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Creating a “Teaching Portfolio Chart” for reflection and clarifying one’s own teaching philosophy

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Abstract

The Teaching Portfolio Chart (TP Chart) is a worksheet for reflecting on teaching, distilling one’s teaching philosophy, connecting philosophy and practical methodology, and setting future goals. It was developed based on the concept of the Teaching Portfolio by Seldin, Meller and Seldin (2010). The advantages of the TP Chart are: (1) helping the creator reflect on all their educational activities to find their teaching philosophy with short creation time; (2) the process of creating a TP Chart can support one’s reflections, step by step and in an organized way; and (3) an AP Chart presents a singular overview of one’s teaching, making sharing with others easy. In this paper we introduce the structure and features of the TP Chart, explain its creation process, and then discuss its future potential and challenges.

1 Introduction

Reflection has been referred to repeatedly as a crucial quality of good teachers since Schön (1984). Recent studies have shown the importance for educators of reflecting on their “being” as a teacher, i.e., of finding their teaching philosophy (Araki, 2015; Seldin et al., 2010). Clarifying this teaching philosophy is valuable in terms of establishing teacher identity and guiding growth (Goodyear & Allchin, 1998).

However, methods of clarifying teaching philosophy through reflection such as creating teaching portfolios (Seldin et al, 2010) and core reflection (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005) are based on narrative writing and discourse with supervisors. These processes can be time consuming (1 to 3.5 days) and require knowledge and skills.

On the other hand, the Teaching Portfolio Chart (TP Chart), as its name suggests, is a worksheet inspired by the structure of a teaching portfolio (Seldin, Miller & Seldin, 2010). The TP Chart guides the creator's reflection on their educational activities step by step. It takes about 2 hours to understand one’s philosophy and set future goals for the future. In Japan, the TP Chart is gaining recognition as a teacher training tool for education at all levels (Kurita, Yoshida & Ohno, 2017).

In this paper, the significance of the TP Chart, its structure and its specific creation method are described, and its future potential and challenges are discussed.

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2.2 Features

The most distinctive feature of a TP Chart is its format and the process of creating a single worksheet with sticky notes to reflect on educational activities in a step-by-step manner.

The creation process allows creators to reflect on their *whole* educational activities in a short amount of time (typically 2 hours). Even if their reflection is more shallow than in other reflection tools such as the Teaching Portfolio by Seldin, the TP Chart works for identifying their philosophies. It is a great advantage that the short period of time required helps most people participate without hesitation.

The TP Chart uses a step-by-step process. This process guides teachers to easily deepen their reflections without specialized knowledge about specific reflection models. They start by looking back at practical educational activities and then follow the steps to independently discover the teaching philosophy that underpins those activities.

3 The TP Chart creation process

3.1 Overview of creation process with timetable

Basically, the creation of a TP chart begins by looking back at real activities and then gradually approaching the philosophy behind them. The process is shown in Table 1.

3.2 Before starting the creation process

Originally, the TP Chart was printed on a piece of A3 paper. A digital format³ is introduced here because it could be more useful to start without needing to prepare sticky notes. It is more effective to keep than a paper-based TP Chart.

The color and shape of “sticky notes” in a digital worksheet have a meaning: big yellow ones are for current or past things (lighter color in Figure 2); big blue ones are for future things (darker color in Figure 2); small ones are for evidence; and apple shapes are for personal episodes. Only one element should be written on each “sticky note”.

3.3 Steps in the creation process

Creators fill in each item one by one with elements that are related to teaching activities. Several steps involve sharing the ongoing TP Charts with others in pairs (Table 1).

1. **Discipline & Purpose:** First, for basic information, write your discipline, name and the purpose of the TP chart.
2. **Responsibility:** This item includes all the educational activities you have undertaken in the last year or so.
3. **Improvement & Effort:** This item includes activities or efforts for improvement and improvement in educational activities.
4. **Outcome & Evaluation:** This item includes your accomplishments that represent the student growth which resulted from your educational activities, as well as an evaluation by students, peers or others.

³ The TP Chart and other materials can be downloaded from <https://kayokokurita.info/post-319-2.html>.

Time (min.)	Creation steps	Creation format
3	Discipline & Purpose	Individual
5	Responsibility	
2	Improvement & Effort	
3	Outcome & Evaluation	
8	Sharing Time 1	Pairs (4 min. each)
7	Methodology	Individual
7	Strategy	
7	Philosophy	
2	Private Episode Related to Philosophy	
5	Checking Connection between Philosophy, Strategy and Methodology	
8	Sharing Time 2	Pairs (4 min. each)
2	Updating Time	Individual
3	Evidence	
6	Sharing Time 3	Pairs (4 min. each)
4	Goals	Individual
2	Comment after Creation	
8	Sharing Time 4	

5. **Sharing Time 1:** Share your TP chart in pairs. The contents of “Responsibility”, “Improvement & Effort” and “Outcome & Evaluation” are explained to each other in turn. The key is for the speaker to try to communicate to the other person in a way that is easy to understand. Explaining yourself to others can make you organize and understand your own educational activities. As the listener, on the other hand, you need to listen with interest to the other person, creating a safe and secure place for the speaker to deepen their reflection.
6. **Methodology:** This item includes methods such as what you always do, what you have done consciously because you think it’s important, and what is different from others when you look over the sticky notes listed so far.
7. **Strategy:** This item includes the reasons why you use methods listed in “Methodology”. The following questions will serve as hints: (a) Why is this method important for students?; (b) What do you want your students to be as a result of your teaching?; and (c) What do you want students to learn and how do you want them to learn it? When methodology elements align with these reasons they are grouped accordingly.
8. **Philosophy:** This step repeats the method used in “Strategy”. In other words, try to find the reasons why you are using the strategies with the questions above.
9. **Private Episode Related to Philosophy:** This requires a different perspective than so far. Recall a personal episode that has influenced your philosophy as a teacher and write it on an apple-shaped “sticky note”.
10. **Checking Connection between Philosophy, Strategy, and Methodology:** Now, review the responses by starting with Philosophy and connecting Methods and then Strategies.
11. **Sharing Time 2:** Share “Philosophy”, “Strategy”, and “Methodology” with each other.
12. **Updating Time:** This step is for updating your TP chart after sharing.

13. **Evidence:** Write down the evidence that supports your statements in the elements “Responsibility”, “Improvement & Effort”, “Outcome & Evaluation” and “Methodology”. For each element of each item, consider what corresponds to the evidence and write it on a small “sticky note”.
14. **Sharing Time 3:** Share the elements where you did not find appropriate evidence, and think together about what evidence might be available for them.
15. **Goals:** First, write specific short-term goals on a small darker “sticky note” and place them in the appropriate items. Next, list long-term goals in “Goals”.
16. **Comment after Creation:** Write your comment on creating the TP chart.
17. **Sharing Time 4:** Short-term goals, long-term goals and comments are shared in pairs.

After completion, you can use your TP Chart as a foundation for improvement by updating it regularly. You can also use this to communicate with others about good teaching.

4 Potential use and challenges

The TP Chart is expected to become increasingly popular in the future as a faculty development tool because of its ability to facilitate reflection in order to find one’s teaching philosophy. Although online programs are required to comply with COVID-19 restrictions, the program for creating the TP Chart can be transferred online.

In addition, the simplicity of the TP Chart can help many teachers to realize the value of reflection; widespread use of the TP Chart can contribute to raising the quality of education.

On the other hand, although most creators of TP Charts have given positive feedback about them, it is not clear exactly what factors, such as the reflection process, usability, and so on, make it effective. In the future, the effects of the TP Chart need to be clarified.

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