

Master student project: Motivation and self-regulation

Children's self-regulation is based on their self-monitoring skills, and on their motivation to learn and to persist with learning tasks. For effective regulation, first of all, children need to self-monitor their learning progress in order to identify which materials have been learned, and which materials need further learning. Moreover, to effectively regulate learning, children need to be motivated to translate their monitoring of learning into control actions. Children who are motivated to learn tend to choose challenging learning situations that allow for learning new skills, and persist longer when working on tasks. Therefore, children with high motivation have better task performance than children who have lower task motivation.

Research has investigated the role of monitoring, and how instructions can improve monitoring for children. However, less is known about how children's motivation can be fostered. Although the role of motivation for learning is clear in theory, and has been established in lab research with adults, there is limited insight into how children's motivation, monitoring, and self-regulation are related and how this can be improved.

In this project, we will address the relation between motivation, self-monitoring, and self-regulation. The design of this research is based on theoretical frameworks that explain the effects of instructions on motivation. Most important, previous research shows that giving learners appropriately challenging task and a sense of ownership over the learning process (the possibility to make their own choices) improves motivation to learn. One important question that arises is whether interventions that have been shown to improve motivation affect children's self-regulation when completing learning tasks. Furthermore, because younger children may have different ideas about the relation between ability, effort, and task performance than older children (Folmer et al., 2008), effects of motivation interventions may depend on children's age.

We will use an experimental approach to investigate effects of instructions on children's motivation and self-regulation. The intervention group will be compared to a control group. Moreover, two age groups (in elementary school) will be tested.

Examples of research questions that can be addressed are:

- How is motivation related to children's self-regulation?
- Do developmental differences affect the relation between motivation and regulation?
- How does the experimental motivation manipulation affect monitoring and self-regulation?

The research project will take place in primary schools. A group of 3 – 4 master students will work on the research and task design, pilot testing (individual children), and testing in classrooms.

The project will start in September 2017. Master students will be supervised by Dr. Mariëtte van Loon. Interested master students can write an email to mariette.vanloon@psy.unibe.ch and make an appointment for a meeting to learn more about the project.