



# THE PEDAGOGIC POTENTIAL OF LEARNER AUTONOMY: A STRATEGY FOR ADAPTABILITY

Paper presented by Dr Temi Ladenika  
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# Rationale

<b>Under-representation</b>	<b>Adaptability</b>
<b>Marginalisation-</b>  <b>Cultural e.g., race</b> <b>Social e.g. Exclusion from dominant/positive reference group</b> <b>Structural e.g., political, economic</b>  <b>Exclusion</b>	Manage change, uncertainty, novelty
	Individual differences (Stockinger et al.,2021)
	Resilience (Martin et al., 2013)
	Learner Motivation (Holliman et al., 2019)

Existential conundrum – an interplay between challenges presented by marginalisation and challenges of change, flux and uncertainty, for which adaptability could provide a means

# Outcomes

- The importance of adaptability as a means of mitigating issues of exclusion
- Understanding learner autonomy as key to adaptability (Learner autonomy and Self-regulation used as interchangeable terms).
- Exploring outcomes of the use of a strategy for fostering learner autonomy (and therefore adaptability)

# Argument

1. Issues of Underrepresentation  
(Marginalisation, Exclusion, limited access to resources)



2. Learning and teaching strategies that strengthen learner autonomy  
e.g., The ALC



3. Concomitant strengthening of learner adaptability from increased capability for learner autonomy



4. Adaptability increases the potential for a learner to mitigate challenges presented by marginalisation, underrepresentation and exclusion



# Learner Autonomy and Adaptability

- Adaptability can be likened to a trait which is triggered by challenging situations and differs from person to person.
- The ability to make cognitive, affective and behavioural adjustments, when engaging with new and uncertain experiences (Stokinger et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2013).
- A key argument is that autonomous learners are more likely to be adaptable (Martin et al., 2013; Stockinger et al., 2021), therefore intentions to foster adaptability should consider a learner's autonomy.
- Strong links have been argued between adaptability and resilience (Folke et al., 2010) and resilience and learner autonomy (Ladenika, 2017), so teaching which engages learners' autonomy is likely to strengthen their adaptability.

# Adaptability and Self-Regulation

- Self-regulation and learner autonomy are traditionally separate perspectives increasingly understood as similar and united by the notion of learner control (Benson, 2002; Lewis and Vialleton, 2011)
- Adaptability is a characteristic of self-regulation (Feraco et al., 2022) and individuals with high adaptability can regulate their cognitive, affective and behavioural choices when dealing with change and uncertainty (Martin et al., 2013)
- The extent to which a person's ability to self-regulate can enable them manage their responses to uncertainty, change and unfamiliar situations (Feraco et al., 2022).

# The Autonomy in Learning Construct

(ALC)

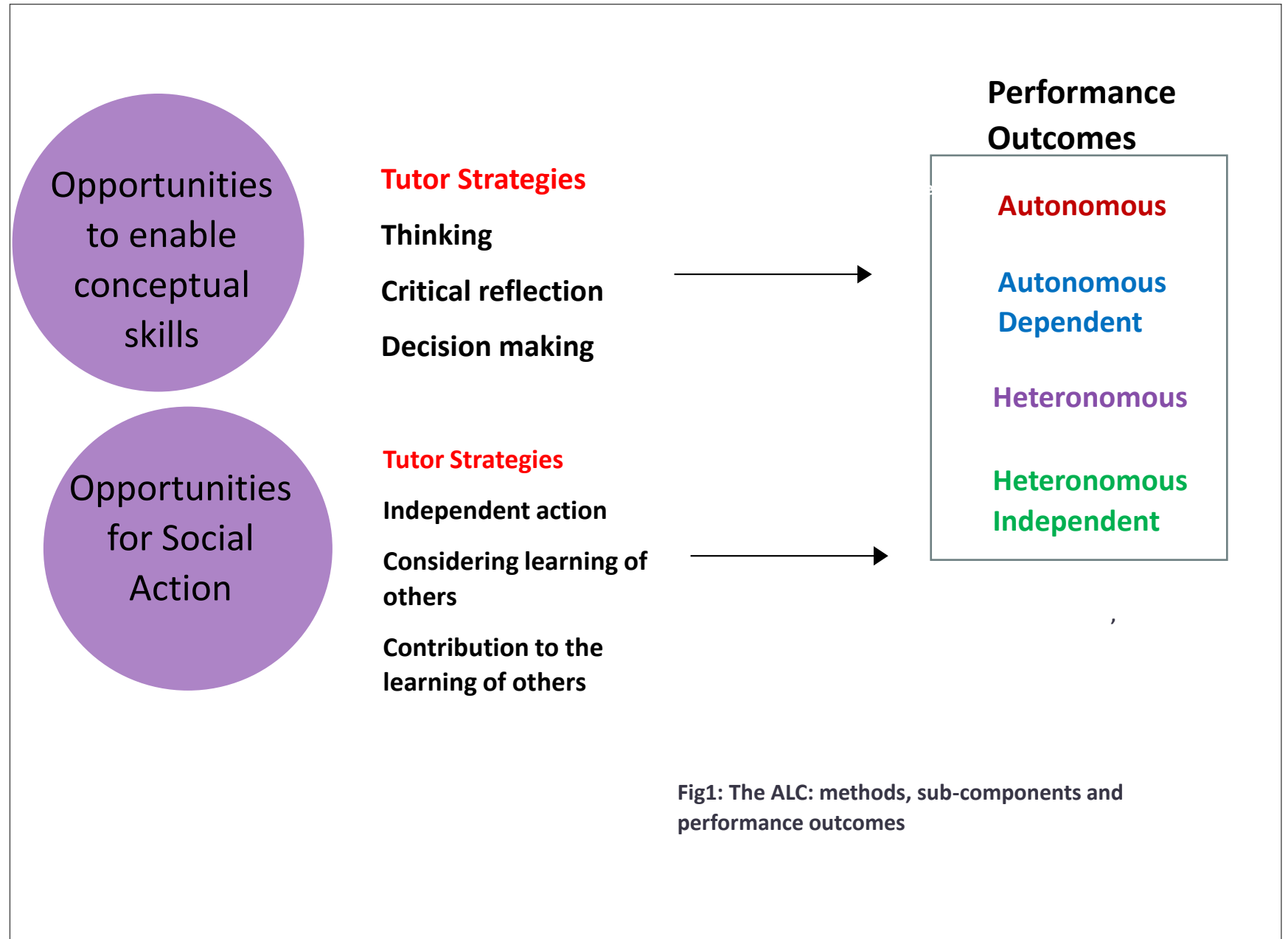


Fig1: The ALC: methods, sub-components and performance outcomes

## OBSERVABLE DEGREES OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

### (A)-Autonomous

- a) Initiates action
- b) Student participates verbally answering and asking pertinent questions relating to knowledge for all.
- c) Engages actively in group tasks.
- d) Completes post session tasks.
- e) Brings information deemed relevant into the session.
- f) Avoids distraction.
- g) Tends to lead.
- h) Listens actively

### HI- Heteronomous Independent

- a) Responds to action.
- b) Student participates verbally asking questions about own progress rather than knowledge for all.
- c) Engages responsively in group tasks.
- d) Completes post session tasks.
- e) Avoids distraction.
- f) Tends to follow.
- g) Listens actively most of the time

### (AD)- Autonomous Dependent

- a) Responds to action.
- b) Student participates verbally answering and asking pertinent questions relating to knowledge for all.
- c) Engages responsively in group tasks.
- d) Completes post session tasks.
- e) Avoids distraction.
- f) May lead, may also follow.
- g) Listens actively

### H – Heteronomous

- a) May respond to action.
- b) Does not participate verbally unless directly requested, gives minimal response.
- c) Tends to leave action to others during group tasks, may listen, rarely contributes,
- d) Tends not to complete post session tasks
- e) May be distracted by own thoughts, electronic gadgets.
- f) Tends to follow.
- g) Listens passively (may appear disinterested though listening)

Ladenika, (2021)



# Findings from Tutors who used the ALC (Ladenika 2021)

- Being able in practice to interpret learner behaviour, within observable criteria using breakdown of each of the degrees of learner autonomy,
- Using the ALC changed the tutor's style of teaching. The change was realised rather than planned.
- The tutor subcomponents guided the tutor tasks, and the degrees of learner autonomy enabled the tutor reflect on how to observe individual autonomy within collaborative activity.
- There is a pedagogic potential to learner autonomy which reminds the tutor to acknowledge and use what students bring into the sessions.
- Tutor 3 recognised that learner autonomy, could legitimate tutor acceptance of knowledge and experience that students bring to the sessions. Learner autonomy supports planned content i.e. has a pedagogic value

- Observable behaviours of autonomous learners include using talk and questioning during sessions, challenging ideas of others, production of quantity and quality of work, independent of tutor direction during the session-genuine engagement.
  
- Tutors identified learner autonomy as
  - 1) being able to generate ideas, make judgements and choices and articulate them
  - 2) appear confident and know you can do something quite well.
  - 3) sometimes needing reassurance
  
- Tutors found that the degrees of learner autonomy described levels of autonomy of widening participation students.
  
- There was consensus on the importance of learner autonomy to HE. Tutor responses supported a need for an overt awareness of learner autonomy, and the necessity of learner autonomy for successful degree completion, lifelong learning and employability.
  
- Tutor responses validate the significance of tutors recognising the role of learner autonomy in their teaching practices.

# Conclusion

- By creating opportunities for enabling conceptual skills and encouraging social action, tutors draw on skills that learners bring to the session. These skills constitute a pedagogic potential which when recognised, increase the learner's capacity for autonomy.
- There are degrees of learner autonomy which learners move through as they develop as autonomous learners.
- An increased capacity for autonomy implies increased adaptability - autonomous learners are more likely to be adaptable (Martin et al., 2013; Stockinger et al., 2021).
- Where learners have the capacity to be adaptable, they are more likely to successfully manage the combined challenges of underrepresentation

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