

Comparing Actualizing Versus Limiting Internal Questions: Exploring what Guides our Thinking and Action During a Day of Teaching

From transformativeclassroom.com by John Shindler

If we examine our thinking during a day of teaching closely, we will notice that it is influenced by a vast set of guiding assumptions, values, conditioned thoughts and narratives. And to a great extent, we are asking and answering questions internally that reflect all these guiding values and assumptions. These questions largely define the content of our mind – both in our unconscious as well as our conscious thoughts, and are then eventually played out as our choices and actions. In a significant way the quality of our work will be a manifestation of the quality of the questions that we are asking and answering throughout the day. Therefore, being intentional about the use and quality of the questions that are directing our thoughts, choices, reactions and actions is of great importance, so that we are able to work with a copasetic mind, experience social and emotional well-being and to produce the best outcomes in our work.

The table below outlines a comparison between internal guiding questions that could be characterized as “actualizing” – those that encourage growth, empowerment, mental health and a clear-sighted understanding of reality, contrasted to those that could be characterized as “limiting” – defined by their tendency to confine thinking, play to the ego, cause distress, and encourage fear-based actions and reactions. The two categories are defined by a series of contrasting sub-factors – expansive vs binary, growth promoting vs excuse promoting, commitment vs. cleverness, true reality vs appearances, freshness encouraging vs stuckness encouraging, and those that promote a psychology of success vs a psychology of failure (See TCM Ch 7).

Actualizing Questions	Limiting Questions
<p>Expansive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ How can I encourage more student engagement? ✚ How can I move another step up the effectiveness pathway into the 1-Quadrant? (See TCM Matrix) ✚ Is there a better way to do this? ✚ Where is our growth edge or ZPD? 	<p>Binary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Are my students on task? ✚ Was it a good day or not? ✚ Did it work? ✚ Do they like me?
<p>Commitment-Based</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ What did I say I would do? ✚ What did I commit to? ✚ What is my job? ✚ As the leader, what actions and qualities do I need to demonstrate to the whole class in this moment? 	<p>Cleverness-Based</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Is there an excuse not to follow through that I can come up with, because I feel like it would be easier not to? ✚ Since this student or the whole class is being the way they are, don't I have the right to give them less than my best?
<p>Growth and New Habit Promoting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ How can I use this opportunity to grow? ✚ Nothing changes until something changes, so what needs to change? 	<p>Resignation and Excuse Promoting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ In what ways are my students, my colleagues and/or my school disappointing to me? ✚ How much longer before the end of the day?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ What do I need to stop doing that would improve my class and my level of self-esteem? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Am I doing well enough compared to others? ✚ If my students don't care, why should I care?
<p>Seeing True Reality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Do I see all the limitless potential in this situation? ✚ Can I feel the connectedness of everything? ✚ I am always enough, all the time, so knowing that how will I be? 	<p>Seeing Only Appearances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ What are they going to do today that confirms my predictions of how they are inadequate? ✚ What am I supposed to do given everything they bring, and where they come from, and who their parents are?
<p>Freshness and Space Promoting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ How would I act if I was really in the moment? ✚ Can I be Ok with a little uncertainty? ✚ Today is a new day, so can I stop and smell the roses, and appreciate the miracle that is each person I meet? ✚ Can I see them anew and as they truly are today? 	<p>Solidness and Stuck-ness Promoting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Shouldn't they know this by now? ✚ Same *#*& new day, know what I mean? ✚ How do I need to brace myself to get through this day given all the craziness and idiots? ✚ What is it now?
<p>Psychology of Success Promoting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ How do I create more empowerment? ✚ How do I encourage a sense of cause and effect? ✚ How do I encourage all of us to focus on quality processes and being in the moment? ✚ How do I send the message that students are accepted for who they are unconditionally? ✚ How to I build connectedness among the members of the class? ✚ How to I encourage students to take risks and focus on growth over self-protection? ✚ How do I help students recognize when they have grown and how they have overcome their fear of failure to produce great things? 	<p>Psychology of Failure Promoting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ How do I help them see that I am the one in charge and they better do what I say? ✚ How do I keep them a little insecure, so they feel dependent on me and worry about losing my approval? ✚ How do I compare the products of each students work to best represent who did better? ✚ How do I challenge them to get better by making them feel inadequate and underperforming relative to others? ✚ How do I structure the room so there is not too much socializing? How do I divide to conquer? ✚ How do I create work that will lead to few students feeling challenged so I don't have to deal with their discomfort? ✚ Isn't it ok to let them play it safe and stay in their comfort zone, avoid failure, stay silent when they don't understand, they seem happier that way?