APPLYING COGNITIVE SCIENCE TO EDUCATION

Thinking and Learning in Scientific and Other Complex Domains

FREDERICK REIF
## Contents

Preface  xiii

I BASIC ISSUES 1

1 Performance, Learning, and Teaching  3
   1.1 Thinking about thinking  3
   1.2 Basic issues  4
   1.3 Importance of these issues  5
   1.4 Structure of the book  8

2 Intellectual Performance  11
   2.1 Description of performance  11
   2.2 Performance in complex domains  13
   2.3 Characteristics of good performance  15
   2.4 Analysis of performance  18
   2.5 Analysis of good performance  21
   2.6 Comparisons and overview  23
   2.7 Summary  26

II GOOD PERFORMANCE  27

II-A Usability  29

3 Important Kinds of Knowledge  31
   3.1 Declarative and procedural knowledge  32
   3.2 Comparative advantages and disadvantages  33
   3.3 Uses of declarative and procedural knowledge  34
   3.4 Condition-dependent knowledge  37
   3.5 Educational implications  38
   3.6 Summary  41
4 Specifying and Interpreting Concepts 43
4.1 Knowledge and concepts 44
4.2 Types of concepts 47
4.3 Kinds of concept specifications 51
4.4 Scientific importance of concept specifications 54
4.5 Educational implications 57
4.6 Summary 59

5 Interpreting Scientific Concepts 61
5.1 Students’ interpretation of the concept acceleration 62
5.2 Motion and the concept of acceleration 66
5.3 Specification of acceleration 69
5.4 Causes of interpretation deficiencies 71
5.5 Requirements for usable concept knowledge 77
5.6 Educational implications 80
5.7 Summary 83

6 Managing Memory 85
6.1 Properties of human memory 86
6.2 Basic memory processes 88
6.3 Practical memory management 94
6.4 Educational implications 98
6.5 Summary 100

II-B Effectiveness 101

7 Methods and Inferences 103
7.1 Methods and procedures 104
7.2 Specification of procedures 106
7.3 Making inferences 109
7.4 Educational implications 113
7.5 Summary 116

8 Describing Knowledge 119
8.1 Descriptions and their referents 120
8.2 Alternative descriptions 122
8.3 Characteristics of different descriptions 126
8.4 Complementary use of different descriptions 129
8.5 Educational implications 132
8.6 Summary 136

9 Organizing Knowledge 137
9.1 Importance of knowledge organization 138
9.2 Some forms of knowledge organization 139
9.3 Dealing with large amounts of knowledge 142
II-D Efficiency 255

14 Efficiency and Compiled Knowledge 257
   14.1 Importance of efficiency 258
   14.2 Compiling knowledge 260
   14.3 Routine performance 261
   14.4 Automatic performance 263
   14.5 Benefits and dangers of efficient performance 266
   14.6 Educational implications 267
   14.7 Summary 269

II-E Reliability 271

15 Quality Assurance 273
   15.1 Ensuring good quality 274
   15.2 Preventing defects 276
   15.3 Assessing performance 278
   15.4 Improving performance 280
   15.5 Metacognition 281
   15.6 Educational implications 282
   15.7 Summary 284
   15.8 Good performance and the instructional challenge 285

III PRIOR KNOWLEDGE 287

16 Unfamiliar Knowledge Domains 289
   16.1 Prior knowledge and new learning 290
   16.2 Everyday and scientific domains 293
   16.3 Contrasting scientific and everyday cognitions 297
   16.4 Scientists’ and students’ conceptions of science 302
   16.5 Educational implications 306
   16.6 Summary 308

17 Naive Scientific Knowledge 311
   17.1 Characteristics of naive scientific knowledge 312
   17.2 Students’ prior knowledge about science 314
   17.3 Naive conceptions about motion 316
   17.4 Naive notions about the causes of motion 319
   17.5 Force as a cause of motion 322
   17.6 Educational implications 327
   17.7 Summary 332