

Cognitive abilities, sociocultural background and academic achievement

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The influence of students' sociocultural background on academic achievement is a well established fact. Research also points out that sociocultural background is related to students' cognitive abilities and these have an effect on their academic achievement. However, the mediator role of cognitive abilities on the relationship between sociocultural background and academic achievement is less well known. A structural equation model that represents these relationships was tested in a sample (N= 728) of Portuguese junior high school students. Multigroup analysis of the model showed the importance of the cognitive ability mediation effect between sociocultural background and academic achievement in the 7th and 9th grades, but not in the 8th grade. This difference may be the result of the academic transition experienced in the 7th and 9th grades in the Portuguese educational system, which requires parents' higher involvement in school.