

Reflections on Statements of Teaching Across Faculty Career Phases

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Abstract:

Teaching philosophy statements are regularly requested from faculty for academic positions, tenure and promotion. While faculty may be required to write a teaching philosophy, how one comes to create or utilize these statements is largely unknown. This retrospective study examined whether faculty members from early, mid and senior career phases valued a teaching philosophy prior, during or on completion of their participation in an educational development program. Results indicated faculty members began writing their teaching philosophy from a pragmatic perspective, but after completing the program were able to incorporate both scholarly and reflective knowledge to positively impact the development, redesign or revised implementation of their teaching philosophy.

Key Words:

teaching philosophy, reflection, educational development.

Introduction

Faculty members offer a diversity of life experiences, educational experiences, personalities, teaching and learning preferences which are unique and highly individualistic to the teaching experience. While this enables them to design and pursue interesting and unique research plans, the process of self-reflection about one's own teaching may be less obvious within their own career. Often, to write a statement about our teaching intentions is easier said than done.

There are studies which instruct faculty about how to structure and write a teaching philosophy which include, for example, what types or methods of classroom teaching are used (e.g.; case-based, problem-solving); or, the assessment methods chosen. Should one include these details in a teaching philosophy? Do faculty consult others or read the teaching literature for ideas or guidance when constructing their personal teaching statements? Are changes or enhancements made to these statements on a regular basis? If so, what changes and why?

In this study, early, mid and senior career faculty were interviewed about their completed teaching statements following completion of an educational development program provided by a Canadian teaching and learning centre. This retrospective study offers insights into the self-reflection by early, mid and senior career faculty about their teaching philosophy over their educational programming period. Did this group of faculty utilize the teaching literature to complete this process? Did they consult others? Were these philosophy statements useful to their professional and/or personal teaching careers or rather a make work project? We begin with a summary of the literature.

Literature Review

Development of a Teaching Philosophy

A teaching philosophy is defined as an individual's personal "thoughts and beliefs about teaching" (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2006). It is a personal statement written by a faculty member to explain their ideas about teaching and why they make the decisions they do in class. It presents others with a picture of what and how they teach in the classroom (Weimer, 2005). Initially developed by Shore et al. (1986) for the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), the teaching philosophy and supportive documentation is formally recognized as a "teaching dossier" and compliments the research portfolio that faculty assemble for academic application, tenure, promotion and awards (Knapper, 1978). Today, the teaching dossier is a major feature of university teaching in Canada and abroad (e.g.; Shore, et al., 1986; Edgerton, Hutchings & Quinlan, 1991; O'Neil & Wright, 1992; Seldin, 1997; Wright, Knight & Pomerleau, 1999; Wright, 2004; Chism, 2007; Kaplan, Kearns & Sullivan, 2011). In a survey of 26 flagship American comprehensive universities, 53.6%, 61.5% and 61.5% of faculty in doctoral, master and bachelor candidates respectively were required to submit a teaching philosophy during the hiring process (Kaplan, Meizlish, O'Neal & Wright, 2008).

Schönwetter, Sokal, Friesen and Taylor (2002) identify six dimensions commonly found in a teaching philosophy or dossier. These include, (1) the purpose of teaching and learning; (2) the role of the teacher; (3) the role of the student; (4) the teaching methods used; (5) evaluation used; and (6) assessment of the activity. In addition, two framing devices also are included, a metaphor or critical incident describing personal teaching experiences; and, a device for recording the impact that contextual factors such as level of courses, student backgrounds and the impact on teacher decision-making. Collectively, these become the central issues in a teaching philosophy, which is then presented in a dossier with supportive documentation.

Contemporary Perspectives on Teaching Philosophies

As the field of teaching and learning has matured, so too has the literature within the field. Currently, three perspectives have developed looking at various aspects of a teaching philosophy. These include, a *pragmatic approach*, a *reflective approach* and more recently, a *scholarly approach*. Each offers ways of thinking about one's teaching philosophy and experiences that focuses on a faculty's perceptions on the personal, professional and evidence-based outcomes of one's teaching performance. A brief review of each of these approaches is presented below.

Pragmatic approach. As Knapper (1978) indicated in the 1970's, the profession of faculty teaching is one of the few careers in which no formal training is required to teach. Today, one of the many roles of university teaching and learning centres is to offer extensive educational development workshops (Saroyan & Amundsen, 2004), customized university instructional development programs, and specialized programs focusing on the creation of a teaching dossier (e.g.; University of Windsor, 2012).

Extended and intensive educational development programs include discussions of creating and utilizing a teaching philosophy, but compact workshop agendas often mean there is neither the time nor the reflective actions given to participants to complete a teaching philosophy statement. This is regretful as a teaching philosophy is central to a faculty member and the development of a teaching philosophy often helps to move teaching from a *task* to teaching as a *process*. This act then becomes very purposeful, it may improve student learning, and it serves to respond to the personal and professional expectations and goals of a faculty member's teaching performance.

Faculty, with or without educational development support, may write teaching philosophy statements, yet little attention is spent to understand or track the development, use, effectiveness, or results of these statements. Moreover, current research needs are beginning to explore how faculty members' teaching philosophies are developed or impacted.

Reflective approach. McQuiggan (2009) argues that faculty and graduate students often repeat teaching strategies, either positive or negative, which they themselves experienced when they were students. Rather, it makes better sense to use these learning experiences to engage in "reflective practice which requires a deliberate pause to assume an open perspective which will allow for a higher-level thinking processes" (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie, 2001 as cited in Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 175). In examining the beliefs, goals and actions underlying experience, faculty need to be invited to explore and adapt changes in their behavior, skills, attitudes or perspectives. It is through these processes that new aims, outcomes or intentions can take place (York-Barr et al., 2001).

This process applies to educators faced with conscious decisions that often are made rapidly in complex situations. It is only through the "reflection-on-action" process, introduced by Schön (1983), that this process of reflection on our thinking that change can occur. "In reflection-on-action, we consciously return to the experiences we have had, reevaluate these experiences, decide what we could do differently, and then try out whatever we decide to do differently" (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 175).

The underlying processes of reflection is least understood. For example, Stes and Clement (2004) utilized an open-ended survey to study the long-term use of instructional strategies presented in an educational development program. The findings revealed that participants' "instructional beliefs were challenged" (p. 2) by becoming more reflective and thoughtful in decision-making after the event. Similarly, Levander and Repo-Kaarento (2004) conducted an assessment using an on-line questionnaire and reported that following completion of an educational development program, 'more than half' of faculty changed their ideas of teaching. In another study, Rust (2000) used a guided conversation approach to study 34 participants who had explored the effectiveness of participating in a development program. Rust found that 26 out of the 34 participants believed that retrospectively "their ideas on teaching and learning changed" (p. 256).

While these studies report changes in faculty's thoughts, no information was provided on how or why these changes occurred, the time they occurred, or the reasons for these changes. In fact, no detailed information was provided about these results in terms of a philosophy as central to a faculty members' teaching role.

The process of change seems likely to happen when faculty members go through their internal thought processes to construct a teaching philosophy. Whether this process is done in an educational development program by groups or by an individual, Bell (2001) and Moon (2007) both note that reflective practice forms the conceptual framework to underlie this process. This becomes an issue for faculty when they experience hiring, tenure or promotion because their file is dependent upon faculty actually explaining this process through their written explanation of a teaching philosophy.

Mäclkki and Lindblom-Ylänne (2012) also noted that in spite of seeing reflection as a prerequisite to effective teaching and teacher development, little empirical research exists that links experience between faculty reflection and faculty action. While studies do occasionally refer to the reflective process, reflection as a central entity is greatly misunderstood. In fact, research which seeks to explore the length of time that one has been a teaching faculty member, the changes one experiences in teaching over time, and the way these can influence the development, redesign, or implementation of a teaching philosophy is an area in need of further development.

Scholarly approach. The growth in scholarly literature on educational development suggests that increasingly educational development has moved from a place of marginality to a central issue within today's Canadian universities. This growth is evidenced by the development of Canadian scholarly journals reporting on scholarly teaching and learning, transformation and expansion of national university and college bodies that focus on teaching and learning issues, rapid growth of specialized fields including educational development consultants, and the expansion of vice-presidential university positions focusing on teaching and learning. These innovations emphasize the importance of teaching and learning research as critically important.

Two examples of the value that a teaching philosophy can have upon faculty are interesting. First, Kaplan, Meizlish, O'Neil and Wright (2008) conducted a study in which senior hiring committees, composed of administrators and faculty of 26 top American

universities, were asked about successful or unsuccessful teaching philosophies. Responses included, evidence of teaching practice; indications of how diverse student learning styles are responded to by a faculty member; demonstration of the value of teaching through tone, language and vision of the statement; the ability to illustrate “reflectiveness” by showing ways to respond to the needs of a class; instructors’ approaches to instructional challenges; and, evidence that support the development of a faculty teacher now and in future. Following analyses on a hundred teaching philosophy statements, a rubric was constructed in which statements were evaluated on issues such as; goals for student learning; enactment of these goals; assessment of goals; creation of an inclusive learning environment; structure, and rhetoric appropriate to the discipline. This enabled qualitative criteria to be used to judge teaching philosophy statements within faculty applications. Faculty should ideally know how their teaching philosophies will be examined as committees review applications for academic positions, and for tenure or promotion.

A second study which was conducted by Schönwetter, Sokal, Friesen and Taylor (2010) focused on the development of a rubric which includes; a definition of teaching and learning; a view of the learner, goals and expectations of the student-teacher relationship; teaching methods and evaluation; personal context of teaching and organization of the statement. This rubric enables a teaching philosophy to be rated by external referees as superior, average or poor across six dimensions of teaching. Again, faculty would be wise to be aware of this information as they develop their teaching philosophy for hiring, tenure or promotion.

While these types of research-based strategies are time-consuming and detailed for a search committee’s activities, they offer ways to classify and evaluate statements by rating and ranking components of a teaching philosophy. These results can then be compared based on this criteria-based assessment system.

In summary, although the literature offers three different ways to think about a teaching philosophy, the fact remains that teaching philosophies most often are developed independently by faculty members who may or may not have referred to these resources. Further, less is known whether statements are updated or changed with new information or across time. In view of this, three questions were posed in this study: (1) How were teaching philosophies developed by faculty members prior to enrolment in a faculty development program; (2) In what ways might have faculty developed/maintained/revised their statements as a result of completing an educational development program; and, (3) How has length of time in a university career influenced one’s teaching philosophy? This study utilized qualitative research methods, specifically in depth interviews, to uncover answers to these research questions.

Method

Study Design

Based on the work of Creswell (2006), a qualitative case study research approach using an interview format was applied in this study. This approach was selected because of the small number of participants whose participation was voluntary; the desire to discover how participants had created or used their teaching philosophy

before, during and after participation in an educational development program; ways these statements may or may not have changed as they reflected on their teaching experiences and, the strengths and weaknesses they identified with their teaching philosophies throughout or after their program was completed. It was hoped that information would be produced that would provide findings about the pragmatic, research and reflective approaches identified in the literature.

Participants

A preliminary survey was completed asking for self-selected faculty who wished to volunteer for this study. The survey ensured all participants (a) were graduates from the teaching certificate program offered by the university; (b) confirmed the length of teaching service at the university; (c) indicated the educational development program had impacted their teaching philosophy; and, (d) agreed to an interview about their teaching philosophy. The preliminary survey identified those faculty that wished to volunteer for this study.

All completed surveys were assessed and those faculty members agreeing to an interview about their teaching philosophy were divided into one of three categories; those faculty in their early career (0-5 years), mid-career (6-10 years) or senior career (over 11 years). This provided three categories so that responses could be analyzed and compared across the time faculty had been in a teaching role. This classification produced six participants within the early career category (one male and five females); five participants within the mid-career category (one male and four females); and four participants in the senior career category (three males and one female). Cumulatively, 15 study participants were included in this study.

Faculty teaching program. All participants completed a comprehensive university educational program lasting 3 weeks in duration. This customized program included the Instructional Skills Workshop and additional workshops on various topics (e.g. assessment strategies, student behaviour). The Writing a Teaching Philosophy topic was included in the educational program but only offered as a 2-hour workshop and was limited to an introduction which included a description of the purpose of a teaching philosophy, examples of completed statements to illustrate the concept, and a resource list of guidelines for those wishing for more detailed information. Interview questions. Three open-ended questions were asked in the interview process. These included; (1) do faculty members' experience a change in their statements of teaching philosophy before, during and after completing an educational development program; (2) how do participants describe these experiences; and, (3) are there differences noted in statements across the three career phases (i.e. early, mid or senior career)?

Data analysis. Interview transcripts were sorted into the three timeline groups-early, mid and senior career categories. Each career set was read several times and responses provided quotations, observations and comparisons from each of the 15 interviews (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). Data was coded and key themes were compared within and across career phases (Charmaz, 2005). These results were sorted and organized for information and report-writing purposes.

Limitations

The study design was subject to the limitations of the interview format (i.e. not asking the correct questions, incorrectly perceiving the responses given, failing to consider additional information, etc.) that might have led to incomplete results. As a qualitative exploratory study, the sample was purposeful but also limited in size. Further, results were based upon a retrospective interview and it is possible that participants may have forgotten details of their experience due to the length of time between the experience and the interview.

Study Results

The first step of analysis provided a retrospective portrait of statements classified as pre-enrolment in the educational development program, during program or post-program faculty responses. To explore comparisons between the early, mid and senior career phases, tables were created to summarize results. Quotations from the interviews provided rich detail within each program and career stage. We begin with pre-enrolment stage.

Pre-enrolment in a Faculty Teaching Program

Prior to participating in the educational development program, early, mid and senior career participants were all limited in articulating what a teaching philosophy meant to them as explained below.

Early career. Participants with one to five years' experience had interesting comments on their teaching philosophy prior to participating in the development program. The idea of an *espoused philosophy* was noted by an early career faculty member.

...actually I did, [have a teaching philosophy] but I would say it was more of an espoused philosophy; it was more like well these are the things that I've read on the web, or I've seen in a workshop that I should have...it was almost like a wish list for how I wanted to teach. (Grace)

Other faculty suggested they intuitively were aware of their teaching philosophy but had difficulty articulating it into a specific statement. For example:

...to be honest, yes I had, but it was based on downloads from different websites because I had no idea. You hear the word philosophy and you think what should I write there? The first thing you just do is Google it. Then you read other people's ideas and then you equate it with what you feel or you learn yourself. (Jay)

In exploring this philosophy question, a participant explained it this way:

I think I did, but I didn't. I don't think I had ever enunciated it or made it clear. I knew what was good...I knew who were good teachers and bad teachers (Daniel).

One instructor stated she did not have an "articulated" (Jenn) teaching philosophy. What becomes clear from these quotations is that early career instructors knew they

should have a teaching philosophy but did not necessarily have the skills or knowledge to express a teaching philosophy to themselves, to their classes or to the institution.

Mid-career. These faculty members commented that while some did not have a teaching philosophy per se, they did have a notion about their *practical teaching*. One participant explained practical teaching in the following way:

...it had to be very practical applications of the use of the content that I was teaching to, so I had actually really had a sort of philosophy of an adult learning philosophy where I was problem focus and oriented towards experiential learning. [The students] ... got involved with a particular activity that would be very practical to helping them learn the materials, and thereby making it more of a rewarding experience for them as well. (Troy)

Another respondent questioned the purpose teaching. They stated that prior to participating in the program they did not have a formal teaching philosophy but they had a sense of what they thought they did and expressed it to the interviewee. "No, it was not something that I thought of as a package deal. I had ways of thinking about how do I want my classes to run, that's more what I was thinking, not really a philosophy" (Simone).

Senior career. Participants tended to focus on *content/instructor* as the central issue they were concerned with prior to the enrolment as a faculty participant. This idea was clear when one participant put forth the following idea:

I became almost like a talking textbook at times, but in the back of my mind, one of the things that was always bothering me was, if I am not really getting excited and enjoying the teaching, what's it like for the student at the other side of the room? (Len)

Another senior faculty member mirrored it the following way:

Before I went to the program, I had a very high standard, and I wanted to show students that they failed to meet the standard, and that in the end they should be grateful for any little grade I give them. I'm going to give you some grace now, because you've failed, but oh well. (Herb)

The idea that content needed to be covered at the expense of student engagement, was what senior career faculty members believed their teaching philosophy to be prior to completing the program.

During the Faculty Teaching Program

As the first few days of their educational development program were completed, participants felt their teaching philosophy statements became clearer to them. This was reflected by the differing emphasis they placed on their statements.

Early career. Comments made by early career faculty showed a noticeable difference in their thoughts around the development and use of a teaching philosophy than before participating in the educational development program. They identified the theme as *living my philosophy* as important to them. These included statements such as, "I had a teaching philosophy and I tried to practically put [into my statement] things I was learning in the program" (Jay). Another indicated this in the following way:

...when I look back on my teaching philosophy I think the things I wrote [for my teaching philosophy] were probably things I wanted to be but did not know how to express them. (Grace)

What did change for participants was their ability and confidence to incorporate a teaching philosophy into their work. This is apparent when one instructor stated, “I think my ideas were already there, it wasn’t like I came in with a blank slate, but I think that the program began to make me really feel confident that I was ahead of the game” (Daniel). He began to practice and reflect his own truthful teaching philosophy.

A second theme that arose from the interviews was the focus on *student-centered learning*. This concept included the focus on designing course instruction with the students in mind as opposed to traditional approaches that emphasized instructor-based content delivery. All participants commented that they understood and desired to create a student-focused learning experience. Both would benefit from the knowledge transfer and retention of information. One program participant stated:

Throughout the program, I learned to design each lecture. Previously, I was just putting materials – I didn’t design anything, my focus is on the students, asking myself what I want them to achieve after fifty minutes, rather than focusing on myself, on what I want to teach today. (Jay)

Another instructor explained it in the following manner:

...the idea of appreciating that different students learn in different ways and that there are also cultural differences or I guess socio-economic differences to be sensitive to. And then expanding on the idea of facilitating learning, I also talked about how I thought that the instructor-student relationship was a partnership, so that we would work together towards the goal of their higher education. (Katherine)

The idea of focusing on students was also apparent when one instructor discussed why they came to believe that, “less is more. I always thought I had to give them as much as I could and cram it in the allotted time” (Doris).

These comments provide a picture of how the educational development program, through learning about educational theories, various learning strategies and practicing different teaching methods impacted on these instructors’ teaching philosophy.

Mid-career. Mid-career participants included the ideas of being able to *live the philosophy* and of *structured teaching*. They explained the program impacted on their ability to live their philosophy and confirmed their beliefs in their philosophy. One member noted, “I don’t think I have changed it [teaching philosophy] but I have more lingo now to describe it, so it has given me some structure...I think what it did for me was confirmed a lot of things” (Simone). Another responded:

I think it’s been qualified and made more clear, I’m noticing [I’m] more realistic. I would say that my teaching philosophy has been tempered a lot, it’s much less about these grandiose ideas but still keeps the core of that hope and that impulse. (Betty)

A participant stated, “it made it more purposeful” (Troy), while another explained the change in the following way:

...the difference I would express, before I knew that I wanted to expose students to the resources...was to make them enthusiastic learners. The faculty program has probably made me see this as a real experience for the students, that the learning experience is important not just after effects. I should know what the objectives are more concretely then before. (Jean)

In fact, all of these participants explained that the reason the program had an impact on their teaching philosophy was because it provided them confirmation and the ability to put their philosophy into practice. During the program, participants had the opportunity to engage in teaching demonstrations where new teaching strategies were tried and then implemented into their teaching philosophy. The program instructors, as well as other program participants, provided participants with direct feedback on the teaching demonstrations. The act of creating and delivering a teaching demonstration with a new philosophy and receiving feedback gave participants detailed information on what worked, what did not and strategies to move forward. This information was seen as invaluable because it provided program participants with confirmation to understand how to implement their teaching philosophy successfully.

Senior career. Participants in their senior career phase had varying views on the impact the educational development program had on their teaching philosophy. One participant believed that the program changed the way they saw their role in the classroom.

I am not here to show them how far they are from the mark, to show them what great sinners they are – if you want to state it that way – but more that I’m here to transform them into lifelong learners, who have a passion for this sort of material. (Herb)

This quote also shows that this faculty member began to examine the relationship between caring and challenging students. Another participant commented:

How to reconcile support for students by challenging them to grow while working at figuring out how to challenge students in a fairly radical way. How to make them feel comfortable while doing that. (Maurice)

A third respondent focused on the confirmation that the program provided. In fact, “the big impact that the program...had on me was to confirm ... that a lot of what I was doing was, according to the literature, the people that study this,...this field of education” (Len). In summary, the *role of the instructor* changed from a content-focused pedagogy to a more profound student-focused teaching direction.

Post Faculty Program

For each of the three career phases, changes to their teaching philosophy were less dramatic post participation in the development program, than during the program. However, participants suggested they were aware of continued growth as faculty working with students.

Early career. Early career participants reflected they felt a *continued growth* both personally and professionally in their ability to implement their teaching philosophy in new ways. Some were able to do this by further developing their own teaching skills and techniques, others by developing an assortment of diverse teaching strategies that they could weave into their teaching requirements. One faculty member explained it this way:

...probably the teaching philosophy in and of itself, I've tweaked here and there, but it's pretty much stayed the same, I believe every student sitting in my class has the ability to learn on some level, has a desire to learn or they wouldn't be there, it's not my job to sort them, it's my job to figure out a course design and a class structure that will afford everybody the opportunity to learn and that it's their responsibility to reach out and learn. It's probably that it just gets enacted more and more every single year. (Grace)

Grace added, "Since taking the program, I think not only do I have an espoused teaching philosophy but I now live that teaching philosophy". Another responded, "I think that I have just continued with the teaching philosophy that I developed from the program" (Katherine).

Mid-career. These participants provided responses of which focused on the idea of *continued growth*,

...it's really evolved, and I think more and more I am becoming, sort of, adopting a philosophy. I used to think that inquiry based learning and problem based learning in and of themselves were the key essence of how we should be doing our teaching, but we are sort of moving away from that now and realizing that there is still a need for a lot of guided instruction too, so it's got to be guided. (Troy)

A second instructor explained, "consistent reinforcement, when you do it right and see the reactions...consistently reinforces this is what I should be doing" (Paula). These actions continue to encourage faculty members to examine their teaching philosophy and inquire as to how it impacts their teaching and student learning.

Senior career. Responses from senior career faculty were brief. One indicated, "I haven't had to write another one yet...nothing major would have changed" (Maurice), while another noted, "I don't think it has changed from what I had going in other than just feeling a little stronger about it" (Len).

The interview data from this study provided a look into how this group of faculty members, at various career stages, utilized and reflected on their teaching philosophy. Further, how participating and engaging in an educational development program can impact the various approaches used to develop and implement a teaching philosophy, whether that is a pragmatic approach where one writes a philosophy by googling the words "teaching philosophy" to understand the concept; a research approach in which the appropriate literature is reviewed, or a reflective approach where the time and opportunity is taken to reflect on the philosophy and how it plays out in the classroom.

Table 1 provides an overall picture of the career phases and key themes to arise out of the interview data.

Table 1: Comparison of career phases and key themes

	Early career	Mid-career	Senior career
Pre-program	Espoused philosophy	Practical teaching	Content/instructor
During the program	Living my philosophy & the importance of student centred learning	Living the philosophy by structured teaching	Role of the instructor
Post program	Continued growth	Continued growth	Continued growth

Discussion

The results of this exploratory research are presented from two viewpoints: (1) the primary results addressing the four research questions of this study; and, (2) the secondary results on the pragmatic, reflective and scholarly approaches used in literature as applied to this study. We begin with a discussion of the first set of results.

Findings for the Study

Program time. Prior to the teaching program, all participants provided a picture of what teaching meant to them. For some it was recognizing good teachers from bad based on their own school experiences, observing good teaching in a workshop, reading descriptions of teaching on the web, or knowing that teaching was something that was a practiced skill. Teaching was seen to involve content, perhaps a philosophical orientation about students as adult learners, and recognition that transmission of information was central to teaching. One of the issues that became clear to the interviewer was that although participants could articulate these facts, there appeared little understanding of how or why these issues were important for faculty or to their teaching role. It seemed likely that had an interview not been done, little information about this would have surfaced.

During the program, change began to appear across all categories. The educational teaching program provided teaching information, knowledge, resources illustrated with examples, scenarios and discussions. During this phase, teaching became not only the reality of the faculty member but an attractive process in which faculty played a role in. Through these steps, faculty became central to his/her teaching process. They began to live their philosophy and to see how student-centered learning and teaching could be key to the process of teaching. This change was significant, even transformational, because it showed faculty how they could work with, guide, structure, provide and enable students to learn based upon the actions of the teaching. This is a major development because it offers faculty a broader perspective for their work than merely controlling teaching actions or events. Through a broadening process, students are invited to learn with a structure, role and purpose that go beyond faculty-centered teaching. Interestingly, to realize these developments, interviewees would talk about themselves, how they were able to transform, and recognized how to make students comfortable when learning was uncomfortable. These self-reflections, self-analysis, and reflection about goals were apparent in the language throughout the quotations gathered in this period.

The post program phase meant that personal and professional growth continued beyond the program. The responses were gathered long after the program was

completed but there was no indication that this continued change was over. In fact, faculty listed many teaching innovations such as “my job is to figure out a course design that will afford everybody the opportunity to learn”, and the fact that “I have just continued with the teaching philosophy that I developed from the program” (Maurice). “When you do it right [you] consistently reinforce this is what I should be doing” (Len). Again, self-thinking, reflection-on-action, self-reflective growth are hallmarks of this period.

Length of time. Teaching at the university meant that pre-program enrolment participants from the early, mid and senior career faculty approached similar situations with differing results. Each career phase group faced the issues of practice, content and “how to I want my classes to run” (Doris). While each individual teaching philosophy did vary the reality was faculty seemed to present a limited view of teaching and student learning in their work.

This viewpoint was altered when the study participants, from the three career stages, were compared during their participation in the teaching program. The quotations suggest that each faculty group had energy, excitement and a sense of opportunity about the role they played in the classroom. Faculty began to believe they had opportunities to think creatively, question and consider how teaching and learning might begin to co-exist. Faculty and students were seen to work together co-operatively. They began to see how to transition into a freer role in which faculty were able to guide, facilitate, lead, invite, encourage and provide learning for others. This is a major change from a faculty-centered teaching perspective in which the instructor is responsible for all aspects of instruction. In many ways, it is a very freeing activity for a faculty member.

The post-teaching program saw a sense of unity across the three career stages suggesting the major changes had occurred earlier in the program. Changes would be made but the findings from this study indicated that steady change would continue to occur within reason and opportunity.

Pragmatic, Reflective & Scholarly Approaches

As the literature reveals, three approaches currently provide information on the development of a teaching philosophy. Within this study, the pragmatic approach was found to be used most directly.

Pragmatic approach. As evidenced from this study, faculty who participated in the educational development program used a pragmatic approach to the development of a teaching philosophy. While participants noted that they knew what good teaching was, most could not articulate the details for this statement. As a result, they tended to create a teaching philosophy by ‘Googling’ statements to utilize when writing statements for themselves. When little is known or understood about a philosophy or teaching statement, as was the case in this study, we all often rely on pragmatic approaches and this was no different when it came to understanding the development of a teaching philosophy.

While research shows that the simple act of writing a teaching philosophy has a positive impact on one’s teaching (Chism, 1998), the faculty program used in this study provided a multitude of strategies and educational research and theory to help these instructors articulate their thoughts and beliefs about their personal aims, expectations

and desires about their teaching. By going through these processes, these faculty felt more confident in expressing what they could do and how this would develop within themselves and with their students. For these reasons, participating in an educational development program early in one's career was extremely beneficial in helping these faculty members design and deliver stronger courses based on what faculty identified for themselves as crucial qualities as effective instructors.

Engaging in an educational development program also permits one to examine the thoughts and beliefs about teaching. Educational development programs identify educational theory, provide tried and true teaching strategies, examine the effectiveness of various teaching strategies and promote discussion surrounding best practices. Participating in the educational development program gave participants in this study the opportunity to better understand the impact their teaching methods have on students and student learning.

Many faculty members beyond this study may not have, or chose not to take the opportunity to engage in a development program. Findings from this study indicate that the early, mid and senior career faculty members were not able to articulate their philosophy when they entered the faculty program. As a result, "googling" is often used by faculty to see what is meant and involved, but simply reading such statements is of limited value. Rather, if we can provide in depth opportunities to learn about teaching, to explore personal thoughts and beliefs about teaching, then faculty are able to use the skills and knowledge to develop and implement stronger teaching and learning experiences. This translates into actions that can be supported with effective teaching statements.

Reflective approach. The importance of taking the time to reflect on teaching strategies, student learning and abilities, and ones thoughts on teaching were findings of this study. While participants noted that they had teaching philosophy ideas, they were unable to utilize this information in their teaching statements. Reflection is a powerful tool that can offer information as to why someone does what they do, it can create the space to question the effectiveness of action, and it can open up the space to make new decisions. Reflection, as seen in this study, provided these faculty members with a way to identify what they used as a method to explain their understanding of the importance of a teaching philosophy through questioning, discussing, and implementing change.

The importance of continued reflection – reflection for creating a personal teaching philosophy was an underlying issue in this study. The process of reflection during the act of teaching, and reflecting back on that personal experience, was critically important for these faculty participants. When faculty are able to reflect on their past teaching experiences, the door is opened for an exploration of those experiences. As seen in this study, the language of self-reflective questions provided the underpinnings which became important to personal and professional issues about teaching. By recalling, self-reflecting, and self-questioning their teaching experiences and attitudes, it was possible to see how they might broaden, modify or even shift their teaching activities to enhance their student needs and classroom issues. It is through self-thinking, reflection-on-action, and self-reflective growth that information gathering, discussion and collaboration, and implementation lead to a personal and insightful teaching philosophy.

Through these processes of reflection, the teaching philosophy can be thought of as a living tool in which faculty are free to return to their reflections whenever they desire, to re-examine what they thought, and to explore why they did what they did that led to teaching decisions. From this perspective, the teaching philosophy can inform, lead, and facilitate the teaching process. This suggests that statements about teaching need to explore and integrate reflective processes to provide a deeper understanding of the processes at work. If this can be done, then a teaching philosophy becomes an essential tool that informs faculty by offering an ability to “reflect-in-action” and “reflect-about-action”. These issues are further discussed in depth by authors who believe that reflection is necessary for all professionals in today’s society (Schön, 1986; Moon, 2006).

Scholarly approach. All participants in this study spoke about the impact that even a two hour focused workshop on the teaching philosophy topic had on their own teaching philosophy. The opportunity to learn about the topic of a teaching philosophy provided immersion into educational literature and engagement with other faculty members was immense. This impacted their understanding about why and how this was important to the work and beliefs they held as teachers.

The importance of this study includes the growth of scholarly research about such statements. While the literature does highlight the fact that many universities require faculty members to submit teaching philosophies for new positions, tenure and promotion, faculty are often unaware how university committees are utilizing the teaching philosophy that can affect the decisions and lives of present and future faculty. For these reasons, it is crucial that the educational developers, hiring committees, consultants and faculty alike are encouraged to share this scholarly research with others. This study would be very helpful to faculty as it provides information not only on what is required in a statement but also on what participants said about the difficulties and strategies in writing and implementing a teaching philosophy.

Conclusion

This study was a retrospective examination which provided a rich understanding of how early, mid and senior career faculty create and utilize a teaching philosophy prior to engaging in an educational development program, during a program and post program participation. This study offers information into the development and use of a teaching philosophy and indicates that faculty need support to identify how statements will be used, what research exists to support the use of a teaching philosophy and the importance of reflection throughout the process of creating teaching philosophy.

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