

Preface

In today's schools, most students are taught how to summarize, take notes, and read for understanding, though mostly without specifically being taught how to figure out by themselves when and why these learning techniques can be most effective. Without obtaining a thorough understanding of the reasons behind the effectiveness of learning techniques, in that general knowledge of the learning process is being developed, learning can be hindered and become unnecessarily difficult, particularly, where new and unfamiliar learning tasks are concerned. This makes the development of general knowledge of the learning process essential for lifelong learning.

In this book, the educational theory of metacognitive learning is presented. The educational theory of metacognitive learning finds its basis in educational and psychological research on metacognitive knowledge from a metacognition research perspective and three research studies. These three research studies have provided us with a better understanding of what adolescent students' general knowledge of the learning process encompasses. Accordingly, it became possible to develop instructional implications with regard to students' development of general knowledge of the learning process, which is needed to become able to learn more effectively. Throughout this book, the theory of metacognitive learning and its instructional implications are exemplified by using the descriptions, comments, and explanations of the students that participated in the three research studies.

This book also includes educational material in that the findings of the three research studies were translated into practical tools that can be used to learn how to decide on the most effective learning technique(s) for a variety of learning tasks. Besides the educational materials, instructional suggestions are presented that place students' development of general knowledge of the learning process at the center of learning how to learn effectively. These instructional suggestions and the educational materials can be applied by educators of all teaching disciplines.

Although this book has been written for anyone interested in learning to advance his or her learning, it is especially written for educational researchers and educational psychologists who are interested in the subjects of metacognition, learning, and instruction. In line with the research studies described in this book, the focus is on students in the upper level of secondary education, although it can also be useful

for students in secondary, higher, and adult education. Furthermore, the educational theory of metacognitive learning and its instructional implications that are presented in this book can also be of interest to teacher educators and student teachers in secondary and higher education.

This book would not have come into existence without the wealth of research that is available and that I have had the pleasure to read for some decades now. However, the research references that are mentioned in this book merely provide an outline in terms of focusing on original thoughts that form the basis of the educational theory of metacognitive learning and its implications and suggestions. This has been done in the hope that such an outline can serve as a starting point for research studies from different perspectives. Also, this book would not have been written if students had not participated in the three research studies that are described in this book and that underlie the educational theory of metacognitive learning. For this, I thank their teachers, mentors, school counselors, and directors for reacting to a call for research participation. Finally, this book is dedicated to Gerard and Lindsey, for encouraging me to write this book and for listening to my attempts in describing metacognitive learning, again and again, and thereby helping me to pursue my ideas.

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Metacognitive Learning

Advancing Learning by Developing General Knowledge
of the Learning Process

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