

# **Could we, would we, should we? Teaching Affective Outcomes in tertiary education**

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## **What is it about?**

Most teaching and assessment in higher education focus on cognitive skills of knowledge and understanding rather than on affective outcomes of values, attitudes and behaviours. Some areas of higher education, however, have pursued affective outcomes and these use particular teaching activities and assessments to do so. This session looks at a range of intended affective outcomes (available within the public domain) and seeks to develop a collective understanding of suitable approaches to achieve them.

## **Why is it important?**

Traditional education has often avoided these 'affective goals'. It is quite possible for learners to learn about their subject and be able to describe, comprehend, apply, analyse, synthesise and evaluate to the extent that they can pass their exams, without actually changing their attitudes as indicated by the way they respond or behave afterwards. Bloom, Hastings and Madaus (1971) discussed this 'educational failure' in a general context. They suggested that educators avoid being too open about their affective objectives because they are concerned about charges of indoctrination or brainwashing. In addition, many educators regard these matters as 'private' rather than public and also express concern that affective outcomes are far too long-term to be assessed within the timescale of any particular learning programme. It is relatively rare in traditional education for attainment of these values and attitudes to be openly assessed or for programmes that attempt to develop values to be evaluated on this basis.

## **How the session will be run**

Participants will work in small groups to initially identify affective attributes from lists of outcomes. They will then use their professional experience to suggest suitable teaching and learning activities that could support the attainment and assessment of these outcomes. The session will end with a discussion on limits to the extent to which tertiary education could, would or should develop affective outcomes in its graduates.

Bloom, B.S., Hastings, J.T., & Madaus, G.F. (1971). *Handbook on formative and summative evaluation of student learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.