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## Effecting Affect: Methods for facilitating affective knowledge in the classroom

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# Effecting Affect: Methods for facilitating affective knowledge in the classroom

## Summary

Bloom's (Bloom et al, 1956) taxonomy of knowledge encompasses three central domains - the cognitive, the affective, and the psychomotor. University research and teaching, both historically and contemporaneously, validates objective and cognitive knowledge at the expense of subjective and affective forms of knowledge (Boler 1999; Cassell, 2002). This seminar aims to provide an argument for the use of affect, but more specifically, to provide practical examples of methods for implementing affect in classes, tutorials and laboratories. This interactive seminar will involve personal reflection, discussion, active learning activities, and will model a number of methods for using affect in the classroom.

## Keywords

Affective knowledge, methods, classroom

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### SUMMARY

Bloom's (Bloom et al, 1956) taxonomy of knowledge encompasses three central domains - the cognitive, the affective, and the psychomotor. University research and teaching, both historically and contemporaneously, validates objective and cognitive knowledge at the expense of subjective and affective forms of knowledge (Boler 1999; Cassell, 2002). This seminar aims to provide an argument for the use of affect, but more specifically, to provide practical examples of methods for implementing affect in classes, tutorials and laboratories. This interactive seminar will involve personal reflection, discussion, active learning exercises, and will model a number of methods for employing affect in the classroom.

**Keywords:** Affective knowledge, methods, classroom

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The graduate students will be able explain the potential utility of affect in teaching, and therefore justify the use (or non-use) of affect in their classes.

Graduates students will be able to describe and explain a small number of methods that promote affect within their classes and tutorials.

### REFERENCE SUMMARIES

Boler, M. (1999). *Feeling power: Emotions and education*. New York: Routledge.

In this powerful critique of education in Western societies, Boler provides a feminist interrogation of the relationship of power, emotions, cognitive thinking and pedagogy. This book seeks to expose the false binary of truth and reason on one side and subjective bias and emotion on the other, and therefore the power effects of subjugating our emotions. Firstly, Boler shows the ways in which emotions are a site of (gendered) control that takes place within education. However, Boler also suggests that a reclaiming of emotion can provide teachers and students with a powerful form of resistance to the cultural hegemony of reason over emotion in the classroom. This book will be used to explain the power dynamic that overlooks affective knowledge for cognitive knowledge. Appreciating this relationship will help the graduate students better negotiate their implementation of affect.

Simpson, R. D., Koballa, T. R., Oliver, J. S. and Crawely, F. E. (1994). Research on the affective dimension of science learning. In D. Gabel (Ed), *Handbook of research on science teaching and learning: A project of the national science teachers association* (pp. 211-234). New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.

Enabling science educators to realize the "hidden potential of the affective domain" (p. 211) in their teaching is the author's intention of this chapter. By exploring

central concepts to affective learning, such as attitudes, values, and motivation, the authors provide an argument for building on the necessity of affect in learning - even in the “hard” sciences. This chapter will be used to show how attracting students to their classes and programs, keeping students enrolled in their class, and increasing students’ engagement with their class content, are all shaped by affective elements (such as attitude or motivation).

Bolin, A. (2006). Teaching and assessing in the affective domain: Level I. Unpublished paper. Retrieved from <http://aaronbolin.com/pubs/Affective%20Domain%20Level%20I%20Workshop%20Participant.pdf>

Dr. Aaron Bolin at Arkansas State University specializes in creating interactive workshops, and this document is used in his seminar on incorporating affect into teaching. This paper seeks to teach the participants about affect, its theoretical background, how to use affect in assessment, and ten methods for incorporating affect into the classroom. The incorporation of many of the strategies employed in this article will be used as methods of using affect in the classroom.

#### CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

Time (minutes)	Presentation Outline	Details
1-5	1. Introduction (Lecture) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce myself</li> <li>• Purpose of presentation</li> <li>• Learning objectives</li> <li>• Outline of presentation</li> </ul>	To create a comfortable environment whereby the audience understands what the presentation is about, why it is important, what they will get out of it, and how the presentation will unfold.
6-20	2. Context (Lecture) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the problem</li> <li>• Theoretical context: outline Bloom’s taxonomy</li> <li>• Why affect facilitates learning: Understanding motivation, attitude, and values</li> <li>• Affect across the disciplines</li> </ul>	This section will set the context for discussion and activities that follow. The theoretical backdrop of Bloom’s taxonomy will be provided to enable a discussion of the power and legitimacy of cognitive knowledge over affective knowledge in the university. An outline of the dearth of affective knowledge in teaching research is one powerful example. A discussion of the historical and future roles for affect across the disciplines (from the humanities, to the social sciences, to the “hard” sciences”) concludes this section.
21-25	3. Debrief	The debriefing will be used as an

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question/answer period for the lecture</li> <li>• Graduates students will reflect on the use of affect in their experience</li> </ul>	opportunity for the students to ask questions, query the issue, and reflect on affect in their learning experiences. It also provides the instructor with an opportunity to gauge the student's engagement with the premise of the seminar.
26-35	<p>4. Small group discussions (Activity)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break into small groups (four people per group) to discuss the lecture, and to work through the activity provided</li> </ul>	<p>This activity will provide an opportunity to think about how affect has played a role in the student's educational experiences. The discussion will be directed by a set of guiding questions to spark conversation. Examples of these guiding questions would be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would more affect in my classroom enhance learning? And if so why?</li> <li>2. How have I incorporated affect into my classroom in the past? What was the result?</li> <li>3. Debate the benefits and limitations of affect in the classroom.</li> </ol>
41-70	<p>5. Methods for using affect (Activity)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four stations would be created, each with its own method</li> <li>• Students spend 10 minutes at three different methods stations</li> <li>• Students work with the method, and create an example of how they might use it in their current class or tutorial.</li> </ul>	<p>This activity is designed to get the students to actively work together to attempt to implement various strategies and methods for incorporating affect. Examples of these methods will include expressive outcomes, journaling, and structured debates. Each method will come with a set of guidelines and suggestions for the possible implementation of the various methods. A handout briefly explaining each method will also be provided at the end of the seminar(see Appendix 1).</p>
71-84	<p>6. Class discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate a discussion of the methods provided in the seminar</li> </ul>	<p>The students now have the opportunity to discuss, debate, explain, and critique these methods for possible use in their classes and</p>

		tutorials.
85-90	<p>7. Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Closing remarks and summary</li><li>• Take audience questions</li><li>• Provide take home notes and resource information</li></ul>	<p>Summarize the seminar. A list of additional resources for incorporating affect in the classroom is also offered (see Appendix 1).</p>

## PRESENTATION STRATEGIES

The first four sections primarily seek to achieve the first learning objective. I begin by introducing this topic through a lecture and invite personal reflection and input with a debriefing session. I also incorporate a reflective exercise to be completed in small groups. This allows the students to discuss their experiences in a more comfortable environment, which will prompt discussion about how affect was, or was not, incorporated in their learning and teaching experiences. This will enable the graduate students to be able to explain the theory and context of affect, and connect it to their experiences.

Secondly, I provide an opportunity to work with three different methods for incorporating affect. Doing so in groups will increase the likelihood of success as students can exchange ideas and experiences about the use of these methods. This is the central section of the seminar, as it gives the students a “hands on” experience with methods that work with affective knowledge. This will be followed up with a class discussion about the methods, which be prompted by their experiences trying the various methods. Sections five and six are primarily aimed at the second learning objective, and at the end of the seminar students will be able to describe and explain a number of methods for using affect in their teaching.

## APPENDIX 1: METHODS FOR INTEGRATING AFFECT IN THE CLASSROOM

Before choosing to implement affective methods, it may be prudent to explain what affect is, and why you are using it. Many students believe academic knowledge is cognitive knowledge. By explicitly explaining what affective knowledge is, and why it is important, the educator can achieve two primary goals. Firstly, to expand the student's understanding of the types of knowledge that we can value. And secondly, enable them to understand why you are using affect in your class, and therefore empower them to use it in their work. The following are four examples of methods educators can use to facilitate affective knowledge in their teaching.

### 1. Expressive Outcomes

**Description:** An expressive outcome states the ability of a student to express themselves in some way, often focusing on creative, evocative, and unpredictable learning experiences. These are often used instead of, or in conjunction with, learning objectives for a class or syllabus.

**Implementation:** There are three components to creating an expressive outcome: the context, the learning event, and reflection. Firstly, create a context that puts the learning event (to follow) into a particular perspective (e.g., the government's involvement in both participatory and elite level sport). Secondly, provide the learning event, which is an exercise or activity that involves judgment and values (e.g., create a budget for where the government should spend its resources). And finally, enable reflection, which is the process by which the learners think about the learning experience and what they derived from it (e.g., each student presents and defends their spending choices in a simulated "board room" environment). An example of an expressive outcome could be by the end of semester, the students will be able to critique the government's sport budget, and suggest why (or why not) spending changes should be made.

**Cautionary note:** It may be harder to assess the attainment of expressive outcomes as compared with learning objectives. It is prudent to create a strong set of assessment tools and indicators to accompany your expressive outcomes.

### 2. Personal Reflection

**Description:** Self-awareness is an important element of affect, and relating course content to the individual students, their lives, and their experiences provides a powerful basis for learning.

**Implementation:** There a number of forms this can take, and I will provide one example of how you might use it. The popular work of Peggy McIntosh, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, is a useful way to encourage self-reflection. In this paper, McIntosh reflects on and records all the ways in which her "Whiteness" provides her privileges. Students can be asked to record how they are privileged and disadvantaged based on their race, gender, citizenship, religion, able-bodiedness and so on. An example of a privilege might be: there are many

historians who teach university classes on Canadian history about my racial (i.e., white) group. This makes for easy connections to class content, whilst also making issues like racism or able-bodiedness relevant for the entire class.

Cautionary note: When dealing with student's private lives, and especially if they bring it up in front of the class, be careful to properly manage the exercise so that sensitive experiences or issues do not create harm for the students.

### 3. Journaling

Description: Journaling is an expressive form of documentation that records personal experiences and thoughts (typically as a written journal but video journaling or another means are also good options). The journal is a personal reflection, which integrates personal experiences, class content, and the feelings brought about by reflection. The journal typically is guided by the teacher, who can focus the journal on a particular experience, or to reflect upon an element of class content (such as a utility of a theory in explaining real life experiences). This is often useful for integrating abstract content with "real life" experiences.

Implementation: There are a myriad of ways in which journals can be used, and for the sake of brevity I will provide one example. In a youth and sport class, the students could write reflective journals about what their sporting experiences were as a child, and how that makes them feel as they think about those experiences. Often journals are guided a set of ideas, questions, or problems. For example, the students could be asked to reflect upon how issues of race, gender, and class shaped their sport participation (or non-participation). Perhaps these could be used as the basis for their major paper in the class.

Cautionary note: Without adequate direction, the student's journals may be less effective as they may struggle to remain "on topic."

### 4. Structured Debate

Description: An effective debate must include both facts and value judgments. A debate that relies solely on facts will be dry and boring. A debate based solely on values will be circular and inconclusive. A properly structured debate will include information from both affective and cognitive domains and require value-based interpretation.

Implementation: Provide a case for debate, and assign the students to an argument either for or against the premise provided for them. An abbreviated example will show how this could be implemented.

Senario: a high school newspaper received complaints that they typically cover men's sports, and not women's sports. The editor of the paper says that readers do not always want to read about women's sports, and if the readership gets lower than the funding for the paper (and all the opportunities that the paper offers students), the paper will be terminated. However, critics suggest that our education

system should not favor male students over female students. Be it resolved that the newspaper must cover men's and women's sport equitably, or otherwise be terminated.

The students could then debate the issue in front of the class. Assessment could include presentation skills, or logical argumentation, but also affective elements such as emotional impact can be incorporated as well.

Cautionary note: Make sure that students debate and attack *ideas*, and not the *people* articulating them. Also, most students are not familiar with the rules, culture, and conventions of debates, so be sure to fully explain how debates are undertaken.