based on a Likert scale (5= highly probable, 1=highly improbable). Items 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 14,15,17,18, 24, 27, and 28 are scored in reverse. All items have the same opening phrase: "In the future I expect that I will …." Subjects were required to indicate to a different ending on each item, each of which represents a belief of success or failure within the future. Higher scores on this scale indicate subjects' greater expectancy for success in the future and greater motivation to face difficult challenges. Previous research showed that ESS had high test–retest reliability as well as high internal consistency; its Cronbach's alpha was .90, while its test-retest reliability was .83.

Procedure

Students were administered the instruments after class. Responses were hand-scored and coded on an Excel spreadsheet. Students' anonymity was maintained to control bias; the only demographic information needed was course, gender, and age. Accuracy of scoring was ascertained by rescoring 20 percent of the answer sheets.

A three-way analysis of variance (Group x Gender x Age) was conducted using SPSS (2004). The dependent variables were self-efficacy and expectancy for success scores, while the fixed variables were group, gender, and grade.

Results

A three-way analysis of variance on self-efficacy revealed no significant group, gender, or age differences in self-efficacy. Significant group and gender interactions were found on one self-efficacy item: If someone opposes me, I can find the means to get what I want, $F(1, 104) = 6.22$, $p <. 05$. Significant gender and age interactions were found on two self-efficacy items: (1) When I have a problem, I can usually find several solutions, $F(3, 102) = 3.19$, $p < .05$; and (2) If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution, $F(3, 102) = 3.13$, $p < .05$.

A three-way analysis of variance revealed significant group and age differences in expectancy for success. Significant group differences were found on the following expectancy for success items (see Table 1): (1) I expect that I will succeed in the projects I undertake, $F(1, 104) = 4.29$, $p < .05$; (2) I expect that will be able to solve my own problems, $F(1, 104) = 5.39$, $p < .05$; and (3) I expect that I will be very successful working out my personal life, $F(1, 104) = 9.68$, $p < .05$.

Table 1: Significant Group Differences on Expectancy for Success

Items	*df*	Type III *SS*	*MS*	*F*
Succeed in the projects I undertake	1	2.95	2.95	4.29*
Be able to solve my own problems	1	4.34	4.34	5.39*
Be very successful working out my personal life	1	6.57	6.57	9.68*

* $p < .05$

Significant age differences were found on the following expectancy for success items (see Table 2): (1) I expect that I will be encouraged about my ability to gain the respect of others, $F(5, 100) = 2.77$, $p < .05$; (2) I expect that I will deal effectively with emergency situations, $F(5, 100) = 2.43$, $p <. 05$; (3) I expect that I will discover the good in life outweighs the bad, $F(5, 100) = 2.75$, $p < .05$; (4) I expect that I will find things will turn out the way I would like if I try hard enough, $F(5, 100) = 2.90$, $p < .05$; and (5) I expect that I will succeed at most things I try, $F(5, 100) = 2.43$, $p < .05$.

Table 2: Significant Age Differences on Expectancy for Success

Items	*df*	Type III *SS*	*MS*	*F*
Be encouraged about my ability to gain the respect of others	5	7.28	1.46	2.77*
Deal effectively with emergency situations	5	9.14	1.83	2.43*
Discover the good in life outweighs the bad	5	12.0	2.41	2.75*
Find things will turn out the way I would like if I try hard enough	5	13.2	2.64	2.90*
Succeed at most things I try	5	8.39	1.68	2.43*

* $p < .05$

Significant group and gender interactions were found in the following expectancy for success items: (1) I expect that I will be a good parent, $F(1, 104) = 4.69$, $p < .05$; (2) I expect that I will have a happy marital relationship, $F(1, 104) = 4.31$, $p < .05$; and (3) I expect that I will experiences many successes in my life, $F(1, 104) = 4.00$, $p < .05$.

Significant group and age interactions were found in the following expectancy for success items: (1) I expect that I will discover the good in life outweighs the bad, $F(3, 102) = 3.77$, $p < .05$); and (2) I expect that I will make a first good impression on people I meet, $F(3, 102) = 2.95$, $p < .05$.

Percentages on Self-Efficacy and Expectancy for Success

Percentages of positive responses for all self-efficacy items were calculated (see Table 3). More than 80 percent of the students indicated that (1) they could solve difficult problems if they tried hard enough, (2) they could find the means to get what they wanted, and (3) they could solve most problems if they invested the necessary effort. However, less than 45 percent indicated that they knew how to handle unforeseen situations.

Percentages of positive responses for all expectancy for success items were also calculated (see Table 4). Eighty percent of the students indicated that they expected that they would (1) be encouraged about their ability to gain the respect of others, (2) be able to accomplish their goals, (3) be very good at learning new skills, (4) carry through their responsibilities successfully, (5) find that things would turn out the way they would like, (6) attain their career goals, and (7) be able to work with others.

However, less than 65 percent of the students indicated that they expected that they would (1) deal effectively with emergency situations, (2) discover the good in life would outweigh the bad, and (3) handle unexpected problems successfully, (4) make significant contributions to society, and (5) be able to change unpleasant situations effectively.

Table 3: Percentages of Positive Responses on Self-Efficacy

Item	Moderately true andexactly true (%)
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough	87.7
If someone opposes me, I can find the means to get what I want	83.8
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals	54.3
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events	56.0
I am resourceful, so I know how to handle unforeseen situations	44.7
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort	80.9
I can remain calm when facing difficulties as I can rely on my coping abilities	71.4
When I have a problem, I can usually find several solutions	73.3
If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution	70.5
I can usually handle whatever comes my way	60.9

Table 4: Percentages of Positive Responses for Expectancy for Success

Item	Strongly agree and agree (%)
In the future I expect that I will …	
find that people seem to understand what I'm trying to say	67.7
be encouraged about my ability to gain the respect of others	81.0
be a good parent	73.4
be able to accomplish my goals	80.0
have a happy marital relationship	69.5
deal effectively with emergency situations	62.8
find my efforts to change unpleasant situations are effective	59.0
be very good at learning new skills	80.9
carry through my responsibilities successfully	81.0
discover the good in life outweighs the bad	63.8
handle unexpected problems successfully	63.9
get the promotions I deserve	69.0
succeed in the projects I undertake	77.2
make significant contributions to society	60.9
discover that my life is getting much better	71.4
be listened to when I speak	75.2
discover that my plans work out very well	75.7
find that things will turn out the way I would like if I try hard enough	80.0
handle myself well in what ever situation I am in	64.8
be able to solve my own problems	73.4
succeed at most things I try	75.2
be successful in my own endeavors in the long run	69.5
be very successful working out my personal life	74.3
experience many successes in my life	74.3
make a good first impression on people I meet	67.6
attain the career goals I have set for myself	80.0
be able to deal with my superiors	68.6
be able to work with others	83.9
be a good judge of what it takes to get ahead	69.6
achieve recognition in my profession	79.0

Discussion

Self-Efficacy

Results yielded no significant group, gender, or age differences in self-efficacy. Findings showed that pre-university engineering and business students tended to have more similarities rather than differences in their self-efficacy.

More than 80 percent of the students indicated that (1) they could solve difficult problems if they tried hard enough, (2) they could find the means to get what they wanted, and (3) they could solve most problems if they invested the necessary effort. Findings showed that pre-university students were aware of the importance of problem-solving at university as well as in the real world. They took Innovation and Change, a course that requires students to design an innovative product or service. The course also allowed them to see the link between problem-solving and perseverance.

However, less than 45 percent of the students indicated that they knew how to handle unforeseen situations. This finding showed that pre-university students tended to have high uncertainty avoidance, a cultural dimension associated with a dislike toward ambiguity or the unknown. Pre-university students tended to dislike facing unforeseen situations, showing preference for a structured environment characterized by formality, specific guidelines, and a sense of certainty.

Expectancy for Success

Significant group differences were found in three aspects of expectancy for success: Success in projects undertaken, ability to solve own problems, and success in personal life. Findings reflected that engineering students had higher expectancy for success in terms of doing projects, solving problems, and attaining personal success than business students.

Significant age differences were found in expectancy for success in five aspects. Results indicated that older students had more favorable expectancy for success than younger students, especially in the following areas: Gaining the respect of others, dealing effectively with emergency situations, discovering that the good in life would outweigh the bad; finding that things would turn out successfully, and experiencing success at most things. Expectancy for success was linked to age; students might become increasingly more optimistic and confident with the passage of time, partly due to greater exposure toward learning and significant life experiences.

Eighty percent of the students indicated that they would be encouraged about their ability to gain the respect of others and be able to work with others. Findings reflected that pre-university students expected to gain success in terms of teamwork and group learning. Relationship-oriented, their optimism in attaining success might be associated with cooperative learning and social adaptation rather than competitive/individualistic learning.

In addition, eighty percent indicated that they would be able to accomplish their goals, including career goals and be very good at acquiring new skills. Further, they would be able to execute their responsibilities successfully and find that things would turn out the way they would like. Findings showed that pre-university students exhibited high expectancy for success in terms of attaining academic and personal goals as well as fulfilling their responsibilities.

However, less than 65 percent of the students indicated that they expected that they would deal effectively with emergency situations, discover the good in life would outweigh the bad, and handle unexpected problems successfully. Findings showed that pre-university students lack expectancy for success to deal with the new or unexpected. Their expectancy for success might be affected by their need for certainty or fear of the unknown.

Implications of Self-Efficacy

University primarily functions as a setting for the development of intellectual efficacy. It is the place for pre-university students to gain knowledge and problem-solving skills needed to face the real world.

Here their knowledge and critical thinking skills are not only continually tested, but also socially compared until graduation. Their intellectual efficacy is not only influenced by coursework performance, but also by peers and lecturers. Hence to enhance students' intellectual efficacy requires an effectual learning environment, mastery experiences, peer modeling, and social persuasion (Nevid & Rathus, 2007; Rathus & Nevid, 1995).

Effectual Learning Environment

Pre-university students need a learning environment conducive to the development of intellectual efficacy. Such an environment partly depends on the self-efficacy of lecturers. Lecturers with high instructional efficacy can enhance students' motivation and intellectual development, while those with low self-efficacy tend to be authoritarian and use negative reinforcement in the classroom.

Besides academic, college or university also functions as an interactive social system; program effectiveness partly depends on the social efficacy of staff. To create a positive learning atmosphere, pre-university lecturers need to collectively convey the message that they are capable of modifying students' behaviors and attitudes. When lecturers unanimously see themselves as capable of helping students, they project a consensual sense of efficacy that pervades the entire program. Only with high self-efficacy can lecturers raise students' aspirations, interest level, and in the long run, program effectiveness.

Pre-university students' intellectual efficacy can be fostered by instructional practices and classroom structures that avoid fixed sequences of instruction, ability grouping, and unfair competition. Rigid learning sequences, ability testing, and competitive practices tend to benefit a few but diminish the self-efficacy of others, especially those functioning at the lower end of the spectrum. Instead of emphasizing undue competition via formal testing and comparative evaluation, pre-university lecturers should encourage students to engage in self-appraisal.

Students should rate their progress according to personal standards rather than to their peers' performance. Therefore, a more personalized classroom structure that stresses individualized instruction should be implemented. When students are urged to learn at their own pace, they can expand their competencies without much social alienation. Finally, to develop more favorable interpersonal skills and self-evaluations among students, cooperative learning should override ability testing and other individualistic or monolithic structures.

Besides intellectual efficacy, pre-university students also need to exhibit psychosocial efficacy as it enables them to fulfill the demands of young adulthood. Students with high psychosocial efficacy are more capable of dealing with intrapersonal/interpersonal problems, significant life events, and norms of adult society. Further, psychosocial efficacy is essential for the development of basic cognitive, self-management, and interpersonal skills that are crucial for academic achievement. Often, it contributes more significantly to academic achievement than mastery of textbook knowledge, IQ, or test ability, as it affects students' motivation, emotional wellbeing, and thought processes.

Mastery Experiences, Peer Modeling, and Social Persuasion

Mastery experiences, peer modeling, and social persuasion are crucial in enhancing pre-university students' intellectual and psychosocial efficacy. Mastery experiences allow students to earn real success, praise, and encouragement. They result in an authentic sense of accomplishment and ego identity strength. Having peers with similar interests and values enables students to develop efficacious styles of thinking and behavior. Favorable peer relationships (vicarious experiences) reinforce students' self-worth and social affiliation, leading to high social efficacy. Social persuasion in the form of encouragement and sincere praise raises the confidence of students. Lecturers who use positive social persuasion are more capable of increasing students' self-efficacy than those who resort to using negative sanctions.

Self-efficacy plays a central role in influencing students' intellectual and psychosocial development. It affects their academic performance, choices, interpersonal relationships, and overall wellbeing. It is important for pre-university students to demonstrate a strong sense of self-efficacy to cope with a challenging learning environment enmeshed with language requirements, intensive courses, independent learning, and peer comparison. Fortunately, self-efficacy can be raised via mastery experiences, favorable peer modeling, and positive social persuasion – all of which encourage students to assume responsibility of their own actions, exert better control over their own lives, and shape their own destinies.

Implications of Expectancy for Success

Expectancy for success has tremendous influence on pre-university students' motivation to learn. Pre-university students who believe that they are capable of accomplishing challenging tasks through their own efforts are more willing to marshal their resources and apply themselves. Believing that their efforts will be rewarded, they are more likely to persevere.

Based on their expectancy for success, pre-university students may choose engineering, business, design, or information technology. It influences them to select the major to which they expose themselves and in which they will contend. In other words, expectancy for success influences pre-university students to select a particular major, construct plans for completing it, and congratulate themselves when they graduate according to schedule. According to Pintrich and Schunk (1996), expectancy for success can be fostered through realistic and course specific feedback, challenging tasks, positive communication, and minimal social comparison.

Realistic and Honest Feedback

To foster expectancy for success among pre-university students, lecturers should help them maintain accurate but high expectations, while avoiding the illusion of incompetence. Providing positive but accurate feedback based on their argumentative essays or written reports is an effective way to promote expectancy for success. Feedback should reflect students' level of understanding of content and task requirements. Sincere feedback allows students to learn from mistakes, but insincere feedback creates false sense of accomplishment that is self-defeating. While providing accurate feedback to help students develop reasonable perceptions of their competence, lecturers should also emphasize that their actual competence and skills will continue to improve with diligence and perseverance.

Before providing feedback to students who lag behind, lecturers should first determine the reasons for their underachievement and then find ways to increase their learning motivation. One effective way is to show them model answers to inspire them to begin their assignments early rather than waiting until the last minute. Model answers, with some individual attention, provide the structure and guidelines that underachievers need to increase task commitment and accomplishment, resulting in improved expectancy for success, and vice versa.

Course Specific Feedback

Besides providing realistic and sincere feedback, lecturers should be course specific, focusing on their own subjects. Pre-university students' expectancy for success primarily depends on their self-perceptions of course competence rather than global self-esteem. Hence, lecturers should provide accurate feedback concerning their performance in specific areas, for instance, academic writing, research skills, or mathematics. Course specific comments that focus on actual performance include: You have good argumentative skills/You have clearly stated the purpose of the study/You need to spend more time on trigonometry. Global and nonspecific comments that pre-university students tend to disregard in terms of course performance include: You should be proud of yourself/You are very capable/You should work hard.

Challenging Tasks

Besides honest feedback, challenging tasks with reasonable difficulty level also enhance expectancy for success. Pre-university courses therefore should include a diversity of tasks with differing levels of challenge. Therefore, each course should include a midterm test, individual report, group project, oral presentation, and final exam. Gifted and talented students who can go beyond the course requirements can be given extra-credit assignments or research projects while those who are struggling should receive individual guidance. An array of course requirements with appropriate difficulty levels ensures that most students succeed with some concerted effort.

Positive Communication

To develop favorable self-perceptions and subsequently, increased expectancy for success among pre-university students, lecturers should instill the belief that competence/ability is a modifiable aspect of life. They can conduct a general discussion on learning styles and study and information literacy skills to highlight the importance of appropriate learning strategies, time-management, and commitment. By emphasizing that most students can learn to learn, lecturers not only communicate high expectations, but also make students see that competence/ability is not a fixed trait, but something that gets better with the passage of time and experience. In brief, to increase expectancy for success, lecturers should stress the fact that while some students require more time to learn or complete assignments, most students can master a subject with some dedication and consistency, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, or IQ.

Minimal Social Comparison

Most pre-university lecturers use Blackboard (BB) to pose information on their courses, including subject outlines, references materials, past-year papers, and student attendance. While it is time-saving to list all coursework requirements and deadlines, it is not advisable to post students' grades on BB as it leads to unfavorable social comparison. To boost expectancy for success, social comparison should be prevented as it leads to either vanity or bitterness. While capable students resent being regarded as bookworms or nerds, others feel ashamed, or worse, shunned when their poor grades appear on BB. However, lecturers can still use BB for management purposes, using check marks for task completion rather than public posting of grades. To further prevent unnecessary social comparison, individual folders or portfolios can be used for formative and summative evaluation purposes.

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