David W. Darling

Why a Taxonomy of Affective Learning?

WHY a taxonomy of affective learning? [1] How does one go about answering such a question? What a task! I submit that this very important question, posed in its present form, cannot be directly answered. It is my intent to develop a rationale which justifies and helps explain the affective taxonomy by exploring the following questions:

1. Are the schools responsible for the development of qualities of character and conscience in learners as expressed in their interests, attitudes, appreciations, values, and emotional sets or biases?

2. Does the taxonomy of affective learning have any practical value in designing and evaluating learning experiences or in curriculum building?

3. Does the affective taxonomy have research potential which will contribute to our growing science of education?

If the answer to the first question is yes, then the affective taxonomy clearly has a contribution to make. The taxonomy represents an intelligent and rational synthesis of much thought and research in psychology and personality theory and gives this synthesis a structure heretofore not visible and hence not communicable. The taxonomy takes the old triad of "interests, attitudes, and values," redefines them in more specific terms (and more categories) and gives a rational ordering to their occurrence.

The reader may recall that there are five levels in the hierarchy of the affective taxonomy: (1) Receiving, (2) Responding, (3) Valuing, (4) Organizing, and (5) Characterization. All the behaviors of Level 1 (Receiving), *i.e.*, *awareness, willingness to receive,* and *selective attention,* are indicators of a progression of interest. Likewise the first step of Level 2 (Responding), *acquiescence in responding,* is the highest level of interest before attitudes are affected. Both interest and attitude are at play when a child exhibits a *willingness to respond* and then derives some *satisfaction from his response* (the two remaining steps in Responding).

Interests, attitudes, and values are all

[1] Much of the structure of this article is based on the following sources:

Benjamin S. Bloom, editor. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives; The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook I: Cognitive Domain.* New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956.

David R. Krathwohl, Benjamin S. Bloom, Bertram B. Masia. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives; The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook II: Affective Domain.* New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1964.

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apparent when a child indicates the *acceptance of a value* and then, through his behavior, indicates a *preference for a value*. These behaviors are the first two steps of Level 3, Valuing. When a child indicates a *commitment* to a value, he has moved beyond mere interest but attitudes and values are still of concern. Also in the attitude-value overlap is the *conceptualization of a value*, a step beyond *commitment*, and the first step of Level 4, Organizing. Finally, the child (or adult) moves beyond mere attitudes to the highest levels of value formation when he reaches the highest step of Level 4, *organization of a value system*, and then moves through Characterization by *formulating a generalized value set*, and then he is able to relate this set to the larger world in which he lives; there the set becomes the *Characterization of the individual*. The latter two behaviors compose Level 5, Characterization.

Are not the steps indicated in the taxonomy more specific and indicative of corresponding behaviors than are "interests, attitudes, and values"? Is there not a clear taxonomical progression of behavior that is completely lacking in the triad of "interests, attitudes, and values"? The answers to these questions are obvious. Yet are the schools responsible for the interests, attitudes, and values of students?

Certainly the terms "interests" and "attitudes" appear in the stated objectives of schools often enough to be considered within the province of the school. What about values? If schools are responsible only for "interests" and "attitudes" and not "values," what is the highest step in the taxonomy for which the school has a charge? Can the school ignore the other steps of affective learning indicated in the taxonomy? These questions are left for the reader to ponder.

Practical Utility

It will be some time before any definitive answers to question 2 are forthcoming; the affective taxonomy is too new for any conclusive argument. The writers of the taxonomy are hopeful that the domain will permit curriculum workers to produce a systematic and comprehensive set of affective objectives which are stated clearly and in specific terms. The writers of the taxonomy are also hopeful that the taxonomy will aid in refining methods of measurement in this area and will provide a common vocabulary which will assist the communication process among people working in education. The writers of the taxonomy say little or nothing about how the teachers might use the work. The inference is that the taxonomy is for curriculum workers as such. I would like to pose the notion that a portion of the taxonomy is clearly the domain of the teacher and a portion is clearly the domain of the curriculum worker and that there is an area in which both have a concern—the vital link which gives direction to both ends of the affective continuum.

The daily interaction between pupil and teacher continuously involves the behaviors of Receiving and Responding. It is a long term objective of a teacher that the children develop an *acceptance of a value, preference for a value*, and *commitment to a value*. For instance, it takes time for a student to develop an acceptance of reading as something valued; then a preference for reading over some other activity; and finally, a real commitment to reading.

The curriculum worker's task probably *begins* at this Level 3, Valuing. The cur-

riculum worker should state specifically what the valuing objectives are, *i.e.*, what values a child ought to accept, prefer, and develop a commitment for. The curriculum worker must then fit the value objectives into the continuum of higher affective objectives (Organizing and Characterization). The top three levels are very complex and can be realized only over a considerable period of time and after endeavors have produced many values that may be ordered and placed into a master configuration which becomes the characterization set of an individual. The vital link is the posing of Valuing objectives by curriculum workers and the achievement of these objectives by learners through activities provided by teachers.

At another level, a thorough knowledge of the taxonomy by persons who prepare materials for instruction, notably textbooks and programmed materials, might give these productions a significantly different flavor. Or stated in a different way, "What kinds of materials are likely to be produced by persons who lack a knowledge of the affective domain?"

Yet perhaps the most significant "practical use" of the taxonomy lies in whether or not it can be used for research purposes; for, if it is to have any long term effect on the curriculum, it must survive the test of researchability. Educators are looking more and more to research findings when deciding what is to be taught, to whom, by whom, and in what kind of environment. Laymen are becoming more aware of research activity in education and are more accepting of decisions "based on research." Cognitive behavior is clearly more observable and amenable to research. Conscious efforts to promote cognitive learning may crowd out conscious efforts to develop affective learning simply because research answers will be available in the former domain.

Research Potential

By their own admission, the writers of the two taxonomies indicate that the separation of objectives into cognitive and affective domains is artificial and cite research which shows that cognition and affect can never be completely separated. Nevertheless, the two taxonomies do permit us to classify observably different kinds of behavior. The writers of the taxonomy indicate very intelligently and rationally what relationships they *believe* exist between the categories of the cognitive and affective domains. What is clearly missing is what the two taxonomies may now make possible; that is, a comprehensive controlled study which ferrets out any relationships that may actually exist.

Such questions as the following may now be posed: "Is the relation between growth at the various levels of cognitive and affective learning positive, negative, or zero?" "When a child is engaged in learning *knowledge of terminology* (Level 1.11, cognitive domain), is there a positive, negative, or zero relation with his *willingness to receive* (Level 1.2, affective domain)?" "At what level of the cognitive domain is the *willingness to receive* most positive?" It should be clear that the two domains (cognition and affect) give us a more definite structure in which to determine specific relationships and their nature. Perhaps the two domains have given us a systematic way to begin studying the vast implications of concomitant learnings.

As demonstrated earlier in the article, the research question is of paramount importance. Clearly, the affective taxon-

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2. A. T. Jersild. *When Teachers Face Themselves.* New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1955.
3. S. Milgram. "Behavioral Study of Obedience." *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67: 371-78; October 1963.
4. D. A. Prescott. *Emotion and the Educative Process.* Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1938.
5. B. E. Ruebush. "Anxiety," in *62nd Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I, Child Psychology.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963.
6. M. H. Schrupp and C. M. Jerde. "Teacher Growth in Attitudes Toward Behavior Problems of Children." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 44: 203-14; 1953.
7. E. K. Wickman. *Children's Behavior and Teachers' Attitudes.* New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1928.

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omy serves to generate significant and worthwhile questions which need resolving. The question is, can they be resolved? The authors of the taxonomy claim that the central research problem is how to measure affective behavior with greater validity, reliability, and objectivity.

What behavior will serve as evidence that a child is showing *commitment to a value* rather than merely a *preference for a value*? How does a researcher determine when a child is achieving the *conceptualization of a value* which is affective behavior rather than only cognitive conceptualization? There are many big problems to be solved in order that the affective taxonomy be made researchable.

This is the task of researchers. The writers of the taxonomy have done their task. Now it is up to researchers and practitioners to do the necessary changing and refining.

Why a taxonomy of affective learning? The taxonomy can serve as an aid in clarifying the school's responsibility for promoting learning in the affective realm. The taxonomy may provide practical help to teachers and curriculum workers. Finally, it may further the study of education.

If schools are to meet the needs of an ever changing society, the schools must be in a position periodically to change their educational objectives. The two taxonomies lend themselves well to this task because they give visibility, structure, and definition to objectives which represent current thinking. As the purposes of the schools change, so ought the taxonomies *or* their replacements.

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plays, pageants, and PTA spectaculars destroys the motivation of the vast majority of children who know that they will never be chosen. Let us realize that a finished production and a good learning experience are sometimes antagonistic. Let us decide whether drama, music, and similar activities are primarily public relations events or learning opportunities for children, and act accordingly.

The fact that we must educate children in groups rather than individually places some limitations on the degree to which we can build the curriculum on children's interests. Nevertheless, we should provide every child with some time to explore a subject of interest to him as deeply as he wants. Children are going to know more about some subjects than others when they arrive at high school and college. Let us stop lamenting this and start to encourage it.

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