University of Bedfordshire
Journal of Pedagogic Development
Volume 5, Issue 1
Centre for Learning Excellence

The learning approaches of A Level History and Geography students analysed: a Report from a Sixth Form College

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Keywords: General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level; Self-regulated learning (SRL); Sixth Form College (SFC).

Abstract
This paper sought to explore how students in History and Geography approach learning. The research involved GCE A Level students in the Sixth Form College sector, in which they responded to a structured questionnaire that was drawn from the literature on self-regulated learning. The key areas for investigation revolved around motivation, self-efficacy, fear of failure and reflection. The data was analysed according to ability range with analysis undertaken between the A*-B range and those students below in the DE range. The conclusion suggests students adopt a range of approaches, some determined by their innate ability but others by more practical concerns such as the chances of success or the value of the activity. Importantly, the research also identified some common approaches adopted by students of History and Geography that challenge Kolb's views of subject disciplines divides.

Introduction
The media in England and some leading universities have periodically criticised the current General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A Level) qualification as failing to prepare students for undergraduate level study. Indeed, the Russell Group of leading universities has identified subjects, such as History and Geography, as 'facilitating' entry to certain degree courses, and in doing so differentiated between more academic and supposedly less academic subjects on offer to potential university entrants. This debate over the academic quality of A level as a qualification for university entry has led the Coalition Government to announce plans to restructure the qualification after September 2015 (The Government Digital Service, April 2014). A major criticism of GCE A Level is that students are often 'spoon-fed'- which means that students are led to the answer by the teacher without the need for independent thought or effort. As early as 1998, Utley (1998) had identified this issue: 'many university tutors claim that the school system is failing to prepare students for what will be expected of them at university. A-level history in particular is seen to be teacher-dominated, creating a passive dependency culture'. The aim of the paper is to explore the degree to which A Level students adopt self-regulation as part of their approach to learning.

The institutional context: Sixth Form Colleges and GCE A Level
The Sixth Form College (SFC) sector remains relatively small both in terms of its membership and those students it caters to. Compared with the over two hundred General Further Education Colleges (GFECs) and 1689 schools with sixth forms reported by Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (Sixth Form Colleges' Forum (SFCF), 2011), there are now only 93 SFCs in the highly competitive post-16 education field. School sixth forms taught over 176,000 students and GFECs cater to over 86,000 students enrolled on level 3 (university entrance) programmes in 2008, compared to over 54,000 students in SFCs. Their market has tended to be limited to the core provision of GCE A Level study. The sector is also characterised by the numbers of students it serves. SFCs tend to be much smaller than GFECs. Although there are some that have below 1,000 students and an equally small number over 3,000, most range between 1,000-3,000 students, with an approximate average of 1,880 (SFCF, 2014). Although the SFC sector is relatively small in relation to the maintained school sector and the more

diverse and larger GFECs, SFCs do make a significant contribution to university entrance in England.

The A Level qualification was introduced in the UK in 1951 as the primary entry qualification to university. The qualification is taken over two years by 16-18 year olds in both the State and Independent sectors, and indeed internationally. Awards are subject-based and cover a wide range of disciplines such as the arts, sciences, social sciences, foreign languages and some vocational subjects. In practice, most A Level students take a study programme of three or four subjects. In recent years there has been some diversification with the introduction of the Applied A Level which is designed to deliver a vocational curriculum for subjects such as Travel and Tourism. In many respects, however, A level is still dominated by the traditional subjects, with Mathematics being the most popular with 88816 candidates (10.65% of the total), English second with 85336 candidates (10.23%), History sixth with 52131 (6.25%) and Geography ninth with 33007 (3.96%) candidates (JCQ, 2014). Although there has been a small rise in the number of students taking History at A Level, Geography has seen a decline in its share of the post-16 student cohort.

In terms of the mode of assessment, A Level is still characterised by traditional methods of assessment, such as essay writing and formal external examinations. In some respects, the traditional make-up of A level is also reflected in the professional practice of some teachers who tend to adhere to traditional modes of teaching and learning. Hibbert (2014: 39) reported that 'students valued... the structure of A Level teaching, but nearly all of them talked about having been spoon fed or force fed'. According to the University of Kent (2014), 'This is one of the big differences people often notice if they come straight to university from school or college: instead of being constantly 'spoon fed' by teachers [i.e. dependent upon teachers] telling them exactly what to do, university students are expected to work on their own a lot more, setting their own goals, tracking down resources and taking responsibility for producing the goods on time'. Research from across the globe suggests that 'spoon-feeding' is not unique to the UK and is widely practised in East Asia in particular (Briguglio, 2000; Wong 2004). Indeed, accusations of 'spoon-feeding' are not new and not limited merely to pre-University education (Raelin, 2009). Despite, accusations of excessive teacher-dependent learning, we should recognise that teaching in the SFC sector is regarded as being of a high standard, which promotes independent learning in a variety of ways. According to SFCF (2013: 4), for example, 'more Sixth Form Colleges are rated as either good or outstanding by Ofsted (79%) than independent schools, maintained schools or sponsored academies'.

Are there any features of the established SFC curriculum that encourage self-regulated and independent learning?

There are clearly opportunities presented within the pre-2015 specifications for independent learning to take place within both History and Geography. In particular, in both subjects there is scope for individual research and for students to take the initiative in their learning. In Geography, students are required to undertake some field work, in which 'candidates are required to undertake preparatory investigative work in the field to develop skills associated with planning, collection of primary and, if appropriate, secondary data, presentation, interpretation and evaluation, in order to be able to produce a report of an investigation' (AQA, 2014). In History, students are required to undertake a coursework assignment that represents 20% of the full qualification; and, which the 'assignment will assess the ability to carry out a historical enquiry, analysing and evaluating historical interpretations, and organising and communicating the findings' (Edexcel, 2014). This assignment continues the established use of coursework as a method of assessment and that had enabled students to undertake an individual project often based on their own choice of topic. Moreover, many students of History and Geography will have studied for the AS Level Extended Project

Qualification (EPQ) in which they are able to either create a musical or artistic 'artefact', or write a 5,000 word essay on a topic of their own choosing. The EPQ was introduced following the Tomlinson Report of 2006 that had called for the broadening of the Sixth Form curriculum and the provision for an independent study that would accrue currency with the university sector. The EPQ represents a major step forward in promoting independent learning and has not only been championed within the SFC sector but warmly welcomed by leading universities: 'undertaking an EPQ is a good idea…. It develops your ability to study independently and helps make the transition from school to university' (Queens' College Cambridge, 2014). Applying the descriptor of 'spoon-fed' to students of History and Geography is myopic given the totality of their learning in the Sixth Form.

Literature review: the self-regulated learner

Pintrich's definition of self-regulated learning (SRL), cited by Schunk (2005), provides a concise insight into the concept and its practise:

An active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment.

In simple terms, SRL placed the student at the centre of the learning process and, in doing so, allocates a significant amount of responsibility to the student to reach their goals. The literature on SRL mirrors other theoretical approaches to student-centred learning that has appeared in research journals in the past few decades, such as Guy Claxton's Building Learning Power (Stoten, 2012) or more generally as independent learning. Research identifies self-regulated learners as more likely to achieve highly, enjoy studying, and develop life-long learning skills (Wolters, 1998; Zimmerman, 1989; Pintrich and De Groot, 1990; Schunk and Zimmerman, 1994). As Boekaerts (1999: 445) acknowledges, self-regulated learning has been informed by writing on learning styles, students' metacognition, and theories of the self. Importantly, SRL has also been linked to the need to encourage independent action and the capacity to take the initiative often associated with the idea of flexible specialisation in the workforce- a major requirement in the future labour force of the twenty-first century.

SRL has drawn both from information processing theory (Pintrich, 2004), social cognitive theory, and in particular the work of Bandura (1997) and Zimmerman (1998). We should also differentiate theories of self-regulated learning from those associated with students' approaches to learning. Although both SRL and students' approaches to learning approaches (SAL) recognise the importance of goal setting and the motivational context to individuals' learning, they differ in terms of how they undertake empirical research and what they aim to investigate. Whereas, for example, SRL research tends to use quantitative questionnaires, such as Pintrich and de Groot's (1990) Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), SAL research, often influenced by postmodernist theory, may wish to use a phenomenological and qualitative approach. Moreover, SAL investigations have tended to undertake research into general learning strategies, such as learning styles (Marton and Saljo, 1976; Entwhistle and Waterston, 1998) or the idea of deep and surface learning, as well as strategic learning (Biggs,1987). According to Pintrich (2004), SRL is more concerned with the generation and analysis of differences in student motivation and learning than is the case with most SAL investigations. Consequently, we should expect to see the issues of motivation, goal setting and metacognition and as central to the discourse on SRL.

Schunk (2005: 174) has described the four main lines of research that has been undertaken into SRL. Firstly, citing the work of Boekaerts (1999), Schunk refers to the interest in exploring the nature of self-regulation as a process, often comparing 'good' and 'bad' forms of self-

regulation. Secondly, the issue of motivation is central to the work of Pintrich and De Groot, (1990) and Pintrich (2004) in which they explore the idea of influencing the level of motivation amongst students. Thirdly, we see that the possible relationship between learning and affective factors is explored in the work of Henderson and Cunningham (1994), and finally, in the research of Schunk (2005) and the idea that specifically-designed forms of intervention can lead to an improvement in students' achievement.

It is clear from the literature as a whole, that motivation is viewed as a central issue for researchers and work has tended to focus on the traditional discussion of intrinsic (inherent subject interest) and extrinsic (relationship with teacher) forms of motivation, to explore more specific issues such as the impact such as personal ideals, values and goals, as well as the impact of others, on outcomes. Much of SRL research is drawn from constructivist psychology, and that considers the role and impact of others in supporting learning- an early example of which is Vygotsky (1936/1984) and his model of the Zone of Proximal Development. Furthermore, teachers will recognise the every-day complexities of social learning between peers in the classroom. For Thoonen et al., (2011), motivation incorporates additional three components beyond a general orientation and students' intrinsic/extrinsic drives: these are value, expectancy and affective components. In short, students are regarded as being more motivated to learn where they see a clear benefit from the completion of the task, expect to achieve highly and enjoy their learning. Whether Geography and History students are motivated positively through field study or coursework is an area for exploration.

The notion that targets can be set, managed and their outcomes evaluated is a second major concept associated with SRL, and one explored in the research. Indeed, the setting of targets is an important part of the tracking of students' performance today not least in the SFC sector where each student is given a target grade based on their GCSE performance. Sheldon and Elliot (1998) have reported that those students who are more aware of their targets tend to be more effective as self-regulated learners. They also reflect on their progress over a range of tasks and modify their behaviours in light of their evaluation. Such a view suggests that motivation is a nexus of complex processes and far more complicated than behaviourist thinkers had originally alluded to.

A third major theme of the research is associated with the role of reflection in students' learning. For Zimmerman (1989), SRL can be defined in terms of a learning model with three phases: forethought, performance and self-reflection. Although the idea of students' control over their learning strategy is central to SRL, metacognition is more important as learning is the product of this iterative reflective cycle. For Zimmerman (1989), this process of self-reflection involves reacting to, observing and judging the learning experience. Boekaerts and Cascallar (2006) have reported that some students adopt a 'maladaptive' position that inhibits their progress and have suggested that students learn to modify their level of motivation and choice of learning strategy in order to maximise their level of achievement.

A fourth major theme of SRL relates to the importance of self-efficacy. The idea of self-efficacy is integral to this process of metacognition as students reflect on their learning experience. In part, self-efficacy is, as Zimmerman (1998) recognises a consequence of interaction with others and their feedback. For the most part, however, self-efficacy is related to the psychological state of a student, their experiences of learning over their entire educational career, and most importantly, their record of achievements. The implications are clear for teachers. Building-up a student's self-efficacy is a life-long process, as is learning, although Zimmerman (1998) considers that self-efficacy is most closely tied to their most recent results. The importance of constructive feedback becomes ever more important given the cyclical nature of feedback as a reinforcement of self-image. For Zimmerman (1998) the frequency and

immediacy of feedback are both important in constructing a student's self-image. Perhaps one of the lessons to be learned for teachers is the need to design a feedback process that includes the student also in the teaching and learning process as suggested by Fluckiger et al. (2010). Quite apart from the instrumental requirements of effective feedback, it should also recognise the emotional context to all learning.

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is closely tied to students' emotional condition, in that a positive self-image may reduce stress, anxiety and depression. Just as a positive self-image may be associated with higher levels of motivation, effort and achievement, a negative view may inhibit learning. For Rawsthorne and Elliott (1999), students are not simply driven by the attainment of goals, as suggested by goal theory, but need to deal with their emotional state as well. Together with other researchers (Elliott and Harackiewicz, 1996; Elliott, 1997; Middleton and Midgley, 1997) they have emphasised how emotional drives such as 'performance avoidance' and anxiety are integral to students' motivational state. In particular, a number of researchers (Pintrich and de Groot, 1990; Zeidner and Matthews, 2005) have identified test anxiety as a demotivating factor for less able students. Al Khatib (2010) reported that higher levels of test anxiety were tied to underperformance in examinations, and that female students were more prone to test anxiety than male students. Levels of test anxiety are reported to increase (Montalvo and Torres, 2004) when students compare their likely performance to others. This paper was therefore concerned with investigating whether self-efficacy and test anxiety varied between ability levels in History and Geography, indeed and between subjects.

Although strictly separate from the main discourse on SRL, Kolb (1981) argued that academic disciplines encourage particular styles of learning. Kolb (1981) placed subjects such as English, Politics and History together as having a divergent thinking style, in contrast to Engineering which was supposedly convergent in nature and based in logic. Kolb (1981) developed his discussion by asserting that History was based more in the [phenomenological] reflective interpretation of human experiences than Geography, which was closer to the physical sciences due to its reliance on abstract concepts and complex theorisation. The implications of such a finding are profound since it infers that approaches to learning may be tied to the appeal of particular disciplines. For Healey and Jenkins (2000: 2), 'when we first hear the central ideas of Kolb's theory it may well have an intuitive appeal for it connects to, even legitimatises, what we already do as teachers. As researchers we may note that it in part parallels the (scientific) research method of observation, hypothesis building, theory, and testing. For geographers it gives a theoretical rationale for the importance of fieldwork'. There is therefore an important question that emerges from this aside: do particular disciplines reflect innate preferences within us, or do we inculcate a particular approach to study as part of the indoctrination to academic study? This paper sought to explore this issue then as its final research question.

Research methodology

The research exercise was implemented in two stages. The first sought to elicit the views of History students on how they approached learning. This stage was conducted over one year at four SFCs, two in the North of England and two in the South East. At the time of the research, two of the SFCs were regarded as 'outstanding', whilst the other two were judged to be 'good' in their provision of teaching and learning by Ofsted, the statutory inspection agency for England. The author, who had worked at two of the four institutions, used opportunity sampling to obtain the data. Given the reality that the author was a 'practitioner-researcher', a departmental manager and had indeed taught on the A Level History course, certain ethical issues were clearly associated with the process of research in terms of interaction with respondents. Students' anonymity was protected as the questionnaires used were not issued

or collected by the author and no names were elicited. Moreover, students were offered the option of non-participation.

The first phase of the research process involved an analysis of 84 second year A Level History students' views using a highly structured questionnaire following their submission of their History coursework. This questionnaire used 15 statements each with a five point Likert scale to generate students' responses on issues generated through the literature review, such as fear of failure, motivation and their preparedness to undertake self-regulated independent study. These statements were reducible to three core coding themes: affective issues, self-reflection and most importantly how students approached independent learning. The data was initially analysed according to those who either agreed or strongly agreed with each statement in order to obtain an overview of the cohort. The data was subsequently sorted into two data sets, grade A and DE students to see if there was any difference between the most and least able students.

The second stage of the research involved the distribution of the questionnaire to 34 A level Geography students at a single SFC. The questionnaire was modified so that references to History coursework were removed and replaced with reference to field work in Geography, otherwise it was identical to that issued to History students. Again, the data was sorted into two clusters: A*-B and D-E students. Further examination of the data is possible and one possible avenue to explore in future analysis is the gender context to the generated data. It would be interesting to see if there were similar data generated across subjects and if any of the data was markedly different between subjects following a gender-based analysis. However, given the scale of this project, this analysis was assigned to future work.

As with any small-scale study, its generalisability is limited and its value is tied to the insight of a small number of SFCs and their particular context and experiences. This research exercise is useful in relating empirical results to theoretical issues raised within the literature review in relation to students' motivation, their self-efficacy and the process of self-evaluation, and could serve as a starting point for future exploration of SRL.

Findings

Table 1 below displays the data generated from the questionnaires distributed to students, together with a reference to the theoretical context. There is some degree of commonality between subjects that reflect the literature. For example, with reference to the discussion on reflection, it is clear that the more able say that they tend to reflect more than the less able in both subjects- with 86% of History and 100% of Geography students, compared with 80% and 69% respectively. It is also clear that grade A students enjoy learning in greater depth than DE students in both subjects. The data reported that 100% of grade A History and Geography students enjoyed learning in depth compared with 80% and 81% respectively for the grade DE cohort. This degree of commonality between subjects is also mirrored by the approach by students to planning, with the more able students in History 76% and 67% in Geography indicating that they do plan their work whereas the less able appear less inclined to plan, with only 40% in History and 56% in Geography reporting that they do so. Interestingly, both sets of grade DE students appeared to be more instrumental in their approach to study with 80% of History students and 94% of geography students, than the more able.

This commitment to reflection, deeper reading and planning on behalf of grade A students in both subjects may be attributable, as the literature suggests, to their level of self-efficacy and motivation. Whereas 93% of grade A History and 88% of Geography students placed a lot of importance on how they performed, only 60% of grade DE History and 63% of DE Geography students shared this priority. Furthermore, 86% of grade A History and 100% of Geography students described themselves as highly motivated, compared with 50% of DE History and

Geography students 44% respectively. This pattern of response is also reflected in how prepared students are to take the initiative, with 50% of grade A Historians and 88% of Geography students preferring to show initiative when starting a new topic, compared with 40% of DE History and 50% of DE Geography students.

Despite the numerous similarities between subjects, there were instances where differences existed. For example, in relation to learning for a test, it was clear that both cohorts of Geography students put in additional work to prepare for a test than did the two cohorts of History students. Moreover, in relation to the theme of fear of failure- whereas it was the less able cohort of History students who worried about more about examinations, in Geography it was the most able who expressed concern. There was commonality, though, on views of coursework / field study between subjects with a majority of DE students in both subjects expressing a preference for coursework / field study. Interestingly, both sets of grade DE students appeared to be more instrumental in their approach to study with 80% of History students and 94% of geography students, than the more able.

Theoretical context *Statement*	***Raw data: The level of overall agreement (out of 84 History and 34 Geography students)***	***% of A grade students (out of 14 History and 14 Geography students)***	***% of DE grade students (out of 10 History and 16 Geography students)***
Fear of failure / Test anxiety *I tend to worry about exams*	*73 (History)* *26 (Geography)*	*76 (History)* *88 (Geography)*	*100 (History)* *69 (Geography)*
Self-reflection *I tend to reflect on how well I have done after submitting work*	*67* *31*	*86* *100*	*80* *69*
Deep / Independent learning *I tend to go into all aspects of a topic in great depth before I start writing*	*42* *18*	*64* *67*	*30* *50*
Instrumental ism / self- efficacy *I tend to put more effort into a piece of work if I think I will do well in it*	*64* *30*	*57* *75*	*80* *94*
Deep / Independent learning *I prefer to be in control of my coursework / field study*	*61* *6*	*64* *38*	*70* *13*
Deep / Independent learning *I prefer to set my own learning goals when doing work*	*43* *20*	*43* *63*	*40* *56*
Intrinsically motivated *I enjoy learning in depth*	*69* *29*	*100* *100*	*80* *81*
Deep / Independent learning *I tend to explore new aspects of a topic without being told to do so before being instructed*	*28* *21*	*36* *67*	*40* *57*
Deep / Independent learning *I tend to plan my work*	*55* *21*	*76* *67*	*40* *58*
Instrumentalism / self-efficacy *I place a lot of importance on how well I perform*	*60* *26*	*93* *88*	*60* *63*
Deep / Independent learning *I prefer to take the initiative when learning something new*	*42* *20*	*50* *88*	*40* *50*
Intrinsically motivated *I am highly motivated to achieve highly*	*57* *22*	*86* *100*	*50* *44*
Deep / Independent learning *prefer making my own notes instead of using worksheets*	*50* *23*	*62* *100*	*70* *63*
Fear of failure / test anxiety *I prefer coursework to exams*	*41* *18*	*28* *38*	*60* *75*
Deep / Independent learning *I tend to learn extra things when I need to for a test*	*54* *24*	*50* *88*	*50* *63*

Table1. The data generated from the student questionnaire.

Discussion

The data generated a number of interesting findings that echoes much of the literature on self-regulated learning. The data infers that students who are high achievers are so because of their more effective approach to learning. If we consider how students manage their work, we can see that those who claim to be effective planners, set their own work and control their learning were more likely to be in the grade A cohort. Again, those who thought of themselves as being self-directed were more common in the grade A cohort.

This ordered approach to academic study from the more able student is consistent with deep approaches to learning. It also reflects a relatively high level of self-belief which is consistent with an established record of academic achievement over a period of time. Students who have experienced academic success recognise not only that their performance is attributable to being in control of their learning but that they do not learn simply for a test but for a deeper level of understanding of the subject material. All the students in the grade A cohort in both subjects recognised the importance of deep learning and its connection to success. The implications for teaching in the classroom are clear: teachers should create an environment where each student is able to claim success from independent work and thereby develop their confidence in undertaking deeper forms of learning. Although strategic approaches to learning can lead to success for many students, teachers should emphasise the benefits of deep learning.

The importance of intrinsic motivation is also an indicator of possible success for students. The gap between the A grade and DE cohorts in both subjects was significant with 100% of the most able Geographers and 86% of Historians, being highly motivated to achieve highly. The data suggests that a virtuous circle exists where students' achievements reinforce their self-esteem and self-efficacy image. This conditioning of their behaviour is also reflected in how much emotional capital they invest in study. For those with a track record of underperformance, there is likely to be a lower level of exertion compared with those students who expect to achieve highly.

The manner by which students are assessed is also important. Students clearly value coursework as part of the A Level qualification but it is the DE cohorts of students who prefer it as a mode of assessment over examinations, where presumably they have a disappointing record. Given that the entire DE cohort of Historians expressed concern about examinations, the contribution of coursework to their final result becomes all the more important. With 20% of A Level History being allocated to coursework, teachers must ensure that students are prepared effectively for this section of the course. Interestingly, Geography students claimed that they were likely to engage in extra preparation for a test. Both findings infer that students are encouraged to perform by what occurs in class and how the teacher offers feedback to them. Given this finding, teachers should reflect on how they could prepare students better for examinations under timed conditions such as more regular testing and how they conduct feedback.

Conclusion

This research paper suggests that students' approaches to learning are multifarious and are situated not only within the activity itself but also within the context of the individual and their experience of learning. Instead of viewing the teaching of A level as excessively didactic and de-motivating, we should recognise the excellence of teaching and learning that takes places within the education system, especially in SFCs. Although there are pressures to 'teach for the exam' and fill-up students with the requisite knowledge to achieve at A Level, it is clear from numerous Ofsted inspection reports that teachers recognise the importance of developing students as life-long learners. Moreover, initiatives such as Building Learning Power are

testament to the drive within the education system to promote independent learning and greater individual ownership of learning.

In relation to History and Geography specifically, Kolb (1981) considered these two pillars of the Humanities curriculum as very different in essence and that students approached these disciplines differently. This paper differs with Kolb and suggests that there is a high degree of commonality between History and Geography students in the manner they approach academic study. This paper explored the propensity of students to manage their learning and generated some interesting, if limited findings. Students of all abilities engage in instrumental forms of learning, particularly when close to sitting external examinations. Further research could investigate the degree to which academic ability impacts on their approach to learning. Moreover, future research could also compare the performance between the SFC sector and the school sector for instance, as well as more extensive research within the SFC itself. A large number of students study A level History and Geography in the School sector and it would be informative to see if there is any variance between sectors, and what possible factors may influence diversity, including gender.

Students' ability to undertake independent forms of learning is tied to many factors not least their capacity, and indeed willingness, to engage in the management of their own learning. The didactic model of teaching is increasingly viewed as redundant for most forms of learning. As a consequence, we should encourage students to accept the responsibility to manage their own learning rather than rely on the teacher. In doing so, teachers should be aware of the literature on self-regulated learning that offers insights into how students respond to target-setting, how they are motivated – both instrumentally and intrinsically- and how they see themselves as learners. Although all students may choose to adopt an instrumental and/or a strategic approach to study as examinations approach, they should not be inducted into surface learning simply in order to meet discrete learning objectives set by examination boards. Learning History or Geography is not simply concerned with learning facts; study at A level should be about engaging with complex and challenging ideas and developing an intellect for the future.

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