

Reflect, Express, Compare: Reimagine Your Teacher Identity with  
the TeachPhil U Model and Strengths-Based Reflective Practice

## The TeachPhil U Model: Practical Guidance and Additional Resources

The TeachPhil U Model applies concepts and theories from organization development and strategic management to the standard step-by-step approach towards a teaching philosophy to provide a flexible framework enabling teachers at different career stages to choose their own entry-point to the process that best fits their level of competence and comfort in their role.

Participants can follow the regular top-down route working from fundamental principles to everyday practices, or start with their concrete experiences of teaching (what they do) and work their way round to more abstract concepts of pedagogy (what they think). Alternatively, they can start in the middle of the series of trigger questions and sentence-completion prompts and move in either direction to cover all elements of the model.

The U model and associated methodology of strengths-based reflection encourages users to adopt a pragmatic approach, reflect on and appreciate their positive experiences (what works), and check their practices and interactions are congruent with their stated goals and beliefs. Our model incorporates four core questions and two supplementary questions. This handout includes sample answers to questions and extracts from pedagogical literature to facilitate and support reflection and discussion.

### Influences

***Who or what has influenced, informed or inspired your approach to teaching and supporting learning?***

#### *Sample answer*

**My approach to teaching has been influenced by...** my experiences as a learner, the pedagogical approaches promoted at the institutions where I have worked, and articles I have found through reading *The Chronicle* and via email lists. In the 1990s, I participated in a short-course and a part-time MBA program based on **self-managed learning** (Cunningham, 1999), which were totally different to my previous learning experiences and introduced me to Kolb's (1976) **experiential learning theory**. As a faculty member, I completed teacher education certificates and courses that introduced me to **constructive alignment** (Biggs & Tang, 2011), **backward design** (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), and **reflective online discussion** (Vai & Sosulski, 2016), and gained lots of useful ideas for learning activities and assessments from the instructional designer assigned to help transition my f2f courses to our online platform. At my previous institution, I was involved in a five-year educational development program promoting **inquiry-based learning** (Brew, 2012) as an institutional teaching and learning strategy in a research-led university. I have also been inspired by the **Transparency in Teaching** project at UNLV, especially the work on transparently designed assignments (Winkelmes et al., 2015).

### *Examples of influential books*

The organizers of the 2006 LOEX-of-the-West conference for instruction librarians invited all participants to share the titles of one or two books that have influenced their instruction activities, teaching philosophy, or meaning of education and then to briefly describe the significance of the book(s).

The resulting annotated bibliography contains 192 titles and was classified into seven genres of instruction inspiration: fundamental truths, political struggle, education technologies, learning potential, educational reform, heroic stories, and teaching tools. The seven genres were then further distilled into four major generic philosophies: vocational, applicational, political, and developmental (Brier & Lebbin, 2006).

The journal of SEDA (the UK-based professional association for educational developers and others working in centers for teaching and learning) published a list of 20 influential books in 2013 covering similar areas, including curriculum design, inclusivity, developing students' skills, assessment for learning, and technology (Brown, 2013).

### **Beliefs**

***What are your assumptions and beliefs about the processes of learning and teaching and the roles of teachers and learners? How can a teacher facilitate or intervene in the learning process to help learning occur?***

#### *Sample answer*

**For me, learning occurs best when it...** starts with a learner's **personal experience**, integrates new concepts into existing mental models, is situated in the **real world**, and supported by **explicit standards**, continual practice, **low-stakes assignments**, and continuous **constructive formative feedback**. One of the first questions I ask in my MLIS Academic Libraries course (in the classroom and online discussion forum) is "Do you have any academic library experience?"

#### *Examples of teacher perspectives*

Sage on the stage or guide on the side? (King, 1993)

*Five perspectives on teaching* (Pratt & Associates 1998, p. 11; Collins & Pratt, 2011)

- A transmission perspective: Delivering content
- An apprenticeship perspective: Modeling ways of being
- A developmental perspective: Cultivating ways of thinking
- A nurturing perspective: Facilitating personal agency
- A social reform perspective: Seeking a better society,

The **Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI)** is a popular free, web-based self-assessment tool.

The TPI provides a summary profile of your beliefs, intentions, and actions related to teaching and defines your dominant, backup and recessive perspectives as one of five types (transmission, apprenticeship, developmental, nurturing, or social reform). Based on a general model of teaching with five elements (teachers, learners, content, context, and ideals) and three key interrelationships (between teacher, learner, and content), it supports **self-reflection**, developing a teaching philosophy, and conversations about teaching.

It also “respects teaching as a personal activity that is socially mediated, culturally authorized, and historically situated”, asserting there is no one best way to teach, i.e., good teaching depends on **context**. The instrument has 45 items and it automatically generates a profile you can print along with concise descriptions of the five perspectives and their different character. It is available at <http://www.teachingperspectives.com/tpi/>.

*Intentions and strategies for five approaches to teaching* (Trigwell & Prosser, 2004, p. 413)

|                          | Strategy        |                             |                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Intention                | Teacher-focused | Student-teacher interaction | Student-focused |
| Information transmission | A               |                             |                 |
| Concept acquisition      | B               | C                           |                 |
| Conceptual development   |                 |                             | D               |
| Conceptual change        |                 |                             | E               |

The five approaches are categorized on a spectrum (A-E), where A is an extreme version of the traditional transmission (sage-on-the stage) model and E represents the most extreme version of learner-centered approach.

*Teaching-centred or learning-centred?* (adapted from Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001, p. 306)

| Teaching/learning orientation of academic teachers | Desired learning outcomes      | Expected use of knowledge     |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Imparting information                              | Recall of atomised information | Within subject                |
| Transmitting structured knowledge                  | Reproductive understanding     | Within subject for future use |
| Providing and facilitating understanding           |                                |                               |
| Helping students develop expertise                 |                                |                               |
| Preventing misunderstandings                       |                                |                               |
| Negotiating understanding                          | Change in ways of thinking     | Interpretation of reality     |
| Encouraging knowledge creation                     |                                |                               |

**Goals**

***What goals do you have for your students, as learners in your specific subject and more generally?***

*Sample answer*

**As a result of working with me, my students...** acquire **knowledge** of libraries in higher education; develop **skills** in critical analysis, synthesis, and evaluation; and the **abilities** needed to become flexible, creative, reflective, self-aware, socially-sensitive, independent collaborative interdisciplinary evidence-based practitioner-researchers, teachers and **lifelong learners** with global perspective!

*Types of learning goals*

“In your statement of teaching philosophy, you should not only consider what subject matter items you think students should learn, but also some of the broader issues that add value to the education students can be expected to obtain by working with you. You might also consider the question of why these goals are important” (Coppola, 2002, p. 449).

Consider also how your goals should be expressed, e.g.,

- what students should know
- what students should be able to do
- how they would use their knowledge, skills and abilities.

Coppola (2002) provides 17 questions to help you think about learning; goals; design and implementation; assessment and evaluation; and documentation and reflection when developing and writing your teaching philosophy; e.g.,

- What goals do you have for students as learners in the specific subject matter?
- What goals do you have for students as learners in your discipline and its subject field?
- What goals do you have for students as learners in general, within the liberal arts educational framework where your discipline sits?

**Style**

***What is your style of teaching or learning facilitation? How do you see your relationship with the learners you work with and interact with?***

*Sample answer*

**As a teacher, I prefer to be...** an **authoritative source** of expertise, who **facilitates learning** by identifying, selecting and organizing the best possible resources for learners; **explaining and demonstrating** key concepts/terms and core competencies; and offering **individual advice** and feedback. My style has evolved from the sage-on-the-stage style I adopted as a guest lecturer/practitioner-teacher in the 1990s towards the guide-on-the-side model, which is best exemplified in my asynchronous online courses.

Examples of educator styles

“In the midst of the multitude of educational theories, learning technologies, and institutional procedures and constraints, it is easy to lose sight of the most important thing – *teaching is above all a profound human relationship*” (Kolb et al., 2014, p. 218.)

Kolb et al. (2014) outline six propositions of **Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)**, showing how ELT relates to the work of nine foundational 20th century educational scholars (John Dewey, Mary Parker Follett, Paulo Freire, William James, Carl Jung, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, Carl Rogers, and Lev Vygotsky).

They present a new version of the classic Kolb experiential learning cycle, which expands the original four types of learning styles (Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation) to nine types (Initiating, Experiencing, Imagining, Reflecting, Analyzing, Thinking, Deciding, Acting, and Balancing), and shows how four educator styles (Facilitator, Expert, Evaluator, and Coach) are needed at different stages of the learning process to help learners move around the cycle.

*Examples of beliefs, goals, styles, and practices associated with educator roles*  
(Kolb et al., 2014, p. 222)

| Educator role      | <b>Beliefs:</b><br><i>“Learning occurs best when...”</i>    | <b>Goals:</b><br><i>“My students develop...”</i> | <b>Style:</b><br><i>“As a teacher, I prefer to be...”</i> | <b>Practices:</b><br><i>“Instructional forms I often use include...”</i> |
|--------------------|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Facilitator</b> | It begins with the learners’ experience                     | Empathy and understanding of others              | Creative, warm, affirming                                 | Class discussion, journals, personal stories                             |
| <b>Expert</b>      | New concepts are integrated into existing mental frameworks | Analytic and conceptual abilities                | Logical, authoritative                                    | Lectures, readings, written assignments                                  |
| <b>Evaluator</b>   | Clear standards and feedback are provided                   | Problem-solving skills                           | Structured, outcome-oriented, objective                   | Laboratories, graded homework assignments                                |
| <b>Coach</b>       | It takes place in a real-life context                       | Ability to work productively with others         | Applied, collaborative, risk-taking                       | Field projects, role-plays, simulations                                  |

In contrast to the vast majority of pedagogical research, Grasha (2002) discusses the dynamics of **one-on-one teaching** (such as the interactions that might occur at a library reference desk) and presents a comprehensive model mapping five teaching styles to 12 faculty roles and corresponding attitudes and behaviors.

*The relationship between teaching style, roles, and corresponding attitudes and behavior*  
 (Grasha, 2002, p. 141)

| One-on-one teaching styles | Major faculty roles                            | Important attitudes and behaviors  |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Expert                     | Prescriptive adviser                           | Gives detailed explanations<br>Provides succinct answers<br>Provides details on what to do   |
|                            | Questioner                                     | Questions emphasize basic knowledge and comprehension of concepts  |
|                            | Mini-lecturer                                  | Gives an overview of issues involved with a problem and outlines ways to handle it   |
| Formal authority           | Provider of feedback [evaluative/summative]    | Provides clear expectations and directs feedback to expectations<br>Sets high standards for project or task<br>Has clear goals and objectives for task or project<br>Believes in correct, acceptable, and standard ways of doing things                            |
|                            | Coach  | Teaches by example<br><br>Able to work alongside learner to provide guidance and direction   |
| Personal model             | Role model                                     | Perceives self as a worthy role model to follow  |
|                            | Provider of feedback [nonevaluative/formative] | Gives feedback that helps learner enhance skills   |
| Facilitator                | Provider of feedback [nonevaluative/formative] | Provides feedback that helps learner enhance skills  |
|                            | Active listener                                | Uses descriptive/nonjudgmental feedback<br>Listens well to learner's concerns before making interventions  |
|                            | Discussion facilitator                         | Able to engage individuals in a discussion of issues<br>Strives to be an encouraging and supportive teacher  |
|                            | Questioner [open-ended]                        | Asks broad questions designed to facilitate creative and critical thinking   |
| Delegator                  | Consultant                                     | Encourages appropriate autonomy independence   |
|                            | Resource person                                | Directs responses and questions to immediate needs of the learner<br>Helps learner to explore options for what to do<br>Willing to delegate tasks and responsibilities<br>Readily available to provide guidance, give advice, and suggest other resources for help |

**Five factors that influence the selection of teaching style** (Grasha, 2002)

- Capability of the learner
- Interest in developing productive interpersonal relationships
- Teachers' need to control the learning task
- Learning style of the student
- Situational demands

**Practices**

***What are your teaching, learning, assessment and evaluation practices and methods?  
What methods do you use to support and assess student learning? How do you  
evaluate your teaching?***

*Sample answer***Methods I often use include...**

- readings (required and recommended)
- discussions (aligned to learning objectives)
- lectures (pre-recorded with transcripts)
- authentic assignments (scaffolded field projects)
- student opinion of teaching surveys
- group/personal communication (emails)
- end-of-term/annual reflections on teaching

I never ask my students to write essays, but try instead to design relevant **meaningful tasks** that require students to relate theory or models from the literature to real-world practice, and submit work in formats they might use in future professional positions (such as evaluating online resources; drafting briefing papers on hot topics; conducting onsite library assessments and interviews with practitioners; and using a standard research paper structure to provide experience in writing for publication).

See *also* the tables on pp. 5-6 for examples of instructional behaviors and practices associated with teaching styles (Grasha, 2002; Kolb et al., 2014).

**Metaphor**

***What metaphor could you use to describe your teaching role to someone outside the education field?***

**A teacher is like...***Examples of metaphors*

Prior work has identified five categories of metaphors used to describe the role of teacher (Oksanen, Lahdenperä & Rämö, 2018):

*Teacher as subject expert.* The teacher has a deep knowledge base in the subject(s). Typical metaphors describe the teacher as a source of knowledge; e.g., *a book, a radio, a computer.*

*Teacher as didactics expert.* The teacher skillfully plans and manages the learning process as a person who knows how to teach specific subject-related content to support pupils' learning; e.g., *a coach, a conductor, an engine, a road map, a lighthouse.*

*Teacher as pedagogical expert.* The teacher supports the child/learner's development as a human being. Understanding of human thought, behavior and communication is an essential element in the teacher's pedagogical knowledge base; e.g., *a mother, an older brother, a tree.*

*Self-referential metaphors.* Describe features or characteristics of the teacher's personality, with reference to the teacher's characteristics, rather than the role or task of the teacher; e.g., *a machine, a candle, a sunshine, a camel.*

*Contextual metaphors.* Describe features or characteristics of the teacher's work or work environment, or in other ways refer to characteristics of the environment; i.e., where (physically, socially, and organizationally) or in what kind of setting or environment the teacher works; e.g., *a king, an actor, a slave.*

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