

Summary

Academic achievement in the context of the school necessarily involves a whole range of factors. The education system and schools in particular, have assumed the primacy of cognitive attributions in the learner over that of any other factors in the shaping and honing of individual academic achievement.

However, the literature revealed that the learning process within the school environment feeds on a plethora of explanations for academic success or otherwise. Much work by researchers has focused on factors other than the cognitive, in an attempt to explain good or weak academic achievement. Certainly the separation of the cognitive from the affective in terms of achievement is impractical, as revealed by the literature. However the literature also contradicts received wisdom which suggests the omniscience of the cognitive as an explanatory tool for academic performance.

This investigation focused on factors other than the cognitive in order to seek reasons for academic success. Three important affective factors were selected from the literature in order to ascertain whether these factors played a role in academic achievement or indeed if there was a relationship between these factors and scholastic success or otherwise.

An empirical investigation was conducted which consisted primarily of a questionnaire for form four students in English classes. The questionnaire consisted of four sections with a total of 81 items. It was completed by 271 students attending five schools in Mutare Zimbabwe.

Statistical analyses revealed that the affective factors attitudes towards English, self-concepts of academic ability and student perceptions of their teachers of English correlated significantly. The analyses also revealed that the selected factors took up 33% of the variance and that within that 33% the area in which students lived was the most

important factor contributing to academic achievement whilst I.Q. and student self-concept of academic ability followed closely.

The results of the literature study and the empirical investigation demonstrated that there are factors other than the cognitive which are important in terms of academic success in school. As a result recommendations were made regarding school based programmes where the aim is to enhance affective factors and therefore achievement.

Key Terms: attitudes towards English; self-concepts of academic ability in English; student perceptions of their teachers of English; academic achievement; the English language; secondary schools; Zimbabwe; student questionnaire; quantitative research; enhancement programmes.

