Where's the learner starting from?

Learners come to a learning occasion in various "states" regarding the learning at hand. It can be helpful to recognise these.

Below is a four stage model[1]. See whether it rings bells with your experience of learners, and the state they may be in at the start of some learning.

①	②
I don't know that I don't know how to do it (unconscious incompetence)	*I know that I don't know how to do it* (conscious incompetence)
④	③
I know how to do it, but am not aware how (unconscious competence)	*I know how to do it, and am aware of how I am doing it* (conscious competence)

It is suggested that state 2 is an ideal state at the start of a learning experience. Are there ways in which we can help learners to be in this state?

This activity will help you think about the way we progress through these states during the process of learning.

▷ **Do**   Think about a skill that you acquired easily for example - driving a car. Track through each of the stages as they occurred for you in that learning.

① unconscious incompetence I don't know that I don't know how to do it
② conscious incompetence   I know that I don't know how to do it
③ conscious competence   I know how to do it, and am aware of how I am doing it
④ unconscious competence   I know how to do it, but am not aware how

▷ **Review**   Can you identify the characteristics of each stage?

▷ **Learn**   What helped you progress through the stages?

▷ **Do**   Now think about a skill you have had difficulty learning. Again, track through each of the stages as they occurred for you in that learning

① unconscious incompetence I don't know that I don't know how to do it
② conscious incompetence   I know that I don't know how to do it
③ conscious competence   I know how to do it, and am aware of how I am doing it
④ unconscious competence   I know how to do it, but am not aware how

▷ **Review**   Can you identify the characteristics of each stage?

▷ **Learn**   What made the progression between these stages difficult (or non-existent)?

▷ **Apply**   Are there any parallels between your experiences and the experiences of learners you work with? Do these ideas help understand their learning?

Can these ideas can be used to improve their process of learning? How might you as a teacher utilise the idea that various of the learners in a class may be at all four of the stages in relation to a particular learning?

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[1] attributed to R Dubin: exact reference unknown

Dubin, P (1962)
'Human Relations in Administration'
Prentice-Hall

Learning and "motivation"

Purpose: to consider the orientations of learners, the effects of these orientations, and the influence of school.

Some uses of the term "motivation" can get us stuck. For example, the idea that some learners "have more of it in them" than others, can lead us to a deficit view of some learners, and thence a lack of appropriate challenge.

Other uses of the term help us see that different learners have different styles of approaching achievement-related activities. We then recognise how much the tasks and contexts influence motivation.

Dweck[1] identified different motivational styles and their characteristics:

"learning orientation"	"performance orientation"
a belief that effort leads to success	a belief that ability leads to success
a belief in one's ability to improve and learn	a concern to be judged as able, and a concern to perform
a preference for challenging tasks	satisfaction from doing better than others or succeeding with little effort
derives satisfaction from personal success at difficult tasks	emphasis on interpersonal competition normative standards, public evaluation
applies problem-solving and self-instructions when engaged in task	helplessness: evaluates self negatively when task is difficult

The performance orientation is much linked to learners who say "I can't do it", when things get tough, whereas people with a learning orientation can talk themselves through the difficulties they meet, including difficulties in a learning process.

▷ *Do*   On your own, think of two learners you know who differ on this dimension.

▷ *Review*   How do these two learners differ in their approach to learning tasks?

Are there ways you have found to engage each of them?

Exchange your examples with a colleague.

▷ *Learn*   What principles inform how you can engage a learner with performance orientation?

▷ *Apply*   There are significant disadvantages to the performance orientation. In what ways can you help someone move more towards a learning orientation?
- through the tasks you devise?
- through the assessment and feedback you offer?
- through occasions when you help learners learn from each other?

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[1] Dweck C (1986), "Motivational processes affecting learning", *American Psychologist*, 41: 1040-1048