

# Cognitive Activation Potential of tasks in Economy & Society at Commercial Vocational Schools in German-Speaking Switzerland

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## Short Abstract

Teaching tasks are an essential part of teaching as they are conducive tools to cognitively activate learners. Cognitive activation promotes comprehensible learning and can explain learning growth.

To gain a deeper insight into the cognitive activation potential of tasks in Economy & Society (E&S), this project focuses on E&S tasks that were used in a video study at commercial vocational schools in German-speaking Switzerland in 2014. The objectives of this project are the qualitative analysis and description of (a) the objective cognitive activation potential of the tasks used in the video study by means of a self-developed coding manual and (b) the realised activation potential of these tasks in class.

A combination of deductive and inductive approach was used to develop the coding manual. This combinational approach resulted in nine criteria to descriptively assess the tasks (surface structure) and 15 criteria to assess the cognitive activation potential (underlying structure). Regarding the coding of the tasks, a comprehensive training and six test codings with two coders were carried out. To check the intercoder reliability, a sample of 12% of the overall 225 tasks was double-coded. The examination confirmed a good to perfect match for 14 criteria ( $0.8 \leq \kappa/\text{ICC} \leq 1.00$ ), an acceptable match for five criteria ( $0.7 \leq \kappa < 0.8$ ) and an insufficient match for two criteria ( $\kappa < 0.5$ ), which must be tested again. Also, the evaluation of the results from the material coding as well as the coding of the realised activation potential in class are still pending.

The results of the task coding and video coding should provide a deeper insight into the E&S tasks used at commercial vocational schools in German-speaking Switzerland. Also, they should raise awareness of possibilities to increase and potential pitfalls to unintentionally decrease the cognitive activation potential of tasks.