

Promoting Non-Cognitive Skills: A Classroom Practice

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to highlight the non-cognitive skills (Motivation, confidence, tenacity, trustworthiness, perseverance, social and communication skills), and demonstrate how non-cognitive skills can be promoted in the classroom.

Key terms: Non-cognitive skills

I. INTRODUCTION

Non-cognitive skills also named Soft skills are very essential skills to students in classrooms to enable teachers achieving excellence through equity. All students' needs and requirements need to be taken care of by teachers to help students from various backgrounds benefit from the conducive learning environment of classrooms.

What Are Non-Cognitive Skills?



Gutman and Schoon(2013) defined non-cognitive skills as a very broad range of characteristics or skills that include motivation, confidence, tenacity, trustworthiness, perseverance, social and communication skills. The concept was introduced by sociologists Bowles and Gintis (1976) to focus on factors other than those measured by cognitive test scores. They highlighted the role of attitudes, motivation and personality traits, rather than academic skills, as determinants of success.



More recent studies demonstrated the significant role of non-cognitive skills like attitudes, motivation and personal characteristics over and above cognitive skills in shaping learning outcomes, social behaviour and health (Farkas, 2003, Heckman et al., 2006).

In a wide range of studies from a variety of disciplines, researchers have established an association between non-cognitive skills and academic outcomes (Heckman et al., 2006; Lleras, 2008). Furthermore, Heckman et al.suggested that investing in the development of these non-cognitive factors would yield high returns in future educational and employment outcomes, and help close the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged young people. All studies emphasizeon the role of the non-cognitive skills to attain excellence through equity in classrooms.

II. SUMMARY OF NON-COGNITIVE SKILLS

Conscientiousness	Agreeableness	Emotional Stability	Openness	Extraversion
Dependability	Collaboration	Confidence	Creativity	Assertiveness
Grit	Collegiality	Coping with Stress	Curiosity	Cheerfulness
Organization	Generosity	Moderation	Global Awareness	Communication
Persistence	Honesty	Resilience	Growth Mindset	Friendliness
Planning	Integrity	Self-Consciousness	Imagination	Leadership
Punctuality	Kindness	Self-Esteem	Innovation	Liveliness
Responsibility	Trustworthiness	Self-Regulation	Tolerance	Sociability

The analysis of non-cognitive skills consistently yielded five factors labeled Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism/Emotional Stability, and Openness.

III. DISCUSSION

The opinions in these resources highly match with my views and experiences in my classrooms. As an English and French language teacher, I emphasize on group work, discussion, debate, presentation, and role plays as effective instructional when teaching languages to promote non-cognitive skills among students.



Group work, discussion, debate, presentation, and role plays activities support much in building students' non-cognitive skills like confidence, motivation, social interactions, cooperation, communication skills, and the art of public speaking. When students prepare in such activities, they learn skills like organization skills, punctuality, time management, socialization, communication, and perseverance. Burris (cited in Blankstein and Noguera, 2016) mentioned that struggling learners need the support from teachers to be effective in classrooms. The support that is very crucial mentioned is socioemotional support like mentoring programs, health, emotional, guidance, counselling, and special personal support. I totally agree with Burris that students from poor families they need emotional support because of fears, hard life, hunger, lack of confidence, and lack of hope of life. To them academic life seems to be meaningless. They completely need special support. For instance, majority of my students are children who come from backgrounds of poverty and living in poverty conditions. Getting food and health services to them is very hard. Some attend classes without school materials, no books, with hunger. Some come late in classrooms due to many challenges at home with less support from families. They need special attention, encouraging words and care to perform well in classrooms and recognize their effort.

IV. STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE NON-COGNITIVE SKILLS

The discussion of non-cognitive skills significantly changes my perception of children who come from backgrounds of poverty. Various activities are introduced in my classroom to support children who come from backgrounds of poverty. Harper (cited in Blankstein and Noguera, 2016) mentioned various activities organized to support students like sharing experience between teachers and students which can motivate students towards learning. The experiences can be the source of inspiration to the students living in poverty. The community also can be invited to give inspiration messages to students which is very encouraging to students. Barlowe and Cook (cited in Blankstein and Noguera, 2016) also outlined the strategies which are very crucial to my ways of helping students in poverty like participation in groups, exchanging ideas, and support to students with learning disabilities. This can build their confidence, communication, team spirit, and social interactions.



Non-cognitive skills in your daily classroom teaching and lessons can be included in various ways. Beggle (2003) outlined strategies that are very powerful to teachers to include non-cognitive skills. I always need to show and tell students that are all valuable and special without distinction. I need to build self-confidence and social interactions in my classrooms through group work, presentations, and discussions. I need to take care of emotions of students and their personal needs. I need to fight against the racism and discrimination among students and avoid using discriminatory words in classroom. Motivating students is also another crucial element in my classroom. I need to conduct guidance and counselling sessions in my classroom especially students in needs to make sure that every student receives the support required and needed.

V. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, my experience with students confirmed that Non-cognitive skills are very indispensable to students in classrooms to enable teachers achieving excellence through equity. All students' needs and requirements need to be taken care of by teachers to help students from various backgrounds especially children with disabilities and who come from backgrounds of poverty that benefit from the conducive learning environment of classrooms. Non-cognitive factors would yield high returns in future educational and employment outcomes and help close the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged young people. There is a close association between non-cognitive skills and academic outcomes.

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