managing the inner world of teaching

EMOTIONS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND ACTIONS

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Preface

To a great degree, we have been writing this book for about three decades. In the mid-1980s we came to the joint realization that the field of education (Bob’s focus) and the field of clinical psychology (Jana’s focus) would both be enhanced by a comprehensive theory of how the human mind operates. It was at that time that we began crafting the model presented in this book—a model driven by research and theory that explains how human beings operate on a moment-by-moment basis.

The heart of that model is the interaction among three dynamic processes: (1) our emotional responses, (2) our interpretations, and (3) our actions. Of these processes, our interpretations are the fulcrum. They are the source of our emotional reactions and our actions. The interplay of these three processes constitutes the “inner world” of human experience. It is a world in which we spend the majority of our time. It defines what we believe, how we behave, and who we are in relation to the people, events, and tasks we encounter in the outside world.

Understanding the inner world gives us control over it. This book is written specifically to and for classroom teachers with the intent of providing them with a means of understanding how and why they react to specific situations in specific ways. This knowledge provides them with the awareness and skills to ensure that all students are not only treated fairly and kindly, but in a manner that motivates and inspires them. While the information presented in this book has an obvious connection to effective classroom management, it also has implications for a much broader view of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Finally, it has implications for how our lives might be approached outside of the classroom.

—Robert J. Marzano and Jana S. Marzano
Chapter 1

Understanding the Inner World

It is a widely accepted fact that what teachers do in their classrooms can have a substantial effect on the learning of their students. If teachers engage in specific behaviors and employ specific strategies, their students tend to learn better than if they do not use those strategies. Consider the strategy of activating prior knowledge: if teachers help students recall and discuss what they already know about a topic before presenting new information regarding that topic, students tend to learn that information more readily. This applies to other strategies as well: if teachers help students generate graphic representations for what they are studying, they tend to learn the content better; if teachers expose students to content multiple times, they tend to learn it better; and so on.

There is a vast research and theory base around the teacher behaviors and instructional strategies that show promise in enhancing students’ learning. Reviews of such behaviors and strategies have been chronicled in a number of books, such as the following:

- *High-Impact Instruction: A Framework for Great Teaching* (Knight, 2013)
While it will always be important to keep abreast of teaching behaviors and instructional strategies that have the greatest chance of enhancing students’ learning, there is another aspect of effective teaching that has been virtually ignored in the literature on classroom instruction: the relationship between what teachers are thinking and feeling at any point in time and their actions at that same point in time. Historically this issue has been largely ignored, although recent years have seen calls for including the management of thoughts and emotions in the discussion of effective teaching. As Daniel Liston and Jim Garrison (2004) noted:

For too long we have left emotions in the ontological basement of educational scholarship, to be dragged up and out only when a particular topic necessitated it (e.g., classroom management, student motivation, or teacher ‘burnout’). That seems ill advised, and it is time to rebuild our academic house. When we teach, we teach with ideas and feelings. When we interact with students, we react and they respond with thoughts and emotions. (pp. 4–5)
Evidence within education is beginning to mount that the thoughts and emotions of both students and teachers play a critical role in the teaching and learning process. Reviews of research and theory as to the importance of thoughts and emotions in teaching are found in works by Izhak Berkovich and Ori Eyal (2014); Paul W. Richardson, Stuart A. Karabenick, and Helen M. G. Watt (2014); and Paul A. Schutz and Reinhard Pekrun (2007).

Andy Hargreaves (1998) framed the importance of thought and emotion quite eloquently. He stated:

- Teaching is an *emotional practice*.
- Teaching and learning involve *emotional understanding*.
- Teaching is a form of *emotional labour*.
- Teachers’ emotions are inseparable from their *moral purposes* and their ability to achieve those purposes.
- Teachers’ emotions are rooted in and affect their *selves*, identities and relationships with others.
- Teachers’ emotions are shaped by experiences of *power* and powerlessness.
- Teachers’ emotions vary with *culture and context*.

(p. 319)

The importance of thought and emotion is also quite evident in the general literature on human behavior. To illustrate, in 2003, F. Dan Richard, Charles F. Bond Jr., and Juli J. Stokes-Zoota conducted a meta-analysis of research in psychology spanning one hundred years. Their findings were reported in the article “One Hundred Years of Social Psychology Quantitatively Described.” A selection of their many findings is reported in table 1.1 (page 4).

The findings in table 1.1 are organized into two broad categories. The first section reports the findings of studies demonstrating consistency between people’s attitudes and their behavior. That section lists five reports, each of which is a synthesis of multiple studies. For example, the first report (Kim & Hunter, 1993a) summarized 138 studies. The \( r \) stands for a correlation coefficient, which is a
A measure of the relationship between two variables—in this case, people’s attitudes toward a given situation and how they behave in that situation. The correlations reported in that section of Table 1.1 range from .38 to .65. Typically, such a range is considered to indicate a medium to strong relationship between the two variables (Cohen, 1988). Taking these findings at face value, it would be safe to conclude that our attitudes are related to our behaviors—if we have positive attitudes about football games, we will likely act in a positive way when attending a football game.

The second section reports the findings of studies demonstrating the consistency between what people intend to do and what they do.
actually do. Again, the correlations are medium to large; it would be safe to conclude that if we intend to work hard on a particular day, we will likely put energy into our work on that day.

In effect, there is a viable research and theory base in the literature on education and psychology supporting the fact that what teachers think and how they feel have an impact on what they do. Stated differently, the “inner world” of teachers’ thoughts and feelings affects the “outer world” of their behaviors, which in turn influences students’ learning. In this book, we take the position that if teachers understand and monitor their inner worlds, it might go a long way toward enhancing the effectiveness of their outer worlds—their classroom behaviors and use of instructional strategies. This is a topic that, at best, has not been fully explored and, at worst, has been ignored. We begin by exploring the inner world of teaching.

The Inner World of Teaching

The dynamics of the inner world of teaching are depicted in figure 1.1 (page 6). This model has emerged over a number of decades in our joint research and writings (Marzano, 2003a; Marzano, Gaddy, Foseid, Foseid, & Marzano, 2005; Marzano & Marzano, 1987, 1989, 2003, 2010).

At the top of figure 1.1 is a box with the phrase new situation. New situations can involve people, events, and tasks. This box points to another box titled working memory. Inside that box is the term script. Working memory is always executing some form of script. The final component of figure 1.1 is titled the self-system, which is the system responsible for interpreting a new situation.

The interaction of the components of figure 1.1 illustrates the foundational dynamic of the inner world. At any moment, we are engaged in some type of mental activity. This occurs in our working memory. We examine each new situation that presents itself. Our examination or interpretation of a new situation is conducted within our self-system. This determines what we do or don’t do next.