

# A Select Glossary of and Commentary on Educational Terminology for Christian Education

Pastor Edward D. Seely, Ph.D.

**Affect/Affective**, pertaining to the emotions, feelings, attitude, and caring; approach and avoidance tendencies: matters of the heart. This dimension of human learning is crucial. If we teach our students all they need to know about a subject cognitively, but they don't care about it and are not motivated to use their knowledge, that knowledge will be of very little or no use to God's Kingdom and his purposes; the students won't be motivated to use what they've learned. That knowledge will thus be wasted. As instructors we must also be sensitive to and work toward teaching in ways that help students avoid negative affect toward the subjects we're teaching. Affective objectives (*op. cit.*) address the vital dimension of human learning that is motivation to put into action what is learned. At the same time it is unrealistic to assume we can produce lessons that will cause every student to be ecstatic; however, we can do much to increase their tendency to approach rather than avoid the subjects we're teaching and especially God, his Word, and his will.

**Antecedents**, the expected and observed conditions in a teaching-learning setting (*op. cit.*) which effect the lesson plan (*op. cit.*) and the outcomes the plan produces, such as the accomplishment or failure to accomplish the objectives (*op. cit.*) of that setting, e.g., the conference, course, retreat, or seminar.

1. **Expected Antecedents**, a statement of the anticipated conditions of a teaching-learning setting, e.g., the number of students who will attend, size of the room in which the teaching will occur, where the teaching will be done (e.g., in a well-equipped classroom or outside under a tree), what resources will be available (e.g., chalkboard, computer, desk chairs, desks, digital projector, dry erase board, lighting, overhead projector, spare bulbs for all projectors, tables), temperature and other weather-related matters. Other expected antecedents necessary to consider if the setting is in an extended format such as a conference, retreat, or seminar include food and living accommodations and transportation.
2. **Observed Antecedents**, a statement of the actual conditions seen upon arrival at the location of the teaching-learning setting. The degree which the observed antecedents are congruent with (i.e., match) the expected antecedents indicates whether, and if so how many, changes need to be made in the lesson plan (*op. cit.*).

**Application**, one part of learning transfer (*op. cit.*), the learner's ability to put into practice in all relevant aspects of his or her life what he or she has learned.

**Assessment**, a step in the evaluation process where observed outcomes are compared and contrasted with a preset value standard.

**Behavior/Behavioral**, observable and measurable actions done by students that indicate the understanding of, attitude toward, and performance of what has been learned. Behavioral also refers to one of the three domains of human learning: cognitive, affective, and behavioral.

**Cognitive**, pertaining to knowledge, facts, intelligence, mental functioning: matters of the mind.

**Conditions**, all the relevant circumstances in which a teaching-learning experience is undertaken, including a segment of subject matter (e.g., given John 3:16 or given the six major themes of historic Christian systematic theology), a learning activity (e.g., watching a DVD, engaging in a role play, working on a matching task), and time-frame (e.g., by the end of this class session, the end of this semester, the end of October).

**Content**, a statement identifying the subject matter to be taught in a teaching-learning setting (*op. cit.*), e.g., the concepts and skills that will be taught with accompanying resources such as the textbooks, DVDs, and maps the teacher and students will use in order to accomplish the objectives that will meet the felt and unfelt needs (*op. cit.*) of the students. See also Subject Matter (*op. cit.*).

**Curriculum**, in the narrow sense means the textbooks, lesson plans (*op. cit.*), and other materials designed for a teaching-learning setting (*op. cit.*), but in the broad sense it refers to all that is done by the teacher to help the students learn the subject matter (*op. cit.*) that will accomplish the objectives (*op. cit.*), which will meet the needs (*op. cit.*) of the students.

**Empirical**, actual, observable, measurable, scientific, contrasted with anticipated, expected, logical.

**Evaluation**, an assessment compared and contrasted with a prescribed criterion written prior to the beginning of a teaching-learning setting (*op. cit.*), e.g., a class, conference, retreat, seminar, that is used to indicate how well the objectives have been accomplished and whether the students' needs (both felt and unfelt) have been met. Evaluation consists of two types:

- 1. Formative Evaluation**, an ongoing openness to receiving, and an active search for, corrective feedback during the entire teaching process (e.g., class, conference, one-to-one mentoring, retreat, seminar, small or large group) for the purpose of making any needed midcourse or mid-presentation changes to accomplish the objectives that will meet the students' needs. Such feedback is obtained by observing student nonverbal (e.g., yawning, sleeping, disruptive behavior indicating boredom) and verbal behavior (e.g., carefully listening to student comments, both solicited and unsolicited). This type of evaluation is crucial in all Christian education, in every teaching-learning setting, for we typically have such a small amount of time when we can help people learn the most important knowledge; develop the most valuable wisdom; grow in affect toward, especially love for, God and his Word; and mature behaviorally in order to serve the Lord most effectively, that we cannot afford to be wasting any time we have with our students.

- 2. Summative Evaluation**, an assessment of all that occurred the entire time (the sum of everything) in a teaching-learning event compared and contrasted with the prescribed criterion, specifically the Level III objectives (*op. cit.*).

**How well**, a specific indication in a Level III performance objective (*op. cit.*) that precisely stipulates the level of competency a student or other learner must be able to demonstrate via a behavior in order to assure the teacher that the student has understood, developed the ability to use, and is in fact doing in daily life what the teacher has been trying to teach.

**Learning Activities**, a statement identifying the experiences that will engage the students performing tasks, individually and/or with others, which will help them develop the knowledge and especially the skills required in order to understand the content that will enable them to accomplish the objectives that will meet their needs.

**Learning Levels** (See **Taxonomy**.)

**Learning Transfer**, the student's ability to apply to many contexts in life and work the concepts, principles, skills, and other cognitive (*op. cit.*), affective (*op. cit.*), and behavioral (*op. cit.*) knowledge, caring, and functional development he or she has developed throughout a teaching-learning experience. It's what I call taking learning "from text to turf."

**Lesson Plan**, a statement listing the steps the teacher intends to take in the teaching-learning setting (*op. cit.*), including the content the teacher has assembled and the activities he or she has developed in order to accomplish the objectives that will meet the students' needs.

- **Plan A**, is what this initial intention described above is typically called. It refers to the teacher's expectation of what he or she will say and do prior to entering the class setting. Sometimes upon arrival at where the instruction is to take place, certain unexpected realities require one or more changes in the initial plan; the result of the changes is a modified strategy called Plan B.
- **Plan B**, a statement specifying what the teacher will do in each step of Plan A if the actual antecedents (*op. cit.*) are different from the expected antecedents (*op. cit.*). For example, what will the teacher do if he or she arrives at the teaching-learning setting and discovers that 10 more students have shown up in addition to the number expected and for whom the teacher does not have 10 additional textbooks, other teaching aids, work (e.g., desk) space, and chairs?

**Needs**, a statement of both the felt and unfelt deficiencies of students and other learners in a teaching-learning setting (*op. cit.*), e.g., classroom, conference, one-one mentoring, retreat, seminar.

- 1. Felt Needs**, a list of the deficiencies the learners have that they know they have and that they willingly disclose for the teacher at the beginning of the teaching-learning setting,

which informs the teacher of what he or she needs to include in his or her instruction. Such needs are obtained by asking the students what they hope to learn in and take away from this class or other teaching-learning event. This information can be obtained in a variety of ways, e.g., by asking them to verbalize their desires; by asking them to express and list these desires in a conversation in a small group; by coloring in the spokes of a wheel with a list of felt needs typical of the age group represented, with blank spokes on which the students can add other felt needs not already on the wheel. (This latter tool is especially useful with children who can read.)

2. **Unfelt Needs**, a list of the deficiencies the learners have that they are unaware of but that the teacher knows they lack (e.g., information pertinent to the subject matter that will be taught).

**Objectives**, statements of intent that indicate what a teacher plans to teach that are expressed in four distinct levels of increasing specificity, from the most general to the most specific.

### 1. Teacher-Oriented Objectives

- **Level I Objective**, a statement of the subject matter the teacher intends to teach in a given class or other learning experience (e.g., a conference, retreat, seminar), expressed in terms of what the teacher will be doing. For example: This term I plan to teach students how to witness effectively for Jesus Christ.

### 2. Student Performance Objectives

- a. **Level II Objective**, a broad statement of what the students will be able to do after the teacher's instruction. For example: The students will be able to explain why they believe in Jesus Christ as their only Savior and Lord.
- b. **Level III Objective**, a statement of specific actions the students will do that will assure the teacher that what has been taught has been understood, that the required competencies have been developed, and that the knowledge and ability to use it is being done in the students' daily lives. Level III objectives contain three parts: **observable behavior** (*op. cit.*, e.g., each student will be able to recite John 3:16 perfectly and explain correctly the meaning of each word), the **conditions** (*op. cit.*, e.g., given John 3:16, by the end of this term, each student will be able to...) under which the behavior is to be accomplished, and a specification of **how well** (*op. cit.*, e.g., each student, perfectly and explain correctly each word) the behavior is to be done. Example of a complete Level III objective for the teacher's Level I objective: Given John 3:16, each student will be able to recite John 3:16 perfectly and explain correctly the meaning of each word by the end of this term.

- c. **Level IV Objective**, the most specific of all objectives, usually appearing in the form of a test.

**Observable Behavior**, actions students and other learners do that can be seen and measured which assure the teacher that what he or she has been teaching has been understood, the capabilities including affect developed, and is being done in the learners' daily lives.

**Standard/Standard of Judgment**, the benchmark against which an assessment (*op. cit.*) is made that produces an evaluation. Two types of standards are typical in educational evaluation:

1. **Criterion Reference**, a carefully worded and detailed statement of what has to be done in order to be considered acceptable. For example, in a class on the Apostles' Creed, one objective may call for the memorization of the creed. What will the teacher consider acceptable, indicating the student has adequately memorized the creed? Will every word need to be mentioned? Or will it be OK if the student only misses one, or two, or five? Will the teacher be satisfied only if the student mentions every word and in its correct order? Or will it be OK if the student omits one word or has only one word out of place? How about if the student misses two words? Beyond what point does the student need remedial work and a retry at demonstrating the correct response? How about the whole class? Will the teacher (and the superintendent, the pastor, and/or board of elders, to whomever the teacher is accountable) require every student to recite the creed perfectly—no errors—or will he, she, or they consider it acceptable if only 90% of the students recite the creed perfectly? How about 75%? Using a criterion reference standard, the teacher may require that each student recite the entire creed with 100 % accuracy, including every word mentioned in its correct place. Thus, in evaluating each student's performance, the teacher will refer to the criterion: In Student A's recitation, were all the words stated in order? Did the whole class do so?
2. **Norm Reference**, a method of evaluation whereby the performance of a modal number of people in a learning experience is used by the teacher as the standard of evaluating individual performance. In school settings such evaluation is typically referred to as "grading on the curve." In the church school example regarding memorizing the Apostles' Creed, a teacher using (with the permission of his or her supervisor[s]) a norm reference may observe that the best performance was done by a small group of students who missed only three words. Thus, the teacher may allow any student's performance that misses three or fewer words to be considered acceptable; those who miss four or more need remedial help and will have to recite the creed again before receiving the teacher's approval.

**Subject Matter** (See **Content**.)

**Taxonomy of Objectives**, an orderly, hierarchical, classification of levels of specific performance goals in the three domains of human learning (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) in the educational literature. The levels proceed from the most basic (#1 in the lists below) to the

most complex and advanced degrees of competency in which learners demonstrate progress in cognitive, affective, and behavioral functioning.

- 1. Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives** The most familiar domain and common to church education aims, the cognitive levels can be used with children, adolescents, and adults, but of course the higher levels pertain more to adolescent and adult education, where learners have attained the capability to function mentally in abstract thought. Nevertheless, even in children's ministry it is important where appropriate to raise questions that encourage the learners to stretch their thinking to apply what God is teaching in the Bible and to begin to evaluate specific behaviors as to which are in accord with God's will and which are not. Such teaching helps children to develop beyond their present ability level. The examples of each level of cognition that follow relate to teaching Romans 12:1-2:

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

<sup>2</sup> Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (NIV)

- a. Knowledge**, basic information about and rudimentary understanding of a subject. Includes rote, accurate memorization of a passage of Scripture or other text. For example: the student's ability to memorize and accurately recite word for word Romans 12:1-2.
- b. Comprehension**, the ability to understand a subject that has been studied. For example, given Romans 12:1-2, the student is able to accurately define and explain the meaning of being "conform[ed]...to the pattern of this world" and being "transformed by the renewing of [his or her] mind."
- c. Application**, the ability of the student to relate the concept to daily life and to engage it in all related aspects of his or her life and work. For example, the student is able to give at least three examples of how people conform themselves to this world.
- d. Analysis**, the ability to distinguish among a subject's component parts, define them, and reflect on their significance. For example, the student can identify, define, and explain at least three examples of conformity to this world and of a Christian's transformation in accord with the Word of God.
- e. Synthesis**, the ability to see and reflect upon the meaning of interrelationships among a subject's component parts and their relationship with the whole subject. For example, the student will be able to identify at least three ways conformity to the world is occurring among some Christians who lack maturity in Christ; will be

able to identify at least three ways transformation according to God's Word is occurring among Christians maturing in Christ; will be able to define the sanctification process; and will be able to identify at least three results of how those in the immature levels of that process and those in the mature levels function in the church and in our society.

- f. **Evaluation**, the ability to discern that which is good and that which is substandard concerning a given subject by comparing and contrasting the components of the subject with a preset **standard** (*op. cit.*). For example: given a set of elements within a culture, being able to identify those that are consistent with the Word of God and those that are opposed to the Bible's teaching.

- 2. **Taxonomy of Affective Objectives** The levels within the **affective** (*op. cit.*) taxonomy also progress from more basic to more advanced capabilities, but especially within certain subjects many children as well as adolescents and adults can develop increasing ability to function to a degree in higher levels. This domain of human learning is crucial. Affective objectives address the vital dimension of human learning involving motivation to put into action what is learned, including obeying God's commands, a major theme throughout the Bible. (See, e.g., Exodus 19:5; 20:6; Leviticus 18:4-5; Numbers 15:40; Deuteronomy 12:28; 13:4; Joshua 1:7; 23:6; 1 Samuel 12:15; Psalm 119:2, 115, 167; Matthew 28:20; Luke 11:28; John 14:15, 21; 15:8, 10, 14; Acts 5:29; Hebrews 5:9; 11:8; 1 Peter 1:14; 1 John 2:3, 4; 3:24; 5:3; Rev. 3:3; 12:17; 14:12.)

Consider John 14:21. "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." Here we see in one verse the interrelationship and connection the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains and objectives have with each other. The knowledge and understanding of Jesus' commands are cognitive; the love for him and his and his Father's love for those who obey are affective and behavioral (the essence of the *agape* form of love); obeying the commands is behavioral. The examples that follow in the taxonomy are for a lesson on one of the most important Biblical subjects: our Lord's commission to be his witnesses. (Matthew 28:20; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15)

- a. **Receiving**, student's indication of approaching and engaging rather than avoiding learning opportunities. Example for a lesson on Christian witness: Student listens carefully and attentively to instruction from the Bible on Jesus' commissioning of us to be his witnesses.
- b. **Responding**, student actively participates in class activities. Witnessing examples: Student participates in class discussion. Student volunteers to give a presentation.
- c. **Valuing**, student chooses to rate highly certain concepts, experiences, and behaviors; student internalizes specific values and expresses indicators of those

values through visible performance. Witnessing example: Student shows concern for those who don't believe in and follow Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

- d. **Organizing**, student constructs a value system that includes diverse and disparate values but finds a way to resolve conflicting values within the system. Witnessing example: Student accepts and explains Biblical teaching that God loves the whole world and wants all people to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), but recognizing that many won't be saved (Matthew 7:13-14), he or she accepts responsibility to do all he or she can to be prepared to witness for Christ when the opportunity occurs. (1 Peter 3:15)
- e. **Characterizing by Values**, student has demonstrated over time that he or she functions consistently according to the guidance of his or her values such that he or she is known by that lifestyle. Witnessing example: Student has a reputation for loving all types of people and engages them in conversations about Christ and their relationship to him.<sup>1</sup>

**3. Taxonomy of Behavioral/Psychomotor Objectives** As with the cognitive and affective domains, the higher levels in the behavioral taxonomy require mental and emotional competency, but at least the lower levels should be used also in children's education. God's will is for children as well as teen-agers and adults to obey his Word, and children can be remarkably sensitive to others' needs and respond with surprising acts of caring, love, and obedience in accord with the Bible. The examples below, again pertaining to Christian witness, are more for learners with higher cognitive capability, specifically Piaget's levels of formal operational thought (i.e., above the ages of 10-15).

- a. **Perception/Awareness**, the ability to sense cues from the environment and respond appropriately. Witnessing example: Role playing talking to someone about Jesus after observing an instructor's demonstration.
- b. **Set development**, the readiness to act according to mental, emotional, and physical dispositions that guide the learner's response to situations he or she encounters. Witnessing example: Being ready and demonstrating ability (1 Peter 3:15) to give an account of the hope that is within when the opportunity arises.
- c. **Guided Response**, ability to learn a complex skill by imitation and trial and error where increased competency occurs through practice. Witnessing example: Willing

---

<sup>1</sup> For further information see 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 Company, Inc., 1973). Robert F. Mager, *Developing Attitude Toward Learning* (Belmont, California: Fearon Publishers, 1968). For more including key words to use in affective objective writing an excellent resource is Norman E. Gronland, *Stating Behavioral Objectives for Classroom Instruction* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1970), pp. 20-23. See also <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html>. (Accessed 05/16/2014)



and able to use principles learned to engage in conversation about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not worrying about the presentation being smooth and perfect; talking with a teacher or mentor afterward about the witness given; learning from what was done as to how to do better next time; and continuing to put into practice what was learned.

- d. **Mechanism/Basic Proficiency**, the next stage of skill development where performance is becoming “second nature” and done habitually with some confidence, predictability, and proficiency. Witness example: Feeling comfortable explaining the Gospel of Christ to a non-believer and sensing that the conversation went as well as possible.
- e. **Complex Overt Response/Expertise**, skillful performance of complex behavioral patterns done without hesitation, almost automatically, and highly coordinated. Witness example: very confident and competent explanation of the Gospel message of Christ, capably and adequately answering all the questions of the non-believer and/or skeptic.
- f. **Adaptation**, skills are well developed and can be modified to competently address related but significantly different situations. Witnessing example: able to make changes in his or her usual explanation in order to more adequately address and answer skeptics’ questions, including those intended to trap or embarrass, while still “speaking the truth in love.” (Ephesians 4:15)
- g. **Origination**, developing new patterns of functioning, using highly developed skills, in order to more adequately address and resolve a situation. Witness example: able to design and implement a new way to more effectively explain God’s plan of salvation for a unique and unfamiliar setting.<sup>2</sup>

**Teaching-Learning Setting**, any place where instruction occurs, e.g., a class, conference, course, lecture, retreat, or seminar such as in an auditorium, cafeteria, classroom, fellowship room, gymnasium, lecture hall, library, multipurpose room, or outside under a tree. As a teacher prepares to teach, it is important to consider the different aspects of each setting (see **antecedents** *op. cit.*) and how those aspects affect what the teacher can and cannot do with regard to both Plan A and Plan B (*op. cit.*). For example, if the teacher is planning to use a

---

<sup>2</sup> The above psychomotor taxonomy has been based on that of E. J. Simpson (1972). E. J. Simpson *The Classification of Educational Objectives in the Psychomotor Domain* (Washington, DC: Gryphon House, 1972). See <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html#sthash.hme5yjaP.dpuf>. (Accessed 05/16/2014) Others exist but Simpson’s is more complete, covers what the others include, and is more directly applicable to church education. See <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html>. (Accessed 05/16/2014) For a helpful chart that lists all three taxonomies, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, together with suggested instructional strategies to teach the taxonomies, see <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/strategy.html>. (Accessed 05/16/2014)

PowerPoint presentation, what will he or she do upon arrival and finding out that the projector's bulb is blown and no spare is available or that the power is out?

**Transfer of Learning (See Learning Transfer.)**

For further information on the above aspects of church education and their use in the teaching-learning process, see the essays and other writings on my Web site:

[www.fromacorntoak12.com](http://www.fromacorntoak12.com).