How Social Capital Affects Academic Performance: A New Approach to Higher Education

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Abstract

The paper aims at understanding the interconnection between social interactions and academic performance in tertiary education. Although there is abundant theoretical and empirical literature exploring implications of human/social capital in education, one of the pressing questions - how social interactions contribute to better academic performance – is still relatively new especially on graduate level. So far, the approach to studying successful teaching and learning is mostly focused on characteristics of a student, faculty or a teaching methodology. As for the scholarship on the role of socialization networks in education (Becker 1962; Coleman 1988; Gasevic & Zouaq, 2013; Stadfeld et al., 2018), there is still considerable uncertainty with regards to in-depth causal relationship between two variables. To better understand social mechanisms of how ingroup relationships are related to better GPA, the research methodology covered mixed-methods approach where social network analysis and in-depth interviews were conducted with the sample students' groups in Universities, in the capital of Georgia. By using visualization schemes of group interactions, it was possible to investigate individual networks in relation to GPA. As for the follow-up in-depth interviews, they provided comprehensive data on nature and role of connections determining academic success. The research demonstrated that students with high degree of reference to other students believed that their good (or better) GPA was due to their well-connectedness in the network. The research paper suggests well-structured methodology and fruitful findings that are valuable addition to existing knowledge on interrelation of social interaction factors contributing to better GPA on undergraduate level.

Keywords: interactions; GPA; education; networks; undergraduate