The Influence Mechanism of Self-efficacy on College Students’ Learning Difficulties

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Abstract: College students’ learning difficulties are getting more and more attention from the social, educational and academic circles. This paper studies the influence mechanism of college students' self-efficacy on learning difficulties, and finds that low self-efficacy makes students set unreasonable goals, biased academic expectations, mistaken attribution of poor academic performance, improper learning strategies, little attention to academic help, negative motivations and emotions and other non-cognitive factors besides, and finally lead to learning difficulties. This paper analyzes the causes of college students' low self-efficacy and proposes strategies to improve college students' self-efficacy.

Introduction

Due to various subjective and objective factors, in recent years, the number of students with learning difficulties in colleges and universities in China has increased dramatically. Students with learning difficulties have developed into special groups that cannot be ignored in universities. The problem of students with learning difficulties not only affects the development of college students themselves, disrupts the normal teaching order of colleges and universities, but also increasingly puzzles the development of colleges and universities, and even affects the development of the whole society and economy. The problem of students with learning difficulties has been concerned by experts in psychology, sociology, pedagogy and other fields. A large number of studies have shown that students with learning difficulties generally have a low self-efficacy which leads to low college students' learning goals, lack of motivation, lack of effort, and low academic performance. This paper attempts to study the mechanism of self-efficacy on learning difficulties, to provide a reference for the educational departments, administrators and teachers to solve the problems of students with learning difficulties, and to minimize the number of students with learning difficulties in universities.

Literature Review

The American Federal Committee for Learning Difficulties defines learning difficulties as: learning disability is the most obvious feature of a variety of heterogenous disorders, which is characterized by obvious barriers to the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading,
writing, reasoning, and mathematical skills. They believe that learning difficulties stem from the dysfunction of the central nervous system. Since college students in China are admitted to the university by the university through the college entrance examination, it is possible to eliminate the learning difficulties caused by the defects in physical function. Chinese scholars mainly attribute the formation of learning difficulties to their own factors. They believe that inertia, inferiority, rebellion, and alertness are all psychological reasons for college students’ learning difficulties. Subjective factors that lead to college students’ learning difficulties include lack of motivation, lack of interest in learning, improper learning methods, weak psychological adjustment ability, and poor self-control ability. Objective factors include school factors such as family factors, school teacher level, learning atmosphere, and social factors such as: money first, reading uselessness”.

At present, there are several problems in the research on learning difficulties. First, the research object is single, and most of the researches focus on primary and secondary school students. It was not until the end of the 20th century that the problem of college students’ learning difficulties began to attract public attention. Second, the research content is single. Most of the researches focus on the learning difficulties of a certain subject or a certain course, and lacks the study of overall learning difficulties. Third, most of the researches are to summarize the daily teaching experience, lack of deep exploration and discussion from a certain theoretical perspective, making the study of learning difficulty problems in universities lack of the depth of theory, and it is very messy and does not form a system at the same time.

The Influence Mechanism of Self-efficacy on College Students’ Learning Difficulties

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy was first proposed by the famous American psychologist Bandura in the 1970s. He believed that self-efficacy refers to the individual's belief in the events that affect his life and the ability to exert control over his level of activity, that is, the individual confidence in being able to perform an action at a specified level [1]. Since the research in this paper is related to the study of college students, the meaning of self-efficacy should be explained from the perspective of learning. For learning, self-efficacy is the assessment of the ability of a student to achieve a certain learning goal based on summing up the past learning experience, and whether he or she has the ability to be competent for the learning task. From the definition of self-efficacy, it can be seen that it is not the ability itself, but the subject's feelings about it that influence functional activities such as individual behavior. As a highly influential subjective belief, it affects not only the individual's mindset but also the individual's emotional response in a variety of situations: it affects the individual's choice of behavior; affects the individual's efforts to complete the task; affects the resilience of an individual in the face of a challenges; also makes the individual feel anxious or confident about the task at hand.

The Influence Mechanism of Self-efficacy on Learning Difficulties

Studies by domestic and foreign scholars show that self-efficacy is significantly positively correlated with academic achievement, and students with learning difficulties generally have lower self-efficacy. Self-efficacy causes college students to have learning difficulties in the following aspects: First, self-efficacy affects students' goal setting. Students with low
self-efficacy often make false estimates of their ability to complete tasks, so the goals set are either too high to achieve or too low to succeed. These results reduce their sense of accomplishment and are not conducive to other abilities development. Second, self-efficacy affects college students' expectations and attribution. Students with low self-efficacy often attribute their poor academic performance to internal factors such as lack of ability, which makes their self-confidence lower and their interest in studying lost. Finally, self-efficacy affects the effective use of learning strategies, academic help-seeking behaviors, and non-cognitive factors such as motivation and emotion in learning. Students with low self-efficacy are afraid to confess their deficiencies to others, fear of a threat to self-esteem, and dare not ask others for help. Students with low self-efficacy often feel lack of ability, are easy to experience anxiety, generate negative avoidance and defense, which ultimately lead to poor learning results.

Reasons for Low Self-efficacy of College Students

First, low generalization of the trait of self-efficacy. The self-efficacy mentioned above refers to a specific sense of self-efficacy and is a temporary expectation in a specific situation. On the other hand, self-efficacy is also seen as a trait. Gist proposes that generalized self-efficacy is an individual's unique and stable cognition, reflecting the individual's expectation of whether he or she has the ability to successfully complete work in different situations [2]. That is to say, individuals with high generalized self-efficacy are more likely to succeed in different situations. On the contrary, individuals with low generalized self-efficacy may encounter failures in some situations. After entering the university, it is easy for students to compare with their peers and have negative psychology. For example, students born in a lower social class will have a feeling of inferiority when compared with students born in a higher social class, and considering their peers more versatile or academically better will make them produce negative psychology that they are not as good as others. If these psychologies are not resolved, they will make students doubt their own abilities, and thus abandon themselves to become individuals with low generalization of self-efficacy. These students not only have learning difficulties, but are also difficult to perform well in other aspects.

Second, the past failure experience. Individuals often get diagnostic information from past experience and cause changes in self-efficacy, that is, self-efficacy changes depend on the individual's processing of previous behavioral experiences. After entering the university, students have more courses than high school, and a shorter time to complete classes, which makes many students unsuitable for university study methods and exams, resulting in unsatisfactory academic performance. There are also Some students, because their major is not their first choice, they are not interested in their major, learning without goals, lost motivation, also lead to poor academic performance. The unsatisfactory academic achievement causes the college students to have learning helplessness, negative internal attribution of their own poor learning ability, and worse academic performance, resulting in learning difficulties.

Third, bad physical or emotional state. Anxiety, fear or nervousness tends to reduce an individual's self-efficacy; fatigue or pain can also lead to a decrease in self-efficacy based on mental work. After entering the university, students leave their parents to live independently and face new interpersonal relationships, a completely different learning style and environment from high school. They are often prone to anxiety, fear and nervousness. At the same time, some college students are addicted with online games and various entertainment
activities after departure from their parents' control. They often stay up late, lack of exercise, not feel well physically, fatigue and lack of concentration, making their academic performance poor.

Fourth, wrong imitation or substitution. There is much knowledge and experience in learning and society, not through personal practice, but through observation and imitation of the behavior of others. At present, college students in China mainly take the form of collective accommodation. Under such conditions, the dormitory companion can easily affect the learning behavior and academic performance of college students. Researches by Ralph Stinebrickner et al. have shown that the dormitory companion affects freshman's academic performance and dropout behavior through factors such as the learning energy, the quality of learning time, and the level of awareness of receiving education [3]. Using experimental methods, they randomly assign roommates to some dormitory rooms. These roommates brought video games to the dormitory and played regularly. As a result, it was found that students in the same dormitory spent more time on playing games because of the influence of their peers. And the reduction in learning energy leads to lower academic performance. Kremer and Levy's research shows that students' academic performance during college is considerably related to the relationship with roommates' drinking behavior before going to college [4].

**Strategies for Improving the Self-efficacy of College Students with Learning Difficulties**

Low self-efficacy has become one of the most important factors influencing college students' learning difficulties. To solve the problem of college students' learning difficulties, the following strategies should be adopted:

First, implement the "students with learning difficulties" tutor system. While emphasizing standardized management, the university should pay attention to the individualized education of students, especially for students who are students with learning difficulties. After each semester exam, universities should find out those students whose academic performance is not good, such as failure of many courses or the low grades of each subject in a semester, and equip the students with a special tutor who must be a teacher who is consistent with the majors of the students. And they must be caring and patient with rich teaching experience. The school calculates the workload based on the number of students instructed by these tutors and pays the corresponding compensation. The tutor must not only provide academic guidance to the students, but also psychological guide the students. Because college students are still in a period of psychological immaturity, and personality characteristics have not yet been finalized. Proper psychological intervention may improve the generalized self-efficacy of the students with learning difficulties. In this period, tutors should guide them to adjust their personal goals, build a correct self-knowledge system and improve their self-confidence. In addition, the tutor can also lead these students with learning difficulties to participate in social practice properly, help them understand the society, understand the professional knowledge and skills needed by their major, and eliminate their confusion about their learning goals. In order to help them correct their attitude to learning, re-acquisition of learning motivation.

Second, create opportunities for success and increase the experience of success of students. American psychologist Gagne believes that proper success and failure play a role in enhancing the motivation for subsequent learning, but the positive effect of successful experience is much more than the failure experience, especially for students with poor grades.
College students’ understanding of their own learning ability is obtained through past learning experiences. Repeated failures will reduce their self-efficacy. On the contrary, successful experience can improve the self-efficacy. This requires teachers to adopt a flexible principle to teach students in accordance with their aptitude, carefully design teaching activities, and create success opportunities for students with learning difficulties by selecting easier learning tasks, thereby stimulate the interest and confidence of students with learning difficulties and improve their self-efficacy.

Third, strengthen guidance education and improve the physical quality of students. Strengthen the ideological education of college students, especially for freshmen, through the introduction of relevant professional courses, college psychology and other courses, to help students change from the role of high school students to college students as soon as possible. Improve students' independent living ability and self-management ability through activities such as college students' life practice lectures and life skills competitions. Increase the class time and intensity of college students' physical education, strictly assess the basic physical quality of college students, and improve their physical fitness. Strengthen the management and supervision of college students' daily life, and eliminate Internet addiction and other factors that are not conducive to the physical and mental health of college students.

Fourth, strengthen the construction of school spirit, study style and class style, and strengthen the management of dormitory. In the whole school, the outstanding students should be recognized openly to set up a typical example of the excellent students and avoid the evil trend of "reading is useless", forming a good study style throughout the school. The class teacher should actively understand the students' learning situation and ideological dynamics, and form a good study style in the whole class through activities such as reading clubs, postgraduate sharing, and extracurricular activities. The class advisor and the class teacher should visit the students' dormitory to understand the situation of the entire bedroom, and to prevent the students from surfing the Internet and playing games. Through the comprehensive management of schools, classes and dormitories, students can see that their peers put their time and energy into the study, and they must study hard, thus to achieve a good peer effect.

Conclusion

Low self-efficacy is an important reason for college students' learning difficulties. This study analyzes the influence mechanism of self-efficacy on college students' learning difficulties, finds out the reasons for the low self-efficacy and propose strategies to improve college students' self-efficacy. This study makes theory contribute to the research of self-efficacy and give implications to education authorities.

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