Bloom’s Taxonomy: The Psychomotor Domain

Part Three

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**Two Taxonomies**
The psychomotor domain pays attention to kinesthetic ability and the movements, coordination, and use of motor-proficiency required to carry out physical skills—an important area of focus for massage curricula. Bloom discussed a psychomotor domain, but did not live to participate in the development of its taxonomy. Education researchers later created independent models to build on Bloom’s work. The two most popularly referenced psychomotor taxonomies are those of R.H. Dave (developed 1967–1970), and E.J. Simpson (developed 1966–1972). Dave’s is the most general and probably the most widely used for adult education. Simpson’s is appropriate to a massage training program because it addresses sensory and perception issues and works well when asking adults to practice skills outside their comfort zones. Like the cognitive and affective taxonomies, these are structured with lower-level skills building to higher-level skills.

**Dave’s Psychomotor Domain**  
*Level 1: Imitation.* The student is able to copy and replicate actions of the teacher. Key verbs used in learning objectives: adhere, copy, follow, repeat.

*Level 2: Manipulation.* The student can reproduce an activity from verbal instructions or from memory. Key verbs: build, execute, implement, perform, recreate.

*Level 3: Precision.* A student executes a skill reliably without verbal or written direction. Key verbs: calibrate, complete, control, demonstrate, perfect, show.

*Level 4: Articulation.* A student begins to adapt and integrate previously learned skills. Key verbs: combine, construct, coordinate, develop, formulate, master, modify, solve.

*Level 5: Naturalization.* When skills are mastered to the degree that they are performed on an unconscious level, the student has reached this highest level and thinks strategically, moment-by-moment, to maximize outcomes for the client. Key verbs: design, invent, manage, project-manage, specify.

**Simpson’s Psychomotor Domain**  
*Level 1: Perception.* The student prepares to learn the new skill by being aware of his or her body in space and by a willingness to absorb data. Key verbs: choose, describe, detect, distinguish, hear, identify, isolate, feel, notice, recognize, relate, select, touch.

*Level 2: Set.* The second level, like the first, is about a student’s preparation to attempt a new physical skill. For massage therapists, who must be present and aware of body mechanics, attention to preparation and set is important. Key verbs: arrange, begin, display, explain, move, prepare, proceed, react, show, state, volunteer.

*Level 3: Guided Response.* A student attempts to perform a new skill by imitating an instructor, by following written or verbal directions, or by trial and error. Key verbs: copy, follow, react, reproduce, respond, try.
Level 4: Mechanism. Skills have become habitual and are performed with confidence and proficiency. Key verbs: assemble, calibrate, complete, construct, display, make, manipulate, measure, organize, perform, shape.

Level 5: Complex Overt Response. Students can perform complex movement patterns quickly, accurately, and in a highly coordinated manner. Key verbs: same as for level 4, but adverbs or adjectives are used to indicate a higher level of performance.

Level 6: Adaptation. Students can modify techniques and movements in order to adapt to the special requirements of a unique situation. Key verbs: adapt, adjust, alter, change, integrate, rearrange, reorganize, revise, solve, vary.

Level 7: Origination. Learning outcomes are based on the creative use of highly developed skills at this level. Students might be planning and implementing complex treatment outcomes using a variety of different techniques to achieve treatment goals. Key verbs: arrange, build, combine, compose, construct, create, design, formulate, initiate, modify, originate, refine, trouble-shoot. When developing curriculum for your massage school, assess the learning objectives in each course carefully. Do they represent all three domains? Do knowledge and skill level difficulty build as the course progresses? The overall goal is a series of purposeful learning events that integrate what might otherwise be viewed as isolated and disconnected experiences.