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### The Affective Domain: Undiscovered Country

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#### Abstract

The authors argue that the affective is the most-overlooked of the three domains identified by Bloom & Krathwohl's committees. Research suggest the affective domain is the gateway to learning, yet the cognitive and psychomotor domains take precedence. Some complexities of the affective domain are neglected. They further suggest that many college course outlines and lesson plans with affective outcomes fail to indicate how these will be taught and evaluated. They offer reasons, both historical and current, for this shunning of the affective domain, and indicate ways in which college faculty may begin to pay more attention to the affective domain of curriculum design implementation and evaluation.

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Think for a moment about the teachers who influenced your life. You may recall not the absolute masters of theories and skills, but more likely those who inspired you to love or dislike learning, to see yourself as a talented or inept learner, or who caused you to value or discount the content area you were studying. Those teachers addressed the affective domain in their teaching strategies. We may not be able to determine whether they operated tacitly or were conscious of their choices. What is evident is that those who teach from the affective domain influence values, beliefs and attitudes. Although the cognitive and affective "domains interact significantly in instruction and learning" (Martin & Briggs, 1986, p. 3), any behavior that has an emotional component lies within the affective domain.

On a personal note, our involvement in this topic developed through synergy. We were working on a variety of workshops and professional development initiatives, and realized we were both interested in further exploring the most ignored of the three domains. We developed workshops, "Teaching to the Affective Domain" and "I feel good! Talking Feelings," and presented them at several venues. These events sparked the flames and have us still "playing" in the affective domain.

Affective learning inculcates the values and beliefs we place on the information we engage with. It refers to our attitudes and willingness to take part in new things, and ability to make decisions about how we operate and behave in a variety of circumstances. Attitudes are not directly observable, but the actions and behaviors to

which they contribute may be observed (Bednar & Levie, 1993). Although there are some difficulties in measuring attitude formation and change, the affective domain is important in education. Bloom's Taxonomy includes the cognitive domain, the affective domain and the psychomotor domain. The cognitive domain's hierarchy begins with straightforward acquisition of knowledge, followed by more sophisticated cognitive tasks of comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The affective domain, in its earliest taxonomy, takes one from receiving, responding, valuing, and organization through to characterization (Bloom, 1965). The psychomotor domain relates to the learning of physical movements and progresses through the levels of reflex movements, fundamental movements, perceptual abilities, physical abilities, skilled movements and expressive movements.

A brief reflection on our own learning will confirm that there is seldom cognition or psychomotor activity not accompanied by some emotion or affect. Piaget noted, "at no level, at no state, even in the adult, can we find a behaviour or a state which is purely cognitive without affect nor a purely affective state without a cognitive element involved" (as cited in Clark & Fiske, 1982, p.130). McKeachie (1976) emphasized the need to understand humans holistically; in doing so we employ cognition and affect, and these should not be separated. The "cognitive taxonomy" in particular is still a major tool for curriculum design, teaching and learning plans, and evaluating student progress. If we continue to employ Bloom's framework to design curriculum and pedagogy, perhaps we should pay attention to all the domains.

Affective educational outcomes that focus on individual dispositions, willingness, preferences, and enjoyment must be acknowledged and integrated into curricula throughout institutions. Evidence that such outcomes are lacking, but required, in education can be found in the soft skill shortage among employees in the workplace (Clark, 2005). Soft skills are important to productivity, employee satisfaction, a healthy workplace, and ultimately, economic success for society. They include self-awareness, analytical thinking, leadership skills, team-building skills, flexibility, acceptance of diversity, the ability to communicate effectively, creativity, problem-solving skills, listening skills, diplomacy and change-readiness. A shortage of these skills has been identified in both Canada and the U.K. Human Resource and Skill Development Canada stated, for example, that employees in call centre/help desk environments must be able to handle not only the technological aspects of their job, but a variety of customer queries in an appropriate manner, using good 'soft skills' (MacLeod, 2000).

In Ontario, for example, three of the eleven essential employability skills mandated by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities fit clearly into the affective domain: one, to show respect for the diverse opinions, values, belief systems, and contributions of others; two, to interact with others in groups or teams in ways that

contribute to effective working relationships and the achievement of goals; and three, to take responsibility for one's own actions, decisions, and consequences (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities). These skills are found conceptually in the affective domain as the external expression of internalized emotion through attitudes and values.

Several potential causes exist for our collective fear of the affective domain. It's tempting to blame Descartes for the division in Western thought between 'body', the emotions traditionally considered to stem from the heart, and 'mind.' Outcomes which emphasize a feeling tone, an emotion, or a degree of acceptance or rejection may be difficult to teach or measure. Affective outcomes vary from simple attention to selected phenomena to complex but internally consistent qualities of character and conscience. Further, emotions are messy and unpredictable. Music that energizes one person may irritate another. Exercises connecting students with their emotions may release feelings and memories from non-school life that educators are uncomfortable dealing with.

The affective domain is less predisposed to classification. While a considerable body of material existed with which to evaluate performance and achievement in the cognitive domain, only marginal work is available in the affective domain. Tests of cognitive knowledge can be marked right or wrong, but emotions exist on a continuum. Feelings are never wrong; people's ways of expressing that emotion may be. Changed behaviour is slippery ground, and learning theories of attitude change are no longer as popular as they once were. Focus on reinforced behavior as the primary factor responsible for attitude development is now frowned upon. Early research on attitude change drew on Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, which posits that, when a person is persuaded to act in a way that is not congruent with a pre-existing attitude, he or she may change the attitude to reduce dissonance (Smith & Ragan, 1999). Few teachers have the time or the inclination to venture there.

Teachers also learn that a largely cognitively-oriented classroom is more predictable and controllable than an emotionally-expressive one. They may assume that, by paying attention to cognitive outcomes, the affective ones are magically being furthered. But "Krathwohl et al. discuss an assumption concerning the relationship between the cognitive and affective domains. It has been said that, if the cognitive objectives are developed, the development of the affective behaviours follows. Krathwohl et al. deny this assumption: 'The evidence suggests that affective behaviors develop when appropriate learning experiences are provided for students much the same as cognitive behaviors develop from appropriate learning experiences'"(Utah Sate Office of Education, 2006). To really undertake the work of shifting a vast array of attitudes and values to some pre-determined "better" outcome is daunting, which may explain why it receives more lip service than pedagogical attention.

A third factor may stem from our increasingly diverse students, many of them recent immigrants. Values and attitudes are rooted in belief systems, which are built on cultural, religious and moral learning. By the time students arrive in our college classrooms, much of their value system is formed. As we began to explore the questions raised by classroom implementation in the affective domain, we quickly realized it is the undiscovered country in college curriculum and teaching. It's not that affective outcomes are ignored in formal documents, but rather the exploration of them in teaching and evaluation strategies that is ignored.

How many course outlines and lesson plans specifically address how the students feel about the material, or how they are to achieve or modify attitudes and values? Silence pervades these areas except in courses that explicitly address issues like motivation, persuasion, teamwork, leadership, or empathy with clients/patients. Some professors are more skilled in getting their students excited and involved, but we rarely explore how they do this, although researchers in educational psychology have done some good work on motivation and interest. When it comes to mastery of skills, we see that "Learning is essential for students to master skills but if the affective domain is ignored, the cognitive areas are greatly affected. If one feels threatened, sad, stressed, etc. the learning process can break down." (Griffith, K. and A. Nguyen, 2006).

So what happened? Somewhere along the many pathways of curriculum, the spotlight landed on cognition. Program outcomes that contain terms like "values", "attitudes" and "interpersonal skills" are not always evaluated or examined for accomplishment. For example, teachers are famed for their compassion, which may influence liberal views; in fact, prosecutors often reject teachers as potential jurors because this quality, added to their practice in persuading others, can tilt juries toward the defendant. We have learned compassion, but how to know we have taught it to our students? If teachers are to influence their students' attitudes, they must be as clear about the affective outcomes as the cognitive ones.

There is also some silence around how to measure learning outcomes in the affective domain. A search of educational resources will turn up dozens of handy assignments, tests and rubrics for measuring cognitive outcomes; but very few, if any for evaluating affective progress. Since attitudes cannot be directly observed, they are inferred from behavior, usually in the form of verbal responses or observable actions (Bednar & Levie, 1993). Some of the existing measurement instruments for assessing attitudes and attitude change employ quantitative survey scales with the assumption that different respondents will interpret items in a similar manner (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). Research has shown that even rigorously tested measures of attitude such as the Quick Discrimination Index (QDI) may be valid measures only for members of a specific group (Burkard et al., 2002).

Recent emphasis on accountability in education is influencing a return to standardized testing whose results sometimes affect school finances. In the USA, the "No Child Left Behind" legislation that ties funding and even educational jobs to standardized test results has had an unexpected effect on the affective domain. "This fear of non-renewal due to the performance level of their students fuels educators to keep their absolute focus on the cognitive domain. Little time or energy is focused on the receiving, responding, valuing, organizing and value characterizing aspects of the affective domain," (Santrock, 2003). "Accountability, based on minimum-skills proficiency exams, is the center of the educational world. For many, the end results of our efforts are test scores and the mastery of academic skills" (Griffith & Nguyen, 2006).

So how are we to bridge the gaps in this landscape? Instructional designers should not use the affective domain only for a student's motivation to learn, but consider how to engage students in deeper learning through the use of this domain with appropriate pedagogy and evaluation methods. This may involve designing teaching strategies and activities that address learning outcomes on various levels of the taxonomy and move students to deeper content areas in the affective domain. The research supports the use of the affective domain both at the motivational level and in deeper levels of engagement. As Smith and Ragan (1999) pointed out, "any 'cognitive' or 'psychomotor' objective has some affective component to it. Motivation is certainly important, as students' attitude toward a given course or subject area can be a contributing factor to achievement" (Edwards & Porter, 1970). Research also suggests that attitudes are acquired and therefore "subject to fairly predictable change" (Simonson & Maushak, 2001, p. 84); although some researchers do believe that some attitudes may be innate or may have biological origins (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), there is also evidence for moving students to a higher trajectory to satisfy educational change.

The question remains: can professors who teach from the affective domain influence values, beliefs and attitudes? Although much research is still needed, there are effective instructional strategies to promote attitude formation and change. Effective attitude instruction should involve the learner emotionally, and demonstrate the required behaviors that is consistent with the desired attitude and when positively reinforced can bring about the desired changes. Humour, fun, delight, surprise, and even confusion (dissonance) can all have a place in students' affective progress. Finally, instruction that provides learners with an opportunity to express or act out the target attitude, and responds to that expression with positive reinforcement will move them towards changed behaviour (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). Any instruction that includes these qualities is likely to result in the desired attitude formation or change. Undoubtedly, further research is required in the area of accomplishing and evaluating learning outcomes in the affective domain in college courses.

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