

AUTONOMY IN THE RELATIONAL LEARNING FRAMEWORK

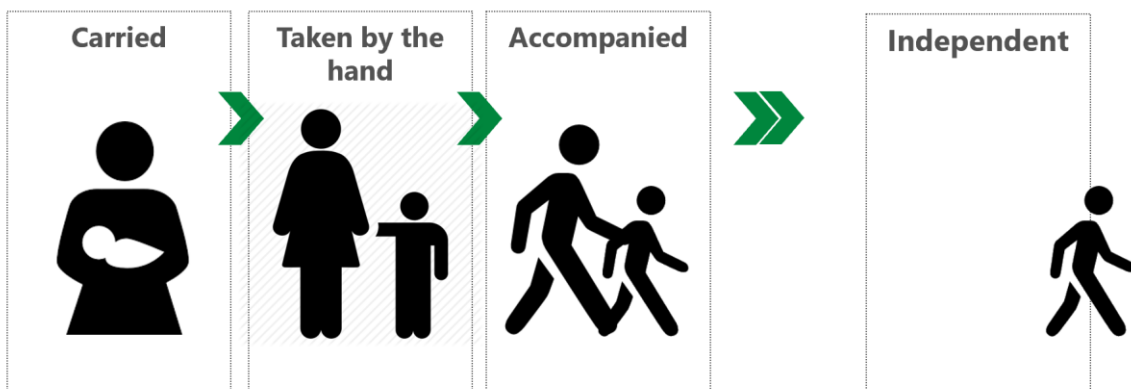
Introduction

Autonomous learning is understood as the individual's capacity to learn and grasp the world through itself, using his/her skills. In other words: autonomous learners can work by themselves, to reach their dreams. Who wouldn't want that? In traditional education systems, students are consistently waiting for instructions: they are being told what to do, what to say, how to say it. They see the world through the lens of their teachers' eyes.

An autonomous learner grasps the world without any intermediary, using his/her skills. Learning autonomously means being able to ask questions and find their answers, see problems, propose solutions, and overcome challenges.

The Relational Learning Framework helps students to become autonomous learners, but this is a progressive transformation. The four levels of autonomy can be illustrated by the metaphor of a child crossing the street:

- **Directed:** The child, or baby, is carried by an adult.
- **Guided:** The child is taken by the hand when crossing the street.
- **Oriented:** The child is accompanied across the street.
- **Autonomous:** The child crosses the street by himself/herself and traces his/her itinerary independently.



All students start at the Directed level and then, as they progressively develop their learning skills in terms of **planning, organization, self-awareness, and skills**, they are progressively promoted to the higher autonomy levels by their Educators.

Levels of Autonomy

DIRECTED STUDENTS



Need an authority figure to behave.

Avoid taking responsibility for their own actions.

Make behavioral changes under threats: "I have to behave, or I will be grounded!"

Need specific instructions to set and reach goals.

GUIDED STUDENTS



Need external validation of their actions.

When prompted and with guidance, they can take responsibility for their actions.

Behavior is led only by external motivation: "I will behave, for my parents to be happy!"

Need guidance to set and reach goals, as well as to assess their work.

ORIENTED STUDENTS



Take responsibility for their actions humbly and naturally..

Identify their own needs, strengths and weaknesses.

Reflect and change their behavior by themselves, by sole intrinsic motivation.

Challenge themselves to become more autonomous.

AUTONOMOUS STUDENTS



Manage their own learning path and take appropriate decisions to learn and excel.

Set and reach their own goals taking into account their needs, strengths and weaknesses.

Their behavior and actions are coherent and self-imposed.

Are able to assess their own learning process.

Develop a decision-making process that responds to their own characteristics and potential.



Educators' Role by Level of Autonomy

DIRECTED LEVEL

The educator is an **authority figure**. The educator's main tasks for directed students are:

- Plan, create instructions and direct activities.
- Provide research resources and analysis tools.
- Model and set time management rules for students.
- Engage and motivate students to reflect on their actions.
- Propose activities to challenge students.

GUIDED LEVEL

The educator **provides hands-on guidance for students**. The educator's main tasks for guided students are:

- Guide students on how to plan, manage their time, and follow instructions to work more pleasantly and effectively.
- Provide research resources references and guide students to analyze information.
- Help students to know more about themselves: interests, strengths, weaknesses.
- Promote respect for rules and sets agreements.
- Guide the students' academic and personal goal setting.

ORIENTED LEVEL

The educator **monitors students' work, but students become more responsible**. The educator's main tasks for oriented students are:

- Supervise goal setting.
- Help students to challenge themselves.
- Promote self-awareness and self-assessment among the students.
- Accompany and provide feedback on the students' self-assessment process.

AUTONOMOUS LEVEL

Educators become **observers of the students' processes**, providing feedback when needed. The educator's main tasks for autonomous students are:

- Observe the students' process and time-management skills.
- Supervise the students' personal and academic goal setting.
- Propose challenging activities and create opportunities for students to foster their skills.
- Promote dialog and self-reflection.