ABSTRACT

The Influence of Teacher’s Knowledge about Learning Disabilities on their Feedback and Emotional Reactions

The purpose of the present study was to test basic attributional principles as applied to children with learning disabilities (LD). The researcher sought to explore to what degree teachers’ knowledge of the presence or absence of a learning disability would influence (a) the level of reward or punishment they gave a hypothetical student based on his/her ability and effort expended, (b) the pity and anger the teachers felt, and (c) the expectations the teachers held for the student's future failure. In order to measure, teachers’ attributional style toward students with and without learning disabilities, vignettes were used, each describing a hypothetical boy/girl who had just taken a typical classroom test and failed. The participants were 188 teachers (male = 94 & female = 94) from government run middle schools in Tehran, Iran. All the participants were at least 30 years of age, had a minimum qualification of Post Diploma (i.e., 12+2), were trained to deal with exceptional children, had a minimum teaching experience of ten years, and were currently employed in the Government run middle schools.

The results revealed that the greatest punishment was assigned to high ability and low effort NLD students, whereas least punishment was given to LD students. Furthermore, no punishment was assigned to low ability and low effort LD students. Significantly greater anger was expressed toward high ability/low effort LD students than their LD counterparts. Significantly greater pity was expressed toward high ability/low effort NLD students than their LD counterparts. The teachers believed that the LD students were more likely to fail in all the four instances (high ability/high effort; high ability/low effort; low ability/high effort; low ability/low effort) than their NLD counterparts. The present findings regarding attributions supports previous research which states that the attributional message that teachers transmit to students with LD is that they are less competent than their peers without LD, and should expect to achieve less as a result.

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