RECENT DISSERTATIONS

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What's in it for me? Norwegian students' choices of post-compulsory science in an expectancy-value perspective

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Abstract

The thesis investigates young people's motivations for choosing science in secondary and tertiary education, and discusses implications for increased participation in science and technology. The work is part of the Lily study, and presents analyses of questionnaire responses from more than 2,000 students in secondary and tertiary education in Norway. The thesis comprises three papers of which two are empirical. The first empirical paper concerns choices of the Science programme area in secondary school, whereas the second looks specifically at choices of secondary and tertiary physics. Main findings include:

- Interest and self-realisation were important motivations for choosing secondary science, alongside the utility value of science for admission to university.
- There were clear gender differences in secondary physics students' inclinations towards tertiary education and future occupations. More girls than boys aspired to medical studies and health-related careers, whereas more boys than girls wanted to study technology and become engineers.
- Tertiary physics students appeared to be motivated primarily by interest in the subject itself. Many of them wanted to go into research. Female students in particular wanted an idealistically oriented career.

One overall message from this work is that for young people to choose science, science must convincingly answer their question "what's in it for me?" Students want to use their talents and develop themselves while working with something they are interested in and care about. The findings may inform approaches to increase young people's participation in science and technology.

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