Classroom Environment Can Strengthen or Weaken Student's Inner Motivational Resources

All students possess inherent psychological needs and internalized motivational resources that energize them to engage in classroom learning activities proactively as an expression of self and to interact effectively in the classroom environment (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002). When the classroom environment, including teacher's motivating style, is autonomy-supportive, it would strengthen the expression of students' inner motivation, thereby developing students' growth fostering behaviors to internalize values, goals, and requirements etc. of the school. On the other hand, a controlling classroom environment weakens the students' autonomous motivation, thereby producing in the student less autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation such as, introjected regulation and external regulation, amotivation and behavioral problems.

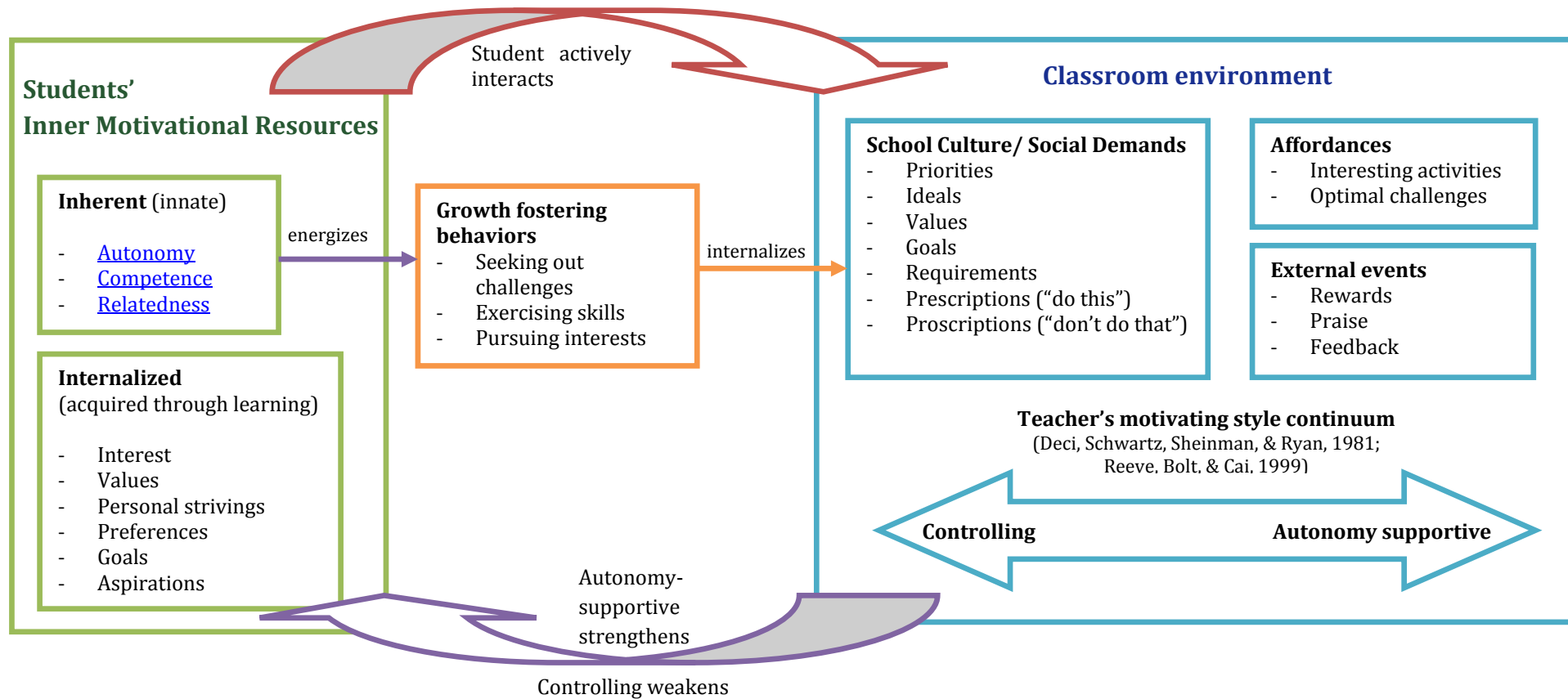*Fig. 1 Adapted from the dialectic framework within self-determination theory (Reeve, 2006).*

Key definitions:

Amotivation	Refers to a perception that no worthwhile reasons for pursuing an activity exist and hence a complete absence of self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2002).
Autonomy	"A sense of being choiceful in one's actions and experiencing oneself as the locus of initiation of those actions" (Connell & Ryan, 1987; deCharms, 1976; Deci & Ryan, 1985; White, 1959).
Autonomy-supportive	Environments that minimize the salience of external incentives and threats, avoid controlling language, and acknowledge the learners' frame of reference (Black & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Connell, 1989). Autonomy-supportive teaching involves behaviors that seek to promote students' tendency to engage in learning because they value this activity or find it interesting (Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007).
Competence	Experiencing one-self as capable and competent in controlling the environment of the activity. The need for competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Elliot & Thrash, 2002; Koestner & McClelland, 1990) is the need to experience satisfaction in exercising and extending one's capabilities. Naturally, people seem to seek out challenges that are optimal for their level of development (Harter, 1978; White, 1959).
Controlling	Events that pressure people toward specified outcomes, thereby denying them the experience of choice (Deci & Ryan, 1980). Presence of salient external controls or incentives.
External Regulation	Doing an activity because of external pressures or incentives (Ryan & Deci, 2002). E.g. "I study because my parents force me to."
Extrinsic motivation	Behaviors engaged as a means to an end and not for their own sake (Deci, 1975). Four types of extrinsic motivation are ordered along a self-determination continuum (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 1991). From lower to higher levels of self-determination, they are: external regulation, introjections, identification and integration.
Introjected regulation	Involves taking in a contingency or value or regulation but not accepting them as their own (e.g. planning to attend college to avoid feelings of guilt). Controlled motivation accompanied by feelings of inner compulsion, based on self-esteem being contingent upon approval and worth that had previously been applied by others (Niemiec et al., 2006; Roth, Assor, Niemiec, Ryan, & Deci, 2009).
Psychological needs	People's innate needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. For a high level of intrinsic motivation people must experience satisfaction of these needs(Deci & Ryan, 2000).
Relatedness	Feeling connected with significant others; experiencing authentic relatedness from others and to experience satisfaction in participation and involvement with the social world, e.g. with class mates during a PE lesson.

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