

Joshua Reyes
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It is true: developing a plan is different from executing a plan. Likewise, thinking about a course of action is different from following a course of action. Often it is not enough to have the appropriate skills to complete a task; one must actually employ those skills. This sort of distinction reminds me of what psycholinguists call *competency* versus *performance*. In language, and more generally in school, students gain competency—that is, the theoretical understanding of a subject—before they acquire the sensitivity and skill set to put their understanding to practical use. However, put in these terms the distinction between skills and dispositions begins to blur, and I believe there is good reason for that. The mechanisms that govern the development of dispositions are really not different than those that govern development of skills.

I agree that classrooms ought to be structured in a way that gives students the chance to try out what they have learned, because using what they have learned is, itself, worth learning. Performance and sensitivity are just like any other skills: they begin as external processes which, due to sustained practice, eventually become internalized, automatic. To cast the situation in a language that builds on my last journal entry, I claim that educators need to focus on building *traditions* of practice.

One reason why isolated lesson plans which highlight thinking skills, dispositions, or anything else do not effect long-term, behavioral change is that they don't allow for habituation. Traditions of practice have built into them a sense of scale measured in units of time. Annual holiday are events which happen on the order of once a year. Therefore a holiday can earn the status of tradition only after several years of observance because traditions must exist on time scales which include the many copies of the internal schedule of the event. Only then can observers internalize the routine of the event. After successful internalization, the season itself serves as cue to trigger practices associated with the holiday. If we wish students to engage in thinking skills more frequently, then they need to practice those skills over the course of a shorter scale, so that the time scale associated with the tradition can occur more often. If, for example, we wish students to practice good thinking repeatedly over the course of a day, then we need to set up a schedule that includes practice time for good thinking everyday. At that point, good thinking skills will become automatic on the scale of day.

Automaticity of ability is crucial because of limitations built into human biology. Humans have at most one locus of attention at any given time. So, students who have not habituated to thinking skills will have constantly to shift their focus from the requirements imposed by the task at hand and the requirements of what good thinking means to them. If thinking skills are not automatic, situations which require thinking skills as a tool rather than an ends will distract the student from remembering and implementing the mechanics of good thinking.

Performance over time.

I have been deliberate in my label. The term tradition is meant to evoke a sense of value judgment. I think it is appropriate to center a discussion about dispositions around values because I further believe that *all actions communicate information*. In particular, actions acquire their meaning through the lens of a society. While each individual must interpret each action on his own, the rules of the society

provides a background system of values—whether the individual accepts or rejects those values—against which he can measure new actions. In this way, societies provide meaning to actions.

In learning environments, the structure of the community singles out classes of behaviors which are seen as acceptable, even favorable, forms of communication. According to these observations, if we wish to instill intrinsic motivation in students, then we should adopt practices that value intrinsic motivation, i.e., persistent, hard work. In our praise we should not focus on the end-product, but, instead, address the hard work that went into its making. To instill a drive for improvement and initiative, praise should include a call to make the product even better. Indeed, contemporary research agrees.¹

¹See, for example, *Self-theories: Their Role in Motivation, Personality, and Development* by Carol Dweck, Psychology Press (2000).