LOCUS OF CONTROL

Definition: “The attribution of causality” or, “How do you explain your successes and failures?”

1. Internals: tend to say things like,
   “I succeeded because I tried.”
   “I failed because I did not try hard enough.”
   “I succeeded because I have ability to learn in that area.”
   “I did well because I’m smart.”
   Thus, they see self as responsible for both success and failure.
   They attribute success and failure internally.
   Effort and/or ability are the factors they see at work to produce outcomes.

2. Externals: tend to say things like,
   “Everything is going my way this semester. That’s why I’m doing well.”
   “I really lucked out on that last test.”
   “I got a bad grade because the teacher didn’t like me.”
   “The teacher threw us a curve. That was a hard test.”

Thus, they see outside, external factors as responsible for their successes and failures. They do not perceive themselves as being in charge. They believe luck, task difficulty, “powerful others” are the main factors determining their outcomes.

Importance of Locus of Control to learning:
1. The Coleman Report found locus to be a very strong predictor of academic achievement for minority youth.
2. Many studies have reported that black, Hispanic, and Native American youth tend to be external on locus of control assessments,
3. Traits of the internal student (Note: these are not particularly related to intelligence as assessed by standard IQ tests):
   - Self-reliance.
   - Level of aspiration.
   - Expectancy of success.
   - Achievement motivation.
   - Intensity of work.
   - Persistence in face of failure.
   - Response of reinforcement.
   - Performance under skill (vs. chance) conditions.
   - Test-taking skills.
   - Building on poor experience.

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