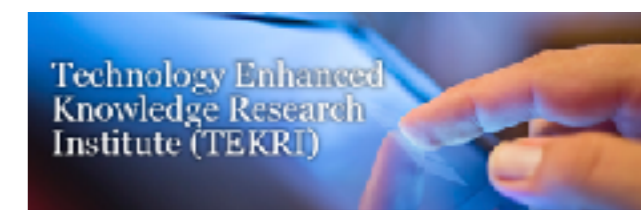https://jondron.ca
jond@athabascau.ca

There is no such thing as online learning

Why in-person teaching methods fail online, and what to do instead

**Invited talk,
Workshop on International Trends in Education 2022
Óbuda University**

Jon Dron, June 11 2022

IFNTF
International Federation of National Teaching Fellows

Athabasca University
FACULTY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
School of Computing & Information Systems

Technology Enhanced Knowledge Research Institute (TEKRI)

Education is a technological system. Ways of teaching (pedagogical methods/ pedagogies) are technologies, too

(so, learning technologies are those which include pedagogies in their assembly)

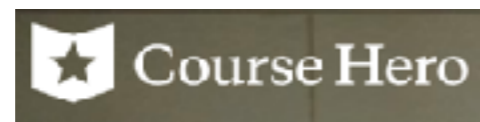On the whole, the 'stuff' technology does is to solve problems.

But, nearly always, a technology also *makes* problems

"Developing counter technologies to correct the new kinds of damage constantly being created by technological innovations is a policy of despair" (Dubos, 1969)

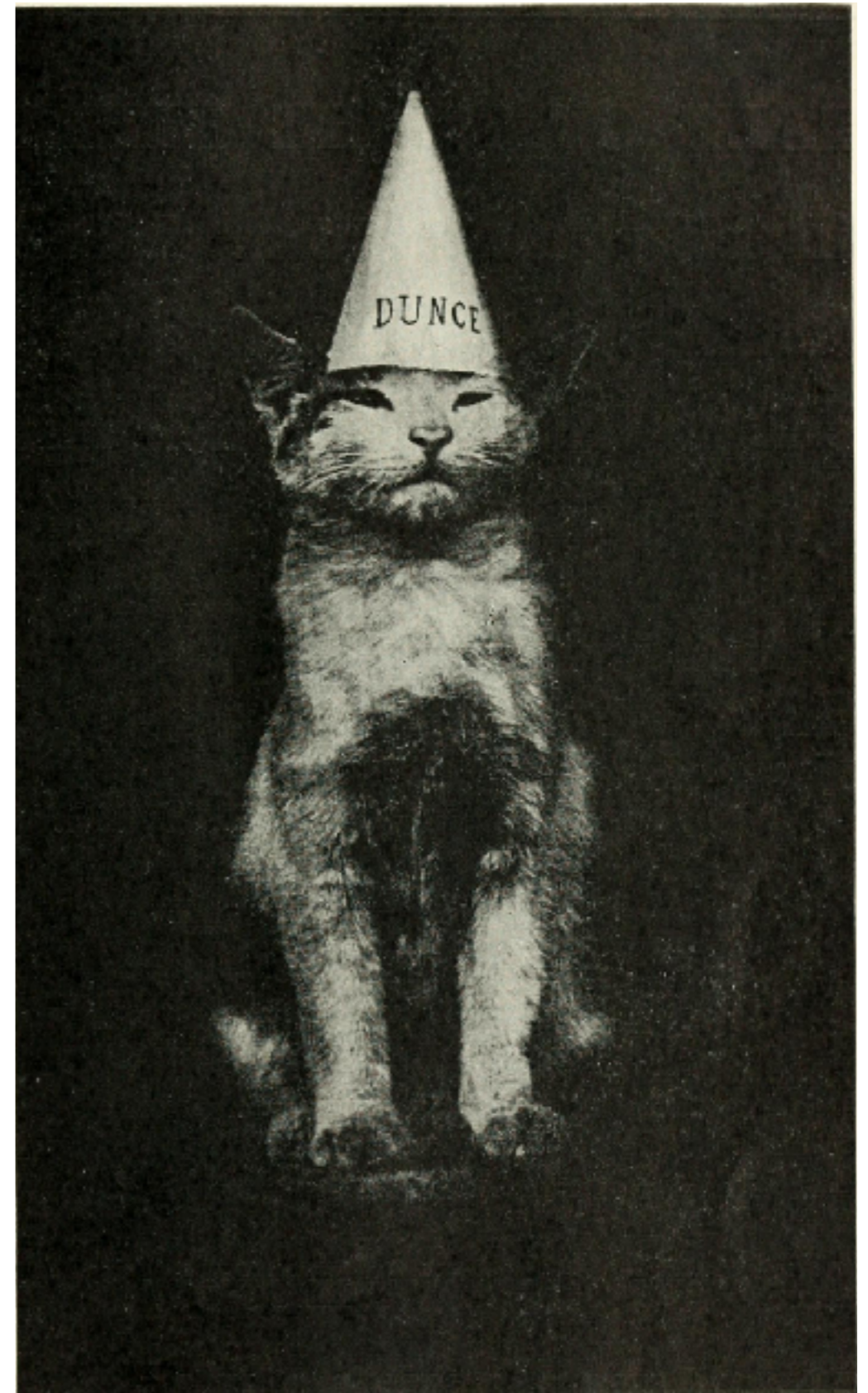## Often, the problems a technology solves are *caused* by other technologies
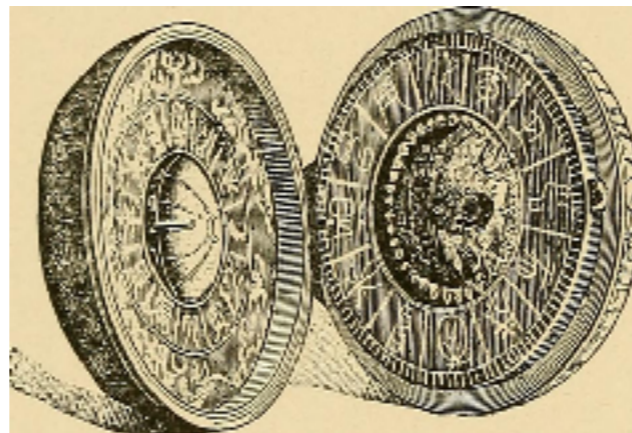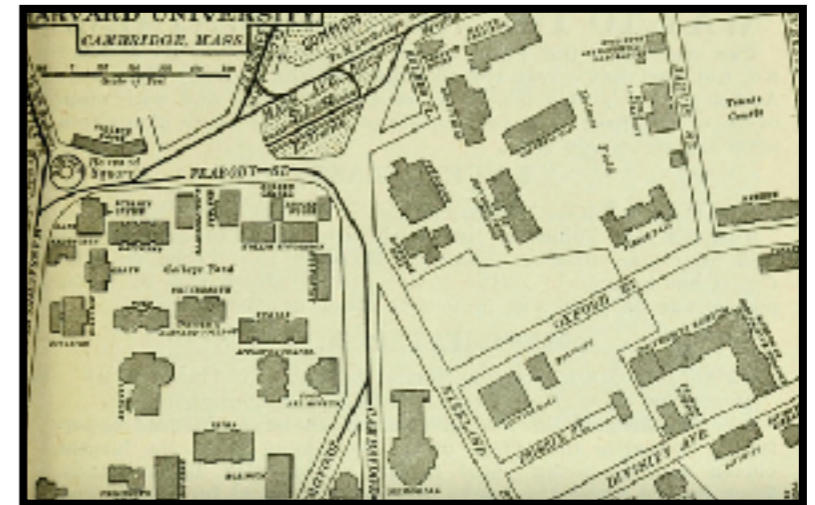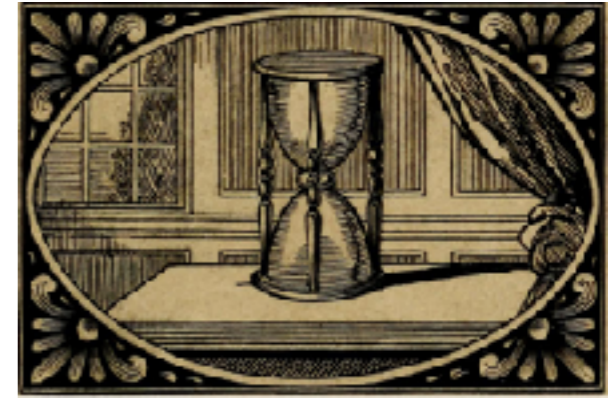
Higher education has been around a long, long time

a *lot* of its technologies are counter-technologies

What are the problems that in-person education has solve?

The hard problems

Physical boundaries and scarce resources

Good solutions (for mediaeval times)

seminars

tutorials

lectures

classrooms

classes

workshops

schools

libraries

labs

desks

universities

lecterns

textbooks

faculties

blackboards

What follows…

assignments

rules & regulations

tests

courses

exams

curricula

grades

programs

teachers in control of every second of what happens in the classroom

credentials

convocations

semesters

timetables

terms

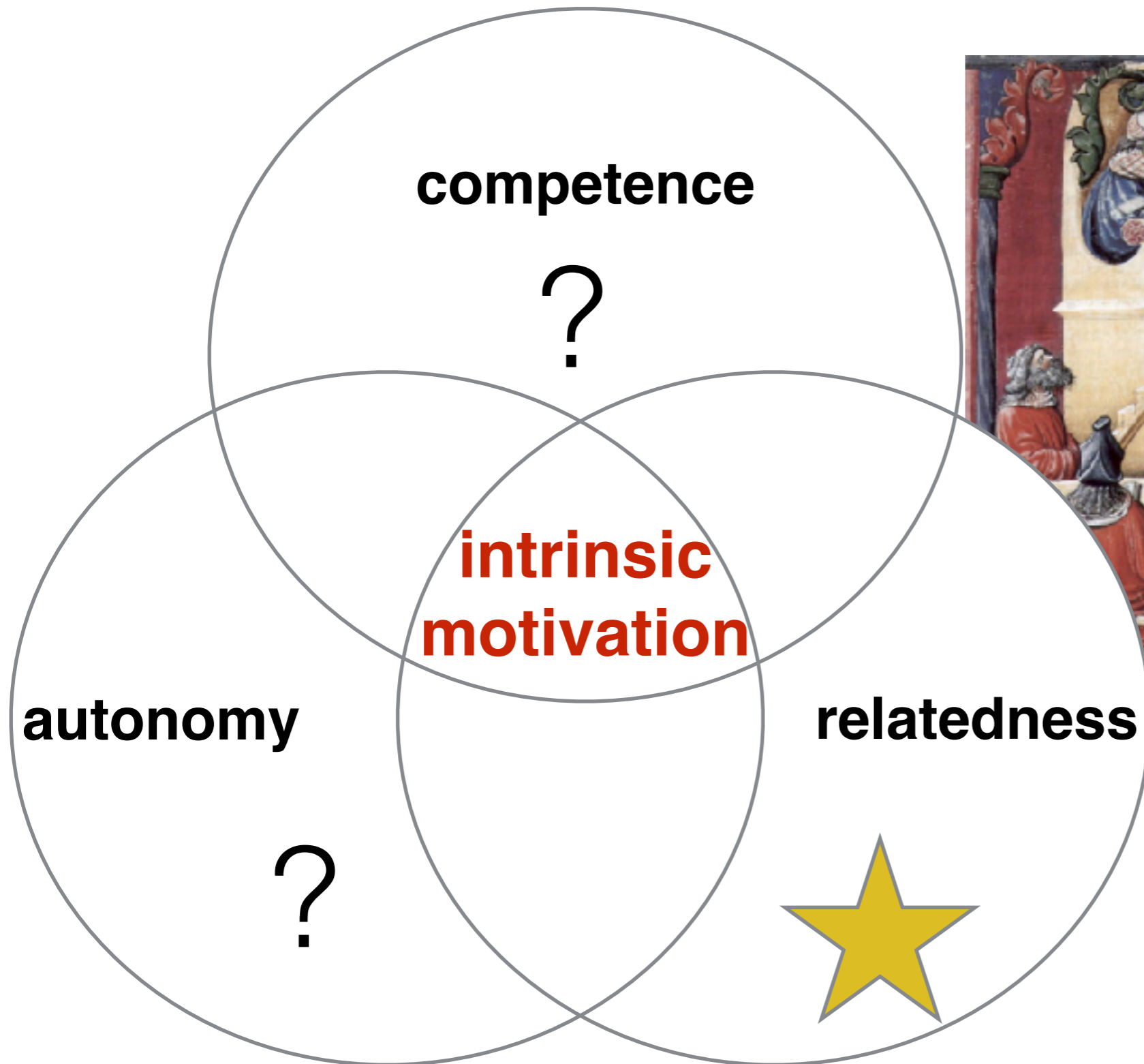**and**

People who are not in control
Confused people
Bored people

People who would rather be somewhere else

Classroom motivation

competence

?

intrinsic motivation

autonomy

?

relatedness

http://selfdeterminationtheory.org

Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (2000). The "What" and "Why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behaviour. Psychological Inquiry, 11, 227-268

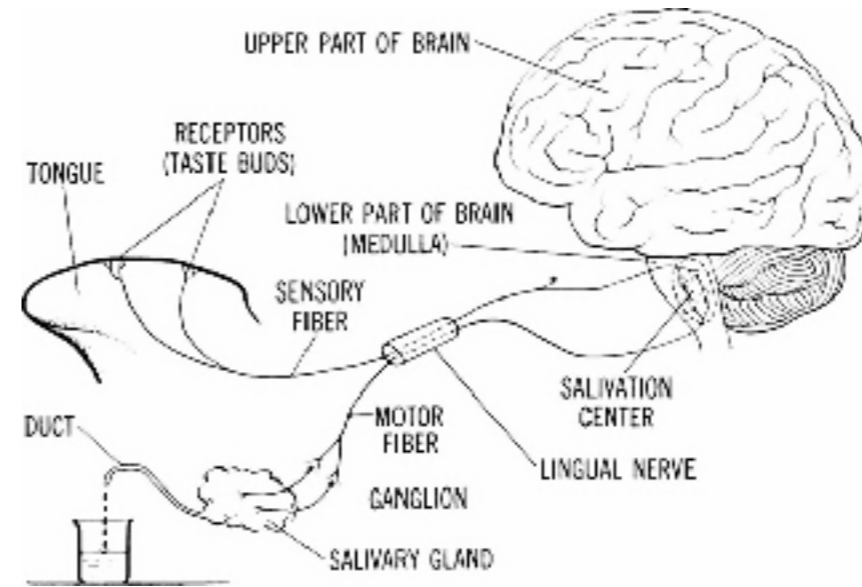**Ineffective** solutions use punishments and rewards

(that includes grades)

https://alfiekohn.org

Kohn, A. (1999). *Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise, and other bribes* (Kindle ed.). Mariner Books.

Extrinsic motivation crowds out Intrinsic motivation.

The reward, or avoidance of punishment, becomes the purpose (and *stays* that way)

Counter technologies to restore classroom motivation

Effective pedagogies allow for different capabilities, interests, approaches, differences in pacing, foster peer support, give opportunities for feedback, etc

competence

?

intrinsic motivation

autonomy

?

relatedness
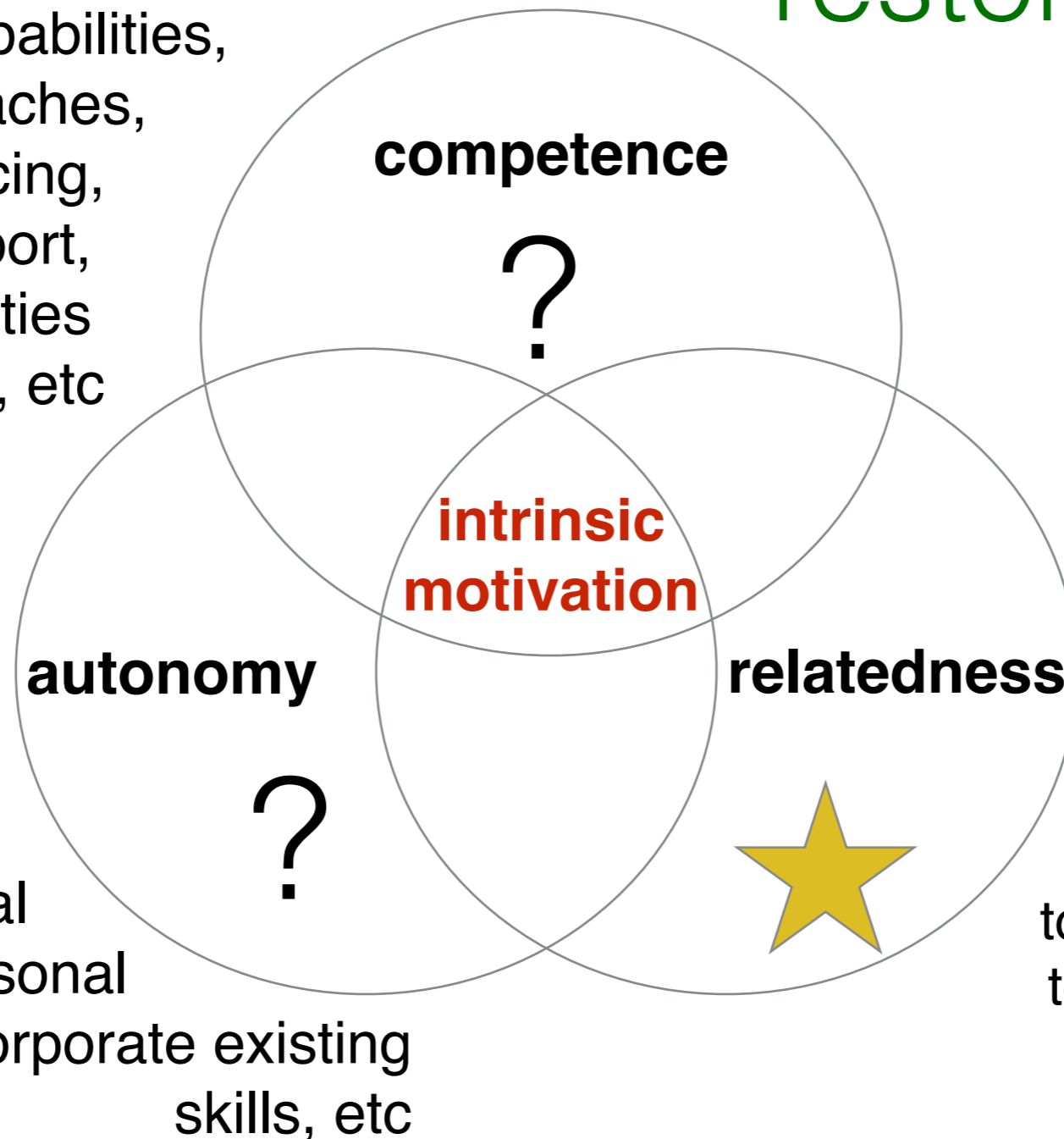
Effective pedagogies give learners autonomy, support personal goals, show personal relevance, incorporate existing skills, etc

Effective pedagogies let teachers show they care, help students to support one another, work together, see relevance to their communities, etc

http://selfdeterminationtheory.org

Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (2000). The "What" and "Why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behaviour. Psychological Inquiry, 11, 227-268

But in-person institutions (not just their teachers) teach, too

So you can teach terribly in-person, and students still learn

(in fact, they sometimes still learn if you fail to turn up at all)

It's not the same online

A virtual learning environment is not a learning environment

It is **part** of the learner's environment

The online *teaching* environment

The online *learning* environment

There is no such thing as online learning

Why in-person teaching methods fail online, and what to do in

You can't control this, or monitor this

Quora

Google

Reddit

StackExchange

Wikipedia
The Free Encyclopedia

Slack

Khan Academy

GitHub

Instagram

YouTube CA

Slashdot

stackoverflow

WhatsApp

Dictionary

and yet…

What happens when you take away the power of the teacher and keep the same controlling pedagogies?

Coursera Social Network by the Numbers

http://cogdogblog.com/2012/11/27/owning-massive/
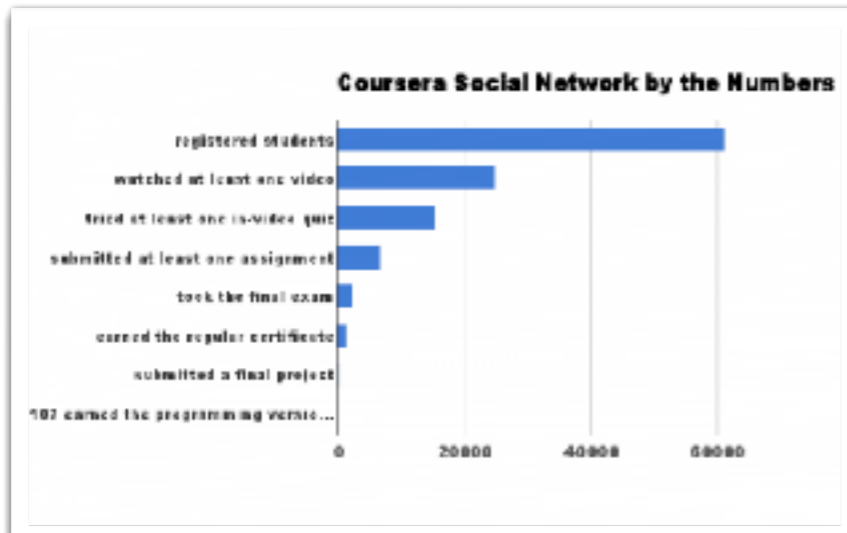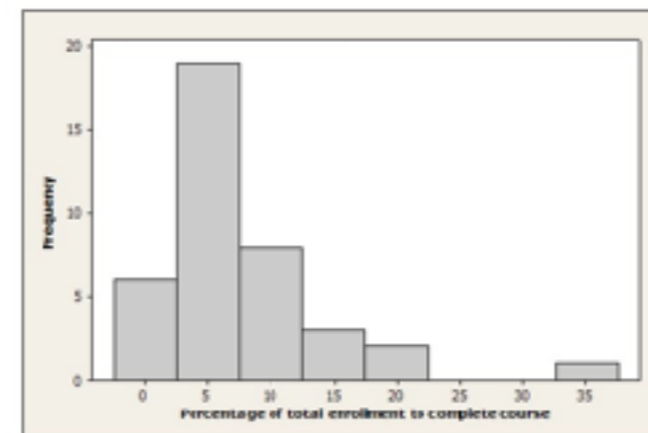
Figure 4. Histogram of completion rates for the sampled courses (n = 39).

"Completion rates range from 0.9% to 36.1%, with a median value of 6.5%"

Katy Jordan, 2014: http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1651/2774

Online motivation

Effective pedagogies:
give choices, support diversity, curate resources from different sources

Effective pedagogies:
let learners use their interests and environments, allow students to help define goals, respect diversity, focus on outcomes more than process

competence

intrinsic motivation

autonomy

relatedness
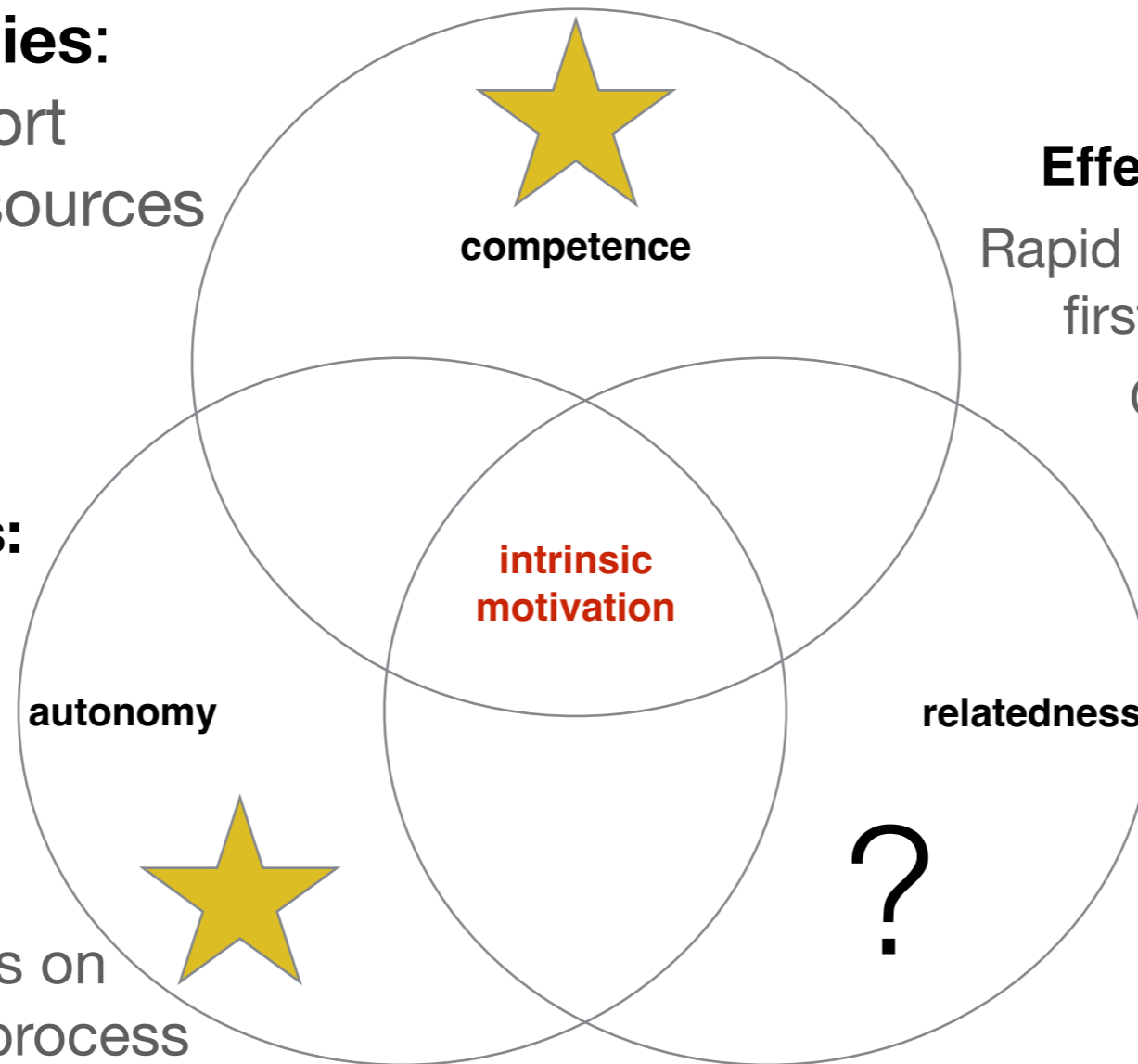
Effective pedagogies:
Rapid response times (especially the first time)

Giving (time, attention, praise for work, responsibility)

Designs that valorize sharing

Designs that make observation easier

Shared activities

Online discussions

Trust building

Personal profiles

Active online presence

Proactive engagement

http://selfdeterminationtheory.org

Understanding the distributed teacher

Architects
Lecture theatres
Universities
Movies
Legislators
Exam boards

Semesters
Programmers
Libraries
YouTube
hamburgers

Desks
Teachers
Twitter
LMSs
Illustrators

Website builders
Wikipedia
OERs
Timetables

Computers
Committees
The learner
Partners
Schedules
charts

Stack Exchange
rules
Curricula
System admins

Friends and families
People on buses
Classmates

News sources
Textbook authors
Books

Cleaners
Google search
Laboratories
amazon

Administrators
Learning designers
religions

Pedagogical patterns

Controlling		**Liberating**
Creating content	→	Curating content
Telling, directing	→	Listening, observing
Fixed curriculum	→	Flexible paths
Timetables	→	Chunks, self-pacing
Rewarding, punishing	→	Supporting, caring
Leading, demanding	→	Role modelling, connecting
Collaboration	→	Cooperation
Fixed deadlines	→	Negotiable deadlines
Teacher-dictated challenges	→	Personal challenges
Fixed outcomes	→	Negotiable outcomes
Assignments and tests	→	Portfolios, problems, and projects
Assessing whether outcomes are met	→	Assessing evidence of learning

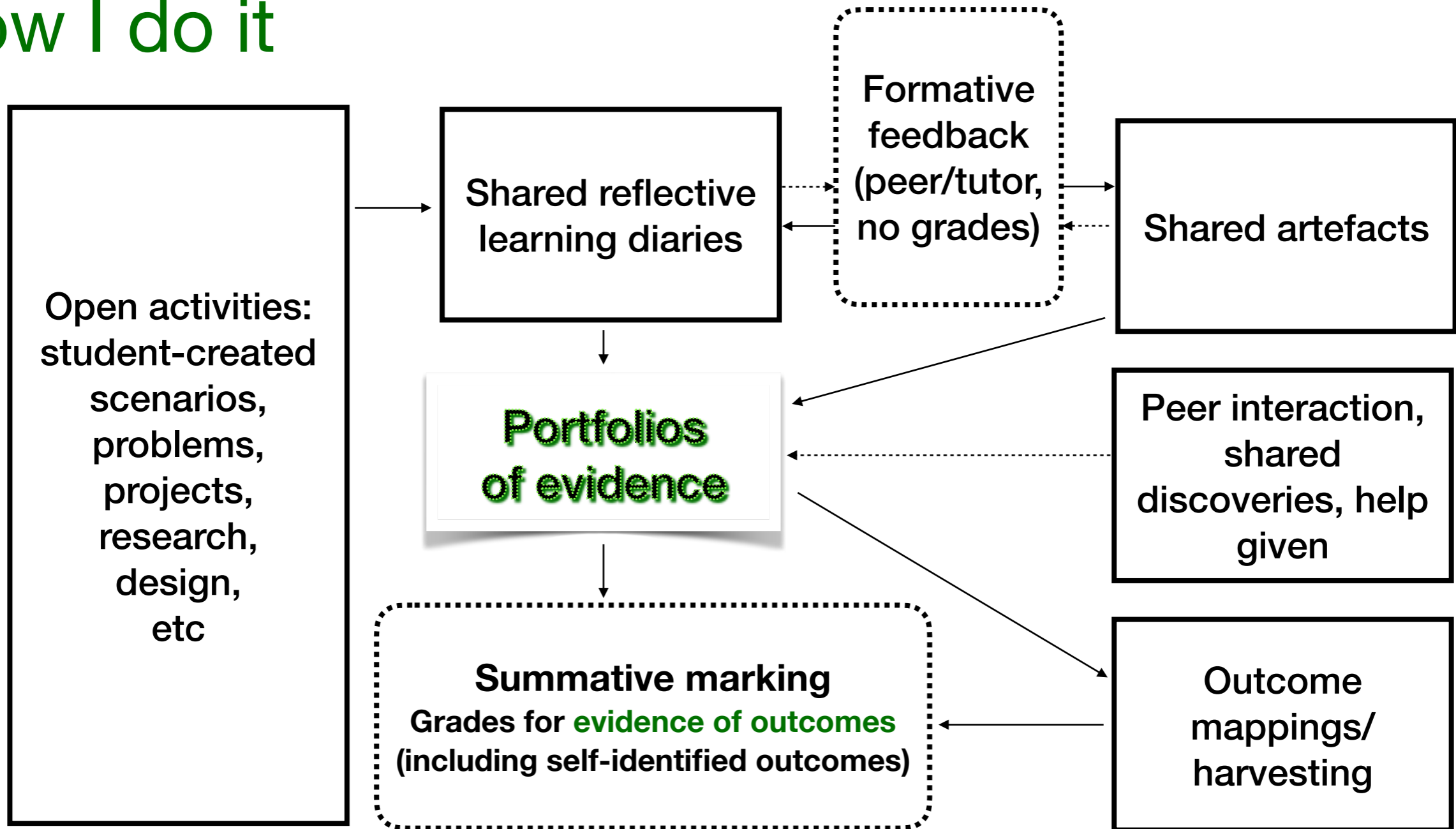The easiest path in-person   The easiest path online
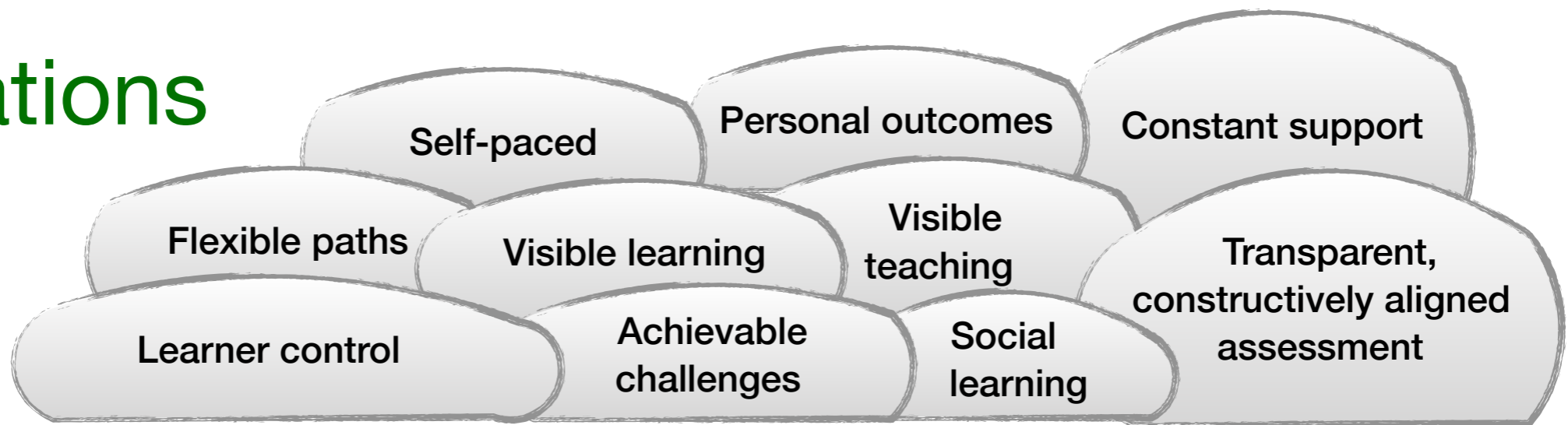
In brief:

let go (but stay close)

design the **process**, not the product

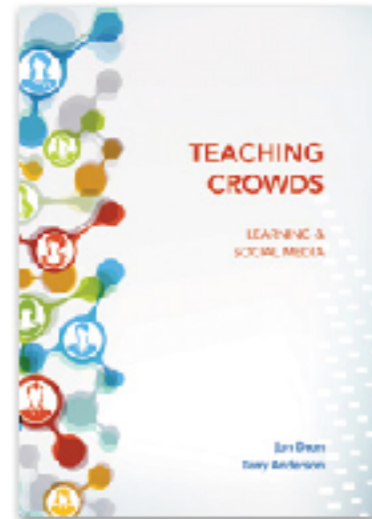make learning (not just its products) **visible**

How I do it

Open activities: student-created scenarios, problems, projects, research, design, etc

→ **Shared reflective learning diaries**

→ **Formative feedback (peer/tutor, no grades)**

→ **Shared artefacts**

Portfolios of evidence

Peer interaction, shared discoveries, help given

Summative marking Grades for **evidence of outcomes** (including self-identified outcomes)

Outcome mappings/ harvesting

Foundations

- Self-paced
- Personal outcomes
- Constant support
- Flexible paths
- Visible learning
- Visible teaching
- Learner control
- Achievable challenges
- Social learning
- Transparent, constructively aligned assessment

CONTROL AND CONSTRAINT IN E-LEARNING
Choosing When to Choose

JON DRON

TEACHING CROWDS
LEARNING & SOCIAL MEDIA

Jon Dron
Terry Anderson

Coming Spring 2023:
How Education Works:
Teaching, Technology, and
Technique *(AU Press)*

Thank you

✉ jond@athabascau.ca

▶ @jondron

🌐 https://jondron.ca/