

ICED 2020 proceedings:

A future-ready teaching philosophy: Opportunities to reflect, re-value and re-frame a teaching philosophy

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Abstract

This paper offers a reflective experience for educational developers, educators and university managers/administrators involved in supporting the “future-ready” capabilities of academics and student cohorts through their teaching and learning journeys. Readers are guided through reflective statements that share aspects of a teaching philosophy (TP) as a capacity building, future-ready resource. The learning outcomes are three-fold. First, to activate/identify the context and purposes of a TP. Second, to acquire knowledge of our research findings relevant to the future-ready value of a TP including examples of practical suggestions by research participants and attendees at research dissemination events. Third, to reflect and develop an action plan about the role and capabilities of a TP for future-ready higher education professionals and identify personally relevant “take-away” ideas.

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1 Introduction

In today's changing higher education context, the impacts of beliefs, values and practices related to educational developers' and academics' teaching and learning philosophies have received little attention (Arroyo et al., 2015; Schönwetter et al., 2002). Yet, teaching philosophies are likely to be "increasingly important" when academic work "is being defined in terms of a set of competencies" (p. 40; Fitzmaurice & Coughlan, 2007). For educational developers, educators, and managers/administrators to be future-ready in today's higher education context requires "...challenging oneself to be aware, and to be mindful when making decisions" in times of rapid change and complex uncertainty (Sonnenfeld, 2015). This implies that we are able to draw on our own as well as others' values and beliefs in order to be "ready to be valuable, and to produce value [for and with others]" (McCormack and Ruge, 2016). Whereas in the past we thought of the future as an element that exists "over there", the future is really right now, which requires us "to be in the moment and to act within it...being 'future ready' really means having an expressive capacity to create value" (Sonnenfeld, 2015).

The learning content and experiences in this paper are based on recent research findings by the authors on the value and impacts of a teaching philosophy involving members of the Canadian Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) and the Higher Education and Research Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA). Research findings show that the supported development of TPs builds personal, collegial and institutional capacity through increased teacher knowledge, skills, confidence and competence, including deeper and more explicit engagement with student learning and quality teaching, and by elevating dialogues about teaching quality across the institution. During 2019, these findings were shared and expanded with feedback from over 750 higher education participants at workshops held in Canada, New Zealand and Australia (Ruge et al., 2019). This paper, based on a workshop designed for ICED 2020 participants, offers a reflective experience for educational developers, university managers/administrators and academics to better understand, engage and future-ready themselves and their professional and institutional context. Why is this important? Because the future is now!

2 Personal reflection

Foundational to reflecting on one's TP is an awareness that a TP focuses on important components defining effective teaching and learning (Schonwetter et al., 2002). Over time the conscious process of engaging in iterative review, reflection and improvement supports alignment with targeted teaching and learning outcomes (Ruge, Tokede and Tivendale, 2019). This involves personal beliefs, values, educational pedagogy and practice. It focuses on how one's beliefs are enacted in one's teaching practice and how they influence our students' learning (Schonell, et al, 2016).

First self-reflection activity: Have you written a TP? If "**yes**", who or what experience(s), prompted you to write your TP? What value has emerged for you from writing a TP and does that value continue, change, or disappear? If "**no**", What/who could prompt you to write one? Can you see any value in having a TP?

3 Valuable insights from interviewees

Sixteen interviewees from among the 3M and the HERDSA Fellows were asked, through purposive sampling, to explore the value of a TP for today's academics and their institutions. As seen in Table 1, following independent coding and theme identification involving iterative inductive and deductive analysis produced four key themes.

Value of a TP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building for effective learning & teaching • Reflecting and enacting goals and values • Increases career opportunities
TP Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing impact over time • Collaborative reflective practice • Writing process supports skills development
TP for Teaching & Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence to engage and communicate • Able to enact values in T&L situations • Supporting students and staff
Institutional Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tends to formulaic use of TP for promotion • More recognition and support needed • Institutional processes exclude/ lack TP linkages

Table 1: Key themes with supporting examples from our research findings

4 De-centring the “Eurocentric voice”

Four practical opportunities to enhance future-readiness of TP: Links between the value of a TP and teacher resilience-building factor literature; re-view the commonly used name “teaching philosophy statement”; de-centre the current “Eurocentric voice” underlying the development of a TP; and TP interviewees’ personal stories.

Second self-reflection activity: Describe an indigenous or Euro-centric, multi- or inter-cultural experience (something or someone who made you re-value and reflect and perhaps revise your position). How did this experience make you reflect on your own beliefs? Did you review, clarify or change your values? Is this experience reflected in your current practice?

5 Reviewing common terminologies

The workshop series and conference presentations provided feedback from various attendees to reconsider the terminologies used for the classic TP.

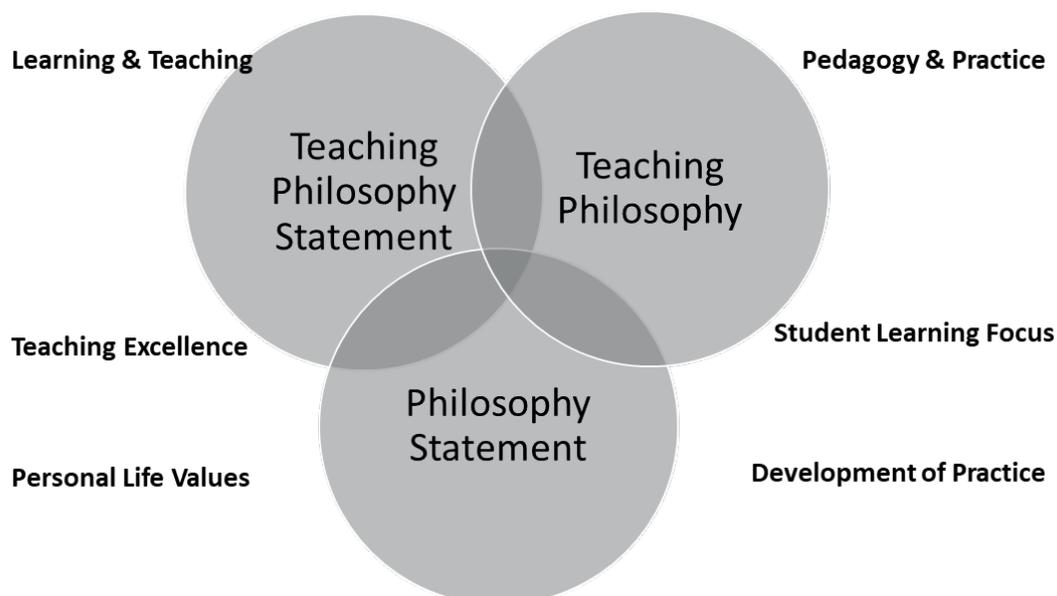


Figure 1: Common terminologies identified

Third self-reflection activity: Which elements of the TP centric diagram (Fig.1) best resonates with you and why? How might you distinguish the differences among each of these?

6 Value of a TP: Personal and professional

Based on the 16 interviews, Fellows' experiences perceived to be of relevance or importance to them, their students and their institution were further identified. The most influential value was that of resilience building. In other words, it involves the "coming to know who you are as a teacher" so you can "be true to yourself" by "coming to know your inner motivation" and deeply questioning your beliefs and values in safe relationships with others, to increase your confidence, competence and credibility and teaching knowledge and skills.

As seen in Table 2, Fellows noted that the process of thinking, reflecting and writing one's TP provided capacity building for effective learning and teaching. It yielded the motivation to teach or solidified the call to teach. This motivation had both a personal and professional focus, as seen in Table 2. One of the side benefits was the ability to use the TP in garnishing supportive relationships with other like-minded academics. Over time, sharing, reflecting and even rethinking and modifying one's TP provided teacher with resilience for their long-term careers and learning journeys as well as building critical capacity for career advancement.

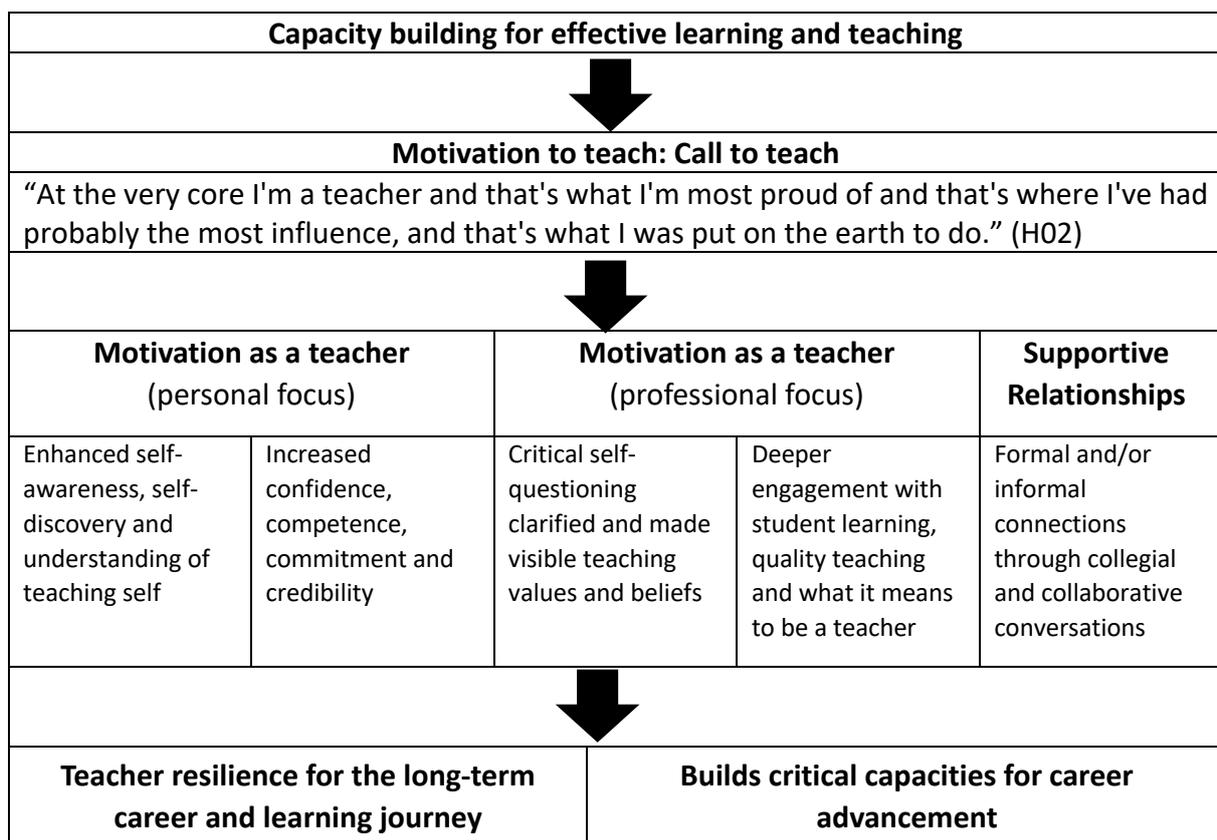


Table 2: Key themes with supporting examples from our research findings

Fourth self-reflection activity: In what ways does your TP identify your motivation or call to teach? Are you able to see elements of the personal and professional focus in terms of motivation as a teacher through your TP?

7 Value of a TP: Resilience building

Following the identification of resilience building as another major theme or benefit of a TP, we conducted a literature search focusing on resilience-building factors in 46 empirical studies. As seen in Table 3, we were able to identify four parallel dimensions of teacher resilience in the interviews of our 16 Fellows. In the left-hand column we identify the four dimensions reported in the literature, and in the right-hand column we provide examples from our interviewees.

Dimensions of teacher resilience	Resilience-building factors identified in a sample of 46 empirical studies	Value of a teaching philosophy identified by 16 TP research interviewees
Motivation to teach: strong intrinsic motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call to teaching: sense of vocation, ethical & moral purposes, make a positive difference in the lives of children/young people • Persistence/Perseverance/Determination: commitment to students' learning & achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call to teaching: from deep within, at the very core, I teach who I am, make a positive difference in students' lives • Persistence/ Perseverance/ Determination/Driven to focus on: students' learning, always captivated by student learning, never be able to stop teaching
Motivation as a teacher (personal focus): high self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence: agency, effectiveness, recognition, autonomy, achievement, self-belief • Confidence: experiencing positive feelings, managing emotions positively. • Commitment • Identity: personal awareness, self-understanding as a teacher, sense of identity as a teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence: recognition, achievement, institutional credibility, self-belief (internal credibility) • Confidence: positive feelings • Commitment: love of teaching and learning • Identity: self-awareness, self-discovery, know myself as a teacher, know what is important to me as a teacher and why it is important, my TP and my life-philosophy are aligned
Motivation as a teacher (professional focus): being reflective and professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection: critical self-questioning, reflective teaching, reflective attitudes • Professionalism: responsibility, enthusiasm for the profession, knowledge acquisition, socio-cultural awareness, professional goals & purposes, classroom skills, problem-solving • Sense of well-being: work-life balance, self-care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformative • Being reflective: importance of reflection, self-questioning (Who? What? How? Why?), thinking/digging very deeply about what it was to be a teacher/what I was actually doing • Professionalism: socio-cultural awareness, T & L knowledge and skills, professional goals and purposes, enthusiasm for the profession (discipline)
Supportive relationships or formal/informal connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabled through connections, collegiality and collaboration to be built through teacher conversations with: colleagues, students, friends & family, school leader, mentors, students' parents, peer groups/networks, administrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring others and being mentored, colleague conversations (elevator conversations, workshops, networks, communities of practice, faculty meetings as reflective conversations about learning and teaching) and connecting with students through conversations

Table 3: Dimensions of teacher resilience parallel to interviewee findings

The close alignment of the benefits (value) of developing a TP, and the key resilience building factors identified in teacher resilience literature offers academics four sources of support through which to grow their resilience.

Fifth self-reflection activity: How can we, the ICED community, encourage and lead collaborative development in terms of “future-readying” our academics to enable them

to benefit from the value of reflecting on, writing, sharing, and rewriting their TP? How do we do this at the individual level, at disciplinary levels, and the institutional level? How do we invite colleagues to collaborate and benefit from the value-added resilience building dimensions that many academics have experienced through TPs?

8 Conclusions

Based on the merging of our research findings with our numerous conference and workshop presentations, we have benefitted by finding invaluable outcomes for those who think about, write on and share their TP. As leaders and facilitators of educational development, our desire is for all academics to have the opportunity to focus on their TP. In doing so, they too might be able to benefit. As such, we ask you to reflect and develop an action plan in our last self-reflection activity.

Final self-reflection activity: What is the role of the TP for future-ready higher education professionals, educators and institutional managers? What are the capabilities of the TP for future-ready higher education professionals, educators and institutional managers? Identify personally relevant “take-away” ideas.

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