Evidence-based Improvement for Learning and Teaching Psychology

Guest Editors: Joerg Zumbach & Birgit Spinath

In September 2018, there was a revival of the European Psychology Learning and Teaching (EUROPLAT) conference series that took place in Salzburg, Austria. With more than 50 paper and poster presentations from all over the world, the conference was a successful sequel to EUROPLAT but also a new beginning. As Birgit Spinath had announced in *PLAT 17*(2), one major aim of the conference was the founding of a new society dedicated to the teaching and learning of psychology, that is the European Society for Psychology Learning and Teaching (ESPLAT). This international society is the successor of the network EUROPLAT, that had been initiated by Annie Trapp in 2007 and had hosted a series of conferences all over Europe (for the history of EUROPLAT see the ESPLAT website, www.esplat.org). Also on the ESPLAT website, you find the announcement of the first ESPLAT conference, that will be held in Utrecht, The Netherlands, in 2019, September 25th-27th. Make sure to be there!

This special issue is at this point the last from a EUROPLAT conference and will be followed by future ESPLAT conference special issues. With the conference focus on evidence-based improvement for learning and teaching Psychology, the call for submissions for this special issue was not limited to a special field or area within Psychology learning and teaching, but put emphasis on the importance of evidence-based teaching that is deeply grounded in research. The relevance of evidence-based teaching and, thus, the improvement of academic practice is increasingly recognized within Higher Education. The combination of theoretical backings with empirical data is a solid base in order to improve the field and is known under the label of scholarship of teaching and learning. With its solid anchoring in its empirical tradition, Psychology is able to provide sound answers to many questions, not only limited to its own teaching and learning. The theme of this special issue is the same as of the EUROPLAT 2018 conference "Evidence-based Improvement for Learning and Teaching Psychology". Following the tradition of the PLAT journal, all submitted papers had to undergo the rigorous double-blind peer review process separately from the conference review process.

The Current Issue

The currents issue contains three articles and one report. Moreover, this issue contains a book review and abstracts of the current issues of Abstracts of recent articles published in *Psychology Teaching Review* (PTR24(1)), *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (SoTL), and *Teaching of Psychology* (ToP45(3)).

In their research article, Jonathan Barenberg, Ute-Regina Roeder and Stephan Dutke investigated the study behavior of Psychology students depending on the organization of the course (mainly the organization of examinations), and metacognition. Authors found that the temporal distribution of learning activities within lecture-like course in Educational Psychology depended on these factors: When there were multiple assignments during the course, students accessed course-related online resources more frequently compared with students in a course with only one examination at the end of the term. Students with accurate metacognitive monitoring also accessed learning resources more continuously than students with less accurate metacognitive monitoring.

The second research article by Daniela Feistauer and Tobias Richter is dedicated to the validity of student evaluations of teaching (SET). Within their cross-classified, multilevel model approach, they identified biasing factors in SET within the domain of Psychology indicating that students' prior knowledge and clarity about teaching contents as well as prior subject interest wee biasing variables. These bias factors were stronger for lectures than for seminars although overall relatively small. Authors suggest that SET's validity might benefit from students' realistic expectations about the nature of Psychology as an academic discipline.

The contribution by Ines Deibl, Jörg Zumbach, Viola Geiger and Christine Neuner suggests an additional instrument for assessing and improving the quality of Psychology teaching and learning. Based on the construct of Constructive Alignment (CA), they present a questionnaire capturing the three dimensions of CA. Results reveal that the instrument might be a supplement for traditional SET, but still needs further development.

Christine Blech and Robert Gaschler report about a study, in which students' concepts of learning and forgetting curves were analyzed. Students were required to draw hypothetical learning and forgetting curves into a pre-given coordinate system with fixed starting and end points. Results reveal that students deviated from optimal solutions and also showed poor consistency of their knowledge. Authors point out implications of their analyses to development of future learning aids such as online feedback.

The book review is provided by Naveen Kashyap on the book authored by Lee Hadlington: *Cybercognition: Brain, Behaviour and the Digital World*. Please also pay attention to the abstracts from *Psychology Teaching Review*, *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, and *Teaching of Psychology* that you will also find in this issue.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of PLAT!

Jörg Zumbach and Birgit Spinath

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