



FAMILY BACKGROUND, PARENTAL INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND CHILDREN'S SELF-REGULATED LEARNING

A LONGITUDINAL, EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

Educational policies research group

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This project examines if parental meta-cognitive strategies with their children in formal and informal learning contexts mediate social inequalities in learning processes and if a targeted parenting intervention can improve these strategies and reduce educational inequalities. Meta-cognitive strategies comprise a combination of scaffolding & challenging behavior in learning tasks with child's encouragement, autonomy-fostering practices, contingent feedbacks and parental responsiveness. We argue that these parenting practices are unequally distributed among social groups and affect children's capability to develop self-regulated learning strategies, enjoyment of learning and, ultimately, school proficiency.

In the first part of the project, we will carry out a qualitative study of parenting behavior, of related meta-cognitive strategies and of their variations among social groups. This will help us to design a light-touch parenting intervention that we will test by means of a randomized controlled trial targeting parents of children attending 1st grade in primary schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The main outcome is school proficiency; instrumental

Intervention design

Our **theoretical framework** identifies a broad set of potentially relevant treatment contents, such as the use of meta-cognitive strategies in task-oriented interactions with children, scaffolding techniques, behavioural insights on how to praise children facing learning challenges, guidance on autonomy-fostering practices, information on the detrimental effects of excessive monitoring and punitive sanctions.

In order to select and adapt relevant treatment contents, we will carry out a **qualitative study** with 20 teachers and 20 parents of children attending grade 1.

We will use **text messages and short video-messages** to effectively communicate with parents.

Methods and assumptions

The intervention will be implemented in 40 primary schools.

Within each school, one class will be randomly assigned to the treatment and one to the control status. The blocking at the school level increases statistical power for any given sample size, while the between-class randomisation reduces the risks of spillover effects (interactions between parents are much less frequent between different classes than within the same class).

We target schools in low-SES neighbourhoods. We will not do any targeting by family SES within the selected classes, as we anticipate a strong opposition by teachers on ethical grounds to involve only some students in their classes.



The project targets children aged 6 attending 1st grade of primary school in REP schools.

This is a particularly delicate stage in the educational career, where children are socialized to a new and more formal learning context. This year lays the foundations of essential academic skills, such writing and reading. It is fundamental also for student's self-concept and self-efficacy beliefs, as their learning outcomes start being regularly graded by teachers. This is an important transition also for the parents, as their children start following a more structured school program and having regular homework duties that parents are expected to supervise. We target disadvantaged neighbourhoods displaying a sufficient social mix to explore treatment heterogeneity by family background (parental education and migration background). For instance, within the city of Paris, we plan to target public schools in the 18th, 19th and 20th districts.



Interdisciplinary dimension

The project adopts a strong interdisciplinary perspective bringing together the analysis of structural social inequalities in education and of micro-level cognitive processes of skill development.

This project stems from a well-established collaboration between researchers coming from three disciplines (sociology, economics and psychology).

Moreover, the project adopts a mixed-method approach combining qualitative interviews and direct observations, survey methods and a field experiment.

Contribution to public policy evaluation

This project has the ambition to make a research contribution providing educational practitioners with ready-to-use tools to foster parental involvement and instructional strategies.

The **research contribution** stems from the systematic analysis of the interplay between family resources, parental instructional strategies and children's SRL. While the psychological and educational literature on SRL has failed to systematically explore how instructional strategies vary across social groups, the sociological and economic literature still misses a systematic analysis of the dynamics of interaction between parents and children in formal and informal learning processes.

The RCT methodology provides a strong **impact evaluation** of the effect of this intervention on children's SRL and academic proficiency. If this **light-touch, cost-effective intervention** is found to have positive impacts, it will provide schools with a **ready-to-use intervention** that can be easily implemented on a larger scale.