

Bloom's taxonomy: helping you to think about thinking

INTRODUCTION

Explain that in 1956 Benjamin Bloom chaired a committee of educators that developed a hierarchical way of classifying the way that people learn. Since then, 'Bloom's taxonomy', as it became known, has been revised by other educators and psychologists. In the 1990s Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl were amongst those who came up with the hierarchy of learning objectives that is the subject of this session.

Show the students the 'Anderson & Krathwohl' model below, with the descriptions of skills that might be used at each 'level'.

Explain that this Taxonomy can be thought of as a pyramid, with simple knowledge-based recall questions at the base, building up to increasingly challenging questions that test comprehension of a given material.

Creating: compose, construct, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, write.
Evaluating: appraise, argue, assess, contrast, defend estimate, judge, predict, value.
Analyzing: categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test.
Applying: choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, practise, sketch, solve, use, write.
Understanding: classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, locate, report, review, select, translate.
Remembering: arrange, define, label, list, memorize, name, order, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce, state.



DISCUSSION

Ask students to consider and respond to such questions as:

- In what ways are the skills of 'remembering' simpler than 'understanding'?
- Why is 'evaluating' more complex than 'applying'?

- Is creating really more difficult than analysing?

ACTIVITY

Prompt the students to apply the Taxonomy to a story, using the following questions to guide them:

Creating: How would you create a new story to convey some of these ideas?
Evaluating: What choices would you have made if you were in the story?
Analyzing: How is this story related to your life?
Applying: What questions would you ask in an interview with the main character?
Understanding: What is the main idea of the story?
Remembering: Who was the main character?

Ask them if they can apply these ideas to some of the following stories, versions of which can easily be found on the web:

- The Boy who cried Wolf
- Plato's Cave
- The Parable of the Good Samaritan
- The Enlightenment of the Buddha

CONCLUSIONS

Explain that 'metacognition' is when you are thinking about your thinking. Ask the students to comment on their experiences of applying the taxonomy in this way, answering such prompting questions as:

- How does Bloom's Taxonomy help you to think about thinking?