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# **FLEXIBLE STUDENT ALIGNMENT FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper describes the process of using student self-directed learning to develop Flexible Student Alignment (FSA) and enhance 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Development in Higher Education. An innovative approach and methodology for self-directed learning (RAPAL – a Reflective and Participative Approach to Learning) is used to help students to develop their self-understanding, creativity, flexibility and collaborative learning skills. Students develop individual metacognitive awareness and an understanding of their personal learning preferences and practices by reflecting on elements of their personal learning profiles and creating a digital artefact. The artefact can be an e-portfolio or individual learning environment developed using a series learning activities involving individual and team based presentations and role plays. The concept of flexible student alignment is discussed as a model and a method for assisting students in Vietnam to develop and use 21CL skills to adjust to the different demands of learning at university after high school graduation. Flexible student Alignment (Webster, 2009) is a product of the use of RAPAL for the creation of the digital learning environment. FSA can be seen as a development of Biggs' (2003) concept of constructive alignment. Flexible student alignment differs from constructive alignment in that it aims to facilitate alignment from the perspective of the student rather than the organisation or teacher. The flexibility developed is a product of the individual student's ability to adapt to the demands of different learning tasks, structures and environments. The use of the methodology and process for professional development and teacher training is also discussed. Student and staff feedback and comments on the process are reported.

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