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The Soul of Teaching: Insights From 50 Years of Experience in Management Education

Amy L. Kenworthy1, Joy E. Beatty2, and Joan V. Gallos3

Abstract
This interview with Dr. Joan V. Gallos, 2023 recipient of the David L. Bradford Outstanding Educator Award from the Management and Organizational Behavior Teaching Society (MOBTS), explores the four components of what Gallos considers the “soul of teaching”—insights she wished she had understood when she began her teaching career more than 50 years ago. Her four insights advise educators to: (1) work with what they’ve got—and own it!, (2) fail in the right way (think progress, not perfection), (3) dive into the magic at the heart of teaching and learning, and (4) relax and take your time: becoming the best educator you can be is a journey of never arriving. The interview is presented to encourage others to both find the soul of their teaching and guide their individual and collective discovery of the connection, authenticity, and magic at the heart of all teaching and learning.

Keywords
management education, interview, care, academic career, learning, professional growth, authenticity

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"Soul work is deep, messy, fiery business. . . Soul at work requires questioning present structures, beliefs, and policies. It demands new and creative leadership. . . It means a work world that deeply respects, supports, and appreciates the total person." (Gallos, 1997, p. 282)

Introduction

Imagine a place that encourages soul work—one that supports us in reflecting on our curiosities, bravery, connections, engagements, vulnerabilities, and strengths. Think about how rare it is to find a space where we are encouraged to experiment, learn, and continue growing throughout our life journeys, wherever our career paths may lead.

More than 50 years ago, a group of management educators set out to create that kind of place at a conference and in a society that would not only encourage such personal growth but also celebrate its “power and magic” (Gallos, 1997, p. 282). That place of which we speak is the Management and Organizational Behavior Teaching Society (MOBTS), with its annual MOBTS conferences all over the world and its ground-breaking journals: the Journal of Management Education (JME) and the Management Teaching Review (MTR). That celebration of the unexplainable magic at the soul of teaching is the impetus for this interview article with the hope that its readers will identify for themselves what lies at the heart and soul of their teaching. Our interviewee has been on that path for decades, and she generously shares what she has discovered here.

We begin this article with some context and a few definitions, acknowledging that terms like “soul,” “magic,” and even “teaching” will mean different things to different readers. To us, the “soul of teaching” is akin to Palmer’s (2003) rich definition: “the ontological reality of being human that keeps us from regarding ourselves, our colleagues, or our students as raw material to be molded into whatever form serves the reigning economic or political regime” (p.3). Like Palmer, discovering our soul of teaching asks each of us to explore and embrace our “inner terrain” (p.4)—to look inside ourselves in a search for our own authenticity, connectedness, and opportunity for growth. Without that, Palmer cautions that educators will further entrench a “system of education so fearful of soulful things that it fails to address the real issues of our lives, dispensing data at the expense of meaning, facts at the expense of wisdom” (p.5). It is that same deeply felt sense of personal identity, authenticity, connection, and awareness that infuses our use of the phrase “soul of teaching” here. It also informs our use of the word “magic.”

We use the word “magic” to capture that aspirational and indescribable spirit that led to the founding of the MOBTS—a spirit of open, vulnerable,
and authentic community. As the first Executive Director and founding member of the Society David Bradford describes, MOBTS conferences are spaces within which educators realize they are not “alone in the wilderness”—a place where people find “colleagues, whom we respected, struggling with the same issues” and where it is “legitimate to discuss teaching issues and share mistakes and problems” (Bradford & Strauss, 1975, p. 3). That spirit and magic are captured in the MOBTS’ unique board position of OB1—a role designed to facilitate community, togetherness, and connection (i.e., be “the keeper of the magic”). This is so vital to every fabric of the Society that the MOBTS Operations Manual even provides a role description: “The OB1 is primarily responsible for maintaining the culture of the Society by keeping it consistent with its traditional values and magic. The Magic is defined as the Society’s traditions of humanism, diversity, innovation, ceremony, history keeping, and fun” (B. Charpied, personal communication, April 1, 2024).

In that same tradition, this article sets out to suggest one way to operationalize one’s soul of teaching and the magic at its core. We have set out to share and probe the experiences of an experienced educator so that all “can gain new and meaningful insights about ourselves, our students, and each other” (Edwards & Leigh, 2022, p. 432).

This is an interview with Joan V. Gallos, Professor of Leadership Emerita and former VP for Academic Affairs at Wheelock College. In addition to academic and administrative appointments at a host of other institutions, Dr. Gallos has served as President of the MOBTS and editor of JME. She is an award-winning educator and author in the field of leadership, and a management educator and consultant interested in professional effectiveness, individual and organizational change, the arts as a vehicle for leadership development, and the scholarship of learning and teaching. This interview coincides with Dr. Gallos being named the 2023 David L. Bradford Outstanding Educator Award winner by the MOBTS. The Bradford Award is the Society’s highest honor, acknowledging the lifetime achievements of an individual who focused their career on teaching and learning excellence.

Being a university educator who cares about learning and teaching is complex work, often requiring hard choices among conflicting factors like student satisfaction, educator satisfaction, and short- versus long-term thinking (Mesny et al., 2021). Yet, the recent study of business professors by these same researchers reminds us that good teaching need not be framed as a choice of student versus educator, or short- versus long-term. Their conclusion: “the most sophisticated teaching approach was multifocal,” integrating student and educator satisfaction as well as short- and long-term learning goals (ibid., p.69). May the interview article we share here, which shares the wisdom drawn from one educator’s 50-year career, challenge and encourage
us all to engage in the deep, messy, and fiery process of discovering our souls of teaching.

**Interview**

Interviewer (INT): Before we begin, I would like to say two things. First, a heartfelt congratulations on winning the David L. Bradford Outstanding Educator award. Your contributions to the MOBTS, JME, and the larger Academy have shaped management learning and education in incredibly significant and uniquely impactful ways. Second, an enormous thank you from everyone at JME for taking the time to share both your thoughts on the lessons you have learned as you reflect back upon your fifty years as an academic and your guiding words of wisdom for those of us who are navigating through our own academic journeys. I'd like to start by asking what it means to you to be the 2023 winner of this very special award?

Joan Gallos (JG): It was a genuine honor to receive the award and to give the 2023 Management and Organizational Behavior Teaching Conference (MOBTC) Bradford Award address. MOBTC has been like family to me for more than 50 years and has contributed much to my development as an educator and scholar. I took the opportunity of the award to reflect across my career and to pull together what I see now as my most important take-aways about teaching and learning. It felt right to share what I discovered in “straight talk with the family” style. No PowerPoints or fancy technology, I just wanted to speak from the heart and with deep gratitude to a very special Society.

What made MOBTS so special to me? Each summer, we came together—often in the early days with our families in tow—in the spirit of collective discovery and courageous innovation. So much of what we created together resulted in processes and approaches now taken for granted in management teaching: experiential learning, practice-based teaching, fieldwork, teamwork, the scholarship of teaching, use of simulations, films and videos in the classroom, and more. This Society has been a safe haven for management educators across the generations and career span to teach and learn together. That has sustained and nourished me on my life’s quest to explore two, big questions:

1. How do we learn, grow, and become all we can?
2. And what can we do—in the lingo of our Society, how can we teach—to maximize the chances of that happening?
I attended the 3rd Organizational Behavior Teaching Conference (the name of our annual conference before the Society added “management” to its name to recognize the full scope of its work) at Harvard in 1976—albeit as a starving graduate student showing up for a few meals. My first full conference as a presenter was in 1980 at the University of Southern California. I was scared and awestruck—people whose books and articles I had read were walking around, shaking hands, laughing, and chatting like the old friends that they were. I was a second-year graduate student who had never attended an academic conference in her life. A girl from a large and boisterous immigrant family whose disabled mother never went beyond eighth grade and whose father worked three jobs his entire life to make ends meet. This academic conference “stuff” was all new to me.

I presented a session on the implications of developmental theory for understanding pedagogy and the role of the instructor—a stream in my research and a set of ideas that still informs much of my work. We did not have PowerPoints back then—just a few hand-written transparencies for the clunky overhead projector beside me. I remember a gray-haired man, sitting in the back of the room, frantically taking notes as I spoke. After the session he raced up. He introduced himself, said how much he had learned, and asked if we could talk further. The man was Karl Weick, a renowned scholar whose work on sensemaking I knew well because it had significantly shaped management education and practice, as it continues to do today. We talked. Others joined in as we sat on a stone wall in front of a water feature in the lobby of the building—a confidence builder beyond anything this young, scared graduate student could have imagined. He, along with others, suggested I publish on the ideas. I did, earning my first writing award with a Fritz Roethlisberger Memorial Award. That was followed (under a different governance structure) by an invitation to join the Society’s board—my first of multiple stints on the board. A few years later, I was selected as the 4th editor of what is now called the Journal of Management Education.

I knew from that first encounter with Karl and others that I had found a professional home for the ups and downs, twists and turns of an academic career. And I have learned much with, from, and in this community that has served me well. This is the background to the four things “I wish I had known at my first OBTC” shared in my 2023 Bradford Award address. I am pleased to explore those further in this interview with you and the JME readers. May they save others from the bruises and that 50 years that it took me to figure all this out.

INT: For the readers who are now smiling at your bruises metaphor—primarily because we all have them—and are at the edges of their seats (or
settled in nicely into a comfortable reading space) and are waiting to hear your words of wisdom, I will share the titles of your four lessons learned before exploring each one with you. They are: (1) Work with what you’ve got—and own it!, (2) Fail in the right way. Think progress, not perfection. (3) Dive into the magic, and (4) Relax. Take your time. It’s a journey of never arriving. Let’s start with your first insight—“Work with what you’ve got — and, most importantly, own it!” Would you please share what that means to you?

JG: I spent too many years trying to be like great teachers I had known like Chris Argyris, John Kenneth Galbraith, Bob Kegan, Lee Bolman, Peter Vaill, Peter Frost, David Bradford, and others. If your graduate education was like mine, no one taught you how to teach. And, despite my getting degrees at a School of Education, no one ever talked about learning goals, pedagogical philosophies, or instructional design. So, I borrowed and mimicked—and tried to be more polished than I felt. But it was not much fun; and I was sure I was a fraud to be uncovered any day, even as the accolades and awards rolled in. I wondered often if I even had the right “stuff” for the career I had chosen. Teaching felt more a burden than a joy—and I suspect it was harder for others to connect with me because of that. Plus, even though I was a pretty good mimic, I didn’t realize in those days that it wasn’t going to work for me anyway—a young woman in an academic world of many, many, White men.

I remember in graduate school, for example, being asked to teach in my first Harvard executive program. I was to present my evolving work on developmental theory in the classroom to senior academic leaders—deans, department chairs, provosts, and the like. I watched the way the male professors dressed casually and peppered their talks with examples from their homes, children, and lives to illustrate their theories. And I saw how they were praised for “showing their vulnerability” and bringing concepts to life. My similar stories and witty illustrations—some verbatim adaptations of what I thought were clear winners—led to feedback suggesting a girl fixated on home life had no place in the lineup with the Harvard men. Stunned (and hurt), I swore I would never do executive teaching again. I actually said to the Exec Ed director (who eventually became a good friend and thankfully coaxed me years later back into the executive classroom), “You couldn’t pay me enough to be your token woman again.” Contrast that story to the welcome and encouragement from Karl and others at (M)OBTC, and you see why I have clung and served this organization for as long as I have.

It’s never easy being a pioneer, but some of the cruelty and dismissal that comes with the role can lead to important choices and discoveries. I once left a faculty position that might have led to promotion and tenure when a
well-meaning, senior colleague took me aside and said, “You’re never going to make it in this field if you keep studying and writing about non-consequential things like gender, management education, or that two-career stuff. You should switch to important things like strategy.” For weeks I struggled, wondering why I would work like a dog, fighting for tenure and the chance to stay forever in a place that didn’t value who I am? I was plowing new ground, sowing new seeds, yet being seen as a second stringer for my interests and discoveries. And, I kick myself even today that I did not publish from my dissertation on power and competition in two-career couples when related findings from that work are finally making it into print, oh so many years later, in new books like Kay and Shipman’s (2023) *The Power Code*. At the end of the semester, I quit teaching at that institution with nothing new in hand. Without realizing it, I made one of the most important career decisions of my life. I launched a process of self-discovery about my needs, strengths, and talents. I reflected upon the following:

- What do I like doing—and don’t?
- What am I good at?
- More importantly, how could I become more comfortable in my own skin? How could I better know and accept myself—and stop comparing myself to senior, male others—even if the zeitgeist wasn’t welcoming or quite ready for me yet?

The result was that I spent the next seven years at the Radcliffe Seminars—in yearly contract positions with no opportunity for tenure. I was teaching women; many were single heads of households who were under-employed and under-valued for their diversity because of the realities of the times. I loved every minute of my time there. It was some of my most joyous work, and I blossomed in confidence and technique. And I flourished when I claimed and used my skills: An English major, passionate about theatre and fiction, for example, I brought that into my teaching and developed a “leadership through literature” course. As a singer and musician who knows the power of music to touch souls, I began to use music in the classroom—to plant subliminal themes, to increase others’ reception to learning, to illustrate theory, and to infuse the classroom with joy. As a people-lover, not a stat and fact pusher, I moved to more intimate modes of teaching and discussion, finding ways for these new approaches to our shared learning and teaching experience to work even in large groups. I felt alive and, as I wrote in my chapter in the ground-breaking classic, *Rhythms of Academic Life*, by this Society’s former Executive Director and extraordinary human being, the late Peter
Frost, and our colleague Susan Taylor, I was more creative and productive in my scholarship as I found ways to run my own race in that arena, too.

Teaching is generous service, not rote performance. And we serve best when we serve from our core values—from the soul. I encourage every reader to identify your special and unique gifts. What are you good at? What do you enjoy? How can you use yourself to the fullest? Exploring questions like that has brought me both pleasure and success. Authenticity matters, both to you and to others.

**INT:** I love that in your description of your first reflective insight you include terms like intimate, passionate, generous, interests, discoveries, diversity, value, joy, and “feeling alive” all encompassed in a cocoon of self-discovery. You also describe some of your experiences using words like struggle, fighting, token, “(I) had no place (there),” stunned, hurt, and “I swore I would never do that again” in the context of finding a place, space, and people who made you feel welcomed and at home. And, thankfully for all of us, you did find that home in the MOBTS family. I can think of no better transition into your second insight which is, “When you fail — and we all do in large and small ways—fail in the right way. Think progress, not perfection. Learning, not washout.” We would love to hear your thoughts on this.

**JG:** Early in my career I was terrified of failing. I was devastated by every flop—ready again to quickly conclude that “I don’t have the right stuff.” I managed my terror by keeping to the sure winners. The result was that I began to bore myself (and others, I have no doubt). Sure, I would get good evaluations, but I knew I’d lose my soul—and my sanity—with the same exercises, activities, topics, and cases. I have always been a lover of variety, so, I began to experiment beyond my students at Radcliffe in consulting or executive teaching spaces. I don’t like doing traditional case teaching, but I do see the value in cases. I began exploring how I could use cases differently to the same end. How could I craft non-traditional cases and scenarios that address and challenge deeply rooted, often ignored, biases of the day? While it is common in today’s teaching environment, back then I did rather radical—using fiction, comedy, historical materials, participant cases, and my own scenarios. Teaching was my way to make the world a better place, so I added action-learning and community service projects. Things that worked, I added to my bag of tricks and brought them out when the context was right. Those that didn’t, I tweaked and retried or moved on. In the process, I came to understand that I would not blow up a class or a program or a career with a few mistakes. I did not have to be perfect to do what I loved. There can be no doubt that I have gotten myself into some big messes—embarrassing
flops. And, I have certainly followed my own advice to fail big! But my skills, understandings of the world and our field, and my contributions to it have grown in ways I couldn’t have predicted. My parting thought on this issue: be brave. Let yourself fail in ways that let you learn. You’ll thank yourself for the gift.

**INT:** What a beautiful connection to what so many of us love about what we do—our intentional, welcomed, and nurturing focus on never-ending learning. It is one of the greatest privileges we share as academics, supporting what you and others have so aptly coined as the “magic” of our profession. Which takes us into your third insight, “Dive into the magic.” The JME readers and I are ready to explore this with you.

**JG:** We like to talk about magic in this Society. The history of that word runs deep with us and for good reasons. Teaching is an art, and all art is fueled by a touch of magic. I am a sufferer from Post-Covid Syndrome (aka., Long Covid) and have been in rehabilitation for almost 2 years, learning how to sleep, breathe, read, write, and think again. Suddenly and shockingly losing so much of what I did—often without much thought—sent me exploring something new—I started to paint to pass the time. And I am continuously amazed at how things like canvas type and size, the amount of paint used, the chemistry and interactions of the paints and mediums—something as simple as the amount of water to mix an acrylic—result in something far beyond anything I set out to do. And the end product is usually more beautiful. There can be no better word to describe that than magic.

Before Covid, I also began writing the novel that has been in various stages and iterations since 1996. I know now what authors mean when they talk about their characters taking over and creating a tale far different from the story they originally set out to tell. It didn’t take long before my characters began speaking to me in dreams—“You can’t say that. I wouldn’t have known that piece of information” or “You need to give me a different backstory, girl. I would never have said that.” And, when I looked closely, I knew they were right. I missed it. They didn’t. Again, I am experiencing magic.

Art also has the ability to transport us to someplace unknown and unimaginable. It taps into our experiences, tacit knowledge, and other subliminal processes. As a result, something quite remarkable happens: we see ourselves and the world differently for reasons we can’t even explain. We unleash something in us we never knew we had. Good teaching does that, too. Sure, teaching is also craft, and we come to conferences like MOBTC to pick up ideas and exercises to throw into our bag of tricks. But the real art—the
teaching that touches souls, changes directions, unleashes potential, gives students hope and confidence to find new routes and answers—requires educators to dive into the magic. Things that worked for me often meant staying in the moment and not just my plan and needs. Those include:

- Go with the flow that an activity brings.
- Throw away the clock—and sometimes the design, even the syllabus—and meet people where they are.
- Ask provocative questions—ones to which we do not have the answers.
- Share in relevant and appropriate ways who we are and what we believe (while respecting others’ diversity and experiences and without asking them to believe the same as us).
- Plunge into controversial topics or deeply constructed and facilitated conversations that grab people emotionally.
- Provide ways for people to connect, communicate across their differences, and solve real problems.
- Help others see more deeply, understand their values and drivers, respect and live with differences, handle conflict productively, manage the permanent white water of change and chaos better (Vaill, 1991).

Whatever your topic, all teaching is rooted in developmental growth and unique ways of knowing. There’s magic when we enable others to learn who they are, explore what they believe, examine the consequences of their actions, identify how they learn best, and develop new talents and understandings. This includes acts of love and care, like holding another’s hand as they discover and come to terms with parts of themselves and the world that they didn’t know were there—or don’t like very much. Don’t shy away from the opportunity for that. Years from now, students may not remember the theories and facts—which may be irrelevant or incomplete anyway. They will, however, remember when they were fundamentally changed in wonderful, magical ways because they knew you.

I have won Lasting Impact awards—including one from this Society—which is gratifying in the way this wonderful David L. Bradford Outstanding Educator Award is. But I was even more pleased recently, when a student who took one of my courses about 37 years ago contacted me. He was at his MBA reunion, and he and others were talking about lasting impact from their MBA experiences. He wanted me to know, that they had agreed it was learning from my Introduction to Organizational Behavior class: I enabled them see and navigate the world differently. (A note about karma: this was at the
I truly believe teaching is sacred and enchanting work, if we let it be. I encourage everyone reading this to dive into the magic. I have no doubt that you and others around you will be thankful for it.

INT: Thank you for this reminder and gift. I have always found, since the later days of my doctoral program when I attended my first MOBTS conference (which, back then, was called ‘OBTC’), that our experiences together in the spaces and relationships we form through this Society, are infused with magic. Your lessons are no different. I find myself experiencing a deep connectedness as I listen to you and reflect upon your insights. They evoke a nostalgia intertwined with an enthusiasm for what is to come. And, now, we have the privilege to hear about your final insight, “Relax. The road is long, and you’re on a journey of never arriving.”

JG: Well, I’ll start by saying that I wholeheartedly believe 70 is indeed the new 50! So, for everyone reading this, relax... slow down. I lived too many years, especially those when my children were still at home, when burn-out and exhaustion were my middle names. There is no need to do that to yourself. Savor the moment. Pace your life. Embrace experimentation. Go with opportunities that unexpectedly present themselves to you. Let some things go, or at least move them to the back burner until you have the bandwidth to engage. Be enriched by other experiences accumulated during the wait. Explore discoveries that intrigue you. Think about your career in protean ways.

Teaching is a way of being for all deeply committed to the profession. It is not just what we do, but how we navigate the world. A career dedicated to teaching and learning can take many forms. We teach through our classroom work, as scholars and writers, as mentors and advisors, as podcaster and commentators, as administrators who make their leadership and decision-making processes visible to others, as consultants and activists, in one-on-one conversations, in written feedback and emails, in faculty meetings, in neighborhood meetings, over the coffee pot or internet, through service and volunteerism, around the kitchen table, and more. Wear your educator hat and values with pride wherever you go and spread those magical seeds. Keep taking stock wherever you are, as you would after a class or semester—what worked, what didn’t, what could have been done differently. It will keep you learning and fresh. That is the beauty and gift of never arriving. And, don’t be afraid to try the administration route, an off-beat sabbatical or summer project, a volunteer consultation, or whatever intriguing possibility might come
your way. What may look like a detour could turn out to be the path you have been searching a lifetime to find.

**INT:** And I’m grateful that my path, and those of everyone reading this interview, have brought us here, in this space, time, and place, reading this interview and experiencing a connection together with you. I wonder, when you think about these insights, which you have referred to as encompassing “the soul of teaching” for you, which of the four is the hardest to embrace and why?

**JG:** All the lessons are hard because they challenge us to expand and explore in ways that may be easier or more difficult for us. Individual differences—our personalities, our educational and life experiences—have shaped how we view and embrace the unknown. Something that seems terrifying to one person may feel like a breath of fresh air to another. A need for control, for example, may be much stronger than an ability to drop the syllabus and meet people where they are. The better we know ourselves, the easier it is to find places where innovation is possible—where we can comfortably take small steps to embrace the magic. Even small steps lead to big chances.

Each lesson also requires risk; and risk tolerances vary, too. It is always safer to stay inside the box—do as advised, follow traditions and norms, embrace a known career path lockstep, and hide behind an acceptable professional persona (and show little of who you really are). We know how to do that: become an assistant professor, teach, get good evaluations, publish, get promoted. . . rinse, repeat, and continue to full professor. That strategy, however, may ask us to forgo interesting opportunities that come to our way, suggest a detour or hiatus, or forego quick wins for possible long-term rewards.

There are no right or wrong ways to navigate a career or to find one’s professional soul. What I set out to convey to educators in my Bradford talk, especially those just starting out in our profession, is that they really do have choices about how to structure their professional lives in and out of the classroom. And, they maximize their chance of combining professional success with personal joy, when they relax, find themselves—refine themselves (we never find ourselves once and for all), make a few mistakes (and learn from them), and take some risks. In the end, authenticity matters: be true to yourself and run your own race. I would have saved myself a lot of stress and savored more of the simpler moments had I recognized the power and importance of all that earlier in my life. Teaching is sacred work. We are all here to change lives and human systems. We serve ourselves and our profession when we bring our all to the work.
INT: I agree. It is indeed a sacred road we travel together. As you just reflected, I experience today’s road as bumpier, more fractured in places, and, at times and in some ways, darker than it was in decades prior. I believe in many of the things you do. . . I believe in magic. I believe in failing big. I believe in radical experimentation with new approaches to learning and teaching to increase connectedness with my students and our larger community. However, I also worry about junior faculty today in terms of your lessons and the messages you’re giving us, which are so beautiful, and so powerful, and so important. I fear that they may come at too high a price for people who are new to this profession. Do you worry about this at all?

JG: I have a son who just finished his Ph.D. and is starting his academic life. When I look at the stresses and pressures he is finding, I appreciate the ways in which the university environment has become increasingly more complex. The financial problems post-Covid, issues of diversity and inclusion, the ways in which politics has infiltrated things like what books can be found in a library, and so on. Those are all incredibly powerful and complex issues. On the other hand, these four insights encourage people to fortify themselves for the challenging road ahead—to discover who they are and how they can bring their best selves to the work, to experiment and learn from mistakes, and to infuse their lives and work with a little of the artistry needed to get their increasingly difficult job done. I hope they will encourage junior faculty to inspire, engage, and connect with people. I know from my years in the classroom and more recent work with current students, that students are desperate for deep connection and caring others who can help them anchor in this wild and crazy storm.

All that takes us to my final insight. Have patience. Take your time. Know there will be bumps in the road. These four insights could, in fact, be a meta curriculum and exactly what higher education and all of us need to get us through these difficult times.

Having said that, I certainly do not encourage junior faculty to come in wearing costumes or doing things that are inconsiderate or offensive to others. Rather, I encourage them to stand strong in the face of the many and varied institutional pressures they will find and to search for places where they can bring innovations, creativity, and a little bit of the magic that flow from expressions of authentic selves. It will help them avoid burn out. It will free their soul at work. It will maximize their chance of really making a difference in others’ lives.

I have been speaking about these four principles as helpful to early career educators. That I believe is true. It is equally important for us all as we navigate life’s stresses. I like the line from a John Mayer song where he says,
“I’d like to think the best of me is still hiding up my sleeve.” May that be true for us all.

INT: I agree and have no doubt that you still have quite a bit up your sleeve to discover and share with the world. On that note, there is a phrase that has been used quite a bit in the literature about the “grand challenges” we are facing. How do you think those challenges are impacting both the field of management education and those who are struggling to find their place in it?

JG: Our grand challenges magnify the need for talented, authentic, and committed educators in all fields. We need the very best who have skills and courage to help us understand and resolve issues that a short time ago we wouldn’t have thought imaginable. And this is at a time when good educators, at all levels, are harder to recruit and retain. Our students are rightfully confused. Many face mental health concerns, and they are not alone. What could be better than committed educators willing to stand with our students as they engage in fun and artful ways; to explore these tough issues; and to help them distinguish facts from propaganda, opinions from data, or the benefits and limits of advances like AI.

Good teaching at its core engenders hope. It enables people to believe they can tackle a small piece of a complex problem and come up with a strategy to respond. It engenders persistence to keep trying in the face of failure. Who can model and guide that work? That question takes us back to the four insights I have shared here: educators who know and use their best selves to the fullest, who are not afraid to fail, who can learn from their mistakes (and teach others to do the same), who like to experiment, who appreciate that a changing world requires new strategies, and who have patience and persistence. The four lessons were developed for management educators. They have relevance for academic leaders and administrators, as well as audience outside of higher education.

INT: Having read through a number of your articles published in JME prior to this interview, and being particularly taken by your 1993 article titled, “Women’s Experiences and Ways of Knowing: Implications for Teaching and Learning in the Organizational Behavior Classroom” which was selected to receive the Society’s 2017 Lasting Impact Award and is powerfully reflected upon in your 2017 essay, I wonder if there have been significant women who have helped shape your journey and the insights you share here?

Without a doubt, my mother was a powerful role model in her courage and commitment to lifelong learning and development. I’m also old enough to have
been a pioneer in a number of institutions and roles, with deep appreciation for
the few role models I could find. One that stays with me—and I hadn’t thought
about the link to my lessons until you asked, but there is one—is the late Polly
Bunting, the esteemed microbiologist, former president of Radcliffe, and
Special Assistant to the Princeton President in the early days of co-education.

My first higher education job was as Princeton’s Assistant Director of the
Alumni Office. One of my responsibilities was traveling with Princeton pro-
fessors and administrators as they spoke around the country. That put me in a
car for hours of one-on-one conversation with Polly. She, for those who may
not know, was an early feminist who gained national attention in the 1960s
for calling out what she saw as a global “climate of unexpectation” for girls
and the “waste of highly talented educated womanpower.” I figured if anyone
knew how to balance career, home, and family, she did. She spoke generously
and openly about her own life and struggles: being the supportive spouse of
a rural doctor, raising her children, and continuing her science career. Her
advice to me—pacing. Don’t try to do it all at once. Never feel defeated by a
detour or hiatus. Keep your eye on the prize and make every experience along
the way worth something to you. You don’t have to look too far to find Polly
in my image of career as a long journey and advice to learn from every-
thing—even the events that may look like failure in the moment.

INT: Two shining examples of women whom you have learned from and have
helped to shape your journey. Related to that, one of the biggest takeaways of
all the things you have shared with us is the sense of connectedness you men-
tioned students are desperately in need of. I couldn’t agree more, and think
that phenomenon extends beyond students to all of us. I experience our insti-
tutions and, in some ways, our larger communities as more disconnected
today than they have been in the past.

JG: We are in a period of disconnection, ironically at a time when technology
and mobility offer opportunities for more connection than ever. Skilled edu-
cators can offer a respite from the storm—being there for their students and
colleagues, using their skills to bridge what can seem like insurmountable
differences, offering skills of connectivity and human kindness as alterna-
tives to strife. There is so much weighing heavily on the shoulders of our
students today: the burdens of war, injustice, being replaced by machines,
disrespect and disconnection, questions about the role of higher education
and the need for a college degree, and loneliness. All of which shape not only
the context in which our junior faculty are working, but also the context in
which our students are choosing to come or not come to learn with us. We
need to be anchors in this storm.
We need to come together, at places like MOBTS, to think together about how we do this—to explore what we need to know, how we need to think, and how we need to support and relate to each other. That will bring light to these dark times. That’s what makes our work sacred.

**INT:** And even if we don’t solve it, we are working on it together.

JG: And what we come up with today might be something different from what we will come up with tomorrow. The critical part is continuing the discussion, the learning, and the progress.

**INT:** It sounds like we both view the MOBTS and its conferences as an anchor that encourages faculty of all levels, spaces, places, and times to discover their own anchors. We are also acknowledging in our conversation today that we will never be good anchors for our students if we are not anchored ourselves—if we are disconnected, struggling through our own mental health issues, and unable to discover the magic and feel the passion you spoke of earlier. It is a ripple effect. We can only be anchors for others if we are anchored ourselves.

JG: Absolutely. How can we connect with and guide others if we are not connected with and anchored to our authentic selves?

**Commentary**

Dr. Gallos’ insights invite us to continuously, curiously, and vulnerably explore what it is that lives in our “inner terrains” and drives us, so that we may discover our own souls of teaching. She shares the caveat that our journeys of learning and discovery are never finished, and we will never fully “arrive” at our destinations. She encourages us to draw upon the arts, creativity, collaboration, extension, and engagement with others as we uncover our passions and interests. She does this with the acknowledgment that choosing a career in higher education is rarely an easy road to travel. As she so eloquently described, there is a “storm” around us which represents, and is represented by, the grand challenges that we face together with our students, our colleagues, our communities, our nations, and our world (Colombo, 2023; Zanoni et al., 2023). We see this not only in our journals, but also our lived experiences. With respect to our institutions and our professions, there are countless criticisms of today’s higher educational environments as having entrenched neoliberal, mechanistic, oppressive, prescriptive, and toxic cultures (Black, 2023; Jones et al., 2020). Within these environments
we experience a stripping away of the autonomy and freedom that was formerly celebrated as the cornerstone of an academic career, leaving us with a shell of hypercompetition and conformity (van Houtum & van Uden, 2022). It is through this storm that Dr. Gallos encourages us to find ways to anchor ourselves and engage in the incredibly challenging work of discovering our soul of teaching. She sees this work as providing a foundation for those around us to do the same, including our students through exposure to innovative, creative, and engaging course design.

One of the ways in which she grew and discovered her soul of teaching was through experimenting with new ways to learn and teach. Here, her learning echoes that which was celebrated in the 2023 MOBTS Lasting Impact Award given to Jerry Harvey posthumously for his 1979 article titled *Learning To Not Teach* published in JME. In his article, he passionately called for the “encouragement of disciplined experimentation in the teaching context to provide students with parameters in which they may better understand themselves and their shared humanity” (Middleton & Alday, 2023, p. 569). It is in the same spirit of growth and learning that Dr. Gallos encourages us to move beyond tradition, to embrace the unknown, draw upon that which we love, and search for moments of “pedagogical epiphany” (Eury & Hawk, 2023).

In doing this, she notes that few of us have ever been taught how to teach, yet crafting learning spaces is a significant part of our roles as educators. This is not a new discussion within the management education field, yet it is one that we have not yet resolved. As the authors of a recent study published in JME using grounded theory to explore the efficacy of current models for doctoral student training as teachers shared, “doctoral programs are not properly designed to support educator development” (Pittaway et al., 2023, p. 618). In their discussion, the authors call for the use of a scaffolding approach which includes both formal and informal components, steering doctoral program administrators away from the typical “ask(ing) students to teach too much before they are ready to do so, rather than a purposeful strategy of developing teaching” (p.640).

They are not alone in their call. In this interview, Dr. Gallos not only raises the need for greater educator training in the domain of learning and teaching, she also gives us three gifts related to this issue. First, she lets us know that even the most recognized, published, scholarly, esteemed academics have struggled with their teaching, as she so vulnerably and openly shares with stories from her own lived experience. It is here where we openly encourage junior faculty to reach out to those who are more seasoned in their experience—we have all struggled, we are all on a learning journey, reaching out to ask an esteemed scholar/teacher/practitioner about their journey, and the bumps in the road they have worked to overcome, is a wonderful way to
make a connection and experience genuine support. Second, and relatedly, Dr. Gallos reminds us that the MOBTS is comprised of people—educators, scholars, and practitioners—who come together to celebrate teaching, and to do that through the support, encouragement, engagement, discussion, shared experience, and intimate settings of its conferences which now take place on multiple continents every year. And last, but certainly not least, reading her words reminds each of us that there are others out there with thoughtfully designed, adaptable, and experience-based resources to share. There are countless articles to read, exercises to shape to our own spaces, cases to use, and so many other resources calling out to be discovered, created, extended, and shared. As Dr. Gallos explains, the MOBTS is dedicated to providing this type of professional support for educators at every experience level, from Ph.D. student through tenured professor, and from every discipline falling within the wide domain of management education. The two journals MOBTS oversees, JME and MTR, are highly respected international outlets, with JME focused on publishing cutting-edge scholarship in the teaching and learning domain, and MTR focused on publishing immediately useful active learning resources. There is something for everyone in terms of finding content that will both interest and encourage readers to connect with others who have similar interests.

In this interview article, we see this type of support richly interwoven throughout Dr. Gallos’ words and the four valuable insights she shares with us. And there are other sages, like Dr. Gallos, who have written about their lessons learned in articles that we can look to for inspiration and strength. Readers will find them scattered throughout every year of JME’s long and rich history. As a current example, Schultz and Canchaya (2023) published a commentary on Whetten’s (2007) article in JME titled, “Principles of Effective Course Design: What I Wish I Had Known about Learning-centered Teaching 30 Years Ago.” In their commentary, the authors not only share a very brief overview of Whetten’s (2007) main points, but they also create an opportunity for readers to connect with them through their own take-aways from Whetten’s work, with many of these lessons drawn from the mistakes they made in their own teaching. As Jennifer Schultz vulnerably shares, to say that she was “unprepared for teaching would have been a huge understatement. This article forever changed me as a management educator” (p. 456).

The message of “no educator is ever alone with whatever they are going through” is a theme that runs throughout most JME articles, including this one. As Dr. Gallos reminds us, it is a hopeful future when we are working together to chart a course for a continued growth and transition within the scholarship of teaching and learning. We can do this if we engage together
using interdisciplinary exploration and multidisciplinary application, embracing diversity in all its forms (Gallos, 2008). There is a richness that stems from the variety of experiences, and associated “soul of teaching” magic, we each bring to our shared journey.

Working together, with others who embrace the magic of MOBTS, we experience a community full of people who are both real and imperfect, who are vulnerable and struggling, who are faced with the, at times, overwhelming challenges of navigating the endless changes within our classrooms, communities, professions, and lives. It is an environment of \textit{hominis curans} (caring people)—a nurturing place and space which radically challenges the belief that academic environments are sterile and abstract with distinctly neoliberal and individualist agendas (Cunliffe, 2022; J. Tronto, 2017; J. C. Tronto, 2018). Within the MOBTS community, as is illustrated in this interview, there is a foundation of care, concern, and interdependence, which in turn encourages the vulnerability, collaboration, and sharing that is often absent in today’s academic environment (Deranty et al., 2023; Jones et al., 2023).

This interview is a call for everyone reading it to stand bravely, both on our own and together, connected by our wholehearted commitment to learning and teaching. It is a call to: (1) work with what we have, (2) fail (big) in our search for progress not perfection, (3) dive into the magic, and (4) know that our journeys are long, and they are best made when relaxed, reflective, focused on growth and experimentation, and wrapped in genuine connection with others. Dr. Gallos would be the first to admit that her insights are shaped by her experiences, many of which took place in a different higher education context than the one we live in today. Although her stories emerge from a career journey primarily taking place in a series of long-term, protected, tenure-track positions, her words of encouragement are aimed at educators across every type of professional engagement (e.g., full-time, part-time, shared, adjunct) to discover and embrace their souls of teaching. Regardless of the number of hours we teach, or the level of protection we are given in our institutional contracts, engaging in our teaching with curiosity, bravery, connection, vulnerability, and strength will undoubtedly simulate engagement for educators and their students (Palmer, 2003).

As our concluding thoughts, we would like to thank Dr. Gallos for bringing us together, once again, through the creation of a learning space infused with magic. In this space—one that she shaped by sharing what the “soul of teaching” means to her—she has inspired us to embrace reflection, engagement, curiosity, vulnerability, humanity, and artistry. As one of the co-authors on this interview article reflected, having been in attendance at one of Dr. Gallos’ MOBTS conferences (then called OBTC) Presidential addresses in the 1990s, she remembers hearing Dr. Gallos share a quote which was
inspired by the book *Where the Wild Things Are*. There, in that space, Dr. Gallos enthusiastically encouraged everyone to “let the wild rumpus begin.” It is through calls like that one, and the one we are sharing here, that we hope to inspire readers to come together as “courageous educators” (Gallos, 2008, p. 539), both embracing the magic of OBTS and celebrating the insights that shape our souls of teaching.

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