

Valuing the learner in value added: A view of attributing success & failure?

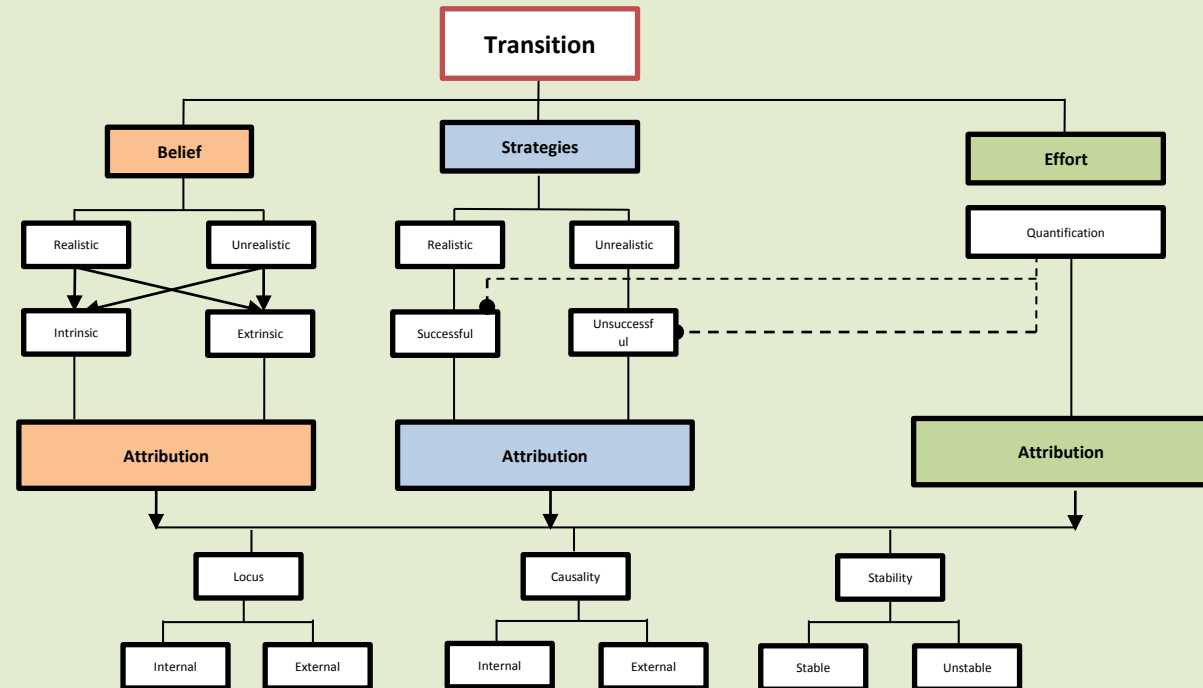
Why investigate this research question?

- To analyse why some students underachieve, achieve and overachieve in respect of their value added predictions
- To investigate what variables can be contributed to improving student attainment and overall course impact when measuring value added
- To further investigate how these themes may have an impact upon learners attainment of their predicted value added grade
- To improve the understanding of academic staff of how these themes may impact the value added scores achieved

Methodology and data analysis

- Design: case study qualitative design separated into 3 stages throughout the 2011-2012 academic year. Quantitative analysis consists of descriptive analysis of predicted and achieved value added grades.
- Participant numbers changed throughout the year depending on drop out rate:
 - Stage 1 ($n = 19$)
 - Stage 2 ($n = 17$)
 - Stage 3 ($n = 16$)
- The case studies consisted on questionnaires (3 intervals) and were analysed for codes and themed using descriptive coding, initial coding and theoretical coding
- Triangulation consisted of comparing qualitative themes with quantitative data while theming was cross interrogated by 2 researchers to increase reliability of themes generated.
- Diagram produced to identify key themes and to analyse and propose potential action research based on the Attribution Theory and key themes generated.

Fig 1. Theory of secondary-vocational education



Findings

There is evidence that transition from secondary education impacts vocational education. There are 3 key variables which have been identified;

- **Belief:** Students expressed unrealistic expectations, had high self-belief and demonstrated a lack of strategizing for goals set and all students failed to achieved their value added targets.
- **Strategies:** Students set unrealistic strategies and did not take accountability for poor progression or may have acknowledged their poor progression but did not know how to change the outcome.
- **Effort:** Due to belief and strategies effort was deemed an essential construct by students but they did not know how effort worked in relation to strategizing.

Recommendations

1. Pre-screening in vocational education needs to consist of assessment of academic belief.
2. Pre-screening should include assessment of attributions
3. Students need to be desensitised to the operative verbs used in vocational diplomas (*pass, merit and distinction*)
4. Students need to be empowered and taught to develop a stable, internal locus of causality along with internal self-control
5. Students need to be taught how to implement self-regulated learning
6. Students need to understand that teachers in FE are not responsible for previous secondary education experiences
7. Teachers need be trained to understand the causal attributions that students used to justify their final outcomes.