

PhD project

Boosting Students' Motivation: Need Support vs. Need Crafting

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Short summary

"Why should I learn this boring stuff?" Students' lack of motivation is a major problem at all levels of education. Over the course of their school career, a significant decrease in students' motivation has been observed in almost every academic domain (Frenzel et al., 2010; Jacobs et al., 2002). Thus, many students do not reach their full potential, because motivation is a key predictor of academic achievement (e.g., Murayama et al., 2013). Students with low motivation have a higher tendency to drop out of school or not further their education (Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997). Consequently, there is a need to identify the most effective strategy to buffer against motivational losses.

A common reflex in education is to impose external measures to boost students' motivation, such as 'need support' provided by teachers (i.e., instructional styles that are aimed at promoting students' autonomy or competence, e.g., through providing choices or guidance). Although prior motivational research has yielded substantial evidence for the beneficial effects of teachers' need support on students' motivation and academic outcomes, several important open questions remain. Based on existing data sets, the aim of Studies 1 and 2 of this project is to investigate differential targets of need support in the two-level classroom context (need support provided for the whole class or individual students), and the role of social processes in the classroom (e.g., motivational contagion). Because students will also encounter many situations in which external need support by teachers is simply not available (e.g., during self-study), data will be collected in experimental Studies 3 and 4 to investigate whether students would benefit from 'need crafting', applying strategies of need support to promote their need satisfaction themselves.

A more elaborate summary is available upon request, please e-mail b.flunger@uu.nl