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A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MALAYSIAN LEARNERS' SELF-CONCEPT IN ACADEMIC WRITING AND THEIR ENGAGEMENT IN ONE HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

Tertiary students, in a postcolonial context such as Malaysia, often face multifaceted challenges. These challenges come about in part because they are required to develop academic literacy in a second language (English). This study aimed to explore the relationship between learners' self-concept in academic writing and their engagement in the Academic Writing class.

This study utilised a mixed methods approach, with an initial survey of 170 students, followed by two semi-structured interviews with each of eight student participants. The quantitative findings ascertained that a positive relationship existed between self-concept in academic writing and student engagement. Further exploration in the qualitative phase affirmed this and identified the nature of the links between the two constructs.

The findings revealed that students' self-concepts in academic writing and engagement were dynamic constructs in that they were influenced by multiple internal and external factors from students' past and present contexts. They were therefore, susceptible to change, and developmental in nature. Both self-concept in academic writing and engagement were found to play an important role in helping students adapt to their new academic context and learning demands, since the intertwining ecologies of self-concept in academic writing and engagement appear to tap a common motivational element related to goals and future self. It was ascertained that the relationship between Malaysian learners' self-concept in academic writing and their engagement is reciprocal. The findings also present a greater understanding of how self-concept in academic writing and engagement are situated and constructed dynamically within context, creating unique ecologies. In particular, the nature and combination of internal and external factors that is available to students influenced the nature of academic legitimacy and literacy outcomes in the Academic Writing class. It is therefore suggested there is a link between learners' self, engagement and context.

The findings of this study suggest that students may benefit from writing support and writing curriculum that is discipline-specific to help enhance their self-concepts, academic identity and academic legitimacy. It is also suggested that an extensive professional development programme be provided for instructors and institutions to cope with any major curriculum and policy changes.

DEDICATION

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

In the name of God
the most compassionate, the most merciful

first
to my family
my husband
Stephen Walker
and my daughter
Naima Sofia Walker
who sacrificed so much to make this journey possible

second
to my parents
my father
Dr. Adi Badiozaman Tuah
and my mother
Fatimah Abdullah
who set the foundation for my education

third
to my brother
Adi Khairulzaman
&
his family (Nik and Nia)
who provided my family and our parents with the comfort of an extended family life
during my long absence from home

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