From Knowing to Not Knowing: An UnWorkshop on the Crucial Shift that Unleashes Real Learning

Dave Goldberg
ThreeJoy Associates, Inc.
Douglas, Michigan 49406 USA
deg@threejoy.com
Spend a few minutes writing in your journal or jotting reflections on a piece of paper.

*What’s different, special, challenging, or otherwise interesting about teaching & learning at your school?*
Debrief
Roadmap

- Larger program of the work
- Speech acts: Assertions vs. Assessments.
- Assertions-Assessments in stories.
- Thinking path analysis for story understanding & reframing.
- Thinking path analysis of imposter syndrome story.
- How imposter syndrome limits faculty authenticity and student engagement.
- The power of not knowing.
- Ways to make it safe to not know.
My intention, attachments & beliefs:

- **A central story.** I believe that there is central story that limits learning.

- **Interactive experiences, reflections, and practice steps.** We do this work with interactive experiences and practical steps.

- **No one right way.** I do believe this is the one right way to approach these concerns.

- **Power available to you now.** Using these ideas can make the power of not knowing available to you immediately.
Larger program of the work
5 Shifts in Polytechnic Education
Shift as small change in practice that gives great power in making change.
Practitioner’s way of knowing as ..

1. Technical rationality
2. Conversation-in-action
5 Shifts

1. Yogi-Schoen shift (Apply theory → CIA)
2. Brain-on-a-stick shift (Feelings allowed)
3. Wittgenstein’s shift (Language is generative action).
4. Sarasvathy’s shift (Planning to little bets)
5. The shift shift (Polarities are everywhere)
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Language Central to Tech!

• Technologists do math occasionally.
• Technologists design occasionally.
• Technologists build or construct (themselves) very rarely.
• Technologists use language **constantly** (in person, on paper, on computer or other electronic device).
• Takes many forms & purposes.
• Familiar with language as describing.
• Focus on language in creation and action.

John R. Searle (b. 1932)
Conventional vs. New View

Conventional
• We are thinking beings.
• Language separate tool we use from time to time.
• Language is descriptive and large passive.
• Language is merely an extension of thought.

New View
• We are linguistic beings.
• We are in language all the time.
• Language is generative & creative (not merely passive & descriptive).
• Language is action. To speak is to act.
Assertions versus Assessments

- **Assertions** committed to the truth.
- **Assessments** committed to expressing an opinion.

**Contrast**
- It’s 60 degrees C outside (assertion).
- It’s very hot (assessment).
- If in doubt, it’s probably an assessment.
Speech Acts in Practice

• 5 main speech acts:
  – **Assertions**: commit to truth
  – **Assessments**: give opinion
  – **Requests**: ask or direct to do
  – **Commitments**: commit or promise to do
  – **Declarations**: cause to exist

• Consider confusion of assertions and assessments.
Many academics suffer from imposter syndrome.
Outline of Imposter Syndrome Story

Imposter Syndrome Story

• I am an expert.
• Experts should know everything about their fields & a lot of other stuff, too.
• I don’t know everything, not nearly enough.
• I am an imposter.
• I am unworthy of being called an expert.
• I fear being discovered for the phony I am.
The Thinking Path

- Thought
- Action
- Feeling
- Result

Alexander Caillet
**Tablewise:** From given thoughts (story), map out feelings, actions & results that might follow from these stories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thoughts</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Results</th>
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| I am an expert.  
Experts know everything about their fields & a lot of other stuff, too.  
I don’t know enough.  
I am an imposter.  
I am unworthy of being called an expert.  
The fact that I am unworthy might be discovered by my colleagues or supervisor. | | | |
Debrief
**Tablewise:** In what ways can we change assessments of the imposter story to allow for more peaceful feelings, actions, and results.

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Debrief
4 Personal Practices to Combat Imposters Syndrome

• **I don’t know quota:** Say “I don’t know” at least 3 times a day.

• **Answer-to-Ask person Jiu Jitsu:** When asked a question, respond with question: “What do you think?” at least 3 times a day.

• **You are not an idiot check in:** I don’t know and am I being gentle with myself!

• **Kitty-puppy-baby imagery:** As needed.
Debrief
The Power of Not Knowing
Georgetown Leadership Coaching Certificate
Georgetown story
2010-11: 3 pro-bono clients
Stuck
The Morning: 18 March 2011
Love
Breakthrough
Dave’s fundamental dictum of coaching: Not knowing is more helpful to clients than knowing.
Observations: Imposter syndrome arises from need to know. Value of not knowing is rarely explored. Importance in helping another never discussed in standard pedagogy training.
Another way to view: Polarity Management
Polarity Management

Identifying and Managing Unsolvable Problems

BARRY JOHNSON PH.D.
Polarities as opposites that need other
In breakout, consider one of four polarities:

- Knowing & not knowing.
- Telling (Aristotle) & listening/questioning (Socrates/Plato)
- Teacher-led teaching & student-led learning
- **Moaching Polarity:** Mentoring (sharing knowledge) & coaching (pulling out knowledge within)

**Exercise:** Pick one of the polarities & fill in each of the four quadrants in a blank polarity map with your breakout table.
Debrief
Roomwise: Once it’s safe for staff to not be smarty pants know-it-alls, in what other ways can students be given really authority and responsibility over their own learning? How do we really turn over the keys to the learning car?
Debrief
Reflections / Closing
Spend a few minutes writing in your journal.

*What are your key takeaways action-aways from this workshop?*
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Dave Goldberg
ThreeJoy Associates, Inc.
Douglas, Michigan 49406 USA
deg@threejoy.com
ChangeMasters Club

URL: threejoy.com/coaching-club
Code: SUMMER2018

More info: deg@threejoy.com