

The Six Facets of Understanding

EXPLANATION

Sophisticated and apt explanations and theories that provide knowledgeable and justified accounts of events, actions, and ideas: Why is that so? What explains such events? What accounts for such action? How can we prove it? To what is this connected? How does this work?

INTERPRETATION

Narratives, translations, metaphors, images, and artistry that provide meaning: What does it mean? Why does it matter? What of it? What does it illustrate or illuminate in human experience? How does it relate to me? What makes sense?

APPLICATION

Ability to use knowledge effectively in new situations and diverse contexts: How and where can we use this knowledge, skill, or process? How should my thinking and action be modified to meet the demands of this particular situation?

PERSPECTIVE

Critical and insightful points of view: From whose point of view? From which vantage point? What is assumed or tacit that needs to be made explicit and considered? What is justified or warranted? Is there adequate evidence? Is it reasonable? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the idea? Is it plausible? What are its limits? So what? What is a novel way to look at this?

EMPATHY

The ability to get "inside" another person's feelings and world view: How does it seem to you? What do they see that I don't? What do I need to experience if I am to understand? What was the author, artist, or performer feeling, seeing, and trying to make me feel and see?

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The wisdom to know one's ignorance and how one's patterns of thought and action inform as well as prejudice understanding: How does who I am shape my views? What are the limits of my understanding? What are my blind spots? What am I prone to misunderstand because of prejudice, habit, or style? How do I learn best? What strategies work for me?