

WHAT'S CONTROL LIKE? WHY DO YOU DO IT?

Controlling teaching style is

- Minimizing, ignoring, or denying students' perspectives at the advantage of your agenda and using pressure to make students act, think, or feel in a particular way (Reeve, 2009).
- Examples (that you can best avoid):
 - Using **explicitly controlling language** eg. "You must" or "you have to"
 - **Yelling** eg. "Mary and Thomas, are you deaf?"
 - **Commanding** eg. "No one stops until I say so"
 - **Pressuring awards** eg. "Only if you read 10 min every day, you get a reward"
 - **Losing patience** or becoming irritated eg. "Nicky, I'm getting sick of your behavior"
 - **Destructive criticism** eg. "Unbelievable, it's really not difficult to simply do what is asked"
 - **Denying input from students** eg. "I don't want to hear it, just get started with what you have to do"
 - **Threats of deadlines and punishments** eg. "You really must do this otherwise you will lose two points"
 - **Drawing out students' shame, guilt, or contingent self-worth** eg. "Everyone should be able to do this. Even a toddler can do it!" or "I'm really disappointed with some students in class [while looking at certain students]"

Controlling happens when teachers are

Pressured from above

Teachers are strongly held accountable for students' performance, high-stakes testing

Pressured from within

Teachers who tend to feel easily pressured by external evaluations, pressuring school leaders, or their own teaching agenda

Pressured from below

Passive, disengaged, and defiant students, or simply expecting students to be demotivated

What happens to students who are taught in a controlling way?

- Effort and persistence to learn
- Academic performance
- Interest and creativity
- Real learning
- Passivity and school dropout

- Anger and anxiety
- Rejecting requests and doing the opposite of what is required
- Superficial learning and compliance
- Depressive symptoms

"But a controlling and stricter style is needed for some students!"

- Some believe it's sometimes necessary or beneficial to use controlling practices for student cooperation
- Note that **control is NOT equals to providing structure** (scaffolding and expectations). Students do benefit from structure, especially those who are anxious and uncertain
- "Benefits" of control like compliance and superficial learning come at a cost – anxiety, anger, and defiance!
- Even for students who're used to being controlled, **a controlling approach is still detrimental** for them AND you

Source: Haerens, L., Vansteenkiste, M., Aelterman, N., & Van den Berghe, L. (2016). *Toward a systematic study of the dark side of student motivation: Antecedents and consequences of teachers' controlling behaviours*. W. C. Liu, J. C. K. Wang, & R. M. Ryan (Eds.). Springer Science+Business Media: Singapore.

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