

Need-Supportive Teaching in Times of Upheaval: A Self-Determination Theoretical Exploration



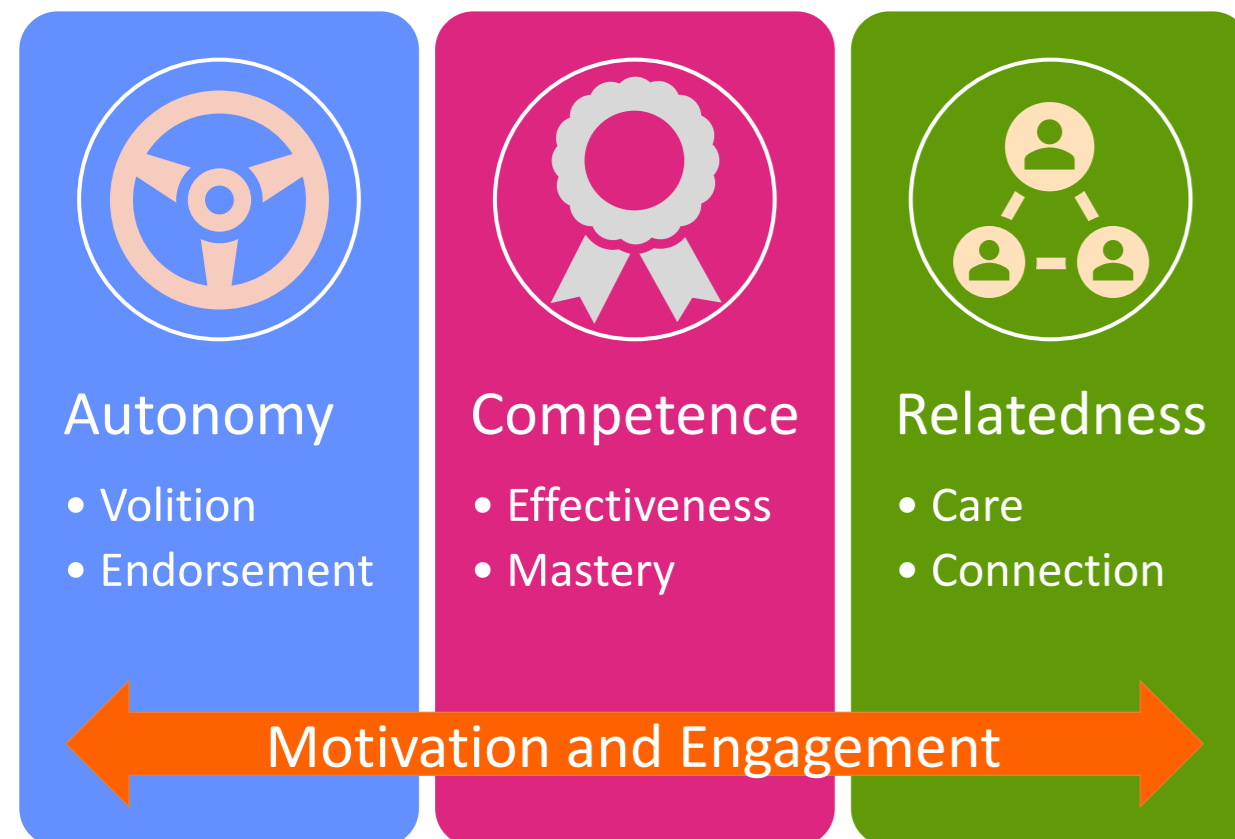
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Introduction

Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

- A motivational framework that highlights the importance of basic psychological need satisfaction in fostering autonomous motivation and optimizing functioning and well-being



Need Supportive Teaching

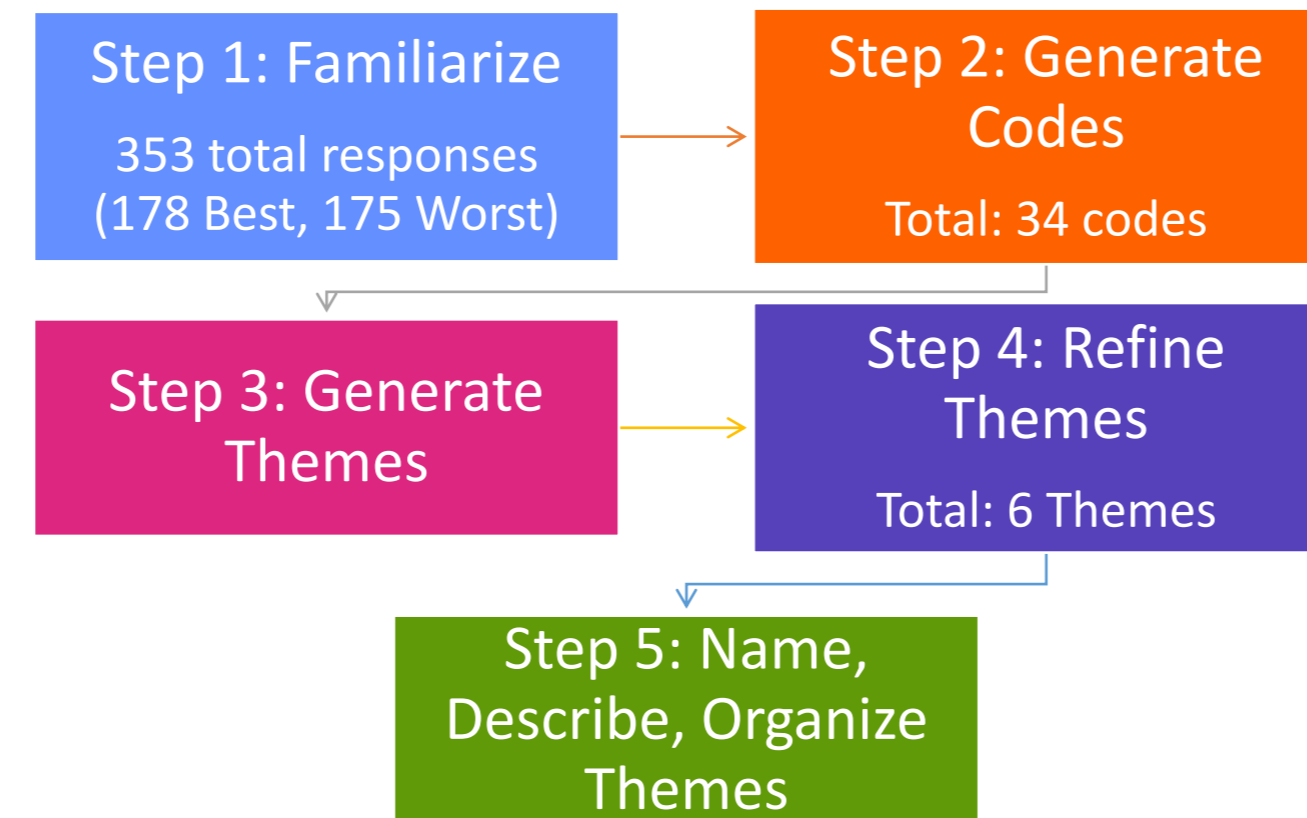
- Teaching practices and policies that support student autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhance student engagement and learning (e.g., Jang, Kim, & Reeve, 2012).

Teaching in Times of Upheaval

- When asking students about their best and worst course experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, are the features they identify consistent with an SDT framework?

Method: Open Thematic Analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)



Results

Student reports consistent with need-supportive practices

Coherent Structure + Predictability

- “Out of all my courses which were all online, it was the only one that was...designed for a virtual format”
- “TAs were also notably confused over what they were supposed to be doing, you could ask 2 TAs a question and get 2...different answers”

Assignments as Process-Focused

- “..assignments were challenging...”, “...intellectually stimulating...[, and] gave us a chance to really dig deeper into our own critiques of the work...”
- “...I felt more like being dragged by the course content instead of...absorbing it and understanding.”

Assignments as Outcome-Focused

- “...the course had practical value instead of just being about the (boring but required) topic,” “[t]he assignments were representative of ...real life...”
- “While there were assignments that were designed to be easier marks, they felt almost pointless to do.”

Through the Eyes of Another

- “The course syllabus, material, and interactions... were adaptable to the circumstances...time zones were accommodated for.”
- “Rather, what made this particular course well below average was...the professor’s willful ignorance towards the many difficulties experienced by students during the ongoing pandemic.”

Professor as Support

- “She made me feel confident in my knowledge and motivated me to continue pushing through to finals...super inspirational.”
- “[t]he instructor was extremely rude and condescending towards students who had questions” and “all that mattered was the grades”

Engagement + Community

- “It had a group assignment which was...fun to do because it allowed me to meet other people and feel like [there’s] actual people in my class...”
- “going to a 3-hr online lecture with minimal student participation/interaction was de-motivating enough...”

Discussion Questions

What policies, procedures, practices, assignments, etc. do you employ to support basic needs in your classes?

Why might your choices not work for everyone?

How do we do this and take care of ourselves as well?