

Knowledge and Creativity



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What's the idea?

Bloom's taxonomy is not a triangle with 'regurgitating facts' at the bottom and 'creativity' at the top.

What does it mean?

Bloom's taxonomy is a way of identifying different modes of learning. The significance of placing 'remembering' or 'knowledge' at the bottom is that this is the foundation on which all the others are built – it is the most important element, not 'low level'.

The other elements are also falsely represented as a hierarchy, as if 'analysing' is precursor to evaluating or creating. That is not true. They are each potentially independent modes of activity. Remembering that knowledge feeds into them all, however, is a good place to start with students who do not yet have much

knowledge or cultural capital to draw on.

What are the implications for teachers?

Never teach in a way that relegates knowing things to the bottom of the pile, placing 'creativity' and 'synthesis' at the top, as if you can do these things instead. The point is to emphasise how valuable secure knowledge is as the basis for all the other elements of the taxonomy.

Also try not to get bogged down in ideas about 'higher-order thinking skills' as if they are

separate from knowing things. Of course, we may want students to go beyond knowing facts of the Cold War, for example, and begin to analyse causation or evaluate the credibility of sources – but the starting point will be secure knowledge and recall of those things.

So-called 'higher order' thinking should serve to reinforce foundational knowledge, not bypass it. In fact, they can all be regarded as ways of making links between elements of knowledge and these links become forms of retrievable knowledge themselves. As Willingham says, understanding is remembering in disguise.

TOP TIP / Re-think your sense of Bloom's taxonomy to view knowledge as the foundation of all else. Knowing things for the sake of it is good because there is always a sake and knowing things never stifles creativity – one fuels the other.

Want to know more?

Pedro de Brukyere - Blog on Bloom's taxonomy (with several links to further reading).
Christine Counsell - Blog series on curriculum

