A Primer on Teaching the Whole Student: Affective Domain & Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

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Good teachers know that there is no single pedagogical method that inspires and motivates all students to learn and to excel in their classroom; however, making the course content meaningful and developing curriculum connected to students' experiences and lives can consistently engage students in the classroom.

The Cognitive Domain and the Affective Domain

Most teachers are fairly familiar with the *Cognitive* domain in teaching; Bloom's hierarchy of learning that includes knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. In the past 10 years this hierarchy has evolved into a multitude of variations for how teachers might approach the development of their lessons and units and the composition of learning outcomes that might herald students through sophisticated and complex materials.

Less instructors are familiar with the *Affective Domain* as it relates to teaching, but new studies in the past decade demonstrate the importance of educators incorporating the *Affective Domain* into their teaching practices. Like Bloom's Taxonomy pyramid, the Affective Domain has it's own pyramid developed by Krathwohl, who designates the following in the Affective Domain:

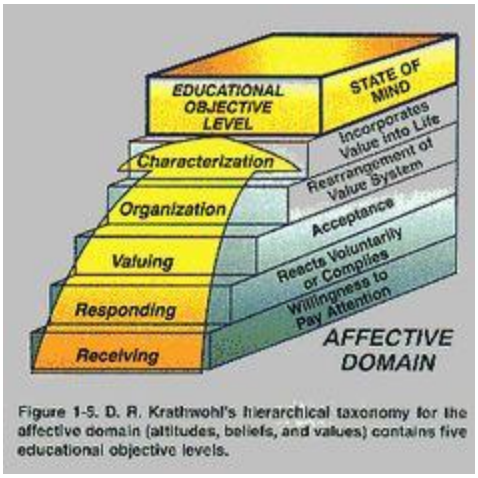


Figure 1-5. D. R. Krathwohl's hierarchical taxonomy for the affective domain (attitudes, beliefs, and values) contains five educational objective levels.

The Affective Domain asks instructors to develop lesson plans and unit instruction while paying attention to the attitudes, beliefs, and values of their students -- their student's state of mind -- in order to effectively teach ideas and concepts.

In a classroom centered on the Affective Domain, students feel a part of the learning process. They also feel valued by the instructor and their peers, which increases their sense of belonging and well-being. Several studies show that when students feel this way in the classroom, their motivation, persistence, grit, and willingness are increased, and they not only improve their ability to pass the course, but they actually ENJOY the learning process in the course.

Employing Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) Practice as part of the Affective Domain framework

Employing Affective Domain strategies is a larger framework that can include Culturally Responsive Teaching (or CRT). In a classroom where the instructor values the Affective Domain, the instructor is authentic in teaching that embraces cultural responsiveness to students and their experiences.

A CRT instructor knows that culture has a direct effect on the ways in which students think and learn. Culture (and regionality, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, race) plays an important role in the communication practices and processes of our students, and has a lot to do with students' intrinsic motivation, a key factor in academic success rates. Employing Culturally Responsive Teaching as a pedagogical praxis celebrates the fundamental differences between all learners, while acknowledging and responding to the unique attributes of learners from a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

Just as students feel valued and cared for in a classroom in which the Affective Domain is supported, students in classrooms where instructors transparently acknowledge cultural differences and employ Culturally Responsive Teaching practices feel positively motivated to persist in their studies and to experience true, equitable access to education.

What a CRT Classroom Looks Like:

In an Affective Domain/CRT classroom, the pedagogical practices are similar:

- **Student-Centered instruction**
    - "learning is cooperative, collaborative, and community-oriented" and students are welcomed to direct their own learning on projects with cultural and social significance *for them.*
- **Teacher as Facilitator**

    - instructors are no longer the “sage on the stage” performing knowledge for students; instead, the relationship between student and instructor is a reciprocal one in which both acknowledge they have much to learn from one another.
- **Teachers and peers care about the communities, families, and lives of one another.**
    - In a K-12 classroom, this might look like a positive, welcoming relationship between parents and teachers. In a Community College classroom, it might mean getting to know students personally, their friends, their hobbies, their goals and dreams, and making it a point to share some of yourself with your students.
- **High expectations of student performance**
    - A hallmark of Culturally Responsive Teaching practice. Most teachers may think they do have high expectations for our students, but sometimes in a culturally diverse classroom our own, unexamined biases may impact the expectations we have for our students. "When a teacher expresses sympathy over failure, lavishes praise for completing a simple task, or offers unsolicited help, the teacher may send unintended messages of low expectations,” says educator Kathleen Serverian-Wilmeth. Having high expectations for our students means communicating the expectations clearly and consistently; this builds intrinsic motivation in our students, and empowers them as learners.
- **Teaching and Learning within the context of culture**
    - This is a contested pedagogical practice in academia, but it is an important part of teaching the whole student (Affective Domain and CRT). As our classrooms get more and more diverse in multiple ways, it is important for educators to develop spaces, curriculum, and practices that foster (for themselves and their students) a deep understanding of cultural difference. This is more than simply selecting representative readings from a variety of experiences, but it’s also transparently guiding discussion about cultural difference in the classroom.
- **Culturally Mediated Instruction**
    - Teachers eschew the “one knowledge, one history, one way” that has traditionally been exercised in our curriculums and classrooms. In an Affective Domain and CRT classroom, teachers acknowledge multiple ways of knowing and being, welcome a variety of interpretations for content and actions, and actively and transparently seek support, suggestions, and expertise from students, teachers, and counselors who may share similar cultural background as your students.

> Students are given opportunity to share their cultural knowledge in the classroom, and the teacher guides students in a vigorous, self-reflective practice of questioning and exploring experiences and belief systems in light of the belief systems of other cultures.

CRT and the Affective Domain build Intrinsic Motivation in our Students

These simple ways of thinking and being when it comes to educating our students can make the difference in student motivation, persistence, and self-empowerment. Raymond Wlodkowski and Margery Ginsberg note that CRT is really about teachers establishing inclusion, guiding students in the development of a positive attitude, composing creative and challenging learning experiences that help students understand themselves and their worlds better, and supporting students in believing in their own competence as learners and thinkers. This focus helps to build up the intrinsic motivation of our students. When we employ practices that include collaboration, cooperation, equal and respectful treatment of our students, and conscious and transparent inclusion of cultural dialogue in the classroom, we are teaching the whole student as a human being, and are ensuring the student's unencumbered and equal access to higher education.

Resources:

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory and Practice. By Geneva Gay. 2000.

"The Place of the Personal: Exploring the Affective Domain through Reflection in Teacher Preparation" by Melanie Shoffnir. Teaching and Teacher Education, Volume 25, Issue 6, August 2009, Pages 783–789.

"The Affective Domain in the Classroom" http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/affective/index.html

Goldstein, L. (1999). The relational zone: The role of caring relationships in the co-construction of mind. *American Educational Research Journal, 36*(3), 647-673.

"A Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching" by *Raymond J. Wlodkowski and Margery B. Ginsberg* in "Educational Leadership" September 1995 | Volume **53** | Number **1 Strengthening Student Engagement** Pages 17-21. http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept95/vol53/num01/A-Framework-for-Culturally-Responsive-Teaching.aspx

"CRT and Teaching Diverse Learners." The Education Alliance at Brown University. Web.

Videos to introduce Culturally Responsive Teaching. http://www.edutopia.org/blogs/tag/culturally-responsive-teaching

The Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching. http://culturallyresponsive.org/

Being Culturally Responsive. http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/being-culturally-responsive

Other People's Children. Lisa Delpit. 2005.

Please contact Kirsten Ogden for samples of assignments from her classroom that use CRT and Affective Domain. This Primer composed by Kirsten Ogden. Please give credit to author when using. keogden(at)pasadena.edu 2015.