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Implications of the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Affective Domain in Remediation

by Ann Laing Dilly

This paper is divided into two sections. The first is a description of the Affective Domain. The second is a discussion concerning implications and application of this domain in teaching handicapped readers.

Description:

Affective objectives emphasize feeling tones, and degrees of acceptance and rejection in an individual. They are commonly termed interest, attitude, and motivation. The objectives vary from simple awareness to complex qualities of character.

That this domain has been separated from the cognitive and psychomotor domains indicates a

desire on the part of the researchers to analyze it, not to acknowledge its actual separateness in function from all other aspects of the individual. However, teachers and other writers of educational objectives do make distinctions between thinking and feeling, and evidence exists that there is little correlation between aptitudes and interests. Thus an objective can readily be placed in one of the three major domains but is not entirely free of components of the others. Each objective in one domain has a counterpart in the other and each domain is used as a means to the other, as illustrated in Table 1.

TABLE 1
THE TAXONOMY CATEGORIES OF THE TWO
DOMAINS

COGNITIVE

1. The affective continuum begins with the student's merely **receiving** (1.0) stimuli and passively attending to it. It extends through his more actively attending to it,
2. his **responding** (2.0) to stimuli on request, willingly responding to these stimuli, and taking satisfaction in this responding,
3. his **valuing** (3.0) the phenomenon or activity so that he voluntarily responds and seeks out ways to respond,
4. his **conceptualization** (4.1) of each value responded to,
5. his **organization** (4.2) of these values into systems and finally organizing the value complex into a single whole, a **characterization** (5.0) of the individual.

AFFECTIVE

1. The cognitive continuum begins with the student's recall and recognition of **knowledge**, (1.0)
2. it extends through his **comprehension** (2.0) of the knowledge,
3. his skill in **application** (3.0) of the knowledge that he comprehends,
4. his skill in **analysis** (4.0) of situations involving this knowledge, his skill in **synthesis** (5.0) of this knowledge into new organizations,
5. his skill in **evaluation** (6.0) in that area of knowledge to judge the value of material and methods for given purposes.

The Taxonomy

Handbook II proposes a continuum in the affective domain based on the process of internalization. This continuum assumes that learning occurs more readily and more easily at the lower end—"Receiving"—that these behaviors are more simple and concrete. Thus an individual passes from being aware of phenomenon, to being able to perceive it, to attend to it, to respond to it with a positive feeling, to go out of his way to respond. Next he conceptualizes his values and organizes them and finally arrives at a complex but consistent outlook on life. It is by internalizing or making values successively part of himself that the individual grows in affective behavior along the continuum.

The writers found the stages along the continuum consistent with empirical studies on the development of conscience. Thus, they suggest that growth from stage to stage is developmental, that with each new behavior or content to be learned the individual may have to begin at a lower level.

Implications

The implications of this classification of and approach to affective objectives for teaching of remedial readers are awesome. Little more is expected of severely disabled readers than 2.1—"Acquiescence in Responding." Stated objectives are quite different than the expectations that are in effect in the classroom. It would appear that too frequently, the most expected of disabled learners is obeying of rules, doing what they are told to do, and completing their work. Perhaps one problem is the inability of teachers to dis-

tinguish between cognitive and affective achievements. If a child has trouble functioning even at the 1.0 cognitive level: knowledge-recall, the inherent assumption seems to be that he cannot be expected to function affectively at, for example, the 3.0 level: Valuing.

The writers of the Taxonomy believe the final level 5.0: Characterization to be a product of maturity, adjustment, self-actualization, and experience and beyond the scope of the public school system. This writer believes the assumption that most remedial readers are taught to behave at least at the 2.1 affective level, is safe. Thus the area for real research and important application in the affective domain lies between the 2.1 and 5.0 levels.

The 2.0 Level:

Responding, requires learning by doing and more internalization than 1.0: Receiving, or merely attending in degrees to phenomenon. The two categories that need development are 2.2: Willingness to Respond, and 2.3: Satisfaction in Response. The emphasis in "Willingness" is that the behavior occurs without prompting, that it is from personal choice. These goals are often self-reinforcing as long as the child receives praise and reward when the behavior is exhibited. It would also follow that pertinent cognitive questioning could bring about the affective willingness. For example, in a situation calling for an outside authority, the child should be urged to think of all possible ways he might find the answer. When he has listed them, he should be urged to consider the next step in finding the answer: go-

ing to get a reference book, going to ask another teacher, eg. When he does, his behavior should be lavishly rewarded. If all subsequent situations are handled this way, it is very likely that willingness will become internalized and reappear spontaneously. Too often it is assumed that a disabled reader will not be particularly willing to get a book since he can't read it. This problem can be overcome if there are materials available at his level and if the classroom atmosphere is such that he can feel comfortable in bringing material to it that can be read to him.

Through the development of increased willingness to respond, comes some natural development of the next affective level: Satisfaction in Response. This category includes such affective terms as "pleasure" and "enjoyment". How many remedial teachers are actively concerned with the degree of pleasure a child receives from reading? Most disabled learners have—through cognitive frustration—lost much of their zest, their interest in reading. Thus teachers are often content if the child will read at all and not put down or ignore their reading in disgust. This objective is acquiescence, not satisfaction.

One problem is certainly the degree of difficulty of materials. But perhaps an even larger one is that teachers tend to impose their own values on children instead of attempting to foster the child's. For example, a twelfth grade girl, reading at the fifth grade level might not enjoy *Teen-Age Tales*, but might develop readily in satisfaction of response if the remediation material is her letter to her boyfriend.

The 3.0 Level:

Valuing, is an extremely complicated and difficult one for teachers to handle. Not only are some values—beliefs, attitudes—a product of the individual's own assessment, regardless of training, but also our Western ethic gives, at least superficially, the right to believe and privacy of the individual highest priority. However, since this Western ethic espouses many inconsistencies, and in fact, retaliates severely against particular attitudes and beliefs, it is ludicrous to conclude that teachers should in no way attempt to instill some values in children.

This level, in all its degrees of internalization: Acceptance of, Preference for, and Commitment to a value, is of particular importance when dealing with remedial readers. These students have been buffeted about by failure, are insecure, threatened, and often think very little of themselves. A great deal must be done to improve self-concepts before teachers can expect children to develop a love of good literature (which is a different goal than the cognitive achievement of being able to read it!) or feel much kinship with people of other nations, for example. Perhaps the first objective in attempting to develop the affective behavior of valuing is to establish a climate in which the disabled learner can discover that he himself has value, and thus be free to establish other pertinent values. The next step—closely related to cognitive development—might be to expose him to concepts that, in his own defense, he has shut out of his mind and experience. For example, in his "dog-eat-dog", "strike first before you're hit" defensiveness, a child might not even realize that

some people actually value returning lost money. When he is exposed to this concept, he may consider that kind of person stupid, but he has at least discovered that they exist. Thus he has broadened his horizons and somewhat loosened his self-imposed affective restrictions.

The highest level of valuing, 3.3: Commitment, is the first to involve tension, need, or a real motivation to act out the particular behavior. That this is not an unrealistic goal for remedial readers is evidenced by some eleventh grade "bookworms" in this writer's class, who read at the second through fourth grade level. These students read everything in a particular series or by a particular author that they can. They exert overt pressure on their teacher to get any materials that the school doesn't have. They debate the topics endlessly and seek ways to improve conditions and to get information other than through reading. Their achievement in reading is quite low. Their affective commitment is extremely high.

Levels Three and Four:

Organization requires a long time to develop, perhaps years. The delineation between them is not precise either. The Taxonomy assumes some conceptualization to occur with commitment, for example, depending on the particular objective.

In brief, level four is divided into 4.1: Conceptualization of a Value and 4.2: Organization of a Value System. These objectives are highly correlated with synthesis and analysis in the cognitive domain. Thus the purpose is to provide the child with a conscious base for making choices and defending them.

The conceptualization need not be verbal although it is an abstract process dealing primarily with symbols. The child needs to learn what is common between his separate values and what the differences are. The poor reader is handicapped with respect to this level, primarily in verbal situations. He can be surprisingly perceptive concerning human motives, for example, if encouraged. Thus teachers must take care not to limit affective (or cognitive, for that matter) development by restricting him to reading. The value possibilities in current low reading level materials are less than most students' potentials. He should be encouraged to think, feel, discuss, and learn through other than printed media.

The Taxonomy discusses a study by Lewin which supports this approach to developing affective behavior. He found that for any really significant change to occur an individual must be personally involved in the process. He does do more than passively participate; he must discover and express his own attitudes and feelings and share them with others. Through this personal method of becoming aware, he has a greater opportunity to become committed. This correlates highly with cognitive theory also. More significant cognitive development will occur with personal involvement (comprehension, evaluation) than with passively accepting information (knowledge.)

There are other important considerations in implementing affective objectives. Peer approval to adolescents surpasses any other in importance. Group dynamics with poor readers will have to take

cognizance of this fact when attempting to deal with affective behaviors.

Another consideration is the changing of learning environments. Developing interests and values often involve individuals in Wordsworth's "willing suspension of disbelief", in a willful separation for a time from their existing values. Manipulating the environment so that it is unfamiliar to the child, thus separating from his usual environment, might help bring about this "suspension."

The Taxonomy states evidence that age is a major factor in changing beliefs, attitudes, and interests. It is commonly accepted, for example, that it is easier to change the opinion of a child than of an adult. However, it is just as likely that adolescence, with all its physical and emotional upheaval and change, is a ripe time of life—perhaps the best—for affective change. Thus a high school handicapped reader might be extremely susceptible to this development rather than "too old", as is commonly believed.

The writers also include evidence of Maslow's that a "peak experience" might have dramatic and far-reaching effects on changing affective behavior. Thus, teachers cannot say that since most affective development takes a long time, little or nothing can be accomplished in one year, or one month, or one class period—because it can!

This is not a brand new work, but its application has been long in coming. Research needs to be done in this area quickly so as to

implement this exciting new approach. The value in developing affective behaviors in remedial readers hardly needs stating. Not only is it important in aiding their scanty cognitive development, but also it is crucial in helping them become self-realized adults.

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