Enhancing students' life satisfaction by implementing decision-making trainings in the curriculum

Johannes Siebert
Impact of Decision Making

"The only way to exert control over your life is through your decision-making. The rest just happens to you.”*

(Ralph Keeney)


Relevance of Decision Making (Example 1)

After your successful studies at the MCI you are working already for two years

A headhunter calls you and offers you an attractive job

Which decision(s) do you have to make?

Picture source: https://www.brama-west.de/de/pferdesportzubehoer/Fahrgeschrre-und-Zubehoer/kopfgestell-mit-scheuklappen.html
Impact of Decision Making

„…Alice, and she (the Cat): “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

„That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

„I do not much care where -“ said Alice.

„Then it does not matter which way you go,“ said the Cat.

…” (Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carrol)

Picture source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/John_Tenniel#/media/File:Alice_par_John_Tenniel_23.png
Theoretical background of Proactive Decision Making

How Should You Make Decisions?

First, articulate and understand your values that are relevant to a decision situation. Then, these values should guide your efforts in all phases of the decision-making process:

- Determining what is important
- Allocating time and effort to and on a decision
- Selecting decision opportunities
- Creating alternatives
- Identifying needed information
- Evaluating alternatives
- Communicating with others

This is Value-Focused Thinking (VFT)
Research question: What is the role of proactive decision-making in explaining life satisfaction?

We assume that proactive decision making (PDM) will positively influence life satisfaction (LSA) (H1). Specifically, we hypothesize mediated relationships:

- H2a: Decision satisfaction (DSA) will positively influence LSA, such that it mediates the effect of PDM on LSA;
- H2b: General Self-Efficacy (GSE) will positively influence DSA, such that it mediates the effect of PDM on DSA.

PDM explains 35.6% of the variance of life satisfaction.

Improving Proactive Decision Making in Decision Making Courses

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
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<th>Study 2: Germany</th>
<th>Study 3: Austria</th>
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Proactive decision making skills can be trained while proactive personality traits remain stable.
Conclusions

- Key limitations: we used self-evaluation and subjective measures
- Participants
  - Improve their proactive skills (Objectives, Information, Alternatives, Decision Radar)
  - while their personality traits (Improvement and Initiative) remain stable
- Proactive Decision Making explains 39.6% of the variance of life satisfaction

We recommend schools, colleges, and universities to include decision-making courses in their curricula and individuals to participate in these courses to improve their proactive cognitive skills and to increase satisfaction with their decisions and lives.
Issues for the discussion

1. (More details on the research)

2. Importance of measuring the training/learning effect of students for colleges, business school, universities, etc.

3. Combining research and teaching, the ultimate win-win

4. Implementing decision-making courses at your school

5. Nudging decision makers at your school to improve teaching quality and learning effects