

International Honours Congress Utrecht

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Honours students' need for freedom and structure explored in Fishbowl discussions

One important difference between honours students – students who are able and willing to do more than the regular program offers (Wolfensberger, 2012; Clark & Zubizarreta, 2008) – and regular students seems to be their need for more autonomy (Wolfensberger, 2012). Teachers often struggle with finding the optimal balance for each student between giving freedom and giving structure (Van Eijl et al., 2010; Kingma et al., 2016).

Research shows that autonomy is important for achieving higher learning outcomes (Vansteenkiste et al., 2012). When teachers support their students in regulating their study activities such that they experience autonomy – the subjective experience of psychological freedom and choice while performing activities (Van den Broeck et al., 2010) – student learning will improve. The emphasis on the subjective aspect implies that the ideal degree and form of support may vary between different types of students. Insight into these differences can provide teachers with tools to adapt their teaching strategy towards individual students, and may help them to find the optimal balance between giving freedom and providing structure.

In this session we will focus on honours students' needs for autonomy. What do students want, expect and need from their teachers and what are the teachers' views concerning this subject. The aim of this session is that both teachers and students gain insight into each other's views. Ideally, teachers will come to some new understandings they can apply into daily practice, while students will learn when and how to express their needs towards their teacher.

After an introduction of the subject and central questions, professor Jaarsma will facilitate two rounds of Fishbowl discussions. For these discussions chairs will be placed into an inner and an outer circle. In the first round students (max 10) will be asked to take place in the inner circle and discuss the given issues and questions. In the second round the inner circle will be filled with teacher/educators (max 10) and they will discuss the same subjects and questions.

The session ends with an integration of the outcomes of the two discussion rounds and a translation to practice.

References

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