

Mu dictionary

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Activity: Developing a 'Mu' dictionary definition of... 3.3 explore the construction of knowledge

What do we mean by 'explore the construction of knowledge'?

A template for capturing a 'Mu' dictionary definition is provided. Use it to capture your entries for each of the following:

A: propositional definition

Complete the sentence: 'exploring the construction of knowledge' means...

B: specific examples

Examples of 'exploring the construction of knowledge' are...

C: felt meaning, personal story

Share some stories of your experiences of 'exploring the construction of knowledge'.

D: analogies, metaphors

What does 'exploring the construction of knowledge' look like? What is an image or an analogy for this?

Why a 'Mu' dictionary?

What is a 'Mu' dictionary? Why a 'Mu' dictionary?

Have you ever looked up a dictionary definition of a term and been none the wiser for your trouble? One of the shortcomings of a traditional dictionary is that the verbal, propositional definition of a term does not always convey meaning. Take the definition of 'positivism' for example:

a theory that theology and metaphysics are earlier imperfect modes of knowledge and that positive knowledge is based on natural phenomena and their properties and relations as verified by the empirical sciences.



Whether the term 'positivism' now has meaning for you will depend on how much meaning the words used to define it have for you. The actual meaning each of us takes away from the propositional definition will depend on the meaning we initially ascribe to each of the words used to describe the term. 'Shared meaning' and 'felt meaning' are not guaranteed.

'Mu' is a Japanese term, which is connected to the Greek concept of 'Arete', which implies a respect for wholeness or oneness. 'Mu' thinking rejects 'either-or' thinking in favour of 'both-and' thinking.

A 'Mu' dictionary attempts to express meaning in four different 'ways of knowing': propositional, factual, personal/experiential, conceptual. It attempts to develop greater 'felt' meaning through the use of personal story and greater 'shared' meaning through image and analogy. It also aims to develop precision and 'definition' in its true sense; i.e. the action or the power of describing, explaining, or making definite and clear. The assumption behind the approach of a 'Mu' Dictionary is that deepest understanding emerges from the integration of these four 'ways of knowing'.

Activity 1

The Mu Dictionary for 'tiger' shown below is incomplete.

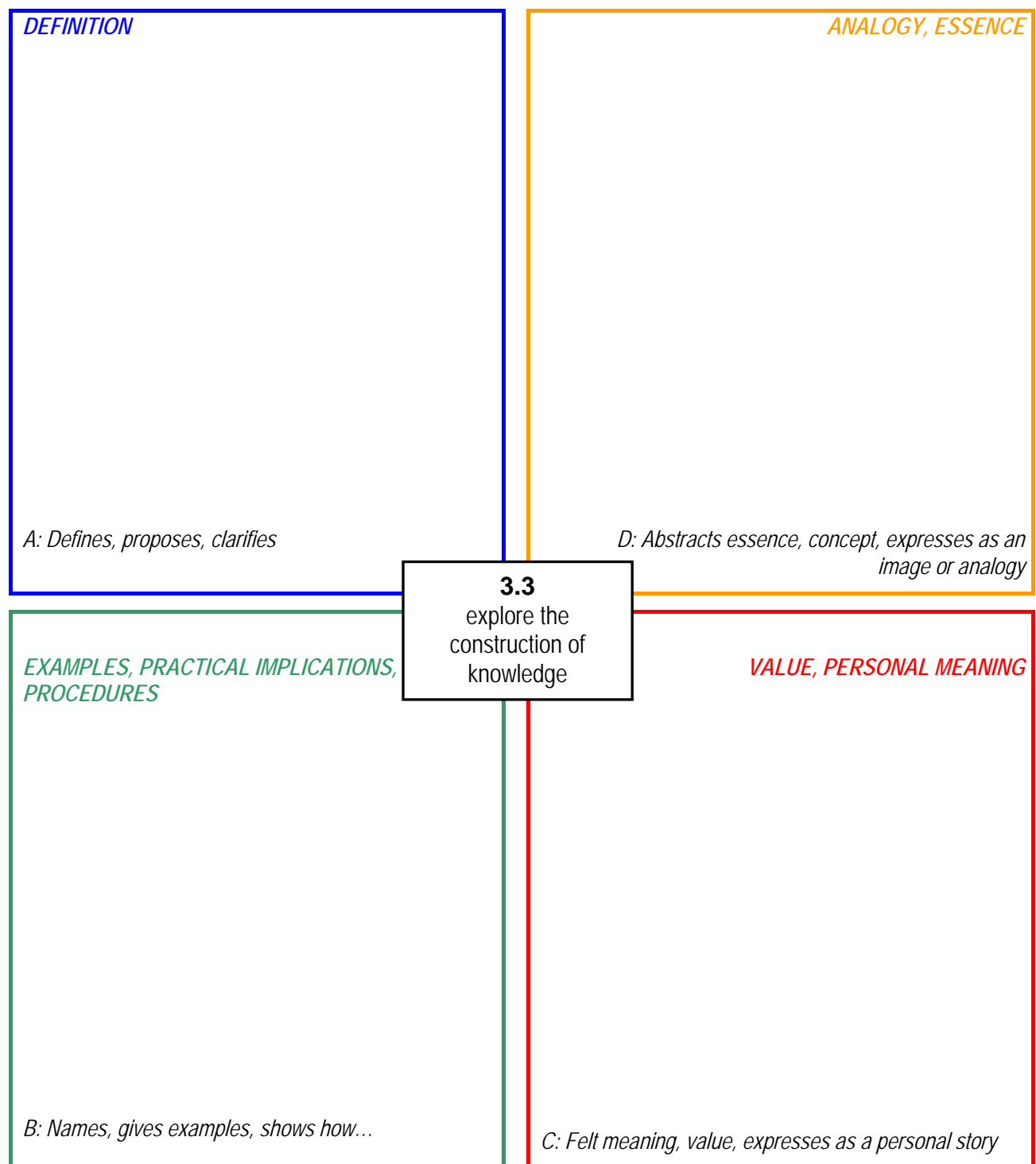
<p><i>A: Defines, proposes, clarifies, classifies. . .</i></p> <p>Tiger – a carnivorous Asian cat, the largest member of the cat family.</p> <p><i>Animalia – Chordata – Mammalia – Carnivora- Felidae</i></p>	<p><i>D: Abstracts essence, concept, expresses as image, analogy . . .</i></p> 
<p>Powerful, runs fast; tawny coat, black stripes</p> <p>Bengal tiger –occurs in India <i>Panthera tigris tigris</i></p> <p>Siberian tiger - northern <i>Panthera tigris altaica</i></p> <p><i>B: Names, gives examples, describes how . . .</i></p>	 <p><i>C: Felt meaning, value, expresses as personal story . . .</i></p>

Activity 1 continued

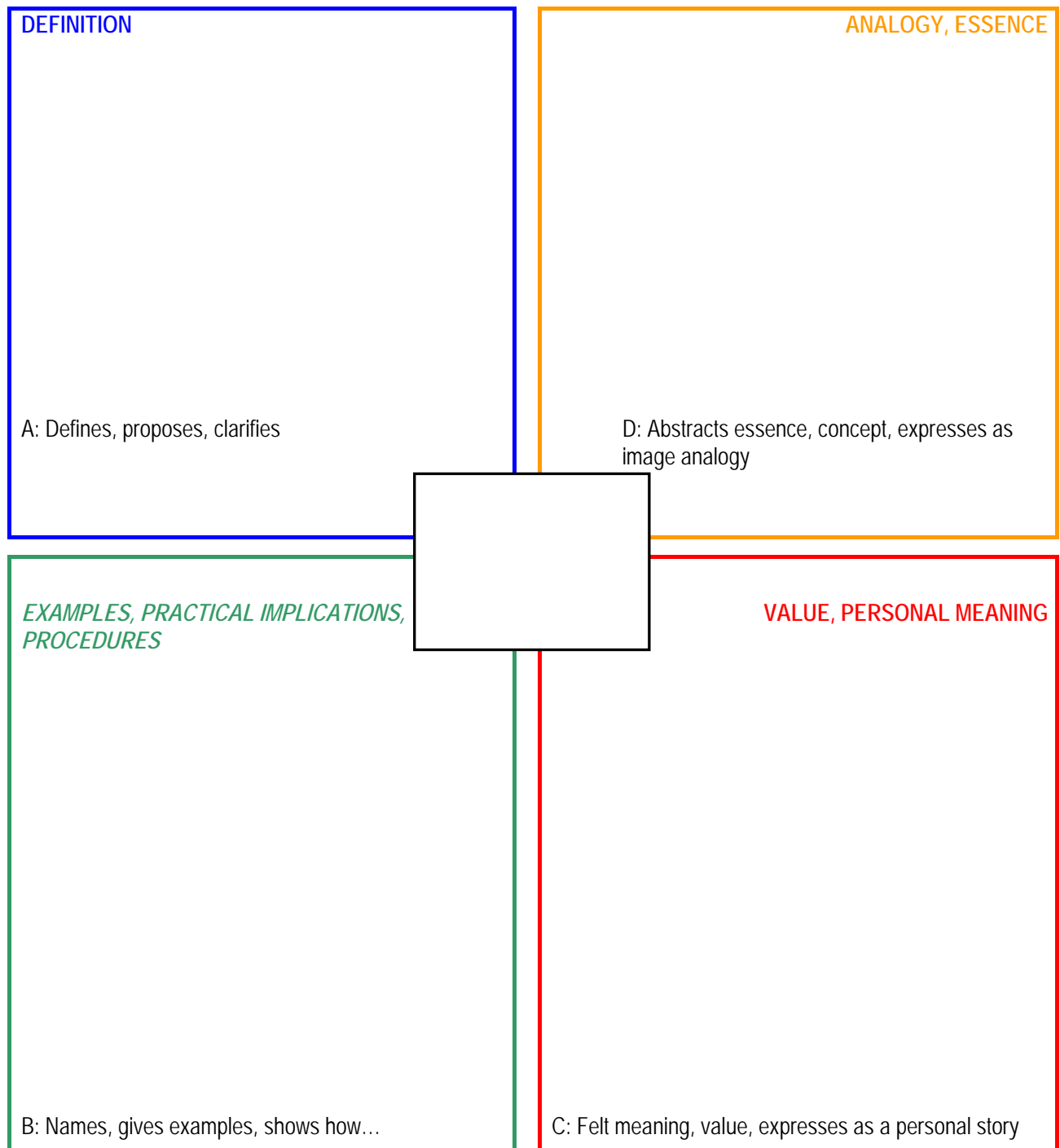
To complete the entry for 'tiger' have a go, individually or as a group, on

- adding **specific examples** of tigers to quadrant B
- connecting with any **experiences** you may have had of 'tiger' – what **emotions** did you experience? In what **context(s)** have you experienced one or more 'tigers'? Share your **stories**. Choose a story that you all relate to and capture a synopsis of the story in quadrant C.
- what is the **essence** or nature of a 'tiger'? Can you think of an analogy for 'tiger'. Imagine you are trying to communicate the 'essence' of a 'tiger' to someone who had never heard of nor seen images of a tiger but was familiar with a range of other animals – what **analogy** could you draw with other animals? What key words capture the 'essence' of tiger? Can you think of examples in which the term 'tiger' is used to imply the essence of tiger to humans or human phenomena? Include analogies, terms, 'essence' in quadrant D
- having completed 1 – 3, is there any modification you would like to make to the 'definition' in quadrant A to improve it as a propositional definition? If so, add it.

Unpacking 3.3 using 'Mu'



Template for developing a Mu definition



Activity 2: think about how you might use this activity with your students

- Develop your own Mu definition of a key concept you are developing with your students
- Have your students develop their own Mu definition on the concept

KEY CONCEPT: _____

A: propositional definition

Complete the sentence: _____ means...

B: specific examples

Examples of _____ are...

C: felt meaning, personal story

Share some stories of your experiences of _____

D: analogies, metaphors

What does _____ look like? What is an image or an analogy for this?

Using Mu with students

KNOWING ABOUT – propositional knowledge

How can I define this?
How can I describe it?
How can I explain this to someone?
Is there a rule?
Formulae?

UNDERSTANDING – conceptual knowledge

How can I express this as an image?
What's an analogy for it?
Make a model
Illustration

KNOWING EXAMPLES, KNOWING HOW - factual, procedural knowledge

Examples
Labels
Facts
Methods
Instructions
Methods
Skills

SO WHAT, WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH ME & MY LIFE? - personal story knowledge

Stories
Poems
Attitudes, feelings
Can I express this musically?
What am I going to do with what I know and can do?

An example: Unpacking the term 'Learning'

DEFINITION

Learning involves processes which lead to change in the individual's capacity to perceive differently, adapt, perform, create / re-create, express.

Learning may involve gaining / developing factual knowledge, understanding, insight, skills, attributes, values, attitudes.

A: Defines, proposes, clarifies

ANALOGY, ESSENCE

Learning is like...

- Journey
- Growth
- Construction-reconstruction; creation-recreation
- Transformation
- Enlightenment
- Empowerment
- Enrichment

Learning is to personal growth as nourishment is to physical growth.

D: Abstracts essence, concept, expresses as image analogy

TERM:

LEARNING

Julia Atkin and Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) DECS

EXAMPLES, PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS, PROCEDURES

Conditioned learning - *stimulus – reward*

Associative learning – *connecting distinct ideas*

'Surface' learning – *knows facts or information without meaning or understanding*

'Deep' learning – *learning with understanding and meaning*

Distance learning – *learning at a distance from where learning experiences are designed*

Experiential learning – *learning through experience*

Action learning – *learning through doing*

Learning & teaching strategies need to be adapted to suit the desired learning outcomes.

B: Names, gives examples, shows how...

VALUE, PERSONAL MEANING

In my experience...

Learning is stimulated by a range of motivating forces – fear, wonder, curiosity, desire, concerns.

Can involve many different emotions – frustration, desperation, excitement, enjoyment, sense of achievement.

Learning experiences that have a high emotional quality to them have a strong impact on your inner world.

C: Felt meaning, value, expresses as a personal story