

Teachers' Attitudes Towards Learners' Autonomy

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ABSTRACT

In order to be successful in higher education, students should be co-owners of the learning process (Greetshuis et al., 2014); there should be equal partnership between teachers and students to develop learners' autonomy. The need for fostering learner autonomy has increased with the **coronavirus pandemic**, which is an ongoing global pandemic that emerged in 2019 (COVID-19) and which has triggered severe social and economic disruptions. Social distancing measures, for instance, were implemented worldwide in 2020. Many students were unable to attend classes and were left to manage their learning on their own. They were expected—and should have had—the necessary skills to learn how to learn, which was not always the case.

The present study seeks to examine learner autonomy from teachers' perspectives with the aim of helping the latter reflect on their practices and find out ways to enhance students' academic performance and accompany them on their journey towards autonomy. It builds on previous research into learner autonomy from students' perspectives (Lamkhanter, 2022), which revealed a great awareness of the importance of learner autonomy among Moroccan university students. The article yielded evidence of very promising ground upon which can be built a culture of autonomy in Moroccan higher education.

A mixed method approach was adopted to gather data. First, a questionnaire was conducted among 74 university teachers so as to discover 1) how—and if—teachers fostered autonomous learning behaviour in classes; and 2) what their attitudes toward learner autonomy were. Later, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 teachers to consider ways to give learners control over their own learning, following Nunan (2015) who speaks about the importance of actively involving students in evaluating and making decisions about what will be the content focus.

The findings have confirmed that teachers play important roles in developing learner autonomy. They need to be facilitators of the learning process so that they can support their students emotionally and prepare them to become responsible for their own learning. La Ganza (2008) concludes that the relationship with the teacher frames the extent to which the learner can realize his/her achievements. Therefore, teachers have to reconsider the multiple roles they might play in order to foster their learners' autonomy.

keywords: learner autonomy, teacher's perceptions; learner responsibility, teachers' roles