

5 DIMENSIONS OF GROWTH OF THE HABITS OF MIND: TOWARDS A HIGHER LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY

Being good today means you have to be better tomorrow, and even better the day after tomorrow. The biggest risk is complacency."

--Peter Löscher, CEO of Siemens, as quoted by [Bloomberg Businessweek](#)

In a recent communication, James Anderson poses a most provocative question:

".....what exactly is changing as a student gets better at the Habit of Mind?"

Getting better at a disposition means that the Habits of Mind are becoming increasingly internalized: they guide our decisions, actions and choices along at least 5 dimensions (Costa and Kallick, 2008, Chapter 4). Those dimensions are:

Deepening meanings: As students develop greater understanding of each of the habits of mind they develop a greater ability to articulate more sophisticated definitions and acquire more concepts associated with the HOM. They develop a basic literacy around the language of Habits of Mind. They draw upon a greater range of examples and build more complex analogies. They connect them to their own experiences and recognize the performance of the Habit in others. They become more aware of and reflective on times when they have (or should have) used a particular habit.

Expanding capacities: Behind each of the Habits of Mind is skill base—those strategies and tools used to employ the Habit in increasingly skilful ways. Over time learners become more self-monitoring when employing those strategies, selecting appropriate strategies for the context and employing skills with increasing accuracy in sequence and concert with other dispositions.

Increasing alertness: Getting better at a Habit of Mind is to become more alert to cues in situations that call for their application. Increasingly, learners become more self-directed and able to recognize, new, novel and complex situations. They employ internal criteria to guide their decision to engage a Habit of Mind rather than relying on prompts and support from others. . Getting better means expanding the use of the Habit of Mind into an increasing range and variety of situations and contexts

Extending values: Developing a deeper appreciation of the positive results achieved when applying the disposition, learners recognize and acknowledge the benefits derived from engaging in the Habit of Mind. They choose to engage in the disposition rather than other less-productive behaviors. They express the values of the disposition not only in isolated or contextualized situations, but also to a personal valuing in their life as well as advocating for the use of the Habit of Mind by the larger community.

Building commitment: Over time learners become more self-initiating and self-directed in monitoring and evaluating their own performance of the disposition. They become more inclined and effective in self-managing, self-monitoring and self-modifying their Habits of mind. Autonomously, they set realistic goals for themselves and develop more sophisticated, qualitative, descriptive self-evaluation strategies.

Another Level of Complexity

The major reason for setting a goal is for what it makes of you to accomplish it. What it makes of you will always be the far greater value than what you get.

--Jim Rohn, American entrepreneur

Getting better goes beyond internalizing the Habits of Mind. The journey towards Internalization increasingly reveals more about us at each step along the way. The meaning and value of the HOM disclose a more humane way of life. In the process of learning the HOM, we form an identity as a thought-full, mindful, empathic human being. The HOM transcend mindfulness and bestow upon us the powers of inner wisdom and spirituality. All are of far greater value than the Habits of Mind themselves. For an example, please visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ep7MIjVqaQE&feature=BFa&list=UUmXu5kPdrfMxn4qKKZk4VaQ>

Meaning: We are not only interested in the learner's meaning of words, the question is, are they becoming more powerful meaning-makers? Are they motivated to seek meanings? Do they seek meanings of words, events, visuals, objects, etc? Are their meanings gaining greater breadth and complexity over time? Are students inclined to transfer meanings from one situation to another, making analogies, finding the nuances and whimsy of meanings? For an example, please visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDC76iuSius&feature=fvwrel>

Capacities: Not only do we want students to gain the skills and strategies basic to each of the HOM, we also want them to be capacity builders--able to "operationalize" such nominalisms and recognize the need for and have the skills to translate them into actions. Furthermore, they must also have the **will** to actualize them. Knowing the names, having the skills does not necessary mean they are inclined to use them. They may be able to define skillful listening, describe what skillful listeners do and name the pause, paraphrase, probe, etc. However, the question is, what is the likelihood that when they are in a situation that demands, skillful listening, do they?

Alertness: Yes, we want students to be aware of when to use and when not to use each of the HOM. However, the real questions are: Are my students becoming more alert to the cues in the environment that signals which HOM, combinations of HOM's and sequences of HOM to employ. Alertness means picking up cues from the environment then drawing upon and employing a repertoire of strategies. Do they gather data to know when the HOM

is NOT working, and do they know how to evaluate its use and effectiveness and to gain greater flexibility and repertoire.

Value: While we want to have students and adults learn to value the HOM, the real question is, are they developing a set of values. Not only do they find striving for accuracy "cool", listening to others "neat" and finding humor "fun", they also are exhibiting those values in how they use their time, in the choices they make and in their advocacy. The question is, are my students developing a strong set of values to live by, to guide their choices and decisions and that they are willing to stand up for those values? This is what we mean by integrity.

Commitment: Not only do students want to get better at their HOM, they are also learning to employ our Feedback Spiral--a commitment to continued growth and learning throughout their entire lives. And, of course, are they doing so without prompting and interventions by others—they are inner-directed.

"Commitment unlocks the doors of imagination, allows vision, and gives us the "right stuff" to turn our dreams into reality."

James Womack