

Learning design for student-directed learning – opportunities and challenges

Tuesday 13 March 2014

ocTEL Week 2 Webinar

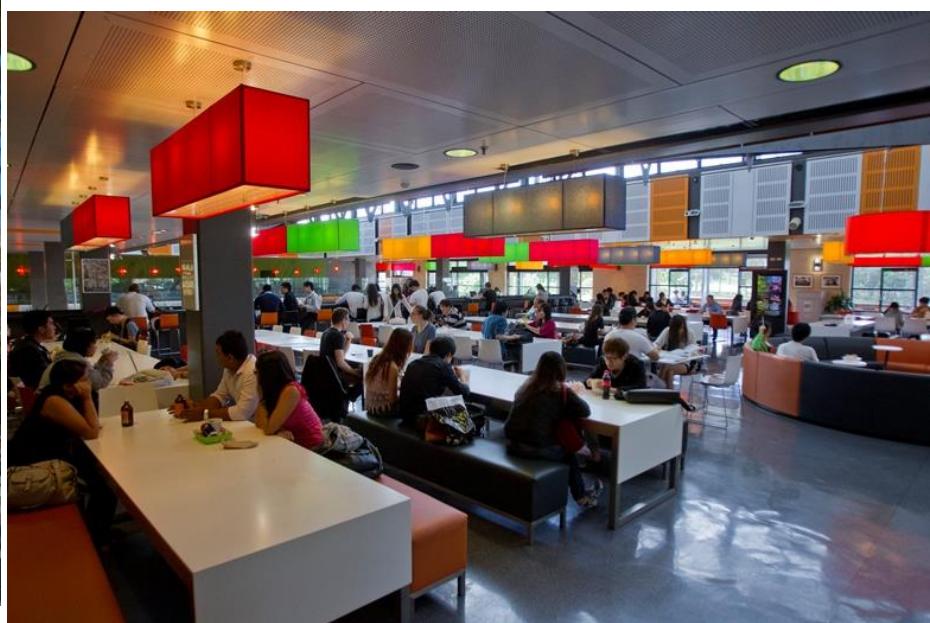
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What do we know about student-directed learning?

- When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means **just what I choose it to mean** – neither more nor less." (Carroll, 1996, p. 124).



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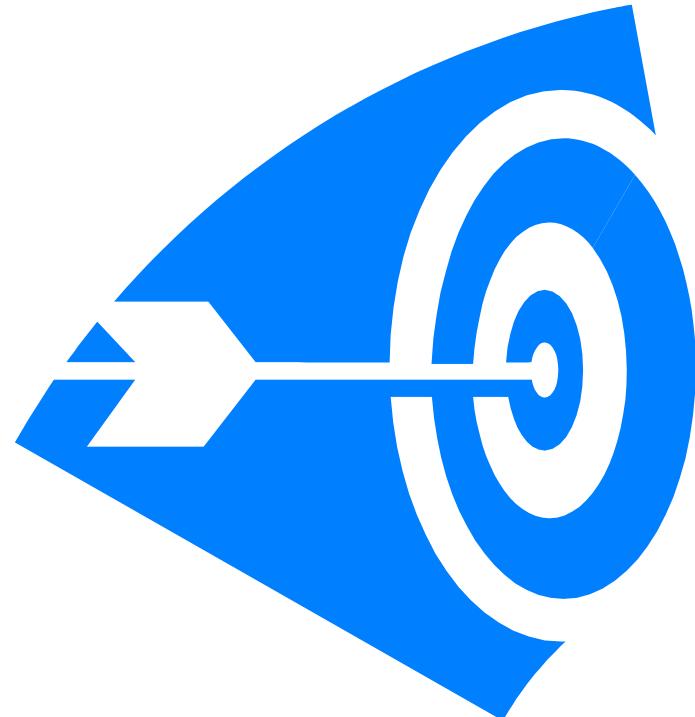


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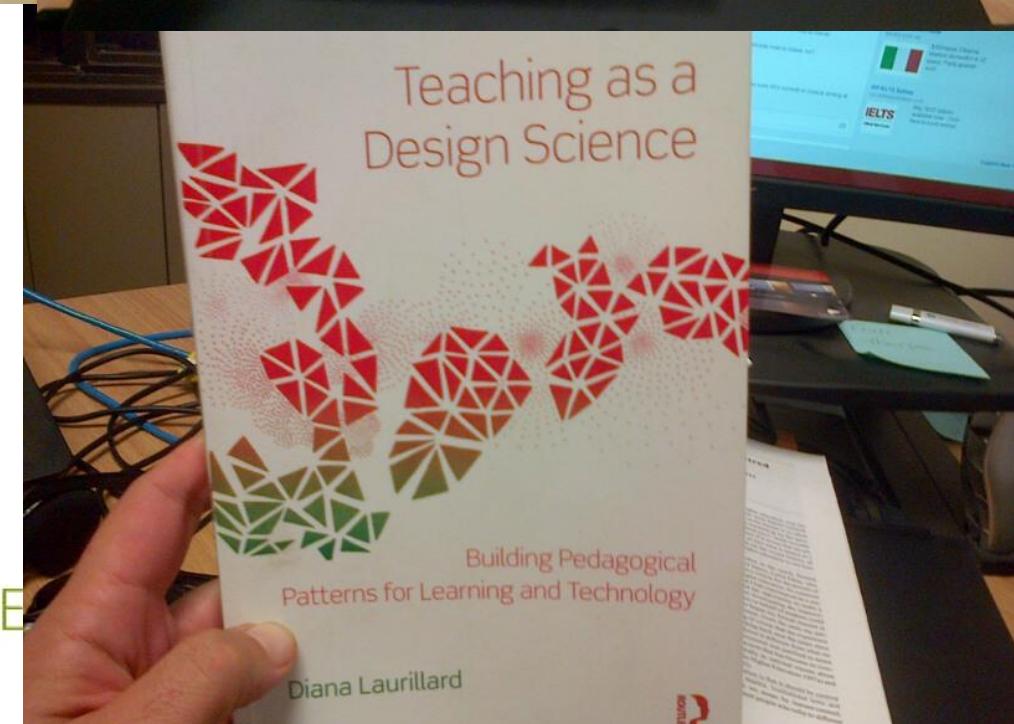
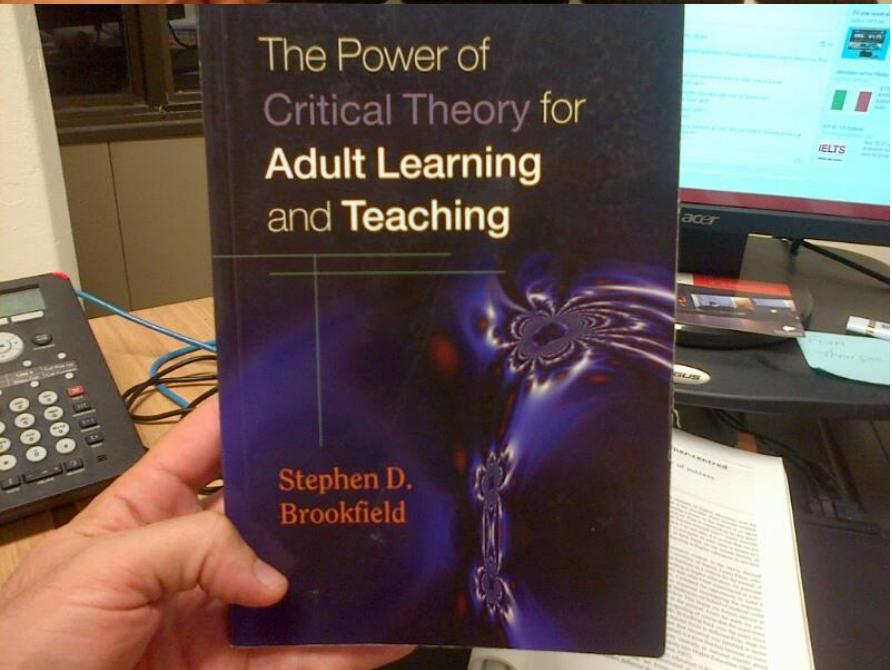
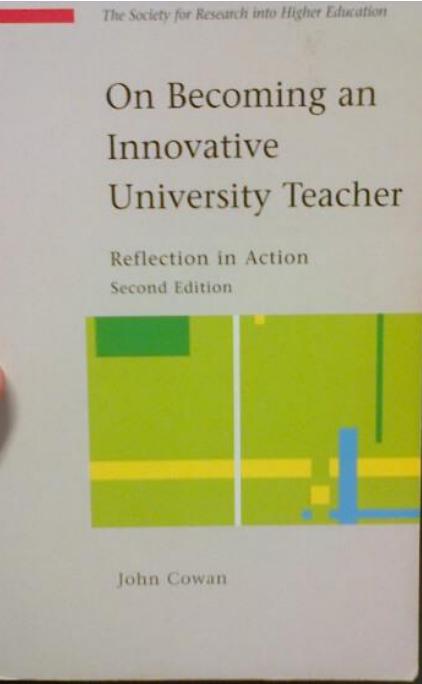
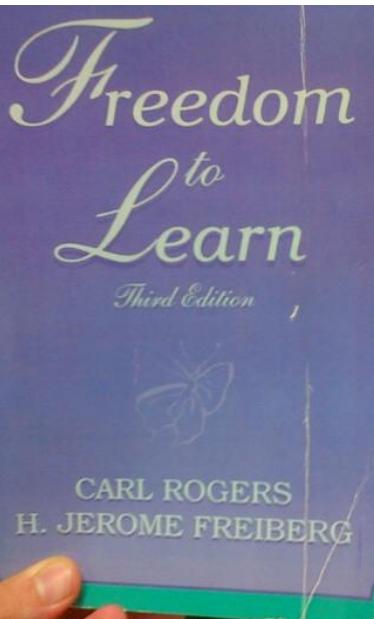
Variations in interpretations...

- Teacher-focused
- Student-focused
- Teacher-centred
- Student-centred
- Teacher-directed
- Student-directed
- Self-directed



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Student-directed learning...

- Power is not a zero sum game to be shifted from teacher to student; the goal of this type of learning was not to move the power from teachers to students but to recognise ways in which it was exercised within different teaching and learning practices (Boud, 2006).
- Student-directed learning has at its core the study of how adult learners exercise power and control over their own educational activities (Brookfield, 2005).
- In formal higher education learning design plays a significant role in the way that roles are understood and agreed and power-relationships are established (Laurillard, 2012).



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An important reminder....

- Education is when someone or some system sets out to arrange for learning - and may partly do so by arranging for interactions of certain types and with certain purposes, between learner and learner, or learner and teacher. I suggest it's important to keep that distinction clear in our minds.



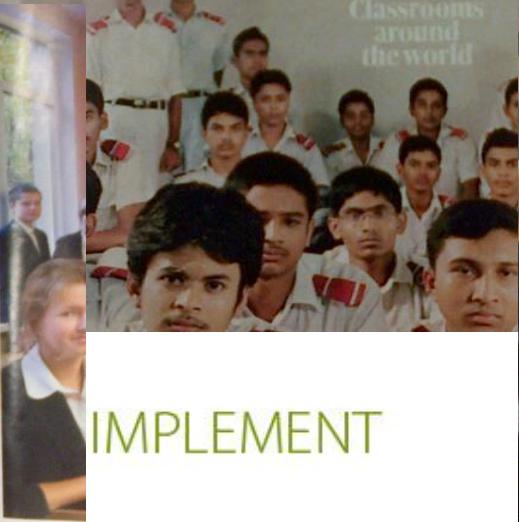
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My working/research definition of student-directed learning

- If a community of learners is to be formed, we need self-directed learners, who will develop intrinsic motivation to learn from and with each other (Wenger, 2009).
- If learning is to be truly student -directed, then there should be a period of learning activity during which the activity, the decisions which matter, the interpretations placed on sourced material and experiences, should be the **sole responsibility of the learners, free at that time from pro-active inputs by people who set out to teach**, however they define that word, and with whatever benevolent intent.



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The context of the study

- 29 fully online post-graduate students
- Working in a VLE, also supported by a live classroom
- Following the Ring-fence learning design framework
- Guided Thought Discussions and Discovery Thought Discussions (both asynchronously and synchronously)
- Over a period of one semester

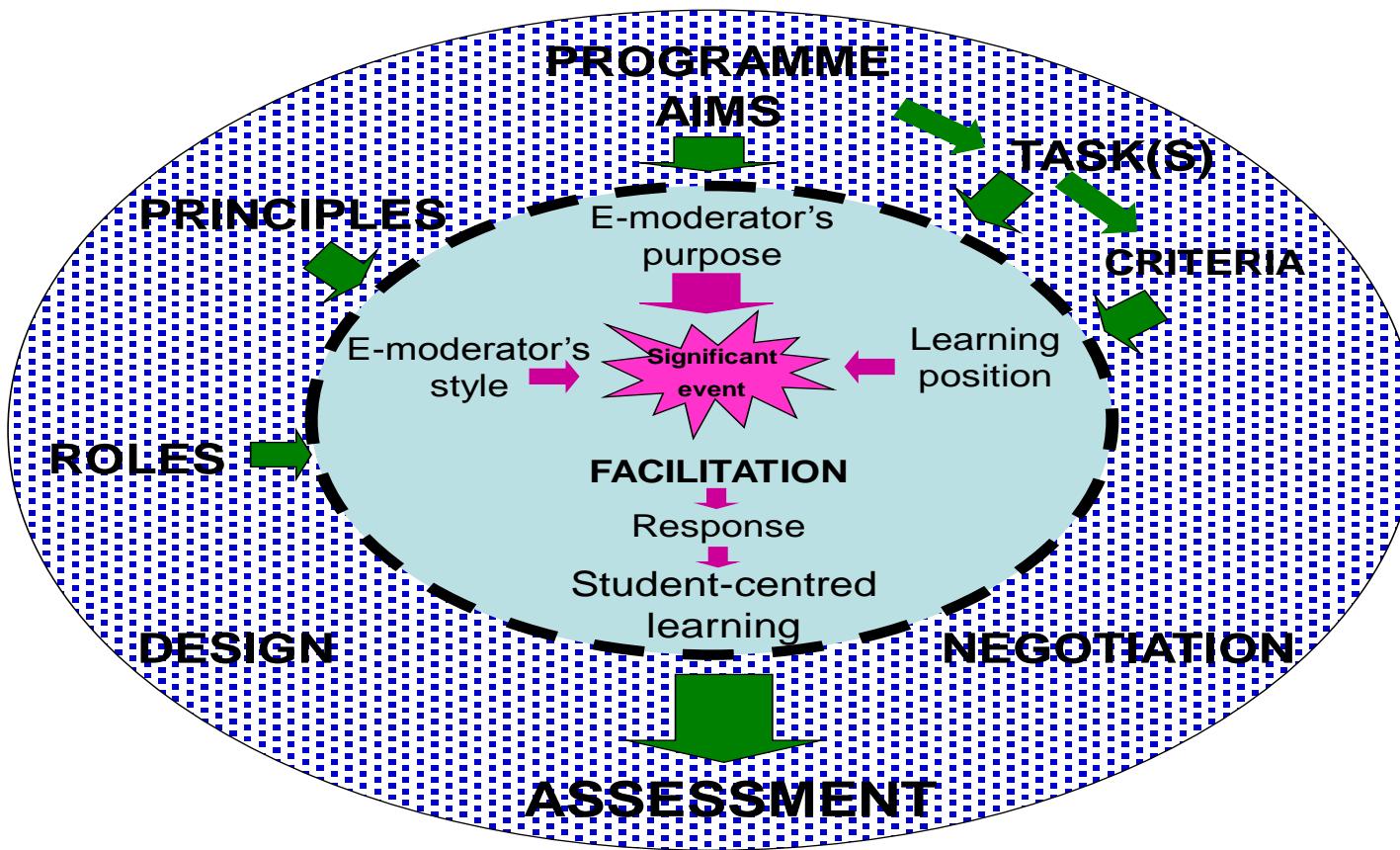


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The Learning Design Framework



Vlachopoulos, P. & Cowan, J. (2010) Reconceptualising e-moderation of asynchronous online discussions: a grounded theory study, Distance Education, 36 (1), 23-36



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Research Method

- Online discussion transcripts were analysed using a coding system developed by the presenter.
- Proactive versus Reactive and Group versus Individual
- Social Network Analysis looking for InDegree and OutDegree of the online tutor and of the participants. Clique analysis (at basic level).
- Post activity anonymous questionnaire
- Reliability check using Kappa for content analysis



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Findings of the Guided Thought Discussion

- The two most frequent types of postings in relation to the purpose of interaction were the Individual Proactive (PI) and Individual Reactive (RI). This was not surprising given that the task was set up by the tutor and the majority of the students were asking (proactively) for individual clarifications from the tutor and then were offering replies to the tutor. This was the case despite the fact that the activity itself was clear in the expectations that students should post their own views and also comment on other participants' messages.
- Social Network Analysis: stronger core and weak periphery. Tutor in the center of the network



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Findings from the Discovery Thought Discussion

- The highest number of contributions appeared to be Group Proactive Interactive , followed by an almost equal numbers of Group Reactive and Individual Reactive. This proactive attitude to the interactions was the result of the need for the students to move fast as a group to arrange the rules of the discussion in the absence of a high tutor presence.
- Social Network Analysis: the occasions in which the tutor was asked to intervene were significantly lower. This is reflected in the lower In-Degree value. The tutors Out-Degree value was pretty much the same as in Activity 1, but the messages sent were more in relation to the content of the actual activity. There were nine ‘cliques’ (or small groups) formed , which means that the network appeared to have a stronger periphery.



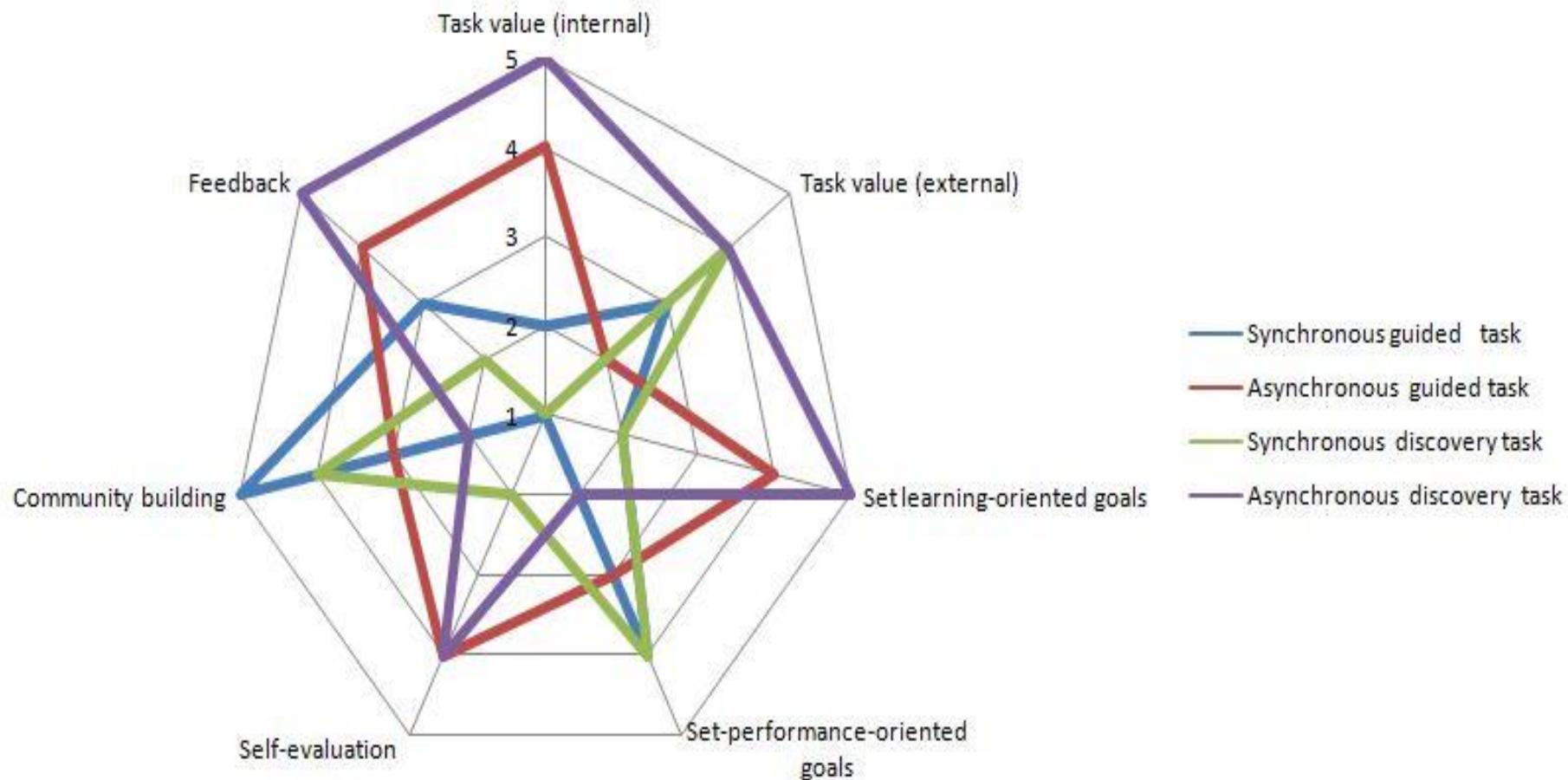
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The Effect of Predefined Context Dimensions on the Promotion of Student-Centreness in Four Online Tasks



What's the message?

- The key message from this study for learning designers and tutors who teach online in fully distance or blended courses is that students who are empowered from the outset through a carefully designed activity that allows them more 'freedom to learn' (Rogers, 1969) will find their way of interacting without always needing the strict monitoring of a prescribed tutor. This is particularly important if we consider the future of online education to be about flexibility and openness, including open educational practices.



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So, what is it all about?

1. It both about shifting responsibilities AND developing abilities on both sides (the learner and the teacher).
2. There is substantial resistance on the part of both the University and the students (risky, time consuming, unsettling, inconvenient and annoying to be asked to take control of the decision-making process).
3. It takes that the teacher will work as a facilitator who accepts a student's choices and decisions with unconditional positive regard and who have departed from any position in which they can manage, direct, or require .
4. Students often report that this is a 'liberating' experience! They see learning as more personally significant.



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