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COMMENTARY

Practice what we preach, think how we teach

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Introduction

Metacognition, or the knowledge and control of one's own cognitions, has served as an excellent tool and perspective when teaching students across disciplines and ages (Flavell, 1979). The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) has identified metacognition as one of the many approaches to improving our higher education standards that may be unfamiliar to us as industrial and organizational (I-O) psychologists. Although the metacognition literature can be cumbersome to grasp, one of its tenets focuses on the concept of self-regulated learning (SRL), which describes the larger processes that occur when students learn (Zimmerman, 2002). Self-regulated learning breaks these processes down into planning, monitoring, and self-reflection and adapting. Although students engage in these processes to become better learners, as educators, we must also engage in these processes to learn how to teach better.

Planning

It is no secret that planning is a must for teaching any course. Within the SRL framework, planning refers to future-oriented cognition about addressing a presented issue (Zimmerman, 2002). It is important as educators that we acknowledge, despite our personal expertise in our domain, that teaching requires forethought and planning. There is more to teaching than simple regurgitation of theories, frameworks, and seminal studies, to which some or many of us can attest. Planning from the teaching perspective includes planning the content of the course, how the content will be delivered, and how the content will be assessed.

Carefully considered learning outcomes help guide us through these planning decisions. For example, say you are teaching an Introduction to I-O Psychology course and have a learning outcome about the selection process. Before the class begins, you would plan what kind of selection procedures to include, how much time to spend on each, how to relay this information either via traditional "sage on the stage" lecturing or with a more engaging approach, involving planned discussion questions or activities to illustrate the content, or ideally both. Finally, once the content has been sufficiently covered, you will plan the forms of assessment, whether it be a multiple-choice exam, a reflection paper, a term paper, or discussion posts. Although each of these methods have their pros and cons, the important thing is to ensure that your choices are purposeful and congruent. If you spent 15 minutes lecturing about personality assessments in the selection process and a full 50-minute lecture on adverse impact considerations, your assessment methods should reflect these choices. The best way to ensure this is to engage in planning.

Although it is easy to think about planning on a massive scale, it is important to realize that we engage in it at multiple levels. On the microlevel, we engage in planning by reviewing our selected course materials and deciding what we want to focus on in lecture. On the mesolevel, we plan how we want to order content in our course to try to create a logical flow of content that facilitates

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learning. On the macrolevel, we decide what content to cover in our courses and the amount of time to assign to each topic.

Although planning ahead is ideal, we live in a very busy world. With the current reality in compensation systems, it can be tempting to meet minimum requirements when it comes to teaching responsibilities. You aren't expected to have a contingency plan for every possible scenario, as the COVID-19 pandemic may have taught us the hard way this past spring, but give your class the amount of thought you would give to your other important duties. At face value, it may seem like engaging in planning can take away precious resources that already feel nearly depleted from other important tasks such as meeting publication pressure, mentoring your graduate students, or being a good steward of your program. However, I believe in following the old adage: better to do it right than to do it twice. The more immediate cost of resources may make us uneasy, but it's better to have your course properly planned than to have to rely on fixing it midsemester, potentially taking you away from one of your million other obligations.

Monitoring

Assuming that we have made an earnest effort to plan our course, now comes the fun part. We start teaching the class according to our master plan and, hopefully, everything goes swimmingly. Because we are not all-knowing, however, it is time for monitoring to take center stage. Monitoring in SRL refers to a process that involves evaluating performance during a task. There are several levels from which one could approach monitoring. At the microlevel, you can look out into the sea of faces while lecturing to see if you notice more glazed looks than usual. At the mesolevel, you may think about how students have been interacting with your content across a unit or set of chapters. If you noticed that students seemed jazzed about organizational climate but barely seem conscious during your job analysis section, take note of that. From a macro standpoint, maybe you notice that one semester, the students in the course that you taught received significantly lower grades than usual. All of these observations are important ways by which we can engage in monitoring from a teaching perspective.

Although these tips may seem second-nature in smaller, more manageable classes, from the perspective of teaching classes with hundreds of students, they can seem all but unobtainable. While engaging in effective monitoring can occur at several levels, it is important to use all of the tools that are available to us. For example, when you want to gauge student understanding in a massive auditorium, consider using anonymous response systems like clickers. Free websites (e.g., strawpoll.me) can provide quick and easy ways for you to gauge holistic engagement by asking questions ranging from a general check-in—for example, How do we feel about today's material so far? (1) I'm lost, (3) I think I'm following along, (5) I'm following along)—or by asking a quick retention question about something you said three times in the lecture. This not only provides an easy mechanism for feedback monitoring for you but also may help break up a long lecture and provide students with an opportunity to do something other than listening. From a more meso–macro level, it has become more and more common to release midsemester surveys where you ask students to honestly report how they feel about the class thus far. These surveys are excellent tools for continuing your monitoring process throughout the semester. I challenge you to incorporate these surveys in all of the courses that you teach. If you already do, I challenge you to think about why you collect this information at the midsemester point. Perhaps there are two exams in the semester, so the survey fits right after the first major assessment in the course? Would you benefit from conducting this survey more often in the semester?

The important thing about monitoring our teaching process is making sure we keep track of our performance and progress. This doesn't mean we need to create memory palaces in order to log all of our interactions over a semester. Instead, use tools and be realistic with yourself. If

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you teach a course that meets three times a week and you have an hour lunch break, take 5 minutes to jot down any notable things that occurred during the lecture, whether it was less than ideal participation or a riveting discussion that you weren't expecting.

Self-reflection and adapting

You've reached a point in the semester where you have planned out the course to the best of your ability, and you have been jotting down observations about the course throughout. At this point, we now want to take the information we have gathered and process it. The self-reflection and adapting stage of SRL is described as occurring after the task has been completed and involves a full evaluation that focuses on whether changes are needed for the future. All of the notes you have taken along with your memories and impressions of your teaching now come to play. The self-reflection process focuses primarily on assessing whether you did what you meant to accomplish. Returning to planning effective learning outcomes for your course, this can simply mean asking yourself whether you have met all of your intended learning outcomes. Assuming that you have built your course congruently with these learning outcomes, this reflection should equate to performance in your course. Students who perform well in your course should then have the knowledge, skills, and abilities you intended to impart to them. Unfortunately, more often than not, we find ourselves noticing inconsistencies, whether it be the impression that your students are receiving the correct information but the results of the assessment not reflecting that or a concern that students are not achieving what is intended despite high scores in the course.

The monitoring process provides you with the necessary information to diagnose what may be causing some of these inconsistencies in your classes. After reviewing the information, whether it be once the semester has ended or ideally after one of the feedback surveys you administered to your class during the semester, you can begin to consider possible adaptations. These adaptations can range from large overhauls to the administration of the course material to minor functional changes such as posting presentation materials before the class begins. Although it may be tempting, it is important to note that part of the self-reflection and adaptation process is the process of making judgments about whether the feedback and information you receive warrants taking action. For example, you may receive an overwhelming number of student responses asking for presentation materials to be posted before the lecture, presumably, so that students can familiarize themselves with the material before lecture. In theory, this seems like a reasonable request; however, if your presentation materials have time-sensitive information that requires the context of the lecture, you may want to reconsider this suggestion. Although you may not be able to post the presentation materials before class, you should not ignore these requests altogether.

I encourage you to probe into these sentiments with your class, whether it be through a follow-up survey for anonymity's sake or with a candid discussion during the next class meeting. You may find an underlying issue with the speed with which you cover your material, or you may find that you rely too heavily on lecture to convey the content. Some possible adaptations could include allowing for more time on specific topics that seem to require further explanation, creating a change in the scope of the course content if possible, or changing the format through which you deliver the material by investigating other mediums to learn the concept. Resources such as those that are presented on the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology's (2016). Teaching Tools webpage may inspire you to take a new approach. Much like the monitoring process, adaptations are made at differing levels.

At the microlevel, a simple adaptation could be acknowledging a strong discussion on a subject and allowing some time during the next class to address the key points. A mesolevel adaptation could be adjusting the number of questions on an exam based on the amount of time that

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your class spent on a topic, contrary to your initial plan. Finally, a macrolevel adaptation can look like a reconfiguration of the course by changing the subject order or even removing content that does not seem to accomplish its purpose and replacing it with more appropriate content. At this point, your adaptations should continue into planning for future semesters.

Concluding statement

As we look to improve the way we introduce the field of I-O psychology to potential new future colleagues, it is important that we approach this responsibility with the level of attention and passion that we commit to our own research interests. The changes that are suggested by Kath et al. (2021) are important, feasible steps in improving the way we teach undergraduates, but let us not forget that although we hope to improve the learning of our students, we ourselves are learning to teach them more effectively as well. Using the principles of SRL, we are better equipped for this scholastic journey.

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