

## CONDUCT NON-DIRECTED OR NON-CONTROLLING LESSONS

Many teachers fear the lack of control. They are afraid that if they lose their control, their students will climb over their heads, they will not hand in their work in time or they do not do well for their examinations. So they have developed many methods to control their students. For example, “If you don’t hand in your work by this time, you will have to stay back after school”, “If you don’t do well for the examinations, you have to come back for extra classes during the holidays” or, “If you don’t pay attention in class, then you have to stay



back and write lines”. However, sometimes the more we want them to do, the more they do not do. The things we do not want them to do, the more they do. The more we control them, the more uncontrollable they are. So why don’t we give up the control? The question is:



If we give up our control, will the students be motivated to do the right things?

Grolnick and Ryan (1987) found out that when lessons are framed in a [non-directed](#) or [non-controlling](#) but [directed](#) manner, students are not only more interested in the lessons, they have a better understanding and memory of what they read. They conducted an experiment with 91 (5<sup>th</sup> grade) children to assess the effects of motivationally relevant conditions and individual differences on emotional experience and performance on a learning task. 3 experimental conditions were contrasted with each other.

Group	Learning Conditions
1	Directed and controlling
2	Directed and non-controlling
3	Non-directed

### Findings:

- ✚ [Rote learning](#) was more evident in the directed groups compared to the non-directed ones.
- ✚ Greater interest and conceptual learning occurred in non directed and non-controlling directed learning groups compared with the controlling group.
- ✚ Children in [controlling](#) condition experience more pressure and deteriorated greatly in rote learning over an 8 (±1) day follow-up.
- ✚ Children who possessed more self-determined styles with regards to school-related activities experience greater conceptual learning.

## CONCLUSION & PRACTICAL IDEAS

Educators may consider conducting **non-directed and non-controlling directed learning** conditions as they are more conducive to autonomy and thus will result in greater interest and conceptual learning.

Examples of non-directed learning:

- Allocate time for students to **visit the library** and read whatever they want.
- Conduct **spontaneous writing or drawing** sessions whereby children can write or draw anything they want. A certain topic could be chosen according to the syllabus or students could choose the topic.



Examples of directed and non-controlling learning:

- Get students to complete a certain task and allow them to **volunteer to present** their work to the whole class at the end of the task so that students are not compelled by external assessment.
- Prepare a few tasks or problems of varying difficulty and allow students to **choose the type of tasks or problems** to do.
- Get students to **assess their own work** using a rubric. Students will not feel judged and they can understand what and how they need to improve.



### Keywords:

Directed:	Intentional learning; learner is provided with a specific goal or directive to remember the material (Gottfried, 1976; Ryan, 1981).
Non-directed:	Subjects are exposed to the material without a specific set to learn or knowledge of a subsequent assessment of their learning (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987).
Controlling:	Presence of salient external controls or incentives.
Non-controlling:	Condition with no salient external controls or incentives.
Rote learning:	Rote recall for meaningful text elements.

### References:

- Gottfried, A. E. (1976). Effects of instructions and stimulus representation on selective learning in children. *Development Psychology*, 12, 140-146.
- Grolnick, W. S., & Ryan, R. M. (1987). Autonomy in children's learning: An experimental and individual difference investigation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 890-898.
- Ryan, T. A. (1981). Intention and kinds of learning. In G. d'Ydewalle & W. Lens (Eds.), *Cognition in human motivation and learning* (pp. 59-84). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.