

CHALLENGES IN ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

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FOCUS OF MY PRESENTATION

- Challenges in assessing students' learning outcomes
- Reliability, validity and experience of fairness in assessment
- Students' and teachers' perspectives
- Examples from our recent studies
 - 5 teacher and 54 student interviews at the end of their course after exams had been graded, using a stimulated recall method

In collaboration with Henna Asikainen, Telle Hailikari, Liisa Postareff, Milla Räisänen and Tarja Tuononen

ASSESSMENT STEERS STUDENT LEARNING – BUT THE INFLUENCE VARIES

(Lindblom-Ylänne & Lonka, 2001)

- Assessment guides learning especially for students with a reproduction orientation
 - The students study in order to be successful in the exam

”--- I knew that [this method] was going to be there for sure... So when I knew what is going to be in the exam, I felt like I don't have to study the other things”

- Students who aim at creating their own understanding are more immune to the backwash effect of assessment
 - They study in order to *learn* for themselves

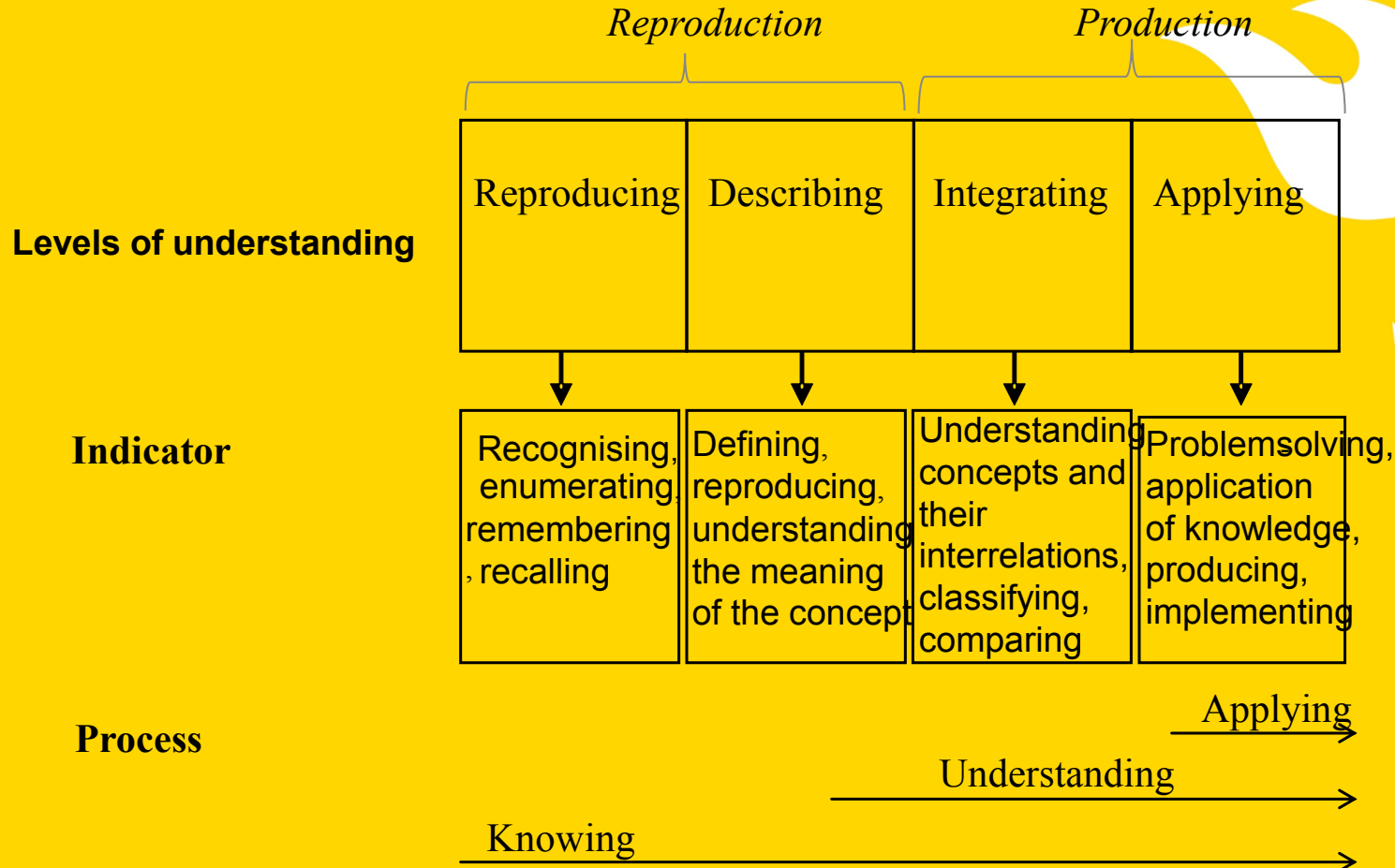
WHAT DO TEACHERS THINK THEY ASSESS IN EXAMS?

(adapted from Marton, Watkins & Tang, 1995)

SUPERFICIAL LEARNING (repetition of knowledge)		DEEP-LEVEL LEARNING (creating own understanding)	
Memorising facts, definitions	Memorising the meaning of facts, definitions	Understanding the meaning of facts and definitions	Creating a deeper and broader understanding of a phenomenon
Word-to-word repetition	Repeating a teacher's view or understanding	Creating own understanding	Broader understanding of the phenomenon

THE THREE-LAYER MODEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

(adapted from Hailikari 2009)



THE GRADES DO NOT ALWAYS REFLECT THE QUALITY OF LEARNING

(Asikainen, Virtanen, Parpala & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012; Hailikari, Postareff, Räisänen, Tuononen & Lindblom-Ylänne, in press)

- The grades and students' descriptions of their own learning and understanding can be contradictory
- The grades and level of understanding are not always in relation with each other
- **Student's view**
It's [what I learned] a little bit more than what the grade reflects. That course didn't went perfect but I didn't expect so poor grade.
- **Teacher's view**
The grades should reflect it [learning outcomes] but unfortunately they aren't reflecting it in this exam because if you answer these tasks, you don't have to know anything else but what has been told in lectures and you can achieve a good grade.

31.10.2012

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UNCLEAR ASSESSMENT CRITERIA INFLUENCES THE RELIABILITY OF ASSESSMENT

(Hailikari et al., in press)

- Assessment criteria are not always clear to the teachers themselves
 - this is reflected in the *reliability* of assessment
- **Teacher 1:**
If you think about this [exam] question, there are huge differences in the my grading even though the answers are principally of the same quality.
- **Teacher 2:**
That is actually quite scary, the evaluation of the answers can vary two points depending on the time of the day, the mood or the order I've assessed the answers.

UNCLEAR ASSESSMENT CRITERIA INFLUENCES THE VALIDITY OF ASSESSMENT

(Hailikari et al., in press)

- The exams do not always measure what the teacher intends to measure
 - this is reflected in the *validity* of assessment
- ***Teacher's view***

You just have to remember things. For God's sake [surprised], you don't have to apply and integrate knowledge in any of these tasks. The fourth task is the only one but actually it's enough that you just remember what has been talked about in lectures.

UNRELIABILITY AND UNFAIRNESS OF THE ASSESSMENT

(Hailikari et al., in press)

- The assessment is not always experienced as reliable or fair
- **Student's view**
Well, I feel that there was one bigger mistake in the middle, so I feel that I got points only from what I have known before the mistake. So everything that has happened after the mistake has been ignored somehow, so that is, I wasn't sure that has the teacher given lower points just because of the mistake.
- **Teacher's view**
One thing I can say for sure, these papers haven't been assessed one after another [sigh], she should have a grade three, for God's sake.

CONCLUSIONS

- Students' trust in teacher's fairness in assessment
 - Although they were not aware of why they received certain grades, they still considered the assessment to be fair, trusting the assessment conducted by their teacher
 - The students considered that only the teacher had the expertise to make judgments of their learning achievements
 - None of the students asked for justifications of their grades
 - If the grade did not correspond with their expectations, they rather thought that they had misjudged their own competence.

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