

## **Learning and teaching: The rear view mirror, and the road ahead**

*D.A. Saint, School of Medical Sciences, University of Adelaide, SA 5005, Australia.*

There are rapid, sometimes bewildering, changes occurring in Higher Education; in the regulatory environment, the amount and distribution of funding, societal (and student) attitudes, and in our increasing “evidence based” approaches to teaching. Although much of this latter appears novel, I contend that the basic psychology of how students learn has not changed substantially for centuries- Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC) was familiar with learning styles; he is quoted as saying- “For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.”. What has changed, starting mid 20th century, is the development of more widespread research on how our teaching interacts with students’ learning, for example evidenced by Bloom’s taxonomy as early as the mid 1950s (Bloom *et al.*, 1956). This rapid increase in pedagogical research has led to an increased pressure on academics to adopt the latest techniques and approaches in their teaching, driven by pressures for increased efficiency but also by the changing demographics and expectations of our students. I contend that “good” teachers have always had this approach, the change is that now everyone is expected to adopt these approaches. Interacting with this are the rapid changes in technology- the advent of e-learning, MOOCs, and distance education means that teachers are no longer repositories of knowledge- since content is now free and widely available – and so their role is changing to one of guiding and mentoring, rather than delivering content. This is a change for the better, but one that can be daunting. If we consider some of the ways that teaching has changed, we can foresee changes likely to occur in the coming years; some for the better, some presenting perhaps unwelcome challenges to current practice and ideas.

Bloom B, Engelhart M, Furst E, Hill W, Krathwohl D. (1956) Taxonomy of educational objectives: Handbook I: Cognitive domain." New York: David McKay.