Learning Taxonomy Derived from a Service Learning Tour

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How do people learn through service?

- Via ‘knowing’
- Via ‘experience’
- Via ‘reflection’
- To ‘attitude change’

“Experience without change”

Is that your conclusion?
What is Learning?

- Learning encompasses knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.
- Learning can be examined in terms of both processes and products.
Jean Piaget

- Learning as a knowledge-construction process
- Student may construct very different understandings even after interacting with the same objects in the same environment.
Experiential Education

A philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in **direct experience and focused reflection** in order to increase knowledge, develop skills and clarify values.
Dewey

- All genuine education comes about through experience – but that not all experiences are genuinely or equally educative.
- Experiences should acquire understanding which enables them to address personal, social and moral dilemmas in the present and future.
How learning be described?

- Through Learning Taxonomy
Tang - Six-level meaning of learning

- Level 1: **Learning as acquiring knowledge** – gaining more knowledge (quantitative).

- Level 2: **Learning as preparing for examinations** or completing assignments – fulfilling the requirements of the course (externally controlled).

- Level 3: **Learning as applying** – direct use of theories or methodologies in real-life situations (job skills orientated).
Tang - Six-level meaning of learning

- Level 4: **Learning as explaining** and relating phenomena – using theories and perspectives to make sense of the world.
- Level 5: **Learning as changing one’s own perspectives** or attitudes – comparing alternative perspectives.
- Level 6: **Learning as personal development** – becoming a different person.
Biggs – SOLO Taxonomy

- Stage 1: **Pre-structured**: Learners acquire bits of unconnected information, which have no organization and make no sense.

- Stage 2: **Uni-structural**: Learners make simple and obvious connections, but show little evidence that their significance has been grasped.
Biggs – SOLO Taxonomy

- Stage 3: **Multi-structural**: Learners make a number of connections, but meta-connections between them are missed, as is their significance for the whole.

- Stage 4: **Relational**: Learners appreciate the significance of the parts in relation to the whole.
Stage 5: **Extended abstract:** Learners make connections both within and beyond the subject area, showing they are able to generalize and transfer the principles and ideas.
Present Study

- A service learning tour
Sample

- A purposive sample of a service tour to Mainland China was selected for examination. The tour was organized by a Hong Kong school to Liannan, Guangdong
- 30 S1~S6 Students
- 6 Days
Data

- Daily journal writing;
- End-of-trip ‘sharing’ passages;
- Observation and interviewing by the researcher.
Data Analysis

- Grounded theory approach was adopted which is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon.

  (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 24)
Result: A Learning Taxonomy

- The highest level reached was selected for analysis.
- Hierarchical structure, means that the lower-level categories are embedded in the higher-level ones.
- The levels of learning are not discrete but developmental.

(Tang, 2003; Marton et al., 1993)
## Reflective learning level descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Description of the physical environment; reporting of events that happened. The written work contains direct observation and direct reporting of incidents that took place on the tour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relational description</td>
<td>Description of the physical environment or reporting of incidents that happened, not only through direct observation in the tour but also with evidence of relating the observation/ incidents to other information, understanding, knowledge, experience etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>Interpretation of what was observed and incidents that happened on the tour and/or direct description of feelings about what was observed/happened.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Relational interpretation</strong></td>
<td>Interpretation of what was observed and happened on the tour, but with evidence that the interpretation is based on other information, understanding, knowledge, experience etc. not in the tour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Abstraction and generalization</strong></td>
<td>Abstraction and generalization of meaning generated through interpretation of observations and incidents on the tour.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Resolution</strong></td>
<td>States a resolution, decision or an action to take, stimulated by observations and incidents during the tour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Extended resolution</strong></td>
<td>Deduction of a general principle from the resolution or decision. The principle moves beyond the observations/incidents that took place during the tour and becomes a rule for one’s life.</td>
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### Reflective learning sample quotes

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>There is nothing in their house. (Ka Po – S01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I saw many flies. (Mei Ling – S09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[The house had] only simple furniture, very dim light, and only a ball. (Ming Yin – S16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Relational description</strong></td>
<td>Today I stayed with the host family. I thought of Hong Kong when I was helping to make a fire with wood. (Wai Yan – S26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I saw the kids wearing worn-down shoes, but I … have a lot of shoes in Hong Kong. (Sin Ying – S27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>… I can get close to rural people living in the mountain region, something which I have never experienced before. (Wai Mei – S23)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>The sponsored boy was not so poor; at least they [his family] had a television and an electric lamp. However, another family that we visited had only an electric lamp. (Ka Ling – S17) When I taught, I realized that the rural kids were lacking in knowledge. (Yick Ling – S19) I felt curious and [had] fun the first time when I did morning exercise. (Tak Man – S22)</td>
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| 4     | Relational interpretation | I felt that the curriculum these students were having was not as advanced as that in Hong Kong. Also, they seldom have English [lessons]. (Yim Chi – S13)  

The students continued to practise writing the alphabet and pronouncing new words during the recess. They were hard-working and eager to learn. Hong Kong students should learn from them. (Ping – S14)  

Our living [standard] is far better than theirs. Their lives are so simple. (Long Ho – S10) |
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| 5     | Abstraction and generalization | This trip gave me a deep understanding that satisfaction in the heart is more important than the material life. (Ping – S14)  
The blessings Hong Kong people have may be a curse in itself. (Ming Yin – S16) |
| 6     | Resolution                   | … I have to treasure my learning opportunities and the chances for learning English. (Ka Ling – S17)  
We are so blessed that we have to try our best to help those in need, and treasure what we have now. (Wai Tak – S25) |
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<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Extended resolution</strong></td>
<td>Diligence and effort will pay off. Diligence leads to progress. People doing nothing and trying nothing shall regret this. (Ka Sin – S08)</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>I should become more open, confident, considerate and tolerant, so that I can learn more. (Ping – S14)</td>
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Reflective learning sample quotes

- Sham Hoi Keung and his brother were diligent in their studies *(Level 3 – Interpretation)*… I have to learn from them. *(Level 6 – Resolution)* Diligence and effort will pay off. Diligence leads to progress. People doing nothing and trying nothing shall regret this. *(Level 7 - Extended Resolution)*

Ka Sin (S08)
Reflective learning sample quotes

- …I am very blessed, but I do not feel satisfied. I concentrate too much on material life. *(Level 4 – Relational Interpretation)*

- I have to concentrate more on satisfaction in the heart. *(Level 6 – Resolution)*

- I should become more open, confident, considerate and tolerant, so that I can learn more. *(Level 7 – Extended Resolution)*

Ping (S14)
Conclusion

- The hierarchical structure of the Reflective Learning Taxonomy provides a useful framework for educators and youth workers for
  - setting objectives for tours
  - measuring the qualitative differences in reflection on experience as a means of learning
Conclusion

- assess the feedback from participants
- outline clearly the group members’ paths to learning
- evaluate educational value of the service learning programme.
Question and Answer