Enterprising ways to teach and learn

Principles and practice

Paul Kearney

Explanation of an engaging pedagogy

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There are **three books** in this series Enterprising Ways to Teach and Learn

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Note on the author

Analyst, innovator and commentator, Paul Kearney is regarded as one of, if
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initiatives around the world. Of his 17 publications, the previous edition has
had a pronounced impact in this field. Paul believes education should be
bold, transforming and just.

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BALANCE

**Creating learning without controlling is the measure
of the enterprising teacher**

PREFACE

I believe that teaching comes from the heart and head – and remains an 'art'.

This book is about two of the most important aspects of modern life: learning and being enterprising.

While acknowledging the value of modern learning strategies, I do fear that we may become infatuated with ideas in their infancy – and, more importantly, distracted from mastering the basics of teaching – the delicate balance of helping others to learn. For example the **balance** could be helping the child to tie her shoes, without doing it for her – so that she can do it for herself in times to come. Remember how frustrating and difficult it was but we achieved it, because the great traditions of learning were involved i.e. managing one's self, doing it, receiving help and thinking about how it was done. In education-speak the principles are:

- Responsibility
- Experiential
- Social
- Reflection

This is not rocket science.

Employing our great traditions in a disciplined and enterprising way may revitalise the pedagogy.

Dedications

To Anne for her great love

Also to Liam for boundless energy

INTRODUCTION

These publications will assist those wanting to

1. refresh their pedagogical practices, in order to make learning more engaging, authentic and purposeful

2. promote enterprise and similar high-value generic skills

3. value-add standard curriculum outcomes by making them richer and less transient

In particular this book hopes to encourage more teachers to teach in a more enterprising way more of the time. No recipes are offered, only ingredients, some advice on 'mixing' and some examples. There are no 'lesson plans'. Teachers are left to contextualise. It is assumed that just as spoon-feeding is unproductive for students, so it is for their teachers.

The Proposition

The central proposition is that development of enterprising skills relies on constant practise in a variety of circumstances. And the best way to do this is by learning all the curriculum areas in an enterprising manner – using initiative, resourcefulness, strategy and determination – and making real decisions.

An enterprising pedagogy simply means that to a **greater degree** students use initiative, resourcefulness and other enterprising skills in the very way they learn most of the day. We shall call this approach Enterprising Learning.

Learning that draws on the great **progressive traditions of education** – students taking responsibility, learning first-hand not just second-hand, learning with and from one another, and learning to reflect and generalise – provides greater opportunity for learning in an enterprising manner.

Learning in an enterprising way offers two for the price of one!

- **Curriculum outcomes** are better, because students are constantly engaged in authentic and useful activities.

- **Enterprising attributes** are nurtured, almost as a by-product – because developing enterprising attributes, like all generic skills, demands constant practise in a range of contexts. And this is what learning the curriculum in this way offers: **constancy and variety**.

This is not rocket science but it is too often overlooked in favour of the one-off mini-project. Teachers need an enterprising approach to their everyday teaching. This is not to say that projects are not valuable; on the contrary they are central to learning to be enterprising. But without the everyday approach the value is transitory and diminished. See Appendix C for a diagram illustrating an enterprising pedagogy.

It can be argued that enterprise is already there in young people, waiting to be developed. But for many it is 'stuck' in a small range of situations. They lack the opportunity to practise generic attributes, such as confidence, negotiation and initiative and opportunism can remain 'situational-specific'. Some examples to illustrate the point are:

- At a recent biannual collectors and exhibitors expo, a shy collector was stationed next to an older toy car collector. The older collector enquired from where the lad sourced his impressive range of die-cast buses. The younger launched into a long story of investigation and intrigue. Excitedly, he talked of solving problems, negotiating, overcoming set-backs, striking deals, risking his savings . . . The shy collector talked cogently with a compelling confidence. Lunchtime came and the lad allowed others to push in front of him at the canteen. He was unable to assert himself. His confidence and strategic powers had deserted him.

- Similarly, many of us sing in the shower but many wouldn't dare sing in the staff room. A confident staff member moans after a promotion interview that her responses didn't do her justice – her usual persuasiveness had gone missing.

People are more confident and competent in 'known situations'. To be able to transfer their competence to other contexts people need to practise them across a range of contexts. This not only makes them more confident and capable, but it also allows them to deal with unfamiliar situations. This is especially true in complex areas such as problem solving, dealing with risk and other enterprising skills. **Reusing or adapting skills is labelled 'transference', which is at the heart of learning**. David N. Perkins uses the concept of *near and far* to demonstrate the nature of transference. For example, if you learn how to fix a 1997 car, you should in theory be able to fix a 1998 model but transferring your 'fixing skills' from a 1998 model to a 2003 model may be very difficult, if at all possible. Learning in an enterprising way is a 'must' for the development of enterprising attributes.

Aside

It helps to think of implicit and explicit approaches to enterprising-learning

Big print, where the activity is explicit and discrete, as with projects, such as training staff in how to make better use of their iPads.

Small print where the approach is more implicit and fused, as with blending the four properties in everyday teaching: for example, working on mobile phone plans in mathematics

Enterprise in Education

Understanding the nature of enterprise provides a basis for understanding how it is developed.

Being enterprising is developing productive ideas and using *initiative, innovation and industry* to create something of **value** – even when things are difficult and uncertain – and involves the risk of losing something valuable.

Enterprise is taking advantage of what 'might be' (possibilities), rather than accepting what 'will be' (fate). Many enterprising people have a heightened desire to make things happen and sometimes with a particular style, such as tenacity or flair. In a business setting it is called entrepreneurialism, but you also need enterprise to run a club, a household, a good classroom or to help yourself and others.
Paul Kearney

The pivotal word is 'value'. Where value is defined largely in economic terms, the concept of enterprise will remain narrow and its practice risks remaining marginalised.

Evidence suggests the goals of entrepreneurialism can be achieved through pursuing the broader definition of being enterprising **but not necessarily vice versa**. The pursuit of private profit as the central concern of education is unattractive to many educators, whereas the notion of 'being enterprising' is categorically inclusive – and encouraging of personal efficacy, community empowerment, public service, enterprising work and citizenship.

And the enterprising person can be described as below:

An enterprising individual has a positive, flexible and adaptable disposition toward change, seeing it as normal and as an opportunity rather than a problem. To see change in this way, an enterprising individual has a security born of self-confidence, and is at ease when dealing with insecurity, risks and the unknown. An enterprising individual has the capacity to initiate creative ideas... and develop them through into action in a determined manner. An enterprising individual is able, even anxious, to take responsibility, and is an effective communicator, negotiator, influencer, planner and organiser. An enterprising individual is active, confident, purposeful, not passive, uncertain and dependent.
Towards An 'Enterprising' Culture Colin Ball, OECD Education Monograph, Paris 1989

An aside

The latter is an attractive definition but it doesn't do to glamorise enterprise. Some people are enterprising because they have to be, like the child in Mumbai. Criminals may be amongst the most enterprising of people...but in the wrong context.) Everyone is enterprising to a degree, some more than others and in different ways. And we can be more enterprising in different places and at different times.

Attributes/skills

When asked what skills/attributes were used (and developed) in an enterprising undertaking, common responses include the following

initiative	get up and go
opportunism	seeing possibilities
drive	give it your all
resilience	sticking at it
managing risk	being bold and cautious
innovation	finding new ways
resourcefulness	making the most of it
problem solving	fixing problems and trouble
communication	getting your message across
influence	persuading others
teamwork	working with others
learning	staying up-to-date
organisation	making plans
reliable	being dependable

There is a noticeable range from more tangible competencies, such as planning and organising, through to less tangible attributes, eg passion. (It is interesting to observe that a series of 'i' words can be seen as characterising an enterprising disposition, eg initiative, innovation, ingenuity, industry, inspiration, insight, intuition.)

Attitudes are central to enterprise. They involve more than a capacity but also a certain disposition, ie a desire or even an eagerness to act and the confidence to do so. For example:

The bus breaks down! The less enterprising, who may have the capacity, sit in the back, perhaps moaning, leaving the matter to others. The enterprising passengers are willing to help. But the truly enterprising person actually wants ('needs') to solve the problem. Enterprising people have the 'itch'. You could call it **a heightened desire to do things.**

An aside

Most early usages of 'entreprendre' described the people who arranged for travelling **minstrels** to enter guarded cities. Later enterprise was used to describe waging wars, voyages of discovery, building cathedrals, infamous court romances and even poets referred to their 'enterprysing amour'. Only with the industrial age did enterprise become commercialised, privatised and politicised.

Introduction

Summary - Enterprising pedagogy

Developing initiative, innovation, problem solving, managing, generating ideas, investigating, teamwork, and other enterprise skills require constant practise in a variety of circumstances.

Using these enterprising skills in the very way you access the curriculum provides opportunities for constant practise in a variety of contexts.

You have better opportunities to learn in an enterprising way – eg using initiative and problem solving – when the learning involves a mix of:

- ownership   >   student-management

- experiential   >   first-hand experience

- cooperation   >   with and from others

- review and reflection >   generalisation

Learning through this enterprising manner – using problem solving, cooperation, inquiry – leads to:

- Better curriculum outcomes

- Enterprise skills, almost as a by-product

Two for the price of one!

Four properties

Typically, enterprising ways to teach and to learn blend greater **degrees** of student responsibility, first-hand experience, cooperation and reflection. These four 'properties' provide greater opportunity for learning in an enterprising manner, eg to solve authentic problems and to make real decisions.

These four 'properties' are known by various names. This book prefers to use the terms in the left hand column below. There are subtle yet important differences which will be described later. (Sometimes terms are interchanged for brevity, eg 'responsibility' with 'ownership' in a diagram and the page labelling).

PROPERTIES	APPLICATION	SIMILAR THEMES
Responsible learning	Students take more responsibility for the learning activity	Ownership Student-managed Self-directed
First-hand learning	Students learn from first-hand experience which is based in or on reality – as opposed to purely second-hand knowledge	Experiential learning Learning by doing Authentic learning Active learning Applied learning Hands-on
Reflective learning	Students extract 'lessons' from the experience	Minds-on Reflective practice Thinking skills
Cooperative learning	Students learn with and from one another	Social learning Collaborative learning

Responsibility

Taking more responsibility for your own learning and actions is important for the development of enterprising skills and attitudes for five reasons. Firstly at a basic level, 'taking charge' is central to enterprising attitude. Secondly, managing our learning requires us to be enterprising – to use initiative, to be resourceful, organise, to solve problems and remain disciplined – inevitably deal with failure.

Besides helping students to become enterprising, being more responsible for our own learning teaches us how to become self-managed learners. And self-managed learning supports life-long learning.

Self-managed learning is a source of empowerment in an ever-changing society.

Why use the term 'responsibility' as opposed to 'ownership'?

The notion of **ownership** is often associated with the naïve view of making a wholesale shift in control. Importantly, responsibility is preferred because it implies that if the learner wants help, they have a responsibility to help themselves. There is a sense of 'mutual obligation'. Although terms such as 'student-directed' and 'self-managed' are more familiar to most, the term and concept of responsibility is the most appropriate.

At the simplest level the notion of responsibility in education means the student takes more responsibility for 'making the learning happen'. Traditionally, the teacher takes responsibility for this. Traditionally, the teacher takes responsibility for identifying needs, setting goals, finding and imparting the knowledge, supplying the resources, demonstrating application, designing the activity, regulating practice, monitoring process and remediating the performance and finally judging success. Almost by definition this is what a teacher does. The student is passive, dependent and doomed to sit-down work.

However in recent decades there has been a universal shift away from this absolutist mode of teaching to 'learning'. Now the learner is encouraged, even expected, to take more responsibility for at least 'some' of the aspects of the learning process. The teacher is no longer the 'big mind' filling up the 'small mind' but rather the teacher is to be the facilitator, ie 'guide on the side'.

Some would argue the swing has gone too far. Teaching became demonised and the swing to facilitation was too great. The all-important structures and processes of good teaching were left behind, leaving a model of facilitation, lacking in sophistication and discipline – and forever in peril of leaving the students to fend for themselves. Over-teaching is replaced with under-teaching!

Whatever the analysis, the bottom-line is that you cannot learn **for** someone else. You can only help!

It is maintained that teacher-responsibility and learner-responsibility are equally important – and the emphasis should be determined by need and situation, not tradition nor predilection. It is a matter of degree, and this can be represented on a continuum.

Paradoxically, the same structures and processes that allow the over-controlling teacher to 'let go' also provide those who under-facilitate with the tools to take on greater control. Assessment (understanding required outcomes, collecting and presenting and judging evidence) is a perfect example where the teacher and facilitator can comfortably maintain and productively share control with the student.

Creating learning without controlling is the measure of the enterprising teacher.

This book offers advice on where to place the emphasis between teacher responsibility and student responsibility. It also offers techniques to assist practice.

First-hand learning

Directly learning from first-hand experience is important to the development of enterprising skills and attitudes for two reasons. Firstly, it is 'place of practice'. And secondly, the closer this practice is to authentic conditions, the more students will understand and feel the nuance of the skills they are using and the attitudes they are adopting. For example, they will realise that making mistakes when using limited resources has serious consequences, not least the restriction of further opportunities. Similarly, negotiation has an emotional dimension.

First-hand and second-hand learning can also exist on a continuum. They are not in conflict. Again, it is a matter of where to place the emphasis. All learning comes from experience. It comes from either direct first-hand experience or second-hand knowledge from others. Learning second-hand involves learning from the experiences of other people over time – refined into knowledge, often packaged in books and ready to be taught by someone else. First-hand learning emphasises learning more directly from experience in authentic circumstances, where the learner is an active agent. Traditionally, the emphasis has been on learning second-hand. Today there is a strong swing away from this 'reproductive approach' to learning – but hopefully not too strong. It is important to understand that learning directly from experience in itself can be inefficient and sometimes ineffective.

Learning from experience is enhanced through a 'structured' process of Review, Reflection and Generalisation, where hands-on becomes minds-on.

Reflection

Reflection is important for the development of enterprising skills and attitudes for two reasons. Firstly, it is necessary for students to understand the enterprising experiences. Secondly, it promotes those critical thinking skills that underpin enterprise.

The common criticism is that too much time is spent on the action and not enough on the meaning. On the surface of it, reflection does not necessarily 'grab' the learner, or the teacher for that matter.

Yet it must, because without reflection learning from experience is left to chance.

Review asks what has actually happened during a first-hand learning experience, eg the events and circumstances. Reflection asks what does this mean, eg why did such and such happen? Generalisation asks does this apply to other situations. Can the ideas act as guides to future action? In a sense Generalisation asks the big question – So what? To create 'lessons for the future', Review, Reflection, Generalisation must be structured and take place regularly. For example, review should take place first and be a detailed and discrete activity, as it provides the 'meat' for reflection. Engaging techniques must be employed, such as video diaries, critical incident analysis (CIA) and peer reviews.

Cooperation

Learning in cooperative ways is important to the development of enterprising skills and attitudes for three reasons. Firstly, being enterprising, involves collaboration and through learning in cooperative ways, students come to appreciate this. Secondly, students practise the necessary skills and attitudes from cooperating. Thirdly, learning in cooperative ways allows students to practise other skills that are important to being enterprising.

Cooperative Learning can also be seen as a value-added model of learning. Research consistently concludes that cooperative learning leads to quality curriculum outcomes plus high-value skills such as communication, decision-making and teamwork. Critical thinking is constantly practised, because students must listen (carefully), discuss, explain, and understand other perspectives, and debate and resolve issues. Dealing with one another at close quarters requires them to use both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. The social dynamic creates an 'active' style of learning. Importantly, the approach is motivating, because students need and want to help one another to achieve common goals.

People naturally learn with and from one another. To ensure all students have the opportunity to contribute (to be engaged) a degree of **organisation is necessary**. For example, in some situations roles may be helpful but these roles should be built on skills audits. Likewise, where students may need to brainstorm, a think-first phase would encourage greater involvement and

increase the pool of ideas.
Without organisation, learning together runs the 'risk of pooling ignorance' –
and marginalising some individuals.

Cooperative learning with a big 'C' is built around the principle that 'structure'
leads to maximum engagement, which in turn leads to maximum output.

Notably, the concept of cooperative learning also involves a shift in
responsibility from the teacher to the collective.

As aside

In some schools students are so familiar with classic cooperative learning
techniques; they themselves will select the technique, which better suits their
task, eg: a Base Jigsaw for sharing information within the group (see page
190)

Re-Balance

It is argued that a number of key aspects of modern education are out of balance. For example:

- Teachers dominate learning activity at the expense of student responsibility

- Learning from second-hand knowledge dominates at the expense of learning from first-hand experience

- Consumption of existing knowledge dominates at the expense of making knowledge

- Learning in groups dominates at the expense of learning as groups

It is proposed that rebalancing these four areas will increase engagement. This rebalancing relies on adopting learning strategies that blend increased student responsibility, first-hand experience, reflection and cooperation in **balanced dosages**, without abandoning the practices we have allowed to dominate institutionalised education.

The properties of an enterprising approach are presented on a **spectrum**. There are degrees and combinations. It is not a matter of 'either or' but a question of emphasis that can be influenced by a number of factors such as
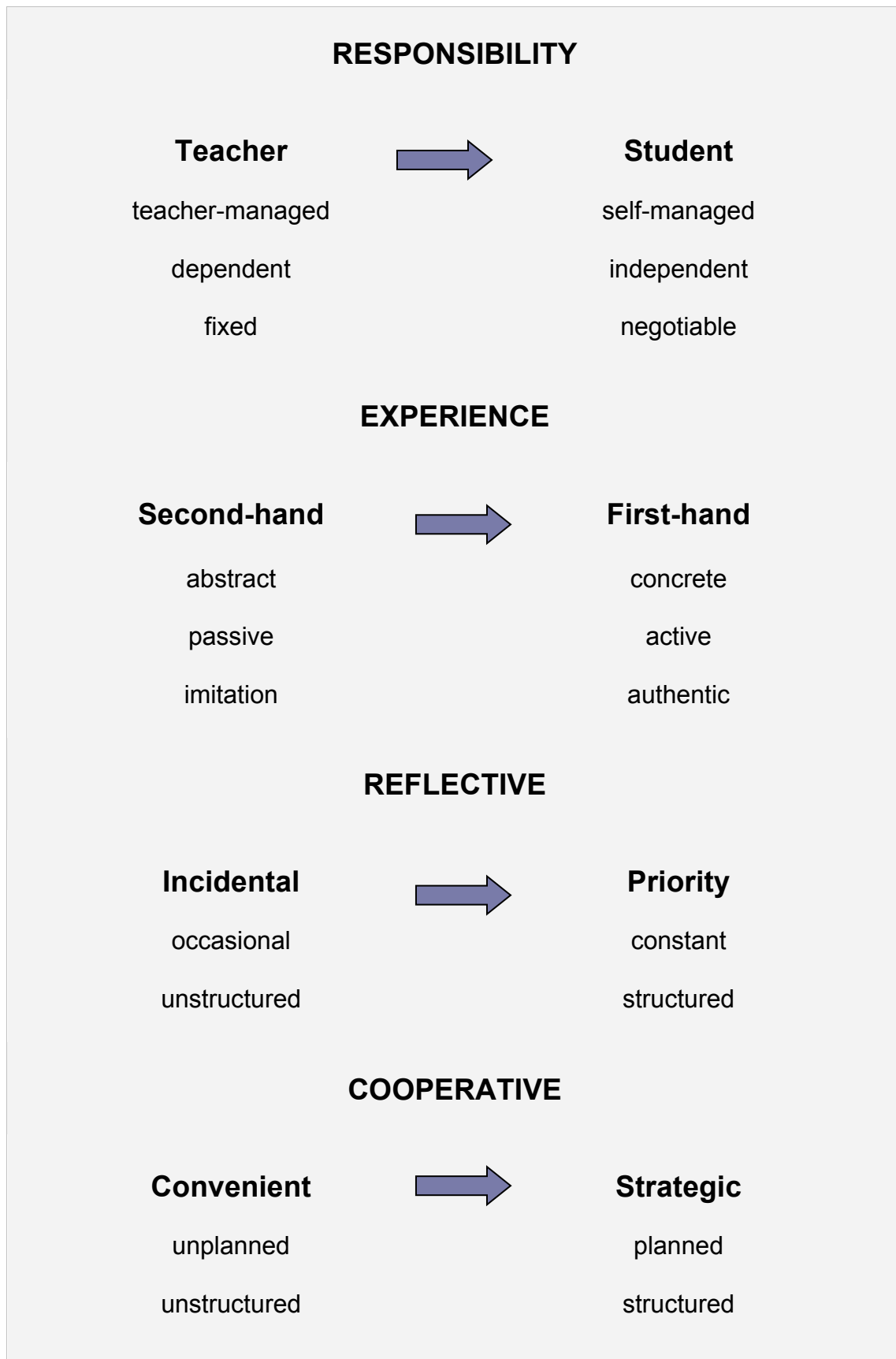
- where students are 'at'
- where they could be
- how fast they could get there
- diversity of need, eg cultural imperatives
- individual preferences

In many cases the properties are integrated and are *concurrent*. For example, peer assessment may bring into play all properties at once. Self-assessment, on the other hand, may only involve increased levels of responsibility and reflection.

An aside

People live in the Realm of Necessity where they must be enterprising to survive, as with the orphan in Mumbai, who uses a razor to cut each match into three to create three boxes – and to a lesser extent the street kids around 'sink estates'. Or people, like most of our students, live in the Realm of Sufficiency, where enterprise is not central to their lives, but perhaps even alien. Some can be inspired but most must be slowly immersed into the world of enterprise – and this is what an enterprising pedagogy offers.

Re-balancing the basics

RESPONSIBILITY

Teacher	→	**Student**
teacher-managed		self-managed
dependent		independent
fixed		negotiable

EXPERIENCE

Second-hand	→	**First-hand**
abstract		concrete
passive		active
imitation		authentic

REFLECTIVE

Incidental	→	**Priority**
occasional		constant
unstructured		structured

COOPERATIVE

Convenient	→	**Strategic**
unplanned		planned
unstructured		structured

THE SUPER QUESTIONS

For this learning activity

HOW DO I ENCOURAGE OR REQUIRE STUDENTS TO

1. To take more **responsibility** for their learning?

2. To learn more from **first-hand** experiences?

3. To reflect – turning experience into lessons for the future?

4. To learn with **and** from one another?

What exactly must I do?

What exactly mustn't I do?

Enterprise Detector

It helps use the metaphor of a detector scanning learning activity and programs – to gauge the degree to which the teaching is enterprising ie possesses student responsibility, first-hand experience, reflection and cooperation

Firstly, the detector would identify **who has the most responsibility** for managing the learning, teacher or students. Where could the students increase their management? Given the experience of the students, nature of the learning area and other factors is the teaching over-teaching or under-facilitating – and where should it be.

Secondly, the detector would identify the degree to which students are learning from **first-hand experience**. Is there an over-emphasis or premature focus on learning knowledge and conceptual understanding?

Thirdly, how much is the teaching helping students to understand their experience and how may it be used **in the future**? .

And fourthly, how much structure is in place to support students learning with **and** from one another in a strategic manner? Does the teacher believe that students are also teachers? And to what degree are students organised to work together? Are they left to their own devices or are techniques used to enhance team approaches?

The metaphor of a detector is only a *conceptual tool that reminds* us to consider ways of making the learning more engaging. For example:

1. It may only remind you to consider the value of the students devising a list of success criteria for a particular activity you are designing.

2. It may lead the students to gathering information from their family and neighbours, rather than just the library.

3. It may help you to identify areas where you should make a conscious effort to avoid interfering, such as student decision making.

4. It may prompt you to video the team meeting for members to analyse in your absence.

In many cases the properties are integrated and are *concurrent*. For example, peer assessment may bring into play all properties at once, whereas self-assessment may only involve increased levels of responsibility and reflection.

An aside

Allocating a role to all members of the team, gives each student some 'power' *and* accountability. This will reduce the number of 'chauffeurs and passengers' and increase the number students making more decisions and using interpersonal skills.