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Summary of Five Perspectives on 'Good Teaching'

Close

Each of the paragraphs below represents a different perspective on 'good teaching'.

Together, they will help you understand and interpret your profile. Keep in mind that these five are not mutually exclusive perspectives. In our research involving hundreds of teachers, the vast majority hold one or two dominant perspectives. Many hold an additional 'back-up' perspective that is high, although not dominant. This combination of dominant and back-up perspectives allows teachers to accommodate changes in context, content, and learners. Common sense requires that no one can operate from all five simultaneously, since they represent contrasting and sometimes competing views of teaching. On your profile sheet you also have sub-scores for Beliefs (B), Intention (I), and Actions (A) within each perspective. These sub-scores scores will further help to identify your philosophy of teaching by highlighting whether your views within a perspective are grounded (differentially or equally) in what you believe, what you intend to accomplish, or what educational actions you undertake in your teaching settings.

Transmission

Effective teaching requires a substantial commitment to the content or subject matter.

Good teaching means having mastery of the subject matter or content. Teachers' primary responsibilities are to represent the content accurately and efficiently. Learner's responsibilities are to learn that content in its authorized or legitimate forms. Good teachers take learners systematically through tasks leading to content mastery: providing clear objectives, adjusting the pace of lecturing, making efficient use of class time, clarifying misunderstandings, answering questions, providing timely feedback, correcting errors, providing reviews, summarizing what has been presented, directing students to appropriate resources, setting high standards for achievement and developing objective means of assessing learning. Good teachers are enthusiastic about their content and convey that enthusiasm to their students. For many learners, good transmission teachers are memorable presenters of their content.

Apprenticeship

Effective teaching is a process of socializing students into new behavioral norms and ways of working.

Good teachers are highly skilled practitioners of what they teach. Whether in classrooms or at work sites, they are recognized for their expertise. Teachers must reveal the inner workings of skilled performance and must translate it into accessible language and an ordered set of tasks which usually proceed from simple to complex, allowing for different points of entry depending upon the learner's capability. Good teachers

know what their learners can do on their own and where they need guidance and direction; they engage learners within their 'zone of development'. As learners mature and become more competent, the teacher's role changes; they offer less direction and give more responsibility as students progress from dependent learners to independent workers.

Developmental *Effective teaching must be planned and conducted "from the learner's point of view".*

Good teachers must understand how their learners think and reason about the content. The primary goal is to help learners develop increasingly complex and sophisticated cognitive structures for comprehending the content. The key to changing those structures lies in a combination of two skills: (1) effective questioning that challenges learners to move from relatively simple to more complex forms of thinking, and (2) 'bridging knowledge' which provides examples that are meaningful to the learner. Questions, problems, cases, and examples form these bridges that teachers use to transport learners from simpler ways of thinking and reasoning to new, more complex and sophisticated forms of reasoning. Good teachers adapt their knowledge to learners' levels of understanding and ways of thinking.

Nurturing *Effective teaching assumes that long-term, hard, persistent effort to achieve comes from the heart, not the head.*

People become motivated and productive learners when they are working on issues or problems without fear of failure. Learners are nurtured in knowing that (a) they can succeed at learning if they give it a good try; (b) their achievement is a product of their own effort and ability, rather than the benevolence of a teacher; and (c) their learning efforts will be supported by both teacher and peers. Good teachers care about their students and understand that some have histories of failure resulting in lowered self-confidence. However they make no excuses for learners. Rather, they encourage their efforts while challenging students to do their very best by promoting a climate of caring and trust, helping people set challenging but achievable goals, and supporting effort as well as achievement. Good teachers provide encouragement and support, along with clear expectations and reasonable goals for all learners but do not sacrifice self-efficacy or self-esteem for achievement. Their assessments of learning consider individual growth as well as absolute achievement.

Social Reform *Effective teaching seeks to change society in substantive ways.*

From the Social Reform point of view, the object of teaching is

the collective rather than the individual. Good teachers awaken students to values and ideologies that are embedded in texts and common practices within their disciplines. Good teachers challenge the status quo and encourage students to consider how learners are positioned and constructed in particular discourses and practices. To do so, they analyze and deconstruct common practices for ways in which such practices perpetuate conditions that are unacceptable. Class discussion is focused less on how knowledge has been created, and more by whom and for what purposes. Texts are interrogated for what is said and what is not said; what is included and what is excluded; who is represented and who is omitted from the dominant discourse. Students are encouraged to take critical stances to give them power to take social action to improve their own lives and the lives of others. Critical deconstruction, though central to this view, is not an end in itself.

Ten Simple Steps For Interpreting Your TPI Profile

- 1. Review the Summary Paragraphs:** Remind yourself what philosophical viewpoint each of the five perspectives represents: Transmission, Apprenticeship, Developmental, Nurturing, and Social Reform. Remember, these are Teaching *Perspectives*; not personality-based 'styles' or technical 'methods'.
- 2. Examine Your Profile Sheet:** The height of each of the five vertical bars on your profile represents how strongly you hold each of the Five Perspectives outlined on the Summary Sheet: Transmission, Apprenticeship, Developmental, Nurturing, and Social Reform. Remember that all teachers embody all five views, but in varying degrees. (Note: Depending on the version you're using, the order of the paragraphs may not be quite the same as the bars on your profile sheet. Not to worry!)
- 3. Note the Height and Range of Your Overall Scores:** Scores on the profile sheet can range from a minimum of 9 to a maximum of 45. Do your scores overall generally fall in the 40s? Or the 30s? Or 20s? Are your individual perspectives strongly held? Moderately held? Weakly held? Do you know anyone who holds stronger views on teaching? What might this suggest?
- 4. Check the Differentiation among Your Perspectives:** On which perspective is your score the highest? Lowest? Are there marked (step-like) differences among your scores, some high and others low? Or is your profile somewhat 'flat', with smaller differences between your highs and lows? Keep in mind that to agree with some items meant that you must logically disagree with others--you cannot agree with everything. As you were completing the TPI, did you keep a single, specific educational context in mind?
- 5. Identify Your Dominant, Back-Up, and Recessive Perspectives:** Do one or two of your perspective scores fall at or above the upper line labeled 'Dominant'? Which one? Most people have at least one (occasionally two) dominant perspectives that represent strongly held views on their roles and functions as educators. Similarly, most people have one or two 'Back-up' perspectives that are also high, but somewhat less so than their dominant perspective. Which are your Back-Up perspectives? Do any of your scores fall at or below the lower line labeled 'Recessive'? Which one? These dominant and recessive thresholds are keyed to your profile individually (+/- 1 SD around the mean of your own five scores). They are not influenced by how other people score on their profiles. For you, which are Dominant? Back-up? Recessive?

6. Check for Internal Consistency: Examine the sub-scores labeled B, I, and A (near the top of each bar). Your score on each of your five perspectives is comprised of three sub-scores: a Belief sub-score, an Intention sub-score, and an Action sub-score. These sub-scores are indicators of how much agreement exists between what you *do* (Actions), what you *want to accomplish* (Intentions), and why you feel that is *important or justified* (Beliefs). High internal consistency (sub-scores within one or two points of each other) means that your Beliefs, Intentions, and Actions all corroborate each other.

7. Examine any Internal Discrepancies: If your B, I, A sub-scores differ by three or more points, inconsistencies may exist that you should consider. Where your sub-scores differ by 3, 4, 5 or more points, look to see where the differences occur. Within which Perspective? Between which sub-scores: Beliefs and Actions? Between Intentions and Actions? Between Actions and Intentions? What might explain these differences? Job constraints? Philosophical inconsistencies? Non-clarity about departmental expectations?

8. Look for Consistency Across Perspectives: Examine the Intentions sub-score for all five perspectives. Does the highest Intention sub-score occur within your dominant perspective? If not, where does it occur and what might that indicate? Similarly, look across your Beliefs sub-scores; in which perspectives are your Beliefs expressed most strongly? Within which perspectives do your Actions predominate?

9. Self-Corroboration: Are the scores on your profile sheet consistent with how you see yourself? Do they make overall sense to you? Are there any unexpected insights? Do your scores help you clarify how you see yourself as a professional educator? How might it help you draft a written Teaching Philosophy Statement?

10. Next Steps: Peer/Professional Validation: If you have exchanged profile sheets with your peers, have you shared and discussed your results with each other? Do they see you in the same manner as the profile suggests? Compare your profile with norms for other people in your department. Or compare with others in your same professional sector. Or with others who have a similar educational background? Is it now clearer that there are multiple and legitimate views on what constitutes 'good teaching'?

Reconfirm or Check for Change: Remember, you can always take the TPI a second and a third time! Look for changes that may occur after professional workshops, departmental discussions, critical self-reflection, or other important events.