

Printout of MindLadder® Advisor

Section B-5*



T-21: Assessing Implications

What we see depends on our mental vantage point no less than our physical vantage point. Assessing Implications (T-21) prepares students to survey information from different points of view. Searching for ways to consider issues and problems from perspectives other than those that at first seem self-evident, or compelling, allows students to overcome egocentric modes of functioning and improve the quality of their reasoning. It lowers the likelihood of falling prey to biases and prejudices while strengthening the mental flexibility that is a characteristic of both critical and creative thinking. By analyzing situations from different perspectives this function enables students to discover and weigh the consequences of alternative or competing approaches to problems. Both maturation and mediation contribute to the development of students' ability to approach situations from different points of view. Mental representation (T-7) and hypothetical thinking (T-11) are among the prerequisites knowledge construction functions. Assessing Implications itself provides support for Decision Making (T-20).

To develop this function engage students in either real or imagined situations that involve problems students need to solve. The problems should be ill-defined in the sense that their origin, cause or complexity initially should be largely obscure or unknown (see also B-7: Problem Based Learning). Ill-defined problems call for a search and analysis of different perspectives, possibilities and hypotheses: Frogs with deformities are turning up in the neighborhood lake; a citizens group demands a new sports stadium; a new school needs to be designed to prepare students for the knowledge economy. By their nature ill-defined problems have to be approached in a number of different and, often, competing ways. Teachers can model and reinforce the adoption of different viewpoints and encourage students to think the problem through from the perspective of as many points of view as they can identify. Lattice-type or systems thinking (T-15)

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often helps both to uncover and structure the complexities that may be involved Teachers can strengthen this function across whole group, small group and individual work formats.

David studied the community's decision to clear a portion of the forest from the viewpoint of animal and plant ecology, economics, land development, logging, as well as environmental and political interest groups. He discovered that while additional information was needed to explore each point of view (divergent thinking) certain trends emerged that tended towards the same conclusion (convergent thinking). For example, David discovered that the value of a two factor index he composed of Land Value and Quality of Life achieved its maximum in roughly the same manner for each viewpoint considered. On the basis of his convergent findings David concluded that common ground existed among the various viewpoints. Assessing the implications of different perspectives enabled David to build and present a more compelling argument for a community development plan than otherwise would have been the case.

Considering different points of view sometimes increases ambiguities and uncertainties. Sometimes it decreases them. Increases often come first. What used to be seen as simple is suddenly seen as much more complex. Consideration of different points of view may be followed by a new understanding, by decreases in ambiguity and by decreases in uncertainty. A clearer sense of the interests, attitudes, values and contingencies that form each of the diverse viewpoints in a given situation may be revealed.