



Individualisation & the Road to Autonomy

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Overview of Presentation

- The uneasy relationship between individualisation and autonomy
- Good language learners
- Choices open to teachers
- Choices open to learners
- Vocational education and the place of CLIL
- Conclusion



The uneasy relationship between individualisation and autonomy (1)

A working definition of individualisation

An educational process by which learners are given or offered an individual programme or sequence of work which suits their diagnosed needs.



Good language learners.....

- are self-aware
- develop independent learning strategies
- constantly evaluate their progress
- take every opportunity for exposure to the target language
- experiment actively with the language
- are not afraid to take risks

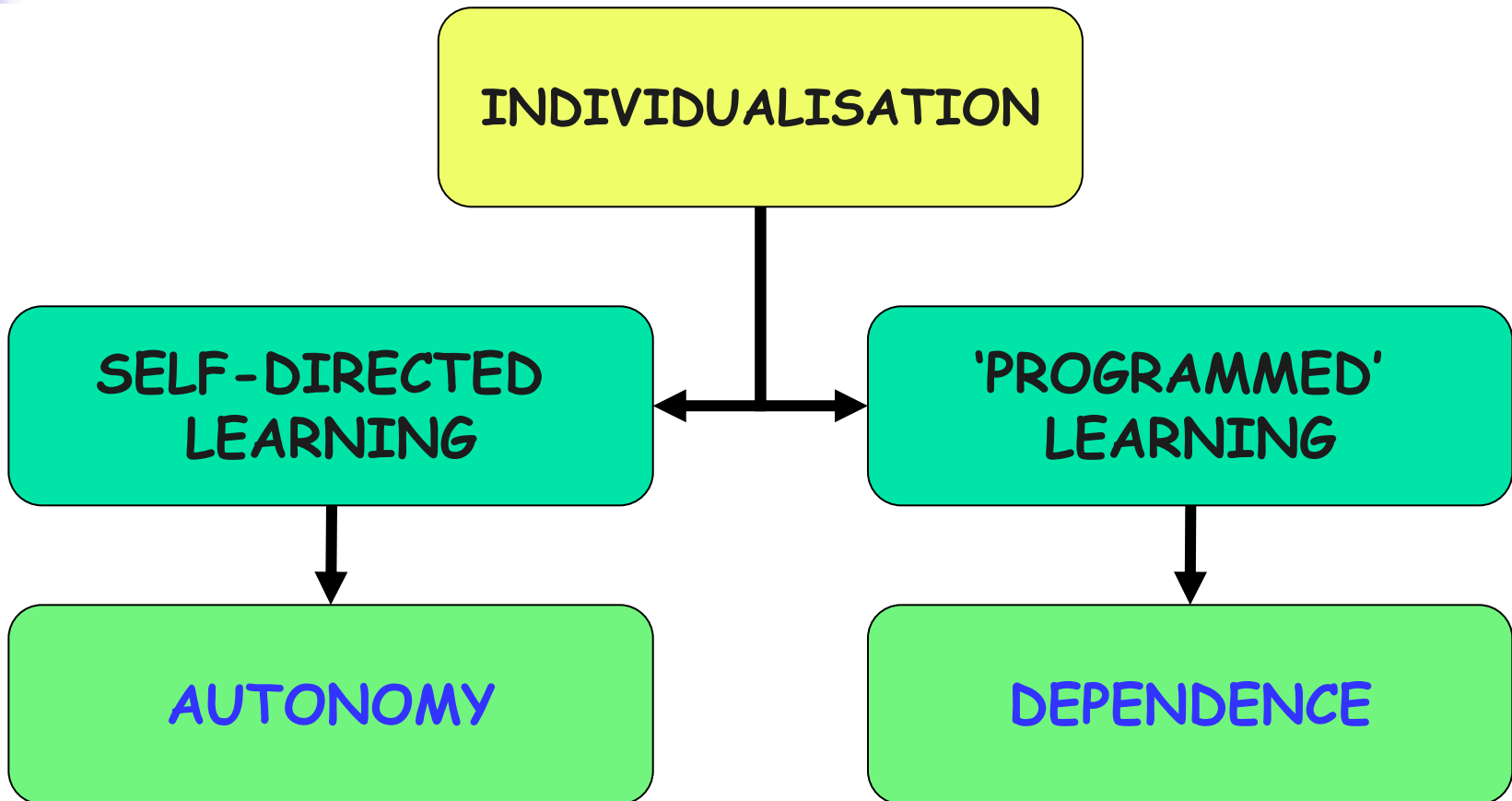


The uneasy relationship between individualisation and autonomy (2)

A working definition of Autonomy

Autonomy is the ability to make your own decisions about what, when, where and how to do something rather than being influenced or told what to do by others.

The uneasy relationship between individualisation and autonomy (3)





Choices open to teachers

- Seeing a class as a class
- Imposing a teaching style on learners
- Seeing a class as individuals
- Taking account of differing learning styles
- Helping learners to develop effective learning strategies
- To be either dependent or autonomous in their own professional action and learning



Constraints on the development of individualised learning and autonomy

For teachers:

- accepted institutional norms regarding teacher behaviour
- time & timetable constraints
- meetings, paperwork, report-writing etc
- lack of personal experience of autonomy as learners and teachers



Choices open to learners

- To be dependent (e.g. by relying on teacher input and guidance) or to be autonomous, (e.g. by learning how to assess themselves and reflecting on their own learning)
- To base their learning decisions entirely on their own needs and wishes or to take account of the group they belong to



How learners differ

- learning styles
- learning strategies
- commitment
- motivation
- thinking styles



...about thinking styles

“(My mother) says German people say what they think and Irish people keep it to themselves, and maybe the Irish way is sometimes better. In Germany, she says, people think before they speak, so that they mean what they say, while in Ireland, people think after they speak, so as to find out what they mean. In Ireland, the words never touch the ground.”

Hugo Hamilton



Constraints on the development of individualised learning and autonomy

In learners:

- Traditions of teaching and learning
- Self-image
- Parental attitudes and expectations
- Peer pressure
- Dependency and lack of teacher autonomy
- Educational 'conditioning'



Constraints on the development of individualised learning and autonomy

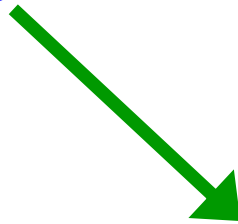
For teachers and learners:

'School prepares for the alienating institutionalisation of life by teaching the need to be taught'

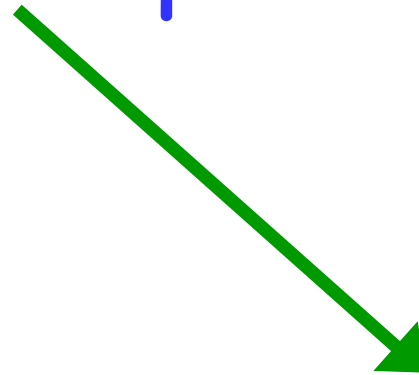
(Illich 1970)

The rocky road to autonomy

Teacher dependency



Peer dependency



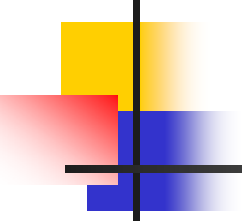
Independence



Vocational education and the place of CLIL in developing learner autonomy (1)

- Preparing students for the workplace and for citizenship
- Plurilingualism and mobility
- Developing transferable skills
- Concerns about job-related skills in certain vocational areas

Vocational education and the place of CLIL in developing learner autonomy (2)



Six key dimensions in a CLIL classroom

- Learning content
- Learning objectives
- Learning context
- Social aspects of learning
- Learning strategies
- Evaluation

(Wolff, 2003)

Vocational education and the place of CLIL in developing learner autonomy (3)



Learning content:

- not strictly textbook-based
- information often drawn from a variety of sources
- related to real-world situations
- language used precisely and for an identifiable purpose

Vocational education and the place of CLIL in developing learner autonomy (4)



Learning objectives:

- Potential for negotiation of objectives
- Content-focussed objectives can usually be expressed in accessible & practical terms.....
- which means that it becomes easier to set related language objectives

Vocational education and the place of CLIL in developing learner autonomy (5)



Learning context:

- classroom as a 'learning laboratory'
- project work: focus on experimentation and 'research' (finding out)
- increased access to ICT resources and Internet
- potential for developing transferable skills



Vocational education and the place of CLIL in developing learner autonomy (6)

The social dimension of learning:

- group work
- working in team and deploying individual strengths
- co-construction of knowledge and learning

Vocational education and the place of CLIL in developing learner autonomy (7)



Learning strategies:

- study skills
- particular focus on developing language skills for a clear purpose (reading for information, writing reports, oral presentations etc)
- reflecting on learning (metacognition)

Vocational education and the place of CLIL in developing learner autonomy (8)



Evaluation:

- potential for self-assessment
- opportunities for peer and collaborative assessment
- development of higher order thinking skills



In conclusion.....

..... it takes time and commitment to individualise your students' learning experience; to help them to develop genuine autonomy as learners requires a deep philosophical belief in the value of autonomy as a goal of the educational process.

Over to you and thankyou for listening!

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