Building a shared culture of students’ autonomy among teachers of the same faculty

We focus on the role of educational developers (faculty support officers as well as pedagogical leaders) in aiding teachers in supporting students’ autonomy.

In recent years, the Faculty of Geosciences and Environment (University of Lausanne) has noticed that student autonomy is mostly achieved at Master’s level but less so at Bachelor’s level. Since the introduction of a Bachelor’s project that requires autonomy, the importance of supporting it has grown.

Too often this process [of becoming autonomous learners] is either left to chance or seen as a natural attribute of the higher education learning system rather than a particular skill that must be learnt and can be taught.

Railton and Watson (2005, p. 182)

**METHOD**

1. **Bring together teachers around a common issue**
   - Faculty development plan
   - ‘Teachers’ workshop (moderated by the Center for Teaching)

2. **Ask teachers to define students’ autonomy**
   - Which characteristics do you assign to students’ autonomy? What are your expectations?
   - Social moderation (Linn, 1993)

3. **Support teaching practices**
   - Highlight existing practices
   - Aiding teachers in building pedagogical scenarios (Faculty support officers and pedagogical leaders)

**OUTPUT**

Which characteristics do teachers in the Faculty of Geosciences and Environment assign to students’ autonomy?

**THE AUTONOMOUS LEARNERS**

According to the teachers

- **Set Priorities**
- **Have a Sense of Responsibility**
- **Get Organised**
- **Know Their Skills**
- **Know How to Learn**
- **Are Engaged in Their Learning**
- **Know Their Limits**
- **Identify Difficulties**
- **Overcome Fears**
- **Persevere**
- **Seek Help**
- **Are Familiar with Information Literacy**
- **Use Given Tools**
- **Deal with Complex Tasks**
- **Think Critical**
- **Are Inquiring**
- **Are Motivated**
- **Are Also Autonomous in a Team**

**Examples of Teaching Practices to support students’ autonomy**

- Flipped classroom
  - Make students read articles with opposite opinions
  - Ask students to identify key research questions from what they’ve learnt
- In-classroom debate
  - Co-constructing assessment criteria - or exam questions - with students
- Peer tutoring
  - Ask students to identify key research questions from what they’ve learnt
  - In-classroom debate

**As a conclusion...**

- Helping university students learn how to learn
- Students’ autonomy
- Must be developed by the students and can be stimulated by teaching
- Key role of educational developers to stimulate, highlight and support the teaching practices in this way