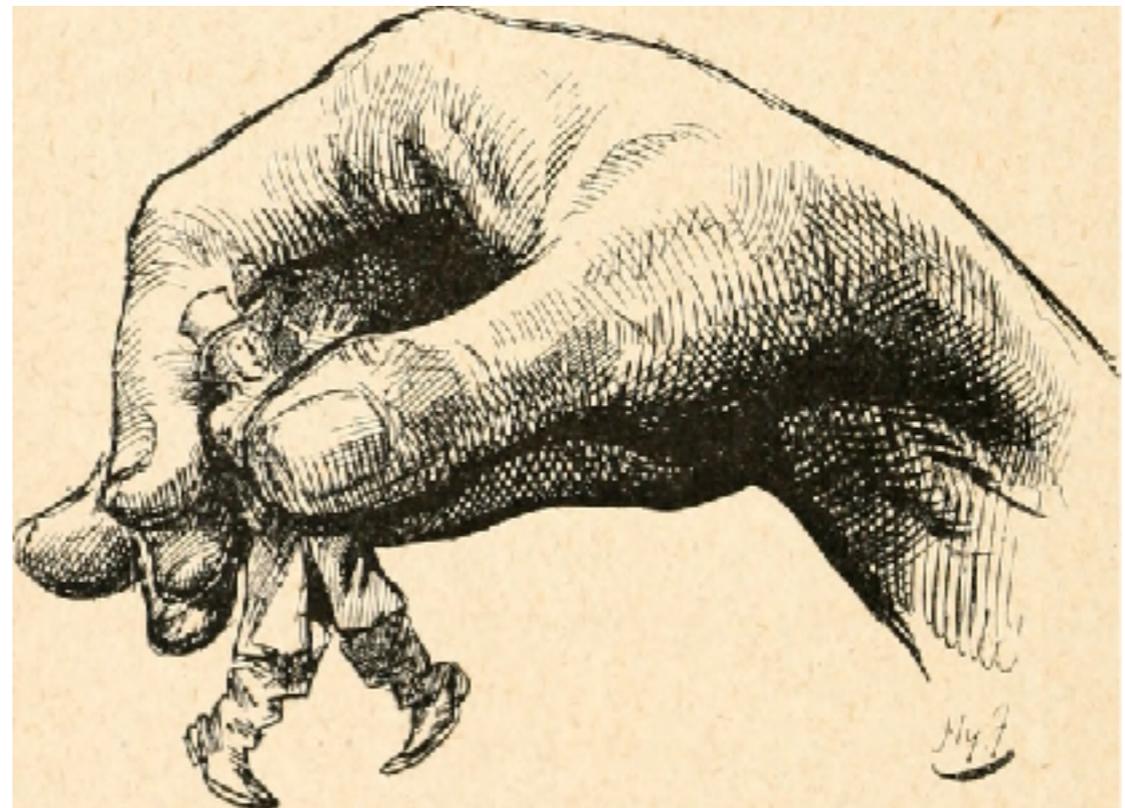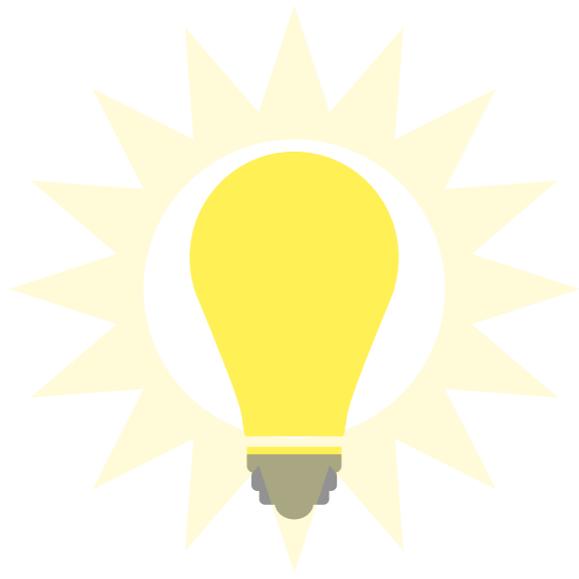# How distance changes everything

*Scaffolding a Transformative Transition to Distance and Online Learning*, University of Ottawa, November 2020

**Jon Dron**
**https://jondron.ca**
**jond@athabascau.ca**

# My proudest teaching moment

**my student:** (angrily) You're not teaching me anything!
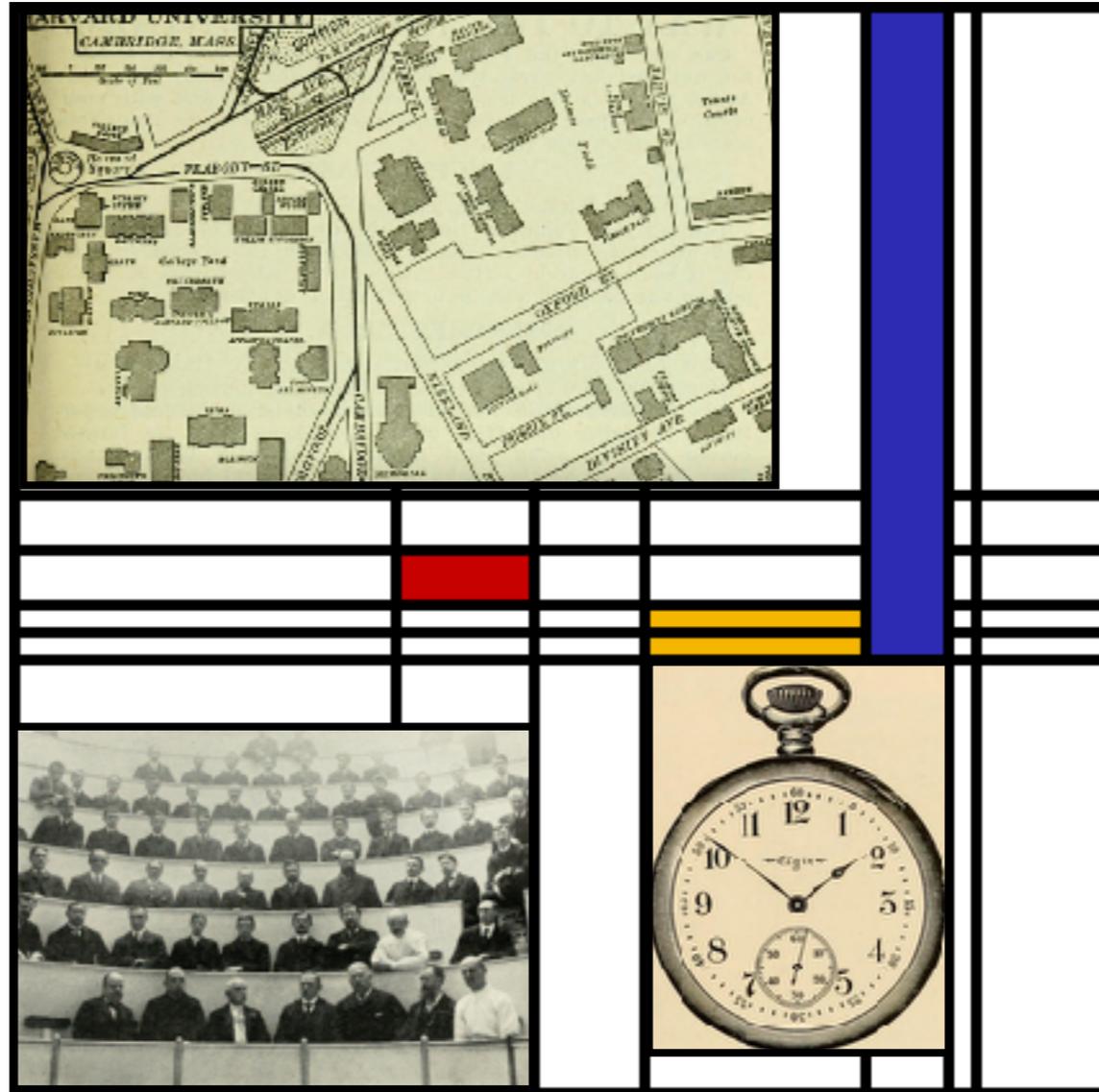
**me:** But are you *learning* anything?

**my student:** Yes, more than on any other course I've ever taken. But I have to do it **all** myself. You're not *teaching* me anything.

Why/pourquoi:

→ lectures

→ classes

→ courses

→ attendance requirements

→ timetables

→ semesters

Physical boundaries and scarce resources

faculties

**classes**

semesters

schools

**rules & regulations**

universities

terms

tests

**accreditation**

textbooks

**timetables**

assignments

seminars

**exams**

**lectures**

**What follows…**

convocations

**courses**

programs

tutorials

**grades**

**curricula**

learning outcomes

desks

libraries

**teachers in control**

# Faustian bargains

"When you invent the ship, you also invent the shipwreck;

when you invent the plane you also invent the plane crash;

and when you invent electricity, you invent electrocution."

Paul Virilio. *Politics of the Very Worst*, New York: Semiotext(e), 1999, p. 89
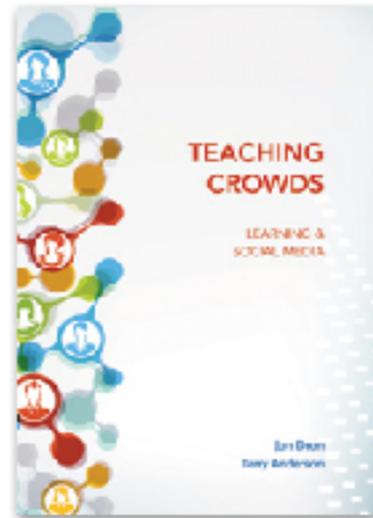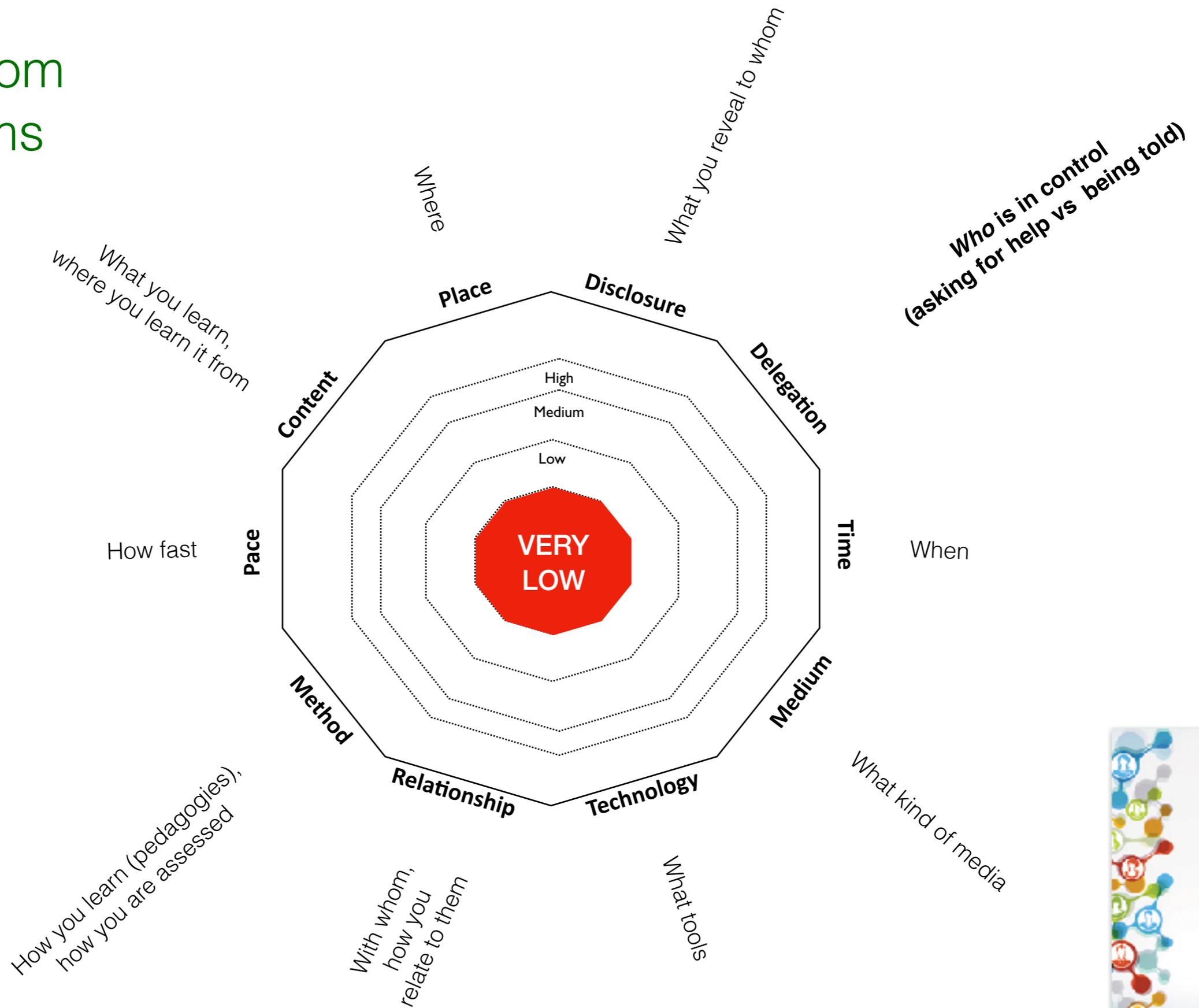
en Français - *Cybermonde, la politique du pire*

# Counter technologies

Many of our most cherished pedagogical methods are solutions to problems created by in-person teaching.



Dubos, R. (1969). American Academy of Allergy 25th anniversary series: The spaceship earth. *Journal of Allergy*, *44*(1), 1-9.

# Typical classroom freedoms



Where

What you reveal to whom

*Who* is in control (asking for help vs being told)

What you learn, where you learn it from

How fast

When

How you learn (pedagogies), how you are assessed

With whom, how you relate to them

What tools

What kind of media

**Place**

**Disclosure**

**Delegation**

**Content**

**Pace**

**Time**

**Method**

**Medium**

**Relationship**

**Technology**

High

Medium

Low

VERY LOW

TEACHING CROWDS

LEARNING & SOCIAL MEDIA

# The biggest problems that classroom teaching must solve
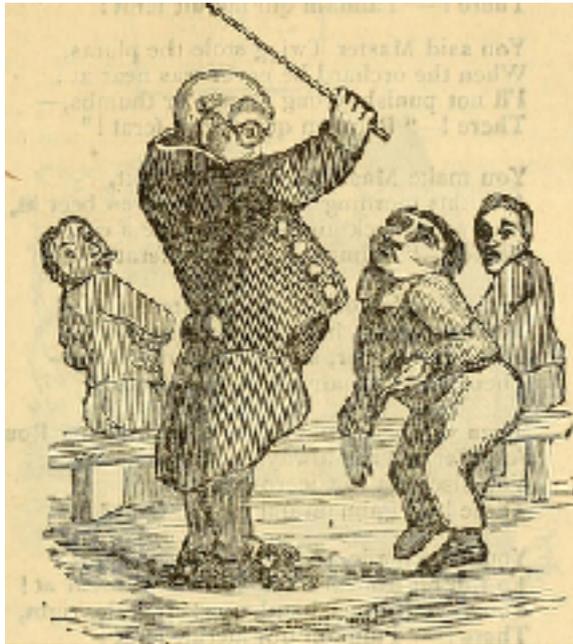
People who are not in control
Confused people
Bored people



People who would rather be somewhere else

# **Ineffective** solutions use punishments and rewards

(yes, that includes grades)

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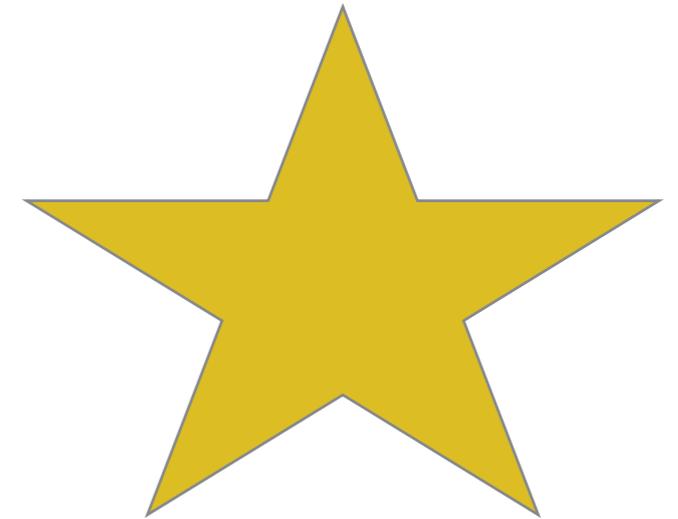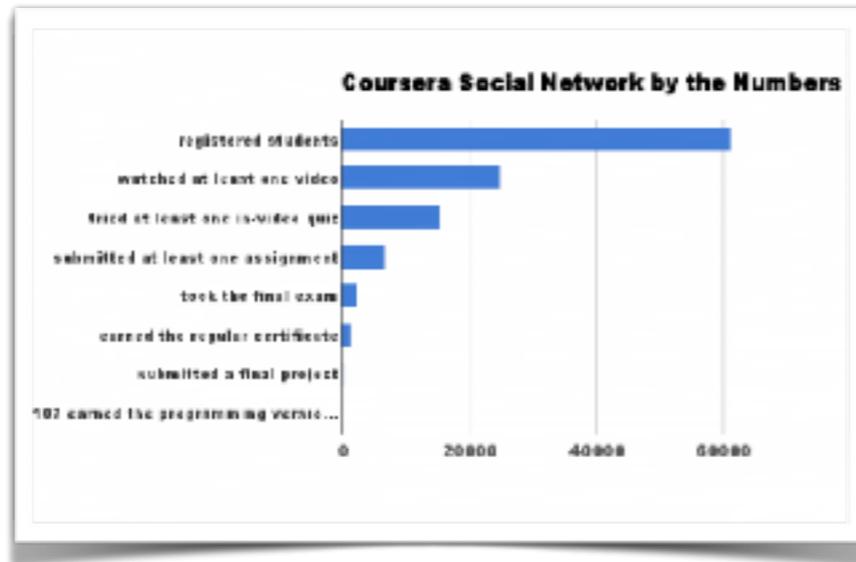
# Extrinsic motivation crowds out Intrinsic motivation.
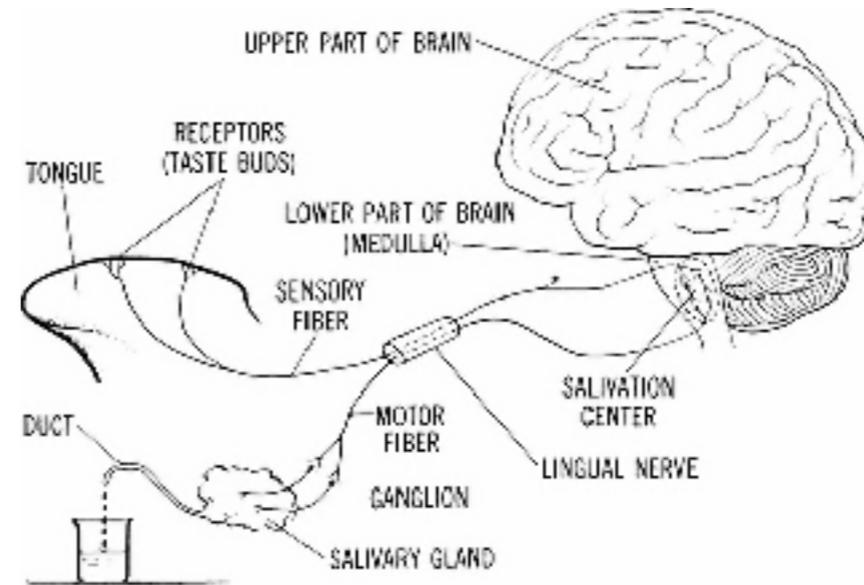


**The reward, or avoidance of punishment, becomes the purpose (and *stays* that way)**

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



**Coursera Social Network by the Numbers**

registered students
watched at least one video
tried at least one in-video quiz
submitted at least one assignment
took the final exam
earned the regular certificate
submitted a final project
*02 earned the programming versio...

0    20000    40000    60000

http://cogdogblog.com/2012/11/27/owning-massive/



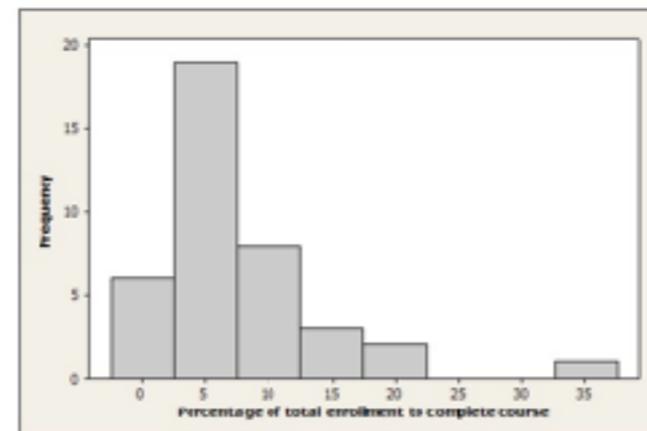*Figure 4.* Histogram of completion rates for the sampled courses (*n* = 39).

Percentage of total enrollment to complete course

"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

# Less controlling approaches to 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

# Online teachers are not in control unless they reward or punish



Where

What you reveal to whom

**Who** is in control
(asking for help vs being told)

Place

Disclosure

Delegation

What you learn, where you learn it from

Content

How fast

Pace

(POTENTIALLY)
VERY HIGH

Time

When

Medium

What kind of media

Method

Relationship

Technology

What tools

How you learn (pedagogies), how you are assessed

Who with, how you relate to them

**TEACHING CROWDS**

LEARNING & SOCIAL MEDIA

# Online motivation

**Effective pedagogies**:
do not dictate, give choices, support diversity, curate resources from different sources

**competence**

**Effective pedagogies:**

Rapid response times (especially the first time)

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

Designs that mean students must share

Designs that make observation easier

Shared activities

Online discussions

Trust building

Personal profiles

Active online presence

Proactive engagement

**intrinsic motivation**

**autonomy**

**relatedness**

?

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

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

# How to let go

Give freedom to choose

Empower students to make *good* choices

*Give freedom to choose **not** to choose*

Understand needs and interests

*Stay close*

# Pedagogical patterns

| **Controlling** | **Liberating** |
| --- | --- |
| Creating content | Curating content |
| Telling, directing | Listening, observing |
| Fixed curriculum | Flexible paths |
| Timetables | Chunks, episodes |
| Rewarding, punishing | Supporting, caring |
| Leading, demanding | Role modelling, connecting |
| Collaboration | Cooperation |
| Setting deadlines | Negotiating 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

# Understand the distributed teacher

# Trade-offs

precision replicability efficiency scalability ease of use

## hard is easy
## soft is hard

resilience flexibility diversity creativity control
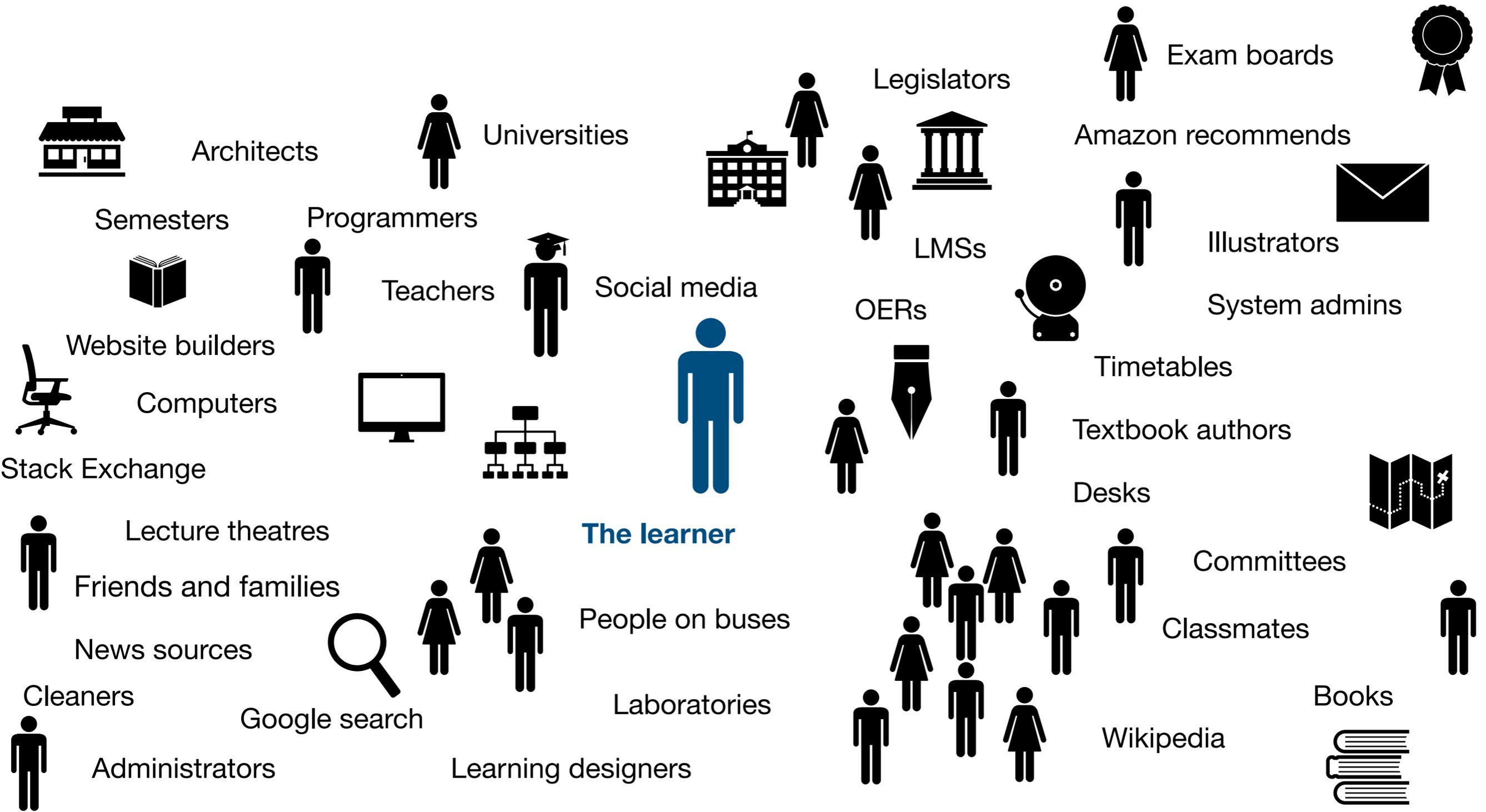
The greater the flexibility, the more active the thought, motivation, and intentional action is needed.

Hard technologies limit the number of choices that must be made. Sometimes that is good.

Dron, J. (2013). Soft is hard and hard is easy: learning technologies and social media. Form@re, 13(1), 32-43.
Retrieved from http://www.fupress.net/index.php/formare/article/view/12613
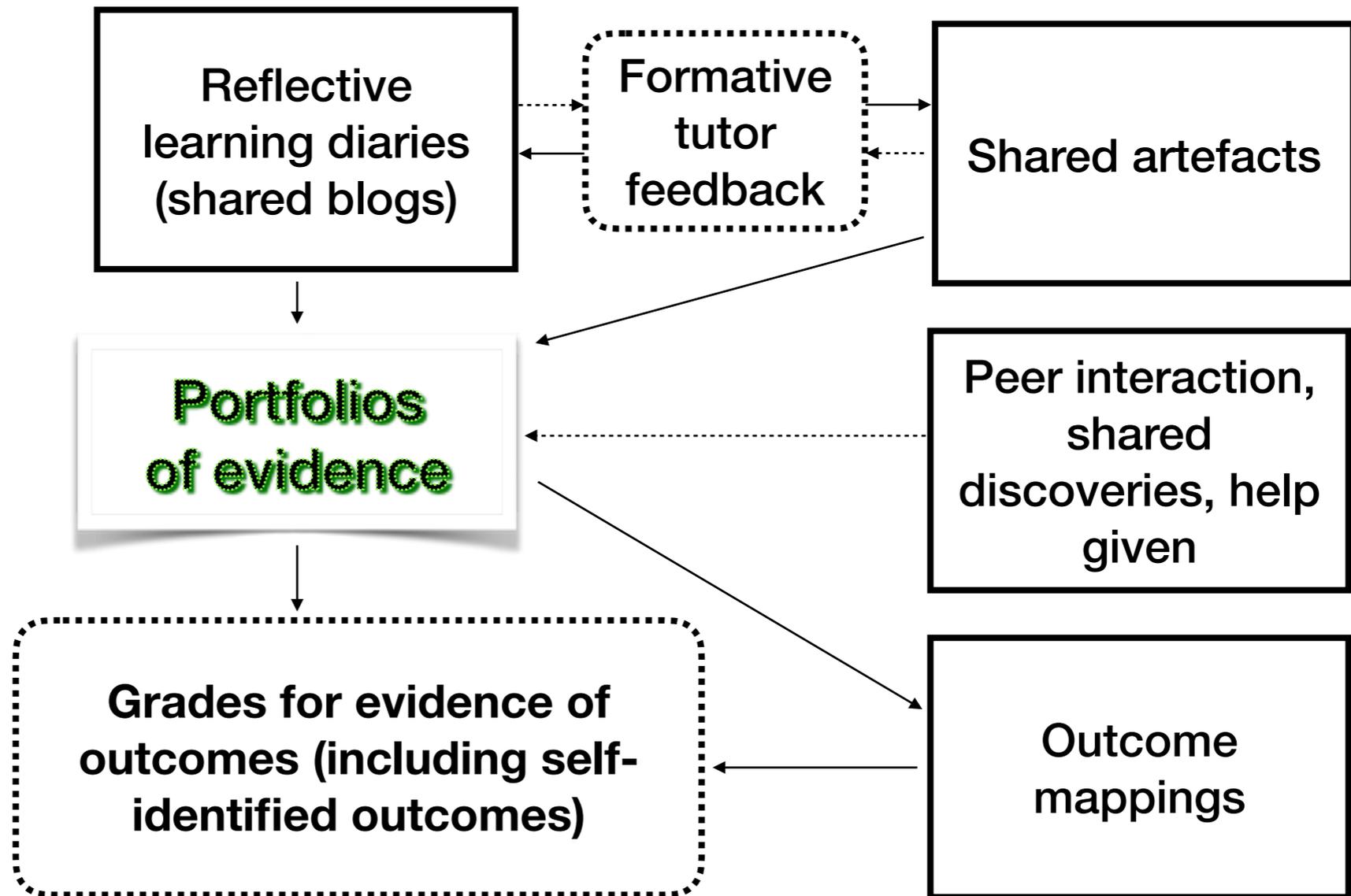
# How I do it

No assignments

One central problem/project/ scenario, chosen by the student

Iterative growth

Structured process, not structured content

Choice of curated OER or Web tutorials using different pedagogies for each stage (or they find their own)

Ongoing interaction and support as needed

Reflective learning diaries (shared blogs)

Formative tutor feedback

Shared artefacts

Portfolios of evidence

Peer interaction, shared discoveries, help given

Grades for evidence of outcomes (including self-identified outcomes)

Outcome mappings

Flexible paths

Visible learning

Visible teaching

Transparent, constructively aligned assessment

Learner control

Achievable challenges

Social learning
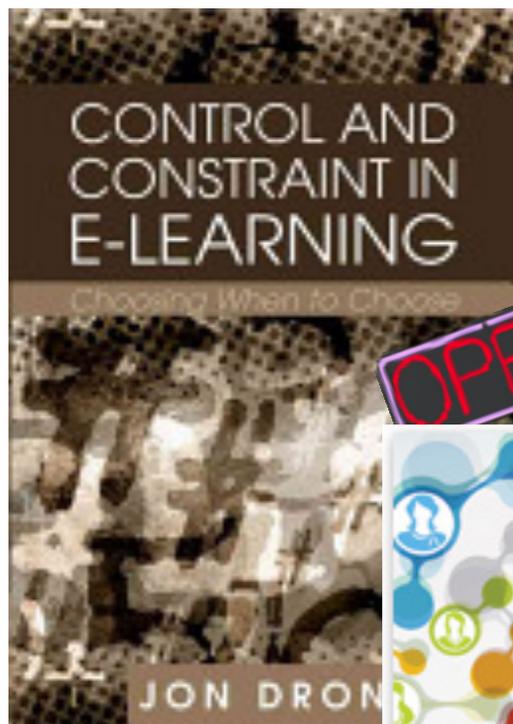
# Being a good teacher (online or not)

⭐ **Caring about (and knowing about) the learners**
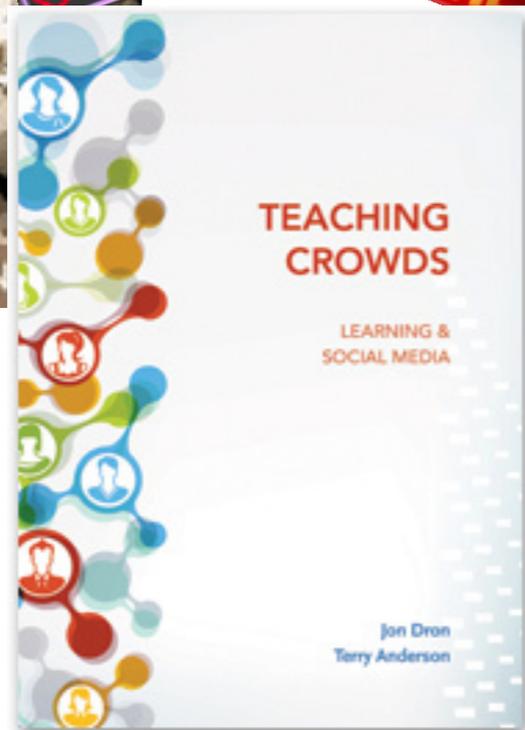
⭐ **Caring about (and knowing about) learning & teaching**

⭐ **Caring about (and knowing about) the subject you teach**

Hattie, J. (2013). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. Taylor & Francis.

CONTROL AND CONSTRAINT IN E-LEARNING
*Choosing When to Choose*

JON DRON

OPEN

LIBRE

TEACHING CROWDS
LEARNING & SOCIAL MEDIA

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https://jondron.ca

Thank you,
Merci

http://teachingcrowds.ca