



The Pygmalion Effect in Education: The Power of Teacher Expectations in a Technologically Driven World

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Received Date: September 24, 2024; Published Date: October 02, 2024

Abstract

The role of a teacher transcends imparting knowledge. It is about creating an environment where students feel valued, respected, and capable. This article reflects on the importance of humanizing the classroom, underscoring the impact of teacher behaviour on student performance, particularly through the lens of the Pygmalion effect. Despite the rapid advancement of technology in education, the human connection between teacher and student remains irreplaceable. Teachers who exhibit kindness and confidence in their students' potential contribute significantly to their academic and personal growth. Drawing on psychological theories, research, and personal reflection, this article emphasizes highlights the power of positive teacher-student interactions.

Keywords: Pygmalion Effect; Psychology, Technology

Introduction

As I reflect on my years in school and college, some teachers have left a lasting impression on me. They were the ones did not only teach well, but also treated students well. I can't always recall what they taught or how they explained complex concepts, but I distinctly remember how they made the students feel valued and appreciated. This realization points to a deeper truth about education: the emotional and relational aspects of teaching are just as important, if not more so, than the intellectual content. One concept that beautifully explains the significance of teacher-student interactions is the Pygmalion effect. This psychological phenomenon suggests that students tend to perform better when their teachers believe in their potential. It highlights the immense influence teachers have on their students'

achievements, not just through academic instruction, but through the simple act of believing in their abilities. As we move into an era where technology is playing an increasingly dominant role in education, it's important to remember that technology cannot replace the human touch that only the teachers can provide.

The Power of Expectations: The Pygmalion Effect

The Pygmalion effect, named after the mythological Greek sculptor who fell in love with a statue he had carved, was first introduced into educational psychology by Rosenthal R, et al. [1]. Their research demonstrated that teachers' expectations for their students could significantly influence the students' academic performance. In their study, teachers were made to believe that certain students, selected randomly by the

researchers, were had higher intellectual abilities. These students, in turn, performed better than their peers, not because of any inherent ability, but because the teachers subtly altered their behaviour to convey higher expectations.

More recent studies have further confirmed this idea and expanded on how teacher expectations shape students' learning. A 2020 study by Rubie-Davies CM, et al. [2] found that teachers' high expectations were directly linked to increased motivation in students and better self-efficacy, which basically means that teachers' expectations affect students' learning outcomes [2]. Additionally, a 2022 meta-analysis by De Boer H, et al. [3] examined the long-term effects of teacher expectations, and found that students who experienced positive expectations from their teachers in early education showed academic improvement throughout their school years.

This effect speaks a lot about the power of belief in education. When teachers exhibit confidence in their students' potential, they often foster a supportive and encouraging classroom environment. Even average or struggling students can then rise to meet these expectations. Conversely, if a teacher holds low expectations, students are likely to internalize this message, resulting in poor performance. It is not simply a matter of what teachers think or say; it is also about how those expectations show up in their day-to-day interactions with students. As a teacher, this theory resonates deeply with me. I've observed how students blossom when they feel that someone believes in them. They become more engaged, and put in more effort, and sometimes end up topping their own expectations. It's not just about teaching content; it's about teaching students to believe in their own potential. This idea is something every educator should follow because it can change the trajectory of a student's life.

Rogierian Viewpoint in Education

In today's world, technology is rapidly advancing and has affected every aspect of education. From online learning platforms to technology backed personalized learning experiences, there's no doubt that these tools can enhance the learning process. However, students are complex individuals with unique emotional, psychological, and social needs. While technology can offer new ways to access information, it cannot replicate the warmth, empathy, or understanding that only a human teacher can provide. As Carl Rogers, a leading psychologist in humanistic education, suggested, a classroom should be a space where students feel safe to express themselves, explore their ideas, and engage in meaningful dialogue with others. Rogers emphasized the importance of unconditional positive regard-a concept that highlights the significance of a teacher's acceptance and support for students, regardless of their behaviour or

performance [4].

This idea of creating a nurturing and non-judgmental classroom environment is crucial, especially in today's world where students are facing a lot of pressure to succeed. In my own classroom, I always strive to encourage an atmosphere where students feel comfortable asking questions, and even making mistakes.

Balancing Technology with Teacher Expectations

As technology takes a larger role in the classroom, it's easy to heavily rely on using digital tools for efficient learning. But amidst all the innovation, we must not forget the great impact that teachers' expectations have on student outcomes, as highlighted by the Pygmalion effect. Technology can assist in organizing information and tracking progress, but it lacks the emotional intelligence necessary to inspire students to reach their full potential. Recent research by Blazar D, et al. [5] found that while technology can definitely help with personalized learning, it is the beliefs and high expectations held by teachers that are critical in motivating students. Their study showed that students displayed higher academic achievement when their teachers expressed confidence in their abilities, even in classrooms heavily reliant on digital tools. This means that regardless of technological advancements, the key to unlocking a student's potential lies in the belief the teacher holds for that student.

When teachers convey these high expectations, they contribute towards greater self-belief in their students. This is why I believe that technology should be seen as a tool to support, rather than replace, the teacher's role in fostering high expectations. In an ideal scenario, teachers would use technology to supplement their personal interactions with students, offering a blend of technology and human intuition that ensures students feel both supported and believed in.

The Role of Teacher Expectations in Respecting and Valuing Students

The concept of respect in the classroom can be deeply tied to the expectations teachers have for their students. When a teacher respects a student, it often comes across in the form of positive expectations. If a teacher believes that a student has the capacity for growth, and creativity, they are more likely to treat them in a way that helps students see themselves as full of potential. The Pygmalion effect highlights how these expectations communicated consciously or unconsciously, play an important role in shaping student outcomes.

A 2021 study by Gershenson S, et al. [6] reinforced the idea that students thrive when their teachers respect their potential, showing that students perform better when

they perceive their teachers as expecting them to succeed. These researchers found that students who felt respected and valued by their teachers displayed higher engagement, motivation, and academic success. In my classroom, respecting student's means showing them that I believe in their abilities, even when they may doubt themselves. I make it a point to give them challenging tasks that stretch their thinking and creativity because this communicates that I trust their capacity to grow. This respect also shows in how I respond to their mistakes. Rather than seeing errors as failures, I view them as opportunities for growth. The Pygmalion effect operates here as well; when students feel that their teacher expects them to succeed, they internalize this belief and begin to expect success from themselves.

The Lasting Impact of Positive Teacher Expectations

Ultimately, the Pygmalion effect is not just about immediate academic performance- it has the potential to create a ripple effect that can influence a student's long-term achievements. When teachers consistently show that they believe in their students, they are building not only academic skills but also emotional resilience and self-efficacy. Students carry these beliefs with them far beyond the classroom, shaping how they approach challenges in life. Recent longitudinal studies have begun to explore the long-term effects of teacher expectations. A study by Brophy JE, et al. [7], for example, showed that students who experienced high teacher expectations during their formative years continued to perform better academically and professionally later in life.

In my own experience, I still remember the teachers who saw something in me that I didn't yet see in myself. It wasn't just that they taught me math, science, or history- it was the way they treated me, the way they challenged me to achieve more. Those teachers didn't just influence my grades; they influenced my entire outlook on life. As educators, we have

the power to do the same for our students. The Pygmalion effect reminds us that teaching is not just about transferring knowledge- it's about transferring belief, confidence, and a vision of what is possible.

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