

# Prof. Rex Li's Writings

**Category:** Education

**Sub-category:** Educational Ideas

**Code:** Edu 03 – 011

**Title:** Skills, Competence / Literacy and Understanding

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**Summary/ Abstract:** It is necessary for educators to understand the meaning and connotation of these words.

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**Skills, Competence / Literacy and Understanding**

<p>Skills</p>	<p>The business paradigm tends to reduce learning to skills, so as to produce workers with skills for their jobs, thus reading skills (read instruction manual), numeracy skills (to make changes), I.T. skills (to use computers). When they need university graduates with skills to manage business, they call these “soft skills”, not the hard ones (write computer programs, surgery skills, mathematical modeling skills). The K – 12 educators jump the bandwagon and propose “generic skills”, trying to offer a “new” curriculum devoid of content, just “skills”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaboration skills</li> <li>● Communication skills</li> <li>● Creativity skills</li> <li>● Critical thinking skills</li> <li>● I.T. skills</li> <li>● Numeracy skills</li> <li>● Problem solving skills</li> <li>● Self-management skills</li> <li>● Study skills</li> </ul>
<p>Competence / Literacy</p>	<p>Competence refers to ability “internalized” and be able to apply in appropriate situation. It can be indirectly inferred from overt performance. Generally performance score unrepresents competence. More recently “literacy” becomes a new fad, somewhat similar to “competence” in usage. It is more related to subjects / disciplines. Basic concepts, when mastered and applied correctly, are seen as “competence / literacy.”</p> <p>If we were to teach for competence, such as English, we can do so not by teaching / memorizing grammatical rules; but by a wide variety of reading / speaking activities to “submerge” students so as to raise competence. We bother about “internalized” ability (sense of English) more than “skills”.</p>
<p>Understanding</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Egan offers <i>5 Kinds of Understanding</i> (1997).</li> <li>(2) Mctighe and Wiggins proposed <i>Understanding by Design</i> (2005).</li> <li>(3) Gardner’s’ “<i>Disciplined Mind</i>” (disciplined understanding) is understanding in expert knowledge.</li> <li>(4) My scheme of deep understanding can be discerned in 3 basic questions related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cognitive structures</li> <li>● Knowledge enterprises</li> <li>● Human values</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

