An Investigation of Lower Secondary School Students’ Affective Objectives Attainment in Western Rural China

This study was aimed on the important issue of affective objectives by examining the factor structure of affective objectives and to assess students’ affective objectives attainment in rural China. This study investigated 1,563 volunteers from three lower secondary school students in Gansu Province, China. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was employed to construct and revise a model of affective objectives, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to examine the structural validity and model fitting of the factors extracted by EFA. After confirming the factor structure of the questionnaire, ANOVAs was employed in the constructed model to compare the differences in students’ affective development by gender, grade and parental migration states group. A hierarchical cluster analysis was used to clarify the parental style groups and hierarchical linear model was utilized for examining the classroom environment impacts on both student-level and class-level. Finally, the overall environmental variable impacts on students’ affective objectives attainment was build on a hierarchical regression method.

Results: The final affective objectives questionnaire was able to put forth a statistically valid three-factor model that provides solutions for nine affective objectives: bravery, self-confidence, independence, fairness, integrity, forgiveness, gratitude, love of learning, and aesthetic. The affective objectives with the best performance in these rural students were gratitude, independence, and integrity, while the three lowest rated were forgiveness, bravery, and confidence. Male students rated themselves statistically higher on confidence, bravery, and love of learning, whereas female students rated themselves statistically higher on independence, fairness, and aesthetic. Comparing different grade groups revealed that seventh-grade students reported higher scores than eighth- and ninth-grade students for confidence, integrity, love of learning, and aesthetic, whereas ninth-grade students rated slightly higher than eighth-grade students on bravery and gratitude. There were no significant differences on student’s affective objectives attainment by four patterns of parental migration status. Six distinctive categories of parenting style were identified using cluster analysis: parental rejection, parental emotional warmth, parental overprotection, parental favoring, parental non-contact and polarized parenting style. Parental emotional warmth and parental favoring group showed highest scores on nine affective objectives, and parental overprotection turned out to be the worst parenting pattern comparing to other groups. In terms of classroom environment, relationship with teacher, classmates’ friendship and competition appeared to be the most influential factors on affective objectives attainment on student-level, and relationship with teacher and class discipline turned out to be the two main factors on class-level. Finally, the combined impacts’ finding showed that each of the three contexts appears to hold unique proportions of variance, and the final model confirmed that the explained variance in student’s affective development was accumulated for prior two models.

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