**Learning Taxonomy**

In brief, Fink (2003) argues that much instruction today is based on passive learning, where students receive and are expected to retain information and ideas (through lecture and note-taking). In contrast, active learning involves *experiential learning* (through observing and doing) and *reflection* on what one is learning and how one is learning. Within this model he identifies six kinds of significant learning: Foundational knowledge, application, integration, human dimension, caring, and learning how to learn. What might these learning goals look like in a leadership course?

* Foundational knowledge would include knowing the history and development of the leadership theories presented in the textbook, understanding the components of each leadership model or approach, and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each model.
* Application would involve critical and creative thinking about the case studies included in the textbook, identifying practical uses of leadership theory in other contexts, and recognition of one’s own skills relative to the leadership approach being studied.
* Integration would involve the ability to connect leadership concepts and behaviors to other ideas, people and realms of life. For example, how are leaders different from other people? In what ways, if any, are all leaders the same? How does the context of leadership (such as medicine, music or sports) affect the expectations and behaviors of leaders?
* Human dimension involves learning about oneself and others. How does knowing about leadership theory help one to function and relate to others more effectively? How useful are the various leadership models and approaches for developing leadership skills in others?
* Caring would include developing new interests in leadership or caring about leadership to a greater extent than before. Students who care become engaged in leadership issues outside of the classroom and continue to develop their leadership skills.
* Learning how to learn involves the development of intellectual curiosity. Students become more aware of their own learning process and why others, including leadership theorists, pursue their unique lines of inquiry. Students continue to read and think about leadership after the conclusion of the course.

These learning goals are not hierarchical, but interactive. “Each kind of learning is related to the other kinds of learning” and can create synergy (Fink, 2003, p. 32). For example, if an instructor finds a way to help students apply a particular leadership model to the case studies in the chapter (application), “this makes it easier for them to get excited about the value of the subject (caring). Or when students learn how to effectively relate this subject to other ideas and subjects (integration), this makes it easier for students to see the significance of the course material for themselves and for others (human dimension)” (Fink, 2003, p. 32).

This pedagogical framework offers benefits for students and instructors alike. For students, the active learning model appeals to different learning styles, including visual, auditory and tactile. Assignments that draw on multiple levels of the learning taxonomy can help students integrate their learning from different chapters, as well as connect their study of leadership to others parts of the curriculum. The taxonomy also has several benefits for instructors. It can help them develop learning objectives for their courses, provide ways of assessing learning outcomes, select and adapt assignments that are more challenging for engaged students, and spark their own creativity in developing activities and projects for the class.

Instructors are encouraged to select the learning activities that best support their teaching goals, class size and demographics. The template below may help in designing your course.

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| **Learning Goals for Course** | **Procedures for Assessing Student Learning** | **Learning Activities** |
| Understand and remember key assumptions and components of various leadership models |  |  |
| Know how to apply leadership models to real-life situations |  |  |
| Be able to relate leadership theory to other academic subjects and current events |  |  |
| Understand the personal and social implications of knowing about leadership |  |  |
| Care about leadership and learning more about it |  |  |
| Know how to keep on learning about leadership |  |  |

Adapted from L. Dee Fink (2003, p. 125), *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*