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The Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI)

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Abstract: *The teaching of adults is a complex, pluralistic, and multi-faceted enterprise, but there have been no published studies that beyond identification and description of perspectives toward measurement and quantitative forms of validation. This paper traces our progress toward developing and operationalizing five common perspectives on teaching adults with a new instrument called the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI)*

Over a half-century of research has revealed that the teaching of adults is a complex, pluralistic, and multi-faceted enterprise. Yet within the past several years much of the research has shown a surprisingly high level of correspondence in identifying qualitatively different perspectives on teaching. For example, in reviewing thirteen studies conducted between 1983 and 1996, Kember (1997) found only five substantively different views of teaching in higher education. All of those studies found that people conceived of teaching in ways that were remarkable similar to one or more of five perspectives on teaching. Thus, while there may be a great many variations in personal style, there seem to be relatively few substantively different ways to conceptualize the teaching of adults, at least in the context of higher education. To date, there have been no published studies that move this work beyond identification and description toward measurement and quantitative forms of validation. This paper traces our progress toward developing and operationalizing five common perspectives on teaching adults with a new instrument called the *Teaching Perspectives Inventory* (TPI).

Conceptual Framework

This work is grounded in the empirical and conceptual work of Pratt (1992; 1998). Four of his perspectives closely parallel conceptions found in Kember's review. A fifth perspective, Social Reform, was kept intact for this study because it represented the views of a small but important group of adult educators involved in social change movements. We have taken these conceptual categories (Table 1 - *Summary of Perspectives*) and translated them into items related to actions, intentions, and beliefs about learning, teaching, and knowledge. As they are now defined and operationalized, the five

perspectives are labeled Transmission, Apprenticeship, Developmental, Nurturing and Social Reform.

Instrument Development

Instrument development has evolved through successive stages of operationalizing Pratt's five perspectives into five scales concerning actions, intentions, and beliefs related to teaching. Starting with an initial 75-item, 6-point scale version and culminating in a 45-item, 5-point scale version. In 1993, an original pool of nearly one hundred items was reviewed and refined by a panel of trained adult educators acting as judges, who tested them against the conceptual framework; their inter-judge reliability in assigning items to the correct conceptual perspective was .87. The resulting 75 items were initially drafted into 6-point Likert-scale formats for response by 471 teachers of adult night school learners. Item analyses confirmed high test-retest reliabilities (.88) and internal scale consistencies ($\alpha=.79$). Factor analyses showed that the internal structure among the items corroborated the scale scoring as posited by the item development procedures with correlations between factor scores and scale scores averaging .77. Of these teachers, 63% possessed one clearly dominant perspective and another 31% showed two dominant perspectives (Chan, 1994).

In 1997, a new group of eighteen adult educators reviewed a reduced and refined set of 45 items and classified them into the appropriate perspectives with over 95% accuracy. Their review indicated that the instrument could be further shortened without loss of precision (Table 2 - *Sample Items*). This 45-item streamlined version has been further tested on more than 25 groups of teachers of adults in law, pharmacy, dietetics, workforce training, nursing, industry, fitness, as well as on adult education

graduate students and in locations spanning Canada, the United States and Singapore. These 1000+ respondents confirm the high internal consistencies of the streamlined instrument's five scales: alpha reliabilities are Transmission .81, Apprenticeship .88, Developmental .85, Nurturance .92, Social Reform .82 and the overall internal consistency is .80. More importantly, it shows that when teachers examine their own profiles, they recognize themselves and furthermore, colleagues recognize each others' orientations to teaching as represented in the profiles yielded by the TPI.

When teachers' perspectives scores are correlated with their rating of short, one-paragraph descriptors of the five perspectives (Table 1), there are moderate and significant correlations between their scale scores and the descriptive paragraphs—in other words, teachers' TPI scores validate their self-descriptions.

Findings

In total, more than 1000 respondents have thus far contributed to establishing baseline norms. As a result, respondents' individual scores can now be compared against norms of large numbers of teachers of adults (Table 3 - *Sample Profile*) and specific occupational groups (Table 4 - *Dominant Perspective by Occupation*). Across all who have taken the TPI, mid-range scores are common for Apprenticeship, Developmental and Nurturing, with somewhat lower scores common for Transmission. Still lower scores characterize the Social Reform Perspective, indicating that individuals are less committed to Social Reform (see the 50th percentile bar in Figure 3).

Among their individual scores, teachers of adults commonly possess one, and sometimes two, dominant perspectives, that is, perspectives with scores one standard deviation or more above their personal mean—the mean of all five of their TPI scores. They also commonly hold one perspective as 'recessive,' indicating their score on that perspective is one or more standard deviations below their personal mean. Teachers that are newer in their careers, and those still in training, tend to have higher Nurturing scores. Teachers whose learners are comparatively older show somewhat lower Nurturing scores. Professionals with greater fractions of their job duties devoted to teaching show higher Developmental and Nurturing scores (Table 4 –

Dominant Perspectives by Occupation). None of the scales show gender biases (Collins, 1998).

Not surprisingly, the largest single fraction of teachers indicate Nurturing as their dominant perspective (43.7%); and as expected, less than two percent of all respondents held Social Reform as their dominant perspective. However, of the 1000+ TPI respondents, only 11% held a dominant Developmental orientation to teaching—a finding that seems to contradict the conventional discourse about constructivist orientations to learning and teaching. Some 16.9% showed Transmission as dominant, 20.8% showed Apprenticeship, and 5.8% showed no dominant perspective.

An additional 200+ post-baccalaureate students in teacher education programs are at the beginning stages of a four-year longitudinal study to better understand the effects of formal training and subsequent entry into professional practice on the development of teaching perspectives. We are also following twelve university faculty members for four years to better understand changes in their orientation to teaching both during and following a formal training certificate program in higher education teaching.

Discussion

Over the past five years there has been a resurgence of interest in teaching in adult and higher education. In adult education, this can be seen in the increased presence of papers on teaching within the proceedings of CASAE, AERC, and SCUTREA. Within higher education this resurgence is evident in the emergence of centres for faculty development and teaching at colleges and universities around the world. Once again, teaching has reclaimed a place of honor in adult and higher education.

At the same time, there is a call for teachers of adults to be critically reflective in their practice of teaching. For several years now professions have pushed for their members to reflect critically on the underlying assumptions and values that give direction and justification to their work. For many teachers this is not an easy task. What is it that one should reflect upon? How are the underlying values and assumptions to be identified? In other words, the objects of critical reflection are not self-evident. Indeed, it is something of a new twist to look not only at the world, but at the very lenses through which we view the world.

The *Teaching Perspectives Inventory* gives direction to the process of critical reflection by providing a baseline of information as well as articulating teachers' own beliefs about learning, knowledge, and the social role of "teacher." Initial work with the groups mentioned above suggests that the TPI provides a means of tracking and

looking more deeply at the underlying values and assumptions that constitute teachers' perspectives on teaching. The TPI also provides a well-articulated basis from which to justify and defend approaches to teaching when under review or evaluation.

Table 1: Summary of Five Perspectives on Teaching

Transmission	From a Transmission Perspective, effective teaching assumes instructors will have mastery over their content. Those who see Transmission as their dominant perspective are committed, sometimes passionately, to their content or subject matter. They believe their content is a relatively well-defined and stable body of knowledge and skills. It is the learners' responsibility to master that content. The instructional process is shaped and guided by the content. It is the teacher's primary responsibility to present the content accurately and efficiently to learners.
Apprenticeship	From an Apprenticeship Perspective, effective teaching assumes that instructors will be experienced practitioners of what they are teaching. Those who hold Apprenticeship as their dominant perspective are committed to having learners observe them in action, doing what it is that learners must learn. They believe, rather passionately, that teaching and learning are most effective when people are working on authentic tasks in real settings of application or practice. Therefore, the instructional process is often a combination of demonstration, observation and guided practice, with learners gradually doing more and more of the work.
Developmental	From a Developmental Perspective, effective teaching begins with the learners' prior knowledge of the content and skills to be learned. Instructors holding a Developmental dominant perspective are committed to restructuring how people think about the content. They believe in the emergence of increasingly complex and sophisticated cognitive structures related to thinking about content. The key to changing those structures lies in a combination of effective questioning and 'bridging' knowledge that challenges learners to move from relatively simple to more complex forms of thinking.
Nurturing	From a Nurturing Perspective, effective teaching must respect the learner's self-concept and self-efficacy. Instructors holding Nurturing as their dominant perspective care deeply about their learners, working to support effort as much as achievement. They are committed to the whole person and certainly not just the intellect of the learner. They believe passionately, that anything that threatens the self-concept interferes with learning. Therefore, their teaching always strives for a balance between challenging people to do their best, while supporting and nurturing their efforts to be successful.
Social Reform	From a Social Reform Perspective, effective teaching is the pursuit of social change more than individual learning. Instructors holding Social Reform as their dominant perspective are deeply committed to social issues and structural changes in society. Both content and learners are secondary to large-scale change in society. Instructors are clear and articulate about what changes must take place, and their teaching reflects this clarity of purpose. They have no difficulty justifying the use of their teaching as an instrument of social change. Even when teaching, their professional identity is as an advocate for the changes they wish to bring about in society.

Table 2: Sample Items from the TPI

ACTIONS - What do you do when instructing or teaching?

1. I cover the required content accurately and in the allotted time.
2. I link the subject matter with real settings of practice or application.
3. I ask a lot of questions while teaching.

INTENTIONS - What do you try to accomplish in your instruction or teaching?

17. My intent is to demonstrate how to perform or work in real situations.
21. I expect people to master a lot of information related to the subject.
30. I want to make apparent what people take for granted about society.

BELIEFS - What do you believe about instructing or teaching?

32. To be an effective teacher, one must be an effective practitioner.
36. Teachers should be virtuoso performers of their subject matter.
38. Teaching should focus on developing qualitative changes in thinking.

Table 4. Dominant Teaching Perspectives for Seven Occupational Categories*Dominant Teaching Perspective*

<i>Occupation</i>	None	Tran	App	Dev	Nur	S-R	Tot N Tot%
Higher Ed Teachers	5.8%	10.6%	28.5%	16.4%	36.2%	2.4%	207 17.3%
Adult Educators	7.2	4.8	20.0	6.4	60.8	.8	125 10.4%
Dietitians	8.3	17.4	29.6	6.1	37.4	1.3	230 19.2%
Under-Grads from Professions	1.7	10.3	25.9	12.1	48.3	1.7	58 4.8%
Graduate Students	4.2	8.3	29.2	25.0	33.3	0	24 2.0%
Teachers-in-Training	2.9	6.1	9.7	10.0	68.6	2.6	309 25.8%
ESL Learners	7.3	43.7	18.4	13.1	15.9	1.6	245 20.5%
Column N	69	202	249	132	524	22	1198
Total %	5.8%	16.9%	20.8%	11.0%	43.7%	1.8%	100%

More information about the research behind this inventory and these perspectives on teaching can be found in Pratt, D.D. and Associates (1998). **Five Perspectives on Teaching in Adult and Higher Education**, Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing. If you would like to contact the authors directly you can send e-mail messages to: <dan.pratt@ubc.ca> or <john.collins@ubc.ca>

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