

Providing for the most able

abilityvsability Schemes of Work

Able learner guidance for teachers

Introduction

However small the group size a teacher is working with, there will always be different levels of ability. Identifying our most able students is an ongoing process. Ability in any curriculum subject (especially the arts and sports) is often closely linked to maturation and students may reveal their ability in a range of different ways:

- through work on some material which really inspires them
- when delivering a presentation that builds their confidence
- in a written activity that reveals new developments in their use and
- in an exploration of language

Able students are very rarely easily identifiable packages. Some may be especially proficient in oral contexts but not yet show technical expertise in the subject through the principal means of assessment for most curriculum subjects - writing. Others may be reticent in class discussions and have poor standards of written presentation which mask their true abilities. To help identify students who may have special abilities, teachers should check all of the following as sources of evidence:

- test and examination results
- checklists of subject related criteria
- teachers' perceptions and observations
- parents' perceptions and observations
- peer group recognition
- self recognition

To help support these students, extension work will be beneficial - but only if it challenges and supports, stimulates and teases. Above all it should be fun - no student who has achieved wants to be presented with more of the same as a reward for their enthusiasm. Teachers must always be aware that the best extension work should be something different and interesting.

Before we look at ideas for extension work, there are some general ways in which the most able students can be supported in the classroom. These include giving them some responsibilities in the classroom, challenging them with higher level questions and supporting other learners to achieve more too. It is neither appropriate nor desirable that any work developed for gifted and talented students should develop them in minor aspects at the expense of ensuring their full human development.

There are three main types of curriculum provision for gifted and talented pupils - enrichment, extension and acceleration.

Enrichment is used as a distinct teaching and learning strategy when there is planned intervention on behalf of gifted and talented students in order to broaden their knowledge and understanding beyond the usual parameters of a subject or topic. Enrichment will usually occur through the use of additional resources and learning opportunities or may consist of classroom exercises or be a more opened ended project type piece of work. Enrichment resources could be used to enrich each lesson for gifted and talented students, or be provided for students who have already achieved more in the curriculum and so can then spend a longer period of time with the enrichment materials.

Extension provision is used for gifted and talented students when they are encouraged to use higher order thinking skills, work practices and response skills than might normally be expected from students of their age. Perhaps one of the most popular ways in which extension is used in the classroom is through the use of thinking skills. Using schemes such as Bloom's taxonomy, gifted and talented students can be encouraged to access materials and focus on teaching and learning tasks which require higher order skills. Alternative approaches will see the gifted and talented student challenged through the use of greater degrees of independent and self directed learning. More information about Bloom's taxonomy is provided at the end of this article.

Acceleration is used as a distinct teaching and learning strategy when a student is moved to work with older students, or when the work of older students is taken and used in a class of younger students. Although acceleration can work well with some students it does not suit all, particularly not those who are still developing their social skills. Generally it is helpful to work through strategies of enrichment and

extension before accelerating a pupil and where acceleration is to be used it is important to liaise with other colleagues and schools that the pupil might transfer to so that a seamless approach can be ensured.

Each of these approaches to gifted and talented provision can be used with *abilityvsability* materials. Teachers might like to use the organisation of enrichment and extension approaches to develop their provision. To apply this alongside the Bloom's higher order question cues that provide useful thinking triggers could provide a useful grid for development. An example is given below:

<i>Scheme of work/stage or lesson</i>	<i>Bloom's taxonomy - think about enriching and extending</i>		
	<i>Analyse</i> <i>analyse, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select, explain, infer</i>	<i>Synthesise</i> <i>combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, design, invent, what if?, compose, formulate, prepare, generalise, rewrite</i>	<i>Create</i> <i>assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure, recommend, convince, select, judge, explain, discriminate, support, conclude, compare, summarise</i>
<i>Stage 1</i>			
<i>Stage 2</i>			
<i>Stage 3 (and so on)</i>			

Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom organises learning into a taxonomy or categorisation of different skills learned at different ages. He identifies the first domain (or area) of learning is that of **affective** skills. Skills in the affective domain describe the way people react emotionally and their ability to feel another living thing's pain or joy. Affective objectives typically target the awareness and growth in attitudes, emotion and feelings. In **receiving**, for example - the lowest of these levels within the affective range - the pupil simply passively pays attention but still, without this, no learning can occur.

In **responding** the learner actively participates in the learning process, not only attends to a stimulus, but also reacts in some way.

In **valuing** the learner attaches a value to an object, phenomenon, or piece of information.

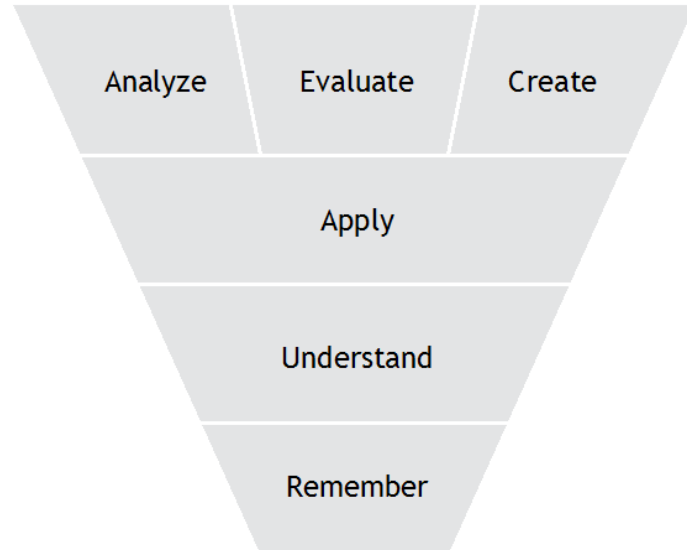
In **organizing** they can put together different values, information, and ideas and accommodate them within their own schema; comparing relating and elaborating on what has been learnt.

And in **characterizing** the learner has held a particular value or belief that now exerts influence on their behaviour so that it becomes characteristic.

The second domain of skills is the **psychomotor** group. Skills in the psychomotor domain are those of physically manipulating a tool or instrument like a hand or a hammer. Psychomotor objectives usually focus on change and/or development in behaviour and/or skills. Bloom and his colleagues never created subcategories for skills in the psychomotor domain, but since then other educators have created their own psychomotor taxonomies.

The third group is the one that is linked most closely to (conventional) education and is the one most useful in thinking about learning. Skills in the **cognitive** domain revolve around knowledge, comprehension, and 'thinking through' a particular topic.

The simplest form of understanding could be via the very basic grid below. This looks at the six levels of this domain - but note that analyse, evaluate and create are presented at the same level. These are what we conventionally call the 'higher order' skills - itself a term derived, in part, from Bloom's Taxonomy.



There are six levels in this taxonomy - as shown above. These move through the lowest order processes to the highest. Teachers will find this way of showing the levels useful in their planning of support for most able students. The first three levels are those achieved by most students. Talented and gifted young learners will find the greater challenges of analysis, evaluation and application a valuable extension of their learning development. Teachers should note that the synthesis of new learning is best demonstrated in creative activities.

Competence	Skills Demonstrated
<p>Knowledge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observation and recall of information • knowledge of dates, events, places • knowledge of major ideas • mastery of subject matter • <i>Question Cues:</i> list, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote, name, who, when, where, etc.
<p>Comprehension</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding information • grasp meaning • translate knowledge into new context • interpret facts, compare, contrast • order, group, infer causes • predict consequences • <i>Question Cues:</i> summarize, describe, interpret, contrast, predict, associate, distinguish, estimate, differentiate, discuss, extend
<p>Application</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use information • use methods, concepts, theories in new situations • solve problems using required skills or knowledge • <i>Questions Cues:</i> apply, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, show, solve, examine, modify, relate, change, classify, experiment, discover

Analysis

- seeing patterns
- organization of parts
- recognition of hidden meanings
- identification of components
- *Question Cues:*
analyse, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select, explain, infer

Synthesis

- use old ideas to create new ones
- generalize from given facts
- relate knowledge from several areas
- predict, draw conclusions
- *Question Cues:*
combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, design, invent, what if?, compose, formulate, prepare, generalise, rewrite

Evaluation

- compare and discriminate between ideas
- assess value of theories, presentations
- make choices based on reasoned argument
- verify value of evidence
- recognize subjectivity
- *Question Cues*
assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure, recommend, convince, select, judge, explain, discriminate, support, conclude, compare, summarise



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