Foreword

There is an undeniable effort to improve the quality of education, at all levels, and in all places. We understand that well-educated citizens have a better chance of making better choices for themselves and for the society they live in. A better trained graduate has a better opportunity of obtaining the job for which he or she made the effort of studying. And the worldwide competitive environment only emphasizes the need for a better educated population.

The ubiquitous presence of technology has, on one hand, led to the false expectation that technology by itself can improve the quality of education, and at the same time given a pulpit, mainly through social media, to anybody who has an opinion on how education can be improved. Since we all went through the educational system, we all feel we know how to fix it. Students are described as ‘digital’ (“they are born with a chip”), and we are told they should be taught differently. The exponential increase in information available on every subject triggers suggestions that its more important to know where to find information that to ‘know it’. The emphasis on increasing quality often leads to useless standardized tests, resulting in teaching for the test.

In the higher education arena, it’s been many years since administrators noticed that a PhD degree does not qualify you as quality instructor, and it is now common within universities to require some sort of training for new instructors. These courses or workshops usually concentrate on teaching techniques, where professors are encouraged to improve the quality of the delivery of their instruction. But higher education instructors, although most likely very knowledgeable about their subject area, usually have very little understanding about how we learn, and little or no time is dedicated to improve this understanding.

In fact, among the proposed solutions to the problems confronting education, we seldom see discussions on helping students understand how they learn, so they themselves can learn how to learn. To become lifelong learners, students must understand how they construct knowledge, and which learning strategies are effective. Few changes in education could have as much impact in quality of learning than having students learn how to learn.
As instructors, we are responsible to promote these metacognitive skills in our classes, and few instructors are prepared to do so. Once students learn how to learn, we just need to point them in the right direction and set an encouraging and exciting environment for the learning to take place. For this reason, this book is a welcome source of knowledge on metacognition and metacognitive skills. And since it is organized as a collection of papers, it better suits the inquisitive mind of the university professor looking for a research perspective on the topic as opposed to a textbook description. I’m sure that instructors who read this book will find a wealth of ideas on how to help students improve their learning and will be motivated to implement them.

But Metacognition and Successful Learning Strategies in Higher Education is not only appropriate for higher education instructors. Teacher and instructors from other levels of the educational system can also benefit from reading this book because the proposed strategies rely on teacher training and life-long learning.

We welcome this new addition to the Metacognition and Learning Strategies literature.

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