

Locus of Control and Student Performance in an Introductory Economics Course

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Abstract : In the Principles of Microeconomics course taught during the Fall Semester of 2019, 158 out of 179 students participated in the completion of one questionnaire and a survey describing their demographic and academic profiles. The questionnaire includes the 29 items of the Rotter Locus of Control Scale and is intended to show the influence of locus of control orientation on student performance. The survey covers variables that have been tested and recognized in economic education literature, which include GPA, gender, age, course level, race, class standing, whether the course was required or elective, employment, whether a high school economics course was taken, and attendance. Regression results of the economic education variables show that GPA, whether the course was required or elective, and attendance are all significant in their influence on student grades. Adding the locus of control to the regression equation, the results show that the locus of control variable has a negative and significant effect on student grades. Also, the adjusted R-squared value increased markedly with the addition of the locus of control to the regression equation. Dividing the sample by a median split of 11 equally size groups of the locus of control variable of internal and external student orientation, the t-test result shows that internally oriented students significantly outperform externally oriented students as reflected by their grades. The implication of these results for educators is discussed in the paper.

Keywords : locus of control, student performance, economic education, educational psychology

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