

EDITORIAL

STEPWISE PLAN TO FOSTER SELF-AWARENESS AMONG THE STUDENTS

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In the context of the constructivist paradigm of learning, self-awareness about one's beliefs of ontology and epistemology, learning strategies, and their effectiveness is an important element fostering the skills of life-long self-regulatory learning essential for a physician to render better patient care¹.

Literature indicates that self-regulated learning (SRL) is a trait that can be taught and learned. Since the very nature of the medical profession demands dynamism in knowledge, skill, and attitude, it is a “kind of must” to incorporate a structured plan to train the learners in the skills of self-awareness, which will ultimately result in SRL.

The proposed plan in the light of an evidence-based model is presented². Though this model addresses the students, the author feels that the effective implementation requires simultaneous training of the faculty in the skills of self-awareness as well.

Planning:

1. Students will be sensitized to the concept of self-awareness and regulation through a seminar and provided with some written material about the topic.
2. Students will be asked to consult the curriculum document of a particular module and write down the targets they set out for themselves in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitude.
3. A trained tutor will meet the student to discuss the targets set by them to clarify any ambiguity and shape them into specific, measurable, achievable, realistic,

and time-bound ones.

4. These goals will act as guiding principles for the student's subsequent learning activities and create the motivational force required to pursue the desired learning³.

Learning:

Incorporating the teaching of Metacognitive skills in each learning activity will be ensured. The Department of Medical Education (DME) will train the faculty in this context. However, the teacher must understand the importance of his and his students' beliefs about self and variability in their learning styles to make the metacognitive skills effective.

The students will be asked to keep a record of their learning activities in the form of a portfolio. (Each student will be allowed to attend a half-day workshop on portfolio). A designated tutor will be available if any support in this connection is needed.

Feedback and Assessment:

The students will be made aware of the importance of reflection in all phases of their learning in a documented form. This will be self-feedback, which will make them aware of their strengths and weaknesses and will enable them to alter their learning strategies and planning. However, the teacher must be aware of the limitations of self-

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feedback by the students. The criteria generated by them to monitor their attainment of learning may not be uniform and/or appropriate, affecting their direction and level of effort.

In order to avoid any misconceptions and unrealistic monitoring of their own learning, external feedback from the teacher will also be provided formatively in a structured manner.

Adjustment:

In a fortnightly session, the student will be asked to triangulate both the self and teacher's feedback and indicate any change in his goal-setting and learning strategies.

This adjustment is a necessary result of this model of planning for fostering self-awareness. However, effective self-regulation is a closely linked complex skill strongly influenced by self-efficacy, motivation, and attribution. This is why attribution re-training in the form of workshops and informal teaching will be incorporated in the learning strategies. Otherwise, potentially corrective external feedback may result in lowering self-efficacy if perceived as an indicator of low ability or teacher bias.

Summary:

- Stepwise plans to foster self-awareness in the students require simultaneous capacity building in both the faculty and the students.
- If the students design their learning goals and targets to be achieved themselves, they will be self-aware and regulate their learning effectively.
- The awareness of effective learning requires the

development of metacognitive skills to be practiced in all phases of learning, which a teacher can incorporate into his teaching.

- The adjustment in the planning can be effective if both self and teacher feedback inform it.
- The plan has to consider the importance of other cognitive areas, such as belief about knowledge and self, motivation, self-efficacy, and students' attribution to their performance outcomes, in order to effectively foster self-regulation of learning.

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