EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

A Technical Deep Dive into the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy: Anderson and Krathwohl's Framework for Modern Pedagogy

Published: January 7, 2026 | Index ID: #15

In the mid-20th century, Benjamin Bloom led a group of educational psychologists in developing a classification system for educational objectives, which became known as Bloom's Taxonomy. While the 1956 framework revolutionized how educators approached cognitive development, the shift toward a standards-based curriculum and advances in cognitive psychology necessitated a significant overhaul. In 2001, Lorin W. Anderson (a former student of Bloom) and David R. Krathwohl published **\"A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives.\"**

This revised framework serves as a more dynamic and multi-dimensional tool for educators, moving beyond the static hierarchy of the original version. By decoupling the type of knowledge from the process of cognition, Anderson and Krathwohl provided a matrix that allows for a much more granular analysis of student learning. This article provides an exhaustive technical analysis of the revised taxonomy, its theoretical foundations, and its practical application in contemporary instructional design.

The Theoretical Shift: From Nouns to Verbs

The most visible change in the 2001 revision is the shift in terminology from nouns to verbs. In the original 1956 taxonomy, the levels were titled Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. The revision renames these to **Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating**. This shift reflects a move from thinking of learning as a static state (the acquisition of a \"thing\") to an active process (the engagement in a \"doing\").

Furthermore, the hierarchy was slightly rearranged. In the original model, Evaluation was considered the highest level of cognitive demand. In the revised model, **Creating**(formerly Synthesis) is placed at the apex, acknowledging that the act of synthesizing existing information to generate a new, original product is the most complex cognitive task a learner can perform.

The Two-Dimensional Framework

While the original taxonomy was one-dimensional, focusing solely on the cognitive process, the Anderson and Krathwohl revision introduces a **Two-Dimensional Framework**. Every learning objective is now viewed as an intersection of two dimensions: **The Knowledge Dimension** (the noun) and **The Cognitive Process Dimension** (the verb).

1. The Knowledge Dimension

The Knowledge Dimension represents the \"what\" of learning. It is divided into four primary categories, moving from concrete to abstract:

- Factual Knowledge: The basic elements students must know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems in it. This includes knowledge of terminology and knowledge of specific details and elements.
- Conceptual Knowledge: The interrelationships among the basic elements within a larger structure that enable

them to function together. This includes knowledge of classifications, principles, theories, and models.

- Procedural Knowledge: Knowledge of how to do something, including methods of inquiry, and criteria for using skills, algorithms, techniques, and methods.
- Metacognitive Knowledge: Knowledge of cognition in general as well as awareness and knowledge of one's own cognition. This involves strategic knowledge, self-knowledge, and contextual/conditional knowledge.

2. The Cognitive Process Dimension

The Cognitive Process Dimension represents the \"how\" of learning. It retains the six-level hierarchy but uses active verbs:

- Remembering: Retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory.
- Understanding: Constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining.
- Applying: Carrying out or using a procedure through executing or implementing.
- Analyzing: Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing.
- Evaluating: Making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing.
- Creating: Putting elements together to form a novel, coherent whole or make an original product through generating, planning, or producing.

The Taxonomy Table: A Matrix for Alignment

The true power of the revised taxonomy lies in the **Taxonomy Table**. This grid allows educators to map learning objectives precisely, ensuring that curriculum, instruction, and assessment are perfectly aligned. Below is a structural representation of this matrix:

Knowledge Dimension	1. Remember	2. Understand	3. Apply	4. Analyze	5. Evaluate	6. Create
A. Factual	Recalling facts	Summarizing terms	Using terms in context	Differentiating details	Checking facts	Generating fact lists
B. Conceptual	Recalling theories	Explaining concepts	Applying principles	Organizing structures	Critiquing models	Developing theories
C. Procedural	Recalling steps	Explaining methods	Executing skills	Organizing workflows	Checking efficiency	Designing procedures
D. Metacognitive	Identifying strategies	Reflecting on learning	Using strategies	Analyzing own bias	Assessing self-progress	Creating study plans

Technical Breakdown of Cognitive Processes

To implement the taxonomy effectively, one must understand the sub-processes associated with each level. Anderson and Krathwohl identified 19 specific cognitive processes across the six categories.

Level 1: Remembering

This level is characterized by **Recognizing** (identifying information in long-term memory that is consistent with presented material) and **Recalling**(retrieving relevant knowledge from long-term memory when given a prompt). It is the foundation upon which all other levels are built.

Level 2: Understanding

Understanding goes beyond simple retrieval. It includes:

- Interpreting: Changing from one form of representation (e.g., numerical) to another (e.g., verbal).
- Exemplifying: Finding a specific example of a concept or principle.
- Classifying: Determining that something belongs to a category.
- Summarizing: Abstracting a general theme or main point.
- Inferring: Drawing a logical conclusion from presented information.
- Comparing: Detecting correspondences between two ideas or objects.
- Explaining: Constructing a cause-and-effect model of a system.

Level 3: Applying

Applying involves **Executing** (applying a procedure to a familiar task) and **Implementing**(applying a procedure to an unfamiliar task). This is where knowledge becomes functional.

Level 4: Analyzing

Analysis requires **Differentiating** (distinguishing relevant from irrelevant parts), **Organizing** (identifying how elements fit together), and **Attributing** (determining the point of view or bias behind the material).

Level 5: Evaluating

Evaluation involves **Checking** (testing for internal consistency or fallacies) and **Critiquing**(judging based on external criteria or standards). It is often misunderstood as simple opinion; in the technical sense, it is judgment based on rigorous evidence.

Level 6: Creating

The highest level involves **Generating** (hypothesizing alternative solutions), **Planning** (devising a procedure for accomplishing a task), and **Producing**(inventing a product). It is the synthesis of all previous levels to produce something novel.

Practical Implementation: A Field Guide for Educators

Implementing the Anderson and Krathwohl framework requires a systematic approach to instructional design. The following steps outline the technical workflow for aligning a course module with the revised taxonomy.

Step 1: Objective Formulation

Every objective must contain a verb and a noun. For example: \"The student will be able to **differentiate** (Analyze) between **procedural and conceptual knowledge**(Conceptual Knowledge).\" This places the objective in cell B4 of the Taxonomy Table.

Step 2: Instructional Planning

Instructional activities must match the cognitive demand of the objective. If the goal is \"Applying,\" the instruction cannot merely be a lecture (which supports \"Understanding\"). It must include hands-on practice, simulations, or problem-solving exercises where the student *uses* the knowledge.

Step 3: Assessment Design

The assessment must target the same cell as the objective. A common failure in education is teaching at a high level (e.g., Analyzing) but assessing at a low level (e.g., Remembering via multiple-choice questions). To assess \"Evaluating,\" for instance, the student should be tasked with a critique or a rubric-based judgment of a case study.

Comparison: 1956 Original vs. 2001 Revision

Feature	Original Taxonomy (1956)	Revised Taxonomy (2001)
Structure	One-dimensional (Cognitive)	Two-dimensional (Knowledge & Cognitive)
Terminology	Nouns (e.g., Knowledge)	Verbs (e.g., Remembering)
Knowledge Level	Included as the first level	Separated into its own dimension
Top Level	Evaluation	Creating
Sub-categories	Less emphasized	19 specific sub-processes defined
Purpose	Classifying objectives	Planning instruction and assessment

Metacognition: The Breakthrough of the 2001 Revision

The inclusion of **Metacognitive Knowledge**was a significant advancement in the 2001 revision. It acknowledges that students who understand how they learn—and can monitor their own cognitive processes—are more effective learners. This dimension includes:

- Strategic Knowledge: Knowledge of general strategies for learning and problem-solving (e.g., mnemonics, outlining).
- Knowledge about Cognitive Tasks: Understanding that different tasks require different cognitive approaches (e.g., reading a textbook vs. reading a novel).
- Self-Knowledge: Awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses (e.g., \"I know I struggle with spatial reasoning, so I need to draw diagrams\").

By explicitly teaching metacognitive strategies, educators can help students move from being passive recipients of information to active managers of their own intellectual growth.

Case Study: Applying the Taxonomy in STEM Education

Consider a unit on Physics (Newton's Laws). In a traditional classroom, a teacher might focus on the **Remembering/Factual**cell (stating the three laws). In a Revised Bloom's-aligned classroom, the progression would look like this:

1. Remember/Factual: Define the terms \"Force,\" \"Mass,\" and \"Acceleration.\"
2. Understand/Conceptual: Explain the relationship between mass and force in your own words.
3. Apply/Procedural: Calculate the force required to move a 50kg object at a specific acceleration.
4. Analyze/Conceptual: Examine a car crash video to identify which law was most influential in the outcome.
5. Evaluate/Procedural: Critique the safety features of a vehicle based on Newtonian principles.
6. Create/Metacognitive: Design a new safety restraint system and justify the design based on personal reflection of past learning errors.

Troubleshooting Common Implementation Failures

Even with a robust framework, errors in implementation occur. The most frequent issues include:

- Cognitive Overload: Attempting to reach the \"Create\" level before students have mastered the \"Remember\"

or \"Understand\" levels for foundational facts.

- Misalignment: Providing creative assignments (Creating) but grading them solely on factual accuracy (Remembering).
- Verb Misuse: Using verbs like \"understand\" in objectives without specifying the process (e.g., is the student classifying, summarizing, or explaining?).

To solve these, educators should use the Taxonomy Table as a checklist during the syllabus design phase to ensure that for every objective, there is a corresponding activity and a corresponding assessment item.

The revision of Bloom's Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl represents a more sophisticated understanding of human cognition than its predecessor. By separating the knowledge being learned from the process of learning it, the framework provides a precise language for discussing educational outcomes. Whether used for designing a single lesson or an entire degree program, the two-dimensional matrix ensures that education remains rigorous, aligned, and focused on the development of higher-order thinking skills. In an era dominated by rapid information access, the ability to Analyze, Evaluate, and Create is more valuable than the mere ability to Remember, making the 2001 revision more relevant today than ever before.

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- **A Technical Framework for Adolescent Pedagogy: Analyzing the 9 Key Ideas for Educating in Adolescence**
  URL: http://alaskawriters.com/technical-framework-adolescent-pedagogy-9-key-ideas.pdf
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