



**This strategy guide may be used by educators to improve metacognition in their classrooms. It includes: a definition of metacognition, a brief discussion of its importance for learners and 7 strategies to help learners better understand the way they learn.**

### **Thinking about one's thinking**

Metacognition is an awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes. The term metacognition literally means cognition about cognition, or more informally, thinking about thinking. For example, a person is engaging in metacognition if he notices that he is having more trouble learning A than B or if it strikes him that he should double-check C before accepting it as fact. Metacognition is a general term encompassing the study of memory-monitoring and self-regulation, meta-reasoning, consciousness/awareness and auto-consciousness/self-awareness. In practice these capacities are used to regulate one's own cognition, to maximize one's potential to think, learn and the evaluation of proper ethical/moral rules.

### **The importance of metacognition**

Metacognition plays a critical role in successful learning. It is the foundation upon which learners become independent thinkers and reflectors. It consists of two basic processes occurring simultaneously: monitoring your progress as you learn, and making changes and adapting your strategies if you perceive you are not doing so well. Metacognition builds schema (background knowledge), keeps learners engaged - thus reducing disciplinary issues - and increases learners' agency and self efficacy. It encourages self-reflection, self-responsibility, initiative, as well as goal setting and time management - essential skills that equip learners to take charge of their own learning.

# 7 STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU FOSTER METACOGNITION IN THE CLASSROOM

## **1. Make metacognition an explicit goal**

It is vital that we make learners aware of themselves as learners in explicit and concerted ways. We must regularly ask, not only 'what are you learning?' but 'how are you learning?'

## **2. Use thinking words in your classroom language**

Examine, evaluate, persuade, identify, analyse, debate, elaborate, summarise, etc.

## **3. Talking to the text (thinking out loud)**

Teach learners how to think aloud and report their thoughts while performing a difficult task. A knowledgeable partner can then point out errors in thinking or the individual can use this approach for increased self-awareness during learning.

## **4. Reflection on progress and confusion**

Emphasise the importance of personal reflection during and after learning experiences. Encourage learners to critically analyse their own assumptions and how this may have influenced their learning.

## **5. Encourage self-questioning**

Foster independent learning by asking learners to generate their own questions and answer them to enhance comprehension.

## **6. Academic discourse    small group discussion and socratic seminars**

Socratic seminars are formal discussions, based on a text, in which the teacher asks open-ended questions. Within the context of the discussion, learners listen closely to the comments of others,

thinking critically for themselves, and articulate their own thoughts and their responses to the thoughts of others.

## **7. Solve problems with a partner or a team**

Cooperative problem solving can enhance metacognitive strategies by discussing possible approaches with a partner/team members and learning from each other.

### **Cooperative Problem Solving: *Think - Pair - Share***

**Think - Pair - Share** is a collaborative learning strategy in which learners work together to solve a problem or answer a question about an assigned reading.

In terms of the **Think-Pair-Share** strategy, a problem is posed, students have time to **think about it individually**, and then they **work in pairs** to solve the problem and **share their ideas** with the class.

This strategy promotes classroom participation by encouraging a high degree of learner response, rather than using a basic recitation method in which a teacher poses a question and one student offers a response. Additionally, this strategy provides an opportunity for all students to share their thinking with at least one other student which, in turn, increases their sense of involvement in classroom learning.

The following resource draws on a presentation given by Lucy Hilarides and Elizabeth Colen, members of Teach With Africa, at the Axis Education Summit in July 2016.

To access their presentation, click [here](#).