An evaluation of the FOLA-lessons at the Atert Lycée Redange

ATERT-LYCÉE REDANGE

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Declaration of originality

I hereby declare that the present work is the result of my own individual research and effort and that I have written it myself. The material presented in this *travail de candidature* has not been submitted wholly or in part for any other academic qualification or award other than for which it is submitted now. Every idea or material borrowed from other authors is given its due credit.

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Identifying success factors and areas for improvement towards better practice

Redange, 2016

Abstract

FOLA-lessons (Follow-up Learning Activities) at the Atert Lycée Redange consist of a number of weekly lessons in which students are expected to complete a series of tasks. These lessons are meant to reduce social inequality in order to provide students with equal opportunities to do their homework inside the school, especially for those who lack an adequate learning environment at home. In addition to this goal, quite a number of other aims and objectives were initially set for the FOLA-lessons and the use of a week-plan.

The present project is both qualitative and quantitative as the methodology used consisted in three different steps. A first step consisted in observing FOLA-lessons with different classes and teachers. Secondly, based on these empirical observations, two questionnaires were designed in order to shed light on the beliefs and attitudes of students and teachers in and towards FOLA-lessons. Two more questionnaires exploring teachers' and parents' attitudes are also occasionally referred to in our analysis. Thirdly, interviews with teachers were carried out in order to get a better understanding of the answers provided in the above-mentioned questionnaires.

Based on the data collected, this *travail de candidature* explores the positive aspects as well as the limitations of FOLA-lessons with regard to the initial learning objectives that this project identified based on the school's archives. The impacts of FOLA-lessons were divided into four main categories, namely teacher-student relationships, learner autonomy, personalised instruction and cooperative interactions.

The outcome speaks in favour of an attitudinal shift within the school community. Focus on *practice* should develop into focus on *deliberate practice*, where teachers are to adopt autonomy-supportive rather than controlling strategies, thus encouraging students to self-regulate their learning with greater responsibility in order to develop more learner autonomy. This *travail de candidature* clarifies the concept of FOLA and suggests areas of action towards better practice in FOLA-lessons with regard to the learner, the week-plan and the teacher. It highlights the importance of learner variables such as student empowerment, self-regulation skills and social skills facilitating cooperative interactions. The week-plan also plays a role towards better practice in FOLA-lessons by providing clear instructions and success criteria, but also engaging and appropriately challenging tasks as well as prior scaffolding in class. Finally, teachers should also be made aware of their impact, which can be enhanced thanks to their psychological skills, positive classroom management, autonomy-supportive strategies and a greater synergy within the teaching staff. Analyses and hands-on advice provided throughout this *travail de candidature* are meant to raise students' and teachers' awareness of their actual impact as well as strategies they can implement to make the most out the opportunities which FOLA-lessons provide.

Glossary

ALR	Atert Lycée Redange
CM	Division Administrative et Commerciale de l'EST
ES	Enseignement Secondaire
EST	Enseignement Secondaire Technique
FOLA	FOllow-up Learning Activities
PS	Division des Professions de Santé et des Professions Sociales de l'EST
TG	Division Technique Générale de l'EST
WP	Week-Plan or Weekly Plan

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Chapter 1 – The origins and goals of FOLA-lessons

1.1.   Historical background

In 2006, the Ministry of Education launched an ambitious national school reform based on the observation that our Luxembourgish society has changed tremendously over the last decades. As Jos Bertemes and colleagues point out, the Luxembourgish society is now characterised by:
- the disintegration of traditional family models and the increase of single-parent or patchwork families,
- the intensification of individualism and loss of parental authority,
- the vanishing of unskilled jobs due to corporate relocation to emerging economies,
- the rise of youth unemployment and early school dropouts,
- a significant population growth due to unforeseen immigration streams which result in a multicultural society,
- an unusual labour market with an increasing demand for highly skilled and specialised jobs (2012: pp. 50-1).

Due to these fundamental changes and the diversity of student profiles, Luxembourgish schools have to face new challenges in order to enable every pupil to develop their full potential. As a result, the Ministry of Education commits to ensuring more equity in the Luxembourgish educational system.[1]

Instruction is traditionally based on the 'no child left behind' principle according to which all students should be given similar treatment in order to reach and demonstrate equal standards of proficiency. As Julia Roberts and Tracy Inman point out, fairness does not consist in giving every student the opportunity to do the same thing but in enabling pupils to be equally challenged, i.e. to be provided with ongoing opportunities to make continuous progress by being involved and challenged according to their individual characteristics and needs (2007: p. 6). This idea is also reflected in the 2013-2018 Luxembourgish government programme.

> Un système éducatif performant et socialement juste est décisif pour donner à chaque enfant des chances équitables pour construire son avenir. Il constitue en même temps une condition indispensable afin d'assurer la cohésion sociale et le succès économique de notre pays. Les mêmes chances de départ dans la vie, une éducation de qualité et le développement des capacités individuelles de chaque enfant doivent donc être les points centraux de la politique en matière d'éducation nationale.
>
> (Programme gouvernemental 2013-2018, p. 1)

Being aware of these significant changes in society and the specific needs of today's pupils, the Atert-Lycée Redange (hereafter referred to as the ALR) commits to developing and implementing pedagogical tools to improve every learner's chances for academic as well as social success, especially of those who do not get the expected or needed support at home. Since its recent creation, the ALR has defined a set of core principles that guide the development and implementation of this pedagogical approach. These core principles, which

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[1] For further information, see Lenz and Bertemes (2015)

shape the ALR's identity, consist in providing more opportunities for learning to occur inside of the school house, alongside greater student autonomy and sense of academic and social responsibility. The pedagogical methods implemented towards these goals should provide a balance between skills, knowledge and attitudes by favouring formative assessment, task-based approaches and to the development of transversal competences.

In order to reach these ambitious goals, a variety of tools have been and are still being developed, among which FOLA-lessons, which are the focus of this *travail de candidature*.

1.2.   What are FOLA-lessons?

The concept of FOLA (i.e. FOllow-up Learning Activities), also known under the name of *homeroom class* (West, 2008: p. 2) or *extended school day* (Vatterott, 2009: p. 146) consists of up to seven lessons which are integrated in the official timetable of each student, during which the latter is expected to complete a series of tasks within one week. As mentioned above, these lessons are meant to reduce social inequality by providing students with equal opportunities to do their homework *inside* of the school house and in the presence of a teacher, especially for those who lack an adequate learning environment at home.

In other words, FOLA-lessons are 45-minute periods of time used to supervise homework and accompany students academically. As a result, school days last until 3.30 p.m. (except on Fridays, when students go back home at 12.15 a.m.). For administrative and budgetary reasons, subject-based class periods have all been shortened by five minutes in order to be able to include this homework time in the official schedule. Appendices 1a, 1b and 1c are examples of typical ALR student schedules.

Since it first opened its doors in September 2008, the ALR has developed a complex system of FOLA-lessons. As shown in Appendix 2, not every class has the same amount of FOLA-lessons in their timetable. Initially, the number of FOLA-lessons in each class was defined according to the students' needs in terms of age, autonomy, workload and pedagogical resources. Based on the assumption that students would gain autonomy in the course of their education at the ALR, it was planned that the more the students would progress in their schooling, the fewer FOLA-lesson they would need. Nevertheless, the allocation of FOLA-lessons turned out to be more complicated than expected. First, FOLA-lessons are to be organised within budgetary constraints. Furthermore, FOLA-lessons are subject to organisational constraints. An obvious example can be found in the 'régime de la formation de technicien', where FOLA-lessons are planned in the timetable and used as a time slot for remedial actions such as 'rattrapage', 'appui' or 'remédiation' to enable students to resit modules.[2] As students have different modules to resit or optional modules to choose, not every student attends the same classes and FOLA-lessons, so that students tend to have different amounts of FOLA-lessons within a same class. This is also the case in the superior classes of the 'enseignement secondaire'

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[2] See Appendix 1b

(hereafter called ES), where the number of FOLA-lessons is adapted according to the students' choices of main and optional subjects (e.g. Latin). Moreover, due to space but also time constraints (as a lesson lasts only 45 minutes), some FOLA-lessons have been replaced by subject-based lessons so that students have one more lesson in their timetable than prescribed in the curriculum, such as French in CM classes, Maths in TG classes, Biology in PS classes or Sports in IIIe/IIe.[3] Finally, besides these budgetary and organisational constraints, questions have been raised whether FOLA-lessons should not be optional rather than compulsory. Indeed, based on the observation that not every student enjoys or takes advantage of the FOLA-lessons, a new project called 'ProET' was launched in September 2014, enabling students in IVe, 10^e, IIIe, 11^e, IIe, 12GE, T0 and T1 to take part in activities meant to develop their talents rather than to attend two weekly FOLA-lessons. These optional FOLA-lessons are therefore called FOLAP instead of FOLAC in the students' timetable.[4]

1.3.   What are the goals of FOLA-lessons?

It is quite a challenge to find one clearly-defined set of aims and objectives initially set for FOLA-lessons. As mentioned above, FOLA-lessons were initially thought as a means to complete tasks at school in order for learning to occur under teachers' control and guidance and not to be affected by the students' socioeconomic home environment. In other words, FOLA-lessons are meant to reduce social inequality by providing students with equal opportunities to do homework. Although this process does not *replace* homework, it results in less workload at home, so that *most of* students' learning happens at school.

Besides this objective, other goals were set for FOLA-lessons but these have always remained quite implicit, and/or scattered across numerous mostly unpublished documents written in the early stages of the ALR.[5] Based on these internal documents, quite a number of other goals can be identified for FOLA-lessons and the use of a week-plan. Classified in five categories, eleven aims and objectives of FOLA-lessons can be listed up (in no implied order of importance).

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[3] See Appendix 2 for the distribution of FOLA-lessons according to the various classes in the school year 2014-2015

[4] See Appendix 1c – Under the legislation, schools are granted a certain degree of autonomy to pursue their pedagogical aims and objectives:

> Les domaines d'autonomie des lycées
>
> Dans les limites fixées par la présente loi, les lycées peuvent engager des actions autonomes dans le domaine pédagogique, dans le domaine de l'organisation administrative et dans le domaine financier afin d'adapter l'enseignement du lycée à des besoins et des priorités qui lui sont propres, tels qu'exprimés par la communauté scolaire. Le conseil d'éducation tel que défini à l'article 36 donne son accord pour ces actions et fait des propositions y relatives. Elles sont consignées sous forme de profil du lycée. Elles font l'objet d'une évaluation interne par le lycée et d'une évaluation externe par le ministre. Le directeur met en place les structures qui permettent de gérer ces actions et d'organiser le développement scolaire, notamment la communication, la concertation et la formation continue des enseignants nécessaires pour atteindre les objectifs visés par ces actions.
>
> (Loi modifiée du 25 juin 2004 portant organisation des lycées et lycées techniques, Chap. 2, Art. 3, retrieved from http://eli.legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/loi/2004/06/25/n9, accessed 22nd July 2015)

[5] Among which Bissen et al. (2008), West (2008), "Das Lernkonzept des ALR" (unpublished document), and the webpage http://www2.alr.lu/index.php/alr/concept (accessed 29th March 2016)

Learning objectives of FOLA-lessons

Overcoming social inequality

1. Providing students with equal opportunities to do homework inside of the school house, especially for those who lack an adequate learning environment at home.

Improving teacher-student relationships

2. Providing teachers with the opportunity to become the *guide on the side* rather than the *sage on the stage* and thus improving teacher-student relationships thanks to a more informal dialogue centred on the student rather than the school subject.

3. Preparing students for formative and summative evaluation through regular study and practice in a positive classroom climate in order to foster self-confidence and reduce anxiety before and after assessments.

Fostering learner autonomy

4. Helping students gain autonomy in terms of self-assessment, decision-making, time management and self-organisation and thus foster life-long learning and increase their employability.

5. Providing students with opportunities to learn to take on personal responsibility for their learning.

Fostering differentiated instruction

6. Accompanying students in their learning process by providing individualised support as each student is regarded as an individual learner.

7. Shedding light on students' misunderstandings or weaknesses and adapting lesson contents and teaching strategies accordingly in the subject-based class.

8. Getting to know better how students learn in order to adapt teacher practices accordingly to enhance learning.

9. Providing students with opportunities to put into practice advice given in the COACH-lessons.[6]

Supporting the acquisition of skills

10. Improving students' social skills as well as encouraging team spirit by supporting social interactions and cooperative learning.

11. Facilitating interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and project-based learning.

1.4.   What is the week-plan?

By devoting a specific lesson for homework inside of school emerged the need for a tool that would guide students and teachers regarding the tasks to be completed during that specific time slot. The week-plan or weekly plan (hereafter called WP) was hence created to list up the follow-up learning activities for each subject which the students of one class are expected to

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[6] COACH-lessons are weekly lessons in which a teacher assumes the role of a facilitator to assist a group of about ten students to learn how to learn and develop academic and social skills through sharing of experiences and mutual advice.

complete within one week.[7] It encourages students to organise this workload autonomously according to their own pace and free time activities as they are given one week to meet the deadlines.

As initially defined, these follow-up activities are a collection of assignments which can be compulsory, optional and additional according to the students' needs in terms of level of proficiency, interests and learning profiles and which are based on the content dealt with in class the week before. The WP can also contain projects and tasks that can last more than a week. Assignments can also consist in the correction of a paper and ask students to get it signed by a parent. In addition, it contains clear and precise information and instructions as far as the upcoming tests and exams are concerned. Additional tasks can be added to the WP in the course of the week if they can be completed in less than 30 minutes. As mentioned before, learners decide on what task they want to start with at school and finish it at home if necessary.

In theory, students' workload should take between 200 and 300 minutes, depending on the grade and the learning pace of the individual learners. The workload is also distributed according to the number of lessons for every specific subject, so that students dedicate more study time to major subjects (e.g. languages or mathematics) than to what is traditionally seen as more minor subjects (e.g. arts or religion). A mathematical formula has even been devised to help teachers calculate the amount of workload they can expect for their subject:

- ES: number of lessons x 60 /4
  e.g. A 6M-student has 6 lessons of English in his or her weekly schedule, which results in 90 (i.e. 6 x 60 / 4) minutes of English in his or her week-plan.
- EST: number of lessons x 40 /4
  e.g. A 10CM-student has 4 lessons of English in his or her weekly schedule, which results in 40 (i.e. 4 x 40 / 4) minutes of English in in his or her week-plan.

Students' workload is expected to remain steady from one week to the other to allow students to find their cruising speed. This requires communication among teachers in order to avoid discrepancies from one week to the other.

As the ALR also commits to fostering learner autonomy, the decision was taken that no WP would be handed out to students in the last two school year levels as those students are expected to be able to organise their workload on their own. In 2014-2015, this rule was observed with the exception of the 12CG, T2EQ, T2CM and T3EQ classes. The reason for this choice will be analysed in Chapter 6.

1.5.   What are the goals of the week-plan?

Similarly to FOLA-lessons, the WP pursues specific learning aims and objectives, which can be found on the ALR website.[8]

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[7] See Appendices 3a to 3e

[8] Retrieved from http://www2.alr.lu/index.php/alr/concept (accessed 29th March 2016)

The WP should enable to:

- document each learner's learning process, as every student is expected to write down how long it took him to complete the task and assess the task's level of difficulty to compare his or her experience with the teacher's expectations;
- help to prevent teachers from overwhelming the students with too much workload;
- foster communication with parents by informing the latter about their children's learning process;
- help students to develop their time management skills by visualising their workload and deadlines;
- enable and foster differentiated instruction by containing differentiated tasks (e.g. tiered activities).

1.6. What rules have been set for FOLA-lessons?

A set of rules was initially defined to guide teachers and to achieve and maintain a consistency of approach. Based on the aforementioned internal documents, these rules can be listed up as follows:

- The WP is handed out to the students during the first FOLA-lesson and one copy is hung onto the wall.
- The tasks should be principally completed by the learners themselves (without the help of a parent or teacher) unless it is mentioned so on the WP. Nevertheless, when in difficulty, the learners are allowed to ask their FOLA-teacher or a peer for help as quietly as possible, or to use reference books they can find in the classroom or in the library.
- Students principally work in the classroom. Students are allowed to go to the library only when allowed by the WP. No more than 5 students per class are allowed to go to the library simultaneously.[9]
- Reading should happen at home, when it is quiet.
- The teacher should be present and display willingness to help the students in need.
- The teacher should foster a positive classroom climate.
- At the end of the FOLA-lesson, the teacher writes a plus ('+') or minus ('-') into the class register in order to report on the learners' attitude. Students with one or more minuses are subject to disciplinary measures (e.g. restrict a student's access to the library in case of misbehaviour in the library). Students' attitude in their FOLA-lessons is also mentioned in the 'Annexe au bulletin'.[10]
- The way a student completes the tasks assigned in the WP is controlled by the teacher, COACH-teacher and FOLA-teacher as well as the class teacher. Students whose WP tasks are not completed or completed inconsistently are reported in the class register.

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[9] Initially, students were allowed to go to the library regardless of how many they were or what was written on the WP. Pedagogical principles can, however, only be implemented within organisational constraints. Conditions were subsequently introduced in order to reduce the influx of students to the library.

[10] See Appendix 4

The rules presented in this chapter are principles which both teachers and students are expected to follow. Nevertheless, these rules are not necessarily observed in practice. For example, most FOLA-teachers do not insert a '+' or '-' into the class register anymore. More teacher and student attitudes will be analysed in this paper in relation to these rules in order to find out whether the latter need to be adapted or not.

This chapter introduced the reader to the aims and objectives as well as the rules governing the implementation of the FOLA-concept at the ALR. The aim of this project was to analyse the situation after six years of implementation. The upcoming chapters will deal with each objective to explore whether the latter is or can be fulfilled in the framework of the FOLA-lessons. The conclusion will finally suggest whether these objectives should be redefined or if the FOLA-lessons need to be implemented differently in order to pursue these initial goals more efficiently.

Chapter 2 – Research aims and methodology

2.1. Research aims

The aim of this *travail de candidature* is threefold. First, by collecting data through direct observation, questionnaires and interviews, it is aimed at providing an accurate picture of both students' and teachers' practices in FOLA-lessons after six years of implementation. Then, based on the data analysis and academic research, two questions are raised. Firstly, are teachers aware of the eleven objectives presented in Chapter 1? Secondly, are these objectives reached or not? In other words, what are the benefits and potential limits of FOLA-lessons from the students' and teachers' perspectives? Based on these observations, this *travail de candidature* will identify areas for improvement and suggest concrete paths for action towards better practice (Chapter 9).

2.2. Methodology

The research carried out throughout the second and third terms of the school year 2013/2014 was both qualitative and quantitative as the methodology used in the framework of this *travail de candidature* consisted of three different steps.

2.2.1. Direct observation

The first step of the data collection consisted in observational research. Over the period of three months in the second term, I observed 23 FOLA-lessons in various classes (7STP, 8STP, 9STP, VIe, 10PS, IIe and T0CM). In addition, I had already teaching experience in various FOLA-classes myself (V^e, 10TG, 11TG, T1CM and 3^e). Overt and non-participant observations have clear limitations. The fact of being observed may lead people to behave differently, thus invalidating the data collected. In order to overcome such limitations, I observed several sequences of FOLA-lessons in the same classes over a period of two weeks (i.e. IIe, 8STP and 9STP) to make sure that students get used to my presence and behave more naturally. The data collected through first-hand observation enabled to uncover patterns of behaviour, which proved to be helpful to design relevant questionnaires and provide a suitable basis for reflection.

2.2.2. The questionnaires

Based on these empirical observations, two digital questionnaires were created in collaboration with the 'Agence pour le développement de la qualité scolaire'[11] and contained questions aimed at shedding light on students' and teachers' experiences and beliefs regarding the learning objectives, students' and teachers' roles, as well as classroom climate and classroom management in FOLA-lessons. The student and teacher surveys were conducted before and

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[11] Agency funded and managed by the Ministry of Education (29, rue Aldringen / 1118 Luxembourg)

after the 2014 Easter break respectively. The results of two other surveys carried out by the ALR to explore teachers' and parents' opinions about the school will also be referred to in order to complete the present analysis.

The 2014 student questionnaire

The questionnaire drawn up for the students was part of a larger-scale survey conducted by the ALR.[12] I was in charge of the questions concerning the FOLA-lessons whereas other teachers focused on other aspects of our school. This way of doing allowed the present project to be part of an extensive evaluation of our internal school organisation so that every single student responded to it, thus ensuring more reliable results. All in all, 92.13% of the students (i.e. 1061 out of 1151) replied to it. After a pre-launch analysis, it took our school two weeks to send every class to a computer room to fill in the electronic form under the surveillance of the teacher who was in charge of the lesson. The instructions were sent per email to all the teachers one week before the proceedings. The questionnaire was in German but students were free to answer the open-ended questions in the language of their choice (German, French or Luxembourgish). The part concerning the FOLA-lessons contained 58 items, which were meant to question students on various aspects through closed questions. For example, students were asked about the amount of workload they managed to cope with in their FOLA-lessons (2.1; 2.58). Furthermore, they were asked whether they wished to have fewer or more FOLA-lessons in their weekly schedule (2.2; 2.3). Other questions concerned the day, time of day and length of their FOLA-lessons (2.57; 2.56; 2.4). The students were also asked to evaluate their attitude in FOLA-lessons in terms of engagement (2.5), concentration (2.6; 2.9; 2.10; 2.11; 2.27; 2.28), learning strategies (2.18 – 2.26) and student choices (2.29). The conditions in which students are expected to work in FOLA-lessons were also examined as far as noise (2.7) and movement (2.8) are concerned. A few questions investigated whether FOLA-lessons are also used for other purposes than those mentioned in Chapter 1 (2.12 – 2.17). Finally, students were also asked about their teachers' attitudes (2.44 – 2.55). Due to time constraints (as this questionnaire was part of a larger-scale survey), this last part concerned all their FOLA-teachers in general although we were well-aware of the fact that each FOLA-teacher has their own teaching style and attitude when in charge of a FOLA-lesson. No open questions were formulated about FOLA-lessons in particular but some students mentioned them in their answers to open questions about the general school organisation.

The 2014 teacher questionnaire

This first teacher questionnaire was not part of a wider survey. In order to launch the questionnaire and encourage teachers to participate, I asked the principal to send the link with a formal invitation to take part in the survey. The questionnaire was in French but teachers were free to choose the language of their choice to answer the open questions.[13]

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[12] See Appendix 5a for the questions and Appendix 5b for the students' answers to the questions about FOLA/WP
[13] See Appendix 6a for the questions and Appendix 6b for the teachers' answers

Luxembourgish, French, German and English were used in their answers. All in all, teachers were given a month (including two reminders) to fill in their questionnaire. 52.74% of the teachers (i.e. 77 out of 146) participated, among whom 73 were or had already been in charge of FOLA-lessons at the ALR. All the subjects and classes were represented quite proportionally (2.1 / 2.3). It was quite a long questionnaire (30 – 45 minutes) which included closed and open questions meant to shed light on various aspects of the FOLA-lessons from the perspective of the teacher. After filling in their profile (i.e. their school subject(s) and amount of FOLA-lessons), teachers were asked to express their opinion about the aims and objectives of the FOLA-lessons first in two open and then in closed questions (3; 4.1 – 4.11). They were also asked if they liked being in charge of FOLA-lessons (4.13). Then, similarly to the student questionnaire, a few questions investigated whether FOLA-lessons are also used for other purposes than those mentioned in Chapter 1 (5.1 – 5.09). Based on the classroom observations, teachers were expected to answer that FOLA-lessons are not the same depending on the year level or class in question.[14] As a result, parts 6 and 7 were meant to shed light on differences between classes as they asked the same questions about two different FOLA classes the participants might have. In those two parts, closed and open questions focused on issues concerning classroom management, students' attitudes and learning strategies, classroom climate and teachers' attitudes and behaviour. Unfortunately, the analysis of the data collected in both parts did not enable to shed light on class differences. Indeed, there were too many classes compared to the number of participants so that the number of teachers answering for particular year levels often did not suffice to be representative enough to draw valid conclusions.[15] On the advice of the 'Agence pour le développement de la qualité scolaire', the results will therefore always be presented for the FOLA-lessons in general, although class observations and teacher interviews will still be used to shed light on differences between different 'régimes' and year levels. Lastly, teachers were asked about the future prospects of the FOLA-concept (8.1 – 8.4) and whether they would be ready to be called for an interview (9.1 – 9.2).

The 2015 teacher questionnaire

During the school year 2014/2015, a larger-scale survey was conducted by the ALR to find out about teachers' feelings and opinions about the ALR. I did not take part in that project but the answers and comments dealing with FOLA and WP will also be taken into account in this analysis.[16]

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[14] Appendix 6b, question 5.10 "Les leçons FOLA se passent différemment en fonction des classes enseignées (différente ambiance de travail, différente attitude des élèves, différente attitude de ma part, etc.)"; answers : Je n'ai qu'une seule classe en FOLA (32.5 %), Oui (55.8 %), Non (11.7 %)

[15] See Appendix 6b, questions 6.1 and 7.1 for the detailed distribution of the participants for each year level

[16] See Appendix 7a for the questions and Appendix 7b for the teachers' answers to the questions about FOLA/WP

The 2013 parent questionnaire

During the school year 2013/2014, a survey was also carried out to explore parents' perceptions of the ALR. [17] 471 postal questionnaires were sent back to school, representing 42% of the parents. The questions regarding FOLA and WP in this parent questionnaire will also be taken into account in this present paper.

2.2.3. The interviews

Following the observation period and the two surveys, interviews were carried out in June 2014. Teachers were asked about their individual experiences and personal opinions about the FOLA-lessons in order to get a better understanding of the answers provided in both questionnaires and identify areas for improvement. A total of fourteen interviews was carried out, which corresponds to 18.18% of the participants. The interviewees were all volunteers and were chosen based on their teaching experience and availability for an interview. All the participants had already been teaching at the ALR for at least three years to make sure they had enough experience in the field of FOLA-lessons, and seven of them were part of the 'groupe de pilotage' which had been in charge of thinking and launching the ALR-project. Seven participants agreed on being recorded. Twelve interviews were conducted in Luxembourgish whereas two were conducted in French and German respectively. All in all, ten different school subjects and three different 'régimes' (i.e. classique, technique, formation de technicien) were represented by these fourteen participants. The questions asked in the interview can be found in Appendix 9.

2.3. Outcome and structure

The analysis of the data collected through the non-participant observation, the four different questionnaires and the teacher interviews led to a number of interesting observations. **Chapter 3** discusses whether teachers are aware of the objectives of FOLA-lessons. The following chapters then raise the question whether the objectives initially set for the FOLA-lessons are reached or not. For a better overview, the analysis of the eleven objectives is divided into five categories. **Chapter 4** analyses whether FOLA-lessons enable to overcome socio-economic inequality. **Chapter 5** discusses whether FOLA-lessons improve student-teacher relationships. **Chapter 6** explores the link between FOLA-lessons and learner autonomy. **Chapter 7** examines if FOLA-lessons are used to differentiate learning and instruction whereas **Chapter 8** focuses on the impact of the FOLA-lessons on students' acquisition and development of transferable skills, knowledge and attitudes. Finally, **Chapter 9** identifies areas for improvement and suggests concrete paths for action towards better practice.

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[17] See Appendix 8

Chapter 3 – Teachers' representations

Before carrying out an in-depth analysis of the aims and objectives of FOLA-lessons introduced in Chapter 1, it seemed important to first identify the teachers' mental representations of these goals. Before exploring the teachers' opinion about each of the eleven objectives in close-ended questions, the first part of their questionnaire was purposely designed to shed light on their own representations of the pedagogical objectives of the FOLA-lessons. At the beginning of their questionnaire, the seventy-seven participants were asked to answer two open-ended questions separately. First, they were asked to express what they see as the main objective of the FOLA-lessons. Then they were asked to mention any other objective(s) that would come to their mind.[18]

3.1. The main objective of FOLA-lessons

Question 2.1. ("Pour moi, l'objectif principal des leçons FOLA est …") was meant to identify the main objective of the FOLA-lessons according to the teachers. As shown in Table 1, although the question was asking for a single objective, most teachers mentioned more than one element of answer, reaching a total of 144 answers, which can be classified into 23 categories (hereafter called 'items'). The two most frequent items are directly linked to the **week-plan**. 41.6 % of the participants considered that the FOLA-lessons' aim is to make students work on their WP. 24.7 % of the teachers also mentioned the fact that FOLA-lessons enable teachers to play the role of a helping resource. In conclusion, FOLA-lessons are rather considered as a tool that does not necessarily have its own learning goals but which helps to pursue the WP's pedagogical objectives, which are subject-based rather than cross-curricular. Items 6 and 9 also mention the WP but this time as a means of making students work autonomously (10.4%) and overcoming social inequality (6.5%). Nevertheless, it is quite obvious that when asked to answer spontaneously, most teachers consider FOLA-lessons as a means to complete tasks and revise contents related to a particular school subject (as expressed in items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 20, 21; representing 73.6% of the 144 elements of answer) rather than an opportunity to develop transferable skills such as social, organisational and self-regulation skills (however expressed in items 12, 14, 15, 22, 23; representing 6.9 % of the 144 elements of answer).

Table 1

	2.1. Pour moi, l'objectif principal des leçons FOLA est de :	Answer frequency	Percentage (among 77 participants)
1.	permettre aux élèves de réaliser les tâches inscrites au WP	32	41,6 %
2.	aider en tant qu'enseignant les élèves à réaliser les tâches inscrites au WP	19	24,7 %
3.	permettre aux élèves de poser des questions aux professeurs	11	14,3 %
4.	garantir une bonne ambiance de travail	11	14,3 %
5.	permettre aux élèves de demander de l'aide à un camarade (échange entre élèves)	8	10,4 %

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[18] See Appendix 6a, questions 2.1 and 2.2

6. faire travailler les élèves de manière autonome sur leur WP	8	10,4 %
7. permettre aux élèves de réaliser des travaux de groupe	7	9,1 %
8. permettre aux élèves de revoir ou d'approfondir la matière	6	7,8 %
9. donner à chaque élève les mêmes conditions dans lesquelles réaliser les tâches inscrites au WP (gommer les inégalités sociales)	5	6,5 %
10. permettre aux élèves de se préparer à des devoirs en classe	5	6,5 %
11. permettre aux élèves d'avoir du temps libre à la maison	4	5,2 %
12. apprendre aux élèves à s'organiser	4	5,2 %
13. permettre aux élèves de refaire des exercices	3	3,9 %
14. apprendre aux élèves à demander de l'aide	2	2,6 %
15. apprendre aux élèves à offrir de l'aide	2	2,6 %
16. permettre aux élèves de suivre leur propre rythme	2	2,6 %
17. permettre aux élèves d'utiliser les infrastructures scolaires (ex : faire des recherches en bibliothèque)	2	2,6 %
18. offrir une aide individualisée pour que chacun fasse des progrès	1	1,3 %
19. permettre de varier le rythme de la journée	1	1,3 %
20. permettre aux élèves de préparer la matière pour les cours à venir	1	1,3 %
21. permettre aux élèves de préparer des présentations orales	1	1,3 %
22. responsabiliser les élèves dans leur apprentissage	1	1,3 %
23. permettre aux élèves de devenir plus autonomes	1	1,3 %
TOTAL of answers	144	

3.2.   Other objectives of FOLA-lessons

Table 2 shows that, when asked about further objectives of the FOLA-lessons, the participants mostly referred to the fact that FOLA-lessons provide an opportunity to get **support**, either by asking the teacher (item 1) or classmates (item 2) for help. 10.4 % of the participants also mentioned that FOLA-lessons provide an opportunity to work on group projects. Seven items (4, 7, 11, 12, 14, 23, 25; representing 19.8 % of the 81 elements of answer) refer to the transferable skills that FOLA-lessons are meant to help learners acquire, namely better time management, learner autonomy, concentration, self-discipline and mutual respect. Five items (9, 18, 19, 21, 24; representing 7.4 % of the 81 elements of answer) also refer to the benefits for the teacher, as FOLA-lessons enable them to become aware of a number of different aspects such as the students' workload, weaknesses and learning strategies.

Table 2

2.2. Pour moi, d'autres objectifs des leçons FOLA sont:	Answer frequency	Percentage (among 77 participants)
1. permettre aux élèves de poser des questions au professeur par rapport à la matière	17	22,1 %
2. permettre aux élèves de demander de l'aide à un camarade (échange entre élèves)	14	18,2 %
3. permettre aux élèves de réaliser des travaux de groupe	8	10,4 %
4. guider les élèves dans leur méthodologie de travail (gestion du temps, organisation, …)	5	6,5 %
5. réaliser les tâches inscrites au WP (devoirs à domicile)	5	6,5 %
6. permettre aux élèves d'utiliser les infrastructures scolaires (ex : faire des recherches en bibliothèque)	4	5,2 %
7. apprendre aux élèves la gestion du temps	4	5,2 %
8. faire travailler les élèves de manière autonome sur leur WP	3	3,9 %
9. créer un lien entre les enseignants et les élèves	2	2,6 %

10. résoudre des problèmes en groupe	2	2,6 %
11. permettre aux élèves de devenir plus autonomes (trouver la solution sans l'aide du professeur)	2	2,6 %
12. développer chez l'élève des compétences sociales (respect du calme et travail des autres élèves, apprendre à demander de l'aide)	2	2,6 %
13. permettre aux élèves de revoir ou d'approfondir la matière	1	1,3 %
14. apprendre aux élèves à se concentrer	1	1,3 %
15. aider en tant qu'enseignant les élèves à réaliser les tâches inscrites au WP	1	1,3 %
16. assister les élèves qui ont moins de soutien à la maison	1	1,3 %
17. permettre aux élèves de se préparer à des devoirs en classe	1	1,3 %
18. se rendre compte de certaines lacunes	1	1,3 %
19. permettre à l'enseignant de prendre conscience de la charge de travail dans d'autres branches que la sienne	1	1,3 %
20. permettre aux élèves de préparer la matière pour les cours à venir	1	1,3 %
21. observer comment les élèves travaillent	1	1,3 %
22. permettre de varier le rythme de la journée	1	1,3 %
23. permettre aux élèves d'acquérir de l'autodiscipline	1	1,3 %
24. permettre de régler des problèmes administratifs sans perdre de temps scolaire	1	1,3 %
25. permettre aux élèves d'apprendre à être productifs	1	1,3 %
TOTAL of answers	81	

It is interesting to compare teachers' representations with what students claim to do in their FOLA-lessons. Table 3 shows that students' answers seem to corroborate their teachers' perceptions as they seem to devote most of their FOLA-time to their tasks (av. = 3.3), to ask for explanations (av. = 2.3) and engage in group work (av. = 2.4). What teachers seem less aware of is that students also often devote time to the preparation (av. = 2.3) or correction (av. = 2.7) of assignments in their FOLA-lessons, which turns out to be a great opportunity to provide students with effective feedback (see Chapter 7).[19]

Table 3:   Student perceptions of what they do in their FOLA-lessons

I use FOLA-lessons	(1) Never	(2) Sometimes	(3) Often	(4) Always	Average
to read books.	45.7%	43.8%	9.3%	1.2%	1.7
to get prepared for assessments.	16.9%	36.4%	42.2%	4.5%	2.3
to correct assessments.	9.3%	25.2%	56.7%	8.8%	2.7
to copy from another student.	42.7%	39%	13.2%	5%	1.8
to do revision exercises.	47.1%	38.1%	13.8%	1%	1.7
to complete tasks.	2.4%	8.8%	47.5%	41.3%	3.3
to learn vocabulary.	36%	42.3%	19%	2.7%	1.9
to correct tasks (e.g. previous WP).	28.8%	32.4%	30.2%	8.7%	2.2
to sort out material.	35%	36.5%	23.7%	4.7%	2
to ask for explanations.	15.1%	44%	35.9%	5%	2.3
to do group work.	11.5%	40.6%	41.4%	6.5%	2.4
to write lab reports.	31.4%	29.1%	31.7%	7.7%	2.2
to do nothing.	56%	27.9%	11.3%	4.8%	1.6

3.3.   The teacher's role in FOLA-lessons

Besides defining the aims and objectives of FOLA-lessons, a third open-ended question asked the teachers about their role in those lessons. 62.3 % of the participants claimed that the

[19] Appendix 5b, questions 2.31 to 2.43

teacher's role is to **create and maintain an environment conducive to learning**. A series of other items (2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11; representing 40% of the 145 elements of answer) also highlights the importance of creating a supportive environment in which every student is given the opportunity to focus on their own learning process in the presence of a teacher as a helping resource (i.e. the so-called "*guide on the side rather than sage on the stage*" introduced in Chapter 1). These answers show the duality of the role played by the FOLA-teacher, who has to provide support and guidance while keeping a position of authority. Moreover, two different approaches to the role of the teacher can be identified in these answers. On the one hand, some teachers hold the view that they should "*display openness and availability*" (item 4) and "*wait*" for the students to ask for help (item 2). This first conception considers that the teacher should provide students with opportunities which the latter are free to take or not. On the other hand, other participants define their role as professionals who "*observe*" (item 7), "*stimulate*" (item 14), "*ask*" (item 10), "*control*" (item 3), "*provide advice*" (item 2), "*encourage*" and "*motivate*" (items 6 and 9) their students and "*make the latter become aware*" of their responsibility in their learning process (item 12). This second approach reflects the idea of a (pro-)active teacher, who does not wait for students to *express* their needs but rather tries to *identify* students' needs by observing them at work and asking them to justify their choices. Such teachers consider that they should play a stimulating role by explicitly engaging students in their learning process and holding them accountable. This dichotomy of opinion about the teacher's role depends on the definition and importance given to learner autonomy and will be dealt with in Chapter 6.

Table 4

	Pour moi, le rôle de l'enseignant en leçons FOLA est de:	Answer frequency	Percentage (among 77 participants)
1.	être garant d'une ambiance de travail favorable (garantir le calme)	48	62,3 %
2.	prodiguer des conseils et de l'aide aux élèves (dont 11 mentionnent que cette aide doit être voulue par l'élève)	25	32,5 %
3.	contrôler si les élèves sont productifs	17	22,1 %
4.	être ouvert et à disposition pour que les élèves osent demander de l'aide	11	14,3 %
5.	accompagner/guider l'apprentissage des élèves en les aidant à améliorer leur méthode de travail	11	14,3 %
6.	encourager/motiver les élèves à travailler	8	10,4 %
7.	observer l'apprentissage/l'organisation/le travail des élèves	7	9,1 %
8.	offrir un accompagnement individualisé aux élèves	5	6,5 %
9.	encourager les élèves à trouver eux-mêmes la solution aux problèmes et servir uniquement de guide (stimuler l'autonomie)	5	6,5 %
10.	demander aux élèves d'expliquer leurs choix	2	2,6 %
11.	jouer un rôle d'interlocuteur	2	2,6 %
12.	rendre les élèves conscients de leur responsabilité dans leur apprentissage	1	1,3 %
13.	garantir les conditions permettant aux élèves de se développer	1	1,3 %
14.	stimuler l'entraide	1	1,3 %
15.	vérifier que les élèves ont compris la matière	1	1,3 %
	TOTAL of answers	145	

3.4. Result-based approach vs. process-based approach

Before the beginning of every school year, new teachers are systematically introduced to the pedagogical concepts of the ALR in a two-day training session. One of the workshops is dedicated to the explanation of the concepts of FOLA and WP. Six interviewees out of fourteen admitted that they did not remember exactly what had been said about FOLA-lessons as they first arrived at the ALR.

> *Ech fannen, duerch de Questionnaire sinn ech mer bewosst ginn, dass ech u sech net detailléiert Bescheed weess wat d'Haaptobjektiver si vun der FOLA. Du kriss dat, wann s de di éischt Kéier hei bass, hei ufänks, kriss de dat eng Kéier a sou Workshopen esou erklärt an dat ass dann an engem Dag wou s de Stonnen a Stonnen do setz an du hues esou vill Informatiounen an iergendwéi bleift net grad näischt hänke mee net vill hänken an dono héiers de näischt méi dovunner. Dann setz de eng Kéier op enger FOLA an dann wann s de Chance hues, schaffs de elo mat Leit zesummen, wou den Echange awer e bësschen ass, wou s de am Ufank vum Joer da sees: „Ok, wéi hale mer lo d'FOLA?" mee anerer, do hunn d'FOLA-Proffen, déi hunn u sech keng direkt Kommunikatioun matenaner. Dat heescht, et mëscht jiddwereen e bëssche wat en denkt.*
>
> *(teacher interview)*

This idea that everybody acts as they please was also reflected in the answers provided by the interviewees who claimed that they can remember what they were told about FOLA-lessons. Each of those interviewees insisted on the aspect(s) that he or she most feels a connection with. For example, two teachers who are also parents of teenagers insisted on the fact that FOLA-lessons are valuable time slots for group work as students do not need to desperately try to find some time outside of school to get together to work on a project. Another teacher claimed to remember being told that ¾ of the WP should be done within the FOLA-lessons.

Overall, the objectives mentioned during the interviews corresponded to those described in the written questionnaire (i.e. working on the WP, reducing the workload at home, providing support at school, fostering autonomy, facilitating group work, providing individual feedback as well as acquiring and developing collaboration, organisation, and concentration skills).

In September 2014, I attended the 45-minute FOLA-WP workshop, which was held by a teacher. She explained the concept by focusing on *how* the FOLA-lessons take place (e.g. under what conditions the students may go to the library, what students are (not) allowed to do, etc.) rather than the reasons *why* FOLA-lessons were created in the first place (i.e. what the objectives are). When asked whether they think that FOLA-lessons are useful and should be kept in the students' timetable, teachers' opinions differ depending on their personal interpretation of what a successful FOLA-lesson is. A teacher who considers that FOLA-lessons are meant to complete the tasks contained in the WP and prepare tests in a serious and silent way expressed his or her disappointment as follows:

> *Den Undeel vu Schüler di wierklech dat maache wat mir eis virstellen an enger FOLA-Stonn ass geréng. (…) Den Undeel vu Schüler di wierklech sérieux schaffe leit bei engem Drëttel. Di aner muss een dozou bewegen, ëmmer rëm, an dat ass ustrengend. Virun allem wat d'Joer méi laang dauert wou dann och Schüler dobäi si wou d'Motivatioun generell erofgeet, di maachen an de FOLA-Stonne strictement näischt méi an et ass ganz schwiereg fir déi iergendwéi dozou ze bewegen, trotzdem eppes ze maachen, net ze stéieren. (…) Et ass net esou dass ech do permanent ënner Stress géif stoen, well d'Schüler esou motivéiert wären, mech di ganzen Zäit do ze froen.*
>
> *(teacher interview)*

On the other hand, a teacher who believes that FOLA-lessons are also meant to teach transferable skills holds a less negative view on FOLA-lessons. About the FOLA-lessons taking place the last two class periods on Friday, that teacher said:

> Di lescht Stonn Freides moies … dat ass natierlech net sou glécklech mee anerersäits notzen si awer oft – si setze vläicht net ganz roueg do - mee si notzen awer oft déi Stonn fir sech z'organiséieren, wat ech och ganz wichteg fannen. Froen, hei, rechts a lenks: „Wat hunn mer fir do nächst Woch?" „Kann ech dat nach kréien?" „Kann ech mer séier eng Kopie maache goen?" Déi Zäit … et ass jo och wichteg, datt si déi Zäit hunn. Anerersäits muss ech awer och soen, déi setzen awer och roueg heiansdo do ze schaffen.
>
> *(teacher interview)*

All in all, although common ground can be identified, this first part of the questionnaire highlighted discrepancies among the teaching staff regarding the aims and objectives as well as their role in FOLA-lessons. Two main approaches can be identified. The first approach, which can be described as the **result-based approach**, considers FOLA-lessons as periods of time dedicated to the completion of the follow-up activities contained in the WP. Teachers who adopt this approach think and work in terms of 'ends' rather than 'means'. In the interviews, such teachers assess their students' efficiency based on the amount of work they have done:

> Well d'Iddi dohannert ass jo, dass si herno heem ginn an da vläicht nach, keng Ahnung, eng Stënnchen oder esou drunhänken awer net elo heem ginn an nach eng Kéier 3 Stonne schaffen. Dat heescht, de Wocheplang muss jo zu 80, 90 Prozent an deene FOLA-Stonne gemaach sinn an ech denken net dass dat de Fall ass. Ech menge wierklech dass der vill nach doheem musse schaffen, wou se u sech just sollen nach widderhuelen, a mengen Aen, di Saachen nach eng Kéier iwwerfléien, iwwerkucken, iwwerliesen di se dann an de Cours'en gesinn hunn an ech weess net ob dat efficace iwwerall leeft.
>
> *(teacher interview)*

In this approach, teachers are mainly in charge of providing support and ensuring a quiet classroom climate. The second approach could be called the **process-based approach**. This approach focuses on the students' learning process rather than their actual performances as it defines FOLA-lessons as an opportunity for students to get actively involved in their learning process. This approach takes its roots in social constructivism, built on the advances of the **constructivist movement**. Kersten Reich (2008) attributes this movement to John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Lev S. Vygotsky. Constructivist theorists see learners as active creators of their own mental representations of reality based on their subjective experiences, interactions and negotiations with their environment. Learning is contextual: we do not learn isolated facts. We learn in relationship to our prior knowledge, beliefs, prejudices and fears. Horst Siebert et al. insist on the fact that learners acquire new knowledge through their senses and need to be physically and emotionally ready to welcome new knowledge:

> Lernen benötigt zwar Informationen "von außen" aber die äußere Realität wird nicht im Kopf abgebildet und widergespiegelt, sondern sie wird aktiv ausgewählt, biochemisch umgewandelt (…), gedeutet und in Handlungen umgesetzt. Lernen ist strukturdeterminiert, d.h. was und wie etwas verarbeitet wird, hängt weniger von der Qualität der Mitteilung ab als von dem internen kognitiv-emotionalen System und den momentanen körperlichen Empfindungen.
>
> (Siebert et al., 2005: p. 31)

One can understand **social constructivism** as constructivism with an additional focus on learning as a social activity: our learning is closely associated with our interactions with other human beings (i.e. family, teachers, peers, acquaintances, strangers, …). In other words, the learner is

not considered individually, as the only constructor of meaning, but as a member of a group in which the participants influence each other and provide additional input for the individual learning process. FOLA-teachers who adopt such an approach believe that learning happens when students get actively involved in their learning process. Such teachers recognise the importance of interactions. The teacher's role is consequently redefined. Teachers who adopt this approach need to show more flexibility regarding movement and noise in their classroom management and foster reflexion and interaction through questioning and encourage peer work when necessary. This quality approach focuses more on the conditions in which students learn by lowering their affective filter and get actively involved in their learning by questioning their own understanding of the knowledge or skill in question:

> Ein konstruktivistischer Lernbegriff hat keineswegs eine „Laissez-faire-Pädagogik" oder einen unverbindlichen Meinungsaustausch zur Folge. Die Konstruktion von viablen Wirklichkeiten in einer hochkomplexen Wissensgesellschaft erfordert die „Anstrengung des Begriffs", das Erkennen von Zusammenhängen, systemisches vernetztes Denken, reflexive Beobachtungen. Eine konstruktivistische Pädagogik ist kognitiv anspruchsvoller als eine Wissensvermittlungspädagogik.
>
> (Siebert et al., 2005: p. 35)

Both result- and process-based approaches are not mutually exclusive. Most FOLA-teachers seek to find a balance between both approaches, which is quite a hard nut to crack. The majority of the interviewees (ten out of fourteen) expressed their difficulty in finding a balance between establishing a routine in a good working climate while still taking into account the divergent learner types and styles of their students. Findings in neuro-linguistic programming (i.e. visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, olfactory, gustatory) and multiple intelligences (i.e. spatial, naturalist, musical, logical-mathematical, linguistic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, bodily-kinaesthetic) show that teachers' task is overwhelmingly complex if they want to satisfy the many different students in front of them.[20] It is a challenge for a FOLA-teacher to simultaneously monitor group projects and/or enable auditory students to integrate their knowledge orally with a peer while other students need some peace and quiet to get down to work. It is also difficult for FOLA-teachers to make sure that interactions among students are focused on their learning and not reduced to mere chatter. Well aware of all those difficulties, some teachers tend to favour the *result-based* approach, which provides more tangible proof that students made good use of their FOLA-lesson than the *process-based* approach.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that FOLA-lessons cannot be reduced to a steady set of practices independent of teachers' mental representations. Over time, teachers appropriate the concept of FOLA and define their own role as a FOLA-teacher by finding a balance between their aspirations and the realities on the ground. When exploring the various objectives of FOLA-lessons in the upcoming chapters, it is therefore necessary to be aware of the dangers of generalisations as there are as many forms of FOLA-lessons as students, classes and teachers involved in them.

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[20] For further information on individual variables, see Harmer (2007: pp. 81-105)

Chapter 4 – Do FOLA-lessons enable to overcome social inequality?

4.1. Social and educational inequality

In April 2015, the Ministry of Education released a report consisting of a compendium of statistics on the school year 2013/2014.[21] It also released a collection of in-depth analyses of the state and quality of the Luxembourgish educational system.[22] In their analysis of Luxembourg's educational inequalities, Andreas Hadjar and colleagues define educational inequalities as unequal educational outcomes in terms of competences, results, educational guidance ('avis d'orientation'), educational path ('voie pédagogique') and certificates so that not every student is given the opportunity to access higher levels of education, which are in turn more likely to lead to a higher occupational status and income (2015: pp. 34-5). According to them, the Luxembourgish educational system is even more likely to create such inequalities as it is highly stratified with numerous pedagogical divisions.[23] Statistics reveal that educational inequalities occur in both primary and secondary schools and can be mainly attributed to student differences in terms of gender, social inequality, origins, and language:

> In der Zusammenschau der Befunde zum luxemburgischen Bildungssystem lässt sich feststellen, dass sich Bildungsungleichheiten mit Bezug auf die soziale Herkunft, den Migrationshintergrund und die Geschlechtszugehörigkeit im Grund- und Sekundarschulbereich zeigen. Als „Risikomerkmale" kristallisieren sich ein sozioökonomisch benachteiligtes Elternhaus, ein Migrationshintergrund und eine männliche Geschlechtszugehörigkeit heraus. Auch wenn im Sekundarschulbereich die französische Sprache an Bedeutung gewinnt, setzen sich doch Bildungsungleichheiten aus dem Grundschulbereich für nicht-luxemburgischsprachige oder nicht-deutschsprachige Schülerinnen und Schüler auch dort fort.
>
> (Hadjar et al., 2015: p. 55)

As shown in Figure 1, the most striking inequality lies in the distribution of students in the various pedagogical divisions of Luxembourgish high schools.

Figure 1:   Distribution of students in Luxembourgish high schools according to their socioeconomic status in the school year 2013/2014
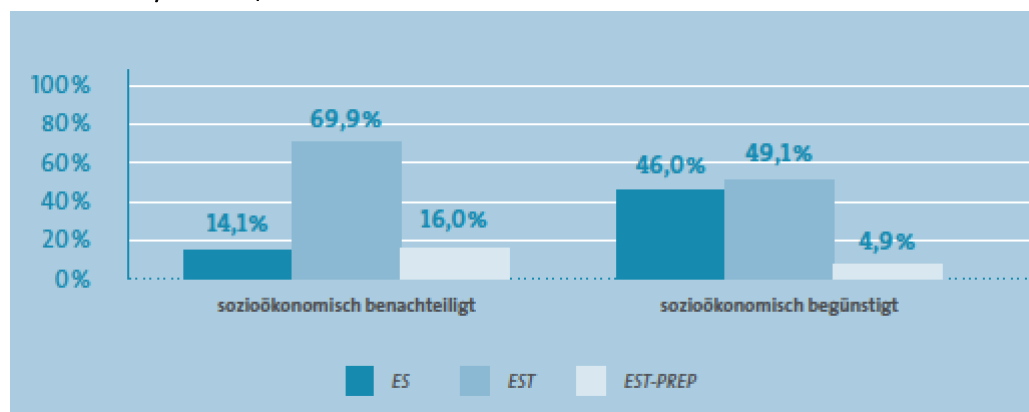
Hadjar et al. (2015: p. 49)

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[21] See Bertemes and Lenz (2015)
[22] See Lenz and Bertemes (2015)
[23] Enseignement Secondaire (ES), Enseignement Secondaire Technique (EST), Régime de la Formation de Technicien (DT), and Régime Professionnel (DAP/CCP)

The government report reveals that the lower your socioeconomic status, the higher your chance of being enrolled in technical or vocational courses (Hadjar et al., 2015: p. 49). As this project focuses on the completion of homework, this chapter will specifically focus on the inequalities of students' home environment, where homework is traditionally done.

4.2.   The diversity of homes

4.2.1.   A variety of family structures

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Luxembourgish families have changed in the twentieth century and especially over the last decades. With the increasing amount of divorces, traditional **family models** are breaking out, sometimes leading to foster care but more commonly new configurations ranging from single-parent to patchwork families. Markus P. Neuenschwander and colleagues point out that the modernisation of our society lies more in the *social acceptance* than the *creation* itself of these new family models, enabling families to gain and enjoy greater autonomy in terms of internal organisation and family values (2005: pp. 18-9). As a result, today's students are more likely to experience disruptions in their routines, shifting back and forth between different homes with different rules and different parenting styles. Nevertheless, in his synthesis of meta-analyses, John Hattie points out that the effect of family structure on students' academic performances "*can be classified as small compared to many other influences*" (2009: p. 64). Among these other factors are the students' origins.

4.2.2.   A variety of origins

Figure 2 shows that 56.2% of the students attending Luxembourgish schools in 2013/2014 were Luxembourgish. The other students were of Portuguese (24.1%), ex-Yugoslavian (4.5%), French (3.9%), Italian (1.8%), Belgian (1.8%), German (1.4%) or other foreign origins (6.4%) (Bertemes and Lenz, 2015: p. 20)

The gap between Luxembourgish and **foreign students** is the widest in the ES, with 78.7% of Luxembourgish students and 21.3% of foreign students. Hadjar and colleagues attribute this gap to what they call an institutional discrimination as schools tend to advise foreign students to choose a less challenging pedagogical path based on their lower results. However, they also admit that this tendency is based on real shortcomings in terms of proficiency in the languages spoken at school, parental involvement and home environment (2015: p. 40).

It is important to note, however, that foreign students are not all similarly affected by social and educational inequalities depending on their country of origin, their socioeconomic status, and the reasons for their migration. A foreign student's academic success will therefore also depend on his and his parents' understanding of the country's culture and educational institutions. German students, for instance, have an advantage over students of Portuguese or Italian origins as they are better acquainted with the Luxembourgish culture and institutions (Hadjar et al., 2015: p. 40). Moreover, as a result of globalisation, there are migrant families with high educational and socioeconomic backgrounds who have the means to support their

children accordingly and thus contribute to their academic success (Neuenschwander et al., 2005: p. 35).

Figure 2: Distribution of students in the Luxembourgish educational system according to their origins in the school year 2013/2014

Aufteilung nach Nationalität, Schulform, Schullaufbahn (prozentual)														
	Fondamental				EDIFF	ES	EST								
% Nationalität	Cycle 1 précoce	Cycle 1 préscolaire	Cycle 2-4	TOTAL Fondamental	Éducation différenciée	TOTAL ES	Préparatoire modulaire	Classes accueil/insertion	Cycle Inférieur	Régime technique	Formation de technicien	Régime professionnel	TOTAL EST	TOTAL ES et EST	TOTAL
luxembg.	56,3	52,8	49,7	51,0	48,6	78,7	39,8	19,8	52,1	66,9	57,3	56,2	54,7	62,4	56,2
portugiesisch	19,9	24,0	26,8	25,5	35,0	7,6	40,7	48,3	31,4	20,6	27,2	27,7	29,2	22,2	24,1
ex-jugosl.	2,7	4,0	5,3	4,8	3,6	2,0	7,3	8,3	5,2	4,3	5,6	3,9	5,1	4,1	4,5
franz.	6,9	5,9	4,7	5,2	2,4	2,6	2,7	0,8	2,7	1,8	2,4	2,2	2,3	2,4	3,9
ital.	1,4	1,8	2,1	2,0	1,6	1,1	1,6	1,1	1,8	1,7	2,1	2,0	1,8	1,6	1,8
belg.	2,3	1,9	2,3	2,2	1,4	2,3	0,8	0,3	0,9	0,8	0,7	0,9	0,8	1,3	1,8
deutsch	1,8	1,6	1,7	1,7	0,7	1,5	0,6	1,3	0,8	0,5	0,5	2,6	0,9	1,1	1,4
andere	8,7	8,1	7,4	7,7	6,7	4,2	6,7	20,1	5,2	3,5	4,2	4,5	5,1	4,8	6,4
Total	43,7	47,2	50,3	49,0	51,4	21,3	60,2	80,2	47,9	33,1	42,7	43,8	45,3	37,6	43,8

Hadjar et al. (2015: p. 40)

4.2.3. A variety of socioeconomic statuses

Whether they are of foreign origin(s) or not, students are not offered the same opportunities in terms of financial, emotional, cultural and intellectual support at home depending on their **socioeconomic background**, so that higher-class students are known for succeeding better academically (Neuenschwander et al., 2005: p. 31). A child's socioeconomic status is usually defined by his or her position in the social hierarchy based on the resources in the household in terms of parental income, parental education and parental occupation (Hattie, 2009: p. 61). Although differences in homework completion exist among students regardless of social class, homework is likely to perpetuate and intensify class differences and widen this achievement gap. Cathy Vatterrott summarises and classifies the gaps between lower-class and middle- or upper-class home environments into three categories (2009: pp. 36-7). First, there is a reading gap as not all the students are given the same opportunities at home to develop literary skills and acquire the habit of reading for pleasure or to solve problems. Second, there is a conversation gap leading to huge differences in terms of vocabulary depending on whether parents talk to their children or not. Finally, there is a health and housing gap, referring to the living conditions in which children grow up. Not every child has a quiet place to do homework, or a parent at home in the evening, or a parent with knowledge and skills in the subjects taught at school, or the money for a computer, the Internet or even school supply. Some families may also *"need their children to babysit younger siblings, cook meals, do laundry, or clean. For families who own businesses or farms, children are a valuable part of the workforce"* (Vatterrott, 2009: p. 32).

4.2.4. A variety of parental involvement strategies

Furthermore, as Martha Boethel and colleagues point out, it is worth making a distinction between parental *aspirations* (i.e. what parents hope and desire for their children), **parental** *expectations* (i.e. what parents realistically expect to happen) and **parental** *involvement* (i.e. what parents actually do) (2003: p. 27). Boethel et al. present a non-exhaustive list of specific activities used as measures of family involvement (2003: p. 20):

- parent rules about children's habits, behaviours, and/or school performance;
- communication between parents and children;
- parents' talk about students' post-high-school plans;
- monitoring homework;
- helping with homework;
- academic stimulation at home;
- contact between parents and their child's teacher;
- contact with the school about academics;
- participation in parent-teacher organisations, or attendance at meetings;
- participation on school committees or governance structures;
- volunteering in the classroom or with fundraising.

By referring to the work of Helmke & Weinert (1997), Neuenschwander and colleagues (2005) list up four aspects of parental behaviour which can have an influence on students' academic performances: stimulation (by interacting with their child and ensuring a supportive home environment), instruction (by transmitting their own knowledge), motivation (by expressing their aspirations, expectations and values) and imitation (by acting as role models) (2005: p. 32). Boethel and colleagues insist on the fact that regardless of their race, ethnicity, culture, or income, most families do have high aspirations and concerns for their children's success. Nevertheless, although many low-income families strive to support their children's education by having high aspirations, they are disadvantaged in the methods they use to encourage their children to attain the latter (2003: p. 33). In their report of 64 studies on diversity in America, they explain lower parental involvement as follows:

> Research studies have identified barriers to minority and low-income families' involvement in their children's schooling — barriers that schools often can help to overcome. These barriers include contextual factors (particularly time constraints, child care needs, and transportation problems); language differences; cultural beliefs about the role of families in their children's schooling; families' lack of knowledge and lack of understanding of U.S. educational processes; and issues of exclusion and discrimination.
>
> (Boethel et al., 2003: p. 42)

Based on his analysis of the research carried out in this field, John Hattie (2009) points out that parental involvement can also negatively relate to achievement when it involves a surveillance approach consisting in "*external rewards, homework surveillance, negative control and restrictions for unsatisfactory grades*" (2009: p. 69).

Besides high parental aspirations, Neuenschwander and colleagues (2005) insist on the fact that in order to be academically successful, students need their parents and teachers to share the same values and attitudes towards school and parents who are the most likely to share teachers' values and take up their role at home are parents from the middle and upper classes.

> Wenn die Kinder in Schule und Familie mit den gleichen pädagogischen Interventionen konfrontiert werden, sind sie gezwungen, sich damit auseinander zu setzen. Kinder können von der Schule nicht in die Familie ausweichen und umgekehrt, die soziale Kontrolle ist gewissermaβen über zwei wichtige Lebensbereiche hinweg koordiniert. (…) Eltern sind dann wirksam, wenn sie im auβerschulischen Bereich immer wieder die Lehrerrolle einnehmen.
>
> (Neuenschwander et al., 2005: pp. 31-2)

4.2.5. A variety of family values

Family involvement correlates with the above-mentioned **family values**. School is not viewed as the absolute authority anymore and some parents do not value intellectual work and/or homework the same way as teachers do.

> *The 1960s "do your own thing" generation marked the beginning of a diversity* of family and societal values that continues to widen. As our society grows more diverse, students and parents may no longer receive the same messages from their family, church, community, and school. Parents value their individuality and freedom to set their own standards about child rearing. The result is that today there is little standardization among parents about child-rearing. (…) Economic diversity, cultural diversity, and different parenting styles and family values converge to have an effect on homework, creating differing views of the parent-school relationship and differing attitudes about homework. A diversity in family values makes it even more likely that those values will clash with the values of individual teachers. (…) Traditional power relationships have given way to more democratic, egalitarian relationships between parents and children (…) When teachers say, "Why can't the parents just make their children do their homework?" they may be visualizing a dictatorial style of parenting that no longer exists in those families.
>
> (Vatterott, 2009: pp. 27-8)

Schools and teachers must now accommodate with a range of different value systems corresponding to the various cultural, social and economic backgrounds of their students. For some – especially low-income – families, homework may be considered as a waste of time compared to their need for help in the household and money for the family. Other parents may consider homework as useless if they feel school has not been of any use in their own lives. Others show more concern for their children's well-being than homework, which consumes their free time (i.e. family time, leisure time, playtime and downtime), consequently causing anxiety and affecting their overall physical and psychological health (Vatterott, 2009: pp. 22-4). According to Alfie Kohn (2006: p. 22), homework is a burden on parents as it requires them to be well-educated and well rested. It also requires them to master the languages spoken and taught at school.

Parental involvement can also be excessive. For example, some parents are so worried that they take over their children's assignments, mostly "*because of competitiveness (they want their kids to outshine their peers), or enmeshment (their own self-esteem is bound up with their child's success), or misplaced priorities (they become so concerned about the quality of the product that they forget the point is supposed to be about the process – that is learning)"*(Kohn,

2006: p. 22). Interestingly enough, whether parents get involved or not, the fact is that when done at home, homework evokes more negative than positive reactions as most parents and children miss out on the true reasons for doing homework:

> Family conflict is also more common when the children are struggling. In fact, every unpleasant adjective that could be attached to homework – time-consuming, disruptive, stressful, demoralizing – applies with greater force in the case of kids for whom academic learning doesn't come easily. (…)
> But there are virtually no exchanges – in this or any other family – that deal with the content of the homework. No parent asks, "So, did the assignment help you to understand the topic?" or "What's your opinion of [the issue you were working on]? As a rule, the point of homework generally isn't to learn, much less to derive real pleasure from learning. It's something to be finished. And until it is, it looms large in conversations, an unwelcome guest at the table every night."
>
> (Kohn, 2006: pp. 13-15)

Neuenschwander and colleagues hold the view that parents' values, attitudes, knowledge and expectations are bound to be internalised by their children as a result of their biological bond, frequent interactions and genuine intimacy. This parental transmission is both implicit and explicit but the assimilation tends to decrease with the teenage pursuit of individuality (2005: p. 29).

4.3.   Do FOLA-lessons help overcome the achievement gap?

As shown above, inequalities among students are not just a matter of socioeconomic diversity. Besides the erosion of school's authority and the emerging new family models, families – and consequently students – also differ in terms of organisation, aspirations and expectations, values, and engagement towards school, although these factors are also themselves influenced by socioeconomic status. As students are not given equal opportunities at home, the question arises whether students should still be given homework or not. The aim of this paper is not to discuss the benefits and drawbacks of homework. It rather raises the question whether giving students the opportunity to complete part of their homework at school enables to reduce the achievement gap between privileged and less privileged.

When asked this question in their questionnaire, 80.6% of the teachers agree or fully agree with the fact that FOLA-lessons enable to overcome social inequality among students by offering access to a variety of helping resources (library, computers, teachers, peers, …).[24] The interview, however, enabled to shed light on much more mixed opinions. Out of fourteen interviewees, only one teacher provided a clear-cut positive response to this question. The other participants admitted that FOLA-lessons provide an opportunity to do part of the assignments in the presence of various helping resources but hold the view that students do not seem to make the most of that opportunity. Four participants insisted on the fact that FOLA-lessons make sense only if students seize the opportunity they offer.

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[24] Appendix 6b, question 4.11 "Les leçons FOLA permettent d'effacer les inégalités sociales en donnant à chaque élève l'occasion de travailler en présence de différentes sources de soutien (bibliothèque, ordinateurs, professeurs, camarades, etc.)"; scale : 1: totally disagree (7.8 %), 2: disagree (11.7 %), 3: agree (40.3 %), 4: totally agree (40.3 %)

Also ech si relativ tolerant soulaang et esou roueg bleift, datt déi di wëlle gutt schaffen dat och kennen. A letztendlech kann ee keen zwéngen, ze léieren. Wéi soll dat goen? Enner Zwang an Drock kann een net léieren. Wann d'Motivatioun guer net do ass, wéi sollt … wëlls de e Schüler dozou kréien, awer eppes ze maachen?

(teacher interview)

Four other interviewed teachers also pointed out that students who make the most of their FOLA-lessons are those who are already academically privileged.

Wéi ëmmer. Di gutt Schüler kloer. Mä dofir maache mir et net. Di gutt Schüler kommen an egal wéi engem System virun. Mä di mëttel an di schwaach Schüler net.

(teacher interview)

Ech weess elo éierlech gesot net ob dat Ziel erreecht ass doduercher. Also, wann ech elo kucken einfach vum, weess de, wéi eng Schüler hu mir am Technicien setzen, a wéi eng hu mir am Technique respektiv am Classique setzen. Meeschtens di aus méi sozial net sou gutt gestalte Milieu di op Techniciensklasse sëtze wou d'Eltere vläicht och vum schouleschen Niveau hier net sou onbedéngt de beschten, also nee den héchste schouleschen Niveau hunn. Et ass awer och ob deene Klasse wou am mannsten an der FOLA geschafft gëtt, u sech. Dat heescht, ob s de dat Ziel erreecht hues, datt s de domatter dat ausgläichs, déi ,inégalités sociales', weess ech net.

(teacher interview)

This opinion is also reflected in the 2014 teacher questionnaire. When asked whether students make the most of their FOLA-lessons, teachers' general opinion is not clear-cut (av. = 2.4 / av. = 2.6).[25] When asked the same question, students were much more positive. 79.7% of the students believe that they take advantage of those lessons.[26] Nevertheless, when asked if they can concentrate in the FOLA-lessons, 39.9% of the students claimed that they never or only sometimes manage to concentrate, which can affect their efficiency and productivity.[27]

In addition to the fact that they believe that not every student takes advantage of the FOLA-lessons, four teachers claimed that the average number of FOLA-lessons (i.e. 3 to 4 lessons) is not high enough to make a real difference. As a teacher pointed out, it is not even enough to go through the different stages of successful learning especially as FOLA-lessons cannot fully replace part of the learning process which is bound to happen at home, such as revising and memorizing:

Hausaufgaben - jo. Mierken datt s de vläicht Schwieregkeeten hues - jo. Mee d'reng Léiere fir eng Prüfung mengen ech, geschitt an der FOLA net. Hunn ech bis elo nach net erlieft dass dat efficace geklappt huet, och wann si soe: „ech setze mech elo dohinner an ech léiere fir meng Prüfung." Geschitt net. Se kennen an der FOLA gutt hier Exercicë maachen an och nach vläicht sech géigesäiteg d'Vokabelen opfroe mä dee Prozess vu wierklech léiere wann se dat da sérieux maachen iergendwann eng Kéier, mengen ech, geschitt net an der FOLA, an da komme mer dem net aus de Féiss.

(teacher interview)

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[25] Appendix 6b, question 6.21 "En leçon FOLA, les élèves travaillent de manière optimale (ils font de leur mieux)"; scale: 1: never (5.2 %), 2: sometimes (54.5 %), 3: often (31.2 %), 4: always (9.1 %)
and question 7.21 ; scale: 1: never (4.7 %), 2: sometimes (41.9 %), 3: often (46.5 %), 4: always (7 %)
[26] Appendix 5b, question 2.5 "Ich nutze die FOLA-Stunden optimal, um alle meine Aufgaben des WPs zu erledigen"; scale: 1: never (4.3 %), 2: sometimes (15.9 %), 3: often (58.7 %), 4: always (21 %)
[27] Appendix 5b, question 2.6 "In den FOLA-Stunden kann ich konzentriert arbeiten"; scale: 1: never (7.4 %), 2: sometimes (32.5 %), 3: often (51.3 %), 4: always (8.9 %)

This observation was also made by nearly half of the 471 parents who took part in a survey conducted by the ALR in 2013.[28] 45.9% considered that the time provided in the FOLA-lessons did not suffice to complete all the tasks contained in the WP, especially in the ES (VIe, V^e, IVe) and final years of the EST (12^e/13^e).[29] 25.9% of the participants blamed the WP for being too voluminous. 10.2% also regretted that their children did not manage to concentrate in the FOLA-lessons.[30] When asked in their questionnaire, only 15% of the students claimed that they managed to complete the entirety of their WP tasks. 26.3% answered that they complete three-quarters of their assignments, whereas more than half of the students complete only half (36.5%) or less than half (22.3%) of their homework at school.[31]

All things considered, the impact of FOLA-lessons remains marginal considering how perennial and complex this societal problem is. This is also the reason why one interviewee insisted on the fact that FOLA-lessons might also entail or increase the risk that parents believe that they do not need to get involved in their children's learning process anymore since children are taken care of at school. Nevertheless, two out of those four teachers also added that the students who work less in the FOLA-lessons are also mostly those who work less at home, which leads them to believe that FOLA-lessons still remain valuable to give the necessary impetus to get started with homework in an appropriate working environment.

> *Do sinn eng Rei Leit drop, di schaffen souwisou näischt. Si schaffen weder hei eppes nach doheem eppes. Mä ech mengen si giffe wahrscheinlech nach manner schaffe wann si FOLA net hätten. Dat heescht, an dem Sënn ass et awer mengen ech scho gutt, well soss giffen se guer näischt schaffen.*
>
> *(teacher interview)*

Another teacher also mentioned the fact that FOLA-lessons enable teachers to devote time to time-consuming procedures and tasks which they would otherwise complete during the traditional lessons. FOLA-lessons offer a valuable time slot which can be used to correct homework (e.g. by providing students with an answer sheet), provide individual feedback, answer questions, perform class teacher duties (e.g. informing students, checking class attendance and absences, handing out or collecting official documents, discussing results and school reports, etc.), allow SPOS[32] interventions with the class or with individual students, teach or evaluate students in class or individually in case of extended absence or delays in the curriculum. FOLA-lessons hence enable traditional lessons to be fully devoted to student instruction and provide less privileged students with greater learning opportunities in subject-based classes. Table 5 reveals that students feel that FOLA-lessons are more often used for other purposes than teachers do.[33] The most striking discrepancy concerns the class teacher's duties. This difference of opinion can however be attributed to question phrasing. Teachers were asked if FOLA-lessons are used as *tutoring lessons* whereas students were asked if they

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[28] See Appendix 9

[29] In 2013, the ALR did not have a IIe or I^e yet.

[30] For a detailed presentation of the results per class, please see Appendix 9, question 4.

[31] Appendix 5b, question 2.1

[32] Service de psychologie et d'orientation scolaires

[33] Appendix 5b, questions 2.12 – 2.17 / Appendix 6b, questions 5.1 - 5.6

are used for *tutoring*. By analysing teacher comments[34], six of them mentioned that they devote a few minutes to tutoring but not the entire lesson, which can explain the discrepancy. Nevertheless, teachers and students seem to agree that FOLA-lessons are used rather rarely for other purposes than those mentioned in Chapter 3.

Table 5:   Teacher and student perceptions regarding the use of FOLA-lessons for other purposes

FOLA-lessons are also used …	Answers	(1) Never	(2) Sometimes	(3) Often	(4) Always	Average
as a traditional subject-based lesson.	teacher	77.9%	22.1%	0%	0%	1.2
	student	38.9%	40.5%	16.6%	4%	1.9
for oral evaluation.	teacher	84.4%	14.3%	1.3%	0%	1.2
	student	48.7%	39.2%	10.9%	1.2%	1.6
for written evaluation.	teacher	88.3%	11.7%	0%	0%	1.1
	student	51.4%	36.1%	10.1%	2.4%	1.6
by the SPOS.	teacher	42.9%	54.5%	2.6%	0%	1.6
	student	42.6%	41.4%	13.9%	2.1%	1.8
as a tutoring lesson with the class teacher.	teacher	70.1%	27.3%	2.6%	0%	1.3
	student	32.7%	38.1%	24%	5.1%	2
to prepare a school trip.	teacher	67.5%	32.5%	0%	0%	1.3
	student	48%	37.6%	11.6%	2.9%	1.7

4.4.   Conclusion

Teachers' perceptions are confirmed by scientific research. FOLA-lessons in high school do not suffice to bridge the achievement gap which takes its roots in the early years of childhood and is preserved across generations due to a complex combination of economic, cultural and social factors. Studies and experts suggest that when seeking to close the achievement gap, it is necessary to build relationships among families, communities and schools (Hattie, 2009; Boethel, 2003; Neuenschwander, 2005). It is therefore important to develop initiatives to reduce the barriers between school and home to prevent children from being torn between the world and language of home and the world and language of school. This need for strategies encouraging schools to increase or improve their family outreach and involvement activities is also expressed in the 2013-2018 Luxembourgish government programme:

> Chaque parent a son rôle à jouer pour la réussite de son enfant. Or, de nombreux parents ne savent pas comment soutenir les enfants de manière appropriée. Un nouveau dispositif de «family learning» sera offert qui associera enfants, parents, écoles et éducation des adultes et proposera aux parents différents sujets de formation, tels que le fonctionnement de l'école, les langues du pays, le goût de la lecture et d'autres sujets.
>
> (Programme gouvernemental 2013-2018, p. 6)[35]

As far as Luxembourg is concerned, Hadjar and colleagues suggest that it is important to take measures at all the stages of lifelong learning by reorganising the Luxemburgish educational system in a less stratified system, preserving and developing policies designed to reduce inequality in early childhood education in nurseries and kindergarten, and organising remedial education in high school as well as in adult education (2015: p. 55).

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[34] Appendix 6b, question 5.7 "Vos leçons FOLA font-elles l'objet d'autres utilisations? Lesquelles? A quelle fréquence?", p. 28

[35] Retrieved from http://www.men.public.lu/fr/acteurs/ministere/priorites-politique-scolaire/prog-gouv-2013-2018.pdf (accessed 30th March 2016)

In conclusion, although FOLA-lessons are not sufficient to bridge the *achievement gap*, they deserve credit for trying to bridge what we could call the **homework gap** as they offer a new approach to homework. Communication between home and school is improved by the use of the WP as parents can visualise their children's workload for the FOLA-lessons and home. In addition, FOLA-lessons provide students with the opportunity to do their homework in equal conditions and constitute an attempt to respond to a need for remedial education by giving students the opportunity to get individualised support inside the school house.

Chapter 5 – Do FOLA-lessons improve teacher-student relationships?

Among the eleven objectives of the FOLA-lessons listed up in Chapter 1, two were related to the relationship between teachers and students.

> 2. Providing teachers with the opportunity to become the *guide on the side* rather than the *sage on the stage* and thus improving teacher-student relationships thanks to a more informal dialogue centred on the student rather than the school subject.
> 3. Preparing students for formative and summative evaluation through regular study and practice in a positive classroom climate in order to foster self-confidence and reduce anxiety before and after assessments.

This chapter will therefore be divided into two parts, exploring whether FOLA-lessons enable to improve teacher-student relationships on the one hand and foster a positive classroom climate to reduce student anxiety on the other.

5.1. Teacher-student relationships

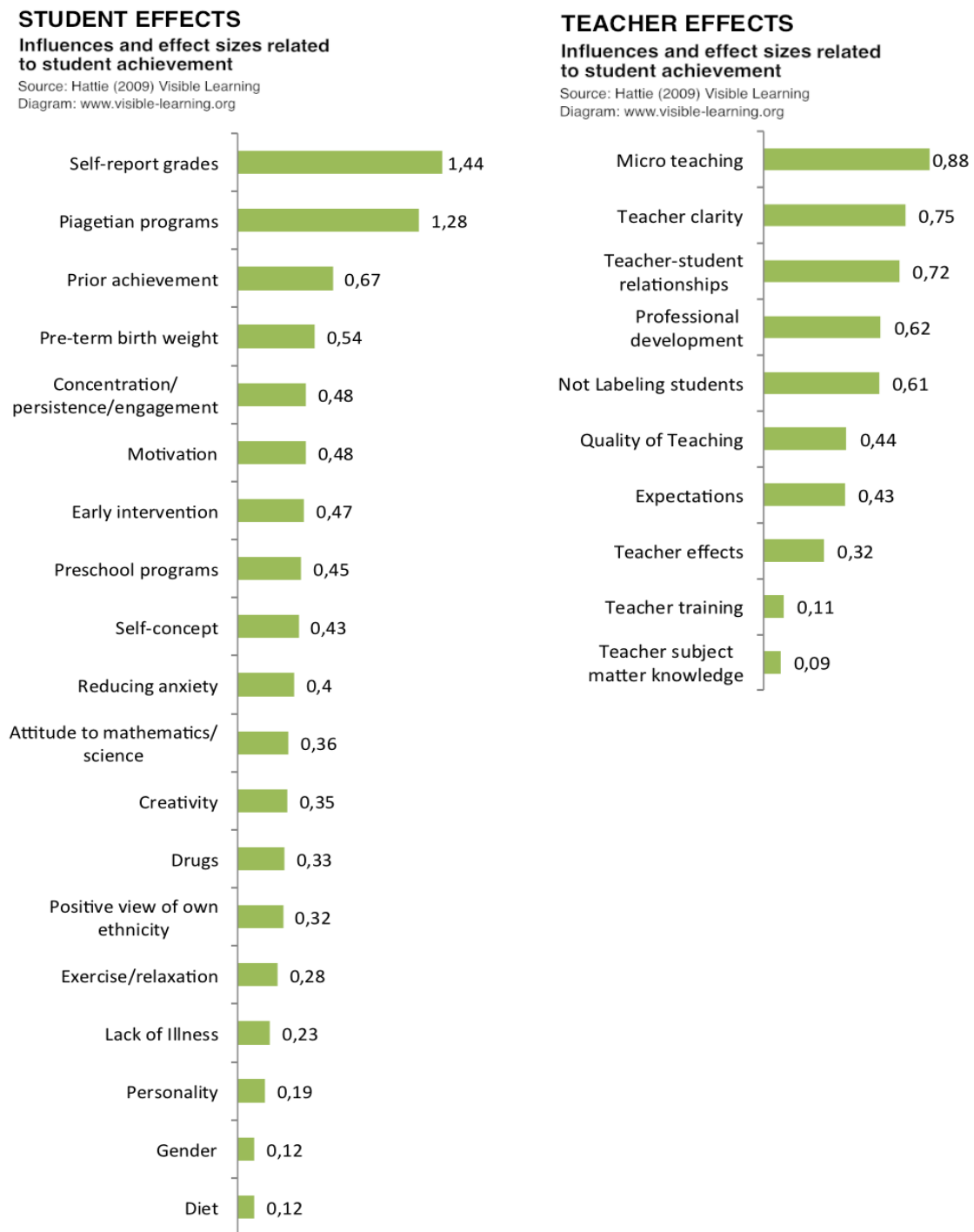### 5.1.1. The influence of relationships on student engagement and achievement

As mentioned in Chapter 3, FOLA-lessons take their roots in social constructivism. This approach considers student engagement as crucial to enhance learning. When asked about the negative aspects of FOLA-lessons for the teacher, 29.9% of the teachers highlighted the fact that motivating students in FOLA-lessons can be a challenge.[36] This answer would not surprise Robert C. Pianta and colleagues who claim that "*engagement in school begins to decline early in adolescence, and by entry into high school this decline is pronounced to the point where more than half of high school students from all types of schools report that they do not take their school or their studies seriously*" (2012: p. 366). A relevant example of student disengagement is that "*doing well in school switches from a positively valued behaviour among peers in childhood to a somewhat negatively valued behaviour by mid-adolescence*" (2012: p. 366).

Student engagement is not so much an individual variable as **contextually influenced**. There is sizeable literature that emphasizes that student motivation and engagement are influenced by the nature and quality of the relationships and interactions that take place within the classroom (Allen and Allen, 2009; Akey, 2006; Hafen et al., 2012; Pianta et al., 2012; Urban and Schoenfelder, 2006). Student engagement, which can be defined as a student's cognitive, emotional, behavioural and motivational states or capacities, should therefore be seen as a relational process which is affected by the social relationships with his or her teachers and peers (Crosnoe et al., 2004). [37] Whereas teachers place value on the students' cognitive skills and 'moral' attitudes towards work, learners attach much more importance to human and relational qualities. Renowned synthesizer of educational research and meta-analyses John Hattie (2009) found out that teacher-student relationships are the third most important variable of teacher influence on student achievement, as depicted in Figure 3.

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[36] Appendices 6b and 6c, question 4.15 "Quel(s) est/sont les aspects positifs des leçons FOLA pour l'enseignant?"
[37] Peer influence will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Figure 3: Student and teacher influences and effect sizes related to student achievement[38]

STUDENT EFFECTS
Influences and effect sizes related
to student achievement
Source: Hattie (2009) Visible Learning
Diagram: www.visible-learning.org

Influence	Effect size
Self-report grades	1,44
Piagetian programs	1,28
Prior achievement	0,67
Pre-term birth weight	0,54
Concentration/persistence/engagement	0,48
Motivation	0,48
Early intervention	0,47
Preschool programs	0,45
Self-concept	0,43
Reducing anxiety	0,4
Attitude to mathematics/science	0,36
Creativity	0,35
Drugs	0,33
Positive view of own ethnicity	0,32
Exercise/relaxation	0,28
Lack of Illness	0,23
Personality	0,19
Gender	0,12
Diet	0,12

TEACHER EFFECTS
Influences and effect sizes related
to student achievement
Source: Hattie (2009) Visible Learning
Diagram: www.visible-learning.org

Influence	Effect size
Micro teaching	0,88
Teacher clarity	0,75
Teacher-student relationships	0,72
Professional development	0,62
Not Labeling students	0,61
Quality of Teaching	0,44
Expectations	0,43
Teacher effects	0,32
Teacher training	0,11
Teacher subject matter knowledge	0,09

Hattie (2009), retrieved from http://visible-learning.org/hattie-ranking-influences-effect-sizes-learning-achievement/ (accessed 30th March 2016)

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[38] The concept of effect size is used by John Hattie throughout his work to define the impact which single variables have on school achievement alongside an achievement continuum ranging from reverse effects (effect size below d = 0.0) to desired effects (effect size above d = 0.40). The typical effects from teachers are between d = 0.15 and d = 0.40 whereas the zone between d = 0.0 and d = 0.15 is what students could achieve without any schooling. An effect size of d = 1.0 is therefore considered as highly significant as it "*would mean that, on average, students receiving that treatment would exceed 84% of students not receiving that treatment*" (Hattie, 2009: p. 8).

Teacher-student relationships are intricately linked to the teachers' effective **didactic skills**. It is therefore important to identify the characteristics of efficient teacher-student relationships which foster student engagement. In a meta-analysis of the literature on teacher-student relationships, Jeffrey Cornelius-White (2007) found out that learner-centred teacher variables have an above-average correlation with positive student outcomes. Although these variables have beneficial effects in isolation, they are more effective when applied as a whole. The most effective variables as well as their effects on student behaviour and achievement can be summarised as follows:

> Positive relationships, nondirectivity, empathy, warmth, and encouraging thinking and learning are the specific teacher variables that are above-average compared with other educational innovations. Correlations for participation, critical thinking, satisfaction, math achievement, drop-out prevention, self-esteem, verbal achievement, positive motivation, social connection, IQ grades, reduction in disruptive behaviour, attendance, and perceived achievement are all above average and are presented in decreasing order.
>
> (Cornelius-White, 2007: p. 134)

Cornelius-White also adds teachers' respect of and adaptation to student differences to the list of influential learner-centred teacher variables.

All in all, there is general consensus over the idea that teacher-student relationships do enhance student engagement and learning. It is therefore important to build upon and nurture strong and supportive relationships between teachers and students to foster higher academic achievements and a lower likelihood of disciplinary problems. The following point therefore aims to answer the question whether FOLA-lessons offer an opportunity to contribute to the improvement of teacher-student relationships, and thus student achievement.

5.1.2. Do FOLA-lessons help foster positive teacher-student relationships?

Student perceptions

86.8% of the students who took part in the questionnaire in 2014 claimed that they were generally satisfied with the ALR.[39] When asked about the reasons for their satisfaction in a close-ended question, 35.9% of those students attributed their satisfaction to the fact that they have engaged and motivated teachers and 36.3% claimed that they appreciate the quality of their relationship with their teachers.[40] When asked more specifically about the quality of these teacher-student relationships, 86.8% of the students agreed to some extent with the fact that they have good relationships with their teachers.[41]

Teacher perceptions

When asked about the positive aspects of FOLA-lessons for the teacher, 23.4% of the participants spontaneously mentioned the fact that FOLA-lessons help improve teacher-

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[39] Appendix 5b, question 1.2 "Bist du mit dem ALR als Schule insgesamt zufrieden?"
[40] Appendix 5b, question 1.3 "Gründe, warum ich mit dem ALR als Schule zufrieden bin (mehrere Antworten sind möglich)"
[41] Appendix 5b, question 1.6 "Zu meinen Lehrern habe ich ein gutes Verhältnis"; scale: 1: agree (32.6 %), 2: quite agree (54.2 %), 3: quite disagree (11 %), 4: disagree (2.2 %)

student relationship as they enable to get in touch with students in a more informal, personal and direct way.[42] When asked more specifically, the majority (81.8%) agreed with the fact that FOLA-lessons enable to improve the quality of teacher-student relationships thanks to a more informal setting.[43] Teachers agree even more (91%) when they are asked if FOLA-lessons enable teachers to act more like a guide on the side than a sage on the stage.[44]

As the ALR is a school that offers quite a number of opportunities in the weekly schedule to build up and foster supportive relationships between teachers and students (i.e. COACH-lessons, tutoring lessons, ProEt-Talentförderung[45], FOLA-lessons and lunchtime activities), it is difficult to identify the specific impact of FOLA-lessons on that relationship. In their interview, three teachers spontaneously claimed that they do not need FOLA-lessons to strengthen the relationship they already get to build with their students within the traditional classroom. On the other hand, other teachers claimed that they appreciate having a weekly lesson freed from the pressure of the curriculum, which allows them to show more flexibility and openness in a more informal setting. This enables teachers to get to know their students better as they engage in more personal conversations, which they do not have time for in the 45-minute subject-based lessons.

A teacher, however, insisted on the fact that teachers should not try to become their students' friend and should keep their teacher's role aiming at guaranteeing a positive working atmosphere. Such a reference to the importance of the teacher's position as an authority figure in the classroom can also be found in Jeanne Moll's opinion about classroom relationships:

> Si toute rencontre est celle de sujets humains qui croisent leur appel de reconnaissance et d'intercommunication, le risque existe de se complaire dans un mouvement de reflets narcissiques et d'oublier l'enjeu de l'école qui est un lieu pour apprendre – des savoirs, mais aussi la solidarité – et un relais pour accéder à la culture. Lorsque l'adulte poursuit une visée de séduction auprès des enfants ou adolescents, c'est-à-dire accède à toutes leurs demandes, et relègue le savoir à l'arrière-plan, il tombe dans le piège de la relation affective complaisante, qui se suffit à elle-même, et il rompt le contrat qui le lie à l'institution.

(Moll, 2009: p. 173)

FOLA-lessons are, in essence, student-centred. It is therefore not surprising to see that both students and teachers agree with the fact that they contribute to positive learner-centred teacher-student relationships although their effect cannot be observed in isolation from the other pedagogical strategies implemented at the ALR. Nevertheless, FOLA-lessons provide teachers with an additional opportunity to call upon their relational and didactic skills which are known for fostering teacher-student relationships and thus student engagement. As

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[42] Appendices 6b and 6c, question 4.15 "Quel(s) est/sont les aspects positifs des leçons FOLA pour l'enseignant?"
[43] Appendix 6b, question 4.2 "Les leçons FOLA permettent d'améliorer la qualité de la relation élève-enseignant grâce à un dialogue plus informel"; scale: 1: fully disagree (0 %), 2: quite disagree (18.2 %), 3: quite agree (62.3 %), 4: fully agree (19.5 %)
[44] Appendix 6b, question 4.9 "Les leçons FOLA permettent à l'enseignant de fonctionner en tant que guide prodiguant des conseils plutôt qu'en tant que maître dispensant des enseignements"; scale: 1: fully disagree (1.3 %), 2: quite disagree (7.8 %), 3: quite agree (49.4 %), 4: fully agree (41.6 %)
[45] As mentioned in Chapter 1, a new project called "ProET" was launched in September 2014, enabling students in IVᵉ, 10ᵉ, IIIᵉ, 11ᵉ, IIᵉ, 12GE, T0 and T1 to take part in activities meant to develop their talents rather than to attend two weekly FOLA-lessons.

mentioned above, the most influential teacher variables are non-directivity, empathy, warmth, encouragement of higher order thinking, encouragement of learning and teacher adaptation to student differences.

The questions whether there is non-directivity (i.e. students initiating and regulating their own learning process), encouragement of learning and adaptation to student differences in the FOLA-lessons will be discussed in the upcoming chapters. As far as **empathy and warmth** are concerned, FOLA-lessons are a place where teachers are freed from the pressure of the curriculum and get a greater opportunity to demonstrate that they care for the learning of each student as a person by spotting individual cues to respond to their needs accordingly. Caring relationships are defined by the extent to which teachers show "*affection (liking, appreciation, and enjoyment of the student), care, attunement (understanding, sympathy), dependability (availability when needed), interest in and detailed knowledge about the student, and dedication of resources (such as time, interest, aid, energy, and emotional support)*" (Jones, 2009: p. 279). Robert C. Pianta and colleagues call this variable *teacher sensitivity* and describe it as a pro- and reactive attitude on the side of the teacher:

> Highly sensitive teachers, through their consistent, timely, and responsive interactions, help students see adults as a resource and create environments in which students feel safe and free to explore and learn. Highly sensitive teaching requires teachers to attend to, process, and respond to a lot of information simultaneously. For example, during whole group instruction, a sensitive teacher may, within quick succession, notice some children not paying attention, see that one child is frustrated because he does not understand her questions, and observe a sad look on a child she knows is generally very happy and engaged. The sensitive teacher not only notices these subtle cues from students, but knows her students well enough to respond in ways that help alleviate their problems. She may, for example, change the tone of her voice to reengage those students not participating, take a quick moment to restate her question in simpler language, and make a mental note to check in with the sad student at recess. In contrast, an insensitive teacher may completely miss these subtle cues or respond in ways that aggravate, rather than alleviate, students' problems.

<div align="right">(Pianta et al., 2012: p. 373)</div>

The end of this quotation shows one significant limitation of the FOLA-lessons. Theoretically, they offer a regular opportunity for learner-centred interactions but in practice, the nature and quality of those interactions depend on the students and teachers involved in the process.

A similar observation can be made as far as the **encouragement of higher order thinking** is concerned. Most tasks contained in the WP require a discrete answer rather than elicit reasoning, analysis and problem-solving around a more ambiguous challenge (Pianta et al. 2012: p. 368). Appendices 3a to 3e reveal that most tasks contained in the WP consist in exercises, the preparation and correction of assessments, reading and summarising books, group work, and creative writing. Giving students appropriately challenging tasks makes them feel that you take them seriously. According to Joseph Allen and Claudia Allen, "*teachers form their best connections with students when they are focused upon drawing out the **students' inner adult**"* (2009: p. 206). Teenagers love being given the chance to speak up and having others listen with interest. Although students can also be given that chance in the traditional classroom, FOLA-lessons give teachers an even greater opportunity to pull the students toward greater maturity for instance by asking them for their opinions and expertise about school matters, give them assignments with personal, emotional and motivational properties to foster their engagement or pay special attention to the words they use (e.g. "ladies and gentlemen"

instead of "boys and girls"). Joseph Allen and Claudia W. Allen insist on the fact that the best teachers do not just treat but really consider teenagers as adults:

> It's partly the language the adults use and how they frame their actions, but those are just the outward signs. The best teachers already see the inner adult in teens. They don't see themselves so much trying to lead kids into adulthood, as simply trying to help already fledgling adults make their way in the world as effectively as possible. And year after year these teachers bring out the very best in their students.
>
> (Allen & Allen, 2009: p. 221)

Teachers are not the only responsible for successful teacher-student relationships. For example, teachers cannot fully influence student motivation. Indeed, positive teacher-student relationships seem to have a positive impact when students are "*actively not complying with school structure*" (i.e. oppositional or resistant behaviour, dropout, disruptive behaviour and absences) but this influence seems to be reduced to zero when students are "*passively avoiding effort*". (Cornelius-White, 2007). In addition, Allen and Allen (2009) acknowledge that some students tend to show disinterest in relationships with adults, for instance by rolling their eyes or deliberately ignoring teachers' attempts in order not to lose face in front of their peers. Besides those conscious reactions, Philippe Jubin (2009) also attributes part of students' rejection of teacher-student relationships to the unconscious phenomenon of *transference*, which leads students to project their desires and fears onto their teachers. As a result, teenagers' apparent lack of motivation and disinterest in adult connections can, in turn, demotivate teachers in their attempt to build up a positive relationship to their class as a whole and to each student as a person (Allen & Allen, 2009: p. 221).

All in all, similarly to the observations made regarding social inequality, it seems that FOLA-lessons provide a great opportunity to promote positive teacher-relationships but whether this opportunity is used depends on the quality of the tasks contained in the WP as well as students' reactions and teachers' psychosocial competences, efforts and resilience in the face of student disinterest.

5.2. Student anxiety

The second FOLA objective analysed in this chapter concerns classroom climate and student anxiety towards school in general and evaluation in particular. There is extensive literature on the sources and outcomes of stress. More specifically, the issue of academic stress is regularly studied in regards to how it affects students' well-being, health and performance on school assessments. The literature, however, can be extremely confusing as studies show that stressful events can facilitate learning and memory in some cases (e.g. it is generally accepted that stressful events are very well remembered) and impair cognitive performance in some others. According to David Putwain (2007), this confusion about stress effects stems from a lack of precision in terminology. The terms *stress*, *worry*, *anxiety* as well as their corresponding adjectives *nervous*, *upset*, *worried*, *stressed* and *helpless* tend to be used interchangeably as much in everyday language as in scientific studies as if they carried the same meaning.

5.2.1. Defining anxiety

According to Putwain, the term **anxiety** refers to a "*subjective experience of fear and apprehension accompanied by a state of physiological arousal where heart rate increases,*

palms become sweaty and so forth", which can include both cognitive effects (i.e. *worries* or *concerns*) and emotional effects (i.e. *nervousness*) (2007: p. 211). This term has acquired a negative connotation as it now refers to an unpleasant emotional state by definition. By interchanging and associating the terms *stress* and *anxiety* repeatedly, stress has started to carry a similar negative meaning although it initially referred to a "*state of adaptation to environment pressure*" which "*can have either positive or negative outcomes*" (2007: p. 211). Anxiety is *one* of many other stress responses, which can include depression, anger and other forms of negative affects (2007: p. 213). Moreover, stress can be a short-lived stimulus as well as a chronic or repetitive experience of distress (Joëls et al., 2006; Putwain, 2007).

In their respective meta-analyses, John Hattie (2009) and David Putwain (2007) base themselves on evidence that suggests that schoolwork and especially passing examinations are the most commonly reported sources of stress for secondary school students. **Academic stress** is the general term used to encompass all the aspects of school life such as student workload, homework time, extracurricular activities, sleep habits, course expectations, parental expectations, college admissions and examinations (Pope and Simon, 2005: p.35). The stress outcome of assessments is usually ranked as the top source of stress among secondary students and has developed into a subtype of academic stress usually referred to as **examination stress** or **test anxiety** (Putwain, 2007: p. 210).

Contrary to some misguided beliefs, struggling students who continuously experience failure are not the only ones to suffer from academic stress. Denise Clark Pope and Richard Simon (2005) offer an alternate picture of high-achieving adolescents who are vulnerable to scheming, lying, cheating, plagiarism but also sleep deprivation and the use of expensive tutors, therapists, caffeine, and/or pills to get the grades they believe they need for future success. As a result, high-achieving students devote time and energy not to *learn* but merely to what they call 'doing school':

> Instead of thinking deeply about the content of their course, students who are 'doing school' focus on managing their workloads and cutting corners. They memorize facts and figures just long enough to ace the exams and then move on to the next set of tasks.
>
> (Pope and Simon, 2005: p. 34)

Although it is not fully clear at present whether stress has positive or facilitating outcomes on learning and memory (Joëls et al., 2006), studies have highlighted the potential negative effects of academic stress – and especially test anxiety – on students' health (e.g. their cardiovascular and immune system functioning), emotional well-being, and performance in a wide variety of assessment contexts (Putwain, 2007). As a result, despite the lack of clear consensus in the literature, considerations should be given to reduce anxiety towards school.

5.2.2. Do FOLA-lessons help reduce student anxiety?

Although the FOLA-objective presented at the beginning of this chapter seems to be restricted to test anxiety, the present section sets out to explore whether FOLA-lessons contribute to the reduction of academic stress in general. When asked whether FOLA-lessons help students to work in a positive social climate and reduce academic and test anxiety, 65% of the teachers

expressed their agreement.[46] This point will examine in detail whether FOLA-lessons can reduce academic anxiety by examining various strategies that schools and teachers can implement to reduce stress related to school (Pope and Simon, 2005).

Raising people's awareness

In order to tackle the issue of academic stress, parents, schools and teachers need to promote values which are consistent with the strategies they are willing to implement. For example, in order to reduce test anxiety, students need to be told and taught that success is not just defined in terms of high grades. For instance, parents obsessed with university admissions might fuel their children's anxiety. In order to promote a broader definition of success, the ALR parents committee annually honours a student who served the school or community. Moreover, besides their school report, students are sent an appendix (called 'Annexe au bulletin') which evaluates their engagement and social skills and highlights good deeds and achievements in athletics or manual work.[47] Nevertheless, these initiatives are still counteracted by more traditional measures such as ranking students on their school report or comparing the ALR's position in the national school ranking. Time spent in FOLA-lessons could also be used punctually to engage in conversations with students who seem to put themselves under much pressure regarding academic success.

Improving students' use of time

The ALR is aware of the influence of time management on students' achievements and stress. For example, it has started to enact changes like replacing terms by semesters in order to reduce the amount of examinations throughout the year and thus reduce test anxiety. Teachers are also asked to avoid planning examinations or deadlines within the weeks following holidays to give students real time off. The ALR also uses digital homework and test calendars to prevent scheduling conflicts. The resulting WP-sheet and FOLA-lessons provide students with one week to complete homework mainly within school time to avoid conflicts with their free time activities and respect their learning pace. Nevertheless, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the current number of FOLA-lessons seems to be insufficient as most students claim that they still need to work at home on an everyday basis to complete their tasks and get ready for tests and examinations.[48]

Fostering a positive classroom climate

Classroom climate plays an important role in reducing academic anxiety. John Hattie argues that **classroom cohesion** is the attribute of positive classroom climate which optimizes learning the most. Cohesive classes are characterised by "*co-peer learning, tolerance and welcoming of*

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[46] Appendix 6b, question 4.7 "Les leçons FOLA permettent aux élèves de travailler dans un climat de confiance et ainsi diminuer leur anxieté par rapport à l'école et aux évaluations"; scale: 1: totally disagree (6.5 %), 2: quite disagree (28.6 %), 3: quite agree (44.2 %), 4: totally agree (20.8 %)

[47] See Appendix 4

[48] Appendix 5b, question 2.58 "Wie lange sitzt du jeden Tag zu Hause an den Wochenplanaufgaben?"; scale: less than 30 minutes (28.4%), between 30 and 60 minutes (31.9%), between 60 and 90 minutes (22.3%), more than 90 minutes (17.3%)

error and thus increased feedback, and more discussions of goals, success criteria, and positive teacher-student and student-student relationships" (2009: p. 103). Teachers are to create a risk-free supportive environment in which students feel safe and secure enough to acknowledge and express their understanding or lack of understanding. Similarly to Pope and Simon (2005), Gayle H. Gregory and Carolyn M. Chapman insist on the fact that this tolerance applies to gifted students, too.

> Many times, the students considered academically gifted feel that they are expected to know all the information. Often these learners pretend to have all the answers in response to the expectations of others. This can cause stress and interfere with learning. A disappointed look or comment can keep the gifted student from expressing a lack of understanding. This student, as well as others, should feel secure in the classroom even when he or she doesn't have all the answers.
>
> (Gregory and Chapman, 2007: p. 16)

John Hattie, however, insists on the fact that in a positive classroom climate, both teachers *and* students are responsible for working towards positive learning outcomes. "*The presence of disruptive students can have negative effects on their own and all other students' achievement outcomes. Thus, reducing disruptive behaviours needs to be a core competency of any successful teacher*" (2009, p. 103). Furthermore, Bernard Rey (2007) insists on the importance of the validity of classroom rules. The latter should not exist for their own sake but serve pedagogical purposes. For example, teachers must be aware that student movement and talking are part of the FOLA-lessons and are by no means signs of flawed classroom management. Moreover, the kind of work students are assigned to should *ideally* be defined regardless of its implications on classroom management.

Enabling students to experience success

Some teachers will say that learning how to cope with frustration is part of growing old and that homework is a way of making students acquire tolerance for frustration as they have to face challenging tasks on their own. According to Cathy Vatterott, it is misguided to believe that frustration will foster motivation and learning.

> For the achievement-oriented student who has successfully overcome frustration in the past, that may be true. These students may have a higher tolerance for frustration and be motivated to try harder. But for students who are fearful of failing and being judged, frustration is a cost they may not be willing to pay, especially if they possess no strategies for getting beyond the frustration. Differences in motivation, persistence, and organizational skills oblige teachers to adapt homework assignments to provide opportunities for maximum success and minimum frustration for each student. This obligation means homework assignments should be time based – students should be instructed to do as much as they can in a certain number of minutes and given feedback on what they complete. Students who have trouble persisting with difficult tasks must be given work that is doable and must be provided one-on-one assistance. Their homework should be monitored more closely, with an emphasis on progress and with improvement noted and praised. They must be taught concrete strategies, assigned study buddies, or provided after-school support programs. For students who have difficulty persisting with homework, checking for frustration is as critical as checking for understanding.
>
> (Vatterott, 2009: p.84)

In order to feel confident and find motivation, students need to sense that success is within reach. As Rick Stiggins puts it, the aim is "*not to eliminate failure, but rather keep failure from becoming chronic and thus inevitable in the mind of the learner*" (2007: p. 23). Nevertheless, as

will be shown in Chapter 6, student beliefs do influence their reactions to success. Success in learning seems to lead to greater motivation only for those students who believe that "*success arises from personal efforts, rather than simply from ability or chance*" (Dickinson, 1995: p. 171). The teacher's role is to show students what success looks like and help students identify where they are now in relation to the objectives they want to reach. Ideally, such a form of assessment should provide students with the opportunity to work on their productions as long as necessary by drafting and taking descriptive feedback into account and hand in their work for final evaluation and grading whenever they feel they are ready. In practice, however, regarding the number of students they are in charge of and the curriculum imposed on them, teachers in the traditional classroom do not have the possibility to systematically provide repeated feedback on the same task until their students feel they are ready to hand it in. Teachers who are in charge of a FOLA-lesson, however, have a weekly opportunity to provide feedback and praise efforts and progress on a one-to-one basis. Whether teachers use that occasion will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

Providing valuable feedback

The quality of individual feedback can, among others, reduce academic anxiety and increase self-confidence as it shows students that teachers value their learning (Brookhart, 2007: p. 56). John Hattie (2009) identifies feedback as one of the most powerful influences on student achievement as it has an effect at the cognitive level (by informing students on where they are in their learning) as well as the affective level (by developing students' feelings of control over their learning). The influence of feedback on students' cognitive processes will be discussed in Chapter 6 as this chapter is mainly concerned with the emotional dimension of learning.

By helping students develop a feeling of control over their learning, feedback increases efforts, motivation and student engagement. John Hattie and Helen Timperley (2007), however, insist on the fact that feedback needs to fulfil certain conditions to be effective. Simply providing feedback is not the answer. Its nature and timing, as well as the way students interpret it, is what will or will not lead to further learning. Praise, for example, is known for not being effective in enhancing learning as it is directed at the self (e.g. "Good boy!" or "Well done!") rather than the task at hand (e.g. "You used capital letters correctly."). Nevertheless, although such feedback does not inform the student on how to improve, it is psychologically reassuring. It is also motivating, especially when it is directed to the effort, self-regulation and engagement displayed by the learner during the process (e.g. "You're really great because you diligently completed this task by applying this concept.") (Hattie and Timperley, 2007: p. 96). Besides focusing on the students' efforts rather than the student as a person, **effort feedback** must remain credible. In order to have an impact on the student, it must be a reward for real efforts and appear in the early stages of a task, when the learner needs to provide special efforts to get properly involved. At the end of a task, effort feedback should then be replaced by **ability feedback**, highlighting the competences which the learner has acquired or developed through the task (Hattie and Timperley, 2007: pp. 95-6).

Feedback which does not fulfil the conditions for improving learning can still be appreciated by students whereas what might be considered as effective feedback can be ignored or rejected, depending on the conditions in which it is provided. For example, the degree of confidence that

students have in the correctness of their answers can influence their reaction to feedback. Moreover, as Susan M. Brookhart puts it, "*unsuccessful learners have sometimes been so frustrated by their school experiences that they might see every attempt to help them as just another declaration that they are 'stupid'*" (2007: p. 56). As far as praise is concerned, it seems that it is most appreciated and thus heard and taken into consideration when it is not public.

> Sharp (1985) reported that 26% of the adolescent students in this sample preferred to be praised loudly and publicly when they achieved on an academic task. 64% preferred to be praised quietly and privately, and only 10% preferred teachers to say nothing at all. (…) students preferred praise for trying hard rather than for having high ability (especially when the praise was public) and for achievement rather than for behaviour.
>
> (Hattie and Timperley, 2007: p. 97)

Teachers should be aware of the fact that students' reactions to feedback are unpredictable as the latter is received in a context in which students have to protect their reputation (i.e. some students do not want to lose face in front of peers who do not esteem school achievement as valuable) and self-esteem (i.e. some students (do not) want to be seen as a good student). Even if feedback is directed to the task (e.g. "You forgot to use capital letters."), students tend to interpret it as aimed at the self (e.g. "I am not a good student."). Age does also play a role. Hattie and Timperley point at the fact that older students interpret "*praise after success or neutral feedback after failure as an indication that the teacher perceived their ability to be low. When given criticism after failure and neutral feedback after success, they perceived that the teacher had estimated their ability to be high and their effort low*" (2007: p. 97). Students' reactions also vary depending on whether they get feedback for a task they *want to* do or a task they *have to* do (2007: p. 99). All in all, feedback is a message that students need to be ready to hear. It requires teachers to know their students and develop a myriad of competences in order to adapt the nature and timing of their feedback, which Hattie and Timperley sum up as follows:

> It should be clear that providing and receiving feedback requires much skill by students and teachers. [It] does not merely invoke a stimulus-and-response routine but requires high proficiency in developing a classroom climate, the ability to deal with the complexities of multiple judgements, and deep understandings of the subject matter to be ready to provide feedback about tasks or the relationships between ideas, willingness to encourage self-regulation, and having exquisite timing to provide feedback before frustration takes over. To be able to devote time and thoughts to feedback is aided when teachers automate many other tasks in the classroom and provide rich learning opportunities for all students and thus have the time and resources to be responsive to feedback.
>
> (Hattie and Timperley, 2007: p. 103)

Whereas doing homework alone at home can lead to frustration and arguments, FOLA-lessons provide teachers with opportunities to observe their students and provide feedback accordingly. The classroom observations carried out in the framework of this project confirmed Hattie and Timperley's findings. Contrary to teacher beliefs, feedback tends to be limited in the classroom. Only one teacher who took part in the observation phase of this project provided feedback on the learning process (i.e. "How are you planning on working on this?") whereas all the others restricted their interventions to feedback on the task (i.e. "What task have you chosen to do?"). This tendency is also reflected in the students' answers to their

questionnaire.[49] Praise, which is appreciated by students under the conditions mentioned above, is very rare. Within a 45-minute lesson, a teacher praised a student only once, namely for writing down her vocabulary instead of repeating it orally.

Teachers tend to be mainly concerned with getting and keeping every student busy to guarantee a working climate which enables every student to concentrate on the task at hand. As a result, teacher interventions mainly focus on *what* their students are doing instead of *how* the students are processing it. Various reasons can explain this attitude. First, it can be explained by the diverging teacher perceptions of the teacher's role in FOLA-lessons (i.e. the result-based and process-based approaches described in Chapter 3). Moreover some teachers expressed in their questionnaire or interview that they do not feel comfortable enough to provide advice on tasks which are related to school subjects they do not master enough.[50] Students also feel that their teachers sometimes (44.2%) or even often (33.9%) cannot help them with particular school subjects.[51]

Hattie and Timperley (2007), however, insist on the fact that the concept of help does not necessarily imply to provide answers and explanations. According to them, it is important to teach teachers that even if they cannot provide students with answers or feedback on the correctness of their students' answers because of their shortcomings in particular school subjects, they are more than welcome to engage in a conversation with the students that will foster self-evaluation and self-regulation on the side of the student. As Hattie and Timperley put it, feedback is not only the teacher's responsibility. Students need to learn to decide for themselves "*how well they are going, what the goals are, and what to do next*" (2007: p. 101). Not having a deep understanding of a subject can therefore be considered as an advantage for the teacher as it will enable him or her to provide the students with much more effective feedback, as it will force him or her to involve the student in the process and develop ways for students to ask themselves questions (e.g. "Doesn't that surprise you?", "Could you explain to me how you got that result?", "Why did you decide to do it this way?") and gain more autonomy.[52]

Besides the fact that they do not feel comfortable with other school subjects, some teachers feel they also sometimes lack the necessary instructions regarding what is precisely expected of the students and do not feel confident enough to decide instead of their colleagues.

> *Personnellement je n'aime pas trop répondre aux questions sur les autres cours parce que … parce que parfois je ne sais pas ce que l'enseignant, il veut. Moi je peux avoir mon idée mais je ne sais pas si ça va dans le même sens. Et parfois il y a déjà aussi des enseignants qui se sont déjà plaints de ça. Que d'autres n'ont pas, si ce n'est pas leur cours, n'ont pas à intervenir. Donc j'évite. (…) Parfois les consignes après, elles ne sont pas claires et puis les élèves ils disent alors toujours : «Ah oui mais c'est l'autre prof qui a dit ça ».*
>
> *(teacher interview)*

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[49] See Chapter 6, point 6.1.5. for an in-depth analysis of that particular aspect.
[50] See Appendix 6c, "What are the negative aspects of the FOLA-lessons for the teacher?"
[51] Appendix 5b, question 2.55 "In den FOLA-Stunden stelle ich fest, dass der Lehrer mir in einigen Fächern nicht weiterhelfen kann"; scale: 1: never (14.9 %), 2: sometimes (44.2 %), 3: often (33.9 %), 4: always (7 %)
[52] This aspect will be developed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Here again, the quality of the WP is of utmost importance to facilitate both students' and teachers' understanding of the task at hand and work together with a clearly-defined goal, which is known for being a determining factor for better student engagement and achievement (Hattie, 2009: p. 163). Appendix 3c is an example of a WP which provides FOLA-teachers with input as to what they should help their students pay attention to while completing their tasks. Thanks to the German and French teachers, the FOLA-teachers know that their students will have to be reminded to read the instructions carefully in order to know what exercises they should copy on a separate sheet. Appendix 3b is a clear example of incomplete instructions for the FOLA-lesson, all the more since the class in question is a T0CM. 'Technicien' students are known for needing extra support – especially in terms of organisation and decision-making –, which FOLA-teachers will struggle to give as no precise goals, instructions or possible helping resources are mentioned on this sheet. The teachers who completed these boxes expect their students and FOLA-teachers to know what the task is all about, which is not always the case, especially in such classes. The similar lack of information in Appendix 3d is not as problematic since students in 3rd grade are supposed to have reached a higher level of autonomy. Teachers might rather use the opportunity to check students' understanding of the task at hand by questioning their choices and fostering self-evaluation and self-regulation.

5.3. Conclusion

It is undeniable that classroom social climate and teacher-student relationships as an indicator of this climate are determining factors to encourage student engagement and learning. That being said, it is not so much teacher behaviour itself as students' perceptions of this behaviour that will determine whether students will feel comfortable and willing to engage in the classroom. Student engagement will depend on individual variables (such as psychological transfer) but also the nature and timing of teacher feedback and the quality of the task at hand. The more a student relates to the task, the more likely he or she will get engaged and actually learn and not just 'do school'.

FOLA-lessons provide teachers with time and learning opportunities to reduce anxiety and frustration. It is however up to each teacher whether they use that opportunity to make "*crucial pedagogical decisions in the short term and cultivate a powerful classroom ethos over the long term*" (Intrator, 2004: p. 22). The teachers' task is highly complex. First, teachers who set up the tasks for the WP need to make sure that their tasks are appropriately challenging to prevent boredom (with underwhelming tasks) or frustration (with overwhelming tasks). They need to make sure that the goals and instructions are clearly defined in the WP in order to help their FOLA-colleagues feel more comfortable with the task at hand and provide valuable feedback. Teachers also need to put extra effort into knowing their students and to develop psychosocial competences in order to show empathy and warmth, adapt to student differences (ranging from the struggling to the gifted), and provide feedback which reduces anxiety and fosters learning at the same time. The next chapters of this project will continue to insist on the fact that teacher training in terms of effective feedback is needed at the ALR to help FOLA-teachers make the most out of those lessons, even if – and especially if – they do not display any expertise in the school subjects related to the assignments at hand.

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As shown in this chapter, teacher variables do not influence student engagement in isolation. In order to strengthen their interpersonal behaviour, teachers also need to display didactic competences that will enable them to address the inner adult within each student, among others by providing more genuine opportunities for students to speak up, encouraging higher order thinking and setting up non-directive tasks which foster self-evaluation and self-regulation. Whether FOLA-lessons enable teachers to foster learner *self-regulation* (also called *autonomy*) is therefore the focus of Chapter 7.

Chapter 6 – Do FOLA-lessons foster learner autonomy?

Among the eleven objectives of the FOLA-lessons listed up in Chapter 1, two are related to the concept of learner autonomy.

4. Helping students gain autonomy in terms of self-assessment, decision-making, time management and self-organisation and thus foster life-long learning and increase their employability.
5. Providing students with opportunities to learn to take on personal responsibility for their learning.

This chapter will therefore raise the questions whether FOLA-lessons enable to develop learner autonomy on the one hand and teach a sense of responsibility on the other.

6.1. Learner autonomy

6.1.1. Historical background

The concept of autonomy is not recent. Great thinkers throughout the ages believed in autonomous learning (Benson, 2001). Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 78) defended the ideal of a 'natural' education consisting in letting children follow their natural impulses and inclinations and learn through direct contact with nature rather than through the transmission of knowledge under the authority of others. John Dewey (1859-1952) based his educational ideas on Rousseau's precepts and grounded them within a project of social reform, as "*school and classroom were seen as microcosms of the community, in which learners worked together to solve shared problems. It was through collaborative work that learning contributed to the development of community*" (Benson, 2001: p. 26). This view of learning as an adaptive process (i.e. solving problems generated by the environment) is at the root of the constructivist approaches already defined in Chapter 3 which are highly influential in the theory of autonomy.

Constructivist approaches hold the view that learners are active participants in the process of learning. If learning requires active participation, it follows that it is most effective when learners are engaged and motivated.

> Effective learners are characterized in the research literature as being cognitively and affectively active in the learning process. They are seen as being capable of learning independently and deliberately through identification, formulation and restructuring of goal; use of strategy planning; development and execution of plans; and engagement of self-monitoring.
>
> (Wang and Perverly, cited in Benson, 2001: p. 40)

Although the concept of *self-monitoring*, also called *self-regulation*, is somehow narrower than the concept of autonomy, it constitutes a key factor in the development of learner autonomy. **Self-regulation** cannot be learnt through formal instruction. It is a skill which is acquired and sharpened through social interactions with adults and peers and needs practice at three different stages of the learning process, namely "*forethought, performance or volitional control and self-reflection*" (Benson, 2001: p. 41).

6.1.2. Defining learner autonomy

Before defining what learner autonomy consists in, it is necessary to first insist on what it is *not*, as teacher scepticism towards autonomy-supportive environments is often rooted in the following misconceptions:

- Autonomy is *not* a synonym for self-instruction; in other words, autonomy is not limited to learning without a teacher.
- In the classroom context, autonomy does *not* entail an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher; it is *not* a matter of letting the learners get on with things as best as they can.
- On the other hand, autonomy is *not* something that teachers do to learners, that is, it is *not* another teaching method.
- Autonomy is *not* a single, easily described behaviour.
- Autonomy is *not* a steady state achieved by learners.

(Little, cited in Benson, 2001: p. 48)

According to Eric M. Anderman and Linley H. Anderman's encyclopaedia, autonomy is defined as "*the experience of being the author and origin of one's behaviour*" (2009, p. 88). More particularly, **learner autonomy** is usually defined as the capacity to take charge of, or responsibility for, one's own learning. It is however best to define learner autonomy as the capacity to **take control** of one's own learning, largely because the construct of *control* appears to be more open to investigation and description than the constructs of *charge* or *responsibility* (Benson, 2001; Cotterall, 1995). This control over one's learning can be defined as follows:

> [Self-regulated learning] involves activating and sustaining cognitions, behaviours, and emotions in a systematic way to attain learning goals. Self-regulated learners manage their behaviours and anxieties to facilitate learning, actively avoiding behaviours and cognitions detrimental to academic success. They understand the strategies and environments necessary for learning to occur and feel capable of performing to their personal standards. When challenged, self-regulated learners understand when and how to utilize strategies that increase persistence and performance.

(Abar and Loken, 2010: p. 25)

It is important to highlight the fact that autonomy is commonly defined in terms of *capacity* as the possession of an ability does not necessarily imply that the learner will demonstrate it. Indeed, the learner might not want to do so (due to a lack of motivation or confidence) or be permitted to do so (due to a lack of opportunity). Furthermore, autonomy is not an 'all-or-nothing concept', but rather a matter of degree all the more since it is a multi-dimensional construct, which is difficult to operationalise. Instead of talking of measuring autonomy, it is more accurate to talk about measuring **degrees of autonomy**. As a result, the description of specific levels of control over learning is a far easier task than the description or measurement of autonomy in general (Benson, 2001).

6.1.3. Levels of learner control

According to Benson (2001), an adequate description of learner autonomy should at least recognise the importance of three interdependent levels at which learner control may be exercised, namely 1) learning management, 2) cognitive processes and 3) learning content.

Control over learning management

The first level of learner autonomy describes the concept in terms of the capacity to make decisions at successive stages of the learning process. It concerns all aspects of learning, namely setting goals, choosing materials and tasks, choosing methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the learning process (in terms of pace, time, space, etc.) and evaluating what has been acquired (Benson, 2001; Cotterall, 1995).

The important factor which will influence learner choice at this level is whether learners are striving after *performance goals* or *learning goals*, which was already referred to in Chapter 5 when mentioning the phenomenon of students committed to 'doing school' rather than actual learning. Students with **performance goals** (i.e. striving for high grades, gold stars, and teacher or peer recognition) tend not to develop the necessary confidence to engage and persist in challenging tasks as they are afraid of unfavourable external judgements of their performances and abilities. On the other hand, students with **learning goals** are more likely to take risks as they are driven by their willingness to acquire new knowledge and skills. In other words, "*learners who believe that they have control over their learning – that by accepting new challenges, they can increase their ability to perform learning tasks and so increase their intelligence – tend to be more successful than others*" (Dickinson, 1995: p. 172).

During the teacher interviews, a teacher pointed out the fact that the Luxembourgish educational system does not foster learner autonomy as students do not need to demonstrate any autonomy to pass their A-levels. On the contrary, final exams are so codified that students and teachers tend to focus on the students' ability to comply with the rules and standards imposed on them rather than to develop further knowledge and skills throughout the final school year. A students' degree of autonomy is not taken into account in this final evaluation. What matters is the student's performance. According to that teacher, there's no wonder why students do not see the point in becoming more autonomous as it is not a competence valued in our evaluation system in particular and society in general.

Control over cognitive processes

The second level over which learners need to take control adds a psychological dimension to the concept as it concerns the **cognitive factors** involved in the development of learner autonomy, especially those concerned with motivation, affective state and beliefs or preferences (Benson, 2001). In other words, autonomy is also a capacity for detachment, critical reflection and independent action over one's own individual variables such as nervousness, effort management despite potential obstacles, beliefs about the importance of academics in life, performance-avoidance versus performance-approach goal orientation (i.e. avoiding versus taking on a task due to the fear of appearing incompetent in the eyes of others), and intrinsic motivation to develop academic competence (Abar and Loken, 2010: p. 26).

As far as **motivation** is concerned, an accepted distinction is made between *extrinsic* and *intrinsic* motivation, coming from 'outside' and 'inside' a learner respectively.

> People who are intrinsically motivated in doing an activity are doing it for its own sake rather than because of external pressure or promise of reward for doing it. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand,

refers to learning situations where the reason for doing a task is something other than an interest in the task (or broader learning endeavour) itself. In addition, undertaking the task may be something the person feels pressured to do rather than genuinely wants to do.

(Dickinson, 1995: p. 169)

Most researchers and methodologists have come to the view that intrinsic motivation is more likely to enhance learning (Dickinson, 1999; Hattie, 2009). Research shows that extrinsic and intrinsic forms of motivation are interrelated. When students have no intrinsic wish to learn, extrinsic incentives and controlling events to pressure students to learn can, in turn, develop into intrinsic motivation. But the reverse is also true: "*offering rewards to learners who were previously intrinsically motivated can have the effect of reducing intrinsic motivation (and thereby perhaps diminishing the effectiveness of learning)*" (Dickinson, 1995: p. 170). Parents' promises of material rewards as well as frequent testing and grades at school can, as a result, have devastating effects on the quality of learning (which must be distinguished from grades and rankings).

John Hattie points out the fact that **demotivation** has a greater impact on students than motivation itself.

Such demotivation can directly affect commitment to the goals of learning, turn off the wish for and power of feedback, and decrease involvement. It can take less effort by a teacher to demotivate students compared to the often greater effort required to motivate them – to turn students on to learning.

(Hattie, 2009: p. 48)

It is not the teacher's sole responsibility to build and nurture student motivation. Students need to play their part, too. However, teachers can implement instructional strategies to identify, nurture and build students' inner motivational resources. Besides the interpersonal strategies presented in Chapter 5, encouraging students to be active participants in their learning process in autonomy-supporting conditions is one more of those strategies which are believed to increase intrinsic motivation (Dickinson, 1995; Harmer, 2007).

Students can also learn to be in control of the **beliefs and preferences** which they hold about teachers and their role, about feedback, about themselves as learners and their role, and about learning in general. The beliefs and expectations learners hold can have a profound influence on their learning behaviour as well as their receptiveness to the approaches adopted in the classroom. Beliefs thus either contribute to or impede the development of their autonomy. Students with low confidence in their ability to learn successfully are less likely to believe that they have an influence on their learning and are less likely to develop an autonomous behaviour, like welcoming teacher feedback as seen Chapter 5. A further example are students who expect teachers to function as an authority figure. Such students are not 'ready' for autonomy either and need to work on their beliefs and expectations before gaining more responsibility and independence in the classroom. Furthermore, in order to accept responsibility for their own learning, students must believe that they have control over their learning successes and failures.

(…) pupils who attribute their failure to stable causes tend not to persist when they fail, but those who believe that their failure is due to unstable or internal causes – particularly effort, tend to persist in the face of failure. Furthermore, this view that failure is the result of not trying hard enough tends to carry over to future tasks, and so these learners are seen as the more highly motivated. In addition, they tend

to achieve more than those who believe success or failure is outside their control. (…) There is also evidence to suggest that for those learners who accept responsibility for success, that is, who attribute their success to effort, learning success enhances their self-perception of competence. This success leads to enhanced motivation, which increases the possibility of success. (…) One way, then, of improving the learning effectiveness of some learners would be to help them recognize that factors within their control may be responsible for their success or failure."

(Dickinson, 1995: p. 171)

As a result, it is the teacher's role to contribute to raising students' awareness of what makes learning successful. Such explicit discussions are even more important since student beliefs are influenced by culture and educational background. Freeing students from such influences and constructing a shared understanding of what it means to learn and to be autonomous is therefore a first step towards more student autonomy (Cotterall, 1995).

According to Benson, however, the question remains open as far as to what extent learners would be able to exercise control over other psychological variables such as **learning preferences** and **interest**. To what extent could visual learners, for example, improve their learning through other learning preferences such as auditory or kinaesthetic strategies? "*Research does not provide conclusive evidence on the mutability of individual variables in learning, their interrelationships, or the role of experience, training and self-control in change*" (2001: p. 68). As far as interest is concerned, we can distinguish between "*situational interest (similar to curiosity), which is of temporary value, environmentally activated, and context-specific; and personal (a.k.a., individual) interest, which is of enduring personal value, internally activated, and topic-specific*" (Jones, 2009: p. 278). Whereas situational interests seem quite easy to control thanks to instructional strategies (e.g. providing information in a provoking or surprising way, or showing enthusiasm for activities as a role model), the question remains as to what extent personal interest can be influenced to enhance engagement.

Control over learning content

Finally, autonomy-supportive environments provide students with opportunities to make meaningful choices as to the topics they can study. Content can be differentiated in response to a student's level of proficiency, interests or learning profile and can be thought of how we adapt *what* is learnt and *how students have access* to what is learnt (Tomlinson, 2001). For example, there are fundamental concepts and skills that each and every student should learn but the degree of complexity of a task related to those concepts can vary according to each student's capacity to understand and apply that concept or skill. Students can therefore be given control over how far they feel they are ready to sharpen their knowledge or skill taught at school. If students are learning how to summarise a newspaper article, giving them the choice to pick an article which matches their interests is also a way of differentiating content to foster a sense of control over learning and thus student motivation and engagement. Such an alternative is even more valuable when teachers use the opportunity to teach students how to make a relevant choice regarding the task at hand (e.g. choosing an article which can actually be summarised) and thus display an even greater degree to efficient autonomy.

6.1.4. Benefits of autonomy-supportive instruction

In order to show how aberrational and shocking it is to constantly control and not to challenge teenagers, Joseph Allen and Claudia W. Allen suggest a daring comparison between teenagers and puppies:

> But as we skimmed through the voluminous literature on training puppies, we were struck by a theme that emerged with remarkable consistency: 'Your puppy needs something to do. Keep your puppy active. Puppies like a challenge. They want to perform. An engaged puppy is a happy puppy.' The warnings were equally consistent. If a family fails to provide such challenges and leaves a puppy with too little to do, the result will be a puppy that is bored, anxious, destructive, and poorly behaved. Bored, anxious, destructive, and poorly behaved. Sounds familiar? Might it be that our teens are in some ways like their puppy brethren in the family of juvenile mammals? That they are impulsive and have remarkably high levels of energy, that they aren't fully trained, but have capacities that, if not challenged and developed, may turn into significant liabilities and lead to significant problems.
>
> (Allen and Allen, 2009: p. 41)

This intuitive observation is supported by the literature focusing on autonomy. **Students' benefits** in autonomy-supportive environments can be classified in six categories (Hafen et al., 2012; Jones, 2009; Pianta et al., 2012; Reeve, 2009):

1. greater learner motivation (e.g. greater intrinsic motivation, relatedness, mastery motivation and perceived control, curiosity and internalised values);
2. enhanced learner engagement (e.g. more positive emotion, less negative emotion, greater efforts, higher class attendance and better persistence);
3. increased development (e.g. higher self-esteem and self-worth, higher creativity, and preference for optimal challenge);
4. enhanced learning (e.g. higher social competences, enhanced conceptual understanding, deeper processing, active information processing and self-regulation strategies);
5. optimised performance (e.g. better grades, task performance and standardised test scores);
6. higher learner psychological well-being (e.g. decreased boredom, higher school/life satisfaction and vitality).

There also seem to be **teacher benefits** deriving from an autonomy-supportive teaching style. According to Johnmarshall Reeve (2009), autonomy-supportive teachers tend to report an increased sense of personal accomplishment (e.g. greater satisfaction and psychological well-being) and less emotional exhaustion.

6.1.5. Controlling vs. autonomy-supportive motivating styles

As seen above, it is generally acknowledged that students and teachers benefit from an autonomy-supportive environment. By a curious paradox, however, controlling is still a default motivating style for many teachers. **Controlling** teachers adopt attitudes and behaviours during instruction to pressure students to think, feel, or behave in a specific way whereas teachers who enact an **autonomy-supportive** style look to identify, value and take into account students' inner motivational resources to foster student motivation and engagement (Reeve, 2009: p. 159). Table 6 provides the definition as well as the conditions which make an approach to

motivating students controlling or autonomy-supportive, and typical forms of instructional behaviour associated with both styles.

Table 6:   Definitions, enabling conditions, and instructional behaviours associated with controlling and with autonomy-supportive approaches

Controlling Approach	Autonomy-Supportive Approach
Definition Interpersonal sentiment and behaviour teachers provide during instruction to pressure students to think, feel, or behave in a specific way.	**Definition** Interpersonal sentiment and behaviour teachers provide during instruction to identify, nurture, and develop students' inner motivational resources.
Enabling conditions • Adopt the teacher's perspective. • Intrude into students' thoughts, feelings, or actions. • Pressure students to think, feel, or behave in a specific way.	**Enabling conditions** • Adopt the student's perspective. • Welcome students' thoughts, feelings, and actions. • Support students' motivational development and capacity for autonomous self-regulation.
Instructional behaviours • Rely on outer sources of motivation (e.g. directives, deadlines, incentives, consequences, threats of punishment). • Neglect explanatory rationales (e.g. make little effort to explain why they are asking students to engage in requested endeavours). • Rely on pressure-inducing language (e.g. utter 'should's, 'have to's, 'got to's, and guilt-inducing criticisms). • Display impatience for students to produce the right answer (e.g. intrude on students' natural rhythm to produce a right answer on the teacher timetable). • Assert power to overcome students' complaints and expressions of negative affect (e.g. counter students' criticisms with assertions such as "Quit your complaining and just get the work done").	**Instructional behaviours** • Nurture inner motivational resources (e.g. interests, preferences, psychological needs). • Provide explanatory rationales (e.g. articulate the sometimes hidden usefulness underlying a teacher's request). • Rely on noncontrolling and informational language (e.g. informational communications that help students diagnose and solve their motivational problems). • Display patience to allow time for self-paced learning (e.g. allow time for students to work in their own way). • Acknowledge and accept expressions of negative affect (e.g. treat students' complaints as valid reactions to imposed demands and structures).

adapted from Reeve (2009: p. 160)

Teachers are more likely to adopt a controlling motivation style considering the multitude of implicit and explicit **forces** imposed on them 'from above' (e.g. administrators, state standards, social roles, high-stakes testing, parents, or media reports), 'from below' (e.g. students) and 'from within' (e.g. teachers' own beliefs, values and personality dispositions), which Johnmarshall Reeve (2009: pp. 164-6) sums up as follows:

1. Teachers occupy an inherently powerful social role - Teachers have naturally more power and influence over students based on their greater authority, experience, expertise, status or social position.

2. Teachers have to carry the burden of responsibility and accountability for student behaviours and outcomes – Teachers who are pressured to ensure student achievements are more likely to teach in a controlling way.

3. Controlling is culturally valued in some countries – Particular cultures consider controlling instructional strategies as optimal ways to motivate students and to produce maximal performance.

4. Teachers sometimes mistake control for structure – Teachers do not want to risk losing control over their classroom by implementing autonomy-supportive strategies which they believe to be unstructured and too permissive.
5. Teachers adopt controlling strategies in reaction to students' passive attitudes - Controlling styles are more likely to emerge when teachers perceive student passivity, low motivation, disruptive behaviour and inattentiveness.
6. Generally speaking, adults believe that controlling motivating strategies are more effective than are autonomy-supportive ones.
7. Some teachers are motivationally or dispositionally oriented toward a controlling style.

The two main reasons that seem to explain why teachers tend to adopt a controlling style in FOLA-lessons are the fourth and fifth explanations. As seen in Chapter 3, most FOLA-teachers define their role in terms of creating and ensuring a quiet working climate, which they tend not to associate with an autonomy-supportive environment. Autonomy-supportive approaches are often seen as unrealistic because too naïve and situationally inappropriate. Experts insist on the fact that autonomy-supportive teachers are *not* permissive teachers who contribute to a laissez-faire climate. Autonomy-supportive teachers (1) set priorities and define clear learning goals *before* a learning activity, (2) provide information on how to attain those goals by offering guidance and supervision *during* the learning activity, and (3) give positive and constructive feedback *after* the activity (Vansteenkiste et al., 2012: p.432). Teachers' motivating styles rather determine *how* students are expected to make progress toward those objectives: whereas controlling environments focus on the teacher's perspective, autonomy support takes the perspective of the student into account and values that perspective by welcoming student input and supporting self-regulation (Reeve, 2009: pp. 171-2).

As far as the fifth reason is concerned, students' lack of motivation and engagement in FOLA-lessons was the top answer to the question about the negative aspects of FOLA lessons.[53] Student demotivation might therefore also be a reason why teachers tend to adopt a controlling style in FOLA-lessons to turn students on to learning and make sure they do not daydream, lose focus and drift off during that period. When asked whether students need to be controlled in their tasks, teachers' answers were quite discordant.[54] The interviews revealed that there are differences in degrees of autonomy depending on the 'régime' and year level, but also – and above all – among students within the same class:

> *Bei deene schwaach Schüler muss de wierklech dohannert bleiwen. Mä ech denken awer et ginn der awer och vill verluer. Also, ech hunn och elo, op menger 8ᵉ, do ass e Schüler wou s de dann dohannert bleifs an dohannert bleifs an e well net an hie mëscht et net an da leeft hien nach an d'Bibliothéik sech e Buch sichen … an … et ass net efficace. An dat ass dann de Problem well mer di grouss Klassen hunn. Du bass dann e Proff an du hues déi 45 Minutten Zäit an da … jo … Also ech giff soen, Autonomie: staarke Schüler, 100 prozenteg. Mëttelméisseg Schüler giff ech soen hinnen di Routine bäibréngen. An schwaach Schüler schwéier. Do muss de wierklech bal nieft hinne setze fir datt se dat serieux maachen.*
>
> *(teacher interview)*

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[53] See Appendix 6c
[54] Appendix 6b, question 6.22 "Les élèves ont besoin d'être contrôlés par rapport au travail qu'ils ont réalisé"; scale: 1: never (14.3 %), 2: sometimes (31.2 %), 3: often (37.7 %), 4: always (16.9 %) and question 7.22; scale: 1: never (25.6 %), 2: sometimes (34.9 %), 3: often (18.6 %), 4: always (20.9 %)

Another teacher interestingly pointed out the paradox according to which forcing students to be autonomous becomes a controlling instructional strategy itself, especially when it does not reflect the students' inner desire to have control over his or her own learning, but merely the teacher's expectation of autonomous behaviour:

> *Dat ass wierklech e Mëssverständnes vun dem wat Autonomie ass. Ech kann d'Schüler net zur Autonomie erzéien andeem ech se zwéngen zur Autonomie oder zwéngen ze schaffen an dem ech mech opdrängen. Genau esou wéineg kann ech natierlech Schüler zur Autonomie erzéien andeem ech hinnen absolut Fräiheet ginn an allem wat se maachen. "Ah du wëlls näischt schaffen, da schaff näischt. Dat ass mer Wurscht." Dat ass och net richteg.*
>
> *(teacher interview)*

These quotes show how difficult it is for a FOLA-teacher to find and apply the right instructional strategies that foster autonomy and learning given the number of students and as many different degrees of motivation and engagement in the classroom.

6.1.6. Autonomy-supportive instructional strategies

Psychologists Joseph Allen and Claudia W. Allen (2009) define today's adolescence as a period of transition and preparation for a too distant future, which is inevitably associated with immaturity, passivity and anxiety in people's mind. As a result, adults do not seek to use teenagers' skills and find it difficult to trust and rely on this generation which has consequently become "*increasingly slow to launch and appears helpless in the face of modest challenges*" (2009: p. 17). As teenagers are given few real opportunities to reach maturity, adolescence has just become an "*extended form childhood*" with "*the appearance of adulthood without the substance*" (2009: p. 61). Of course, adolescents commit to drinking, smoking, having sex, and acquiring material goods (legally or illegally) but these are only "*pseudoadult activities*" which do not require any real maturity. Teenage, they note, has not always been labelled as negatively.

> Generations ago, fourteen-year-olds used to drive, seventeen-year-olds led armies, and even average teens contributed to labor and income that helped keep their families afloat. While facing other problems, those teens displayed adultlike maturity far more quickly than today's, who are remarkably well kept, but cut off from most of the responsibility, challenge, and growth-producing feedback of the adult world. Parents of twenty-somethings used to lament, "They grow up so fast." But that seems to have been replaced with, "Well … Mary's living at home for a bit while she sorts things out." What used to occur during the teenage years is now happening far later. Twenty-five is becoming the new fifteen. And it's not just delaying our kids' maturity, it's changing who they become.
>
> (Allen and Allen, 2009: p. 17)

Allen and Allen (2009) therefore insist on the necessity to give teenagers a more meaningful and active role in society in general and school in particular. Contrarily to Allen and Allen, Rob Long (2012) holds the view that teenagers seek refuge behind immature behaviour because their position and role at school has become much more complex. Today's pedagogical approaches require much more from today's students, who do not always have the necessary understanding or competences to live up to their teachers' expectations and might hide behind passive or disruptive behaviour in order not to lose face.

> For some young people the way we teach today can be difficult for them. In the past we had a passive view of learning. Children entered schools as empty vessels and our task was to fill them with knowledge.

> They sat in rows in front of an expert. When we needed to understand how they learned we turned to Piaget – for within child explanations. When we wished to control their behaviour more effectively we looked to the work of the behaviourists – who helped us to use the "carrot and stick" more effectively. Today matters have changed considerably. Now we have an active model of learning which involves young people much more. We look to the ideas of Vygotsky to help us understand the social nature of learning. We expect young people to work collaboratively in groups, to share, build on ideas, give critical feedback, etc. There are many children who lack the necessary skills to work in this way and they often mask this inability through "acting out".

(Long, 2012: p. 2)

Teaching students how to be autonomous and active in their learning process is part of today's teachers' role. Johnmarshall Reeve identifies three tasks to be accomplished initially to become more autonomy-supportive (2009: pp. 167-8). A first step in trying to become more autonomy-supportive is to become aware of the above-mentioned factors that lead to adopt a controlling motivating style as well as the benefits that students and teachers can gain through a more flexible and autonomous approach to learning. Raising teachers' awareness of their (un)intentional and (un)conscious impulses and teaching habits is a first step towards countering the forces imposed on them and becoming less controlling. A second step consists in developing genuine interest in autonomy by believing in its aforementioned benefits for students and teachers and creating the conditions which enable the practice of an autonomy-supportive style as seen in Table 6. In order to counter teacher scepticism towards learner autonomy, "*the desirability and effectiveness of learner autonomy need to be justified through convincing arguments*" (Dickinson, 1995: p. 165). Finally, teachers need to be taught the "how to" of supporting autonomy. Reeve lists up five autonomy-supportive instructional behaviours in Table 6 which provide a "*reasonably comprehensive answer to this question*" and which will be used below as a basis to answer the question whether FOLA-lessons enable to foster learner autonomy or not (2009: p. 168).

6.1.7. Do FOLA-lessons foster learner autonomy?

When asked whether FOLA-lessons enable to enhance learner autonomy in terms of decision-making, time management and organisation, 88.3% of the teachers agreed or fully agreed.[55] The data collected in the classroom observations and interviews enable to analyse these answers in more depth. Classroom observations revealed that most teachers tend to adopt a controlling style in order to manage classroom behaviour. Teachers' behaviour mainly consists in giving permission to go to the library, calling for quiet, asking students what they are working on, allowing and controlling peer and group work and showing a presence in the classroom. This controlling posture seems to be attributed to the fact that most teachers believe that autonomous students are students who work quietly and are focused on their task without having to be called to order. As a result, the big majority of teachers commit to leaving the

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[55] Appendix 6b, question 4.1 "Les leçons FOLA permettent à l'élève de développer son autonomie au travail (prise de décisions, gestion du temps, organisation du matériel, etc.)"; scale: 1: fully disagree (1.3 %), 2: disagree (10.4 %), 3: agree (54.5 %), 4: fully agree (33.8 %)

students alone while they are busy with their tasks[56] and not interrupting students to question them about their progress and the decisions they have made[57]. Few teachers are used to providing help spontaneously[58] as most teachers wait for their students to take the initiative to solicit them for help[59]. The students' answers corroborate these observations. According to them, teachers tend to restrict their questioning to *what* they are doing (i.e. controlling students' work)[60] instead of focusing on the students' strategies and decisions (i.e. guiding students' choices to foster relevant choices and thus life-long autonomy)[61]. They also confirm the idea that teachers tend to leave their students alone[62] and rarely provide help and advice without being asked[63].

These findings reveal that most FOLA-teachers seem to have quite a restricted understanding of the concept of autonomy by mistaking it with quiet work and no need for teacher interventions. Of course, they do control if students are working but the latter are mostly left to their own devices in the name of learner autonomy. To some extent, autonomy is also associated with a form of obedience (see 6.2.). In an interview, a teacher pointed out the fact that successful students who prefer to work at home and do not work in FOLA-lessons are actually autonomous as they know that they are more efficient at home. Such students, however, tend to annoy or at least lose favour from their controlling teachers who would like to see them work as expected.

These findings also reveal that FOLA-teachers tend to consider autonomy as a steady state. Autonomous students are supposed to be able to seek help, which leads teachers not to intervene spontaneously. This is without counting all those struggling students who, because of their negative experience with school or teachers, low self-esteem, lack of a sense of competence, peer pressure, or helplessness, furiously lack the necessary autonomy to seek help and need their teachers to be more proactive. Autonomy needs to be taught and learned. As a result, teachers need to be familiar with autonomy-supportive strategies and implement them in their FOLA-lessons at the risk of interrupting their students at work. Teachers might

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[56] Appendix 6b, question 6.37 "En leçon FOLA, je laisse les élèves travailler tranquillement"; scale: 1: never (1.3 %), 2: sometimes (10.4 %), 3: often (62.3 %), 4: always (26 %) and question 7.37; scale: 1: never (0 %), 2: sometimes (16.3 %), 3: often (46.5 %), 4: always (37.2 %)

[57] Appendix 6b, question 6.39 "En leçon FOLA, j'interromps les élèves dans leur travail pour les questionner sur leur avancement ou/et leurs décisions"; scale: 1: never (45.5 %), 2: sometimes (51.9 %), 3: often (2.6 %), 4: always (0 %) and question 7.39; scale: 1: never (55.8 %), 2: sometimes (39.5 %), 3: often (4.7 %), 4: always (0 %)

[58] Appendix 6b, question 6.36 "En leçon FOLA, je fournis de l'aide spontanément"; scale: 1: never (9.1 %), 2: sometimes (71.4 %), 3: often (13 %), 4: always (6.5 %) and question 7.36; scale: 1: never (11.6 %), 2: sometimes (69.8 %), 3: often (14 %), 4: always (4.7 %)

[59] Appendix 6b, question 6.35 "En leçon FOLA, j'attends d'être sollicité par les élèves pour leur fournir de l'aide"; scale: 1: never (5.2 %), 2: sometimes (28.6 %), 3: often (57.1 %), 4: always (9.1 %) and question 7.35; scale: 1: never (9.3 %), 2: sometimes (27.9 %), 3: often (44.2 %), 4: always (18.6 %)

[60] Appendix 5b, question 2.44 "In den FOLA-Stunden stelle ich fest, dass der Lehrer mich fragt, welche Aufgaben ich erledige"; scale: 1: never (23.8 %), 2: sometimes (40.9 %), 3: often (29.9 %), 4: always (5.4 %)

[61] Appendix 5b, question 2.45 "In den FOLA-Stunden stelle ich fest, dass der Lehrer mich fragt, wie ich meine Aufgaben erledige"; scale: 1: never (48.9 %), 2: sometimes (37.7 %), 3: often (11.6 %), 4: always (1.8 %)

[62] Appendix 5b, question 2.50 "In den FOLA-Stunden stelle ich fest, dass der Lehrer mich in Ruhe lässt"; scale: 1: never (6.7 %), 2: sometimes (16.9 %), 3: often (48.2 %), 4: always (28.2 %)

[63] Appendix 5b, question 2.48 "In den FOLA-Stunden stelle ich fest, dass der Lehrer mir Hilfe anbietet, ohne dass ich darum bitte"; scale: 1: never (46.2 %), 2: sometimes (35.9 %), 3: often (15.4 %), 4: always (2.5 %)

already be aware of the implications of these limitations but stick to what they see as their primary role: managing the classroom.

> *Je ne pense pas qu'il y ait les moyens nécessaires pour apprendre à apprendre en cours de FOLA. Ca, c'est plutôt le rôle du COACH je dirais parce qu'on est en petits groupes et on arrive peut-être à mieux gérer cela. Dans un cours de FOLA, l'enseignant a déjà la classe à gérer, essayer de voir aussi si les élèves ils travaillent plus ou moins correctement (…) Je pense que c'est mission impossible, là.*
>
> *(teacher interview)*

> *Wann ech op der 10ᵉ meng FOLA-Stonn hunn, dann hunn ech méi Tendenz besschen ze kucken, "wat maachen se ?". Ech ginn lo net bei all Schüler kucken sou "wat liest de grad?" "wat léierts de grad?". Mä esou besschen Iwwerbléck probéieren ech awer ze hunn während der FOLA-Stonn. Besonnesch am Ufank. Bis si sech installéiert hunn, an bis si sech konzéitreiert kréien. Ech vertsinn awer och, datt wann se mol eng Keier konzentréiert sinn, an ech fänken un, do si Sachen ze froen, dat stéiert schon, dat stéiert deen Schüler an dat stéiert awer och de Rescht vun der Klass. Dat heescht, dat fannen ech net onbedingt … datt de Prof dat soll maachen. Respektiv ech machen et net esou.*
>
> *(teacher interview)*

Supporting learner autonomy, however, does not necessarily imply big structural and organisational changes in the classroom. The five following strategies show how teachers can adapt their instruction and behaviour to foster students' autonomy without being afraid of losing structure in their FOLA-lessons (Reeve, 2009: p. 168).

Autonomy-supportive teachers nurture inner motivational resources

According to Johnmarshall Reeve (2009), an autonomy-supportive approach to instruction starts from the assumption that students possess inner motivational resources that have the potential to stimulate and maximise their performances. The concept of *inner motivational resources* encompasses students' "*psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness), intrinsic motivation, interests, preferences, self-set goals, intrinsic goals, personal strivings, and internalized types of extrinsic motivation such as self-endorsed values*" (p. 168). Autonomy-supportive teachers look to build lessons around those inner resources. For example, they personalise their lesson content based on their students' interests, openly ask for students' preferences, or allow students to make choices regarding the tasks at hand. As already mentioned, students who find a learning activity too complex compared to their perceived competences will not have the confidence to get down to work and might postpone or give up on the activity. Consequently, learning activities, and especially homework assignments should be reasonably challenging or divided into "*manageable sections that challenge but do not overwhelm students*" (Jones, 2009: p. 276). This observation supports the idea that the WP and FOLA-lessons are closely related and that the quality of the work completed in FOLA-lessons depends on the quality of the tasks contained in the WP. Teachers should therefore keep this principle in mind when inserting tasks into the WP. Ways of improving the WP will therefore also be suggested in the conclusion of this paper as it has a significant influence on the students' learning process in the FOLA-lessons.

Autonomy-supportive teachers provide explanatory rationales

Not all lessons, classroom activities, behaviour requests and homework assignments are inherently interesting, meaningful and engaging. As a result, students do not necessarily

perceive the usefulness of their behaviour and learning and need teachers to explicitly explain the **reasons** underlying their rules, procedures and activities. Providing rationales is aimed at showing students that what is expected of them is truly worth their efforts. "*Instead of telling students that the use of computers in the classroom is prohibited (assuming that typing is not necessary for note taking or other activities), an autonomy-supportive teacher would explain to students that typing during class distracts other students, which can have a detrimental effect on their learning*" (Jones, 2009: pp.274-275). Rationales should not be seen as excuses for learning but as a source of motivation for reluctant students. An example of explanatory rationale concerning a task appears in Table 7. The same instructions appear twice: without and within the context of explanatory rationales. In order to foster student understanding of the goals underlying a task and make the FOLA-teachers' task easier, teachers should try to improve the formulation of the instructions for the tasks to be completed. As seen in Chapter 5, FOLA-teachers expressed their helplessness when facing tasks which are not related to their own subject. Providing information will guide FOLA-teachers and enable them to question and help students in their decision-making instead of leaving them to their own devices.

Table 7:   A teacher's instructional conversation without versus with explanatory rationales

| *Requests and Choices Without Explanatory Rationales*	*Requests and Choices With Explanatory Rationales*
Your paper is due on Monday. Today, we are going to the school library. In the library, you will find information from books and Internet sites to use for your paper. Don't waste your time; don't goof off; make sure to get your work done. In the library, you may work by yourself or with a partner.	Your paper is due on Monday. As a way of helping you write a well-researched paper, we are going to where the information is – the school library. The reason we are going to the library is to find the information you need from books and Internet sites. While there, you may be tempted to goof off, but students in the past have found that a trip to the library was a crucial part of writing an excellent paper. To help you write your best possible paper, you may work in the way you wish – by yourself or with a partner.

adapted from Reeve (2009: p. 169)

For students to agree with the teacher's rationales, it is important to take their perspective by highlighting the benefits that they – as learners – will gain through their time and effort. As a result, Brett D. Jones suggests that teachers involve students in making the rules during their first lessons (2009: p. 275). As a FOLA-teacher in a Ve Moderne with 26 students, I struggled to maintain a positive working atmosphere in a loud classroom. Students kept on talking to each other and I felt that they wasted most of their time chatting with their neighbours. After trying out numerous controlling strategies, I decided to define some common ground rules with my students as represented in Figure 4.

These rules were meant to provide a rationale: if students had no group work, there was no need to be sitting next to a neighbour. Those who wished to work with a peer or more were asked to move to the back of the classroom in order not to distract the others. This compromise also consisted in addressing the 'inner adult' within each student (see Chapter 5). If students displayed a certain degree of maturity by working on their own, they would also be given choice as to how they feel they work the best. In this case, students wanted to be given the opportunity to listen to music. I explicitly explained that it is a personal choice and that they should listen to music if they feel it helps them concentrate. I explicitly used the modal verb 'should' to highlight the fact that choosing to listen to music was not a matter of permission anymore but a matter

of choice to improve learning. By doing so, I showed them that I cared about their concerns and trusted them for making the right choice for themselves. Having been part of the negotiation, most students followed those rules on a regular basis. Only three students decided to listen to music in the FOLA-lesson on Mondays and I felt that they were given better conditions to get engaged and work efficiently.

Figure 4:   Example of a negotiated set of rules for the FOLA-lessons in 5th grade
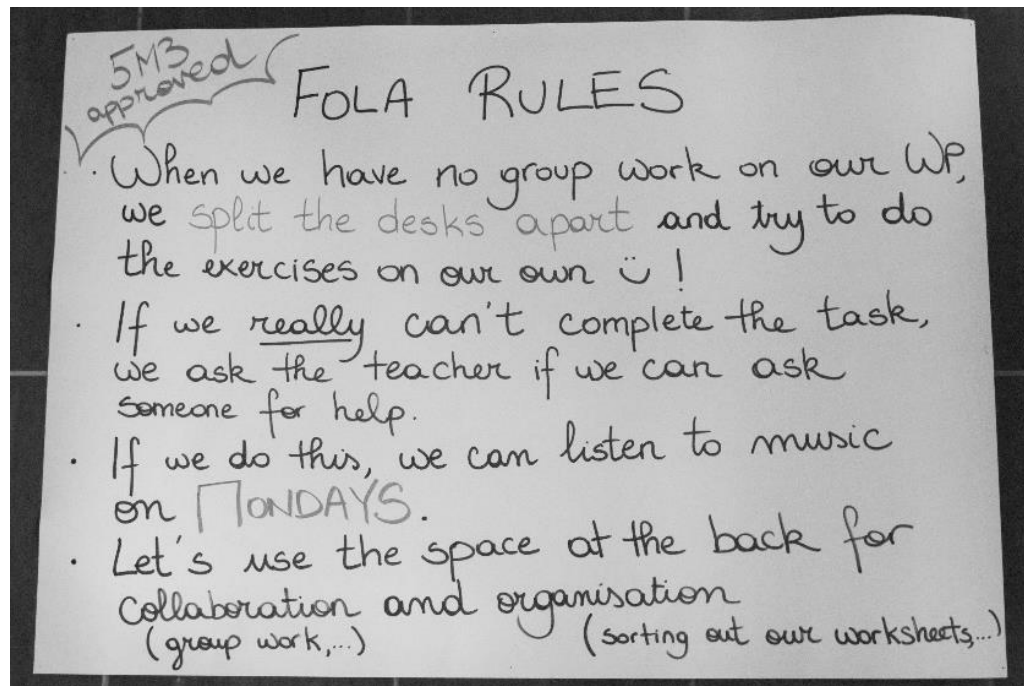
Defining and **making rules explicit** for FOLA-lessons is something which does not happen systematically at the beginning of and throughout the school year. The school administration, students and teachers assume that everybody knows "how FOLA-lessons work" and that everybody shares common rules and expectations. As a result, nearly 90% of the teachers never or rarely (i.e. once or twice a year) get together to define common rules or discuss potential problems in the FOLA-class they share together as they feel that there is no time or need for communication because either they assume they share the same rules or they appreciate being free to choose their own teaching style in their own FOLA-lessons.[64] Moreover, the majority of the participants claimed that they define their classroom management rules on their own, although nearly one third of them also answered that their FOLA-lessons are governed by a set of rules defined by all the FOLA-teachers of the same class. Less than one teacher out of ten seems to refer to a set of rules defined by the school administration.[65]

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[64] Appendix 6b, question 6.2 "Nous nous rencontrons entre enseignants responsables des leçons FOLA de cette classe pour définir les règles de conduite et/ou parler d'éventuels problèmes"; scale: 1: never (40.3 %), 2: sometimes (48.1 %), 3: often (6.5 %), 4: always (5.2 %) and question 7.2; scale: 1: never (58.1 %), 2: sometimes (27.9 %), 3: often (11.6 %), 4: always (2.3 %)

[65] Appendix 6b, question 6.3 "Les règles de conduite dans mes leçons FOLA (autorisation de la musique, gestion du bruit, etc.) sont définies"; scale: 1: par moi-même (59.7 %), 2: par l'équipe d'enseignants responsables des leçons FOLA dans cette classe (27.3 %), 3: par le régent (5.2 %), 4: par le règlement du lycée (7.8 %) and question

Only new teachers and first-year students (7ᵉ) are presented the ground rules when they first arrive at school. And even then, the rules and principles are explained by different teachers (i.e. usually the class teacher) with different understandings of what FOLA-lessons are meant to achieve and how teachers and students should behave (see Chapter 3). An interviewee admitted that, as he did not really know what was expected of him in his first FOLA-lesson, he observed and relied on his students' behaviour to get an understanding of what FOLA-lessons really consisted in. Three teachers also mentioned that not knowing what is expected of them can be a source of teacher anxiety as they never feel whether what they are doing is what the school administration expects them to do.

An example of inconsistency among FOLA-teachers concerns whether students are allowed to listen to **music** or not. As mentioned above, as a class teacher, I decided to allow my students to listen to music once a week and informed the other FOLA-teachers of my negotiation with the class. There is an implicit rule at the ALR that music should be forbidden. However, the teacher questionnaire reveals that not every teacher consents to that rule, especially because it is implicit. 39% of the participants claimed that they never allow their students to listen to music, whereas 41.6% do on some occasions.[66] The effects of background music on attention and performance would deserve a dissertation on their own. Briefly speaking, teachers' intuition that music affects students' concentration and performance negatively is not clearly demonstrated in the reserach literature and is still subject to controversy. On the one hand, in their review of the literature, Peter Tze and Ming Chou (2010) conclude that melodies grab the attention of the listener so that his or her concentration and task performance are diminished. Their study revealed that "*a quiet or silent room would be the best condition for learning because there are fewer distractions that would take the attention or focus away from the task at hand*" (2010: p. 44). On the other hand, music can also have a motivating effect on the learner and increase the latter's engagement (Jäncke, 2008: pp. 406-7). The effects of music on the learning process also seem to depend on the learner's psychological state, personality traits and learning style; the type, rhythm and volume of the music; and the level of difficulty of the task at hand (Jäncke, 2008).

Based on these observations, it seems that it should remain the students' decision whether they should listen to music to enhance their performance. It would nevertheless be the teacher's role to inform the students on the possible negative effects of music on their concentration as music requires multitasking competences and then let the students decide whether they should listen to music or not. Moreover, given all the objectives set for the FOLA-lessons (e.g. fostering autonomy, encouraging peer work, individualising feedback, …), classrooms are rarely completely silent in FOLA-lessons (see Chapter 3). Listening to music might therefore be a way of reducing academic anxiety (Barber and Barber, 2005) or countering other types of interferences. In their questionnaire, students highlighted the negative effects

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7.3; scale: 1: par moi-même (62.8 %), 2: par l'équipe d'enseignants responsables des leçons FOLA dans cette classe (30.2 %), 3: par le régent (4.7 %), 4: par le règlement du lycée (2.3 %)

[66] Appendix 6b, question 5.8 "J'autorise les élèves à écouter de la musique dans les leçons FOLA"; scale: 1: never (39 %), 2: sometimes (41.6 %), 3: often (10.4 %), 4: always (9.1 %)

of noise[67], movement[68] and the presence of classmates[69] in the classroom, so that listening to music could reduce the amount of distracting factors. In the interviews, some teachers pointed out the fact that some FOLA-teachers allow their students to listen to music to benefit the class by guaranteeing peace and quiet in the classroom. The issue should be tackled from the opposite perspective, namely whether the students who listen to music would themselves benefit from that decision or not. When asked in their questionnaire, 78.5% of the students claimed that they can work better with music and 91.9% hold the view that students should be given the opportunity to listen to music in the FOLA-lessons.[70]

Autonomy-supportive teachers rely on informational, noncontrolling language

Controlling teachers tend to "*verbally push and pressure students toward specific predetermined products and solutions, right answers, and desired behaviour*" (Reeve, 2009: p. 170). Such teachers communicate with their students through messages which do not leave space for student regulation, such as the use of directives (e.g. "do this", "get started", "no, do it this way"), short commands (e.g. "hurry up", " stop that", "let's go"), compliance hooks (e.g. "should", "must", "got to") and a pressuring tone whereas autonomy-supportive teachers use a more flexible and positive language by offering hints, providing encouragement, encouraging risk-taking, or asking controlling questions (e.g. "Can you do it this way?") (Reeve, 2009: p. 170).

The quality of teacher feedback undeniably fosters student autonomy by guiding and fostering their ability to self-assess and self-regulate their performances and learning (Hattie, 2009; Hattie and Timperley, 2007). The effects of informational feedback on students' affects were already presented in Chapter 5. Its effects on students' cognitive abilities and sense of competences will be described in more detail in Chapter 7.

Autonomy-supportive teachers display patience to allow time for self-paced learning

Adolescence is a time of growth and development, which requires scaffolding and patience. When under the pressure of the curriculum in general and WP in particular, teachers can become impatient, especially when they have numerous students to care for simultaneously. A typical example of impatience would be teachers who do things for students, like "*impatiently grab the learning material away from the student, show or tell the solution, and then hand the solved material back to the student with an implicit or explicit communication to reproduce that solution*" (Reeve, 2009: p. 170). Learning takes time as it involves many different stages, ranging from exploring and manipulating your learning materials, planning your work,

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[67] Appendix 5b, question 2.7 "In den FOLA-Studen gibt es zu viel Lärm im Klassenraum"; scale: 1: never (7.2 %), 2: sometimes (50.6 %), 3: often (35 %), 4: always (7.3 %)
[68] Appendix 5b, question 2.8 "In den FOLA-Studen bewegen sich zu viele Leute im Klassenraum"; scale: 1: never (21.7 %), 2: sometimes (48.3 %), 3: often (24.9 %), 4: always (5.1 %)
[69] Appendix 5b, question 2.9 "In den FOLA-Stunden kann ich mich in der Präsenz von meinen Klassenkameraden nicht konzentrieren (ich will mit ihnen plaudern, etc.)"; scale: 1: never (15.4 %), 2: sometimes (47.8 %), 3: often (29.7 %), 4: always (7.1 %) and Appendix 5b, question 2.10 "In den FOLA-Stunden werde ich von Klassenkameraden unterbrochen (sie stellen mir Fragen, bitten um Erklärungen, benutzen mein Material, etc.)"; scale: 1: never (12.6 %), 2: sometimes (46.9 %), 3: often (32.7 %), 4: always (7.8 %)
[70] Appendix 5b, question 2.27 "Ich kann besser mit Musik arbeiten"; ja (78.6%), nein (21.4%) and question 2.28 "Ich finde, es sollte erlaub sein, in den FOLA-Stunden Musik zu hören"; ja (91.9%), nein (8.1%)

retrieving prior knowledge, formulating and testing hypotheses, gathering and evaluating feedback and evidence, changing strategies, revising your sense of understanding, monitoring your progress, or revising your work (Reeve, 2009: p. 170).

As shown in Chapter 3, FOLA-teachers seem to evaluate students' efficiency based on their visible outcomes. Students' visible performances are only the tip of the iceberg as there is an important invisible side to learning. It is therefore important for teachers in general and FOLA-teachers in particular not to base themselves exclusively on students' outcomes (e.g. a piece of writing, an answer, a calculation, etc.). Teachers should learn to take time to listen and postpone advice and scaffolding until they understand their students' aims and perspectives and feel that their students are really stuck. It is therefore even more crucial to provide students with positive feedback that values initiatives and efforts to increase students' sense of competence and future engagement (Reeve, 2009). John Hattie and Helen Timperley hint at the fact that there are different types of help requests and warn teachers particularly against "*executive help seeking*" consisting in asking for answers or direct help in order to save time or avoid work (2007: p. 96). On the other hand, there are students who need help but do not dare ask to avoid social embarrassment. Autonomy-supportive teachers commit to identifying students' actual needs to help struggling students and encourage others to provide more efforts accordingly. Cathy Vatterott similarly notes that students quickly learn that if they play helpless, adults will do the job for them (2009: p. 35). Speaking to their inner adult by showing that we trust them and providing feedback that appeals to their self-regulation skills is a way of preventing such **task avoidance strategies**.

As Rob Long puts it, teachers also need to accept that "*there will be times when* [students'] *choices are not in their best interests. We must remember that adults make mistakes as well. – and they have the right to make those mistakes*" (2012: p. 17). A way of making students save time and be more efficient is also by making instructions and expectations as clear and explicit as possible. Specifying grading criteria will also help students focus on what really matters to show their competences in their productions (Jones, 2009: p. 276).

Autonomy-supportive teachers acknowledge and accept students' expressions of negative affect

As Johnmarshall Reeve (2009) points out, motivational and behavioural problems are inevitable at school as classrooms have expectations that are sometimes at odds with students' natural dispositions. Rare are the teachers who have never heard students complain about classes which are too boring, teachers who ask them to do too much, that it is hard, and that it does not make any sense anyway. FOLA-teachers are most likely to be exposed to such assertions as students get the opportunity to speak up in a more informal student-centred environment. By expressing such negative affects, students seek recognition and understanding. All they want is to feel that their teacher is sensitive to their concerns and cares for their well-being (see Chapter 5). As Jones (2012) points out, teachers should not use the occasion to play their students' game but they should acknowledge and use students' emotionality in favour of the work to be done. Autonomy-supportive teachers typically welcome such expressions of negative affect and use it as constructive information to find ways to reconcile students with the assignment at hand by working on the students' inner motivation or providing above-mentioned rationales to transform the roots of their complaint into something worth doing.

6.2. Responsibility

6.2.1. Defining responsibility

Responsibility is an all-purpose word which can be used in a multitude of contexts to reflect a multitude of different ideas. Generally speaking, responsibility can be understood in terms of obedience, independence or self-discipline.

According to Cathy Vatterott, "*responsibility is a code word for obedience*" (2009: p. 11). When we say we want students to be responsible, the underlying idea is actually that we want them to be **obedient**. There is a fine line between both concepts. For example, students who do homework are usually praised for their maturity and responsibility whereas students who do not are considered as disobedient rather than irresponsible.

Secondly, responsibility is also used as a word to express the idea of **independence**. Children are commonly called responsible "*according to how little help they need to do something*" (Kohn, 2006: p. 60). According to Alfie Kohn (2006), this idea of responsibility takes its roots in our modern obsession with individualism and self-sufficiency that have come to outclass other values such as collaboration and solidarity. Kohn therefore raises the question whether instead of teaching independence, homework should not rather be replaced by opportunities to help kids learn how to collaborate effectively at school (see Chapter 8 on peer collaboration).

Finally, responsibility is also usually associated with **self-discipline**. According to Kohn, self-discipline is not just about learning that life if tough and that one should act as expected or told to, but far more about learning how to manage freedom by finding a healthy work-life balance (2006: pp. 64-5).

6.2.2. Do FOLA-lessons promote students' sense of responsibility?

Cathy Vatterott (2009) and Alfie Kohn (2006) hold the view that the aspect of responsibility which homework promotes the most is **obedience**. When asked whether FOLA-lessons enable students to develop a sense of responsibility toward their own learning, most teachers expressed their agreement although this opinion was not shared by 33.8% of the participants.[71] According to Vatterott, "*children are rarely given responsibility for choosing how they wish to learn, how they might show what they might have learned, or how they might schedule their time for homework*" (2009: pp. 11-2). Indeed, FOLA-lessons are time slots which students do not get to choose to complete their homework and the amount of work is determined by the WP. The only choice left for the students is the order of completion and the way they are going to proceed to get the job done. The WP has become such a reference that most students tend to limit their work to its content. Many teachers have already faced students telling them that they did not revise or practise an aspect of the lesson "because it wasn't written on the WP." Other students might claim that they did not go to the library to do some research because "it was not requested in the WP." To some extent, the WP – which was initially designed to foster

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[71] Appendix 6b, question 4.6 "Les leçons FOLA permettent à l'élève de prendre conscience de sa part de responsabilité dans son apprentissage"; scale: 1: fully disagree (5.2 %), 2: disagree (28.6 %), 3: agree (44.2 %), 4: fully agree (22.1 %)

learner autonomy as students are given the opportunity to manage their time within one week – has become an impediment to some students' sense of responsibility, who have started to use the WP as an excuse for incomplete homework or irresponsible learning in case of an omission on the side of the teacher. In addition, although it had initially been decided not to provide any WP in the two final years of A-levels (T2/T3, 12^e/13^e and IIe/I^e) based on the fact that they would have reached a sufficient level of autonomy by then, the head teachers of three classes (T2, T3 and 12CG) decided to carry on handing out a WP as they perceived that their students lacked the sufficient level of autonomy and organisational skills to manage their workload on their own. This decision obviously questions the WP's allegedly positive impact on students' development into autonomous learners as students tend to rely on it too much. Alfie Kohn goes even further and blames homework for actively contributing to training future uncritical workers for powerful corporations:

> Among the reasons homework is seen to be useful is that it develops "work-related skills that can transfer to adult occupations. So perhaps all the talk about homework's value at promoting good work habits is actually less about what children need than about what their future employers need. Perhaps the assertion that homework is "practice for life" is a partial truth: it's really practice for a life spent working in corporations. And perhaps it's not just about teaching *skills* that may be useful to a future employer; it's about inculcating *norms*, helping to produce "workers who are used to, and will not complain about, the long working day."
>
> (Kohn, 2006: p. 65)

Cathy Vatterott (2009) raises an interesting question regarding **incomplete homework**. As mentioned above, students who do not complete homework are usually considered as disobedient students. Based on the behaviouristic foundations of traditional instruction, it then becomes morally acceptable to threaten them with punitive consequences (e.g. zeros or failing grades) for incomplete homework as a negative reinforcement. But what if incomplete homework represents a lack of learning rather than a lack of compliance? According to Vatterott, there are usually five types of reasons why homework is being procrastinated or not getting done (2009: p. 126):

- Academic – The tasks are too hard or too lengthy for the student's academic skills (e.g. working speed, or prior knowledge).
- Organisational – Getting homework home, getting it done, getting it back (e.g. time management skills).
- Motivational – Burnout, overload, too much failure, frustration with tasks (e.g. feeling of incompetence).
- Situational – Students are unable to work at home, there are too many other activities or no materials available at home for the assignment (e.g. homework is the last priority).
- Personal – Depression, anxiety, family problems, or other personal issues (e.g. procrastination as a personality trait).

If students are asked to complete assignments on their own, and lack the necessary knowledge, skills or appropriate environment to do so, does it make sense to penalise them with retention or failing grades? Such instructional strategies do not foster responsibility as much as academic anxiety, which can result in frustration, task avoidance strategies or dubious practices such as

lying, cheating or plagiarism (see Chapter 5). It is the demonstration of knowledge and skill, not the degree of compliance which should be reflected in a student's final results.

At the ALR, some teachers justify grading homework with the fact that FOLA-lessons provide students with regular opportunities to work in positive conditions by fostering routines and providing access to helping resources. The WP also provides students with a clear list of tasks so that each student can clearly visualise their workload.

Alfie Kohn (2006) adds that these mandatory assignments and threats in case of incomplete homework reflect a fundamental **mistrust** of students' capacity to work responsibly and honestly. Or course, there will always be children who will conclude that there is no point in spending time on homework which is not going to be collected and/or graded, but this should not be an excuse for having recourse to extrinsic incentives. Referring to Martin Haberman, Alfie Kohn suggests that student and teacher perceptions of homework would change if homework were designed and used to be *shared* rather than checked (2006: p. 186). Homework is an opportunity for students to *experience* with the lesson content to gain new skills. Unfortunately, FOLA-lessons are mostly used to prepare tests and complete homework, rather than provide feedback on student performance. This aspect will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 7.

Advocates of homework finally argue that homework teaches **time management**. As mentioned above, in their FOLA-lessons, students are coerced into doing homework. They are free to choose the task they are willing to work on but they are not free to choose when and how long they are going to work on it. Of course, the WP is already a good start. It provides students with weekly deadlines instead of daily assignments. Nevertheless, if we want to promote time management skills, we need to integrate more long-ranged projects that require planning by making sure we provide them with information on how to get organised to prevent frustration and feelings of incompetence:

> The premise here seems to be that (the teacher's) requiring a sophisticated sense of organization is tantamount to (the child's) developing it. In reality, if students lack this capacity, the primary effect of homework would be to make them feel anxious and incompetent. Few of us today believe that tossing kids into the deep end of a pool teaches them how to swim. Why, then, do we believe that giving children a set of tasks to do in a limited amount of time somehow provides them with the wherewithal to accomplish this?
>
> (Kohn, 2006: p. 55)

6.3. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, it has been shown that despite teachers' skepticism or automatic use of controlling style strategies, there is evidence from cognitive motivational studies that student motivation, progress and success in learning are positively influenced by learners taking responsibility for and being able to control their own learning. Students' perceptions also play a significant role in their engagement achievement: students need to perceive that their learning successes or failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies rather than factors outside their control. Autonomy-supportive teachers commit to enhance what is commonly called **student empowerment**, which refers to "*the amount of perceived control that students have over their learning*" (Jones, 2009: p. 273). It is wrong to believe that autonomy is

innate and that time and age will bring maturity. Autonomy needs to be taught when students are ready for self-regulation. In her interview, a teacher raised the question whether promoting autonomy makes sense in every 'régime' and at every year level. First-year students, for instance, should be first expected to develop a working routine and learn to get organised in order to be productive. Students in the 'régime de la formation de technicien' are first and foremost required to be able to execute tasks as requested by their future managers. Teachers know how difficult it can be to have those students meet deadlines and follow instructions. According to this interviewee, FOLA-lessons should first and foremost teach first-year students and 'technicians' to acquire those skills before aiming at developing their autonomy. This idea will be further explored in the final conclusion of this paper.

Homework is a classic form of self-regulated learning. Students decide whether, when, and how to tackle the homework tasks they have been assigned. FOLA-lessons restrict students' choice as they have an influence on when and to some extent how long students are going to commit to a task. On the other hand, FOLA-lessons offer a great potential for implementing **autonomy-supportive strategies** which would not necessarily alter the highly structured learning environment of the traditional classroom.

Students should not be left to their learning as it is too often the case. Firstly, genuinely autonomous behaviour is self-initiated and should not be induced to please or obey the teacher. The teacher's role therefore consists in lowering students' resistance to learning, which appears when new knowledge contradicts existing mental constructs, when the task at hand seems undoable or when students are influenced by their affects and individual variables. Secondly, teachers need to create efficient routines from the start and maintain high expectations. Thirdly, students need to feel confident and competent in an environment which challenges them reasonably, takes student input and perspective into account and provides explicit explanations regarding teacher expectations, classroom rules and the tasks assigned. Finally, students should be given opportunities to make choices and experience the consequences of these actions. Through individualised feedback and scaffolding, teachers should guide students and value their efforts on their way toward life-long learning and autonomy. The way teachers can provide such individual guidance in FOLA-lessons is the focus of Chapter 7.

Chapter 7 – Do FOLA-lessons foster differentiated instruction?

As shown in the previous chapters, it is students themselves, in the end, who (un)consciously decide what they finally learn. Teachers can however adapt their interpersonal behaviour and instructional strategies to influence student variables and thus enhance learning. As students differ from one another, learning must be understood as a very personal matter. In the traditional class students are commonly instructed as a group. FOLA-lessons were therefore created in order to provide teachers with the opportunity to individualise instruction and adapt it to their students' actual needs. Four objectives can be related to this idea of individualised instruction.

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6. Accompanying students in their learning process by providing individualised support in terms of learning content and strategies as each student is regarded as an individual learner.
7. Shedding light on students' misunderstandings or weaknesses in a particular school subject and adapting the lesson content and teaching strategies to remedy to those shortcomings in the traditional class.
8. Getting to know students' learning strategies and preferences in order to adapt one's teaching practices accordingly and provide advice to foster learning.
9. Providing students with opportunities to put into practice advice given in the COACH-lessons.

Before raising the question whether FOLA-lessons lead teachers to provide individualised support and adapt their teaching practices and encourage students to put into practice the advice provided in COACH-lessons, this chapter is going to explore the concepts of personalised, differentiated and individualised instruction and their effects on learning.

7.1. Personalised, differentiated and individualised instruction

The terms *personalisation*, *differentiation* and *individualisation* are often used interchangeably to refer to the fact that teachers adapt their instruction to the individual needs of their students. The concept of **individualised instruction** was first experimented with in the 1970s as an approach for adapting instruction to the learners' various profiles.

> Individualized instruction consists of any steps taken in planning and conducting programs of studies and lessons that suit them to the individual students' learning needs, learning readiness, and learner characteristics or "learning styles."
>
> (Heathers, 1977: p. 342)

Back then, experts were already aware of its limitations especially in terms of practicability.

> The central problem of individualization is that a teacher cannot give individual attention to more than one student at a time. How is it possible, with a student/teacher ratio of 25:1 or higher, to stress individualized rather than whole-class or sub-group teaching?
>
> (Heathers, 1977: p. 345)

Whereas individual instruction focuses on the needs of *one* student, **differentiated instruction** is an approach which addresses *groups* of students (Gregory and Chapman, 2007; Roberts and Inman, 2007; Tomlinson, 2001). In the differentiated classroom, teachers gather students in

flexible groups thanks to pre-assessment tools designed to identify students' individual learning needs in terms of interests, learning profile(s) or readiness. In order to respond to those needs, teachers can differentiate the educational content (i.e. *what* the students are going to learn in terms of quality and quantity), the learning process (i.e. *how* the students are going to learn, such as their learning pace and learning preferences) or the specific learning vehicle or product (i.e. how the students are going to *display their competence*) (Tomlinson, 1999: p. 48).

Both individualised and differentiated instruction define the same overarching learning goals for all the students but the teacher can use several resources and approaches to cater to the students' needs in the pursuit of those goals. According to Barbara Bray and Kathleen McClaskey, individual instruction and differentiated instruction remain teacher-centered in comparison with **personalised instruction** (2014: p. 2). In the individualised and differentiated classroom, teachers (pro-)actively plan various instructional approaches before and during their lessons (Tomlinson, 2001: p. 3). Teachers are still in charge of directing their students regarding what and how to learn. Table 8 presents the differences between personalisation, differentiation and individualisation based on Bray and McClaskey's review of the literature and experience in the field of personalised learning. They hold the view that personalised instruction is the only approach which considers that learning occurs as a result of what students – not teachers – have decided. In other words, in addition to responding to students' needs and interests, personalised instruction teaches students how to manage their own learning, i.e. to take control and ownership of it (2014: p. 4). Interestingly, Glen Heathers already associated involvement in the process of decision-making with individualised instruction in the 1970s.

> Two important bases are inherent in the nature of individualized instruction. When students work on tasks designed for them and share in decisions about those tasks, their sense of individuality and personal worth should be enhanced. Also, when students are enabled to master their learning tasks routinely, they should have an improved sense of their competence and personal worth.
>
> (Heathers, 1977: p. 345)

This example illustrates a lack of common language around the concepts of personalisation, differentiation and individualisation. Moreover, John Hattie calls attention to the lack of evidence supporting the positive effects of individualised instruction on learning when it solely consists in catering to individual learning preferences and profiles. If implemented, individualised instructional strategies seem to be more likely to enhance learning under the condition that they adapt the learning intentions to make them appropriate to all students (i.e. individualising learning goals) and integrate "*periodic evaluations used to inform students about mastery; including aspects of self-responsibility for evaluating mastery, having student choice in educational goals; and aiming to have students assist each other in pursuing individual goals*" (2009: p. 198). Such strategies can be related to the characteristics of personalised instruction presented in Table 8.

Instead of having recourse to concepts such as personalised, differentiated or individualised instruction, John Hattie therefore rather argues for an approach which aims at understanding how students function as individuals in the classroom in order to tailor one's interpersonal behaviour and tools to foster student engagement and empowerment as already mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6 (2009: p. 241).

Table 8:   Personalisation versus differentiation versus individualisation chart

Personalisation	Differentiation	Individualisation
The Learner…	The Teacher…	The Teacher…
drives their learning.	provides instruction to groups of learners.	provides instruction to an individual learner.
connects learning with interests, talents, passions, and aspirations.	adjusts learning needs for groups of learners.	accommodates learning needs for the individual learner.
actively participates in the design of their learning.	designs instruction based on the learning needs of different groups of learners.	customizes instruction based on the learning needs of the individual learner.
owns and is responsible for their learning that includes their voice and choice on how and what they learn.	is responsible for a variety of instruction for different groups of learners.	is responsible for modifying instruction based on the needs of the individual learner.
identifies goals for their learning plan and benchmarks as they progress along their learning path with guidance from the teacher.	identifies the same objectives for different groups of learners as they do for the whole class.	identifies the same objectives for all learners with specific objectives for individual learners who receive one-to-one support.
acquires the skill to select and use the appropriate technology and resources to support and enhance their learning.	selects technology and resources to support the learning needs of different groups of learners.	selects technology and resources to support the learning needs of the individual learner.
builds a network of peers, experts and teachers to guide and support their learning.	supports groups of learners who are reliant on them for their learning.	understands the individual learner is dependent on them to support their learning.
demonstrates mastery of content in a competency-based system.	monitors learning based on Carnegie unit[72] (seat time) and grade level.	monitors learning based on Carnegie unit (seat time) and grade level.
becomes a self-directed, expert learner who monitors progress and reflects on learning based on mastery of content and skills.	uses data and assessments to modify instruction for groups of learners and provides feedback to individual learners to advance learning.	uses data and assessments to measure progress of what the individual learner learned and did not learn to decide next steps on their learning.
Assessment **AS** and **FOR** Learning with minimal **OF** Learning[73]	Assessment **OF** and **FOR** Learning	Assessment **OF** Learning

adapted from Bray and McClaskey (2014)

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[72] The Carnegie unit, also known as "credit hour", is the basic unit of measurement for defining students' progress toward diplomas and degrees in the American education system. Nevertheless, the Carnegie unit has come under severe criticism such as follows:

> By stressing the amount of time students spend in the classroom rather than their mastery of subjects, the Carnegie Unit discourages educators from examining more closely students' strengths and weaknesses. It masks the quality of student learning. And by promoting standardized instructional systems based on consistent amounts of student-teacher contact, it discourages more flexible educational designs.
>
> (Silva et al., 2015: p. 5)

[73] There is a common distinction between assessment of learning, assessment for learning and assessment as learning, which Barbara Bray and Kathleen McClaskey sum up as follows:

> Assessment OF Learning is summative in nature and is used to confirm what learners know and can do so teachers concentrate on ensuring that they have used assessment to provide accurate and sound statements of learners' proficiency. Assessment FOR Learning provides information about what learners already know and can do, so that teachers can design the most appropriate next steps in instruction so the teacher and peers can offer feedback to the learner throughout the learning process. Assessment AS Learning is where the learner reflects on their own learning, monitors their progress, and makes adjustments of their learning so that they achieve deeper understanding.
>
> (Bray and McClaskey, 2014: pp. 9-10)

7.2.   Do FOLA-lessons provide opportunities for individualised instruction?

Based on the definitions provided by Barbara Bray and Kathleen McClaskey (2014), FOLA-lessons theoretically meet criteria of both individualised and personalised instruction. On the one hand, teachers are in charge of the educational content which can be adapted for the whole class or individually based on their observation and identification of individual needs. On the other hand, students are also to be encouraged to select and use the appropriate resources and/or network of peers or teachers to guide, support and enhance their learning and become self-directed, expert learners able to monitor progress and reflect on their learning based on their mastery of content and skills. This point will analyse to what extent these approaches are implemented in the FOLA-lessons.

7.2.1.   Do FOLA-lessons encourage individual support?

FOLA-lessons are commonly presented as a class period in which students are given personalised support and advice on how to understand content and complete assignments. Individual support can be affective (i.e. focusing on features of learning such as academic anxiety and student motivation), cognitive (i.e. focus on the development of content- and task-related skills), but also meta-cognitive (i.e. focus on self-monitoring and self-evaluation skills). Affective support was already discussed in Chapter 5. This section will therefore solely focus on the cognitive and meta-cognitive support a teacher can provide in FOLA-lessons.

Cognitive support

Individual support in FOLA-lessons is usually understood as subject-based support. As shown in Appendix 1, teachers in charge of FOLA-lessons are often teachers of major school subjects related to the section which the students have chosen in order to provide students with the opportunity to ask specific questions related to those major subjects (e.g. Economics teachers in 10CM and 11CM). However, the student questionnaire revealed that most students do not choose their assignments based on the teacher in charge of the FOLA-lesson they are in.[74] When asked what teachers they would like to have in their FOLA-lessons, 44.3% of the participants answered that the subject taught by the FOLA-teacher does not make any difference. Those who wished to have specific teachers asked for Maths teachers (34.8%), French teachers (25.7%), English teachers (22.2%) and German teachers (19.8%).[75]

When asked about the positive aspects of FOLA-lessons, the most frequent teacher answer (27.3%) pointed out the fact that it enables teachers to provide individualised support based on the students' questions or the teacher's observations.[76] In a close-ended question, 68.9% of the teachers agreed with the fact that FOLA-lessons enable teachers to check if their students

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[74] Appendix 5b, question 2.29 "In den FOLA-Stunden wähle ich meine Aufgabe entsprechend des Faches, das der FOLA-Lehrer unterrichtet."; scale: 1: never (32.4 %), 2: selten (41.1 %), 3: oft (22.3 %), 4: immer (2.4 %)
[75] Appendix 5b, question 2.30 "Ich wünsche mir FOLA-Lehrer aus den folgenden Fächern (Maximal 3 Fächer auswählen)"
[76] See Appendix 6c

have understood the lesson content and provide individualised support if necessary.[77] However John Hattie points out that although teachers claim that they provide feedback and support all the time, this is rarely the case as most of the feedback they provide is "*social and behavioural*" (2009: p. 173). As mentioned in Chapter 6, teacher interventions tend to be more controlling than autonomy-supportive. Teacher answers to their questionnaire reflect this observation. Whereas teachers seem to sometimes ask about *what* assignments their students are working on (i.e. controlling strategy)[78], they admit that they rarely or even never ask their students about *how* they are completing those assignments (i.e. autonomy-supportive strategy).[79] Asking students how they are completing their assignments is a way of collecting student input that informs the teacher on how to respond the most efficiently. FOLA-teachers do not seem to seize the opportunity to make students "*concentrate on the processes that lead to the correct answer and not just providing the answer*" (Hattie, 2009: p. 172). According to John Hattie (2009), this attitude comes from the precept that practice makes perfect. Students are given more time at the ALR for practice, which implies longer school days. In most teachers' eyes, this time should therefore not be wasted so that students should be kept busy and given the best conditions to work on their WP (see Chapter 3). According to Hattie (2009), practice is valuable only alongside valuable feedback:

> The typical claim is that practice makes perfect. I decided this was the case when I decided to play golf most mornings for a year. While my score dropped dramatically, there came a time when I realized that practice was not enough. Either professional coaching or a change to some physical predispositions would be needed. Further, we certainly do not want more time on task if the learning is not positive – it is like asking an unhealthy obese person to just eat more!
>
> (Hattie, 2009: p. 184)

Similarly, increasing school time without increasing productive time will not necessarily improve student learning and achievement. Productive time is goal-oriented, uses appropriate feedback, takes into account the students' perspective on their learning process and ensures that students are actively involved by self-monitoring and self-evaluating their performances and developing and applying meta-cognitive skills.

Meta-cognitive support

Individualised support is not only subject-based but can also be meant to develop students' study skills. More than two thirds of the teachers admitted that they rarely give advice to students as to how they could improve their learning strategies in FOLA-lessons.[80] This attitude

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[77] Appendix 6b, question 4.3 "Les leçons FOLA donnent l'opportunité de voir si les élèves ont compris la matière dans ma branche et de fournir un appui individualisé à l'élève"; scale: 1: fully disagree (5.2 %), 2: disagree (26 %), 3: agree (45.5 %), 4: fully agree (23.4 %)

[78] Appendix 6b, question 6.32 "En leçon FOLA, je demande aux élèves quelles tâches ils sont en train de réaliser"; scale: 1: never (3.9 %), 2: sometimes (48.1 %), 3: often (37.7 %), 4: always (10.4 %) and question 7.32; scale: 1: never (23.3 %), 2: sometimes (46.5 %), 3: often (20.9 %), 4: always (9.3 %)

[79] Appendix 6b, question 6.33 "En leçon FOLA, je demande aux élèves de m'expliquer comment ils réalisent leurs tâches"; scale: 1: never (20.8 %), 2: sometimes (66.2 %), 3: often (11.7 %), 4: always (1.3 %) and question 7.33; scale: 1: never (52.1 %), 2: sometimes (41.9 %), 3: often (7 %), 4: always (0 %)

[80] Appendix 6b, question 6.34 "En leçon FOLA, je donne des conseils aux élèves pour améliorer leurs stratégies d'apprentissage"; scale: 1: never (11.7 %), 2: sometimes (67.5 %), 3: often (20.8 %), 4: always (0 %) and question 7.34; scale: 1: never (30.2 %), 2: sometimes (60.5 %), 3: often (9.3 %), 4: always (0 %)

is confirmed by their students' perceptions as 78% claimed that their teachers never or only sometimes provide advice on how to learn better.[81] According to the teachers, however, less than 10% of the students seem to ask for such advice on a regular basis.[82] In her interview, a teacher explained that she does not believe that FOLA-lessons are the appropriate time to teach or comment on students' learning strategies considering the teacher-student ratio and the need for appropriate – read quiet – learning conditions in the classroom. Nevertheless, she insisted on the fact that FOLA-lessons are a useful place to observe and become aware of students' lack of or wrong learning habits and study skills. She therefore insisted on the need for more communication among teachers which, she believes, does not take place often enough.

> *Ech fannen elo net, dat ech mat der Franséischproff oder Mathésproff elo méi schwätze wëll ech FOLA ginn. Ganz sécher net. Also wann do geschwat gëtt, dann ass et méi am Allgemengen: „Voilà, wéi leeft et bei iech op der Klass?", „Wéi leeft et mat de Punkten op der Klass?" Mä et ass awer elo net wéi wann ech soen "Ech hunn awer elo an der FOLA gemierkt, datt se Problemer doranner an doranner hunn." Nee. An ech mengen dat ass elo wierklech eppes wat feelt. Ech hunn e bësselchen d'Impressioun, datt d'Leit mol net sou do dergéint sinn, géint d'FOLA am Generellen, mä ech fannen awer net, datt se wäit genuch a serieux genuch ausgebaut gëtt. (…) Ech fannen et ass net genuch Interaktioun do. Awer sécher net.*
>
> *(teacher interview)*

As seen so far, productive time is learner-centred and feedback is more a matter of shedding light on student decisions than providing solutions. John Hattie further insists on the fact that feedback should not only inform learners but teachers themselves as well.

> The mistake I was making was seeing feedback as something *teachers provided to students* (…). It was only when I discovered that feedback was most powerful when it is from the *student to the teacher* that I started to understand it better. When teachers understand where they make errors, when they have misconceptions, when they are not engaged – then teaching and learning can be synchronised and powerful. Feedback to teachers helps make learning visible.
>
> (Hattie, 2009: p. 173)

Whether teachers use FOLA-lessons to make learning visible and adapt their decisions about the lesson content and teaching practices will be discussed in the two next sections.

7.2.2. Do FOLA-lessons influence the content of subject-based classes?

As mentioned above, students do not choose their assignments depending on their FOLA-teachers' field of expertise. As a result, an interviewee claimed that FOLA-lessons do not provide many occasions to identify weaknesses or misunderstandings in her subject, which would influence whole-class instruction. The teacher questionnaire also revealed that teachers are probably more likely to provide one-to-one explanations in FOLA-lessons rather than adapt

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[81] Appendix 5b, question 2.46 "In den FOLA-Stunden stelle ich fest, dass mein FOLA-Lehrer mir Ratschläge gibt, um besser zu lernen"; scale: 1: never (40.6 %), 2: sometimes (37.4 %), 3: often (19.6 %), 4: always (2.4 %)
[82] Appendix 6b, question 6.17 "En leçon FOLA, les élèves me demandent de leur donner des conseils pour améliorer leur étude"; scale: 1: never (63.6 %), 2: sometimes (31.5 %), 3: often (1.3 %), 4: always (0 %) and question 7.17; scale: 1: never (69.8 %), 2: sometimes (23.3 %), 3: often (4.7 %), 4: always (2.3 %)

their lesson content in the traditional class.[83] Another interviewee pointed out that it is rather in the subject-based lesson that he notices and decides whether he should adapt his whole-class instruction.

7.2.3. Do FOLA-lessons encourage to adapt teaching practices?

When asked about the positive aspects of FOLA-lessons, 11.7 % of the teachers answered that the latter provide the opportunity to observe students at work.[84] In addition, when asked in a close-ended question whether FOLA lessons enable to understand students' learning strategies better to adapt one's teaching practices and/or provide individualised advice to students, 66.2% of the teachers agreed or fully agreed.[85] Whether they do really adapt their teaching practices remains an unanswered question but we might receive this answer with scepticism as both teacher and student questionnaires revealed that they do not seem to provide students with much advice after all (see above).

7.2.4. Do FOLA-lessons enable students to put into practice advice given in COACH-lessons?

As mentioned in Chapter 1, COACH-lessons consist in a 'learning-to-learn' program dedicated to the teaching and training of learning strategies which John Hattie calls **study skills interventions**.

> Study skills interventions are programs that work on improving student learning using interventions outside what the teacher or teachers involved would normally undertake in the course of teaching. Interventions can be classified as *cognitive, meta-cognitive,* and *affective*. Cognitive interventions focus on the development of task-related skills, such as note taking and summarizing. Meta-cognitive interventions work on self-management learning skills such as planning; monitoring; and where, when, and how to use tactics and strategies. Affective interventions focus on non-cognitive features of learning such as motivation and self-concept.
>
> (Hattie, 2009: p.189)

Research and meta-analyses show that "*study skills alone can have an effect on the surface level information, but it is necessary to combine the study skills with the content to have an effect on the deeper levels of understanding*" (Hattie, 2009: p. 189). In other words, strategy training such as COACH-lessons must be embedded in the context of the subject to be learnt, and requires a high degree of meta-cognitive awareness (i.e. students need to consciously think of applying those skills) as well as student motivation (i.e. students need to be willing to collaborate and make efforts) (Hattie, 2009: p. 192). It therefore makes sense to expect teachers and students

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[83] Appendix 6b, question 4.3 "Les leçons FOLA donnent l'opportunité de voir si les élèves ont compris la matière dans ma branche et de fournir un appui individualisé à l'élève"; scale: 1: fully disagree (5.2 %), 2: disagree (26 %), 3: agree (45.5 %), 4: fully agree (23.4 %)
and question 4.4 "Les leçons FOLA donnent l'opportunité de voir si les élèves ont compris la matière dans ma branche et d'adapter le contenu du cours en fonction de ces observations"; scale: 1: fully disagree (10.4 %), 2: disagree (31.2 %), 3: agree (44.2 %), 4: fully agree (14.3 %)
[84] See Appendix 6c
[85] Appendix 6b, question 4.5 "Les leçons FOLA permettent de mieux comprendre les stratégies d'apprentissage des élèves pour adapter son enseignement et/ou donner des conseils aux élèves"; scale: 1: fully disagree (10.4 %), 2: disagree (23.4 %), 3: agree (50.6 %), 4: fully agree (15.6 %)

to make sure that the skills taught in the COACH-lessons are recalled and applied in the FOLA-lessons, when students are back into a learning context.

Based on my personal experience, the observation carried out in various classes and the teachers' comments in their interviews, it is quite surprising to notice that 61% of the teachers agree or fully agree with the statement according to which FOLA-lessons provide an opportunity to put into practice the advice provided in the COACH-lessons.[86] This answer might have been influenced by the formulation of the question as teachers were asked whether FOLA-lessons *provide* students with the opportunity rather than whether students *actually seize* that opportunity. A greater synergy should be developed between FOLA-lessons and COACH-lessons so that FOLA-teachers could inform COACH-teachers on their students' shortcomings in terms of learning strategies so that the latter could tackle the issue in their weekly sessions. Vice versa, COACH-teachers could inform the FOLA-teachers on what was dealt with theoretically in their lessons so the latter could focus and provide feedback on that particular aspect when the students are at work.

7.3. Suggestions for better practice

FOLA-lessons could easily contribute to the individualisation of student instruction and support through the personalisation of the WP, individualised teacher feedback and the encouragement to select and use personalised meta-cognitive strategies.

7.3.1. Individualising the week-plan

Individualised homework is based on the same principles which underlie meaningful homework. First, as mentioned previously in this paper, it is crucial to define and communicate **learning goals** to make students acquire a clear notion of successful behaviours and outcomes and direct their attention to those goals (Hattie, 2009, pp. 163-4). Students need to share a commitment to attaining these goals and are more likely to do so under the conditions developed in Chapter 5 as well as if the goals are task- and situation-specific:

> Task-specific goals provide students with clear information about what they are trying to achieve in the immediate future (both in terms of specificity and degree of challenge), and situation-specific goals provide students with the reason they want to achieve a particular outcome (to beat one's previous level of achievement on that goal).
>
> (Hattie, 2009: p. 165)

Chapter 5 also highlighted the fact that teenagers like being challenged. Nevertheless, they might also implement task avoidance strategies or choose performances and goals far below their actual capacities to minimize risks of failure. As developed in the previous chapters, tudents must therefore feel that their goal is attainable given their sense of self-efficacy and confidence. Stuart S. Yeh (2010) suggests a comparison with video games to illustrate this need for an optimal level of **challenge**.

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[86] Appendix 6b, question 4.10 "Les leçons FOLA fournissent des occasions de mettre en pratique les conseils donnés lors des leçons COACH"; scale: 1: fully disagree (11.7 %), 2: disagree (27.3 %), 3: agree (50.6 %), 4: fully agree (10.4 %)

> Significantly, computer video games typically provide individualization of task difficulty, performance feedback, autonomy in task execution, and an accelerating standard of performance, where students advance to higher levels of difficulty after successfully completing less difficult tasks. This may explain why many students who are disengaged in school are highly engaged when playing video games.
>
> (Yeh, 2010: p. 174)

The WP does rarely differentiate, individualise or personalise its content based on individual needs in terms of interests, learning preferences and level of proficiency. Differentiation and individualisation according to student interests mostly occur when students are free to choose their topic for an individual or group project. Students are also sometimes given the choice whether they want to complete a task alone or with a peer according to their learning preferences. Appendix 3c is an example of differentiated content with a WP containing extra exercises ("Zusatzaufgaben") for students but it is not mentioned whether these are meant for high-achieving students or any student wishing more practice. Nevertheless, the personalisation, differentiation and individualisation of the WP rarely goes further than those few examples.

To sum up, it is principally the **adaptation** of the learning goals to the actual level of competence of the individual students to reach an appropriate level of challenge that matters in order to avoid student frustration, demotivation and reinforcement of misconceptions and thus enable student engagement, sense of competence and efforts (Hattie, 2009; Vatterott, 2009; Yeh, 2010).

7.3.2. Individualising feedback

A second step consists in providing students with **scaffolding** and **performance feedback** that acknowledges where they are and provides support on their path towards their learning goals. Feedback can be defined as follows:

> (…) feedback is conceptualized as information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding. A teacher or parent can provide corrective information, a peer can provide an alternative strategy, a book can provide information to clarify ideas, a parent can provide encouragement, and a learner can look up the answer to evaluate the correctness of a response. Feedback thus is a "consequence" of performance. To assist in understanding the purpose, effects, and types of feedback, it is useful to consider a continuum of instruction and feedback. At one end of the continuum is a clear distinction between providing instruction and providing feedback. (…) To take on this instructional purpose, feedback needs to provide information specifically relating to the task or process of learning that fills a gap between what is understood and what is aimed to be understood.
>
> (Hattie and Timperley, 2007: pp. 81-2)

In other words, feedback is meant to reduce the gap between a student's performance and the expected outcome through various processes such as "*helping students to come to a different viewpoint, confirming to the students that they are correct or incorrect, indicating that more information is available or needed, pointing to directions that the students could pursue, and indicating alternative strategies to understand particular information*" (Hattie, 2009: p. 174). As mentioned in the definition above, feedback does not replace instruction. Struggling students or students at the instruction phase rather benefit from instruction than feedback. Thus, in order to be beneficial, feedback needs to be combined with effective instruction at first. (Hattie,

2009: pp. 177-8). Moreover, feedback in a vacuum does not necessarily have the power to trigger (re)actions on the side of the learner. Feedback needs to be embedded in a learning context and accepted by the learner. Feedback should provide information about the task by informing the student on his current understanding and mastery and the path left towards a clearly-defined learning goal.

Figure 5 shows that feedback consists in **three questions** that teachers can ask their students but which the latter should ultimately be able to ask and answer by themselves.
1. The first question asks about the learning goals and success criteria ("Where am I going?").
2. The second question encourages self-assessment and self-evaluation by questioning the students' process and progress towards the goals ("How am I going?").
3. Finally, the third question explores how to make further progress through alternative steps ("Where to next?").

These three questions can operate at **four different levels**:
1. the level of task performance (e.g. whether the work is correct or not);
2. the level of process used to understand a concept or complete a task;
3. the level of self-regulation (i.e. meta-cognitive skills in terms of self-regulation, self-evaluation and sense of competence);
4. and the level of the self (unrelated to the specifics of the task).

According to Hattie and Timperley, corrective feedback (level 1) is powerful when the information related to the task is used to improve strategies at the process and self-regulation levels whereas feedback about the student's process (level 2) and feedback on self-regulatory strategies (level 3) are considered to be the most powerful to foster improvements in achievement (2007: pp. 90-1). As already mentioned in Chapter 5, feedback at the self (e.g. praise) is said to have no positive effect on learning even though it can enhance students' self-confidence and motivation under certain conditions. Having said this, feedback at the other levels should not represent a threat at the self and make sure it is welcomed by the learner in order to be taken into account. It should therefore be non-judgmental, immediate, positive and objective (e.g. involve frequent testing) (Yeh, 2010: pp. 173-4).

As seen above, FOLA-teachers too rarely seize the opportunity to question students about their decisions when completing the task at hand (level 2) and their learning strategies in general (level 3) and tend to stick to the level of correctness of the task performance (level 1) and personal feedback (level 4). As a result, students are not enough encouraged to move from task to processing and then from processing to regulation. Reasons for this lack of individual and autonomy-supportive feedback were already presented in Chapter 6 but could also be combined with the fact that some teachers consider that it is rather the COACH-teacher's role and that there are too many students in the classroom and not enough school time to be able to implement this approach. Hattie and Timperley sum up the whole difficulty of providing effective feedback as follows:

> It should be clear that providing and receiving feedback requires much skill by students and teachers. The model advanced in this article does not merely invoke a stimulus-and-response routine but requires high proficiency in developing a classroom climate, the ability to deal with the complexities of multiple judgements, and deep understandings of the subject matter to be ready to provide feedback about tasks

or the relationships between ideas, willingness to encourage self-regulation, and having exquisite timing to provide feedback before frustration takes over. To be able to devote time and thoughts to feedback is aided when teachers automate many other tasks in the classroom and provide rich learning opportunities for all students and thus have the time and resources to be responsive to feedback.

(Hattie and Timperley, 2007: p. 103)

Figure 5:   John Hattie's model of feedback
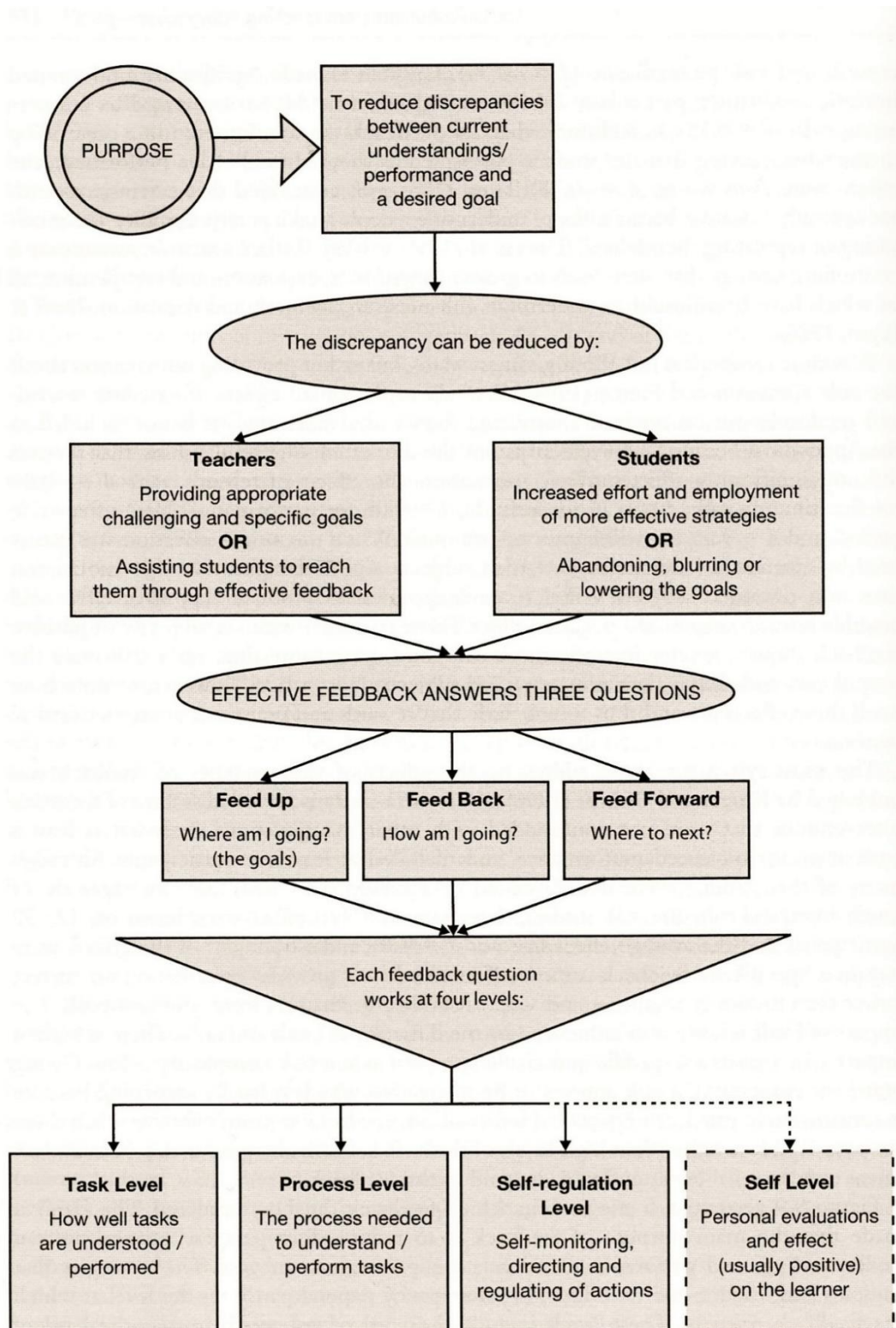
Hattie (2009: p. 176)

7.3.3. Teaching study skills

Self-regulation skills depend on the learner's degree of commitment, control and confidence. Self-regulation "*addresses the way students monitor, direct, and regulate actions toward the learning goal. It implies autonomy, self-control, self-direction, and self-discipline*" (Hattie and Timperley, 2007: p. 93). Self-regulation can therefore be strengthened through the instruction of meta-cognitive skills. Table 9 presents John Hattie's classification of the main study skills according to their effect size based on Lavery's work.

Table 9:   Various meta-cognitive strategies sorted by effect size[87]

Strategy	Definition	Description/Examples	Effect size
Organizing and transforming	Overt and covert rearrangement of instructional materials to improve learning	Making an outline before writing a paper	0.85
Self-consequences	Student arrangement or imagination of rewards or punishment for success and failure	Putting off pleasurable events until work is completed	0.70
Self-instruction	Self-verbalizing the steps to complete a given task	Verbalizing steps in solving a mathematics problem	0.62
Self-evaluation	Setting standards and using them for self-judgment	Checking work before handing in to teacher	0.62
Help-seeking	Efforts to seek help from either a peer, teacher, or other adult	Using a study partner	0.60
Keeping records	Recording of information related to study tasks	Taking class notes	0.59
Rehearsing and memorizing	Memorization of material by overt or covert strategies	Writing a mathematics formula down until it is remembered	0.57
Goal-setting/ planning	Setting of educational goals or planning sub-goals	Making lists to accomplish during studying	0.49
Reviewing records	Efforts to reread notes, tests, or textbooks to prepare for class or further testing	Reviewing class textbook before going to lecture	0.49
Self-monitoring	Observing or tracking one's own performance and outcomes, often recording them	Keeping records of study output	0.45
Task strategies	Analysing tasks and identifying specific, advantageous methods for learning	Creating mnemonics to remember facts	0.45
Imagery	Creating or recalling vivid mental images to assist learning	Imagining the consequences of failing to study	0.44
Time management	Estimating and budgeting use of time	Scheduling daily studying and homework time	0.44
Environmental restructuring	Efforts to select or arrange the physical setting to make learning easier	Studying in a secluded place	0.22

Lavery (2008) cited in Hattie (2009: p. 190)

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[87] As mentioned in Chapter 5, the concept of effect size is used by John Hattie throughout his work to define the impact which single variables have on school achievement alongside an achievement continuum ranging from reverse effects (effect size below d = 0.0) to desired effects (effect size above d = 0.40). The typical effects from teachers are between d = 0.15 and d = 0.40 whereas the zone between d = 0.0 and d = 0.15 is what students could achieve without any schooling. An effect size of d = 1.0 is therefore considered as highly significant as it "*would mean that, on average, students receiving that treatment would exceed 84% of students not receiving that treatment*" (Hattie, 2009: p. 8).

In their monograph, John Dunlosky and colleagues (2013) discuss ten learning techniques and their relative utility. They point out the fact that students tend to rely heavily on ineffective techniques such as rereading and highlighting. Other strategies with greater utility are highlighted in their review and represented in Table 10. Encouraging students to self-test their knowledge and skills by doing exercises proves to be more effective than letting them just reread their material and highlight it.

Table 10:   Various meta-cognitive strategies sorted by relative utility[88]

Strategy	Definition	Description/Examples	Relative utility
Practice testing	Self-testing or taking practice tests over to-be-learned material	Practising recall of information via the use of flashcards, exercises included at the end of the textbook, electronic supplemental materials in textbooks, …	high
Distributed practice	Distributing practice over time to offer opportunities to retrieve information and relearn the content		high
Elaborative-interrogation	Generating an explanation for why an explicitly stated fact or concept is true	Use of explanatory prompts such as: *Why does it make sense that…? Why is this true?*	moderate
Self-explanation	Explaining how new information is related to known information, or explaining steps taken during problem-solving	Having students explain some aspects of their processing during learning	moderate
Summarization	Writing summaries (of various lengths) of to-be-learned texts		low
Highlighting / Underlining	Marking potentially important portions of to-be-learned materials while reading		low
Keyword mnemonic	Using keywords and mental imagery to associate verbal material	When learning a foreign language, finding a word that sounds familiar to the target language such as "dentist" in English for "la dent" in French	low
Imagery for text	Attempting to form mental images of text materials while reading or listening	Drawing pictures that represent the content of a text	low
Rereading	Reading text material again after an initial reading		low

based on Dunlosky et al. (2013)

As mentioned above, these strategies can be taught in the COACH-lessons scheduled for the younger pupils. Nevertheless, it also makes sense to explicitly refer to those strategies in the FOLA-lessons since, contrarily to the COACH-lessons, students implement the latter in a genuine learning context instead of 'just' thematising them theoretically in a 'learning to learn' session. Based on Tables 9 and 10, COACH-teachers and FOLA-teachers should be encouraged to focus on strategies which foster learner autonomy as seen in Chapter 6. Especially in lower classes, effective FOLA-teachers therefore do not necessarily need to master the students' school subjects in order to help them in their learning process. By observing the students at

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[88] A technique is designated as high utility when it generalises widely with respect to learning conditions (amount of practice, open- vs. closed-book practice, multiple intelligences, …), materials (vocabulary, mathematical concepts, narrative texts, …), student characteristics (age, prior knowledge, motivation, verbal ability, …) and criterion tasks (cued/free recall, recognition, problem solving, essay writing, …). These techniques' practicability (i.e. whether these techniques require instruction and training and/or whether they are energy- and time-consuming) is also taken into account to define their relative utility.

work, asking questions regarding their methodology and providing hints that improve their meta-cognitive skills, FOLA-teachers do not provide any explanation or answer, but foster their students' learner autonomy and help them develop lifelong competences.

7.4. Conclusion

It is unrealistic to ask teachers to engage in one-to-one support with every single student. Nevertheless, they can observe their students actively and question the latter in order to help them individually to become better lifelong learners. Based on the observations made in this chapter, the following statements can be made:

- FOLA-teachers can bring struggling students to the attention of the COACH-teacher or teachers in charge of subject-based classes who might not have noticed their troubles in whole-class instruction.
- FOLA-teachers can contribute to the establishment of a learning routine by systematically asking students the feedback questions presented in this chapter. Helping students visualise those questions (e.g. by hanging a poster in the classroom) could also help them recall the procedure and slowly acquire self-questioning skills and thus more autonomy.
- FOLA-teachers can teach students to receive feedback. As Hattie and Timperley put it, "*feedback is not only differentially given but also differentially received*" (2007: p. 100). Students can ignore, reject, misunderstand, bias and select feedback. Informative feedback can be interpreted as feedback at the self. The more explicit teachers are about the nature of their feedback, the more students will be used to receiving and accepting it.
- FOLA-lessons provide students with the opportunity to be in control of their learning as FOLA-teachers' one-to-one questioning is rather meant to guide them than to obtain a specific answer to check that they have understood and recalled specific information (as it is mostly the case in whole-class instruction) (Hattie, 2009: p. 182).
- FOLA-lessons should set low standards in terms of self-regulation at first and progressively move along the feedback continuum. FOLA-lessons in 7^e might just focus on organisational skills and question students at the level of task performance. FOLA-lessons in 6^e/8^e could then provide feedback at the first two levels by encouraging students to reflect on the process they went or are planning to go through. FOLA-lessons in 5^e/9^e would then be used to reflect on the students' learning strategies to develop their self-regulation and self-evaluation skills in general. By the end of 5^e/9^e, students should also have started to ask the three feedback questions by themselves and integrated the fact that feedback is not necessarily someone else's responsibility.

All the chapters so far have shed light on the importance of creating a safe working environment with positive teacher-student relationships, combined with individualised performance feedback and an appropriate degree of autonomy thanks to the acquisition and development of study skills and increasing individualised standards of performance to make sure students achieve success and feel safe and confident enough to get engaged, increase their efforts and further improve their achievements. Chapter 8 is about to deal with one last crucial aspect regarding FOLA-lessons, namely peer collaboration and the development of students' social skills.

Chapter 8 – Do FOLA-lessons support the acquisition of transferable skills?

The last set of goals identified in Chapter 1 refers to the acquisition of transferable skills, which are classified into social and cooperative skills on the one hand and interdisciplinary skills on the other.

10. Improving students' social skills and responsibility as well as encouraging team spirit by supporting social interactions and cooperative learning.

11. Facilitating interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and project-based learning.

This chapter will therefore first focus on the concepts of collaborative learning and the acquisition of social skills in the framework of FOLA-lessons before raising the question whether FOLA-lessons are used to foster interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary activities.

8.1. Cooperative learning

As mentioned in the previous chapters, isolated individual practice can be boring and ineffective for students, especially if they struggle or doubt about their own competences. Moreover, classes are large and diverse in terms of students' abilities and needs, challenging teachers to find ways to address all their students accordingly. Cooperative learning is thought to make practice and learning more efficient since it is believed to be more engaging and to increase students' self-esteem as it gives "*all students 'study buddies' to help them when they run into difficulties*" (Slavin, 2014: p. 25). In a cooperative environment, students themselves are used as instructional resources as they "*work together to maximize their own and each other's learning*" (Johnson and Johnson, 1999: p. 73). Thus cooperative learning is compatible with individualised instruction as it is used to provide and support individualised instruction through peers instead of the teacher.

Cooperative learning is based on the aforementioned social constructivist theory according to which learners negotiate meaning through dialogic interaction in general and Vygotsky's concept of **zone of proximal development** (hereafter called ZPD) in particular. The ZPD refers to "*the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers*" (Vygotsky, 1978: p. 86). In other words, when they have assistance from more knowledgeable others, learners are capable of accomplishing more than on their own. Learning that occurs within and as a result of interactions is often referred to as **sociocognitive learning**:

> Briefly, during social exchanges with others, we often find that our own perceptions of a situation, underlying assumptions about an issue, factual information, analysis of ideas, reasoning, and the like, differ to a greater or lesser extent from those of others. When such conceptual discrepancies arise, we experience internal cognitive conflict. (…) We usually seek to resolve our own cognitive conflict via further interaction with others. We explain what we mean, defend our views, and generally present our thoughts in a reasoned manner. Those with whom we are interacting do the same. In attempting to understand each other's ideas and views and reconcile them with our own in this way, we are engaged in mutual

meaning negotiation, a convergence toward shared meaning. (…) thus, we can say that during interaction an individual's learning is actually being mediated by the other person. This mediation of learning is sometimes undertaken deliberately (…); other times it is unintentional outcome of interaction.

(King, 1997: p. 222)

8.1.1. Defining cooperative learning

For some teachers, cooperative learning is synonymous of 'noisy mess' rather than successful learning. Cooperative learning is indeed more complex than individualistic or competitive instruction as students need to engage in academic tasks and teamwork simultaneously. The 'know-it-all' might do all the work while 'free riders' might socialise instead of contributing. Some students might disrespect their partners and not take their contributions into account. Others might consider cooperative situations as party time. As a result, in teachers' and students' minds, "*it is the 'learning' in cooperative learning that is too often left out*" (Slavin, 2014: p. 23).

As David W. Johnson and Roger Johnson put it, "*setting people together and calling it a cooperative group does not make them one. Study groups, project groups, lab groups, homerooms, and reading groups are groups, but they are not necessarily cooperative*" (1999: p. 68). Depending on the type of group students are involved in, the effects on learning and performance will be different. It is therefore the teacher's role to give students the tools that will convert their exchanges into learning opportunities. Johnson and Johnson (1999: p. 68) define four different types of groups with distinctive effects, which are summarised in Table 11.

Table 11:   Types of learning groups

Type of group	Characteristics	Results
Pseudo learning group	• Students are assigned to work together but they have no interest in doing so and believe they will be evaluated by being ranked from the highest to the lowest performer. • Students hide information from each other, attempt to mislead and confuse each other, and distrust each other.	The result is that the sum of the whole is less than the potential of the individual members. Students would achieve more if they were working alone.
Traditional classroom learning group	• Students are assigned to work together and accept that they have to do so. • Students are evaluated and rewarded as individuals, not as members of a group. • They seek each other's information but have no motivation to teach what they know to group-mates. • Some students seek a free ride on the efforts of group-mates, who feel exploited and do less.	The result is that the sum of the whole is more than the potential of some of the members, but the more hard-working and conscientious students would perform higher if they worked alone.
Cooperative learning group	• Students work together to accomplish shared goals. • Students seek outcomes that are beneficial to all. Students discuss material with each other, help one another understand it, and encourage each other to work hard. • Individual performance is checked regularly to ensure that all students are contributing and learning.	The result is that the group is more than the sum of its parts, and all students perform higher academically than they would if they worked alone.
High-performance cooperative learning group	This is a group that meets all the criteria for being a cooperative learning group and outperforms all reasonable expectations, given its membership. The level of commitment members have to each other and the group's success is beyond that of most cooperative groups. Few groups ever achieve this level of development.	

adapted from Johnson and Johnson (1999: p. 68)

An evaluation of the FOLA-lessons at the Atert Lycée Redange

In order to be considered as cooperative, an activity needs to fulfil five basic conditions are presented in Table 12.

Table 12:   Five basic elements of cooperation

Essential element	*What does it consist in?*	*How to support it?*
Positive interdependence	Positive interdependence is the perception that we are linked with others in a way that we cannot succeed unless they do. Their work benefits us and our work benefits them.	Can be established through • flexible (e.g. four-member teams) and heterogeneous groups (i.e. high and low achievers, boys and girls, etc.) formed by the teacher • mutual learning goals • joint rewards (e.g. if all members of your group score 95 percent on the test, each will get 5 bonus points) • divided resources (i.e. giving each group member a part of the total information required to complete an assignment) • and complementary roles (e.g. reader, checker, encourager, elaborator).
Individual accountability	Individual accountability exists when the performance of each individual student is assessed and the results are given back to the group and the individual. The purpose of cooperative learning groups is to make each member a stronger individual. Students learn together so that they can subsequently perform higher as individuals. To ensure that each member is strengthened, students are held individually accountable to do their share of the work.	Common ways include • explaining to students why individual accountability is fair • giving an individual test to each students • randomly selecting one student's product to represent the entire group • and having each student explain what they have learned to a classmate.
Face-to-face promotive interaction	Individuals promote each other's success by helping, assisting, supporting, encouraging, and praising each other's efforts to achieve. Certain cognitive activities and interpersonal dynamics only occur when students get involved in promoting each other's learning. These include orally explaining how to solve problems, discussing the nature of the concepts being learned, teaching one's knowledge to classmates, and connecting present with past learning.	Face-to-face interactions among group members are increased through • accountability to peers • ability to influence each other's reasoning and conclusions • social modelling • social support • and interpersonal rewards.
Social skills	Contributing to the success of a cooperative effort requires interpersonal and small group skills.	Students must be taught about • active listening • leadership • decision-making • trust-building and encouraging teammates • communication and explaining ideas and opinions • and conflict management skills.
Group processing	Group processing exists when group members discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships. Groups need to describe what member actions are helpful and unhelpful and make decisions about what behaviours to continue or change.	

adapted from Johnson and Johnson (1999: pp. 70-1) and Slavin (2014)

8.1.2. Effects of cooperative learning

As David Duran and Carles Monereo sum up, cooperative learning "*demands the need to be explicit and to make conscious and well-argued decisions about the procedures to be used; it stimulates reflection, strengthened by the existence of an audience; and it creates the need to respond to the questions and challenges of one's companions*" (2005: p. 182). Based on their review of 375 studies related to competitive, individualistic and cooperative efforts, Johnson and Johnson identified a series of student benefits when engaged in a successful cooperative environment which can be summed up as follows (1999: pp. 72-3):

- higher achievement and greater productivity (e.g. learning more, building more complete and complex conceptual structures, retaining information more accurately);
- process gain (i.e. more higher-level reasoning, more frequent generation of new ideas and solutions);
- greater transfer of what is learned within one situation to another;
- greater morale leading to greater personal commitment, more time on task and more student efforts and active participation to achieve up to their potential;
- development of caring and committed relationships by promoting greater mutual liking;
- stronger friendships with peers;
- greater commitment to peers' success and growth;
- improved social skills (e.g. leadership, decision-making, providing and asking for help, building trust, repairing hurt feelings, understanding others' perspectives);
- improved communication skills through interaction;
- more psychological success and greater self-worth through the promotion of others' success;
- healthier social and psychological development through the creation of a personal and professional network;
- increased autonomy and responsibility;
- greater resilience and ability to cope with adversity and stress through cooperative sharing and solving of personal and academic problems.

Ducan and Monereo (2005) also highlight the fact that students engaged in cooperative learning learn to use language to interact and regulate the joint construction of knowledge. Interestingly, peers involved in cooperative learning practise forms of conversations that go beyond the traditional IRF interaction structure in the classroom consisting in an Initiation (generally a question asked by the teacher); a Response (the students' reaction to that question) and Feedback (from the teacher to the student's response). In cooperative situations, two more phases are added to redefine this model into the **IRFCE structure**, namely Collaboration (between tutor and tutee to improve the tutor's feedback) and Evaluation (of that collaboration). In order to reach the peer effects mentioned above, the teacher's role therefore consists in deliberately structuring and encouraging the use of discourse patterns among peers to maximise collaborative reasoning. For example, in order to promote comprehension check, elaborated explanations, justifications, speculations, inferences and other aspects of knowledge construction, students could be taught a sequence of **strategic questions** in the form of a checklist that would guide their cognitive and meta-cognitive

interactions. Strategic questions can be asked at the levels of planning, monitoring and evaluation.

> The format and sequence of questions are deliberately structured to guide students through the stages of problem solving (e.g., problem identification and representation, search for a solution path, implementation of a solution, and evaluation) and help them to monitor their progress toward a solution. Students trained in asking and answering strategic questions are more successful at problem solving than unguided questioners and control students.
>
> (Wilkinson et al., 2002: p. 530)

In order to foster collaborative reasoning, the task at hand needs to be open-ended with an uncertain solution, which requires students to interact and scaffold each other's higher levels of thinking. Easy tasks do not make students want to engage in cooperative learning as it is not worth the effort (Cheng and Ku, 2009; Wilkinson et al., 2002). Furthermore, Robert E. Slavin observes that students are too often put into teams and told to *help one another*, which is good but insufficient. In order to be cooperative, groups need to share a team goal, which Slavin defines as "*a target, product, or indicator that shows a team has done a good job of getting every member to perform at his or her personal best*" (2014: p. 23).

8.1.3.   Defining peer tutoring

Also called *peer-mediated learning*, *peer-mediated instruction* or *peer-assisted learning* in the literature, **peer tutoring** is a type of cooperative learning. Peer tutoring consists in coaching one another by taking "*proactive roles in thinking, questioning, and sharing knowledge*" (Cheng and Ku, 2009: p. 40). What makes peer tutoring cooperative is above all the tutee's role: whereas tutors take on an active tutorial role by initiating the process, providing hints, guidance and feedback, it is the tutee's responses that make the exchange collaborative by (dis)agreeing, commenting, questioning and getting their thoughts in order.

The conditions under which peer tutoring is the most effective and beneficial does not seem to have been explored enough in the literature to draw reasonable conclusions. As suggested by the above-mentioned concept of ZPD, peer tutoring should theoretically require a difference in knowledge between the tutor and the tutee so that the more knowledgeable learner can coach the less knowledgeable, but it can also occur between learners sharing the same levels of expertise and development as it is not so much a peer's expertise but the very fact of engaging in a dialogue and exchanging views with that peer that enhances the process in learning (Duran and Monereo, 2005: p. 181). Alison King holds the view that peers in the true meaning of the term should be each other's equal (i.e. age-mates of the same ability) because in **expert-novice interactions**, tutees are more likely to accept the tutor's ideas without question in order to avoid suffering ridicule or embarrassment, which is not conducive to higher level complex learning. **Same-ability peers** are more likely to understand each other's feelings, language and thinking, feel less threatened by their peer's feedback and advice, and more willing to cooperate to maximise each other's learning. Student perceptions of their own and others' competences do seem to play a significant role in how they will engage in peer interactions: students who perceive themselves with low competences are more likely to remain passive in groups in order not to lose face and others might not even approve of their leadership status or accept their contributions as they consider them as 'poor students' (King,

1997: p. 226). Nevertheless, King acknowledges that the nature of peer interaction depends on the kind of learning it promotes. If the aim is the remediation of factual material rather than a higher level of meaningful learning, working with a more skilful partner seems more efficient as such peer tutoring requires knowledge retelling rather than an active construction of knowledge through the exchange, analysis and integration of ideas (1999: p. 223).

8.1.4. Effects of peer tutoring

Whereas John Hattie concludes that peer tutoring has as many benefits for both the tutor and the tutee (2009: p. 187), Yi-Chia Cheng and Heng-Yu Ku hold the view that it is the tutor who benefits the most from this instructional strategy in terms of social skills and deeper understanding of the content as he is forced to clarify, express and thus strengthen his own understanding, concluding that it is relevant to promote **reciprocal peer tutoring** (RPT) where students take on the roles of tutor and tutee in turns, as opposed to **fixed peer tutoring** (FPT) (2009: p. 40). Although they did not find any evidence to support RPT's superiority, Duran and Monereo explain the interest in RPT as follows:

> On the one hand, it may be that reciprocal tutoring extends the advantages of fixed tutoring to both members of the pair and reduces disadvantages (authoritarianism, dependence on the tutor, transmissive model of knowledge). And at the same time, reciprocal tutoring may incorporate the advantages of peer collaboration (greater symmetry, mutuality and negotiation of knowledge), reducing its disadvantages, such as the avoidance of the role of the mediator or the risk of regression in the case of the competent student.
>
> (Duran and Monereo, 2005: p. 182)

According to Cheng and Ku, however, it seems that long and regular periods of time should be allocated to RPT in order to lead to significant academic and social benefits, like by organising regular tutoring sessions or incorporating RPT in whole-class courses. Regardless of academic benefits, students' satisfaction and perceived benefits seem to be increased through RPT. Based on their own experience, Cheng and Ku realised that their students liked RPT because it made them feel more responsible for their own and others' learning, provided them with the opportunity to share ideas with each other and learn new perspectives, made them feel more comfortable asking questions without having to bother the teacher, and made learning less intimidating, especially when problems arose (2009: p. 48).

As mentioned above, there is a risk of struggling tutees shifting from a dependence on teachers to a dependence on tutors. In that case, "*the benefits of cooperation are minimized because the shift to group learning becomes an authority figure change rather than an instructional change*" (Cheng and Ku, 2009: p. 48). Students need to understand that it is asking for *help* – and not for answers – that will help them learn. As mentioned earlier in this paper, teachers should not step in too soon and let their students struggle constructively (i.e. make reasonable levels of effort and persist). Students are less likely to give up in a team as it enables them to compare their ideas with others' and refine the latter before sharing them in class or applying them in an assessment (Slavin, 2014: pp. 24-5). Of course, at some point, teachers need to guide students with clear parameters to enable them to move forward in their pairs or teams. Teaching students social skills is thus an important step in fostering efficient cooperative learning.

8.2.   Social-emotional skills

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a group of scientists, practitioners and policy makers who hold the view that **social-emotional learning** should be embedded in the curriculum and instruction alongside traditional academic development in order to prepare students for work *and* life, by offering the opportunity to learn broader social and emotional competences which would enable them to practise positive behaviours, maintain fruitful relationships and thus develop values for engaged education, meaningful careers and responsible citizenship (Weissberg and Cascarino, 2013: pp. 9-10). Collaborative learning and social-emotional skills are mutually reinforcing: collaborative learning provides students with opportunities to learn and further develop social-emotional competences; meanwhile, these competences enable students to be more efficient in cooperative environments. Based on extensive research for nearly 20 years, CASEL has shed light on the beneficial effects in terms of social skills, self-esteem, engagement, prosocial behaviour, substance abuse, mental health and academic achievement (Weissberg and Cascarino, 2013: p. 11).

CASEL has also identified five sets of cognitive, affective and behavioural competences which are at the heart of social-emotional learning and "*are to promote students' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship, and responsible decision-making skills and to improve their attitudes and beliefs about self, others, and school*" as depicted in Table 13 (Weissberg and Cascarino, 2013: p. 10).

Table 13:   Social-emotional skills

Social-emotional skill	Description
Self-awareness	The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behaviour.
Self-management	The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations, and to set and work toward personal and academic goals.
Social awareness	The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
Relationship skills	The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups through communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
Responsible decision making	The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, the realistic evaluation of consequences that stem from actions, and the well-being of self and others.

Weissberg and Cascarino (2013: p. 10)

Specific social skills, especially in terms of communication and interaction, are necessary to promote learning in cooperative and tutorial contexts. Such skills can be summed up as follows (King, 1997: p. 224; Slavin, 2014: p. 25; Murphy et al., 2005: p.158):

- listening actively, in order to show others respect and learn as much as possible from teammates (e.g. by periodically summarising others' contributions, asking for clarification when necessary and avoiding interrupting teammates);

- expressing ideas and opinions in a persuasive way (e.g. by identifying and expressing the reasons supporting their personal conclusions, or adapting the message to the audience to make it understandable for peers);
- encouraging teammates and showing respect (e.g. by listening to others, supporting teammates, disagreeing with dignity, keeping a prosocial tone, taking others' contributions into account, or admitting you do not understand);
- providing sufficient time for partners to think about how they might respond.

According to Weissberg and Cascarino, teachers can help their students develop these skills at two different levels. First, they should systematically teach, model and create opportunities for students to apply those social-emotional competences as part of their everyday school habits. Then, teachers should establish a safe, caring and highly engaging learning environment among peers, within the classroom as well as within the entire school community (2013: p. 10).

8.3. Do FOLA-lessons foster cooperative and social-emotional learning?

FOLA-teachers agree with the fact that FOLA-lessons help students to develop social-emotional competences by giving them the opportunity to interact and cooperate with other people from the school community. It is even one of the three objectives they agree the most with.[89] Nevertheless, teachers also tend to be severe regarding collaborative work in FOLA-lessons. Indeed, teachers do not systematically encourage collaboration among students.[90] Most teachers also admitted in their questionnaire that they sometimes forbid students to work together, especially if it is rather group work than peer tutoring.[91] The reasons for not allowing or stopping students from working together are, in order of importance:

1. the fact that teachers notice that the students are chatting instead of completing their task(s);
2. the noise collaborative work produces in the classroom;
3. the group's lack of organisation or productivity;
4. the fact that some students use the occasion to copy their friends' answers instead of trying to find them out by themselves.[92]

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[89] Appendix 6b, question 4.8 "Les leçons FOLA permettent aux élèves de développer leurs compétences sociales à travers leurs interactions et leur coopération avec d'autres membres de la communauté scolaire."; scale : 1 : totally disagree (3.9%), 2 : disagree (10.4%), 3 : agree (51.9%), 4 : totally agree (33.8%)

[90] Appendix 6b, question 6.40 "En leçon FOLA, j'encourage la collaboration entre élèves."; scale: 1: never (7.8 %), 2: sometimes (53.2 %), 3: often (35.1 %), 4: always (3.9 %) and question 7.40; scale: 1: never (20.9 %), 2: sometimes (53.5 %), 3: often (18.6 %), 4: always (7 %)

[91] Appendix 6b, question 6.41 "Il m'arrive d'interdire la collaboration (im Sinne von 'Zusammenarbeit') entre les élèves "; scale: 1: never (18.2 %), 2: sometimes (75.3 %), 3: often (6.5 %), 4: always (0 %) ; question 7.41; scale: 1: never (34.9 %), 2: sometimes (48.8 %), 3: often (14 %), 4: always (2.3 %);

and question 6.42 "Il m'arrive d'interdire la collaboration (im Sinne von 'einen Schüler nach Erklärungen fragen') entre les élèves "; scale: 1: never (18.2 %), 2: sometimes (75.3 %), 3: often (6.5 %), 4: always (0 %) ; question 7.42; scale: 1: never (67.4 %), 2: sometimes (2 : 5.6 %), 3: often (4.7 %), 4: always (2.3 %)

[92] Appendix 6b, questions 6.43 and 7.43

8.3.1. Students' lack of engagement

As mentioned in Chapter 3, most teachers want to *see* that their students are engaged in their FOLA-lessons by controlling what they are doing or saying. Evaluating the quantity of work done within a FOLA-session is therefore a way of evaluating students' productivity. As expressed below, group work is a challenge not only for controlling teachers who want to make sure students are working productively but also for autonomy-supportive teachers who want to guide their students in their collaborative work as there are many different types of activities and student behaviours to manage simultaneously.

> E Problem deen ech ëmmer gesinn ass wann d'Schüler Gruppenaarbechten ze maachen hunn. Wa si mol eng Kéier zu puer zesumme setzen oder zu puer froen, fir an d'Bibliothéik ze goen, fir eng Gruppenaarbecht oder sou ze maachen oder eng Recherche am Computer, a sou virun. Ech mengen, do huet een natierlech... da kann een net soen: „Nee dat stëmmt net" well en plus steet et jo um Wocheplang. Mä wei vill si effektiv dann dorunner schaffen, dat gesinn ech dann net méi sou. Mä ech mengen dat ass awer... dat ass jo eben hir Autonomie di do gefördert oder di verlaangt ass an dann doduercher gefördert gëtt. Si mussen och...zu iergendengem Zäitpunkt mussen si eens ginn. Vläicht bei de 7e Schüler net sou, oder och 8e, oder 9e oder nach ëmmer net. Ab iergendengem Alter, jo.
>
> (teacher interview)

This quote illustrates the confusion and helplessness which can arise among teachers who are willing to play their role in a heterogeneous learning environment. It shows that most teachers are willing to – or have to – trust their students and let them work autonomously, although they are aware of the fact that some students lack the necessary motivation or engagement to work efficiently with their peers:

> Et gi Schüler di kënne gutt zesumme schaffen. Dat kann ech net ausschléissen. Et ass wouer. Di maachen dat och roueg an et ass och wierklech serieux. Anerer notzen dat wierklech fir sozial Momenter, am Sënn vun „Mir schwätzen iwwer alles just net iwwert d'Schoul."
>
> (teacher interview)

This possible mistrust towards students was already mentioned in Chapter 6. Fostering student motivation through positive teacher-student relationships and learner autonomy through autonomy-supportive strategies are ways of overcoming students' lack of engagement in FOLA-lessons. Nevertheless, collaborative learning and peer tutoring are highly complex. As mentioned above, tutees need to contribute actively to the exchange and should not solely rely on their partner to regulate their own learning. Both tutor and tutee therefore need to be engaged. Furthermore, structuring student interaction can also constrain their discussion and thinking. As a result, higher level peer tutoring requires a **balance between structure and autonomy** to let students free to pursue their own processes of thinking in their search for understanding and solutions. Indeed, students also need a sense of responsibility and control over their learning in order to feel empowered by their tutoring skills and thus feel more motivated and engaged and attribute their failures more to themselves than to external sources (King et al, 1998). This lack of student engagement might however also be due to a lack of social-emotional and organisational skills necessary to efficient collaboration.

8.3.2. Students' lack of skills

As shown in this chapter, similarly to the concept of learner autonomy, it is a mistake to believe that students can work in a group or with peers without being taught or at least guided by an

educator. Students are not inherently bad as socialisers but they need advice on how to improve their interactions, especially when there is a learning objective.

As mentioned in point 8.1.4. students need to integrate the idea that good tutors provide hints instead of direct help and answers to problems. Students can either be guided in their contextualised interactions or taught specific interaction strategies within a social skills training programme aiming at identifying, defining, explaining, demonstrating and reminding of using specific skills to foster effective cooperation (Murphy et al., 2005: p.161). If students are not trained, the probability is high that they might simply tell their partner what to do instead of guiding the latter throughout their problem-solving process, thus preventing deeper learning to occur as a benefit of the cooperative activity they are involved in. Indeed, when their interactions are not deliberately structured, students tend to interact only at a basic knowledge-retelling level (King, 1997: p. 226). In other words, asking students to explain to each other lesson content is a good start as it fosters comprehension of that content. Nonetheless, to make sure that this content is integrated at a deeper level, students should be encouraged to make connections and question themselves about this content (King 1997: p. 150). In this model, tutors and tutees are called questioners and explainers respectively. Table 14 illustrates five types of questions questioners can be trained to ask to lead the explainer to make connections between prior knowledge and new information in their own words.

Table 14:   Alison King's "ASK your Partner to THINK" model

ASK your partner		Aim	Examples
K	"knowledge-review" questions	Review questions to activate the tutee's prior knowledge and allow the tutor to assess the extent of the tutee's understanding. Help identify both tutor's and tutee's knowledge base.	*What does … mean?* *Describe … in your own words.*
N	"need-to-understand-better" questions	Probing questions to assess the tutee's knowledge of the topic.	*I don't understand. What do you mean by that?* *Tell me more about …*
I	"intelligent-thinking" questions	Thinking questions to link new knowledge to existing (now activated) knowledge to generate relationships and integrate concepts. Fosters learning through self-questioning on the side of the tutor, too.	*What is the difference between … and …?* *What do you think would happen if … ?*
H	hint questions	Hint questions to provide clues to lead the tutee to clarify the material in case of misconceptions, gaps in understanding, errors in reasoning, or incomplete knowledge.	*Have you thought about …?* *How can … help you?*
T	"thinking-about-thinking" questions	Self-monitoring questions to evaluate thinking and learning.	*How could we have improved this exchange?*

adapted from King (1997: pp. 229-30) and King et al. (1998: p. 136)

Training in intelligent questioning is valuable for tutors too as it enables them to develop the questioning skills used by expert thinkers, which are usually referred to as inner speech or "*self-talk*" and can be externalised as "*thinking aloud*" (King, 1997: p. 225). John Hattie highlighted the benefits this technique can have on low-ability to middle-ability students (2009: p. 192). **Self-verbalisation** was also already mentioned in Chapter 7 as a meta-cognitive skill with one of the highest effect sizes on student achievement.

8.3.3. Students' lack of perseverance

The third reason why teachers decide to forbid collaborative work or peer tutoring in FOLA-lessons is when they notice that the students in question are not gathering for the good reasons. Students tend to work as often with a fellow student as on their own. Only 12.2% of the students claim they always work on their own.[93] In addition, teacher perceptions seem to be supported by the students, who claimed in their answers that when they need explanations, they more frequently ask a peer than try to deal with the problem on their own or by asking the teacher.[94] It is therefore the teacher's role to make sure that students do not provide each other with erroneous feedback, help the *tutees* to find out the solutions on their own instead of just providing answers and do not deal with other matters than the task at hand. Task-avoidance strategies were already mentioned in Chapter 6. Teachers need to be aware of the fact that some students engage in other activities than their WP because they do not feel confident or engaged enough to complete tasks on their own. It is therefore important to make sure that those students understand the instructions and master the required knowledge to be able to complete their tasks on their own or even with others. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, group work is not systematically collaborative or efficient and needs guidance from an educator with knowledge in the field of collaborative and social-emotional instruction and learning.

8.3.4. Noise

As depicted in Appendix 6c, noise is the third most mentioned negative aspect of FOLA-lessons according to the teachers. Group work is a source of noise in the classroom which we cannot deny. The library does not offer the opportunity to engage in group work or peer tutoring as FOLA-teachers cannot allow more than five students to go to the library at once and students have to remain silent there. Students also sometimes work in the hallway in front of their classroom but the latter are ill-equipped (i.e. the students have to move out their own chairs and desks) and tend to echo, consequently annoying the surrounding classes. Students could work in the couches in front of the library but that space lacks surveillance, is subject to constant coming and going and is not appropriately equipped to foster efficient work. As a result, students tend to stay in their classroom even if they have or want to work with a peer or in a group.[95] Suggestions for future practice will be developed in Chapter 9.

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[93] Appendix 6b, question 2.18 "In den FOLA-Stunden arbeite ich allein."; scale: 1: never (5.9 %), 2: sometimes (28.2 %), 3: often (53.6 %), 4: always (12.2 %) and question 2.19 "In den FOLA-Stunden arbeite ich mit einem Klassenkameraden"; scale: 1: never (3.9 %), 2: sometimes (32.4 %), 3: often (54.4 %), 4: always (7.5 %)

[94] Appendix 6b, question 2.24 "When ich Erklärungen in der FOLA-Stunde brauche, frage ich den FOLA-Lehrer."; scale: 1: never (10.4 %), 2: sometimes (38.7 %), 3: often (38.2 %), 4: always (12.7 %), question 2.25 "When ich Erklärungen in der FOLA-Stunde brauche, frage ich einen Klassenkameraden"; scale: 1: never (2.5 %), 2: sometimes (16.1 %), 3: often (58.7 %), 4: always (22.7 %) and question 2.26 "When ich Erklärungen in der FOLA-Stunde brauche, versuche ich alleine klar zu kommen"; scale: 1: never (13.2 %), 2: sometimes (35.1 %), 3: often (41.8 %), 4: always (9.9 %)

[95] Appendix 6b, question 2.21 "In den FOLA-Stunden arbeite ich im Klassenraum."; scale: 1: never (0.7 %), 2: sometimes (4.6 %), 3: often (51 %), 4: always (43.7 %), question 2.22 "In den FOLA-Stunden arbeite in der Bibliothek."; scale: 1: never (11.5 %), 2: sometimes (64.9 %), 3: often (22 %), 4: always (1.6 %) and question 2.23

8.4.   Interdisciplinary teaching and learning

Many terms are closely related to the concept of **interdisciplinarity**, such as **pluridisciplinarity** and **transdisciplinarity**. School is organised in a structured pattern, whose main characteristic is the division of knowledge in separate school subjects, which are subject to the division of time into lessons. School subjects are therefore to be considered as *constructs*, and this fragmentation of knowledge into school subjects has come under criticism. For instance, many new issues which need to be taught at school do not fit into this pattern, such as the media, health issues, new technology, … and "*are considered as having to be taken charge of by several subjects and are most often presented in the form of education for*"(Audigier, 2006: p. 40). Moreover, in order to have meaning for the students, school needs to meet the challenge of generating knowledge that satisfies the reality and complexity of today's youth and thus cannot be solely enclosed in the subjects as we know them today. Briefly speaking, the **disciplinary approach** organises students' instruction according to a traditional fragmentation of the knowledge to be taught whereas the **interdisciplinary approach** constructs knowledge based on a given task from the perspective of various disciplines (Maingain et al., 2002: p. 11).

The work assigned in the framework of the FOLA-lessons is mainly based on the WP. As shown in Appendices 3a to 3e, there is a clear fragmentation of students' homework according to the traditional school subjects. There is no particular box in the WP devoted to interdisciplinary tasks which would encourage teachers to do so. A thorough analysis of the content of the WP would be necessary to evaluate the extent of interdisciplinary projects at the ALR, but based on my personal experience and the data collected in the framework of this project, it can be stated that interdisciplinary projects are not particularly encouraged by the existence of FOLA-lessons at the ALR. Group work contained in the WP is usually restricted to one particular subject. There are interdisciplinary projects taking place at the ALR, but these are rather teacher initiatives or projects that occur in the framework of the so-called 'ProEt' project[96], which aims at developing students' talents which they do not get the opportunity to cultivate in the more traditional subject-based lessons. FOLA-lessons are a time slot where students can engage in interdisciplinary projects, but the latter are initiated by other instructional strategies than the FOLA-lessons themselves.

8.5.   Conclusion

In FOLA-lessons, students are given the opportunity to interact and work on group projects. This survey revealed that students tend to work more on their own or with a fellow student than in a group[97], among others because teachers do not always approve of noisy group work

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"In den FOLA-Stunden arbeite ich auf dem flur/auf den Sofas vor der Bibliothek."; scale: 1: never (66.5 %), 2: sometimes (27.1 %), 3: often (5.5 %), 4: always (1 %)

[96] As mentioned in Chapter 1, a new project called 'ProET' was launched in September 2014, enabling students in IVe, 10^e, IIIe, 11^e, IIe, 12GE, T0 and T1 to take part in activities meant to develop their talents rather than to attend two weekly FOLA-lessons.

[97] Appendix 6b, question 2.19 "In den FOLA-Stunden arbeite ich mit einem Klassenkameraden"; scale: 1: never (3.9 %), 2: sometimes (32.4 %), 3: often (54.4 %), 4: always (7.5 %), question 2.18 "In den FOLA-Stunden arbeite ich allein."; scale: 1: never (5.9 %), 2: sometimes (28.2 %), 3: often (53.6 %), 4: always (12.2 %) and question 2.20

in their classroom. Nevertheless, students appreciate to be given the opportunity to ask a fellow student for explanations or help within their FOLA-lessons. Based on the definitions presented in this chapter, this observation does not suffice to claim that students engage in what can be called cooperative learning in their FOLA-lessons. Most students do not have the necessary competences to co-construct meaning with a tutor or a tutee. As a result, students tend to instruct or provide answers to each other more than they really cooperate to construct new knowledge or find solutions to problem-based tasks. Of course, this is already a very good start. FOLA-lessons help students to organise and work on group projects. Moreover, students are given opportunities to support, help, encourage and assist each other so they can learn and develop in healthy ways. Furthermore, this chapter showed that students have integrated the idea that when in need, they can resort to various helping resources (e.g. teachers, peers, electronic devices or books), which shows that they are on the right track towards lifelong learning.

If we want FOLA-lessons to develop our students' cooperative and social-emotional skills more, we need to guide them more explicitly on that path as effective cooperation does not occur naturally. It needs to be triggered by goal-oriented tasks and guided by a teacher who takes on the role of a facilitator. The following suggestions might help develop FOLA-lessons into greater opportunities to foster student cooperation.

- Students could be taught **interactional strategies** as presented in this chapter to be conscious of their role as tutors and tutees. Students need to be told explicitly that helping does not mean providing the answer. They need to learn to act as a teacher to help their friends acquire better knowledge and skills, which would, in turn, add importance and meaning to their role and give them a sense of responsibility and worth.
- Students should be given a necessary amount of autonomy, especially regarding the content of the task at hand. While students work in their pairs or groups, instead of focusing on the content of the students' hypotheses, FOLA-teachers can rather **monitor** and be attentive to the way students interact "*by systematically observing each group and intervening to provide academic assistance and help in using the interpersonal and small group skills required to work together effectively*" (Johnson and Johnson, 1999: p. 70). In order to do so, FOLA-teachers do not need to be experts regarding the school subject the task is related to, as they focus on the interactions in the groups rather than the content of the discussions which are taking place.
- In order for cooperation to be able to take place, students should be assigned **tasks** which require deeper thinking skills and a constructive dialogue among students to forge understanding and suggest hypotheses to create new meaning.
- **Space** can be organised so that group work does not disturb students who work on their own. Teachers can ask students to move to the back of the classroom if they want to interact for longer than five minutes. Students can also be taught strategies in order not to make too much noise in groups and be penalised if they do not stick to those rules. A special room in the school building could also be dedicated to group work. Similarly to the library,

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"In den FOLA-Stunden arbeite ich in einer Gruppe (ab 3)"; scale: 1: never (21.1 %), 2: sometimes (53.6 %), 3: often (22.1 %), 4: always (3.2 %)

it would be supervised by a teacher or educator and properly equipped to ensure an appropriate working climate (e.g. tables, chairs, computers, acoustic absorption materials, etc.).

- Finally, teachers need to cooperate, too. For example, they would act as **role models** by meeting regularly with the other teachers, FOLA-teachers and COACH-teachers of a same class and deciding on common ground rules which they would communicate to the students to show to the latter that they are themselves aware of the importance of sharing a common goal and making compromises with other people.

Chapter 9 – Areas for improvement

9.1. Positive aspects of FOLA-lessons

At its best, homework provides opportunities for feedback not only for the learner to deepen knowledge and practise cognitive and meta-cognitive skills but also for the teacher to implement individualised strategies to guide the learner accordingly. But at its worst, homework can also widen the achievement gap by discriminating against particular students. Although they do not fully enable to bridge the homework gap, FOLA-lessons provide teachers with the opportunity to take the time to guide students in their homework assignments and give them time to **begin their homework in class** to make sure they are on the right path. Children and teenagers who do not wish to do their homework do not do it for various reasons. Some students do not know how to do it, or are convinced they cannot succeed at it. Others lack the time because of after-school commitments, or lack an appropriate home environment. Some more cannot see the point or they need immediate feedback for them to see relevance in the assignment. FOLA-lessons offer teachers the opportunity to face those individual situations and find solutions to help students to overcome their lack of confidence and motivation, lack of resources, or lack of skills. There will always be reluctant students but FOLA-lessons make it more difficult for them not to do their homework than if they were left alone at home. It is however necessary to remind students and parents that even if FOLA-lessons offer time at school to handle the pressure of keeping up with a continuous flow of assignments, they do not suffice. Work is still required at home.

Students are given assignments **one week in advance** of the due date as the WP consists in a homework packet of weekly assignments to avoid conflicts with their free time activities and respect their learning pace. The WP is also useful for parents who wish to monitor their child's homework on a daily or weekly basis. Teachers, too, can view each other's assignments and are thus more aware of what is expected of their students in other school subjects and adapt their own expectations accordingly. Moreover, digital homework and test calendars are used to prevent scheduling conflicts and encourage coordination among teachers in order to limit the number of tests or projects within a given period of time.

As shown throughout this *travail de candidature*, FOLA-lessons are more than just a time slot devoted to the completion of the WP. FOLA-lessons can be used to correct homework and assignments, provide **individual support** or **feedback**, answer **questions** and give further **explanations**, improve **teacher-student relationships** in a more learner-centered context, as well as perform **class teacher duties** so that the more traditional lessons can be fully devoted to subject-based instruction.

Furthermore, students have the opportunity to work with **homework buddies** to overcome their frustration. By doing so, they get the opportunity to develop stronger relationships and greater self-worth as they commit to peers' success and growth. Students are given the opportunity to share ideas with each other and are exposed to new perspectives. Finally, neurological theories suggest that humans learn a lot by watching and mimicking others (Hattie, 2013: p.32). In FOLA-lessons, high-ability learners can therefore be considered as **role models** for their lower-

achieving peers who would not be given the opportunity to emulate good learning practices if they were asked to complete their homework alone at home.

On the whole, 88.3% of the teachers claim they like being in charge of FOLA-lessons.[98] Students seem to appreciate FOLA-lessons, too. In their questionnaire, only 8.1% of the students claimed they do not wish to have any FOLA-lessons in their schedule anymore.[99] The questionnaires did not explore the reasons why teachers and students appreciate FOLA-lessons. An interviewee pointed out the fact that FOLA-lessons are less demanding in terms of preparation and concentration for both the student and the teacher, which could be a reason why FOLA-lessons are considered as an enjoyable time slot which lightens the daily workload. Deeper analysis would be needed to draw any further conclusions. Nevertheless, based on the data collected in the framework of this project (e.g. the positive aspects of FOLA-lessons listed up in Appendix 6c), we can surmise that this is one among many other positive aspects appreciated by students and teachers in FOLA-lessons.

9.2.   Limitations of FOLA-lessons

Despite these positive aspects, this project also insists on the fact that all these potential benefits remain hypothetical as they depend on the nature and quality of the interactions and strategies implemented by the learner and teacher involved in the process as well as the nature and use of the WP. Quiet and busy students are not necessarily autonomous. This paper shed light on the phenomenon of students who 'do school' to be left alone rather than because they are willing to learn. Similarly, setting people together in a group is not enough to call the latter cooperative. In some cases, students would even achieve more if they were working alone. Moreover, this project highlighted the fact that there is no single way of doing when it comes to FOLA-lessons. This lack of common understanding and common practices can lead to a lack of coherence or even lack of confidence among the teaching staff, which weakens the impact of FOLA-lessons on students' development.

This project leads to the conclusion that a few principles could increase the impact of FOLA-lessons on students if they were implemented on a regular basis. In order to help teachers develop good practices in FOLA-lessons, there is a need for a **clearer set of objectives** which FOLA-teachers should be made aware of. Contrary to what was shown in Chapter 3, teachers should no longer be simply told that FOLA-lessons are meant to enable students to complete their week-plan at school with the help of a teacher and/or fellow students. The concepts of WP and cooperation are closely linked to the concept of FOLA-lesson but this definition is too reductive and thus misleading. As a result, as shown in the quote below, students and teachers tend to rely heavily on the WP so that students tend to restrict their work to the tasks it contains instead of proactively deciding on their own what subject content they should revise or what

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[98] Appendix 6b, question 4.13 "J'aime enseigner les leçons FOLA"; scale: fully disagree (0%), disagree (11.7%), agree (50.6%), fully agree (37.7%)
[99] Appendix 5b, question 2.3 "Anzahl der FOLA-Stunden pro Woche, die ich mir wünschen würde"; scale: 0 (8.1%), 1 (1.5%), 2 (2.1%), 3 (9.8%), 4 (36.6%), 5 (41.8%)

meta-cognitive strategy they could implement to enhance their learning (e.g. what material they could sort out, what vocabulary list they could revise, or what lesson they could review):

> Ech hunn och oft Problemer well ech d'Schüler net un d'Schaffe kréien. Déi sinn dann och éierlech. Déi soen: „Jo, mir hunn näischt ze maachen" a si hunn dann och wierklech näischt ze maache wann ech de Wocheplang kucken. Soll ech bei all Proff vun der Klass goen a soen: „Maach mol e Wocheplang soss hunn ech Donneschdes Mëttes um 1. Auer do Problemer"? Dat ass oft ee Problem, wëll se dann alles gemaach hunn. Da setzen ech do. Wéi wëlls de Schüler da motivéieren, eppes ze maachen, wann se näischt ze maachen hunn ?

> (teacher interview)

This observation questions the WP's allegedly positive impact on students' development into autonomous learners as this attitude reveals a lack of autonomy on the side of the students, who do not seem to be asked or willing to take responsibility for their own learning. FOLA-teachers regularly express their desperation when students do not have enough tasks contained in their WP to keep them busy in their FOLA-lessons. As highlighted throughout this paper, teachers tend to be mainly concerned with getting and keeping every student busy to guarantee a working climate which enables every student to concentrate on their task at hand. As a result, teacher interventions mainly focus on *what* their students are doing instead of *how* the students are proceeding.

Furthermore, FOLA-lessons do not prevent some students from not doing their homework. Some teachers thus regularly threaten students with **punitive consequences** but what if incomplete homework represents a lack of learning rather than a lack of compliance? Penalising students with retention or failing grades can result in academic anxiety, which can result in frustration, task avoidance strategies or dubious practices such as lying, cheating or plagiarism instead of an intrinsic willingness to learn and make progress.

Finally, students tend to rely strongly on the **learning community** to find explanations or solve problems. In other words, students are not enough encouraged to try to deal with a task on their own before seeking help. As shown in the quotes below, this attitude is even encouraged by some teachers who do not feel confident enough to help their students because they have not been told and taught *how* to help their students in FOLA-lessons, especially when they do not master the school subject their students are struggling in. When teachers take part in a teacher training programme, it mainly focuses on the specificities of their particular school subject so that they can feel insecure regarding other subject matters:

> Ech kann hinnen am Fong just nëmmen am Franséischen hëllefen. Ech gesi mech net gutt engem säi Mathésheft nokucken oder sou. Verstees de. Heiansdo sinn ech an der Situatioun wou ee mech froe kennt. An da froen ech: „Ass een an der Klass dee gutt ass an dem Fach?" da soen se: „Jo, hien!" an da soen ech: „Géi bei hien" an da kucken ech och datt dat fonctionnéiert, datt hie gehollef kritt vun dem.

> (teacher interview)

> Meeschtens kommen se mat Physik bei mech. Dann sinn ech de falschen Uspriechpartner. A mengem Fach hunn ech kee Problem an a puer anerer och genuch Fantasie fir op eng Iddi ze komme mä ...

> (teacher interview)

These two answers reveal that teachers have not integrated the idea that it is the students' job to find an idea, not the teacher's or a peer's. Giving more responsibility to the learner and showing to teachers what autonomy-supportive strategies can be implemented to guide the

latter is of crucial importance for better practice in FOLA-lessons. There is work to do regarding **teachers' beliefs and representations.** Throughout this research, questioning students was often described as something which *bothers* the students, which does not leave them alone and thus *annoys* them and ends up being counter-productive. The two following quotes highlight the negative terms associated with the teacher's proactive role in FOLA-lessons:

> Op deene klenge Klassen, miss du et wierklech gesi wéi eng Schoulstonn an ech mengen dat ass – an do zielen ech mech och mat dran - ech gesinn net all FOLA-Stonn wéi eng Schoulstonn wou ech muss enseignéieren. Dach! Mir mussen enseignéieren an der FOLA. An d'Enseignéieren op deene klenge Klassen an der FOLA ass si responsabiliséieren an hinnen nokucken … voilà proaktiv sinn … an hinne genau soen: „Sou, du mëss elo dat, ech kommen an 10 Minutten nach eng Kéier erëm an da bass de do ukomm." Dass de hinne ganz konkret d'Gefill gëss, **du gëss bewaacht**. (*laughs*) Et kuckt een no dir, datt s du dat méchs.

> (teacher interview)

> Ech denke mir, d'Iddi vun der FOLA soll jo di selwecht bleiwen. Di Haaptobjektiver sollen di selwecht bleiwen. Ech fanne just et soll méi konkret gesot ginn, dass mir aneschters solle sinn, dass d'FOLA-Proffe mussen aneschters de Cours halen. Dat fannen ech méi wichteg. Datt d'Autonomie soll gefördert ginn, datt si solle méi Responsabilitéiten droen, datt si solle mat deenen anere schwätze wann se net eens ginn, datt si solle bei de Proff Froe stelle kommen, datt si Hëllef kréie mat hire "stratégie d'apprentissage" … do a mengen Ae soll sech näischt drun ännere well dat ass d'Basics. Mä ech menge wierklech wéi den Unterrecht vun enger Stonn, dee muss differenzéiert ginn (…) Dee COACHing, dat "proaktiv sinn", dat Froe stellen, **dat Nerven**, ech fannen dat ass wichteg. (…) Dat heescht, d'Aart a Weis wéi mer enseignéiere musse mer änneren.

> (teacher interview)

9.3.   A scheme towards better practice

In order to go beyond the restrictive definition according to which FOLA-lessons are a time slot for students to complete their WP with the systematic help of the teacher or peers, teachers need to be regularly reminded and thus become fully aware that FOLA-lessons were initially integrated in the students' schedule because it acknowledges the possible limitations of their home environment and/or parental involvement. Table 15 contains a suggestion of a definition which could be presented to the teachers to highlight the priorities of the FOLA-lessons based on the objectives identified in Chapter 1 and define the teacher's role accordingly.

Table 15:   A definition of FOLA-lessons for teachers

FOLA-lessons pursue the goal of providing each student with **equal opportunities** in their learning process towards greater academic achievement and better well-being.

The teacher's role is thus to provide guidance and **learning opportunities** which will allow students to **develop greater learner autonomy** by learning to make the right choices within a **learning community**. In order to reach that goal, learners need to accept **responsibility** for their learning, which must be encouraged and supported by the teacher's individual interventions. These interventions can be **affective** (focusing on variables such as student motivation through positive teacher-student relationships), **cognitive** (focusing on task-related skills) and **meta-cognitive** (focusing on self-management learning skills).

The WP should be considered as a **tool** which *guides* but does not dictate or restrict the work to be done in the FOLA-lessons. It is specifically designed to engage and empower students and help FOLA-teachers to guide students accordingly.

Peers are considered as one of various **helping resources** whom students should learn to call on when necessary and not systematically.

As argued by David Little (1995), there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Teachers *only* need to observe their students, encourage genuinely successful students to pursue their objectives by making sure they do not just 'act' like students and provide learning opportunities to those students who need to be shown how to succeed:

> The basis of learner autonomy is that the learner accepts responsibility for his or her learning. This acceptance of responsibility has both socio-affective and cognitive implications: it entails at once a positive attitude to learning and the development of a capacity to reflect on the content and process of learning with a view on bringing them as far as possible under conscious control. Although much that has been written on the subject in recent years might seem to indicate the contrary, there is nothing new or mysterious about learning autonomy. In formal educational contexts, genuinely successful learners have always been autonomous. Thus our enterprise is not to promote kinds of learning, but by pursuing learner autonomy as an explicit goal, to help more learners to succeed.

(Little, 1995: p. 175)

Alongside the definition presented in Table 15, teachers could also be shown Figure 6, which summarises the main learner, teacher and homework variables which contribute to more efficient FOLA-lessons. As shown throughout this *travail de candidature*, it is the learners themselves who, in the end, (un)consciously decide what and how they finally learn. Teachers can, however, adapt their interpersonal behaviour and instructional strategies to influence student variables and thus enhance student learning through greater student empowerment and learning strategies. The tasks they insert in the WP and the way they consider and use this WP in class also has an impact on the effectiveness of FOLA-lessons. Each of these variables is once more explained hereafter.

Figure 6:   Key variables towards better practice in FOLA-lessons

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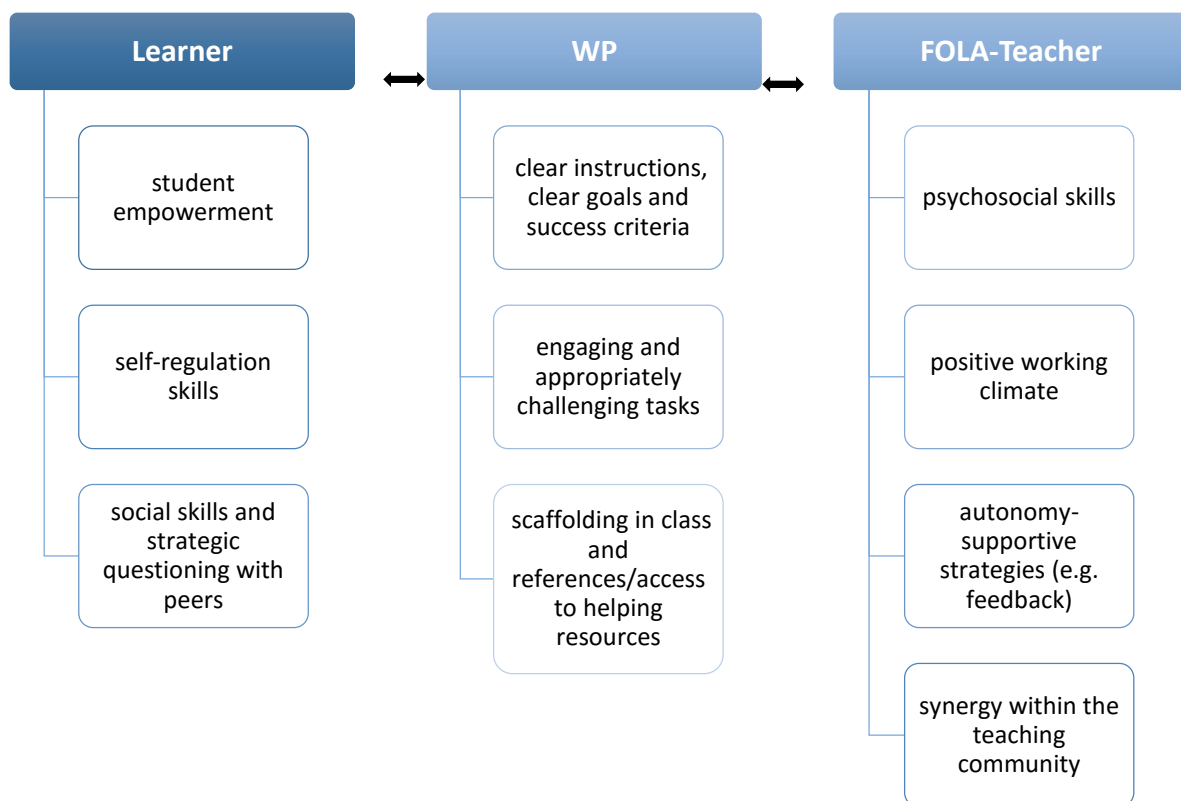
9.3.1. The learner

Student empowerment

The concept of student empowerment refers to the amount of **perceived control** that students have over their own learning. In other words, students need to perceive that their learning successes or failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies rather than factors outside their control (e.g. coincidences, teacher variables, etc.). Students should be given the opportunity to work autonomously but they should also *want* to do so. This project highlighted how important student motivation matters to make them want to demonstrate autonomous behaviour. As a result, teachers can try to adopt attitudes and implement instructional strategies that identify, nurture and build these inner motivational resources. A way of raising students' awareness of what makes learning successful is to show them clear success criteria which they can focus on and to notice and praise their efforts and abilities when they feel they deserve such praise.

In order to increase their **intrinsic motivation**, students should have learning goals that encourage them to take risks to increase their intelligence instead of performance goals which can lead them to 'do school' and put their health or intergrity at risk just to reach good grades or external recognition. Students should also be aware that they can have some control over their own cognitive factors (e.g. motivation, beliefs, interests and preferences) in order to increase their ability to welcome teacher feedback or to develop their confidence in their ability to succeed. Teachers are there to inform students about this matter of fact but, at the end of the day, it depends on the students' attitude whether they will take the opportunity which is offered to them or not.

Self-regulation skills

High-achieving students use a variety of strategies to set personal goals, reflect on and evaluate their own learning, check their own understanding, etc. In order to be able to work autonomously, students need guidance with scaffolding strategies to self-regulate (i.e. monitor) their own learning process consciously. Self-regulation cannot be taught as such but is practised through social interactions with adults and peers before, during and after their performance. It would be worth discussing those skills in COACH-lessons and making sure students apply them in FOLA-lessons. For example, instead of asking students in their WP to merely correct a test, they could be asked to state why they missed the question. They must find the correct answer in their notes or book and write down the reference on their test correction. By doing so, students are asked to reflect on their performance and check for deeper understanding.

Effective meta-cognitive strategies were presented in Chapter 7. Briefly speaking, in order to help students develop such strategies, teachers should focus on (Hattie, 2013: p. 36):
- developing student assessment capabilities (e.g. planning and predicting thanks to success criteria, seeing the value of the task);
- allowing students to hear themselves think and becoming *self-teachers* (self-verbalisation, self-explanation, self-consequences, self-instruction, self-evaluation);

- fostering deliberate practice (i.e. being explicit) that is distributed or spaced (i.e. to allow opportunities for recalling);
- giving and seeking feedback;
- helping define relations between ideas (i.e. seeing the higher level connections);
- making students aware of many power strategies and of when, why and how to use them as well as having them know what to do when they do not know what to do (e.g. when there is no task left on the WP).

Social skills and strategic questioning with peers

For cooperative groups or peer tutoring to be successful, interactions need to be structured by encourging the use of discourse patterns among peers to maximise collaborative reasoning. Chapter 8 presented a list of strategic questions in the form of a checklist that would guide students' tutoring. Nevertheless, some limitations of this structure were also highlighted. Simple tasks do not make students want to engage in cooperative learning as it is not worth the effort. Most tutoring in FOLA lessons consists in knowledge retelling rather than a higher level construction of meaning through the exchange, analysis and integration of ideas.

Besides these patterns, students also need to learn that it is asking for *help* – and not for *answers* – that will help them learn. Similarly, they need to be taught that a good tutor provides hints instead of direct help and answers to problems. They therefore need to learn how to listen to their peers actively (e.g. summarising others' contributions, avoiding interruptions, …) and provide sufficient time for their partners to think about what they might answer or ask.

9.3.2. The teacher

Even if teaching should be learner-centered and aimed at developing students' autonomy, learning starts with and is supported by deliberate teaching. Teachers can implement strategies which John Hattie claims they "*have to DIE for – diagnosis, intervention, evaluation*" (2013: p. 33). Teachers should observe their students, decide on which strategy to implement, and finally evaluate its impact on the student in order to decide on which strategy to implement next.

Psychosocial skills

Teachers need to contribute to positive learner-centered teacher-student relationships in order to foster student motivation, confidence and engagement. The most influential teacher variables are non-directivity, empathy, warmth, encouragement of higher-order thinking (i.e. speaking to the inner adult), encouragement of learning and adaptation to student differences. Some students tend to show disinterest in relationships with adults, which requires even more efforts and resilience from the teacher to promote a positive and supportive classroom climate. Furthermore, teachers are to create a risk-free supportive environment in which students feel safe and secure enough to acknowledge and express their understanding or lack of understanding.

A positive working climate

Even in an autonomy-supportive environment, teachers are not permissive teachers. Autnomy-supportive teachers set priorities, define learning goals, and provide information on how to

attain those goals as much as do teachers in more traditional environments. It is also important to make the rules explicit from the beginning of the year. These rules, however, should not exist for their own sake but serve pedagogical purposes. Teachers must be aware that noise and movement are part of their FOLA-lessons and are by no means signs of flawed classroom mangement if these forms of noise and movement are under control.

In order to be able to deal with the complexities of the FOLA-lessons, teachers need to establish routines in order to automate most tasks in the classroom and thus have the time and resources to be responsive to student feedback. Creating automatisms should be a priority in first grade (7MO, 7STP) in order to make sure students develop routines that enable to save time and energy in higher grades. Differentiating the objectives of the FOLA-lessons according to the grades and 'régimes' therefore seems to be a first step towards more coherence and more realistic aims and objectives depending on the students' actual state and development in terms of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills. A suggestion of differentiated learning goals and teacher roles according to the grade and 'régime' can be found at the end of this chapter in Table 16.

Autonomy-supportive strategies

Autonomy is not a synonym for self-instruction. It does not entail the abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher and it is not a matter of letting learners get on with tasks as best as they can. In FOLA-lessons, most teachers believe that autonomous students are students who work quietly and are focused on their task without having to be called to order. Being autonomy-supportive means allowing students to take control of their own learning by giving them the opportunity to **make decisions** – and thus make mistakes – at successive stages of the learning process (e.g. choosing tasks, choosing methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the learning process in terms of pace, time or space, …). Autonomy-supportive teachers adopt the learner's perspective in the resolution of a task. For example, some FOLA-teachers allow their students to listen to music to benefit the class by garanteeing peace and quiet in the classroom. This issue should be tackled from the opposite perspective, namely whether the students who listen to music would themselves benefit from that decision or not.

Teachers should learn to take time to listen and **postpone scaffolding** until they understand their students' aims and perspectives and feel that their students are really stuck. It is therefore even more crucial to provide students with positive feedback that values initiatives and efforts to increase their sense of competence and future engagement. More concretely, instead of just focusing on the content of their students' work (e.g. "*What are you doing?*"), teachers should be encouraged to focus their attention more on the process their students are engaged in (e.g. "*How are you doing this/that?*").

As shown throughout this paper, practice is only valuable alongside **valuable feedback**. If students stay longer at the ALR for practice, they should be given feedback at the levels of the self, of the task, of their cognitive processes and of their meta-cognitive skills accordingly. Feedback is more a matter of shedding light on student decisions than providing solutions. It needs to guide the student in their task or process of learning to fill the gap between what is understood and what is aimed to be understood. Feedback does not replace instruction but helps struggling students and encourages others to provide more efforts. Feedback can help

students to come to a different viewpoint, confirm to the students that they are correct or incorrect, indicate that more information or other resources are availiable or needed (e.g. encourage students to go back to their textbook or personal notes before doing an exercise), point to directions students could pursue, indicate alternative strategies, etc.

Feedback needs to be accepted by the learner. Working on **positive teacher-student relationships** and being explicit regarding the nature and benefits of feedback in COACH-lessons and FOLA-lessons could also help students understand, accept and use feedback more easily and efficiently. It also matters to provide feedback *before* frustration takes over. Speaking to the students' inner adult by showing that we trust them and by providing feedback that appeals to their self-regulation skills is a way of preventing such frustration and resulting task-avoidance startegies. Feedback could also develop into a self-regulated routine by helping students visualise the self-regulation questions presented in Chapter 7 on a poster to help them recall the procedure and slowly acquire self-questioning and self-verbalising skills and thus more autonomy.

This paper insists on the fact that teachers' shortcomings in particular school subjects should not be considered as a weakness but a strength. As they cannot provide students with feedback on the correctness of their answers, they are more likely to engage in a conversation with the student that will foster self-evaluation and self-regulation by asking questions such as "*Doesn't that surprise you?*", "*Could you explain to me how you got that result?*", or "*Why did you decide to do it this way?*" By observing their students at work, asking questions regarding their methodology and providing hints that improve their meta-cognitive skills, FOLA-teachers do not provide any explanation or answer but foster their students' autonomy and help them develop comptences that they will need in their academic and professional careers. Similarly, as far as group work and peer tutoring are concerned, even if they cannot provide feedback about the task content, FOLA-teachers can be attentive to the ways students interact and focus on the interactions rather than the content of the discussions which are taking place. Nevertheless, in order to do so in an efficient way, teachers need to be informed. Teacher training sessions in that field would therefore be helpful.

Synergy within the teaching community

Firstly, as mentioned in the positive aspects of FOLA-lessons, teachers need to carry on assigning homework with regard to how much other teachers have already assigned.

Secondly, the WP should contain clear goals, helpful instructions and possible helping resources (e.g. the pages in the textbook which the task is refering to) not only to help students find the motivation and right strategies to complete their tasks autonomously, but also to help FOLA-teachers guide their students efficiently.

Thirdly, FOLA-teachers should see their role as facilitators who are in charge of collecting student input for themselves but also for the other teachers, whom they should inform whenever they identify problems that need to be tackled. FOLA-teachers alone cannot provide enough assistance. Similarly, strategy training such as COACH-lessons must be embedded in the context of the subject to be learnt. It therefore makes sense to expect teachers and students to make sure that the skills taught in COACH-lessons are recalled and applied in the

FOLA-lessons when students are back into a concrete learning context. A greater synergy should be developed among the teaching staff so that FOLA-teachers could inform COACH-teachers and teachers in charge of subject-based classes of their students' shortcomings in terms of learning strategies and to-be-learned content respectively. COACH-teachers could also inform FOLA-teachers of what was dealt with in the COACH-lessons so that FOLA-teachers could observe their students' implementation of the advice provided theoretically in their COACH-lesson. It is planned to collaborate with Martine Klees, teacher in charge of the development of COACH-lessons, in order to find ways to integrate some of the self-regulation strategies mentioned in this paper in the COACH-lessons in 7^e and 9^e. In addition, communication between FOLA-teachers and COACH-teachers would be faciliated by the use of a COACH-portfolio currently being designed by the 'groupe de travail COACH'.

9.3.3. The WP

Overwhelmed by pressures related to the curriculum and standardised tests, teachers can be tempted to use homework to extend learning time beyond the classroom to meet standards. Moreover some teachers are explicitly asked to add tasks to the WP to keep the students busy in FOLA-lessons, which can lead teachers to mistake homework for busywork of poor educational value. This *travail de candidature* insisted on the fact that quality homework needs to contain clear academic purposes, be engaging to encourage student empowerment and offer an appropriate challenge to have a positive effect on students' sense of competence.

Clear instructions, goals and success criteria

A way of making students save time and be more efficient is by making instructions and expectations as clear and explicit as possible. Specifying goals and grading criteria also helps students acquire a clear notion of successful behaviours and outcomes and direct their attention to those goals. Besides clear instructions and success criteria, teachers should be encouraged to provide explanatory rationales that show students that what is expected of them is meaningful and truly worth their efforts by highlighting the benefits that they – as learners – will gain through time and effort. Rationales should not be seen as excuses for learning but as a source of motivation for reluctant students.

The lay-out of the WP could be thought over by adding a box for the COACH-lesson (as seen above) and divide each school-subject box into three parts, namely 1) objective, 2) instructions, 3) due date.

Engaging and appropriately challenging tasks

Homework should encourage student ownership. In other words, homework should be personally relevant so that students **engage emotionally**. For example, homework could allow students to express their opinion, allow choices, personalise their productions, connect the content to their everyday life, share information about themselves, create (e.g. design their own method for learning vocabulary or multiplication tables that they can share with others, or create a board game), or deal with moral or ethical dilemmas. The more a student relates to a task, the more likely he or she will get engaged and actually learn and not just 'do school'.

Furthermore, the tasks contained in the WP should encourage higher order thinking as the youths need challenges viewed as 'older' or 'adult-like'. Nevertheless, these challenges should also remain within reach as homework should have a positive effect on a student's **sense of competence**. Students who find a learning activity too easy will be bored whereas students who find a learning activity too complex compared to their perceived competences will not have the confidence to get down to work and might postpone, give up, or cheat in order to complete the task at hand. While higher-ability students know how to deal with challenging tasks and frustration, failure-oriented students will only feel confident in approaching homework if they feel they can do them. Differentiating learning goals according to the actual level of competence of the individual learners is rarely implemented at the ALR. All the students get the same tasks in their WP. Nevertheless, even without personalising learning goals, scaffolding and support can be provided to help students feel more confident or engaged. Examples of such strategies are:

- starting the task in class to check students' understanding before letting them work on their own in FOLA-lessons;
- dividing a task in manageable sections that challenge the student stepwise such as establishing intermittent due dates for long-term projects (this is particularly recommended for group work in lower classes);
- providing one-to-one assistance;
- emphasising progress rather than outcomes, through regular evaluations used to inform students about their mastery;
- teaching concrete strategies to solve the problem;
- having students assist one another in pursuing individual goals;
- writing where students can find the theory related to the task on their WP.

Scaffolding in class

Homework is used for practice. Before rushing into a heavy practice phase, teachers need to check for understanding in class to make sure their students will practise that skill correctly and will not internalise incorrect methods. According to Cathy Vatterott (2009), teachers should be aware of the difference between *checking for understanding* and *practice*. Checking for understanding consists in "*applying the concepts seen in class with the purpose of identifying weaknesses or misunderstandings*" whereas practice consists in "*applying the concepts seen in class with the purpose of internalising them*" (2009: pp. 96-8). If there is no checking for understanding in class beforehand, practice in FOLA-lessons or at home can involve new learning and be quite frustrating or misleading. It is therefore important to examine with the students a few problems in depth and focus on the reasoning used to solve them before moving to the stage of practice. Checking for understanding also consists in introducing the homework's instructions and success criteria or starting group work in class. As far as group work is concerned, teachers should be encouraged to have their students carry out their research under their guidance in the subject-based lesson as FOLA-teachers cannot observe their students – and thus prevent plagiarism or the use of unreliable sources – when they send them to the library. Equipping classrooms with four to five computes to enable students to do some online research in the presence of their FOLA-teacher could also be a solution.

9.3.4. Guidelines towards better practice

Based on the theoretical and empirical research carried out in the framework of this *travail de candidature*, two sets of guidelines were developed to guide teachers towards better practice in FOLA-lessons. As mentioned above, there is a need for differentiated learning objectives according to the students' level of cognitive development. Table 16 is a suggestion of differentiated learning objectives to pursue as a teacher in FOLA-lessons. It is in French as it is a production of the internal *groupe de travail* devoted to the development and improvement of FOLA-lessons at the ALR in the school year 2015/2016.

Table 16:   Differentiation of the learning objectives according to the classes and 'régimes'

7O 7STP	Objectifs	Savoir **s'organiser.** Savoir **se concentrer.**
	Exemples d'indicateurs	▪ savoir appliquer les conseils donnés au COACH (cf. classeur) ; ▪ avoir son matériel prêt lorsque la leçon FOLA débute, avec impossibilité de retourner chercher du matériel dans son casier ; • savoir respecter les échéances ; • avoir développé de bonnes habitudes de travail individuel.
VIᵉ Vᵉ 8STP 9STP	Objectifs	Savoir **s'organiser.** Savoir **se concentrer.** Savoir **demander de l'aide seulement si c'est nécessaire.** Savoir **apprendre sans WP.** Savoir **aider un camarade efficacement.**
	Exemples d'indicateurs	• savoir essayer de résoudre les tâches au WP seul ; • savoir retrouver la théorie et identifier et appliquer les étapes nécessaires à la résolution de problèmes ; • dans le cas où il a terminé les tâches inscrites au WP, l'élève sait quelles stratégies mettre en œuvre pour poursuivre son travail ; • savoir appliquer des techniques de questionnement simple pour aider un camarade à trouver la réponse par lui-même.
Cycle supérieur	Objectifs	Savoir **travailler de manière autonome et responsable.** Savoir **travailler efficacement en groupe.**
	Exemples d'indicateurs	• définir des rôles/tâches pour chaque membre du groupe et soumettre un produit collectif ; • savoir optimiser le temps mis à disposition ; • savoir justifier ses choix et s'autoréguler en fonction du feedback fourni par l'enseignant FOLA.
Régime technicien	Les attentes du monde professionnel vis-à-vis de ces élèves est qu'ils puissent réaliser des tâches concrètes. Le WP devrait donc être utilisé pour communiquer des consignes <u>claires et précises</u>, que les élèves doivent pouvoir être capables de <u>suivre à la lettre</u> (ex : respecter des échéances). Cet objectif semble être une priorité, avant d'aller plus loin dans la recherche d'autonomie et de compétences méta-cognitives.	

Based on the lack of cohesion highlighted in Chapter 3, the question might be raised whether teachers should also be provided clearer guidelines regarding their role in FOLA-lessons in order to pursue the goals presented in Table 16. On the one hand, it would not make sense to target more autonomy on the side of the students by mistrusting or limiting the freedom of their teachers by imposing a set of rules to follow scrupulously. But similarly to what was emphasised in this paper, letting teachers demonstrate autonomous behaviour does not mean leaving them alone to decide what to do in their FOLA-lessons. Teachers should be free to choose what strategies to implement according to their own preferences and sensitivities but they should also adhere to common principles. Table 17 summarises such key principles, which could be

handed out to the teaching staff at the beginning of every school year. Please see Appendix 10 for an alternate hand-out in French that could also be handed out to the teachers.

Table 17: Guidelines for teachers towards better practice in FOLA-lessons

Types of interventions …	
… at the affective level	Dedicate **time, interest, aid, energy and emotional support** to the individual students: • ask students how interested/confident they feel towards a particular task; • ask students for their opinion about school matters and acknowledge/accept expressions of negative affects about school; • display patience and adapt to differences (e.g. allow time for self-paced learning); • articulate the sometimes hidden usefulness of a task by adopting the students' perspective to show the task is worth the effort for *them* (i.e. explanatory rationales).
	Create a **safe and supportive environment**: • let students make choices for themselves and accept these choices might be wrong; • present and welcome errors as learning opportunities; • noise and movement are fine as long as they are controlled; • emphasise on progress (learning goals) rather than outcomes (performance goals).
	Speak to the inner adult of each individual learner • maintain high expectations for every student – prevent task-avoidance strategies and encourage high-ability students not just to 'do school'; • encourage higher-order thinking in the WP-tasks, and within the process of resolution; • rely on adult-like, noncontrolling, informational language.
	Show you are **available** and be **proactive** with shy students.
	Provide effort, ability and descriptive feedback to **boost students' sense of confidence**.
	Do not be a permissive teacher: provide a **clear framework**. Make rules explicit.
	Dedicate **time for homework in class**: share outcomes in class and avoid grading homework and punitive consequences.
… at the cognitive level	**Engage** students through the **quality of the tasks contained in the WP**: • provide opportunities for personalisation; • provide opportunities for choice (differentiation of content/process/product according to prior knowledge, learning preferences, …); • provide opportunities for challenge, with appropriate scaffolding so students can experience success (success must be within reach); • provide clear instructions and grading/success criteria; • mention possible helping resources; • start group work/research in class to prevent confusion/task-avoidance strategies (e.g. plagiarism).
	Encourage **learner autonomy**: • don't just ask students *what* they are doing, but *how* they are doing it – encourage students to identify and verbalise the steps to complete a task to develop autonomy; • question students instead of instructing them – provide feedback that fosters self-regulation rather than explanations or answers; • postpone help and peer support until you feel the students are really stuck.
… at the meta-cognitive level	Help students **recognise the factors within their control**. Observe them at work (preparation, performance, evaluation), and question their methods if necessary.
	Encourage the selection and use of **self-regulation strategies**: practice testing (not just rereading/highlighting but doing exercises as self-assessment); organisation/planning; the invention self-consequences (rewards or punishments); self-explanation, self-verbalisation of the steps to complete a task and self-evaluation; efficient selection and use of helping resources; reviewing content regularly; peer support: helping is not providing the answer.
	Students' work is **not restricted to the WP**. Help students decide what is left to do to enhance their learning (e.g. sort out their material, revise vocabulary, complete the ALR-Notebook or COACH-portfolio, distributed practice (e.g. do exercises from a previous WP again))

9.4. Final word

A successful homework support programme such as the ALR's FOLA-lessons is not just about homework. It is part of a school philosophy of high expectations for all and a comprehensive approach which (pro)actively monitors student choices and performances and provides support accordingly. What we now need is an **attitudinal shift**. Teachers, students and parents need to be told that the WP is not the be-all and end-all. Students need to feel that it is their attitude and their willingness to learn which, at the end of day, will determine what they will actually learn. Homework is not just something to be *finished*. As student empowerment makes a real difference, homework and FOLA-lessons should be seen as a tool to foster student engagement, increase their intrinsic motivation, and assist them in their learning. In order to do so, our focus in FOLA-lessons must shift from our obsession with *achievement*, *standards* and *results* to a focus on *learning* itself. Moreover, if we want our students to take responsibility for their learning, we need to expect more than just obedience. We need to accept that our students are involved in a process. That they are not autonomous yet. That they might make wrong choices and need our help to understand why. And that their silence, their reluctance or their task avoidance can hide deeper weaknesses that need to be tackled by the entire teaching community. The ALR's motto is "*Zäit fir méi*" (i.e. *time for more*). May this *travail de candidature* have shown what is meant by 'more' for FOLA-lessons.

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