

Notes by Sharon Starr, Gaston College

Paper Dialogue: Life Enrichment Learning Skills Domain

Cy Leise

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2:45 – 3:45

The major discussion was whether the proposed Life Enrichment Domain of learning skills, as presented in the conference paper, can be justified as a new domain to be added to cognitive, social, affective, and psychomotor. Cy argued that health and wellness has not been a good fit within the psychomotor domain but does fit well as the first level for life enrichment skills which include the five general levels or processes of (a) health and wellness, (b) identity, (c) life style, (c) community involvement, and (e) spirituality—broadly construed.

Brief notes on the session:

Learning-to-learn camps include a strong focus on personal development so this new domain may be useful for articulating the skills addressed in this context.

There was some analysis of the term “Non-conscious use” in the competency rubric (table 2) that is used across all learning skills domains. There was a suggestion to delete “non” and “use” And to substitute different words such as “Directed” and “Intuitive.” Cy noted that these suggestions may be valuable for future assessment of the competency levels as used for all domains in the classification of skills.

The term “Life enrichment” brought to mind Maslow’s “self-actualization” construct; Cy noted that this was definitely relevant because the new domain parallels Maslow’s general model in certain ways—except that Maslow did not articulate the specific skills involved at each level of his motivation model. Another problem with actually using “self-actualization” for the top level, instead of spirituality or meaning wording, is that Maslow argued that people who are self-actualized do this without having this as a goal. They live their lives in ways that end up there. Maslow’s emphasis on a pattern that moves from dealing with personal issues before being able to move to self-esteem and then community issues is matched in the hierarchy proposed for a life enrichment domain.

Several participants noted that the new domain is very values-laden, which may make it difficult to work out because of the great differences in values and beliefs about what is most important in life and in personal development. Life enrichment as a domain would have many points of overlap with the affective domain.

It was noted by some that the top level, which involves spirituality, is very subjective. Cy agreed but offered the observation that this makes the top level a reflective matter versus level three, life style, which might be where skills related to involvement in a church would fit. As a person attains greater spiritual insight, the “meaning” skills become the highlight. Joining a church and contributing fit with developing a maturing life style that will serve family as well as personal needs, but has no clear expectation of immediate spiritual growth.

Overall, the new domain would focus on ability to push toward a better quality of life.

Level 4 of the new domain, community involvement, has overlap with the social domain, e.g., leadership. In the life enrichment perspective, one way to differentiate how leadership fits would be to focus on how people support quality leadership (a article is cited), versus actually developing leadership skills themselves as is assumed in the highest level of the social domain.

It was observed that motivation is not clearly addressed. Cy noted that a categorization of skills does not solve the problem of motivation to actually do the actions implicated in each skill. A discussion of will power and self help methods resulted in insights such as the need for the approach to match not only a person's need but the skill level for "entering" the self-help model—or to do a specific skill. An elderly woman fearful of walking to stores because of safety concerns or strength would not benefit from Covey's seven principles model—but a large number of people do find it effective because they are working within the contexts Covey has in mind. Several participants noted that they recognize what they should do in terms of exercise or diet but that competent use of relevant health and wellness skills is quite difficult to achieve.

It was concluded that the Life Enrichment Domain has promise for many process education contexts such as advising, constructive intervention with students, and facilitation of personal development in contexts like learning-to-learn camps.