

Overview of Continuation Vocational High School Students' Learning Attitudes and Disturbances

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the learning attitudes and learning disturbances of Continuation Vocational High school students. It also analyzed the differences in learning attitudes and learning disturbances in different situations. The study is intended to be used as a reference to improve teaching and counseling unit. It used the questionnaire method to conduct research with public and private third-grade students. From a total of 787 valid questionnaires, 84.9% (668) were valid. The data analysis methods used included: frequency distribution, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, One-Way ANOVA and Pearson's correlation. The results of the literature review and the study's conclusions are intended to help future Continuation Vocational High school students learn and to make recommendations for further research.

Keywords: Continuation Vocational High school, learning attitudes, learning disturbances.

INTRODUCTION

Li & Chi (2003) pointed out that Continuation Vocational High school students had some bad habits, including: 1) they do not pay attention in class; they often daydream or listen impatiently. 2) They refuse to listen if they are uninterested in the subjects and engage in other non-learning behavior, such as reading extracurricular materials, comic books, newspapers, and so on. 3) They are in poor spirits or sleepy. 4) They chat with other classmates or make phone calls. 5) They are often noisy, playing cards and moving around at will. 6) They often interrupt the teacher and make jokes. 7) They do not do their homework. 8) They skip school. In view of these troubles and disturbances at Continuation Vocational High school, this paper objectively examines what influences students' learning attitudes and learning disturbances. The study's results will be provided to the Continuation Vocational High school as a reference and resource to help improve the faculty's ability to better manage student behavior. It is relatively easy to find appropriate ways and strategies to interact with students when we know the reasons for their behavior (Li, 2007).

Students of the Continuation Vocational High school exhibit some inappropriate behavior, such as bad language, destruction of their environment, campus fights and intimidation of other students. They also exhibit some antisocial behavior, such as poor performance, self-enclose, poor spirit, and truancy. Students with low academic achievement have more problems in adapting to studying. In fact, bad habits are the most troublesome issue to the school authorities.

According to the latest research in psychology, some students cannot fully develop because of individual, family and school problem, resulting in low academic achievement (Lin, 1991). In the long term, they lack self-confidence. When some one's has negative self-esteem, they can no longer trust themselves, resulting in the psychological sense of inferiority, pessimism, despair, and many strange behaviors.

Many arguments have confirmed that young peoples' deviant behavior is due to long-standing learning problems. The authors hope this study can be of some benefit to the students of Continuation Vocational High School and have at least an indirect impact on them by helping them become aware of the factors that cause their learning problems. It will be successful if it helps them to refocus their life by changing their focus from external to internal, knowing their own hearts, affirming their family, getting into the job market, understanding their own learning direction and revise their missing on learning and behavior.

The author hopes the results of this study will help students understand and overcome the causes of their poor attitudes and learning disabilities, as well as change their attitude towards learning, enhance their learning effectiveness, and regain self-confidence.

Good schools need to require good conduct from their students, which will allow them to develop their potential and learn to establish relationships with different types of people (Cai, 2006). Educational curricula should be diversified to meet the needs of students from different environments and backgrounds. Education will be narrower if its purpose is regarded as simply to increase the rate of students graduating to the next grade. Education should take different people to different destinations. To achieve this objective, education should pay more attention to cultivating good behavior. Students who behave well are psychologically healthy. Only those young people who are mentally healthy will be able to develop their emotions, intelligence and smartness, as well as to develop and maintain good relationships. They will also show compassion to others, play freely, develop good judgment and grow by learning from daily conflicts and setbacks (Cai, 2006). When students are doubtful of learning or give up learning, discussions about good versus deviant behavior must begin. When students are happy studying, believe in them, love their teachers and feel they have support from their school; their learning will be more successful (Cai, 2006). In view of this, how to make students study happily is the key to more effective learning. Therefore, we can not ignore the great impact of learning attitudes and learning disturbances on learning.

This matter affects not only the quality of the schools, but also their ability to develop their students' potential. Many domestic scholars have paid attention to this problem and have contributed much to the research on learning attitudes and learning disturbances. However, in many studies, the problem of learning attitudes and learning disturbances of Continuation Vocational High School students has not yet been discussed. This is worthy of in-depth discussion because the students' backgrounds are complex and are accompanied by the problems of low learning effectiveness and deviant behavior. This is the third motivation of the research.

Based on the above background and motivations for this research, the study aims to explore the learning attitudes and learning disturbances of Continuation Vocational High School students. The results of this study will include providing some recommendations to the Continuation Vocational High School so its faculty can use them as a reference for teaching and guidance.

The purposes of the research are as follows:

1. Determine the current situation of Continuation Vocational High school students;
2. Explore whether or not the differences in learning disturbances are due to the differences in personal background;
3. Explore the correlation between learning attitudes and learning disturbances among Continuation Vocational High School students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Continuation Vocational High School

Currently, Taiwan's education system can be divided into four categories: kindergarten education, national education, senior secondary education and higher education. The vocational education system, higher education, senior secondary education and national education can be further divided into: higher technical education, secondary vocational education, continuation vocational education and vocational edifying education. Continuation vocational education can be divided into secondary continuation vocational education and higher continuation vocational education.

Secondary continuation vocational education concludes vocational high school with continuation school; senior secondary school concludes with continuation vocational school. Continuation education is executed by the continuation school, which is supplemented by senior secondary school based on need. Continuation school can be divided into the senior high school, continuation vocational school, Continuation College and Continuation University. The continuation education system referred to in this study is the Continuation Vocational High School.

The Ministry of Vocational Education wants to keep in line with lifelong learning and the trend of returning education. They need to relax the age restrictions on Continuation Vocational School students. Many students have served in society for many years or are retired from the Army. Continuation Vocational High school students can be

simply divided into young students and adult students based on age. In terms of student backgrounds and environment, they can be divided into four categories:

1. Students with generally low academic achievement in national middle school, who can not go to school full time based on their scores from the national middle school. Most of them have some problems of low passion for study, poor attitude or low capacity for learning. Other students are those who just graduated that have low capacity for study because of environmental problems.
2. Students from low family social and economic status or single-parent families whose parents cannot afford their study, so they need a part-time job to complete their study.
3. Students who graduated from national middle school many years ago and now want to attend the Continuation School because they need greater professional knowledge in the workplace. Most of those students have been away from school for many years but have rich work experience.
4. Students recently retired from the Army who lack learning skills but want to further their studies or in the need of working.

From an educational perspective, the Continuation Vocational High school should accommodate differences in student backgrounds, environments, age, and experience. This type of education aims to supplement the students' knowledge of national life, improve their level of education, teach practical skills, cultivate good citizenship, and promote social progress. Additionally, the teaching standards are adapted to both the students' learning needs and the needs of society.

The purpose of this education is to foster good citizens. The educational focus is to cultivate professional ethics, pass on basic knowledge and skills for different majors, cultivate skills in adapting to new environments and develop the capacity for self-development. Students' personality cultivation and cultural training are also an aspect of the education of Continuation Vocational High School.

The Concept of Learning Attitudes

Learning attitudes are integral to learning effectiveness. They affect each other. According to the relevant literature, we know that learning attitudes have an effect on learning, while the effectiveness of learning affects learning attitudes. When there are differences in learning effectiveness and learning attitudes, even though students receive the same learning activities or experience, we will see difference in learning quality. According to psychological research, attitudes are formed by learning.

Attitudes affect an individual's response to specific cases, such as whether or not they have a tendentious response to the organization's internal standards. Learning attitudes are often associated with both a passion for learning and for avoiding learning, such as wanting to learn or not wanting to learn, active learning and passive learning. In this study, learning attitude means that a self-learning attitude, a favorable attitude toward school, an attitude of planning for the future and for acquiring the license in Continuation Vocational High School. The attitude toward school can be further categorized according to the attitude toward the curriculum, environment, equipment, teachers and colleagues.

The Concept of Learning Disturbances

Students encountered setbacks, difficulties and obstacles during the study. Over the long term, this will lead to study pressures, anxiety and psychological problems related to learning. If these are ignored, students will not be able to concentrate on studying, resulting in a serious, negative learning attitude. Eventually students with low achievement will drop out. When learning disturbance problems expand, or snowball, in combination with classmates' interactions, this forms an atmosphere in class and in the campus culture.

Huang (2005) pointed out that most students have experienced these so-called learning disturbances, which can be so difficult that students can not solve them alone. In view of this, it is urgent to discuss these learning disturbances with them, which will really help them. Learning disturbances lead to anxiety and unrest in students. These can be due to problems with individuals, families, schools or other aspects of their lives, and they can have an effect on students' learning performance and emotional life. This study will categorize learning disturbances into the following factors: individuals, families, schools, non-academic affairs.

METHODOLOGY

Framework of the Research

In this study, we used personal background as the independent variable and the learning attitude with the learning disturbances as the dependent variable. This study proposed a framework chart, shown in Figure 1.

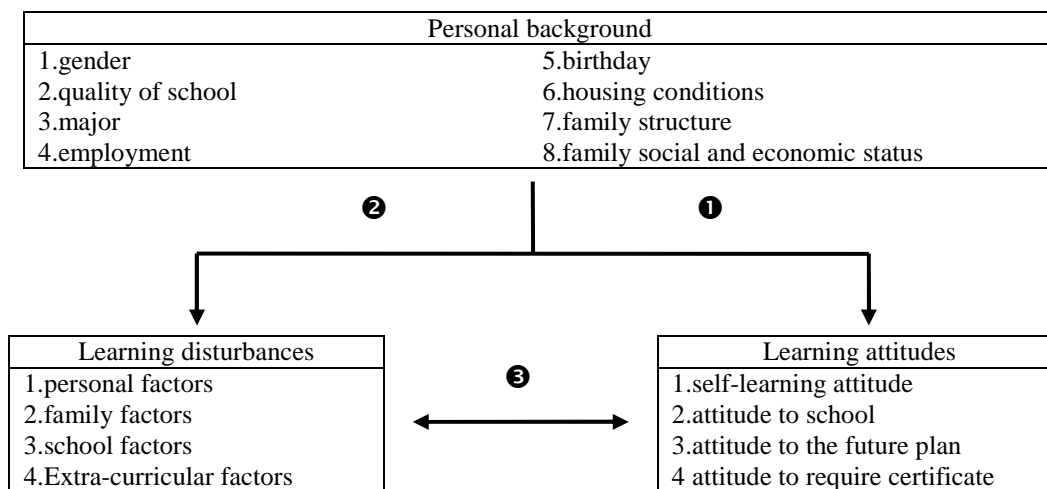


Figure 1. Research framework

Variables and Measurement Tools

The establishment of scale refers to the scale of Chang (2002), Sheu (2002), Liao (2003), Chin (2005) and Lin (2005). This scale is about the learning attitude and learning disturbance and uses five elements. Thus, the respondents can choose the exact extent of the items for their actual feelings. Each item is designed by the standard of the accordance. If the accordance is low, the score is low. A higher score on this part means the learning attitude is more positive. The part with a relatively low score means that the learning attitude is more passive; the scale of the learning disturbances is designed by the accordance too. If the accordance is low, so is the score. The high score on this part means there is a high degree of learning disturbance. The part with a relatively low score means there is a low degree of learning disturbance.

Research Procedures and Data Analysis

The scale in this research is designed based on the relevant literature review, the purpose of the research and the research framework. The procedure includes completion of pre-trial, recovering scales, excluding cases that are missing. This study used SPSS12.0 to analyze the remaining pre-trial questionnaires and to perform the project analysis and factor analysis. The reliability analysis was used to revise or exclude the items with low reliability. In addition, the validity of content is used the experts validity.

This study invited education experts and the director of the Continuation School as expert members to take charge of assessing the validity, checking the adoption, Wending publishing, and expression. Under their guidance, some wrong words or meanings were deleted. The pre-trial questionnaire was revised by the validity of the experts, project analysis, and factor analysis. Finally, the pre-trial questionnaire became the official questionnaire.

Research Restrictions

1. This study set related factors of the future career after graduation in the variables of learning attitude and learning disturbance. So the study will be set for the third year students of Continuation Vocational High School. It did not include the first year and second year students of Continuation Vocational High School in reference to the results of the study, out of concern that there would be some differences in the variables of learning attitude and learning disturbance.

2. Vocational courses have been formally implemented. Since 2006, whether students attend the Vocational High School or the Continuation Vocational High School, they must study the new courses in accordance with the request of the Ministry of Education. There are some differences between the old and new courses in teaching objectives, skills, learning essentials and learning objectives. In order to assure the accuracy of the findings, the study avoided researching the students in their first, second and third years at the same time. In view of this and the above-mentioned restrictions, it was decided not to include the first or second year students of Continuation Vocational High School as research objects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Reliability and Validity of Analysis

This study used the viewpoint of Carmines and Zeller (1979). To be a good education test, its reliability value needed to be over 0.80. The reliability coefficient of the scale of learning attitude is 0.917. The reliability coefficient of the scale of learning disturbance is 0.884. So the results that informed this study have credibility to some extent.

Descriptive Analysis

The objects of this study were the public and private vocational high school in Kaohsiung. There were a total of 1,017 questionnaires; the actual number of questionnaires is 927, of which there are 787 valid questionnaires. The effectiveness of recovery is 84.9 percent. Details are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the Sample

Personal variable	variety	Number (person)	Valid percentage (%)	Total (person)
gender	1. male	457	58.1 %	787
	2. female	330	41.9 %	
School quality	1. public	557	70.8 %	787
	2. private	230	29.2%	
major	1. industry	483	61.4%	787
	2. commerce	227	28.8%	
	3. agriculture	51	6.5%	
	4. housekeeping	26	3.3%	
employment	1. unemployment	167	21.2%	787
	2. once worked, unemployment present	248	31.5%	
	3. employment	372	47.3%	
age	1. under 17	46	5.8%	787
	2. 18-19	613	77.9%	
	3. above 20	128	16.3%	
Housing conditions	1. live outside the family	56	7.1%	787
	2. live with family or relative	718	91.2%	
	3. others	13	1.7%	
Family structure	1. one parent families	194	24.7%	787
	2. two parent families	554	70.4%	
	3. generational-gap education family	39	5.0%	
Family social and economic status	1. first level: high social and economic status	8	1.0%	787
	2. second level: medium high social and economic status	33	4.2%	
	3. third level: medium social and economic status	180	22.9%	
	4. fourth level: medium low social and economic status	409	52.0%	
	5. fifth level: low social and economic status	157	19.9%	

Status Analysis of Learning Disturbances

The attitude of Continuation Vocational High School students toward future plans is the most positive; the self-learning attitude needs to be strengthened. They have relatively high levels of learning disturbance. The family factor troubled them the most.

Diversity Analysis of Students' Personal Background Learning Attitude

The research results indicated that there are some differences in learning attitude due to the personal background. Respectively, differences in gender, employment situation and age are significant, as shown in Table 2.

1. In terms of "peer attitude", students of different gender have significant differences.
2. In terms of "self-learning attitude" and "acquire certificate", students of different employment situation have significant differences.
3. In terms of "attitude to curriculum environment" and "attitude of future planning", students of different age have significant differences.

Table 2. Diversity Analysis of Students' Personal Background in Learning Attitude

Background variable	gender	Employment situation	age
Learning attitude			
Self-learning attitude		Students who haven't work experience are the best F=5.34 , p < .05	
Attitude to curriculum ,environment and facility			Students under the age of 17 are the best F=3.15 , p < .05
Attitude to teachers			
Peer attitude	✓ t= -3.84 , p < .05		
Attitude of future planning			Students under the age of 17 are the best F=1.39 , p < .05
Attitude of acquiring certificate		Students haven't work experience are the best F= 4.42 , p < .05	
Overall learning attitude	Women are more positive than man		

Diversity Analysis of Students' Personal Background in Learning Disturbances

According to the results of this research, indicated that there are some differences in the learning disturbances due to the personal background. Respectively, the difference in major, employment situation and housing conditions, family structure and social and family economic status are significant, as is shown in table 3.

1. In terms of "family factors," students with different majors have significant differences.
2. In terms of "family factors" and "extracurricular factors," students of different employment situations have significant differences.
3. In terms of "school factors", "extra-curricular factors" and "overall learning disturbances" students with different housing conditions have significant differences.
4. In terms of "family factors", "school factors" and "overall learning disturbances" students with different family structure have significant differences.
5. In terms of "school factors", "extra-curricular factors" and "overall learning disturbances," students with different family social and economic status have significant differences.

Table 3. Diversity Analysis of students' personal background in learning disturbances

variable	Background				
Learning disturbances	major	Employment situation	Housing conditions	Family structure	Family social and economic status
Self-learning factors					
Family factors	Agriculture students F=3.17 , p < .05	once worked unemployment present F=4.71 , p < .05		Generational-gap Education family F=18.20 , p < .001	
School factors			Other housing condition students have the highest disturbance F=6.21 , p < .001	Interval education students have the highest disturbance F=12.49 , p < .001	Students with high social and economic status have the highest disturbance F=2.84 , p < .05
extra-curricular factors		Students in employment situation have the highest disturbance F=16.93 , p < .001	Students live outside have the highest disturbance F=5.48, p < .001	Interval education students have the highest disturbance F=10.43 , p < .001	Students with high social and economic status have the highest disturbance F=2.86, p < .05
Overall learning disturbance			Students live outside have the highest disturbance F=4.87 , p < .05	Interval education students have the highest disturbance F=10.43 , p < .001	Students with high social and economic status have the highest disturbance F=2.78, p < .05

Correlation Analysis of Learning Attitude and Learning Disturbance

As is shown in Table 4, correlation coefficient of overall learning disturbance on learning attitude is -0.2. This is a negative correlation. It means that the more positive of learning attitude, the degree of their learning disturbances is lower.

Table 4. correlation analysis of learning attitude and learning disturbance

Learning attitude	Learning disturbance	Self-learning factors	Family factors	School factors	extra-curricular factors	Overall learning disturbance
Self-learning attitude		-0.15***	-0.06	-0.17***	-0.04	-0.13***
Attitude to curriculum ,environment and facility		-0.10*	-0.04	-0.21	-0.10*	-0.15***
Attitude to teachers		-0.06	-0.06	-0.29***	-0.12***	-0.19***
Peer attitude		-0.11***	-0.11***	-0.19***	-0.10*	-0.17***
Attitude of future planning		-0.16***	-0.05	-0.13***	0.01	-0.10*
Attitude of acquiring certificate		-0.07***	-0.02	-0.16***	-0.06	-0.11***
Overall learning attitude		-0.15***	-0.08*	-0.27***	-0.09*	-0.20***

N=787, *** p < .001 ; ** p < .01 ; * P < .05

CONCLUSIONS

The results showed there were more males than females in the sample. The number of males is about 60%. The number of public school students is more than private schools, or about 70%. The number of students who major in industry accounts for about 60%. This shows a trend that most male students in the continuation Vocational High School favor industry majors. Additionally, courses in public and private Continuation Vocational High Schools in Kaohsiung College covered many areas, such as industry, commerce, agriculture and family business. But it showed a lack of maritime, arts and health care subjects. As a result, students interested in maritime, arts and health care subjects must change to other major they are not interested in. To a certain extent, this will weaken their motivation to learn and increase learning obstacles. Students with work experience account for about 80%. This is in accordance with the literature review and the view of Li & Chi (2003). They reported that over 60% of students have work experience. This means that in addition to daytime work pressures and fatigue, about half of the students still have the pressure of homework for their night education classes.

The ages are mostly concentrated in the 18-19 year old groups, accounting for about 80%. On the whole, adult students accounted for more than 95% of third year students. According to the literature regarding where students come from, those who have retired from the Army and dropped out in earlier years accounted for only about 10% of all students. About 90% of students studying in the school are fresh graduates. This is in accordance with the literature, which said that more than 80% of students are fresh graduates.

According to the literature regarding where students come from, the reasons why most students come to study are they come from a poor family, had poor learning passion, and low academic achievement. The problems of family socio-economic status or their personal learning effectiveness are worthy of social concern. In terms of family socio-economic status, more than 70% of the students came from low family socio-economic status. This is in accordance with the literature, which reported that the family, social and economic status of most Continuation Vocational High School students is poor.

Research shows that female students are better at receiving peer assistance than male students. Female students are likely to receive encouragement and peer assistance, which helps them enjoy learning. Students who have not had work experience are more active learners who have better concentration. When they encounter academic subjects that are new or that they are not interested in, they will continue to work hard. Additionally, the students who have no previous work experiences are more likely to acquire their certificate. They are influenced by their school experiences.

Because of an optimistic attitude toward their future security, they are also willing to study hard to increase the probability of obtaining their certificate. In the less 17 age group, students agreed with the school curriculum, teaching equipment and training equipment more than other student age groups. Additionally, the less than 17 age group are actively planning for the future more than the other student age groups. They think that their current studies will contribute to their future development.

Research shows that students who major in agriculture are likely are influenced by factors such as the learning environment, their family atmosphere and their parents' teaching style. The learning effectiveness of students who have previously been employed is often influenced by such factors as family environment, family atmosphere, how they communicate with their families, and even their family's interference in their sexual relationships, in addition to the normal pressures from working during the day and studying in night school. Lack of sleep makes them unable to concentrate on their studies, and they often do not have enough time and or energy to study. They are thus more likely be influenced by extra-curricular factors, compared to those students who live with their families and relatives. They also do not have enough time or energy to study. They often feel that homework is heavy and they are unable to adapt to the teaching methods and the school curriculum. They feel they lack support from the school and their peers and do not like to participate in school-related activities.

The study habits of students who experience a generational gap between the education of their family members and themselves are greatly influenced by many factors, compared to students from a single-parent family, including their family environment, the family atmosphere, how they communicate with their families, and even whether or not their families interfere in their relationships. It can be difficult for them to communicate with their family because of the

generational gap in thinking between them and their grandparents. As a result, the degree of learning disturbance is higher than with students from single-parent families.

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