

Learning Taxonomy Derived from a Service Learning Tour



Dr. Samuel Cheng
Principal, Tsung Tsin Christian Academy



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.



Biggs – SOLO Taxonomy

- 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

Level	Descriptors	Indicators
1	Description	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.
2	Relational description	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.
3	Interpretation	Interpretation of what was observed and incidents that happened on the tour and/or direct description of feelings about what was observed/happened.



Reflective learning level descriptors

Level	Descriptors	Indicators
4	Relational interpretation	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.
5	Abstraction and generalization	Abstraction and generalization of meaning generated through interpretation of observations and incidents on the tour.

Reflective learning level descriptors

Level	Descriptors	Indicators
6	Resolution	States a resolution, decision or an action to take, stimulated by observations and incidents during the tour.
7	Extended resolution	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.

Reflective learning sample quotes

Level	Descriptors	Sample quotes
1	Description	<p>There is nothing in their house. (Ka Po – S01)</p> <p>I saw many flies. (Mei Ling – S09)</p> <p>[The house had] only simple furniture, very dim light, and only a ball. (Ming Yin – S16)</p>
2	Relational description	<p>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)</p> <p>I saw the kids wearing worn-down shoes, but I ... have a lot of shoes in Hong Kong. (Sin Ying – S27)</p> <p>... I can get close to rural people living in the mountain region, something which I have never experienced before. (Wai Mei – S23)</p>



Reflective learning sample quotes

Level	Descriptors	Sample quotes
3	Interpretation	<p>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)</p> <p>When I taught, I realized that the rural kids were lacking in knowledge. (Yick Ling – S19)</p> <p>I felt curious and [had] fun the first time when I did morning exercise. (Tak Man – S22)</p>

Reflective learning sample quotes

Level	Descriptors	Sample quotes
4	Relational interpretation	<p>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)</p> <p>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)</p> <p>Our living [standard] is far better than theirs. Their lives are so simple. (Long Ho – S10)</p>



Reflective learning sample quotes

Level	Descriptors	Sample quotes
5	Abstraction and generalization	<p>This trip gave me a deep understanding that satisfaction in the heart is more important than the material life. (Ping – S14)</p> <p>The blessings Hong Kong people have may be a curse in itself. (Ming Yin – S16)</p>
6	Resolution	<p>... I have to treasure my learning opportunities and the chances for learning English. (Ka Ling – S17)</p> <p>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)</p>



Reflective learning sample quotes

Level	Descriptors	Sample quotes
7	Extended resolution	<p>Diligence and effort will pay off. Diligence leads to progress. People doing nothing and trying nothing shall regret this. (Ka Sin – S08)</p> <p>I should become more open, confident, considerate and tolerant, so that I can learn more. (Ping – S14)</p>



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