

# **HOW DO TEACHERS CONSTRUCT AN UNDERSTANDING OF TEACHING?**

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## **Abstract**

This mixed methods study examined the teaching perspectives of 14 teachers and how they constructed their understanding of teaching. During the 2012-2013 school year interviews and an online survey were administered to these 14 teachers employed in two school districts and one private school in British Columbia. The teachers varied in terms of gender, years of experience and levels of grades taught.

The study was conducted in two phases: a *Teaching Perspectives Inventory* (TPI) survey was followed by interviews. The TPI results described the dominant teaching perspectives of each teacher as transmission, apprenticeship, developmental, nurturing or social reform. The interview data then helped explore teachers' personal, educational and teaching experiences and the way they shaped those dominant teaching perspectives.

The research was conceptualized and guided by a constructivist approach. Social reality is created by individuals to explain their experiences and is influenced by what an individual brings to such experiences. Conceptual lenses interpret what you see. The study was framed by the dimensions of examining teaching as a process of expertise, of interdependence, judgment and the self-expression needs of teachers.

Study findings highlighted the multifaceted problem solving contextual nature of teaching in shaping understanding as an improvisational experience towards ideals that may change over time. Such experiences ultimately favored collegially centered relationships with co-constructed learning support opportunities with other trusted educators. The identity or understanding of what is good teaching is not fixed over time and developing awareness is a matter of reflexive practice and accumulating experience. Teaching is not simple acts of productivity but productive acts of thinking to celebrate both emotional and intellectual ends.

## **Preface**

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Peter Skipper. The *Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI)* used in the survey was researched and designed by Drs. Daniel Pratt and John Collins of UBC and used with their permission. Professor Collins further provided K-12 TPI normative data so the author of this study could compare those results with his participant findings. Ethics approval for this research was received on May 15, 2012 from the University of British Columbia Behavioral Research Ethics Board: UBC BREB Certificate Number: H11-00954.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my granddaughter, Pemberley, and to the memory of my loving mother, Lydia. Their lives and the intervening generations between embody the expanding horizons and opportunities for those that believe in and pursue the benefits of education.



## **Chapter 1: Teaching Seen Through My Eyes**

*The act of teaching is informed by multiple forms of knowledge and is representative of a variety of ways of personal, professional and contextual knowing.* Ardra Cole & J. Gary Knowles

### **1.1 The Conundrum**

Mine eyes have seen the glory of teaching at its best, from enthralling lectures to invigorating investigations, from revealing discussions to thoughtful assignments and to encouraging words. At least I thought so but, surprisingly, my point of view in perceiving and thinking about what had just transpired in those situations was not unanimously shared by others. What I had just experienced as inspiring and enabling fell flat with other teaching colleagues or learners. I poignantly recall a mid-career staff meeting where a teacher had swept me off my educational feet in espousing the gospel and virtues of the benefits of guided reading. As I gazed around the staffroom that afternoon, I was taken aback by the extent of the adverse reaction of a few colleagues to showing their displeasure to such an initiative by turning away from the speaker. One had even dramatically folded her arms across her chest in an unmistakable show of rejection or disapproval. I took this on as a challenge to convince those alleged misguided opponents of the errors of their ways. I thought that learning about proven effective teaching practices should not be contentious but obvious.

Needless to say, this was an example of a string of numerous initiatives that met with the ebb and flow of partial successes with supporters and detractors of said best or promising practices. It became apparent that teachers do not all attend to similar thinking in what works in constructing an understanding of teaching. This became an enduring and perplexing personal professional enigma of how to gain consensus on how to teach children. To paraphrase, you can

persuade all of the teachers some of the time, and some of the teachers all of the time, but you cannot persuade all of the teachers all of the time into accepting how or what to teach. Teaching evidently goes beyond complex and challenging craft-like technique to other intentions, perceptions or assumptions of what works. What lies beneath teacher actions is worth investigating.

My conceptions and assumptions arising from my life experiences interpreted the professional world around me, often limiting the horizons of what I could see, as well as how I saw them. Such ways of knowing and being developed in the past, to be potentially amended by the present, to set the provisional knowledge or “prejudices” to meet the future, shapes us as individuals. New experiences can confirm or challenge present understandings. Those encounters that contextually and comparatively unsettle preconceptions can shift understandings to experience the world in richer or different ways. In this chapter, I seek to share with readers the context and considerations from which this study arose to see the world with new eyes.

## **1.2 My Journey**

To explain the coherence between this study and my practice, let me step back and recall my adventure in constructing an understanding of teaching. Such discernment began at an early age, even before the start of school, with willing and involved parents sharing and modelling their interest in books and learning. In our home I had a wealth of books, records, dinner conversations and bedtime stories. The relatively new phenomenon of television broadcasts and programing brought an even bigger world of experiences and schema to my acquaintance. The awe and wonder of this wonderful world of early imagination and inquiry, and play and practice, created a positive impression of the power of learning new knowledge and applying fresh skills. The opportunities and support provided by parents in those early years afforded a context for an

easy entry into formal schooling. Learning and schooling were priority values set by my circumstance. My mother's weekday after school routine of multiplication tables and spelling words around our kitchen table reinforced this message.

I came to know knowledge and learning as specific things you explicitly acquire. My understanding improved by mastering a new spelling word, replicating an arithmetic algorithm, recalling specific science formulas, reciting French words or retelling historical facts or events. In high school, I remember hour long classes of writing copious notes from the teacher's chalk board into my notebooks for study. Learning was receiving, retaining and returning such knowledge. There were ideas out there that great minds discovered to explain to the rest of us. The scientific method as the way to discern reality was drummed into me. Truth existed on the pages of non-fiction texts. University, initially, was not much different. The emphasis on supporting your point of view by citing examples in texts gave the opportunity to assemble such knowledge, through study and reflection, into novel and gratifying ways of expressing yourself. However, learning through summative marks still seemed to be rewarded by returning a similar point of view or knowledge shared by your professors. The culture of experts and reliance on them became an implicitly held value by me.

As I began teaching, I frequently followed the methods taught to me to insert them craft-like into the classes I taught. Madeline Hunter's direct instructional model and teacher guide books tended to rule my early teaching as part of the passive reliance on expertise. I acted in ways my favorite high school teachers or university professors did in their teaching. It was an informal apprenticeship of sorts in what I discerned as ways to teach well based upon my years as a student. The gradual adjustment to more independent thinking grew out of a need to attend to novel classroom challenges. These professional insights gained from teaching soon had me

searching for a better conceptual model of what teaching was all about. Overtime, as my proficiency and confidence grew, I gradually changed from an apprentice to someone less reliant on templates of practice or guides.

I turned to research literature represented in professional periodicals and sought out in-service opportunities in the search of the best way to teach. I often listened to the advice of fellow teachers in what they found to be successful. A conceptual overview of teaching based upon the research of certain professors highlighted my practice. This provided the assurance and theoretical reasoning behind why certain skills, strategies and teaching tactics, complemented by subject knowledge and classroom management, gradually became my version of understanding teaching. I put my puzzle pieces together in the image of what I thought teaching should be. My teaching was about productivity and accountability in getting mandated learning outcomes into students. I followed the principles and practiced the specifics of this framework over time and it made sense to me in terms of professional satisfaction and recognition. These tenets were reinforced and sanctioned by my appointment as a supervising principal.

As a principal, my decades' long non-contested conception of my leadership role was supported and reinforced by local governance policy and research. So, I persisted in trying to persuade teachers I worked with to adopt certain interpretations or understandings of teaching, particularly as it applied to espousing academic research favored teaching techniques. This technocracy-like view of education seemed to be a rational approach to the challenges of teaching. I met with partial successes for short periods of time but, too frequently, modest results over the longer term. Teachers who shared similar thinking felt like kindred spirits and those times were the professional highlights of my career in certain schools at certain times. Too frequently, from my perspective, I was not able to motivate critical masses of teachers to do what

I asked. I thought teaching could be framed as best practices for others to follow. I regarded this impasse as a professional setback, so I sought the world of further expertise in doctoral studies to find some answers.

### **1.3 Research Question Considerations**

Based upon my experiences with teaching, I understood teaching as both intuitive and deliberative thinking. Successful persuasion of teachers by authorities or experts involved more than the technical aspects of teaching in developing a conceptual understanding of teaching. The emotional aspects of learning are entwined with the cognitive dimensions (Dumont, Istance, Benavides, 2010), and therefore are important constituents of how teachers come to construct their understanding of teaching. It was intriguing to speculate about what teaching experiences developed or helped shape views and approaches to practice. My research aimed to explore teacher perspectives about teaching, with some description and explanation for how teachers in this study constructed their understanding of teaching. The key research question became *how do teachers' construct an understanding of teaching?* A co-requisite research question then also arose of *what are these understandings of teaching?*

Understandings depend upon prior perceptions about teaching. A teaching perspective is “an inter-related set of beliefs and intentions which gives meaning and justification for our actions” (Pratt, 1998a, p. 33). Examining possible interactive experiences in how teachers perceive and construct such teaching perspectives and what these perspectives may be were the main considerations of this research. Clarifying the processes by which teachers make sense of their teaching practices would help me and others understand the epistemic, and perhaps even ontological bases, of their professional knowledge. My point of departure in this exploration is the realization that teaching is not just a technical pursuit. Nor are endorsed 'best practices' —

whether research based or not — likely to help clarify the ways in which teachers come to understand their role and responsibilities as 'teacher'. Teaching as a cultural and systemic activity involves both explicit and implicit ways of knowing.

Such ways of knowing influence the way teachers approach teaching and how they translate this knowledge into action and pedagogic practice. It follows that teachers' awareness of how their understandings of teaching translate into practice represent a key component of professional learning. Such mindfulness provides the means to judge and justify their teaching actions. However, such ways of knowing go beyond mere technical changes in teaching as our teaching culture either supports or resists change. "Structural change that is not supported by cultural change will eventually be overwhelmed by the culture, for it is in the culture that any organization finds meaning and stability" (Schlechty, 2001, p. 52).

From personal experience, structural or technical changes on their own, especially when managerial in origin, that do not engage the bigger questions of the purposes of education or learning, will not address constructing an understanding of teaching that leads to commitment as ethical actions. Changing beliefs, habits, and attitudes as cultural forms of adjustment require attention to values and intentions held by the culture of schools, school districts, departments of education and the public. Such systems are presently based on "the technicist, positivist tradition of producing knowledge" (Kincheloe, 2012, p. 7) which tends to reduce teaching to preferred technical standards and thinking about teaching as ticking off formal curriculum boxes. This productivity and authoritarian reform vision tends to want to condense teaching to a monoculture in meeting the needs of overwhelming diversity. The ideal is that there are preferred ways to teach and think about teaching. As a child of such rational positivist thinking,

based upon our western cultural and scientific traditions, I was constantly searching for the discovery of the best way to teach as both a moral and technical absolute.

The research literature is replete with evidence for why teachers should continue to refine and extend their teaching repertoire as what teachers know and do have implications for student learning (Bennett, B., & Rolheiser, C. 2001; Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. 1993; Brown, J., & Moffett, C. 1999; Darling-Hammond, L. 1999, 2009; Davis, B., & Sumara, D. 2010; Dufour, R., & Eaker, R., 2005; Dumont, Istance, Benavides, 2010; Hargreaves, A. 1994; Hattie, J. 2003, 2009; Joyce, B., & Showers, B. 2002; Kaser, L., & Halbert, J. 2009; Little, J. 1990; Marzano, R., 2003; Reeves, D. 2001; Richardson, N., 2009; Rowe, K. 2003; Smoker, M. 2006; Sparks, D. 1995, 2002; Stigler, J.W., & Hiebert, J. 1999). Moreover, educational jurisdictions, from schools to departments of education, often appear to favor or hold one perspective about teaching as established orthodoxy (Pratt, 2002). The diversity of teaching perspectives of teachers within less tolerant organizational belief systems often appear to be grounds for conflict as teachers are differing over the ends of their teaching and not merely the means (Poole, 2008). A well-articulated grasp of why and how individual teaching perspectives arise, or whether some teachers are aware of what their philosophical orientations are, seems elusive. The extent of influences that support what teachers do, how they do it and why they want to do it is useful information for fellow educators in order to accommodate diverse educational perspectives.

The most important responsibility of my role as a principal was to help create the conditions under which teachers can teach well while developing and applying their knowledge and practice of pedagogy. For much of my career, I thought it was the role of largely outside academic researchers and policy makers to construct this for the teaching community of which I was a part. The inconsistencies I experienced because of such thinking made me question how

teachers came to understand and construct teaching, or certainly my role in it. The intent of this research then was to enlighten my thinking about how teachers construct their understanding of teaching. Examining connections between teaching perspectives and the ways of constructing understandings of teaching to assist teachers, principals and policy makers in their respective roles was a worthwhile initiative to avoid narrow minded habits or sterile teaching formulae.

#### **1.4 Dichotomy Debate**

Until recently, I was an exacting Slavinian (Slavin, 2002, 2004); I saw the world through the eyes of the positivist or natural science paradigm exclusively. Aggregate patterns of relationships or ways of doing and being were out there awaiting a discerning eye and mind to bring them into universal view. I grew up loving ideas that described ‘realities’. In my formative years, for example, a book like my grandfather’s *Architects of Ideas: The Story of the Great Theories of Mankind* (Trattner, 1938) was read with avid fascination, as I tried to make sense of and comprehend the world around me. Darwin, Marx, Freud, Malthus, Einstein and other great thinkers and scientists discovered the reality of the world around us.

I believed there was a ‘reality’ out there waiting to be revealed by systematic study and analysis by uncovering facts. Based upon those facts one could make deductions to reveal the truth to help understanding. In other words, I was looking for ‘what works’ in an objective universal educational sense. Science and rational thought were like a religion to me. Experimental research was the gospel that explained life.

Like Slavin, I thought the epistemology of choice for studies that seek to make causal conclusions was experimental design, and preferentially randomized experiments to reduce the psychological effects of human subjectivity (that should have given me a clue). In comparing outcomes of alternative programs or policies, there is no substitute for a well-designed



experiment (Slavin, 2002, 2004). Experimental research in education, Slavin asserts, would improve the relevance and applicability for use by policy makers and transform educational policy and practice similar to what historically happened in medicine. This was a rational and common sense way of viewing reality for me. I was a disciple of such perceiving, believing and thinking. For example, in my role as principal, when Hattie's (2003, 2009) research of synthesizing over 800 meta-analyses relating to student achievement first came out, it was my duty and responsibility to ensure teachers had such information and acted accordingly. I emphasized such evidence in espousing certain teaching strategies as more productive in terms of student achievement and success as universally better methods of ways to teach.

Due to this paradigm, 'research says' was my mantra. I thought if I could get whatever individuals within an organization I was working with to all see and apply this truth, or *Holy Grail*, we would solve the challenges facing us. Despairingly and frustratingly, my practice, despite persistent diligence, did not achieve the full success that I expected or desired by following this perception of reality. Bewildered, like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, lost in a perplexing world, I sought out the Yellow Brick Road to obtain the help of The Great and Powerful Oz of doctoral studies to improve my understanding. My model of 'reality' was not fully explaining all the inconsistencies I experienced. What were the missing pieces that would enlighten me?

I should have realized I was living in a dialectic parallel universe as a child growing up in the Cold War, between the world of study and its application. I remember a sense of dread, likely coming from the apprehension of my parents, in the Cuban Missile Crisis, due to what I then believed were those adversarial communists that wanted to destroy our way of life. I distinctly recall my vicarious partisanship as a high school student in the campus protests,

marches and demonstrations brought on by the Viet Nam War and the civil rights movement. These crises and tensions were man-made due to disputes over power and control caused by vying ideologies and policies that explained different versions of reality and how things should be. Such phenomena were as real as any theories arising from experimental evidence or books, as people were fighting and dying over such interpretations of truth due to their beliefs.

Into this dialectic came the ideas of Olson (2004), which I read. I saw, like Dorothy, “home” with new eyes. The *Olsonian* view is that I cannot divorce human consciousness from the human being. Perceptions influence what is real. There is no way as yet to randomize for human belief systems that impact experimental research (Olson, 2004). Perceptions of reality are influenced by subjectivity. Depersonalizing research is not easy to do. Reality is constructed by personal beliefs and assumptions that change over time.

Olson (2004) highlights the *Hawthorne Effect* and the fact that human experience over time alters thinking, thus influencing experimental results. He cites examples of clinical trials that demonstrate that different treatments can have similar effects. Due to such influences, assumptions about causality are problematic. There are many inferential paths that may lead to understanding. Rather than merely discovering pathways of reality, we construct them. Research, in other words, should not be designed to “dictate what one does” but is to be used by teachers and students as information in making informed decisions in the varied and multiple contexts in which people work (Olson, 2004). The patriot and the rebel arise from different perceptions of a shared, but not necessarily similarly experienced, circumstance. What one brings to an experience is an important influence to any human knowledge or skill acquired from the context of involvement, particularly as it relates to the social sciences.

Therefore, social reality is a construct created by individuals to explain their particular experience and make sense of their overall existence in society. It is likely to change over time due to our reasoning and thinking nature. What works changes over time as different contexts appear and wane. Individual perceptions are no less real than theories about aggregate experiences or relationships of larger groups of humanity. Insights shift as new information becomes available or is comprehended. Social phenomena are a mixture of temporary creed, circumstance, and lived experiences, each influencing, interacting and ultimately modifying the other.

## **1.5 Complexity Theory**

A second paradigm that revised my ontological view about social reality was complexity theory as described by Clarke & Collins (2006). This second paradigm is predicated on the variety and multitude of interacting influences that come into play that affect something or someone. Teaching, if it were to be described as a system, is complex and multifaceted. Complexity theory is further compounded by the thinking nature of human behavior. Human consciousness and agency make the predictability of human behavior more difficult. Linearity and compliance, as often educational prescriptions, becomes more problematic when viewed through these lenses of awareness and intention. Classrooms as self-organizing systems are constructed rather than delivered, due to the adaptations and innovations necessary, as classrooms of learners are not constants but changing places (Clarke & Collins, 2006). Teaching frequently deals with spontaneity, novelty and invention to meet the learning occasion.

Clarke and Collins (2006) indicate that simple phenomena with fewer influences, such as the movement of a ball around a billiard table, can be accurately predicted. Complicated phenomena have many influences, thus providing difficulty in exactly predicting the outcome in

every specific instance. However, over time there is enough regularity that patterns can be detected and aggregate outcomes predicted within confidence measures. This statistical analysis can be used to describe overall but not specific individual outcomes. The functioning of the insurance industry would be an example of this.

Clark and Collins (2006) explain that complex phenomena have many influences as well, but, unlike complicated phenomena outcomes, they are more difficult to predict. Financial markets, flu viruses, fashion tastes and weather systems would be some examples they provide. According to Clark and Collins (2006), complex systems are networked, like the Internet, rather than hierarchical, and have feedback loops that due to their nonlinearity means information can be communicated quickly. The multiple branching means that complex systems have the capacity for self-regulation or organization and are not dependent on a single point or location for direction (Clark & Collins, 2006). They assert that it is difficult to control such a system as this capacity for change transcends control agents. This constant state of change permeates and generates the constant tension for creative interventions (Clark & Collins, 2006).

An important characteristic of complex phenomena is that they represent systems within systems like interactive nestled cups of various sizes (Clark & Collins, 2006). A highly successful local football coach who applied systems theory to his coaching and classroom teaching explained this concept to me as a collection of tin can lids connected by elastic bands. When you grab onto one, you tend to engage or jiggle to various extents some or all of the others depending upon the arrangement of this matrix of interactive phenomena. John Muir (1911) phrased this concept as, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe" (p.110).

Reducing learning and teaching to specific interventions as simply complicated rather than complex phenomena, within the myriad of influences upon teacher and student, may explain why educational research has not provided the boost to education that such research did for medicine in curing illness. Fostering improved student learning, much like promoting improved patient health, is a much more complex thing to do. In this respect, medicine is as far behind as education in meeting its ideals. Exercising more, eating healthier foods, stopping smoking, reducing addictions and maintaining recommended weight are more complex initiatives than taking a prescription, having a vaccination or undergoing a particular operation. Espousing improved student achievement, similar to promoting health, is a much more complex and challenging task to do. The conceptual model of complex phenomena therefore seems a good fit for much of what happens in education. Such dynamic phenomena are characteristic of social organizations including education (Fullan, 1993, cited in Clarke & Collins, 2006).

Consequently, as a school principal, it is important to be mindful of the complex nature of the subjective experiences and influences that provide meaning to each educator in reaching their respective teaching perspectives. Furthermore, as both a practitioner and researcher, such interpretations are sorted through my conceptual understandings and exposures to various pedagogical traditions. Being vigilant for novel or unexpected arrangements of influences, processes and effects that facilitate the understanding and construction of teaching is necessary. Indeed, that is a purpose for research, to see the world in new ways.

## **1.6 Significance of this Study**

At a more personal level, this study helped explain the conundrum and frustration of my career long quest for understanding why ‘research says’ was not the panacea or mantra for

rallying teacher compliance to ‘what works’ in order to transform schools and improve learning. Orderly, linear, structured cause and effect paradigms and interventions that dominate the thinking and operation of schools, as extolled by much of the research of which I was familiar, perplexingly were not working for me.

For principals and teachers, determining what induces and permits certain teachers to surpass expectations in their practice, to eventually become and continue to emerge into highly accomplished and satisfied educators, is worthy of study. In responding to my research question, I accounted for how different teachers came to construct their understanding of teaching in order to gain insight into their beliefs and practices of "good teaching". "Good teaching" or “promising practices” is about individual teacher deductions of successful and effective practice as to “what works” in varied contexts. Understanding that something is good teaching benefits from understanding why something works in teaching, as well as how you go about deciding whether it worked, and what “worked” means. Teachers are more likely able to adapt their teaching successes to changes in contexts, learners and circumstances if they understand the why in addition to the what and how.

Showing interest in and understanding teacher viewpoints, rather than trying to get teachers interested in my way, required a shift from the manner in which I practiced. The public places faith in teachers to be the best they can be. Engaging teachers in examining their values, attitudes and habits increases professional awareness between the means and ends of teaching and empowers their practice.

In this chapter, I described for readers my journey and struggle to decipher, as a practitioner, a few key conceptual understandings through which I made sense of the world of teaching. In the second chapter, I elaborate upon my further journey of eclectic encounters with

the academic literature, as a novice scholar, in trying to meaningfully sort out the theoretical traditions of research that were often contradictory or incoherent. In the third chapter, I show how I designed the study to generate data to respond to my research questions. In the fourth chapter, I share my significant findings of what are study participant understandings of teaching and how they constructed such understandings of teaching. In the final chapter, I present my reflections and the implications of my findings for impacting my practice and for thinking, judging and acting anew in responding to teacher learning. It is my aspiration that this study will enhance the conversation of teaching practice beyond conventional methods to more nuanced considerations of how teachers come to be effective teachers.

Before moving to the literature review, I want to emphasize that the work of teaching or learning of teaching is often synonymously attached to schooling or formal education. Education, as I understand it, is not limited to formal schooling, but is made up of all of life's experiences over a lifetime. Schooling is often viewed as an instrumental process with specific outcomes in mind that are expressly taught. Education encompasses a broader context of cultural learning and making sense of life experiences in all its ramifications of problem solving, inquisitiveness, creativity, relationships, conduct and critical thinking. So when I use the term education in this thesis, it is not limited to formal schooling.

## Chapter 2: Understanding Teachers' Constructions of Teaching

*Sometimes when I consider what tremendous consequences come from little things...I am tempted to think...there are no little things.*  
Bruce Barton

Parents and students reasonably expect teachers to demonstrate expert behavior (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001). How and why teachers make sense of their teaching so they may teach with understanding — connecting the means to the ends of their work as they see it — is important information for societies emphasizing change and improvement to their educational systems. I have always been intrigued by what induces and permits certain teachers to surpass student learning expectations in their practice to eventually become highly respected teachers and continue to progressively develop into highly confident and accomplished educators. I suspect it may be the depth of their consciously skilled understanding of how to meaningfully integrate their practice with the perspective they hold as to the purposes of education — the how and the why.

The influences that subtly or deliberately shape our teaching perspectives and subsequent practice must be kept in mind, as beliefs on what is 'good teaching' filter or constrain views of suitable practice. For example, those who favor teaching math that emphasizes discovery learning may look more critically at those who profess the rote and rigor of direct instruction as preferable in developing the necessary math skills. Similar educational partisanship has gone on about the teaching of reading as to whether phonics or whole language is 'good teaching.' Consequently, this inquiry was open to possible combinations of influences that may be responsible for inspiring a certain perspective or way of understanding and constructing teaching.



To this end, this chapter chronicles my eclectic journey of my emerging perceptions of the literature on understanding teaching. I encountered different traditions of research in seeking insights on how teachers may construct an understanding of teaching. Insights arose about different perspectives or purposes for teaching, the importance of expertise going beyond technique, the significance of experience in developing expertise, the implications for how teacher learning is configured and the complexity of the debate over what is good teaching. I also examined previous models or plans from which to design or understand teaching for the purposes of my research. From the research literature, I was able to synthesize a framework of cultural and systemic influences or dimensions that helped me interpret my data for the purposes of this study.

## **2.1 Perspectives on Teaching**

My primary source for identifying perspectives on teaching is based upon the work of Pratt and Associates (1998). Over decades of research and study, five dominant views or perspectives of teaching have been documented: transmission, apprenticeship, developmental, nurturing and social reform (Pratt, 1992; Pratt & Associates, 1998). A subsequent instrument for identifying these teaching perspectives, the *Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI)* was developed (Collins & Pratt, 2000). Unlike other inventories (Hattie, 2003, 2009; Trigwell, Prosser, Ginns, 2005), which offer measurements of a continuum of desired attributes that maintain “some approaches to teaching are considered more complete, and have more effect on desired learning outcomes than others” (Trigwell et al, 2005, p. 350), the TPI profiles a multiplicity or plurality of forms of good teaching. The TPI inventory considers teacher beliefs as well as intentions in supporting teaching actions. This is an important consideration when

implementing practice as not merely a technocratic enterprise but one that recognizes change with its systemic human, social and cultural implications.

As teaching is a cultural activity within a complex system (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999), tacit beliefs and assumptions need to be examined within a framework of an integrated dynamic whole. This facilitates describing how and why the teaching components fit together and relate to each other. The observable words and deeds of teaching are like the tip of the proverbial metaphorical iceberg. The thinking that remains hidden below the surface as unstated is critical information in explaining teaching decisions around the displayed practice. Getting to reflect upon teaching actions and the reasons behind them is important in order to justify such teaching as ethical and purposeful activity. It is an ongoing conversation by making the invisible creative process visible by articulating processes as an expression of teacher identity through teaching.

## **2.2 Beyond Teaching Techniques**

In understanding teaching, in order to demonstrate expertise, teachers need to comprehend how and realize why they use certain instructional ways of knowing and doing. This is important information for exercising and clarifying professional judgment. In developing deep understanding, Dufour and Fullan (2013) indicate that "clarity precedes competence" (p. 48) and "we must address why before how" (p. 48). Expertise goes beyond concentrating on customary routine and procedural actions in order to engage the diverse needs and abilities of learners. Informed teaching is not just skilled craft-like replication of a single instructional approach, but innovative and creative professional judgments adjusting instruction to the ever dynamic and changing classroom environment. Teaching under such conditions connects both reflective thoughts and reflexive acts based upon experiential insights to achieve what matters in the minds of teachers in meeting various student needs. Based upon the work of Perkins (1995),

expert or intelligent behavior "is predicated on a combination of deep knowledge within multiple domains, the ability to recognize patterns, the ability to thoughtfully access an extensive repertoire of strategies, and taking time to reflect" (Bennett, Sharratt & Sangster, 2003, p.3). Teacher awareness of why and how they make instructional choices is important for job success, professional growth and satisfaction.

Influences contributing to understanding teaching exist within the context of an organizational culture and society. How educational and community organizations conceive of education by providing opportunity for and support of teachers is integral to the extent of how teachers interpret teaching as an innovative activity or a prescribed one. The purposes of education and design of teacher work is not exclusively a solitary activity but a social one. The extent of alignment between teacher inspired practices and organizational expectations are factors to consider in how teaching is constructed.

So, what distinguishes or describes educators in their ways of understanding instruction may offer important insights to other teachers and shape the larger discourses around teachers' knowledge and professionalism. In order to accommodate diverse educational perspectives, conversations that share personal stories or observations of what teachers do, how they do it and why they want to do it is useful information for fellow educators. Such information is important not only for individual metacognitive reflection, but also for possibly persuasive conversations that may further broaden understanding to connect knowledge and practice. I suspect this is attributable to the scholar-practitioner paradigm that would integrate both worlds (Stack, Coulter, Grosjean, Mazawi & Smith, 2006).

### **2.3 Rationale for the Study**

In an anecdote told by Stephen Covey (1989), a person came upon a woodcutter working feverishly to cut down a tree. Upon the woodsman's explanation of his exhausted state due to five hours of hard work, the visitor asked the woodcutter why he didn't take a few minutes to 'sharpen the saw' as the task then would go much faster. The woodcutter responded that, "I don't have time to sharpen the saw. I'm too busy sawing!"

This is a reasonable allegory of the world of teaching today. In my experience few teachers get the collegial moments or space necessary to sharpen their saw. The demands, complexity and busyness of schooling in organizational roles, processes and structures that shape teacher behavior leave few opportunities for such collaboration. Such time is necessary to work through concerns to engage in promising practices that require a deep understanding to feel more confident and to be more successful (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987). Without adequate time to "work out the meaning of the change for themselves" (Fullan & Stigelbauer, 1991, p. 112), implementing and integrating instructional knowledge with practice is likely to falter due to lack of support and opportunity. Teachers "too often get too little time and insufficient support to become experts" (Bennett, Sharratt, & Sangster, 2003, p.5).

### **2.4 Configuring Teacher Learning**

Mandated "top-down" reforms rarely systemically produce improved teaching (Cawelti, 1995). "No top-down mandate can replace the insights and skills teachers need to manage complex classrooms and address the different needs of individual students, whatever their age. No textbook, packaged curriculum or testing system can discern what students already know or create the rich array of experiences they need to move ahead" (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996, p. 10). On this point, Finley (2000) further observes that,

“There is a general realization that teachers can’t simply be recipients of reform packages, but must be active partners in the process of changing schools” (p. 11). The circumstances and influences that invite or detract from such participation, using complexity theory and a constructivist paradigm as a framework, are multifaceted and need to be examined.

Corroboratively, complexity theory explains that in complex systems such as education, the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Unlike a chain of causality, the interactions of the parts are relatively limitless, usually invisible, and often unpredictable (Clarke & Collins, 2006). Everything is connected to everything else and a change in any one area synergistically affects all the other parts and as a consequence the whole (Clarke & Collins, 2006; Sparks, 1995). Systems theory is a “framework for seeing relationships rather than things” (Senge, 1990, p. 69), so looking at power structures and processes that influence behavior is important. Small changes at certain points can leverage big changes (Senge, 1990). Little, not obvious, things can initiate big differences overall (Arnell, 2010; Gladwell, 2002).

Learning organizations are continuously learning to learn together (Senge, 1990). To go beyond invention, which is producing an idea, to innovation, which is extensive practical use of the idea, requires later widespread development of supporting technologies, as in the example of the invention of the airplane to prevalent decades later everyday commercial use (Senge, 1990, cited in Bennett, Sharratt and Sangster, 2003). Bennett, Sharratt and Sangster (2003) assert that a similar principle exists in education, whereby "extensive and separate bodies of knowledge related to classroom improvement, school improvement, valuing the teachers as learners, the process of educational change, and thinking systemically" (p.7) need to come together in interactive and supportive ways to make any change in practice systemic.

Consequently, small incremental refinements of teaching over time may result in amplified long term continuous development of expertise. Under supportive conditions, such changes may become systemic. Yet, here, it is worth referring to Stigler and Hiebert (1999) who observed that teaching — as a cultural activity — does not change quickly or drastically as it is “emphatically not a reform-like process” (p. 121). Small gradual changes in practice are much better accommodated, as they are built on existing patterns of instruction. Such small steps respect teaching as a cultural activity whose situated learning and meaning making is integral to the physical context and schemas in which it occurs.

Such embedded and tacit knowledge increases with experience as it develops and operates within an environment of application and practice (Sternberg & Horvath, 1995, cited in Pratt and Associates, 1998). This hidden instructional experiential knowledge is usually not explicitly taught, or is difficult to teach, to novice teachers but is necessary for becoming skillful (Pratt and Associates, 1998). When encouraging expertise, the significance of understanding teaching as a cultural phenomenon, as learning done by participation and observation but not necessarily deliberate study (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999), needs to be considered as part of an overall system rather than an isolated part of the whole. School improvement initiatives in the past often had a project mentality. Such enterprise, without due consideration given to how such initiatives impact and are impacted in return by other elements of the system, provide often frustrating consequences and at best partial successes (Sparks, 1995).

Given the importance of education, and the responsibility of teachers in fulfilling its purpose in our diverse and ever more global knowledge society (Hargreaves, 2003), educators and the public must acknowledge the role of teachers as being more than technicians or craftspeople. This is necessary to fulfill the often conflicting aims of education (Egan, 2001). It

is not just a matter of knowing and applying accomplished routines so students perform well on standardized tests, which tend to narrow the curriculum in the short term, and often disengage students from learning in the longer term. More important are the judgments that go into ongoing problem solving and continual reflection about pedagogical practice. Teachers are thereby enabled to support and guide individual students and their colleagues in creating meaningful learning situations. Teaching is not a faceless and inflexible process. “What teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what children learn. And the ways school systems organize their work makes a big difference in what teachers can accomplish” (National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future, 1996, p. 5).

The key determinate in student experiences and schooling outcomes is what teachers’ know and do (Darling-Hammond, 1999), “supported by strategic teacher professional development” (Rowe, 2003, p.1). It is against this backdrop that Bruner (1996) laments at how little attention is paid to the knowledge of how teachers go about teaching at the expense of emphasizing performance targets and higher standards. Isolating and focusing exclusively on individual teacher quality, without examining the context of their work, and the meanings they attach to it, remains highly problematic.

A frequent theme in the research emphasizes the problem of teacher isolation as hindering collaboration to talk about teaching and cooperative ways to improve it (Wagner, 2004; Schmoker, 2006). Rarely do teachers have an opportunity to jointly teach with or observe a colleague teach. Teaching is considered a private rather than a public activity. With little direct teaching contact with others, teachers seldom have a reference point upon which to benchmark their own skills. Collaboration increases professional interaction and reduces isolation among teachers who collectively become their own experts through study and reflection, by

action and conversation. This facilitates more confidence in believing in the wisdom of their practice and in their own expertise to solve problems. Teaching is a social and cultural phenomenon "where the power of the group – and all of the group's insights, knowledge, experience and support" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 145) contribute to a collective expertise and professional culture.

Schmoker (2006) emphasizes that, “Unlike other professionals, and despite near universal agreement on the importance of teaming, teachers do not work in teams. They do not prepare lessons and assessments together, and they do not test and refine their lessons regularly on the basis of assessment results” (p. 18). This harmful impact of teacher isolation upon student achievement and success has been widely documented (Dufour, 2005; Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2000; Little, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Marzano, 2003; Reeves, 2001; Schmoker, 2006; Wagner, 2004). Elmore (2000) and Reeves (2001) argue against elevating teacher isolation or privacy in the name of autonomy, as to what and how to teach to the point of ‘inviolability’, as “then inferior practices will dominate in most schools” (Haycock, 2005, cited in Schmoker, 2006, p. 25). Twenty one researchers signed a call for concerted action. It stated:

*If there is anything that the research community agrees on, it is this: the right kind of continuous, structured teacher collaboration improves the quality of teaching and pays big, often immediate dividends in student learning and professional morale in virtually any setting. (Schmoker et al, 2005, p. xii)*



## **2.5 What is "Good Teaching"?**

However, the research on what distinguishes good teaching has been “ambiguous at best” (Sumara & Davis, 2010, p. 2). Sumara and Davis (2010) surmise that the issue may be the untenable assumption that most people agree on what constitutes effective teaching. This insight is useful as it corroborates the work of Pratt (1992, 1998) about what it means to teach in that teachers have diverse teaching perspectives, “Ask a dozen people and you will hear a range of answers” (p. xii). The importance of such diversity, therefore, should be a consideration in discussing appropriate instructional practices in various contexts in what are the suitable ways to “sharpen the saw.” Given the cultural habits of schooling, the dialectic dance of standardization of curriculum and teaching versus its possible customization of ways to teach is an important consideration. The extent to which a balance may be found marginalizes certain conceptions of teaching to the ascendancy of others, while alienating some teachers while encompassing others. For my purposes of understanding the influences of how teachers come to construct their teaching, the TPI which describes different teaching perspectives is an appropriate instrument to use.

There is a tendency in education, predominantly based upon standardized testing of students, as certainly one common belief as a measure of success, to assume that it is possible to have a few sizes of teacher practice fit all (Pratt, 2002). This assumption needs to be verified by a concerted and open focus upon the attributes, disposition and skills of what an educated person is to better explain or describe the purpose and practice of teaching and learning (Coulter & Wiens, 2008). Interpreting teaching emphasizes the importance of what a teacher values and believes as trustworthy means towards fulfilling the ethical ends of their practice. It also lines up with Olson’s (2004) contention that different treatments can have similar effects. It challenges

the utility of searching for the fountain of *best* practice, an educational El Dorado or Holy Grail. It supports the notion of accepting a diversity of innovative, effective and promising practices resourcefully suited to various circumstances that match a teacher's instructional practice to student learning needs and teaching intent. Teaching is a creative and complex process.

Beyond the question of teacher actions and methods and how they are carried out, it is important to add clarity around teachers' beliefs and intentions when analyzing teaching. The ends of teaching as well as the means need to be intelligibly connected. Exploring how teachers construct an understanding of teaching by subscribing to certain beliefs, intentions and actions is a focus of this research. Identifying some key themes from the literature is the task to which I now turn.

## **2.6 Teaching as Process**

A reading of the literature on teaching emphasizes the importance of learning to build a repertoire of knowledge, skills and techniques in order to teach well. Often this discussion of the what and how of teaching becomes an exclusive debate, regardless of other important educational concepts and purposes (Stack, Coulter, Grosjean, Mazawi and Smith, 2006). Nevertheless, teaching as a process of learning skills, approaches, strategies and techniques through experience deserves attention as a key consideration in the construction of an understanding of teaching.

### **2.6.1 Process as Building Expertise**

It seems that understanding teaching, as defined by the process of expertise (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993), is based upon gradual increments of ever deeper understanding over time of “simply knowing a lot about what you are doing” (Perkins, 1995, p. 80). Sternberg (2005)

indicates that *purposeful engagement* is necessary in order to develop expertise. Hattie (2003) asserts that the difference between experts and experienced teachers is not so much the amount of knowledge of curriculum or teaching strategies but the ability to organize, integrate, and combine this knowledge to meet student needs. Experts are much better at using such knowledge by incorporating prior knowledge and by recognizing patterns of interaction in the classroom and acting accordingly. Biographical investigations indicate that many years of deliberative practice is necessary to develop deep understanding to recognize challenges and opportunities in ever more advanced levels of performance (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993; Perkins, 1995). Given that requisite, it is interesting to speculate on the pedagogical identities and motivations of some teachers to dedicate themselves to the process of understanding and constructing teaching.

Understanding teaching as a process describes what influences certain individual teachers to "surpass themselves" by engaging in ongoing expert-like practices dedicated to progressive pedagogical problem solving or some other alternate professional learning process. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) indicate that the difference between an expert and an experienced non-expert is the *reinvestment* and *progressive problem solving strategy* that experts engage in which constitutes the *process of expertise*.

Reinvestment involves the motivational aspect of conserving the necessary mental and physical resources to be put back into the learning activity itself rather than dispersing them elsewhere (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993). Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) argue that, "Progressive problem solving is the cognitive aspect of the process of expertise" (p. 82). What is learned is transformed into a next effort that is better conceived and articulated. Such reflective experience provides a rich endowment of knowledge for quick and intuitive perceptual ability to

discern patterns for successful interaction that may have not been recognizable to teachers before (Perkins, 1995).

Typical learning eventually permits the learner to adapt to novel or challenging circumstances with well-learned practices that reduce the amount of mental and physical activity required to sustain that level of work. “Things that [previously] required deliberate attention and thought come to be second nature” (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1993, p. 81), similar to the process in learning to drive a stick shift car. It eventually takes less immediate concentrated thinking and physical coordination of how to change gears, steer and brake and so on to free up the mind and body to think or do other things as one navigates the roadways.

In that sense, the career of the expert “is one of progressively advancing on the problems constituting a field of work, whereas the career of the non-expert is one of gradually constricting the field of work so that it more closely conforms to the routines the non-expert is prepared to execute” (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993, p. 11). The expert, paradoxically, lives on the edge of his or her competence, while the experienced, but not expert-inclined, person is content to be satisfied with what they know. Another way to look at the process of expertise is brought out in the work of Pfeffer and Sutton (2000). The learning task is to explore better ways to implement "what is already known" by refining and applying such learning by engaging with colleagues rather than focusing on more formal training.

### **2.6.2 Process as Reflexive Progression**

Understanding teaching as a process is also conceived as a very individual progression (Hord, S., Rutherford, W., Huling-Austin, L., & Hall, G., 1987). For instance, in the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM), individuals progress through a set of developmental feelings and skills. According to Hord et al (1987) personal concerns are addressed first by acquiring

information as to how the change will affect them. Task concerns follow, as in how to do the new practice technically and efficiently. Later concerns relate to overall effectiveness and refinement of the innovation. This practice adoption model may be viewed as a positivistic and systemic process or tool to institutionalize "best practice". Its intent could be as a means to adopt a particular innovation in teaching favored by formal leaders. It may also be considered as a self-regulating and self-organizing framework to conceptualize how individuals go about creating shifts in their practice. The ownership of the process determines whether the end goal is the adoption of a certain prescribed innovation or one embraced by a teacher as an enabling innovation to assist their teaching based upon their professional thinking.

Although these stages of or contexts for concern are important considerations in any implementation process, CBAM assumes linear or developmental progression, as do other models (see Bridges, 1991; Rogers, 1995, following). Framed by the realities of professional practice, this type of process, due to constructivist and systems theory dynamics within teaching, rarely happen in the direct articulated way conceptual models are presented so as to be understood. Individual change processes appear to be more organic than mechanistic, more cyclical than linear, as much emotional as rational, and as amply intuitive as logical. The difficulty with CBAM is its assumed linearity of process and its often strong arm application by professional developers and educational leaders to attempt to get teachers to adopt particular approaches to teaching. Its conceptualization of the concerns individuals consider when adopting a practice or innovation is its strength. In a sense, the application is an abridged version of the theory. The replication of theory as practice is synergistic. Theory may helpfully describe, predict or simulate reality but rarely is an exact holistic replication of practice. "Theoretical concepts do not yield concrete prescriptions for classroom application but good theory can be

used flexibly and creatively by teachers in their planning and educational practice" (Groff, 2010, p. 3). "The contexts in which teachers work, however, seldom mirror the contexts in which theories have been developed. Formal theories must be considered in relation to the unique learning environment of each school" (Halbert & Kaser, 2013, p. 54) and classroom.

Theories are like written driving tests that may explain or describe the rules of the road, but rarely foretell the exact intuitive, interactive and subjective experience of the actual performance of any situational driving. Often an experience, novel or otherwise, may only be understood upon reflection after the occurrence. Similar to Soren Kierkegaard's famous saying "Life can only be understood backwards but must be lived forwards" and Steve Job's more recent quote that "You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards." From a constructivist and systemic view, this makes sense when dealing with the immediacy, numerous permutations and unpredictable combinations of many if not most of life's experiences. It is in the living or doing that provides the fodder for understanding, often from hindsight for later application, which we call experience. People don't live theory; they live in a hectic tangible world of practice.

From the Olsonian perspective, in constructing frameworks for understanding from our experiences, many dynamics are at play within the teaching considerations of any teacher. Diverse working contexts, prior experiences and knowledge, implicit and explicit understandings, beliefs, abilities, interests, intentions and different organizational cultures engage teachers' perspectives and approaches. The messiness of multiple factors influencing thoughts and actions have a momentum of their own, which web like entangles many anticipated and interloping interactive factors. Our uniqueness identifies individuals as much as what unites teachers as social beings.

The concepts of CBAM's personal, task and effectiveness concerns are helpful descriptors, however, for addressing transitions and changes contemplated and undertaken by teachers. They likely all interact, in a dialectic fashion of various arrangements and mixtures, and are considered as an overall array by teachers in addressing any instructional change. As Hargreaves and Fink (2006) have observed, "Change in education is easy to propose, hard to implement, and extraordinarily difficult to sustain" (p.1). The myriad of interactive influences that imbed social contexts, vortex like, do not readily submit to undeviating linear progressions.

The process of developing expertise should be considered within organizational or environmental constraints or supports as well as individual motivation. Embracing any change appears to be influenced by both personal beliefs and intentions and cultural factors that often act implicitly in shaping understanding. The unease relating to any involvement in adjusting practice means a teacher has to be individually concerned or dissatisfied enough with present ways of thinking or acting to be interested or to take notice to likely engage in any change actions (Hord et al, 1987). A teacher's participation depends upon whether the ends of the proposed new idea or skill are a fit for their present way of being and knowing. A teacher engages if they have hope it is doable and the loss of what they previously held or did is expendable or adaptable. Teachers thus are motivated to put in the effort necessary to contribute and perhaps transform the present situation. Teaching as a process of learning is highly regarded and fulfilling for teachers when they are individually motivated to engage as a process of developing personal professional expertise.

Garmston & Wellman (1999) observe that, "vision that is neither shared nor connected ... [to the needs and desires of the individual] ... sputters out into inspirational vagueness" (p. 248) and that, "Without shared dissatisfaction, all the vision and strategies in the world do not

promote a desire to change” (p. 248). This may explain the difficulty of systemic top down initiatives in institutionalizing change on others by authorizing what is considered best practice and may simply be the image of change. Not only is such change difficult to initiate but it is also problematic in sustaining.

Bridges (1991) describes these “transitions” as psychological readjustments or thresholds to change. His three step process includes endings, a neutral zone and new beginnings. He argues that, “It isn’t the changes themselves that people resist ... It’s the losses and endings that they experience and the transition that they are resisting” (Bridges, 1991, p. 20). Without acknowledging these transitions teachers “cling to the tried and true” (Garmston & Wellman, 1999), unwilling to let go of the old. Bridges suggests the “four P’s” to initiate new beginnings to alleviate the anxiety and discomfort such change arises: a *purpose*, a *picture* of the future, a *plan* and a *part* in the outcome. Selling the problem and not the solution Bridges suggests is the key to facilitate engagement by educational leaders. Teachers socially and professionally constructing their own expertise, based upon exigent needs within their work contexts, likely would not need to be “sold” on change suggested by outsiders. Idealistically, they should be more inclined to be self-motivated to do so driven by their perceptions of the practical challenges and professional ethical concerns facing them.

Loucks-Horsley and Sparks (1989) indicate there are four components to the change process: *people*, *processes*, *practices*, and *policies*. People considerations, as already mentioned, are similar to the work of Hord and others (1987). Processes (initiation, implementation and institutionalization) are comparable in intent and purpose to the work of Bridges. The focus on practices resembles the work of Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) by emphasizing the need to be highly accomplished in what one knows and does. Policies in this model have a role in



providing adequate organizational support to fulfill the desired mandate(s). Professional growth therefore is also an interdependent factor of organizational requirements and expectations.

### **2.6.3 Process as Persuasion**

Another, albeit linear, view of understanding teaching as process is presented by Roger's (1962) diffusion of innovation theory. Innovation as a new idea, way of thinking or method of doing something is pertinent to instructional creativity. Understanding and constructing teaching is a steady progression of reflective study and application to improve the knowledge and skill of teaching. New ideas and methods arise from such thinking. The diffusion model, as a roadmap of describing how new ideas or changes may spread within a social system, is a useful concept for educators. Within the realities teachers inhabit and the complexities they engage with, the causal implications for why and how teachers do things are likely much more messily intertwined than described in this model. Although it may not mimic the exact dynamic experience of each teacher, it is useful for the purposes of conceptually understanding teaching as a process. Again, the caution is who controls the process, whether it is teacher initiated or whether it is some mandated change to convince teachers to do things they may not otherwise be inclined to do. The process of building expertise is dependent upon wholehearted teacher participation and professional identity.

In this model, individuals go through a five step process as to whether to participate in the innovation. The *knowledge phase* provides information about the innovation and how it functions. The *persuasion step* is critical in forming a positive or uncomplimentary opinion of the innovation. Following this, the individual makes a *decision* to adopt or reject the innovation. If adopted, the *implementation phase* is where the person puts the innovation into practice. The

concluding *confirmation stage* is where the individual assesses and embraces the success of the innovation that has been put into action.

The four components that influence the process of diffusion are the *innovation*, the *communication channels* available, *time* and a *social* system. People adopt new processes based upon the relative utility of the innovation to their circumstance and personal characteristics. Due to such diversity individuals implement the innovation at different times, some waiting for others to see how well the innovations work before they get involved. As more and more adopters move to the new way of being or doing, the innovation “tips” into widely held acceptance.

The degree of openness to accepting innovation is characterized by five categories or groups. However, another caveat to the indiscriminate application of such models is the presumptuous use of precise percentages as meaningful and worthwhile in describing teacher activity. Rogers (1962) identifies innovators as the 2.5% of any group that enjoy being venturesome and trying out new possibilities. They are followed by early adopters that comprise 13.5% of any given set who base their decisions upon the experiences of the innovators (Rogers, 1962). This group is followed by a larger subsection called early majority at 34% who, when involved in the trend, tip the system so that the late majority of 34% comes on board (Rogers, 1962). The final group called laggards are late adopters, if at all, based upon their traditional outlook or isolation (Rogers, 1962). Such "laggards" or late adopters may likely consider the innovation not pertinent to their context and consequently a lack of participation should not be necessarily inferred as a lack of professionalism within the teaching context. It could be differences owing to teaching beliefs and professional intentions.

According to Rogers (1962), the significant people in adopting innovations are the key opinion leaders that are early adopters. Due to their followers trust and respect for their

judgment, these individuals are instrumental in whether a new idea catches on or not. This small pivot or tipping point upon which the relative rapid spread of an innovation depends springs from these opinion leaders or mentors. This model assumes that certain people may have much power, control and influence over others which is contradicted to some extent by complexity theory where multiple pathways of influence are available. Impacting the attitude of these key people within a social system is therefore instrumental as to whether others may adopt the innovation or conversely be dissuaded from choosing it. As well, Rogers maintains that some social cultures are more resistant to change than others. Opinion leaders in these more risk averse systems do not have the influence to the degree the cultural norms of the other systems do. **Schooling** might be considered a candidate of this more risk adverse culture, as its basic methodologies and structures have maintained themselves for well over a century.

#### **2.6.4 Process as Contested Conceptions**

Educational change has become an oxymoron to some, as the more educators talk about it the more controversial and resistant the educational culture appears to those within and without educational organizations. Critics in the media, educational gurus and governments, those furthest removed from the act of teaching, contribute to the hype and oversimplification of the issues with proposals for quick and easy fixes. These solutions tend to use mandates, coercion or rewards, not fully understanding the important role process plays. Those that have not experienced the protracted teaching apprenticeship through situational practice are unlikely to fully appreciate the context and intricacies of the work. Imposed teaching initiatives that are recipe-like are soon modified by the personal experiences of practice as teaching is a generative innovative process. Teaching actions often emerge spontaneously to fit the circumstances or

interactive flow between teacher and students. Inventiveness based upon prior knowledge and experience arises from those unrehearsed and unconstrained situations.

Good educational practice is often prescribed as productive type solutions that are much easier to understand, see and do, such as *best practice* panaceas or government testing targets to measure student progress. Approaches to change as suggested by the concerns based adoption model and innovation diffusion theory is highly dependent upon the *persuasion step*. Whether the initiative is externally implemented and controlled by authorities, as a preferred best practice, or self- initiated by teachers as a need in developing their expertise to resolve personal professional challenges, it impacts teacher enterprise and resourcefulness. The results of growing expertise are created by experiences that honor the personalized attainments from learning and the professional interests of respective teachers. Teaching as a process to build expertise is much like the process of *Appreciative Inquiry* (AI) (Hammond, 1998; Barrett & Fry, 2005). Such inquiry is identified by what works for certain individuals in particular contexts and "further analysis of how to do more of what works" (Hammond, 1998, p.3) which is constantly being created by the teachers who engage in the process of teaching.

Traditional reform approaches, which focus on what is deficient, wrong, or broken to fix it, tend to look at intervening often in mechanistic ways to come up with the right solution or answer to what is best practice for everyone. *Appreciative Inquiry* however aims to find what is working in organizations like schools. The participation of teachers who do the work generates the knowledge of how to create the conditions by doing more of what works (Hammond, 1998). Unlike imposed change which is framed by concerns of dysfunction, building expertise is highlighted by enabling participants to find out their own best practices and to generate the

conditions for further success. Teaching as a process to incrementally find out what works over time values differences in approaches as the inventory and catalyst for developing expertise.

Unfortunately, educators have taken little or no time to adequately reflect on the question of what is educational practice. Most educators seem to believe it is a private process rather than a collaborative one and this hinders us exchanging the wisdom we gain from our teaching expertise over time. Educators rarely talk about the purposes of education as we fixate on delivering methodology or certain curriculum outcomes. "Teachers learn about teaching through daily conversations with their colleagues" (Leadership and Teacher Development Branch, 2005, p. 11). "It is only through the collective work of teachers and by creating shared professional knowledge that sustained school improvement will be secured" (Leadership and Teacher Development Branch, 2005, p. 13). The interdependent nature of the culture and organization of teaching that systemically promotes and engages teachers in constructing their understanding of teaching is the topic to which we now turn.

## **2.7 Teaching as Interdependence**

Teachers are shaped by the contexts in which they live and work. The interaction among the complexity of those constituent parts and the relative degree to which teachers have power and control over those influences impacts how they construct an understanding of teaching.

### **2.7.1 Interdependence as Context**

Educational reform agendas in most bureaucratic and political jurisdictions are predicated on improving or cajoling teacher quality. This is a rational deduction to make as ultimately "what teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what children learn" (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 12). What is often lacking from these reform developments is due

consideration of the context of teachers' work which lies largely outside the influence and control of teachers and thus lacks the core characteristics of professional work (Silva, 2010; Hargreaves, 1994, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003). Teaching is contextual and is connected to and influenced by people, places, processes and time.

Interdependent relationships are important to teacher learning (Joyce and Calhoun, 2010). As described by Joyce and Calhoun (2010), engaging in professional development for most teachers is dependent upon supportive professional and social environments. In this model, teachers are grouped according to four categories as to levels of engagement, although such labelling can have negative associative and relationship consequences when used as an excuse or justification for interventions. *Gourmet omnivores* are those teachers who are proactive in seeking out their own professional development. They learn readily from the context of their teaching environments and many engage colleagues in these pursuits. *Active consumers* are slightly less proactive than gourmet omnivores in seeking out opportunities to learn, but readily work like gourmet omnivores when grouped with them. These groups make up approximately a third of teachers (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). The third category is the largest one consisting of more than half the teaching population characterized as *passive consumers*. This group is dependent upon the former two categories of teachers and stimulating professional environments to enhance and engage their participation. Without motivating leadership, passive consumers may not take advantage of learning development opportunities (Joyce and Calhoun, 2010). The fourth group is labelled *reticent consumers* as they tend not to actively engage with their colleagues. The key point is that 90 to 95 percent of teachers will initiate or partake in collective and collaborative professional learning due to the influence of their fellow teachers and inspiring work sites.

To paraphrase John Dunne, "no teacher is an island entire of itself." The ways school systems organize their work makes a big difference in what teachers can accomplish (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Acker, 1999). Most teacher work schedules and places hinder rather than facilitate the time to define and the opportunity to support improvement and so persisting in ignoring this structural design problem will continue to confound reform initiatives (Silva, 2010). Unlike imposed "quick fix" initiatives that usually have a castigatory aspect about them, building expertise is a longer term endeavor (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

The school culture "of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories" (Peterson, 2002, p. 1) reinforces and builds the way people work in schools. Timberley (2008) expresses the influence of teaching as interdependence as follows:

Professional learning is strongly shaped by the context in which the teacher practices. This is usually the classroom, which, in turn, is strongly influenced by the wider school culture and the community and society in which the school is situated. Teachers' daily experiences in their practice context shape their understandings, and their understandings shape their experiences. (p.6)

### **2.7.2 Interdependence as Power and Control**

Consequently, providing cohesion between the diversity of teacher perspectives and opportunities to sustain professional learning is essential. If our schools are to operate as meaningful and engaging places to learn, for both staff and students, supportive school systems are necessary to facilitate this learning. The complexity of the process of harmonizing individual teacher needs, interests and desires with organizational requirements and expectations is complex, often frustrating, if not dysfunctional (Hargreaves, 1994; Poole, 2008). As Levin (2008) says, "moving from policy to practice is a very uncertain business" (p. 142). Imposing

mandated forms of learning communities (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Many, 2006; Schmoker, 2006) with specific agendas will perpetuate the technocratic regime and inhibit teacher inspired and created forms of engendering collective responsibility. Harmonizing is dependent upon collaborating and coming to agreements about organizational requirements and expectations as to desired ends. However, despite work place impediments, some educators seem to make this process work more readily than others. At this juncture, important questions arise regarding the ways through which these teachers navigate the school system to create opportunities for understanding teaching for themselves and for others.

One educator described her job as “managing the drama” (Acker, 1999). This description underscores the problem that teachers, in particular, have relatively little power or control over the many decisions that impact their work and the societal forces that affect their efforts, but much responsibility in implementing the decisions of the educational bureaucracy (Ingersoll, 2003). A high proportion of teachers feel they are made to be the scapegoats for all the problems of education and thus high rates of turn over relative to other professions emphasize the frustration and disillusionment experienced by teachers (Ingersoll, 2003). Fullan (2010) concurs indicating "teachers received more blame than the 'system' did for failing schools" (p. 95) after decades of failed reforms. Hargreaves (2003) decries how our society has "subjected teachers to public attacks; eroded their autonomy of judgment and conditions of work; [and] created epidemics of standardization and over-regulation" (p.10) that devalues the teaching profession. Cuban (2004) describes the dilemma this way:

The paradox of distrusting teachers and principals for having created the problem [lack of student success] and then turning around and demanding that they solve the problem they created has flummoxed school reformers



in the past. As a result, reformers then and now have pressed for curricular, managerial, governance, and organizational changes to give them more control over the behavior of teachers and principals. (p.5)

Despite the assaults of past innovations, our schools continue to predominately pursue “chalk and talk” textbook learning as it serves a useful purpose (Osborne, 2008). It helps cover a prescribed curriculum, maintains order and control, prepares students for exams and makes lesson planning and delivery manageable (Osborne, 2008). It helps teachers to cope with a myriad of pressures to satisfy prominent accountability measures (Osborne, 2008). It is a treadmill existence, of factory lines of age specific grade levels on a curricular conveyor belt (Osborne, 2008; Robinson, 2010). Those students that may not fit a prescribed profile are labeled ostensibly to help educate them but equally to sort, rank and manage them within our schools. Schools thus provide little or no sustained time within the largely harried and insular conditions of teaching work to focus on the process of developing expertise.

On this point, Schmoker (2006) observed that, “Educators in overwhelming majorities have agreed that there is indeed a yawning gap between the most well-known, incontestably essential practices and the reality of most classrooms” (p. 2). Schmoker (2006) elaborates that among such essential practices are "generous amounts of close, purposeful reading, rereading, writing and talking" (p. 53) and the actions of "rightly defined" (p. 103) professional learning communities. Educators, such as Michael Fullan (2005), have also referred to the need to address “the awful inertia of past decades” (p. 32). Notwithstanding, while researchers have well documented the conditions of teacher learning that translate into changes in practice that improve student learning (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009), such

research often places the onus on teachers to change without giving due consideration to the system that likely gets in the way of any such transformation.

Hargreaves (1994) and Robinson (2010) argue that public schools are remnants of industrial age thinking and any conceived reforms confined to such a paradigm and culture are inadequate to transform our schools to the needs of students and teachers in our present knowledge society and post-modern world. This theme is echoed by the work of Abbott & Ryan (2001) who reason that our present system was created for a world 150 years ago that no longer exists. They maintain that the system needs to be redesigned for the 21<sup>st</sup> century rather than relying on fruitlessly trying to mend an outmoded way of “receiving, retaining and returning” what we are taught (Gilbert, 2005). Decades of educational reform, based upon raising standards and focusing on the basics, has not improved student engagement nor desired progress in achievement (Kohn, 1999; Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2005).

If teacher effort could solely improve the system, it should have tipped long ago. At this juncture, then, conceiving of teaching as a cultural and systemic process zooms in on the interdependent influences and confluences that either detract or support teacher understanding of instruction in any process of change. Teacher judgment within this context is critical to instructional success.

## **2.8 Teaching as Judgment**

Teaching as judgment is significant as both a tactical and strategic dimension of teaching. It encompasses not only the myriad of classroom decisions in a day but the sources of expansive knowledge, values and thinking that would give rise to such decisions. Teaching perspectives are based on "a complex web of actions, intentions, and beliefs; each, in turn, creates its own criteria for judging or evaluating right and wrong, true and false, effective and ineffective" (Pratt,

1998a, p. 35). Teaching as judgment acts as successive cross road gauges to decide which direction to take based upon the predilections and the extent of awareness of the possibilities by each teacher.

### **2.8.1 Judgment as Ends and Means**

Aristotle discriminated between *poiesis*, an action whose purpose was some specific product or artifact, and *praxis*, an action that will realize some morally worthwhile achievement (such as the ability to discern and apply the process of understanding teaching to assist others over time). In the Aristotelian tradition, it was the latter interpretation of intrinsically worthwhile ends, rather than the former use of a technical set of rules to guide practice, that was the conception of education. “Educational practice cannot be made intelligible as a form of *poiesis* guided by fixed ends and governed by determinate rules. It can only be made intelligible as a form of *praxis* guided by ethical criteria immanent in educational practice itself” (Carr, 1987, p, 173).

The significant fixation of what and how to teach without discriminating as to its broader purpose or ends is problematic (Stack, Coulter, Grosjean, Mazawi and Smith, 2006). Teaching should involve more than just delivering a programmed lesson as an act of measurable production. Its outcome, as a morally worthwhile achievement, such as collective teacher practice ultimately aims to do, must primarily involve teacher judgments of their actions. Such *praxis* leads to a broader understanding and fulfillment of the ultimate ethical purpose of their teaching. Reducing teaching to a technical science stands in contradistinction to understanding teaching without reference to its moral purpose and ethical appraisal (Kristensson, 2014).

### **2.8.2 Judgment as Practical Wisdom**

The aim of *praxis* was centered on what ought to be done through a process called *phronesis*, a form of practical wisdom based upon experience (Carr, 1987). Such practical judgment consists of “doing the right thing at the right time for the right reasons with the right people” (Coulter, Coulter, Daniel, Decker, Essex, Naslund, Naylor, Phelan, 2007, p. 6). If we assume that the ends and means of education are aligned, then we need to engage and connect instructional methodology (the how), with learning outcomes (the what) with the understanding (the why, where, when and who) of doing something. ‘Teacher proof modes of practice,’ by emphasizing teacher ‘how to’ guides of various sorts or similarly oriented short term in-service regarding pedagogy, reduce instruction to set patterns or techniques to create products. The prudent and thoughtful action of practical progressive experiential wisdom cannot really be taught, directed or assigned but has to be learned in the doing. If we only learn methods, we are attached to those methods, but if we exercise judgment, we can develop our own methods using our imaginations (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010).

### **2.8.3 Judgment as Enabling**

Habitual practices and assembly line like schooling organizations does not make an expert. Teaching as a complex activity is unsuited to agendas of memorizing and applying rote practices because of the varied needs and contexts teachers must adjust to. Despite this, "teachers are often encouraged to be compliant laborers, delivering curriculum using best practice strategies and having their work checked by quality control testing tied to objective standards" (Coulter & Wiens, 2002, p. 23), with few opportunities for reviewing with peers about matters of teaching expertise. It is highly unlikely one specific teaching approach fits all in satisfying outcomes for students (Timberley, 2008). Nor is it likely that just knowing more

about teaching without good judgment going hand in hand means better teaching (Coulter & Wiens, 2002).

Constraining and controlling work in such a way is ‘deskilling’ as those in power and influence ‘dumb down’ the need to know or the abilities of the employees by the way the work is organized (Ingersoll, 2003). "Deskilling of teachers and dumbing down of the curriculum take place when teachers are seen as receivers not producers of knowledge "(Kincheloe, 2012, p.18). Such deskilling becomes self-fulfilling prophecy; by degrading the quality of the job you devalue the quality of the work (Ingersoll, 2003).

It is a paradox that educators do not emphasize this point more — how to create expertise — rather than what presumably works in the way of standardized reforms that tend to deskill teacher work. Emphasizing expertise would help to better connect the intent of teaching. Teachers’ judgments around methodology and resources that are most suited to deliver desired outcomes would prevail over customary applications of pedagogy. Prescriptive teaching marginalizes teachers’ judgment in how to meet the various needs of different learners.

Green (1978) admonishes us to “not tell [teachers] what to do but help to attain some kind of clarity about how to choose how to decide what to do” (p. 48). Green suggests that people live lives in mechanical rounds of habitual activities and that, “Lacking wide-awakeness ... individuals are likely to drift, to act on impulses of expediency” (p. 43). If teachers are to ‘surpass themselves’ beyond expediency, they need to be awake to the wisdom of their practice. A part of this ‘scholarship of practice’ would include more influence over access to sustainable resources and time to develop such expertise.

Such professional discourse allows teachers to focus their energies on constructing understandings of teaching that provide hope and identity (Grimmett, Dagenais, D'Amico,

Jacquet and D'Amico, 2007). Without such self-determination, teachers are reduced to a technician role of limited judgment and routine decision making mainly imposed by outsiders. Teaching is an emotional form of work as well as technical. Teachers who felt pressured to conform to imposed initiatives, whether top down or bottom up "perceived themselves as less self-determined about teaching," and consequently became less concerned about student achievement (Pelletier, Sequin-Levesque, & Legault, 2002, as cited in Grimm et al, 2007, p. 3). Bennett et al (2003) cite the need for collaboration to sustain moral purpose between those who are "presenting the change and those who implement the change" (p.5) in terms of the work of Paulo Freire (1984). Bennett et al (2003) indicate that Freire "argues that in the absence of dialogue, we will unintentionally position ourselves as the oppressed and the oppressors," (p.6) a situation which limits trusting interrelations and resolutions.

A lack of control over their work due to political influence has teachers feeling a state of despair (Grimm et al, 2007). "Having a lot of teachers struggling or using an innovation in a routine, mediocre manner ... are facades of change, serving political agendas, and are divorced from meaningful, sustainable educational change" (Bennett et al, 2003, p. 12). Freedom of choice within professional conversations is necessary for teacher ownership of how they do their work set to ethical ends. Members of the public at large, with generally thirteen plus years of schooling education, apparently believe that they share an apprenticeship with teachers to intervene in ways they would not likely consider for law, engineering, medicine or other professions. The educational system needs to design incentives and opportunities for teachers to explore their practice to enhance teaching as judgment rather than just expect resistance to externally imposed solutions. Constructing an understanding of teaching is not supported in a "no man's land" of professional alienation. Learners to be genuinely engaged in learning about

teaching need to be owners of that learning. "Only participants themselves can decide what is and what is not of common concern to them" (Fraser, 1990, p. 71).

In sum, to develop teacher potential we must come to realize there is unlikely a best way to learn or teach, as it is defined by context and increasingly refined by growing understanding based upon progressive practice. In relation to this, teaching is by definition a doing activity. Teachers need to believe in and have some social control over their own expertise, to critically reflect upon their beliefs, intentions and practice to meet the constantly changing particular needs of students. Society and those in power need to realize that the power of expertise based upon respect for *praxis* rather than a reliance on *poiesis* is what education is about – what *ought* to be done, not just how. The influence of understanding teaching as judgment is how individual teachers construct their instructional understanding and identity based upon their awareness of practice and informed decision making.

## **2.9 Teaching as Self-Expression**

Self-expression is revealing or presenting our individual thinking and emotions. Self-expression is only realized when our thoughts and deeds are connected. It is a holistic expression of self that has many facets. Teaching as self-expression combines elements of expressiveness, personal ideas, ideals, emotions, individuality, creativity and assertiveness. It creates the space to appear as a matter of individual responsibility to think for ourselves to act morally (Arendt, 1958). If teachers do not use it, it passes into the hands of others to express or superimpose their identity and influence. As an essential teaching condition, self-expression is intelligible as expressions of beliefs, intentions, actions, identity, mindsets and motivation.

### 2.9.1 Self-Expression as Beliefs

Understanding teaching is also shaped by the way an individual perceives and acts in the world as a means of self-expression. Pratt (1998b) indicates that perspectives on teaching are expressions of an ideal or ideology often implicitly held, but sometimes openly displayed in word and deed. What it means to teach is synchronously viewed and interpreted by teacher beliefs and commitments (Pratt, 1998b). "We may not be aware of a perspective because it is usually something we look through, rather than look at, when teaching" (Pratt, 1998b, p. 33). The guiding principles underlying different perspectives of teaching therefore "both enable and limit what teachers think about their own teaching and the teaching of others" (Pratt, 1998b, p. 217). "Our beliefs about knowledge determine what we will teach and what we will accept as evidence that people have learned" (Pratt, 1998c, p. 21). A limited awareness of the diversity of perspectives about teaching restricts interpretations of what we see as good teaching as other perspectives are hidden from view (Pratt, 1998a).

Perceptions of teaching, due to beliefs and commitments, serve as the lens of the mind for viewing and comprehending teaching as self-expression in order to fulfill professional needs and desires. Such self-expression is applied through moral reasoning whereby "*intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second* [italics in original]" (Haidt, 2012, p. 91). Haidt (2012) argues that "reasoning can take us to almost any conclusion we want to reach, because we ask 'Can I believe it?' when we want to believe something, but 'Must I believe it?' when we don't want to believe" (p. 91). With the former question we seek out supporting evidence, while in the latter we hunt for contrary evidence (Haidt, 2012). Finding any single reason to provide support or doubt for these respective questions provides us with the "permission to believe" or "doubt the claim" (Haidt, 2012).



Therefore, teaching as self-expression through beliefs and commitments arising from them are very powerful arbiters for constructing an understanding of teaching. According to Muhammad (2009), teacher beliefs around student learning induce some teachers to be more inclined to the status quo and stability, predictability and self-interest, while others are more amenable to change to meet the needs of organizational goals. Unlike the explicit administrative agenda expressed in this technocratic view of teacher beliefs, teachers are as likely to make such self-expressive choices as reflective professionals, and not as conforming procedural technicians.

### **2.9.2 Self-Expression as Intentions**

Intentions "are an enthusiastic statement of commitment and an indication of ones' role and responsibility" (Pratt, 1998c, p. 20). Intentions go beyond specific technocratic micromanaged learning outcomes or instructional objectives (Pratt, 1998c). As bigger picture emotive commitments to expressions of what a teacher is trying to accomplish, intentions as a form of self-expression communicate agency for some purpose. Intentions are the bridges of integrity that connect beliefs to actions. Self-expression as intention leads to identification of perspectives, allegiances or associations. These attachments to one or more purposes or groups are due to ends based and or means based ways of thinking and being.

### **2.9.3 Self-Expression as Actions**

Actions are the techniques and routines of teaching (Pratt, 1998c). It is self-expression as an interpretation of the world through action. Beliefs may initiate new actions, but more likely actions shape teacher beliefs as "ideas do not evolve in a logical or even 'step-wise' fashion for many teachers" (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010, p. 26). This is an important point. Trying something out and finding it beneficial forms what teachers believe what works and this is how

an effective practice proceeds (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). "Change appears to be promoted by a cyclical process in which teachers have their current assumptions challenged by the demonstration of effective alternative practice" (Timberley, 2008, p.18). Challenging assumptions keeps teachers actively and continually reflecting about how they express their practice. Like exercise, it keeps them pedagogically fit. Eventually getting to a place where the ideals of teacher aspirations or intentions resonate with their judgments about technical teaching skill sets and actions takes much experiential time and commitment.

#### **2.9.4 Self-Expression as Identity**

Identities are forged from both personal and professional experiences shaped by understandings arising from those experiences. Teacher sense of self is therefore an ongoing creation. Cole and Knowles (2000) observe that, "Teaching is an expression of who teachers are as people; imbued with the beliefs, values, perspectives, and experiences developed over the course of a teacher's lifetime" (p. 2).

In effecting an understanding of teaching, the words of Parker Palmer come to mind. Educational cultures are fearful "of hearing something that would challenge and change us" (Palmer, 1999, p. 21). Educators have an "obsession with a narrow range of facts, credits and credentials ... [when practitioners] all know that what will transform education is not another theory, another book, or another formula but educators who are willing to seek a transformed way of being in the world" (Palmer, 1999, p. 15). A way of being is associated with teacher ways of knowing. The practice of respect by others for how teachers identify themselves through their ways of knowing is instrumental for trusting relationships and an openness to develop a refined understanding of teaching by overcoming fear of learning new ways.

It is not simply a matter for teachers to change mindsets and beliefs about education in a technical sense, but of challenging fundamental assumptions of what ought to be happening. Teachers' emotional, social, cognitive and ethical essence must be engaged if their needs, wants and goals are to have an opportunity to flourish and succeed. For explicit understandings of teaching to occur teachers must identify with and consciously choose how they wish to be influenced. As pointed out by Sparks (2002), such "stretch goals" are powerful motivators for transformational change although such understanding of teaching seldom follows a linear plan.

To this end, teachers need to have a comprehensive understanding of what the purpose and practice of education is in order to enlighten, persuade and ultimately become willing actors. Teachers must be inspired and energized by a vision of meaningful ends and emboldened and encouraged by a plan and a sense of competencies as the means to reach those goals. An essential purpose of understanding teaching is to create an ethical image of a future that one is willing to construct with others. Teacher beliefs and mindset must connect and identify with such a vision of a possible future; otherwise you will not be motivated to proceed.

### **2.9.5 Self-Expression as Mindsets**

Mindsets are "broad cognitive-emotional capacities rather than narrow forms of behavioral competencies" (Kaser & Halbert, 2009, p. 2). Self-expression when framed as mindsets are approaches to interacting with the world to help classify how one copes and relates to others (Dweck, 2008). It is the awareness of 'what lies within us' as a way of thinking, being and approaching life. It is the "view that you adopt for yourself ... [that shapes] the way you lead your life" (Dweck, 2008, p. 6). Mindsets as beliefs have the power to define individuals (Dweck, 2008) and therefore identify each of us.

As beliefs, a mindset goes beyond self-insight into what motivates individuals to engage. It serves as a conception of how teachers perceive, interpret and understand. Mindset is the paradigm behind individual options to choose, and sets the stage for proactivity as a function of “initiative and responsibility to make things happen” (Covey, 1989, p. 71). Mindset changes are significant and difficult work that involve “seeing things in a new way” (Dweck, 2008, p. 238).

Carol Dweck’s (2008) research over the past two decades suggests there are two basic mindset types that frame up personal perspectives of individuals and approaches to what are possible. Although described as dichotomies, it is unlikely that individual teachers are all one or the other exclusively, but rather are more nuanced continuum composites depending upon changing circumstances and reflections over time. Thinking people can change how they cope and approach life.

The first approach is portrayed as believing in a *fixed mindset* that emphasizes the importance of those assets nature has bestowed upon you. Such individuals agree with statements that indicate people have only a “certain amount of intelligence, and you can’t really do much to change it” (Dweck, 2008, p. 17). Fixed mindset individuals do not seek out challenges as they want to feel smart and talented and are only interested in things they can do well right away. They do not want to expose deficiencies as that would negatively reflect on their ability and their enjoyment of success. A “fixed mindset makes people into non-learners” (Dweck, 2008, p. 18). Such individuals would tend to constrict their professional work to those practices they are prepared to execute and are satisfied with what they know. It is unlikely much professional growth outside of certain areas of competence would be initiated by a fixed mindset.

The other view of approaching new tasks and learning is called the *growth mindset* (Dweck, 2008) emphasizing the principle of nurture in developing growth. Individuals with this

belief trust that developing and fulfilling their potential, such as *praxis* in the case of teachers, is all about stretching themselves through practice and effort. They tend to seek out challenges to help them grow their talents and abilities. Dweck (2008) indicates that growth mindset people do not expect ability to show up on its own and get motivated by what is challenging rather than what they have already mastered. People with a growth mindset realize it takes time to reach your potential and afford themselves the opportunity to be patient and engage with the processes of learning. Such individuals do not need constant validation that they are better than others, as failure, although an uncomfortable experience, doesn't define them, but is to be learned from (Dweck, 2008). One learns from mistakes as effort defines the improvement of ability over time and not inability. Accomplishment arises as you progressively advance on the problems constituting a field of work. The growth mindset lives on the edge of competence.

### **2.9.6 Self-Expression as Motivation**

Allied with mindset, the factors that influence motivation are integral to driving an understanding of teaching. Based upon the work of Deci (1971, 1972), Deci, Koestner & Ryan (2001), and Deci & Ryan (2000, 2008), Pink (2009) summarizes the three essential elements of motivation: *autonomy*, the desire to direct your life; *mastery*, the urge to get better at something that matters to you; and *purpose*, a desire to contribute to something larger than self. This “drive” process is best motivated by the satisfaction of the activity itself, or intrinsic motivation (Pink, 2009). If-then, carrot and stick, or reward and punishment external enticements, typical of traditional stimulus response thinking only work for relatively routine and repetitive (boring, uncreative or simple) tasks that demand compliance (Pink, 2009). For more creative, complex and non-routine tasks, internal or self-motivating behavior works much better to engage the

learner or participant (Pink, 2009). Teaching is fundamentally a complex and creative process but can be fashioned to be routine, repetitive and boring.

Research has shown rewards and punishments actually act as a disincentive for self-initiation, diminishing performance, creativity and desired behaviors in the longer term (Deci, 1972; Kohn, 1999). This has implications for jurisdictional pressure and support endeavors as people believe they are worth more or need more for validation. Individuals can become fixated or addicted to external rewards or prizes and develop an expectation for such compensation. If they don't receive it, they do not perform or expect ever higher rewards to engage. The reward and not the ongoing learning becomes the end. Ayers (2010) points out research that indicates merit pay and similar market forces business model reforms have made no difference in teacher performance.

To develop motivation or engagement, each individual, such as a teacher, must find a purpose in the task that helps them think they are making a contribution beyond oneself (or have the potential to), that they are getting better at something that matters, and that they have some ownership over what they do, when they do it, who they do it with and how they do it (Pink, 2009). Pink suggests that tasks — that are not too hard and not too easy, that make or challenge you to put in the effort to improve yourself — are what to aim for. The knowing-doing gap in comprehending what really motivates people in dealing with complex tasks is crucial as it leads to either engagement or subdued compliance.

The concepts of pressure and support have been used to describe the impetus to engage change and provide for accountability in education (Dosdall, 2007). Such processes are largely reminiscent of the if-then, carrot and stick analogy, which has been shown to act as a disincentive and can dumb down the creativity of the people involved in the organization. What

drives an understanding of teaching needs to be more closely aligned with readily available research on motivation. The imbalance between what we know about motivation and what we do when dealing with it can either create drive and action or much pessimism, detachment and ennui. From this perspective then, closing the motive gap between a teacher's beliefs about their principles and practice and what the system values provides a longer term resolution to the challenges of education than short term efforts to change teacher attitudes and behaviors. Widely sharing in the control of any initiative is what sustains the quality of any innovation (Bennett et al, 2003).

Challenging teachers to think more deeply about their practice, rather than just attempting to change techniques, may likely lead them and the system to more functional success as the ends and the means will likely be better aligned. Teaching is a continual set of judgments of what ought to be done, not just how it ought to be done. Principles and purpose form the basis of such judgments to guide practice in varying and complex contexts. Closing such a motive gap, with all its complexities, seems to be a potential promising factor in promoting an understanding of the construction of teaching.

Self-expression is observable behaviors reflecting teacher beliefs, intentions, actions, identity, mindsets and motivations. The concept of understanding teaching as self-expression emphasizes the importance of teaching as an autobiographical act (Cole & Knowles, 2000). Teachers teach "who we are" (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p. 188). Cole and Knowles describe good teaching as reflexive inquiry, "an ongoing process of examining and refining practice ... situated within a context" (p.2). The sense making examination of "past experiences within the context of current and future actions" (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p. 14) involves both personal and professional interactive influences. "Much of what teachers know and express in their practice is

tacit” (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p. 6) and not readily explained and therefore not “measureable, controlled and standardized” (p. 79).

Outcomes of teaching are not necessarily dominated by routines and prescriptions, but emerge as a form of creative expression that relies on innovation and improvisation as the situational exigencies warrant (Cole & Knowles, 2000). Exploring the influences of teacher self-expression in constructing an understanding teaching is a critical concept. The affinity and inclination of teachers to act by expressing their personal doctrine and principles contribute to their vision and action towards accomplishing certain goals.

Teacher thinking and acting is shaped by teacher nature and nurture. It is similar to what Gandhi once described as a process of our thoughts eventually leading through our words, behaviors and habits to demonstrate values of what is right, just and worthy (Gold, 2002). Teacher values, reflected by ways of being and doing, ultimately determine their intentions, or the paths teachers travel, or those with whom they associate.

Understanding teaching as self-expression is an important factor in influencing approaches as to how and why teachers know their practice. Teachers are likely to rebuff changes in teaching if new ideas conflict with their current ideas of self-expression as a teacher unless such assumptions can be successfully challenged (Timperley, 2008). As teachers develop their expertise and gain in experience, their thinking about what is good teaching may change. These adjustments likely impact some aspects of self-expression be it the means or ends of teaching. Observing small changes in practice, that bring better results for students in the minds of teachers, may be persuasive enough to develop new ideas relating to teaching as self-expression.



## 2.10 Models of Teaching

The research literature when viewed through the eye glasses of constructivist and complexity theory bring into focus multiple interactive dimensions or pathways along which teachers construct their understanding of teaching. Building teaching knowledge and skills as processes while swathed within interdependent institutional/organizational contexts and dynamic relational experiences help shape these constructions. So do the judgments and self-expressive needs of teachers. Ideals and contexts account for what shapes teachers' commitment to a certain perspective of teaching from among a variety of approaches. Such a rich diversity of settings in how to construct an understanding of teaching is highly influenced by the multiplicity of models of teaching that teachers may have a commitment to or are immersed in as a cultural dynamic.

In order to frame and structure this study, it is important to describe what teaching is and point out some of the various models that have attempted to represent this concept. There are various models of teaching which provide helpful conceptual oversights of teaching. A model is a pattern or plan from which to design or understand teaching (Joyce, Weil & Showers, 1992). Each of these models succeeds in certain ways to express teaching practices, but also has some limitations in explaining how teachers come to construct such an understanding of teaching as depicted in these models. In fact, my point of departure in this study is to supplement or complement these respective models of teaching by exploring contextual influences among these teachers that may give rise to favoring certain representations of teaching over others.

Joyce, Weil & Showers (1992) in *Models of Teaching* provide an extensive research based overview of *information processing, personal, social and behavior* systems that they identify as four groups or families of teaching. Each model describes teaching orientations

towards a general purpose or particular intention of learning and how people learn. The models represent different ways of thinking about the purposes of teaching to facilitate different designs and applications of teaching and instructional materials. Each model has an articulated theoretical and pragmatic experiential basis to achieve the ends for which they were designed by various scholars and teachers (Joyce et al, 1992). A teacher's understanding of such a variety of models would enhance their repertoire of teaching strategies.

For example, the *social* models of teaching are designed to build learning communities by way of developing school cultures that construct norms or ways of interacting (Joyce et al, 1992). Social models of teaching emphasize cooperative learning practices, role playing, and case study methods designed to build social skills and self-esteem as well as academic learning. *Information processing* models, on the other hand, accentuate ways of making sense of the world by organizing and handling data (Joyce et al, 1992). Some develop concepts and language while others emphasize thinking and creative processes. Examples of such information processing models are inductive thinking, concept attainment (method of teaching concepts), mnemonics (memory assists), advance organizers, inquiry training, synectics (method for gaining new perspectives) and so on.

The *personal* models of learning favor developing concepts of self-hood and individual consciousness. Their intent is individual awareness or self-knowledge, leading creative lives, and personal responsibility to enhance our potential (Joyce et al, 1992). Such productive independence and self-understanding is facilitated by the work of Abraham Maslow in enhancing self-concept and in the research of psychologist and counselor, Carl Rogers, in designing non-directive teaching. The *behavioral* systems family is based upon social learning theory (Joyce et al, 1992). Humans "modify behavior in response to information about how successfully tasks

are navigated" (Joyce et al, 1992, p. 10). These models rely on "observable behavior and clearly defined tasks and methods of communicating progress to the student" (Joyce et al, 1992, p.11) and have been widely researched. Bloom's mastery learning, Glasser's direct instruction, Skinner's operant condition in learning self-control and Robert Gagne's conditions of learning whereby learner needs and sequencing instruction are attended to are some specific examples.

These models are very useful for conceptualizing teaching practices with strategies for teaching. Mastering them would likely increase teacher effectiveness for particular purposes. A high degree of teaching literacy in these models would undoubtedly enhance teacher practices of knowledgeably and skillfully connecting the ends and means of their desired teaching. The mystery for me, however, as I have experienced in my practice, is that when such representations are shared with teachers as another tool for teaching to add to their instructional knowledge and skillset, why do some teachers come on board while others still stay adrift from emphasizing such teaching? What are the influences to their teaching that may predispose them to certain ways of teaching? These models are limited towards such an explanation which is an important missing link in my role as a principal in supporting and providing opportunities for teachers to develop their teaching practices.

Bennett & Smilanich (1994) constructed a practical and integrative framework of teaching that I have used most of my professional career as my conceptual overview of what is teaching. Their framework (they don't describe it as a model, as components may change, but in my experience it serves the same purpose) has three interactive dimensions. They are: *classroom improvement* which describes the technical aspects of teaching; *teacher as learner* which describes the elements that focus on the teacher as a life-long learner and *school improvement* which illustrates the factors involved in how schools may be mobilized and improved. Within

each of these systems are embedded other systems. For example, classroom improvement has the dimensions of *content, instructional strategies, instructional skills* and *classroom management*. Teacher as learner has the dimensions of *teacher repertoire, teacher as researcher, collaboration and reflective practices*. School improvement has *collegiality, shared purpose, continuous improvement and structure*.

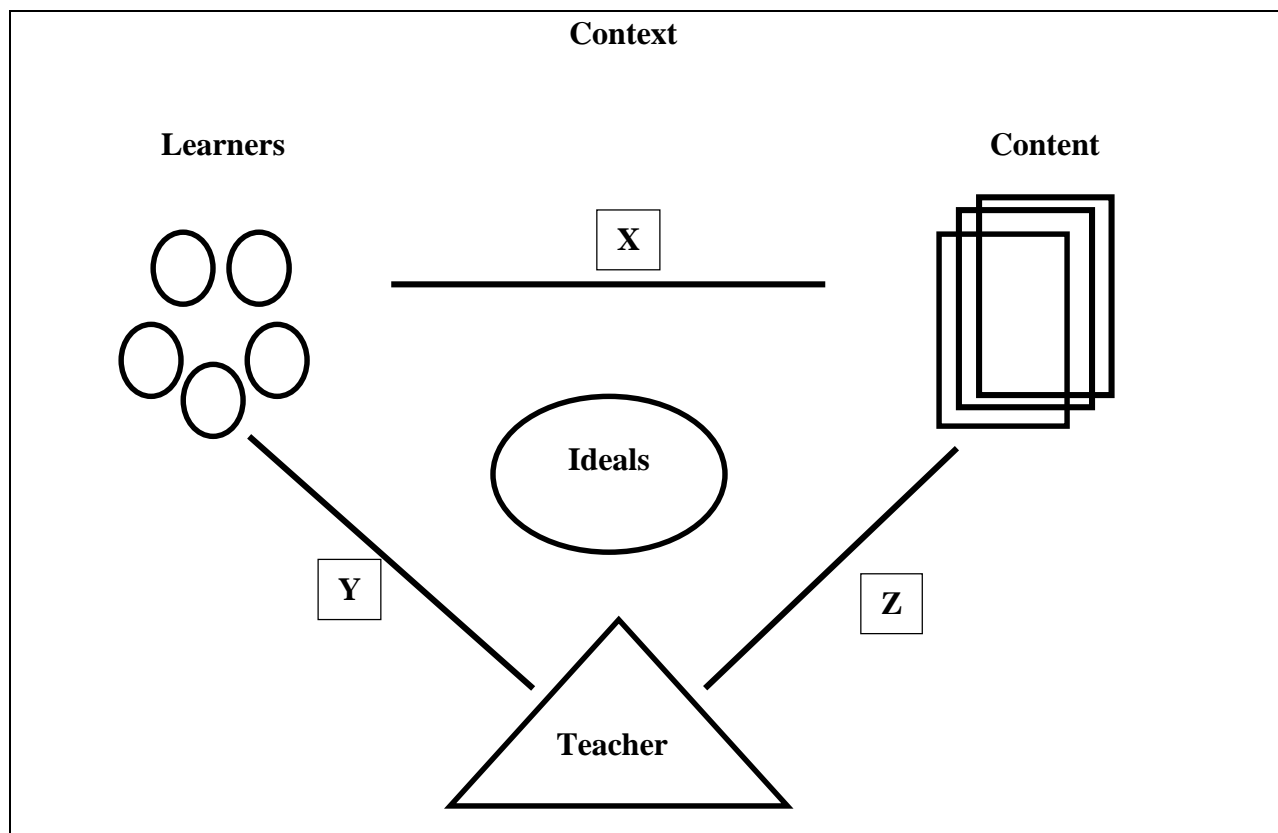
As mentioned, this framework of teaching and learning has been my "bible" in describing teaching practices and the change processes to enable educators to construct their expertise in their teaching. Previously, as a beginning teacher, I felt lost in a professional world of minutia and complexity. Student assignments, learning outcomes, teaching tasks and teacher guidebooks jostled each other with little cohesion or sense making. This framework provided my first glimpse of teaching as an integrative whole providing meaning, coherence and clarity of what teaching was about. Like a puzzle box top picture it was a very useful conceptual overview of teaching and an organizational tool for teaching of how to construct teaching. It was a great fit for what I would later learn was my dominant developmental profile of evolving cognitive structures for learners to understand content. Yet, over my career to date, it was unable to answer why some teachers chose to favor certain ways of teaching over others. What were the influences in teacher experiences and contexts that lead them to what they do? What were the influences that helped them construct their teaching? This is an important point in any discussion of personal or systemic transformations in education.

Armstrong & Epps (2010) Propeller Model provides another dynamic teaching framework, based upon teacher inquiry to engage open ended learning questions derived from curriculum, as another conception of what teaching is or could be. The elements of the Propeller Model comprised: *Universal Design for Learning*, where all students are included in multiple

ways of representing, expressing and processing learning; *Circle of Learning Conversations* to deepen and clarify meaning of what is being learned; and *Ongoing Assessment for Learning* which emphasizes formative assessment to further learning. It was significant for me to note, in a subsequent conversation several years later with one of the authors, that they too had expanded and continued to re-conceptualize and refine their understanding of teaching.

To help describe or define what teaching is, Pratt (1998d) suggests that “a meaningful examination of teaching needs to address types of commitment more than [just] a series of techniques” (p. 10). The General Model of Teaching, presented in Figure 2.1, identifies five elements (*teacher, learners, content, ideals* and *context*) and three overarching *relationships* (lines X, Y, Z respectively) that reference teaching (Pratt, 1998d). Various teachers commit themselves to some elements, through emphasizing certain respective relationships as more important or meaningful than others, based upon their beliefs, intentions and actions, thus identifying their different perspectives of teaching.

The General Model of Teaching, depicted in Figure 2.1, suggests a common frame of reference for conceptualizing teaching perspectives. It was developed by Pratt and Associates (1998) as a model to help explain and accommodate the diversity of teaching approaches that their research unveiled. The relationships between the elements are represented by lines. The various ways to engage students in content are signified by line X. The types of desired relationships with students are represented by line Y. Line Z emphasizes the importance of a teacher’s course expertise. Relative commitment by different teachers to the importance of each respective element would be emphasized through one or more of the relationships. Such commitment is revealed through ideals as to why certain teaching actions and objectives to accomplish are desirable and justifiable (Pratt, 1998d). Moreover, such teaching is located



**Figure 2.1 A General Model of Teaching (Pratt et al, 1998, p. 4)**

within a context or circumstance that may favor, emphasize or reward certain ways or aspects of teaching.

The holistic dynamics of *actions, intentions and beliefs* underpinning the General Model overview serve as a useful sort of comprehensive executive summary of teaching. The ideals or beliefs, behind the strategic and tactical dimensions of teaching techniques and agendas, that are missing or implicit in the other models, makes the General Model a key tool for my research purposes. Ideals are central to constructing an understanding of teaching. Such ideals are the missing or neglected link in understanding teacher perspectives and constructions of teaching. "Every perspective on teaching is an expression of an ideal, or an ideology, it is usually implicit, operating unconsciously to direct teaching" (Pratt, 1998b, p. 246). The General Model recognizes this fundamental aspect of teaching, and by doing, so acknowledges the need to

understand what these ideals are that induces teachers to teach the way they do. Such perspectives influence what teachers wish to learn in constructing an understanding of teaching and then how to do it.

The General Model, although providing for a highly useful descriptive archetype of teaching, is limited in the degree to which it explores the context of how teachers may come to emphasize certain ways of teaching over others. The influences arising from context that may support and construct certain perspectives on teaching, although identified as part of the model, are not covered in any detail by this model either. This is significant and important information when addressing teacher learning, particularly for principals and teachers in providing support and opportunities for such learning to take place.

The General Model emphasizes five significant dimensions of teaching: teacher, learners, content, context (physical and social environment) and ideals. The five dimensions of the General Model are useful in describing the pieces in the teaching environment, like a chess board, and the basic moves, but they do not inform the influential dynamics behind the thinking of what teachers as players are trying to do (intent), how they do it (actions) and why they do it (beliefs). Ideals shape the relative degrees of preference for accentuating the teacher learner relationship dynamic or the ways to engage the learner with course content or the relative importance of course expertise when teaching. The relational and contextual experiences that shape these constructions within the descriptions of teaching are my focus.

## **2.11 Dimensions of Understanding Teacher Constructions of Teaching**

Arising from the literature, for the purpose of exploring relational and contextual teaching experiences in constructing an understanding of teaching, the four cultural and systemic

dimensions of process, interdependence, judgment and self-expression are worth exploring as a formative organizational framework.

What are the influences that particularly contribute to understanding teaching as a process in the lives of teachers? Teaching as process explores the gradual increments of ever deeper understanding over time of teacher practice. In teacher conversations, I expected to hear stories of purposeful engagement of how they gradually organized, integrated and refined their knowledge of teaching strategies and curriculum. I anticipated stories of trials, tribulations and triumphs of incorporating prior knowledge and recognizing patterns of classroom interaction to enhance their teaching success over time.

What interdependent factors socialize or inspire teachers to construct their practice based upon explicit or implicit influences of social or organizational contexts? How systems organize teacher work makes a big difference in what teachers can accomplish (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Acker, 1999). Systemic, contextual and cultural influences articulated by individual teachers as sources of support or impediments to their needs, interests and desires as teachers is information I listened for.

What influences build teacher judgment over time? Decision making is a key aspect of teaching and what dynamics impact how judgment develops to influence their practice. I listened for statements about teaching as guided by rules, measurable products or fixed ends, or else, conversely, comments reflecting decisions made with ethical and moral reasoning in mind. Teacher judgments reflect connecting the means of their teaching to the ends of their teaching about what ought to be done. I attended to those ideas in the interviews.

Similarly, teaching may be viewed as self-expression, the ideals that drive them. What influences shape teacher beliefs around what is good teaching to which they aspire? Teachers



interpret or perceive the world through their thinking and experiences. Their affinity for and inclination to act in certain ways in their teaching is the iceberg as seen. Such actions float upon generally unseen personal doctrine and principles that contribute to their professional vision and fulfillment towards accomplishing certain goals. I looked for comments that reflect values, principles and beliefs.

These formative questions are not entirely and comprehensively addressed in the previous models. These limitations are the missing pieces of the puzzle I am seeking in order to answer the inconsistencies I have experienced in my practice. Just emphasizing the enhancement of important technical aspects of various teaching methods in professional learning does not address why some teachers apparently hold different perspectives on teaching, whether evidence based or not. This is an important question to ask. Teachers so partake and are committed to some actions and not others. My research seeks to answer *how do teachers construct an understanding of teaching* which seems to be largely neglected in describing teacher practice thus far in the obsession over the polemicizing of favored methods. I looked for influences through the lenses of teaching as a process, as interdependence, as judgments and self-expression.

## **2.12 A Pluralistic View**

Overall, understanding teaching, and subsequent teacher learning, needs to be guided by critically reflecting upon teachers' underlying beliefs and intentions. How teachers go about constructing an understanding of teacher is likely predicated on what types of understanding of teaching they comprehend as good teaching. This is frequently absent from many professional programs, in deference to the more common professional development routine or focus of scrutinizing and studying teaching actions. Central to the General Model of Teaching (Figure

2.1) are the ideals or conceptions of teaching that drive preferences for attending to the different teaching emphases of processes, relationships or outcomes.

From the research of Pratt and associates (1998) a framework for understanding such preferences came into being. Their five perspectives of teaching are based upon the assumption that there is "a pluralistic view of teaching and a diversity of commitments and perspectives" (Pratt, 1998d, p. 11). Within the hindsight of my professional experience, this is what I have experienced and it is the reason for entering into this research. Each perspective (transmission, apprenticeship, developmental, nurturing and social reform) emphasizes a different ideal of coming to terms with constructing an understanding of teaching. The Teaching Perspectives Model represents a plurality of good or quality teaching approaches that are amenable to change due to shifting experiential insights. It serves as a pragmatic and theoretical starting point as a collegial discussion tool for reflecting on teacher experiences and intentionality (Collins & Pratt, 2011).

Perspectives are not to be confused with teaching methods of which the latter can be common across perspectives (Pratt, 2002). What differentiates perspectives is how such methods are purposely used to dissimilar distinct favored ends (Pratt, 2002). Through the *Teaching Perspectives Inventory* (TPI), an on-line questionnaire relating to beliefs, intentions and teaching actions, certain perspectives of instruction can be identified and measured. The TPI documents that the majority of teachers "hold only one or two perspectives as their dominant view of teaching [one standard deviation above the mean of all perspectives in their individual profile] and only marginally identify with one or two others" (Pratt, 2002, p. 2). Merging this descriptive information with an analysis of teacher narratives of how and why they came to teach the way they do provided insights into influences upon teaching practice.

A summary description of each perspective now follows taken from the TPI website (see [www.teachingperspectives.com](http://www.teachingperspectives.com)):

### **2.12.1 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."

### **2.12.2 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."

### **2.12.3 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."

### **2.12.4 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."

#### **2.12.5 Social Reform**

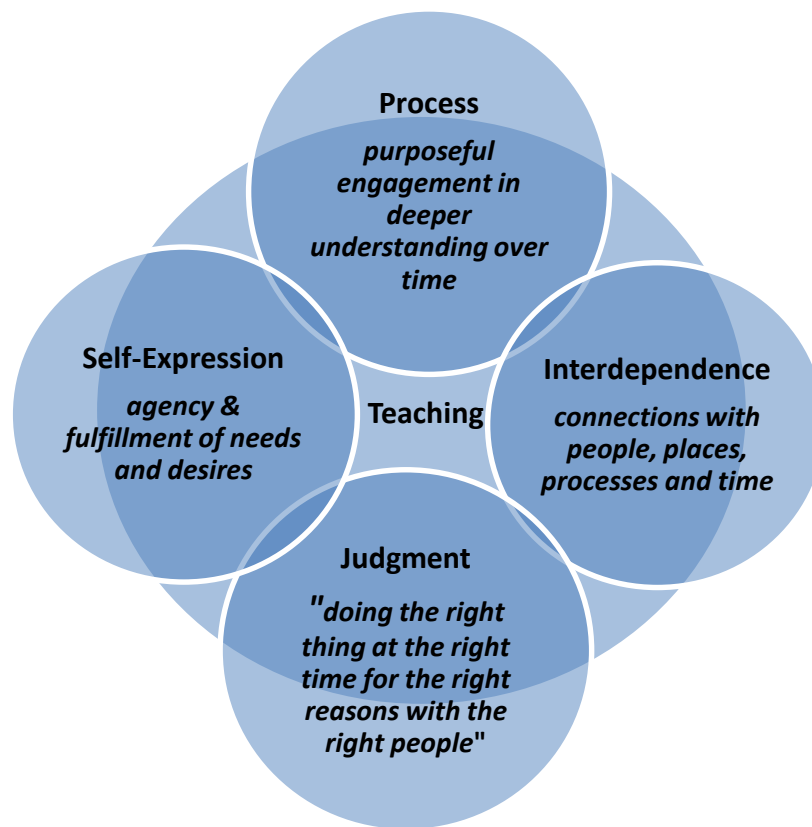
"Effective teaching seeks to change society in substantive ways. From the Social Reform point of view, the object of teaching is the collective rather than the individual. Good teachers awaken students to values and ideologies that are embedded in texts and common practices within their disciplines. 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."

### 2.13 Cultural and Systemic Influences

The point of my research then was to explore what the *cultural and systemic influences* acting upon and within the General Model of Teaching may be. What were the particular influences that motivate or induce my teacher participants to build their own understanding of teaching? As previously mentioned, such examination was guided by the theoretical understandings of teaching: *as process, as interdependence, as judgment and as self-expression*. These dimensions upon understanding teaching are not mutually exclusive of each other and likely interact in numerous ways. These four pillars provide the cultural and systemic mediums or dimensions within which teachers construct their understanding of teaching.

The dynamic I explored is shown in the following Figure 2.2, entitled *Dimensions of How Teachers Construct an Understanding of Teaching*, and which build on Pratt & Associates (1998) approach. To their model, I added the four interactive constructive dimensions of teaching as process, as interdependence, as judgment and as self-expression. They provide the cultural and systemic (organizational) contextual backdrop of dynamic influences impacting the General Model of Teaching at its center. The intention of this research was to use this theoretical classification to explore the actual reported learning experiences of teachers in how they came to construct their understanding of teaching and to determine what those cultural and systemic influences may be. Exploring teachers' constructions of teaching through the lens developed in Figure 2.2 allowed me to account for teaching as a lived experience. Each teacher narrated a pedagogical autobiography, influenced by their processes, interdependence, judgments and self-expression. Teaching, as culturally implicit activities and explicit systemic experiences, includes historical personal life, schooling and professional involvements or contexts that influence instruction. By exploring such structures, relationships and processes that impact upon teaching

perspectives, I analyzed how teachers came to construct their beliefs and approaches to teaching within the contexts of their practice.



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**Figure 2.2 Dimensions of How Teachers Construct an Understanding of Teaching**

By looking at the intersections of both descriptive (TPI) and analytical (interview) data, I went beyond labeling a practice to understanding the developments for how it arose. It is important to identify teaching practices and how they work, but it is equally significant to ascertain the influences behind such practices or preferences. After describing teaching perspectives through the TPI surveys, the use of teacher interviews sought to decipher what teachers hear, see and feel. This helped connect their experiences to ways in which teaching decisions and interventions were made. When we look at teaching, it is important to know the lenses through which we see — and therefore how it frames our teaching and what we see. How

I operationalized the research to determine what influences teachers experienced to construct their understanding of teaching is the topic to which I turn.



### Chapter 3: Research Methods

*You see things relative to your frame of reference, I see things relative to mine and there are no privileged observers.*  
Einstein

The design of social research begins with a problem or issue to be explored, described or explained (Creswell, 2007). My observations in the field of practice have led me to my inquiry to explore and describe teacher experiences of how teachers constructed their understanding of teaching. To organize my study I articulated a conceptual framework through my literature review. I had a sense of what to look for, but rather than merely seeking a confirmatory deductive approach to the study arising from the literature review with a hypothesis to endorse or not, I sought to also inductively build ideas about this inquiry derived from the analysis of teacher interviews.

Data collection is a selective process (Miles & Huberman, 1994), thus subsequent analysis of the data is a codetermination of meaning between the researcher and interview participant (Creswell, 2007). Coding condensed from the literature review was complemented with codes arising from individual interview narratives. Both were used to capture knowledge or understanding as broad social constructions as well as individual conceptions.

Methods are merely tools, but like any tool their usefulness depends upon the insight and skill of the user (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) characterizes that “what we bring to the study ... influences what we *can see*” (p. 15 [original emphasis]). Conceptions are the cultural lenses or knowledge constructs of how individuals perceive and understand the world (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Such world views or conceptions have underlying theoretical assumptions of how knowledge is formed, and thus has implications for posing questions, analyzing and interpreting interview data (Roulston, 2010). Different epistemological conceptual frameworks emphasize

different ways of knowing and being, and thus lead to different interpretations of data counting as evidence. Belief systems are the interpreters of perceptions. Therefore the credibility and dependability of results from using the interview as a research tool must be framed by making the researcher's epistemological preferences clear about what is reality and how one comes to know it. As these constructs are usually invisible, in an editorial sense, unless articulated, it is important that any credible account of a research method be prefaced.

My theoretical assumption, as a researcher, is that individual conceptions are embedded in the experiences of a person with the world around them. This is a congenial fit with phenomenology as well. Phenomenology refers to "social phenomena from the actors' own perspectives and describe the world as experienced by the subjects, with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 26). It is the study of the nature and meaning of phenomena (Findlay, 2008) where the "focus is on the way things appear to us through experience or in our consciousness" (p. 1). Phenomenology therefore entails approaching understanding as subjective perception and interpretation of the world in the eyes and mind of the beholder. Understanding human behavior due to this thinking and meaning making nature of humans, as cognitive actors in our experiences, means understanding from the actor's point of view (Olson, 2004). The use of the interview in my research was a compatible tool to capture such perspectives in relating how teachers come to understand their teaching.

I also considered that knowledge, as a social construction, existed not entirely in the individual teacher's mind where experiences inform beliefs. Certain social phenomena are experienced as more "objective" in the sense that many individuals comprehend similar things, and therefore certain patterns of ways of knowing can be co-determined and agreed to over time.

Meaning making may be an individual exercise, but it is influenced by social and cultural contexts. “Social phenomena exist not only in the mind but also in the objective world” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 4), therefore “we can derive constructs that underlie individual and social life” (p. 4). Such "objective" constructs are frequently determined by those actors with power, authority and influence to structure the contexts of interaction and reduce understandings to certain ways of knowing. Understandings can therefore be perceived as arising from both objective or general and subjective or individualized senses and are both exposed to challenge and change. That such constructs may not be visible to the human eye does not invalidate them (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Understanding of teaching is a reflective and usually after the fact moment. Comprehension may not crystallize or come into focus until well along in the meaning making journey based upon accumulations of daily practice and experiences.

As Charmaz (2006) also alludes to, our understanding of the world is based upon the inquiry our questions create and there are no unbiased questions (Barrett & Fry, 2005). Questions arise from one’s ontological beliefs and epistemology. How knowledge exists and how such knowledge may be studied and justified are theoretical concepts that need to be carefully defined, and made explicit as the foundation of any research study purporting to be either accurate or truthful. Theories are conceptual explanations describing how things work or explaining how they happen (Roulston, 2010). These assumptions create research paradigms or philosophies that shape how a researcher goes about their work (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Such paradigms then, in turn, create the criteria upon which to evaluate the quality and reliability of the research evidence (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). These research paradigms determine the nature of the questions we are prepared to ask about reality, the types of knowledge sought, the role of the researcher and the implications for the findings (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

In research, as in other walks of life, we inhabit the world our inquiries help create. In transforming social systems “language *precedes* changes in structures, systems, policies, and even awareness” (Barrett & Fry, 2005, p. 82, italics in the original). Words therefore create worlds of understanding. Without the necessary words to describe concepts or actions, we are limited by what we may conceive, understand, ask and share. The questions we ask shape what we find (Barrett & Fry, 2005). Questions do more than gain information as they focus attention and direct energy setting agendas for action (Barrett & Fry, 2005). We move holistically in the direction of what we ask questions about (Barrett & Fry, 2005). Appropriately formatted research questions are essential for attaining useful data.

Our awareness is consequently circumscribed by prior experience, language and social interaction. Such understandings influence practice and subsequent approaches to how teachers understand teaching as well. Patterns of receptivity and utility are impacted by what we believe and create the inquiries we pursue. In Michener’s novel, *Chesapeake*, he writes:

But always he lacked the essential tool without which the workman can never attain true mastery: he did not know the names of any of the parts he was building, and without the name he was artistically incomplete. It was not by accident that doctors and lawyers and butchers invented specific but secret names for things they did: to possess the name was to know the secret. With the correct names one entered into a new world of proficiency, became a performer of merit.

The meaning people bring to and construct from their experiences is limited by their awareness of words that describe their understanding and the questions they ask themselves in

pursuit of understanding teaching. The telling of personal stories is an important venue through which teachers' construction of their understanding of teaching takes place. Personal stories (recollecting child and adult experiences, teachers chronicling their successes or lack thereof with students, describing examples of student work or recounting classroom activities) reflect the complexities associated with teachers' work, their respective context, and experiences with educational reforms. Like the proverbial tale of the boy 'making a difference' for each stranded starfish he threw back into the sea, upon a beach littered with them, the emotional impact of such stories likely creates a more personal connection and context. This serves as a stimulus for accessing intuitive reflection and identity rather than just relying upon statistical analysis. Such opportunity for exchanging information and feelings promotes prospects for the achievement of personal goals and accomplishments by often engendering interest and support from a wider audience.

Story telling is a longtime human tradition. Researchers are like storytellers interpreting their research experiences and insights (Wolcott, 1990). Telling the story of the experiential influences of teachers' understanding and construction of teaching at a deep introspective level is the aim of my mixed methods research – descriptive profiles from which to draw insights “to get beyond initial conceptions and to generate or revise conceptual frameworks” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.1). Reality in the social sciences must consider the thinking nature of people as heuristic cycles of learning building upon experiences. Discursive methods, such as an interview, permit individuals to relate their experiences and thinking regarding their understanding of teaching over time about how such individuals constructed their likely shifting realities.

### **3.1 A Mixed Methods Study**

How individual teachers make sense of teaching can be answered through a systematic procedure of gathering insights through questioning of how these teachers structure and give meaning to the pursuit of reflective study and application about their work. With due consideration of the various paradigms and perspectives on research, I came to the conclusion that a qualitative interview would work well for my dissertation as a primary research method in combination with a questionnaire format previously designed by other researchers. This mixed methods approach had two data sources complementing each other to respond to and support the study of my research question. The survey revealed and described validated and reliable respective teaching perspectives. The qualitative interviewing sought to provide credible and dependable complementary detailed descriptions or explanations for how individuals came to hold such particular teaching perspectives. Research questions best suited for mixed methods are those where a singular data source is insufficient to explore results or explain findings (Creswell & Clark, 2011). My study made use of both sources of data for its investigation. Statistical trends or general statements supported by personal stories are popular in describing and exploring phenomena and are an “intuitive way of doing research” (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 1).

A progressive mixed methods study seemed best for my purpose of exploring teacher stories of how they came to understand teaching and describing what teachers' held as their teaching perspectives. Its two phase sequential structure was relatively straightforward to do and provides for “a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone” (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p.5). Green (2007) describes mixed research as “multiple ways of seeing and hearing” (p. 20). The quantitative survey provided for a deductive outlook of describing teacher perspectives

of teaching while the qualitative research added a more constructivist or inductive way of sequentially building upon those perspectives by analyzing how they came to be. Through these two lenses of looking at the world, this research design combined these two methods to conduct this study.

The quantitative survey results described the teaching perspectives profile of each teacher while the qualitative research endeavored to help explore or analyze how such an understanding of teaching came into being. The interview was used to supplement the survey so that a more detailed understanding of how teachers construct their understanding of teaching may be revealed. Harris and Brown (2010) assert that “the main attraction of using mixed method research is that data gained through different methods may complement each other” (p. 12). Mixed methods research is a pragmatic bridge of mixing generalized findings with more personalized and individualized outcomes. One data base is used to help explain the other (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

For example, two participants may have had very different scores on the social reform perspective of the TPI. One may have been very high, a dominant perspective, contrasted to the other participant’s relatively low score as a recessive perspective. Such descriptions as scores were helpful in acknowledging the relative importance of these perspectives to these two different teachers. The interviews, as a narrative, had the opportunity to supplement and complement this data by providing insights as to why or how the respective teachers came to those perspectives. One participant in their interview may have revealed that a narrow religious upbringing into young adulthood had soured their view of espousing or proselytizing a certain way of thinking or believing as a truth or way to a better life. While another, growing up in poverty, saw their schooling success as an opportunity and support to continue to reform or

change the culture of poverty through schooling as an impact upon individuals and society. These contrasting and divergent data sets, of both the TPI and interviews, helped provide not only an overall descriptive profile of teaching perspectives, but also an analysis of what influences or experiences helped construct such an understanding of teaching. This methodology then facilitated the intent of this study which is to describe and explain the influences of how teachers come to construct their understanding of teaching.

In summary, the intent of the research was to first capture the teaching perspectives that help describe teacher beliefs, intentions and teaching actions as exemplified by the TPI survey (Collins and Pratt, 2011; Pratt and Collins, 2000). The second intent was to analyze the participant interviews as narratives in making sense of their professional experiences and influences. By combining the TPI, which is a descriptive tool of teaching perspectives, beliefs, intentions and actions, with the interviews, as an analytical tool, exploring the formative influences upon teaching, this research identified and explored how some teachers construct their teaching.

### **3.2 Research Participants**

In organizing my study design, a purposive sample of participants was originally sought with as much variety of teaching specialties and teaching locations as possible within the bounds of reasonable research logistics, willing participants and time available to facilitate the study. Study participants were recruited from certain public school districts and private schools through the permission of district superintendents or private school headmasters. Requests for study participants were disseminated through a local teacher's union and through headmasters in private schools. A few participants were accessed through snowball sampling based upon initial participants later encouraging colleagues to participate. Fourteen participants were finally



voluntarily interviewed with their informed written consent as to the processes and nature of the study.

Selection criteria encouraged as diverse a group of teachers as possible, according to gender, teaching experience and teaching areas (secondary, elementary, specialists like counselors and librarians), from diverse teaching settings (rural, suburban, inner city, private schools) and subject areas (elementary and various secondary subject areas). Teacher participants eventually came from two different public school districts and one private school. I am aware that my findings are not generalizable to other populations due to the small sampling size and lack of random selection. My purpose however was to explore and describe influences that support and provide opportunities for the teachers in my sample to construct their understanding of teaching.

One school district from which participants came had approximately twice the student population than the other which had a more rural and small town demographic. Pseudonym names were allocated to the districts. The larger district, the Coast Salish School District, has a larger urban population than the smaller Pacific Ocean School District. The private school that is in this study offers a non-denominational, co-ed, university-prep program with International Baccalaureate standing. Of the fourteen teachers ultimately participating in this study, teaching experience ranged from two weeks to 34 years. A majority of 12 participants came from the Coast Salish School District due to snowball sampling within that district. Of the fourteen study participants, ten of the participants were female and four male. Seven extensively taught in secondary settings while seven taught in elementary schools. A factor to be considered of the relatively low numbers of teacher participants was that the request for study participants was

extended during a time of public school job action and strike action across the province.

Profiles of the teacher participants in this study are documented in Appendices A-N.

### **3.3 Research Tools and Design**

My data collection was designed to take place in two sequential phases:

#### **3.3.1 Phase I: TPI**

Each participating teacher completed an online TPI Survey prior to the interview and had the results of the TPI available for the researcher following the interview. TPI results were returned online within a few minutes to the survey taker with TPI scores automatically profiled for printing off. Each perspective received a score relative to the other perspectives in terms of the degree of favorable responses that align with the beliefs, intentions and action statements of that perspective. A higher score means a relative preference for that perspective.

The TPI ([www.teachingperspectives.com](http://www.teachingperspectives.com)) as introduced earlier is a well-researched, validated and reliable survey instrument developed to identify five ways of knowing teaching as: transmission, as apprenticeship, as developmental, as emphasizing nurturing or as espousing a social reform perspective. Within the five perspectives of teaching are survey items related to beliefs, intentions and actions connected to a teacher's teaching perspective preferences. This 45 item five point scale appraisal of teaching perspectives thus profiles a teacher's view of teaching. These conceptualizations of teaching are featured in their dominant (perspective favored by an individual teacher), backup (next highest) and recessive (perspective less favored by an individual teacher) summaries. A maximum score in any perspective is 45 and a minimum is 9. Dominant and recessive perspectives are those scores one standard deviation or more above or respectively below the personal mean of all five of each participant's TPI scores (Collins and

Pratt, 2011). According to Collins and Pratt (2011) most people have one and sometimes two dominant perspectives, one recessive and one or two back-up perspectives that are high scoring but less so than the dominant perspective. Dominant and recessive scores mean current highly favored or least favored teaching perspectives. There is no intent in the TPI to have any perspective labelled as a poor practice as this survey favors a pluralistic view of accepted teaching practices. The intent of the TPI is to provide a personal profile that identifies each respondent's present conceptions of viewing teaching.

The survey took about 20 to 30 minutes to do on line and the results were quickly available to each participant. Participants voluntarily provided a copy of their TPI summary to the researcher to facilitate the research data collection. The survey has been used reliably before with K-12 teachers (Pratt, Collins & Jarvis - Selinger, 2001). The survey results served as a reference point to begin the interview conversation and also provided conceptual language, if needed, to facilitate the interpretation, understanding and sharing of experiences. The survey results similarly served to help surface implicit ways of knowing as well as the more conscious ones. Such ways of knowing influence the way teachers approached teaching and how they translated this knowledge into action and pedagogic practice.

### **3.3.2 Phase II: Interviews**

The second step in gathering data for this study was a semi-structured interview. An interview, as a research method, is a conversation that has both purpose and structure (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The reflections that construct these kinds of stories or narratives provide for a way of knowing as a meaning making process (Seidman, 2006). The intent of such conversations is to explore and learn from the perspectives of others (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The research interviewer's role is to both discern and describe the meaning of the stories or

experiences of those that are interviewed (Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 2006). Researcher presuppositions enter into the composing of their questions (Creswell, 2007).

Gathering meaningful narrative data through thoughtful, insightful questions is a challenging and critical task. Key interview questions have a strategic significance in that they are structured to answer the main themes of the research question (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Follow-up questions are tactically used to ensure the depth, detail and richness of data that the interviewer requires (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Probes are simply worded questions used to manage the interview to keep it flowing, focused and clear (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As a novice researcher and interviewer, I used an interview guide with a few key open ended questions to engage respondents (see Appendix O), with some possible prepared follow-ups relating to the main questions and several ready probes as needed. Interviews and transcription occurred over a six month period from September 2012 to February 2013.

The role of the qualitative researcher interviewer goes beyond determining what is important to ask as the data gathering process itself is informative (Palys, 2003). Interview diary notes were kept to include interviewer reflections and commentary of the interview process as it unfolded. The interviews were also recorded and transcribed for later analysis to provide narrative insights into how teachers came to understand and construct teaching. The questions were created to help participants reflect on how they developed their understanding of teaching over their lives and career. The criteria for formulating the questions emphasized open ended opportunities for participants to enable thoughtful responses across a range of personal, organizational and professional experiences, relationships and contexts.

“Increasingly qualitative researchers are realizing that interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two or more people leading to negotiated,

contextually based results” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 646). “Few activities are more powerful for professional learning than reflection on practice” (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 24). Learning is a non-linear dialogical process of making meaning (Brown & Moffett, 1999). The interviews provided opportunities for and support of insights on how teachers constructed their understandings of teaching given the open ended invitation to share participant experiences and ideas.

The beliefs and attitudes of respondents must be respected for a truthful account. The open-ended format encouraged a comfortable and engaging participant oriented interview, providing probes as necessary to clarify responses. Respondents were informed they had an opportunity to review their transcript upon request. Although no participants made such a request, after transcribing the interviews two participants were later emailed to elaborate further on certain questions for clarification of what they meant which was not immediately followed up during the interviews. Such changes to the initial transcript were noted as additions to the original transcript.

The interview contained a range of questions relating to personal, organizational and professional influences that may help shape a teacher’s construction of teaching prior to, during and after teacher training (See Appendix O). Previous studies (Carter, 1990; Feiman-Nemser, 1988) indicated that personal beliefs about “good teaching” may be formed prior to actual teaching, so my study included questions directed to experiences preceding teaching as well. However, my study focused primarily on practicing, experienced teachers, with one beginning teacher exception, through the retrospective lens they then viewed their work.

The interview conversation was structured around the beliefs, intentions, and actions (BIA) of the TPI as well to facilitate inquiry relating to influences pertaining to such phenomena

(See Appendix O). The interview was initiated by asking the participants how they perceived the TPI profiles as a reasonably accurate general or broad portrayal of them as a teacher and whether it may have changed over time. Questions related to teaching intentions came next (which is usually something people can easily talk about) and then a following question about supports or hindrances that aligned actions (or not) with their intentions. The latter question was provided to gather any data that might explain a discrepancy or gap between what teachers believed in and intended and what they could do in their teaching. Such information may also explain any large differences in TPI scores between beliefs, intentions and actions.

In my experience talking about beliefs is a harder thing to do, as teachers tend to deal with tangible practices rather than abstractions. So beliefs come later in the interview under the guise of what the participant described as good teaching. Aligning my interview questions with the data collected by the TPI helped facilitate later coding and analysis. The interviews averaged forty-five minutes with an additional opportunity given to each participant to add any other thoughts at the end of the interview.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The transcription process goes beyond data collection and is a foundational step in analyzing data. A digital audio recorder was used to record the full interview to enable transformation of the oral language to a later written form. Such translations involve a number of judgments and decisions as the non-verbal communication that goes on in a face to face interview is difficult to represent in written text (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Transcriptions involve some hermeneutical choices between the two narrative modes of communication (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As my main interest is in the content of the narrative, these initial interpretive decisions were more syntactical than in essences of meaning. In my two pilot

interview transcription experiences, it was not always easy to know when one sentence started and the other ended. Pilot interview data from Abigail and Beatrice was included for this study with the information from their initial responses later aligned to the revised interview questions.

Beyond gathering the data and transcribing it, I went with an eclectic analysis format building both deductively (initial pre-existing coding based upon objectives of study) and inductively (nascent initial coding derived from participant narrative) from my interviews to reduce the data into codes, patterns and themes. Coding is linking as well as labeling and is a heuristic cyclical act (Saldana, 2009). Coding is an analytic tool. Coding brings some systemic order to the data to begin to consolidate and condense meaning and explanation (Saldana, 2009). I was able to organize and group similarly coded data into categories to give rise to interpreting the data based upon such analysis. From such inquiry and study came my descriptions, theories or hypotheses that responded to the original purpose of the research question.

Another way to look at it is that coding begins to shape the analytic framework by generating “the bones of your analysis,” whereby “theoretical integration will assemble these bones into a working skeleton” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 45). Through coding I attached ‘names’ to segments of interview narrative as an initial analytic heading or condensation of meaning from which later theoretical categories arose. The coding process was a successive reiterative editing of clarifying and synthesizing coding definitions to enable nascent theory for my study. Charmaz (2006) describes coding as the “pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data” (p. 46).

Miles and Huberman (1994) assert that “coding is analysis” (p. 56) by labeling units of meaning be it a word, phrase, line, sentence or whole paragraph. Codes analyze different levels of thinking “from descriptive to inferential” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 58) with inferential

ones typically coming later. Descriptive codes that label a passage or word involve little interpretation, although the same section could be coded more interpretatively (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Upon a second coding, I analyzed patterns or categories in order to label trends discerned in the data. Such pattern coding involves both inferential and explanatory analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After initial coding, through this process of sequential analysis, I restated or renamed codes to better reflect what I discerned was the categorical intent or meaning of segments of data. Charmaz (2006) calls this second phase focused coding which Saldana (2009) terms second cycle coding. Charmaz (2006) describes focused coding as “using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data” (p. 57) to reduce the data into categories or clusters of meaning. Such coding may be followed by more theoretical coding where integrative generalizations are made to come up with hypotheses or theories (Charmaz, 2006).

Charmaz (2006) recommends initial coding to be data driven which means to “stick closely with the data” (p. 47) to avoid bringing pre-existing categories to the data. Miles & Huberman (1994) however prefer a more concept driven approach by beginning with a provisional “start list” of codes based upon their conceptual framework. I used both approaches to select, simplify and interpret the data as explained below. Creswell (2007) points out that hermeneutical and postmodern thinking means that there likely is a “legitimate plurality of interpretations” (p. 212) for a text but less than most people would assume.

Selected deductive or pre-existing categories describe the thoughts and ideas brought out in the literature review. With this in mind, I used themes identified in my literature review that are relevant to the overall objectives of exploring and describing influences upon understanding



of teaching. For example, the theme of understanding teaching as a process (PRO) initiated scrutiny of narratives arising from the interviews that described articulating, revising and refining practice. Such narratives described building expertise and a progressive integration of practice with theory. Interdependence (INTR) was a second major theme identified in the literature in understanding teaching. So, I was looking for comments that may identify social and organizational factors that were background cultural and systemic influences of participant teaching. Prior knowledge, relationships and collegial collaboration were commonly mentioned perceptions here. A third major theme I explored was judgment (JUD). I looked for commentary on principles or dynamics that informed teacher decisions on what they were trying to do. Ethical means end thinking and pragmatic or technical teaching decisions were ideas that surfaced here. A fourth theme from the literature highlighted teaching as self-expression (SEL) whereby articulated accounts of beliefs and values were sought that brought order, purpose and meaning to teaching. Approaches akin to mindsets and motivational issues were mentioned here. The TPI questionnaire framework with questions related to beliefs, intentions and actions also permitted pre-coding as beliefs (BEL), intentions (INT) and actions (ACT) in teacher responses. These were subsequently later synthesized as factors of self-expression (SEL).

Another contrasting approach to data reduction is using inductive theory generation. Inductive theory generation arises from the data of the participants' articulated accounts of their experiences. The intent is to go beyond description based upon the data to theory generation. Here the research followed the advice of Creswell (2007) in "lean coding" so coding was not overwhelmed by the sheer volume of a complex data base. Some initial inductive coding categories were: settings (SET) [where influences happened], actors (ACTR) [family members, neighbors, teachers, colleagues, mentors, principals], and events (EVE) [moments in time of

social or interpersonal specific happenings, PD or learning occasions and recognized as such]. Some inductive coding replicated literature review or TPI themes. Processes (PRO) [obvious or intuitive procedures, practices, methods or progressions as a series of actions directed towards a longer term particular objective that may be explicit or implicit and therefore, in the latter, recognized in hindsight] and TPI beliefs and values (BEL) [principles, philosophies, interests, needs, ideals] were two that intersected both the theory arising from the literature review and instances of practice as revealed by the interviews. In eventual thematic findings, pre-existing coding came to the fore as such coding was more all-encompassing than initial inductive coding.

Harris and Brown (2010) found that “interview data may carry different messages than questionnaire data” (p. 11), and so they recommend that the two data sets be analyzed separately and then the results compared to “see if any common messages resonate from both sets of data” (p. 11). Therefore, after following the theoretical insights and guidelines articulated above in the data analysis of the interviews, I then examined my TPI survey results. Dominant and recessive perspectives, for each individual a score of one or more standard deviations above or below their personal mean of all five TPI perspectives, were identified by the TPI questionnaire data to recognize individually strongly favored or contrasting disfavored teaching approaches.

The next detailed step of scrutinizing TPI data involved item analysis of each teaching perspective by the responses each participant gave to each statement of the TPI questionnaire (see Table 4.2). Each perspective is identified by nine questions distributed throughout the survey. Three survey statements respectively identify beliefs, intentions or actions as indicators for each perspective. The degree to which each participant either supports or disagrees with each statement of beliefs, intentions or actions along a continuum eventually identifies the relative preference for each perspective of teaching.

A critical final analysis took these itemized results and examined them by comparing and contrasting responses with the interview coding themes and each teacher's interview narrative. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data for each participant arises by comparing qualitative interview coding with the TPI item analysis responses to beliefs, intentions or actions. An always response will be considered a “hot button” revealing strong association with a particular belief, intention or action coded statement of the questionnaire. A never response will be thought of as a “cool button” indicating a weak association for the respective belief, intent or action represented by that statement in the TPI questionnaire. The intersection or convergence of any hot or cool buttons with qualitative coding for each individual will be thought to corroborate that code in influencing beliefs, intentions or actions pertaining to a particular teaching perspective. In this way the two data sets helped explore and describe how teachers come to understand or hold certain teaching perspectives. There should be evidence in what is said in the interviews about themselves echoed in one or more of their teaching perspectives.

In comparing and contrasting these data sets, some conclusions of how various influences helped construct participant understanding of teaching responded to the main research questions. The dependability and credibility of the study results should be based upon the coherence, consistency and logic of my methods and analysis as shown in the findings. TPI participant results from my study were also contrasted with TPI overall grade level norms for K-12 teachers to compare as a frame of reference (see Appendix Q) for any similarities and differences as noted in the findings.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

In addition to understanding why researchers do the things the way they do, they should also be explicit in how they conduct their study (Delyser, 2008). The practice of taking private

information and later publicly publishing it goes beyond mere strategy to ethical obligations to ensure the study participants' rights and interests are protected (Palys, 2003). Such considerations should attend to researcher reflexivity, positionality, any researcher potential conflicts of interest, the voluntary nature and informed consent of participants and the protection of their confidentiality in any published documents based upon their input. Having the privilege of accessing participants' private thinking of their experiences, motives and opinions involves a reciprocal level of confidence and trust in the researcher to fulfill their ethical responsibilities in the undertaking of the study.

Therefore, all participating teachers were informed in writing of the purpose and procedures for my study. Based upon such *informed consent*, all participation was voluntary and any participant could withdraw at any time. No individual was identified in the presentation of data as all conversations and interviews were confidential. To emphasize this right to privacy all participants and locations were assigned pseudonyms. Due consideration to protection from harm is forefront with participants' not being subject to hardship to participate nor loss or gain of compensation from doing so. Participants not comfortable with any particular interview question were permitted to omit it.

### **3.6 Limitations of the Study**

The limitation or test of this work is how authentically it truly represents and interprets the narratives of the study participants. The aim of this research was to generate insights into the complex and multifaceted dynamics that influence teachers' worldviews on teaching by what they say they think and do. This research focuses on how teachers' construct an understanding of teaching and not on what are more effective practices.

The leading limitation is my role as researcher and the predispositions and biases I bring to my way of being and thinking. Research is interpreted through the ontological and epistemic views of the researcher. My epistemic lens will impose certain inferences and interpretations on the "art of hearing data" of how interview participants account for their experiences. Such ways of thinking and believing about teaching are likely to impact any research results. My present constructivist and pragmatist predilections are duly noted, as well as my previous, albeit lingering, technocratic reliance on and affinity for aspects of research based teaching methodologies to resolve teaching and educational challenges.

As a researcher, to mitigate and guard against such "conceptual baggage" of implicit assumptions and theoretical frameworks, I in effect contrasted my experience and understanding of teaching with those articulated by the study participants. This facilitated not only an examination of the content of my research question but also reflections upon my own practice. This self-searching was a continuous part of the research process to surface such implicit thinking to where it was more transparently examined. Dissertation committee meetings, particularly early on, were instrumental in exposing my tacit technocratic predispositions. Through these meetings, I more consciously contemplated my teaching practices. This awareness assisted me in recognizing my preconceptions to ensure a more authentic appreciation for what study participants were saying. Such attentiveness prompted me to keep in mind what I could and could not infer from collected participant narrations, as well as assisting me in what I could extract. Basically, through such reflexivity as a researcher, I became gradually more consciously knowing of who I was as a practitioner and this clarity assisted me in recognizing my part in the shared production of knowledge. I became more aware of the eyes I was seeing through and how they influenced my perceptions.

My use of the TPI survey had limitations as an instrument for considering the complexities and contingencies for how K-12 teachers constructed an understanding of teaching. As an arbiter of perspectives of teaching, including adult education, the TPI describes purposes of teaching and not specific methodologies or styles of teaching which could be used within any teaching perspective. Although the interviews supplemented and extended such data, so that teacher participants could include such information, the use of the survey may have constrained or de-emphasized such constituent understandings of teaching.

Another limitation of the scope of this research, in how teachers constructed an understanding of teaching, was the confinement of this study to practicing teachers. The focus of this study regarding ultimate conclusions and recommendations was on career track teachers with more teaching experience. The intent was to study teachers who had created lasting careers for themselves and the influences upon them. A beginning teacher was included in the study, although participants generally discounted their pre-service education from the hindsight of experience. This is not to say that pre-service education does not influence understandings in some precursor manner, as was noted in some interviews. Therefore, conclusions and recommendations based upon this study do not directly address pre-service teacher needs or understandings which would be worthy of other study.

Also, other limitations of the study may be imposed by the circumstance that participants shared recollections of past understandings and experiences. Those memories may become abridged by more recent adjustments in understanding. There are also limitations and distortions in how well we know ourselves and those recollections even become frailer when the story is years or decades old. Another possible limitation is that some participants may have succumbed to the ‘social desirability’ influence of telling me what they wanted me (and others) to think of

them as teachers. As well, some snowball sampling of participants, linked by various personal and professional associations, may also have increased the likelihood of “kindred spirits” sharing their understanding of teaching, something which could limit the diversity of data collected. Clearly, there are limits to what I as a researcher could possibly know about what truly influenced these participants to become the teachers they have become.

Finally, the interview questions in themselves may guide or limit teacher responses. Merely being asked these questions may call upon a participant to interpret or construct from an experience something they may not have given due consideration before. Certainly, however, each interview was based upon the prior knowledge and experiences of each teacher participant. Although the literature review provided for a conceptual framework, it left opportunities for other interpretations to emerge from the data as evidence arose.

## Chapter 4: Research Findings

*There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*

William Shakespeare

The purpose of this research was to examine how teachers in this study constructed their understanding of teaching. As well as assisting me in reflecting upon my practice, such awareness has implications for a wider audience in understanding personal epistemologies that validate teaching actions as “worthy and justified.” It is important to understand how teachers conceive and reflect upon their practice as well as what their methods and theories are.

However, in order to properly address the study question of *how* teachers construct an understanding of teaching, it is important to summarize and analyze the representative data of *what* teacher participants comprehend or wish to build as good teaching.

In order to respond to the study question, I present data according to the two phases in which I collected them. In this chapter, I first start by reviewing the TPI scores obtained from participants. The aim of Phase I is to present or map out what are the most important facets of teaching as represented by TPI data. This information is also later supplemented in Phase I by interview commentary directly responding to teacher insights on their teaching perspective profiles. In Phase II, I expand upon the scope of data analysis by drawing upon participant stories about their teaching journeys of how they conceptualized teaching (see Appendices A-N for participant narratives).

This study is anchored on the premise that there are many different ways to understand teaching and what good teaching stands for (Pratt, 1992; Sumara and Davis, 2010). By combining the TPI, which is a descriptive tool of teaching perspectives, with the interviews, as a reflexive tool, the aim of this study was to explore what understandings these teachers held and



how they came to know them. The interviews provided substance and detail — muscle to the TPI bones if it were — about the influences that shaped teachers' understandings of teaching as determined by the TPI. By using both these two sources of data — TPI and interviews — the study provided a complimentary and intelligible account of identifying what favored teaching perspectives teachers held as well as gathering insights into how teachers came to embrace a variety of perspectives about teaching.

#### **4.1 Phase I: Mapping Teacher Perspectives on Teaching**

##### **4.1.1 Synopsis**

In Phase I, the TPI inventory was used to map five distinctive approaches to teaching: transmission, apprenticeship, developmental, nurturing and social reform. The following three major Phase I findings are based upon TPI survey results, supplemented by teacher interview commentary concerning their TPI profiles. The dominant themes or facets of understanding teaching arising from this data are:

1. *Teachers exhibit a mixture of multifaceted configurations of teaching perspectives.*

TPI results suggest that teachers are not ideologically locked, as professionals, on particular constructs of teaching. Rather, they pragmatically utilize a range of perspectives and tools for possible application. As a group, teachers seem not to opt for “extremes” as panaceas to practice but rely on eclectic combinations to meet teaching challenges. In commenting on their TPI results in the interviews, *teachers view teaching as a process of progressive learning and practice with understandings changing, modifying or shifting over time.* This means that teachers understand teaching as dynamic change, adapting to changing contexts and building upon experience. Teachers

are mindful of contexts as a characteristic of professionalism. As such, pragmatism rather than ideology determines which perspectives are used as approaches when seeking means to defined ends. The notion of what is good teaching is not fixed. Their awareness of their experiences shifts over time suggesting that teacher identities change as well.

2. *Nurturing stands out as a highly favored teaching perspective.* Teachers acknowledge and recognize emotions as part of teaching and learning by building and maintaining caring relations with their students and colleagues. For them, relational trust is a core aspect of practice that enables formative learning. In commenting on their various TPI perspectives in the interviews, *teachers value ethical consistency which serves as the will and inspiration that drives teacher actions.* Teaching is an expression of beliefs, intentions and actions. Teaching is not a succession of simple acts of productivity. Rather, it captures productive acts of thinking that celebrates connecting moral, emotional and intellectual ends.
3. *For many teachers apprenticeship consists of developing teaching expertise through mastering methods and processes of teaching and learning.* Teachers consider this aspect of teaching as an important personal responsibility, thus establishing expertise in didactic pedagogy as a central practice of teaching. In commenting on developing expertise, teachers acknowledge that *improving judgments about teaching success and fluency is developed through collegial relationships, co-constructed learning opportunities and reflexive practice.* This highlights the multifaceted problem solving contextual nature of teaching in shaping understanding. Developing understanding is an improvisational experience towards paradigms or ideals that may change over time.

Experiences grounded in collaborative relationships and co-constructed learning opportunities with other trusted educators are significant and are highly valued contributors to teaching understanding.

#### 4.1.2 Analysis

##### 4.1.2.1 TPI

TPI analysis in Phase I is represented in Table 4.1, *Summary of TPI Participant Data*, and Table 4.2, *TPI Survey Statement Preferences for Beliefs (B), Intentions (I) and Actions (A)*. Table 4.1 provides overall examined results, while Table 4.2 provides additional detail of TPI survey statement preferences. Related teacher interview commentary elaborates on this data breakdown.

**Table 4.1 Summary of TPI Participant Data**

Perspective*	Study Group Preferred Perspectives (dominant or tied highest scores)	K-12 TPI Normative Preferred Perspectives in wider TPI survey by Pratt & Collins **	Study Group Back-up Perspectives (next highest after dominant scores)	Study Group Least Preferred Perspectives (lowest or recessive score)
Nurturing	64%	51%	7%	0%
Apprenticeship	43%	37%	36%	0%
Developmental	21%	19%	36%	0%
Social Reform	7%	3%	21%	50%
Transmission	7%	13%	7%	64%

\*Participants may hold more than one dominant, back-up (tie) or recessive perspective \*\*See Appendix Q

Teacher understandings of teaching involve all five teaching perspectives to various degrees. TPI results featured all five perspectives as a preference in the study as shown in Table 4.1, *Summary of TPI Participant Data*. Therefore all perspectives reflected a favored purpose

and ideal of teaching at the time of the TPI survey. All perspectives also had individuals choosing them as a preferred back-up perspective (next highest scored perspective after the dominant one). Dominant and recessive perspectives are those scores one standard deviation or more respectively above or below the personal mean of all five of each participant's TPI scores (Collins and Pratt, 2011).

Nurturing led with 64% of teachers favoring it as a widely held dominant perspective and an important undertaking in their understanding of teaching. Within this group of teachers and for teachers in general (corroborated by K-12 TPI survey norms presented in Appendix Q), nurturing had the highest average preferential score of all perspectives. Meaningful relationships created by teachers with students increase the likelihood of success particularly for students living in poverty and with a lack of opportunity (Pannoni, 2014). This study group's preferential dominant perspective results also closely paralleled the larger K-12 TPI normative outcomes (see Appendix Q) with nurturing and apprenticeship at the top, developmental in the middle and transmission and social reform at the bottom. The least preferred teaching perspectives of this group were social reform and transmission with no other perspectives recorded as recessive.

In the interviews, the participating teachers generally indicated that the TPI reflected a reasonably accurate profile of their perspectives on teaching overall (see Appendices A-N). Such participant observations were based upon their initial taking of the TPI questionnaire and their understanding of what the perspectives meant when the interviews were conducted (the TPI survey was done first). TPI perspectives were not explained prior to the taking of the questionnaire, so as to not bias any results due to prior judgments based upon teaching perspective titles and definitions. Following the TPI survey, participants either read about the

perspectives on line to clarify what the concepts were or briefly asked questions about them during the interviews.

Social reform tended to have the most questions asked about it as an approach whose emphasis was reforming some aspect of society through your teaching related to values or ideology. This concept was viewed as more directive in design than most study participants explicitly desired as none choose it as a dominant perspective (one participant chose it as a tied highest score). Teacher interview commentary generally emphasized individual students in terms of progress as much as any consideration of collective student results. Due to social reform not being a dominant score among study participants, these K-12 teachers may interpret social reform as an implicit by-product of collective individual success which many might argue is the purpose of schooling. A few connected systemic change of teaching practices as a collective reform of the education system, particularly as it relates to British Columbia.

Some participants did express surprise at the strength they held a certain perspective or not. For example, both Elise and Mandy indicated during the interview that they did not think of themselves as "nurturing" as a dominant perspective on teaching. On the other hand, Kevin was "disappointed" that his nurturing perspective did not score higher, as he felt that was his dominant view in understanding teaching. In explaining his TPI results, he said that, "When I answered those [TPI] questions the way I did, I might have pulled that score down a bit because frankly I think I am a very nurturing teacher. That is probably one of the things that defines me as a teacher is that I really care you know. It's probably true of most teachers." In Mandy's case she felt her social reform perspective should have been her most dominant based upon her perception of where she is currently as a teacher. Mandy affirmed that with her Aboriginal

background she was not surprised that social reform is so high for her, observing that, "I would have thought that it would have come out as the highest one [it was second highest]."

Comments from transmission recessive teachers like Fiona mentioned her struggle with transmission, "I really felt that our role of teachers is changing because I think we are now more sort of coaches for learning. There is no way we can know everything about content anymore because it is changing so rapidly ... the Internet is going to be far more valuable than you could ever be." This perspective was followed by social reform with seven of fourteen participants indicating that this was their recessive teaching perspective. Participants like Corrine stated, " ... teaching French is not about changing society ... to instill beliefs in children ... that is not our job ... that is the parent's job" (subject areas may have an influence on teaching perspectives and be worthy of further study). None of the other perspectives received a recessive score from a participant, indicating apprenticeship, developmental and nurturing perspectives are currently perceived by these teachers as favored ways of understanding grade school teaching.

The large number of recessive scores for transmission amongst this group seems to be a contextual environmental shift in understanding teaching over the past decades or so. Transmission was apparently initially seen as a dominant perspective early on in their careers by some participants. Ready access to information through technology appears to be providing much impetus to this change in perception. This rethinking of key curricular outcomes for education towards a more process or skills based approach emphasizes the how of learning rather than coverage of subject topics as learning. Teachers appear more as coaches, guides or facilitators of learning rather than just purveyors of information in this evolving understanding of teaching.

Interview comments relating to the developmental perspective highlighted teacher perceptions that students should develop abilities to think critically and constructively rather than be just repositories of information. Ivan's remarks as a developmental teacher were quite typical of some teachers in getting students to reason and think. He shared that he tries to get students to try "to make sense of the material rather than me making sense for them." The apprenticeship perspective of highly skilled teaching making learning accessible for a range of learners likewise had interview commentary responding to the importance of such expertise. For example, Lee as an apprenticeship dominant teacher made observations such as, "inquiry is the best way for students to learn as it puts them at the center of their learning" as well as "in order to turn on those light bulbs for other teachers, I have to be forward learning myself."

Social reform was only held by Holly as a highest score (although tied with her apprenticeship and nurturing). It also received strong support from Mandy, Fiona, Jenny and Gwen as well in their respective TPI responses relating to beliefs, intentions or actions (see Appendix P). These five teachers held the highest scores in the social reform TPI category, perhaps due to three of the five having single parent or vulnerable formative experiences or both. Social reform themes were supported by comments like: "I think in the next decade you will see more practitioners linking to researchers because it does have an effect upon policy. The stronger we build that bridge, the better the system will get".

Jenny's social reform comments around actions reinforced her interest in providing students with more opportunities and supports to succeed. "I think it is crucial we start giving them [students] more voice and the ability to actually invoke change or have impact on anything whether it is their learning or something they are passionate about whatever that might be." A comment from Holly was another example of some teachers in this study with strong social

reform minded sympathies: "I want them [students] to remember the role they play in society. How they contribute and give back to their society. How they make a difference. How they become that citizen we can all be proud of."

Views expressed by participants seem to indicate that the importance of social reform may be a more implied than explicit perspective. Many of the teachers talked about improving student skillsets to survive, if not thrive, in later life which could eventually make an indirect collective difference in how society functions. Although improving student skillsets on their own may not lead to social reform as a specific initiative, it is likely a preparatory state or precursor condition to provide the means and awareness to do it at some point. Therefore, it has the potential for students to live more fulfilling lives from that consideration of social justice which was mentioned by several teachers.

For most teachers in this group, although not all, social reform is viewed not so much in the aggregate as an activist teaching agenda. Rather, if collectively transforming society is to be done, it is focused on the individual success of each student or of the effectiveness of each teacher to those ends. These teachers view teaching as bringing hope and potential to society one student at a time. Such teachers are not out there campaigning for a specific social reform cause in their teaching, unless as, in a few cases, it is changing the way teachers collectively teach.

These latter teachers, like Gwen, with an individual recessive score profile for the social reform perspective, still sat at the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile in overall K-12 TPI norms for this perspective (see Appendix Q). Such percentile scores compare her to many other teachers but her dominant and recessive scores only contrast her high scores with her low scores. Her higher support for social reform action statements, with a six point difference between her actions over her beliefs



(see Appendix P), provides evidence, as does her interview, on the importance of professional learning to change the system as she says by "doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do." If improving society is defined as ways to advance teachers' knowledge and skills, or the potential for student successes in life, then social change thinking is a presence in the teaching of some of these teachers. Teachers, like Gwen, coming from vulnerable or impoverished backgrounds do regard providing improved teaching and student support initiatives as opportunities to help society through more student success.

Moreover, a number of teachers revealed in their narratives that, through networks and professional outreach, they advocate with other teachers to systemically change teaching practices to what they regard as better ways to teach. Such teachers, if not the initial innovators, are certainly strong early adopters of what they see as more promising teacher practices and use their influence with other teachers towards those ethically viewed ends.

The following Table 4.2, *TPI Survey Statement Preferences for Beliefs (B), Intentions (I) and Actions (A)*, condenses the teacher participants' TPI survey responses by displaying the highest rated *always* Beliefs, Intentions and Actions (BIA) statements for each perspective. These statements are those beliefs, intentions and actions identified as being strongly held, as *always*, on the TPI Likert scale. The collective frequency of "always", as the respective "hot" button for each teaching perspective statement, identifies a prioritized or preferred response. This clearly discloses the most commonly held BIA sentiments and are reflective of the teaching cultures teachers would like to construct.

There were only five *never* responses (compared to 223 *always* responses) recorded by this group of participants. One *never* was logged for a transmission statement and four noted within social reform for teaching focusing on societal change. Such a relative lack of categorical

rejection signifies a more pragmatic approach about teaching. Teachers evidently have favored approaches to teaching, but not at the expense of considering other perspectives as teaching contexts and experiences to develop teacher understanding.

**Table 4.2 TPI Survey Statement Preferences for Beliefs (B), Intentions (I) and Actions (A)**

Perspective	Dimension	Statement	% Agreement in Group	% of Survey Total of Always Statements
<b>Nurturing</b>  <i>Held as dominant perspective or co-supportive high score by 9/14 teachers</i>	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's important that I acknowledge learners' emotional reactions.</li> </ul>	71%	31%
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach.</li> </ul>	86%	
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I find something to compliment in everyone's work or contribution.</li> </ul>	50%	
<b>Apprenticeship</b>  <i>Held as dominant perspective or co-supportive high score by 6/14 teachers</i>	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be a good teacher, one must be a good practitioner.</li> </ul>	71%	22%
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I want people to understand the realities of working in the real world.</li> </ul>	50%	
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I model the skills and methods of good practice.</li> </ul>	50%	
<b>Developmental</b>  <i>Held as dominant perspective or co-supportive high score by 3/14 teachers</i>	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching should build upon what people already know.</li> </ul>	43%	22%
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My goal is to help people develop more complex ways of reasoning.</li> </ul>	64%	
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I ask a lot of questions while teaching.</li> </ul>	71%	
<b>Social Reform</b>  <i>Held as co-supportive high score by 1/14 teachers</i>	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For me, teaching is a moral act as much as an intellectual activity.</li> </ul>	57%	16%
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My goal is to challenge people to seriously reconsider their values.</li> </ul>	29%	
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I emphasize values more than knowledge in my teaching.</li> </ul>	43%	
<b>Transmission</b>  <i>Held as dominant perspective by 1/14 teachers</i>	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning is enhanced by having predetermined objective.</li> </ul>	57%	9%
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I want people to score well on examinations as a result of my teaching.</li> </ul>	21%	
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I make it very clear to people what they are to learn.</li> </ul>	29%	

The nurturing perspective intention of *I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach* drew the most always responses with 86% of participants selecting it. Nurturing also received the most always BIA statements with 31% of always statements

referring to this perspective. As well, this perspective was ranked as the most favored among this group with nine of 14 teachers having it as their dominant or co-supportive high score. This result illustrates that understanding teaching as both a cognitive and emotional human experience is significantly held by this group.

The Apprenticeship perspective was the second most widely held by participants as a dominant perspective. *To be a good teacher, one must be a good practitioner* was held as always by 71% of survey participants. Through such a strongly held statement, this shows support and respect for the role and modeling of on-the-job expert practice. This was corroborated by the apprenticeship intention statement *I want people to understand the realities of working in the real world* and the apprenticeship action statement *I model the skills and methods of good practice* as significant 50% always responses within this group.

The developmental perspective also had strong support shown for participant intentions and actions in what teachers hoped to accomplish. *To help people develop more complex ways of reasoning* was cited by 64% of participants as an always intention of teaching. The statement *I ask a lot of questions while teaching* had 71% of participants indicating that as a developmental action they always do this. These strongly held statements reveal that teachers intend that teaching and learning involves inquiry and cognitive processes that enhance thinking. This is noteworthy as it establishes thinking or reasoning as an important technical aspect of teaching as well as a strongly held intention about teaching.

In the social reform perspective, 57% of participants always held the social reform belief statement of *for me, teaching is a moral act as much as an intellectual activity*. Always intending to challenge people to reconsider their values was held by 29%. It is evident some K-12 teachers do want to change and enhance collective student lives in social reform mindedness

ways in some fashion. This confirms the influences of constructing teaching as a strong ethical practice about impacting society. However, social reform did receive mixed reviews with 21% of teachers describing the social reform belief statement of "*My teaching focuses on societal change, not the individual learner*" as something they never do. The most controversial statement also came from social reform. The social reform action statement "*I emphasize values more than knowledge in my teaching*" received 43% always responses but 7% as a never response.

Similarly, transmission received a mixed response. One teacher indicated that she never had as a goal *to prepare people for content-related examinations*. Transmission, as a dominant perspective, was only held by one teacher. However, 57% of teachers always agreed with the transmission belief statement that *learning is enhanced by having predetermined objectives*. By this evidence, most teachers in this study believe in objectives guiding their practice whatever their dominant perspective. These teachers appear to believe that their teaching is enhanced by planning to accomplish particular learning outcomes or goals as a purpose of their practice. Having the end in mind of what students should learn as a product of their teaching is clearly important to these teachers. Other transmission statements received low scoring responses.

Since a variety of dominant or recessive teaching perspectives are derived as degrees of preferences for certain beliefs, intentions and actions, Tables 4.1 and 4.2 importantly show that all teacher participants held composite profiles. Beliefs, intentions and actions in non-dominant perspectives were a part of their understanding of teaching as well with few never scores.

Teaching is an amalgam of nuances of beliefs, intentions and actions with the potential to utilize or develop nascent dominant perspectives as the needs and contexts arise in teaching. Such a complex composite of shades and tones of perspectives provides the resources and notions for

further inquiries into what works for each teacher in their teaching. It belies, to some extent, the obdurate reputation for teachers to be unbending and inflexible to change in what they do, especially when combined with an open mind to exploring possibilities.

#### **4.1.2.2 Interviews**

Based upon teacher interview commentary, Table 4.3 Extent of Agreement among Participants Regarding Teaching, encapsulates the final thematic coding of understanding teaching. After sequential analysis, the four final thematic results came to be: process, interdependence, judgment and self-expression. The reasoning behind these themes is represented in this table by synthesized interview commentary represented as significant results.

The importance of process, as gradually becoming more proficient and expert like as a practitioner, was confirmed by having all 14 teachers report in various ways that this is an understanding of teaching that they had. These teachers acknowledged that their perceptions of teaching changed over time or in the case of a new teacher very likely to. These teachers mentioned constantly searching for what works for them within a particular context and point in time. The ebbs and flows of practice accentuate latent or moderate current teaching preferences, and the degree to which certain teaching perspectives are relatively important. This was a common theme pertaining to the influences brought on by their teaching experiences and the various teaching contexts they engaged with over their respective careers. All participants indicated that over time their on-the-job insights about what teaching was and how to go about it informed and constructed their understanding of teaching.

Interdependent understandings were a crucial element in teaching and were also critical to how teachers came to construct an understanding of teaching. Abigail, for example,

**Table 4.3 Extent of Agreement among Participants Regarding Teaching**

Analysis Final Thematic Coding and Findings	% Agreeing (total 14 participants)	Understandings of Teaching Significant Results Based on Interviews Summaries
Process	Full agreement 100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching involves adapting and changing ways to teach to fit the situation</li> <li>• Perceptions of teaching changes over time – teaching is a dynamic process</li> <li>• Importance of an inquiry approach in developing teaching skills and knowledge through reflection and persistence — “I practiced for years to get that right.”</li> </ul>
Interdependence	Full agreement: 100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is more than transmission in “checking off curriculum boxes”</li> <li>• Teaching is more than just technical competence with relationships key to teaching success with students and colleagues</li> <li>• Importance of learning skills and refining knowledge through collaboration with trusted or kindred spirit colleagues and mentors either in professional conversations or watching others teach; learning from highly skilled colleagues in areas of need or jointly pursuing learning by engaging in similar inquiry</li> </ul>
	High Agreement: 71%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning through formal or informal networks</li> <li>• Importance of emotional connections and support from trusted colleagues and mentors; “spiritual, emotional level” - similar bonding as to band of brothers and sisters in working in comparable challenging circumstances</li> <li>• Teachers acknowledged helpfulness of professional reading and investigating specific teaching methodologies through workshops and in-service in getting ideas and gaining awareness of other approaches to teaching</li> </ul>
	Partial Agreement: 57%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural influences of communities teachers grew up in as widening or narrowing expectations, support and opportunities mentioned as a influence on how they teach</li> </ul>
Judgment	Full Agreement: 100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching judgments improve through practice as the teacher becomes immersed in learning from the everyday whirl of doing</li> </ul>
	High Agreement: 86%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formative student assessment is critical to teaching and encouraging students</li> </ul>
	High Agreement 71%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching involves creativity and inventiveness to facilitate engagement in student learning</li> </ul>
Self-Expression	Full Agreement 100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching intentions and actions arise from beliefs — sometimes not explicitly held but shown in the doing</li> </ul>
	Partial Agreement 57%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feelings</i> about how teaching should be done or not done by teachers — “it is the right thing to do”</li> </ul>

emphasized that working collaboratively with other teachers on common interests and challenges was the strongest way she knows to improve practice. Elise stated that she has "mostly been

impacted by what has worked with me in the classroom." What she struggled with was what taught her to be creative and organized. Fiona talked of practicing for years to get it right or close to right. "It is part of the learning process to be able to work away at something until it is right and know how to gets supports around that ..." Gwen concluded that "We are all learners and we are all teachers. That is just the way it is." These experiences affirm the notion of constructing an understanding of teaching as process which will be examined further later.

The relationship building aspect of teaching strongly resonated with the data found in the interviews. Teachers, although acknowledging technical competence as an important part of teaching, also emphasized relationships as key to teaching success. It was a major teacher satisfier along with collegiality. As a matter of example: Gwen responded that "wise teaching comes from really getting to know your students" and "you need to have empathy around who they are as individuals." Holly focused on "the needs of the entire child and all children". Abigail indicated that if you can't connect with students then it is hard to teach them. This sentiment was shared by all the remaining teachers when interviewed. It is a significant aspect of teaching and a strong influence on successful teaching as described by these teachers.

The improving of judgment to enable fluent teaching came out as well as a consistent understanding of teaching. The application of good judgment was essential for successful teaching as articulated by these teachers. Self-expression was often cited by teachers as to why they do what they do in their teaching. Teachers identified with certain beliefs, intentions and actions to create the type of teaching they deemed as purposeful and fulfilling. These themes will be expanded upon in the upcoming Phase II of Chapter 4.

## 4.2 Phase II: How do Teachers' Construct an Understanding of Teaching?

### 4.2.1 Synopsis

How did teachers come to perceive teaching in the way they now do? What do they tell about their journeys and the experiences which foster their current understanding of teaching? By drawing on the interview data, I reflected upon how these teachers came to construct their understanding of teaching. To that end I theorized understanding of teaching as process, interdependence, judgment and self-expression. Interview findings point to these four interactive dimensions of how teachers engage in their professional journeys to construct an understanding of teaching:

- 1) Practices or *processes* in the acts of doing the work itself are key ways to construct understanding. Teachers constructed an understanding of teaching based upon a progression of experiences in consideration of present and further technical needs. Getting more self-confident and technically fluent through on-going practice to meet the complexities of their teaching was instrumental in shaping their teaching.
- 2) *Interdependence* as contexts and relationships for where teachers were situated played a role enabling and sometimes limiting horizons of practice. The openness and awareness of individual teacher minds were shaped by exposure to possibilities of practice created by accessibility to the collective knowledge of near and far collegial experiences. This included managerial considerations and mandates about teaching practice.
- 3) Reflective thinking or *judgments* enhance how teachers come to understand teaching. This metacognitive dimension of judgment increased awareness of possibilities by deliberating upon the means and ends of previous actions, events or



decisions, including ethical implications. This allowed for refinements or changes in practice.

- 4) Self-determinative convictions or *self-expression* that articulate teacher individualities around ideals and agency that drive teacher motivation was the other constructive dimension. Both professional and humanistic concerns were matters corresponding to teaching perspectives of what ought to be done.

#### 4.2.2 Analysis of Interviews

The analysis of how teachers construct an understanding of teaching is highlighted in Table 4.4 *How do Teachers Construct an Understanding of Teaching?* Successive syntheses of initial coding of the interviews lead to the conceptual categories shown in the table which will be elaborated upon further.

**Table 4.4 How do Teachers Construct an Understanding of Teaching?**

Dimensions	Elements
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Expertise</li> <li>• Progression of Theory &amp; Practice</li> </ul>
Interdependence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social capital</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Collegial Collaboration &amp; Networks</li> <li>• Organizational Culture</li> <li>• Power and Control</li> </ul>
Judgment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pragmatic/technical</li> <li>• Ethical</li> <li>• Enabling</li> <li>• Practical Wisdom</li> </ul>
Self-Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beliefs</li> <li>• Intentions</li> <li>• Actions</li> <li>• Identity</li> <li>• Mindset/motivation</li> </ul>

The Dimensions referred to in Table 4.4, constitute the complex phenomenon of teaching sorted and arranged into further subsets of inter active constituents or elements. Such complex arrangements are interconnected and serve as a network of pathways along which the various perspectives of understanding teaching are created. With multiple networked interrelated influential pathways for individual involvements, each teacher has the self-regulative idiosyncratic capacity for change.

Unlike our bias to think linearly in understanding or explaining things after the fact, based upon the power of reflection, our lived experiences exist in a frequent if not constant state of hectic interactions. This often requires improvisational creative interventions as relayed by the participants in this study. Formative experiences often are unanticipated and are therefore not dependent on a single point or location for direction and control of change. Circumstances create intensely personal teaching moments in time as expressions of identity. Understanding teaching is more than the sum of its parts due to its merging innovative nature in setting new directions or ways of thinking.

The complex phenomenon of teaching has undertones of principles of professional freedom and liberation to fully exploit diverse teaching opportunities. An assortment of sources for growth has a democratic nature and a didactic purpose of promoting the spread of beliefs, intentions and actions to assist teachers in their obligations towards others as well as towards themselves. Understanding teaching requires the consent of those learning its means and ends, and a shared consent of polishing and refining of self through collective social interaction.

The consideration of these observations are explored in the remaining commentary describing how teachers come to construct an understanding. Each Dimension of Practice is built through various Elements arising from an analysis of the interviews. After a brief

reintroduction to each Dimension, the Elements of constructing an understanding of teaching are elaborated upon.

### **4.2.3 Teaching as Process**

Teaching as a process refers to gradual increments of ever deeper understanding over time in the ability to organize, integrate, and combine teaching knowledge and skills to meet student needs. Teaching as a progressive process was an integral part of learning the technical aspects of teaching as represented in these teacher interviews. All interviewed teachers reported gaining much knowledge and understanding of teaching by engaging with the results of their teaching. Such experiences helped shape perceptual understandings and gave rise to preferences for, or awareness of, different teaching perspectives.

#### **4.2.3.1 Process as Building Expertise**

Teaching as a process was upheld by these teacher stories. Learning by doing, through trial and error, finding what works for them in their teaching contexts, helped them build both the greater expertise and confidence to read and react to situations. Abigail described it as "trying something, seeing how that went and then refining it and trying it again – that back and forth interaction." Fiona even talked about the work of teachers as not only informing teacher practice but research as well in providing an "impetus ... to having an effect on systemic change." As their sagacity in teaching proficiency and dexterity developed, many of the participants talked about their sense of 'flow' that arose in such contexts. Elise described those moments as "almost like I am unaware of myself" as an intuitive kind of sense like a "jazz thing." Fiona called such a process as being nimble, flexible, adapting and changing and tweaking the lesson to keep it on track. "I have had to redesign my whole instructional intention of what I was going to do with

them ... that's because I am constantly tweaking ... I will even do it in the middle of a lesson ... I am tweaking constantly to try to get it back on track to where I need it to go or, gee, I thought that was the learning intention but obviously that's not going to be it. I might have to begin down here and scaffold to that." Even a teacher as young as Kevin talked about this concept, reminiscing about how his Taekwondo instruction over time began to help him recognize the patterns and flow of various moves to predict what will likely happen next and react to it seamlessly:

I spent hours and hours holding targets, holding bags, watching people do the most basic elements of martial arts over and over again. You notice so many little things. You do that for so long that the next time you go into a competition and you are sparring with somebody and you recognize the smallest shift of weight, the smallest movement in their body, gives away everything that they are about to do. You see that because you have seen that in hundreds of students in hundreds of hours of training. It's the same in other subject areas too.

#### **4.2.3.2 Process as Progression**

In teaching as process, all participants mentioned their open and willing mindset towards change or risk taking in order to meet teaching challenges as being an influence in improving their opportunities and general enlightenment about teaching. Corrine appeared the most resistant to initially changing her practice but, over time, she said that she acknowledged the need to change her teaching approach after reflecting on her practice and working on her Master's degree. This inclination and disposition to a progression of thoughtful amendment,

adjustment or transformation of one's ways of being and understanding of teaching seems to be a prerequisite for growth in confidence and in gaining expertise in teaching.

These transitions in teaching were emphasized by the concept of "journeying" coming up a great deal in the teacher interview narratives. Donna, Beatrice, Holly, Mandy and Nolan used this word in explaining their understanding of teaching. Others, such as Abigail, used terms like "life long drive" to describe her growth and persistence in becoming a better informed and accomplished teacher. Elise defined this search for improving her understanding of teaching as "looking for the way." Fiona, Gwen and Holly spoke of this pursuit for greater success in terms of "a movement." This drive to change was portrayed by these three teachers (all with provincial or district teacher experience) to be as much of a concerted big picture development as an individual portrait or path. Words like "flipping" or "tipping" and "the right thing to do" or "fighting for" were used for changing the education system. None of the participants talked about this change in mechanistic or linear connotations, but rather identified a gradual reflexive growth process or recognition of such over time.

Of all interviewed teachers, 11 out of 14 thought of their teaching transitions as "evolutionary" in nature. The remaining three indicated such changes were likely dawning upon them in a similar fashion but were noticed in moments of time rather than gradually. For instance, Ivan, as one of the minority of three in this group, talked of these perceptions of transition in his teaching as "setting a fire" or like a "spark" that ignited the latent fuel that was there. He also used the term "crystallization of things" that makes it possible for one's practice to take shape. Nolan spoke of these times as feelings in his brain that something had moved prior to subsequent shifts in his practice. "I feel that in a lot of my shifts I've known before I have shifted. It has taken me a year or two to feel it out and try some things and talk to people

about other resources before I am able to shift the practice to feel more proficient or comfortable with it." Kevin articulated his transitions as remembering the moments when you notice something has changed. He elaborated that he doesn't know if this means it happened suddenly, or whether it was just the first time he noticed this change:

Honestly, I have no idea but I can always remember when you notice that something has changed. I don't know if that means it happens suddenly or if that is the first time I noticed but I remember those moments...in martial arts...on practicums when I was first learning how to teach music. Sometimes it can be really, really sudden...all of a sudden [clicks fingers] I realized wow I can do that [laughs]. Who knew?

The transitions appeared to have a theme amongst these participants from a subject or content based initial approach, often perceived as a transmission perspective, towards a more student centered needs practice. This pattern was supported by the most popular intention in the TPI survey being the nurturing comment, "I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach" with virtually all 12 of 14 indicating they *always* do that.

Another theme that arose in process as a progression of teacher understanding was providing students with the skills and tools to learn rather than just covering prescribed content. This was particularly important for those scoring high in nurturing in order to build up all round student competencies without sacrificing encouraging relationship considerations. Abigail highlighted this by saying the system needed to shift from grade content and rote learning to an emphasis on strategies and processes of learning. This was a prevalent theme among study participants, likely echoing a popular refrain in the educational reform debate. Beatrice talked of a limited focus on academics to the exclusion of the 'spiritual and emotional' side. Over her career Corrine noticed this shift to be more inclined to student than subject focused. She talked

about the lives of students influencing what matters (and this sensitivity from a transmission dominant teacher). "I think I did change over 32 years to be more accepting ... When you teach, you encounter situations that change your perceptions."

Elise described her teacher centered to student centered teaching enlightenment passage as "connection, clarity and formative assessment" culminating in a "sense of knowing where the kids are at and where you want to go. Just going beyond where you think they can go. Constantly getting feedback and keeping them moving, moving, moving." Gwen talked about the importance of emotional trust in order for students to engage. Jenny similarly mentioned the struggle to "fight to retain your humanity" in what she described as the education mass production system. Mandy, at some narrative length, said there was a need to look at learning more holistically. Education in her view is too tipped to cognitive and academic objectives rather than a balance with spiritual, cultural and the emotional side of ourselves. This imbalance, in part, she poignantly explained, is likely one of the reasons why Aboriginal students struggle so much within schools.

All participants commented that their teaching perspectives have likely changed over the years (Kevin thought his profile would change but he had only been teaching for two weeks as a music teacher). This was a universal theme pertaining to the influences brought on by their teaching experiences and the various teaching contexts they engaged with over their respective careers. All participants indicated that over time their progression of on the job insights about what teaching was, and how to go about it, informed and constructed their understanding of teaching in both its practical and ethical dimensions. This affirms the notion of teaching as process.

For instance, Abigail commented that "a lot of what I learned was through experience" and "I have always been building on my knowledge and trying to find out more." She went on to say, "It is not just reading a book and knowing about it. It's applying it, trying it, retrying." Beatrice confirmed this method of understanding teaching by stating, "Every day I go away, sort of evaluating and analyzing, thinking what can I do differently next round? I think I have evolved quite a bit." Corrine remarked, "Kids got initially a different experience than what they would have later on. I think you have to be willing to be always learning as a teacher . . . if that doesn't work . . . try something different. Oh, this worked great. I will use it next year and adapt it a bit. It is an evolving thing." Elise summarized her teaching intentions as similar to an elastic image of engaging and stretching as far as she can go each time, every time, as she gradually improves like exercise.

Donna captured her implementation dip like experience this way, "... in the beginning you are failing more ... but you are actually learning and the learning curve is huge." Fiona talked about the constant being change: "We are always changing and growing [our practice]." She continued that she is "always struggling to be more effective" by thinking "what could I have done differently? ... It is like a puzzle. I just keep persevering until if figure it out." Holly stated she is a very different teacher today than when she was younger as she reflected that her teaching "has gone deeper" and is less concerned with "course content and summative driven assessment."

Ivan talked about his teaching as process journey as gains in competence and mastery from a "focus on the course content itself" to the "processes of learning." His understanding of how learning happens he explained has been a "big shift." Kevin talked about teaching as process as "persisting on things and working on it until they become so natural that you can see a



few movements and you can predict what will happen ... that is what happens to classrooms ... with teachers who are very accomplished."

Mandy struck an important point in highlighting her dissatisfaction with her lack of success in struggling to teach reading. This caused her to search out other ways to teach reading until a method made sense to her and brought better results. This process transitioned to other subject areas or as Mandy explained "grew into creative thinking, innovative thinking and global citizenship." Nolan summarized his teaching as learning process as taking a "year or two to feel it out and try some things and talk to people about other resources before I am able to shift the practice to feel more proficient or comfortable in it."

The stories told by the teachers I interviewed confirm that they are constructing their understanding of teacher over time by their ongoing learning as they go about being engaged in what they are doing. It appears to be both a systemic process, part of the teaching culture by their belief in continuous learning, and an individual effort with specific participant intentions to get better and take actions appropriate to what they are currently facing. This experiential dimension of teaching as a process to develop technical expertise and greater awareness of the strategic implications of teaching is a fundamental part of coming to construct an understanding of teaching over time. It is accomplished by the doing and the reflection upon such experiences both individually and collectively with others. Teacher interviews related that they improve through their practice. What was working in the mind of the teacher mediated their practice. Fiona summarized this sense of professional progression, after 34 years of teaching, as feeling "more renewed and excited about learning and the profession than I ever have."

#### **4.2.4 Teaching as Interdependence**

By the nature of their work, teachers teach within the context of school organizations and societal attitudes and expectations about teaching. Teaching settings did shape understandings and such understandings shaped experiences. Teachers learned from whom they were with or associated with. The extent of what teachers can accomplish through such interactions and interdependent influences is an important consideration in constructing a teacher's understanding of teaching.

The connection between teaching practice in what teachers know and do to meet student learning needs is as much an interdependent cultural construction as it is learning specific technical applications of various instructional methodologies over time. In light of this study, the most prevalent specific influence of how teachers individually constructed their understanding of teaching is associated with the professional communal environments near and far that teachers created or found themselves in. Those teachers interviewed recognized that subsequent critical reflections had the potential to shift their individual teaching beliefs and intentions with appropriate adaptations over time. This is due to the influence of social and organizational contexts in supporting or challenging their teaching actions. However, preliminary insights about teaching and developing personal values, as shared by these participants, were often initiated during their formative years prior to the start of a career of in teaching. Let's look at the findings that underpin these observations.

##### **4.2.4.1 Interdependence as Social Capital**

The participants in this study reported (see Appendices A-N) various personal experiences arising from seminal background social involvements which shaped their approach to or interest in teaching. Family or home life, community contexts, their own K-12 schooling

and practicum experiences were mentioned by various participants. Ten of 14 participants indicated some aspect of home life experiences or expectations that fashioned why or how they go about teaching. Most of these experiences were positive and supportive but some were of situations they had to overcome to get to where they are. Five of 14 teachers mentioned single parent households or challenging family circumstances to overcome. Other teachers, including these five, also spoke of formative role models in their homes or in their communities that helped shape their beliefs and commitments to relationships and working with people. These developmental experiences did provide a basis for later intentions and actions in their lives.

For instance, Gwen confided that she was raised in poor socioeconomic circumstances with the stigma, low expectations and relational trust issues that went along with that. She acknowledged that she always "had to be very strong inside myself to be able to let these people in [later teaching colleagues] because I have always been afraid of being judged. I have been judged all my life." Due to that experiential context she still sometimes feels vulnerable to this day. It also gave Gwen the impetus and drive "to do something to get out of here" as a childhood friend related to her.

Elise divulged that her upbringing in a fervently religious home strongly influenced her aversion to orthodoxy of all types which she perceives as propaganda. As a result, she has a "hard time with the approach of I will tell you what you should value because I'm right and you're not because I am more enlightened." She elaborated that teachers are "not going to change because you told them to. Change does not come from the outside in." Elise concluded that the exhortations by others to change your practice are "like religion": "We are part of the in group and you are not. We're the enlightened ones and you are still in the dark." These past experiences in her family, she pointed out, created a strong skepticism about touted external

educational fixes to complex contextual teaching challenges or to imposed change. Her strong apprenticeship profile speaks to her robust belief as teacher as practitioner that the learning comes from the setting and circumstances you are in. Elise believes that the necessity for change exists in the mind of the individual. Change processes for Elise are more successful being driven from the inside out. This conception began due to her home life experience.

Many of the interviewed teachers mentioned the expectations of their mother in particular as a key experience. Abigail mentioned her parental expectations to continue education and the role modeling of her single parent mother in getting her degree while raising a family as being highly influential. Beatrice cited her mother as a major reader, classical scholar and her interest in politics and the state of the world as being influential in inspiring Beatrice's educational path. Her mother - daughter sharing times gave Beatrice the insight to see the "beauty of the world" "from a stained glass window to a glowing sunset" and impressed upon her daughter her role in contributing to it. Donna related her single mother's example in believing that her daughter should get an education as a strong family value. Somehow her mom managed to support her financially to fulfill such desires. This role modelling strongly influenced Donna's drive and commitment to complete her education and eventually obtain a Master's degree. Jenny indicated her mother was one of the greatest influences in her life. Her single mother's philosophy of identifying your objective and constantly reflecting and assessing as you move towards your objective was particularly influential. Jenny recalled her mother's words of "the only question at the end of the day is how close are you to where you want to be" as becoming Jenny's maxim. Kevin reported that his single mother home schooled him until his secondary years. Her high standards and mentorship influence him to this day.

In contradistinction, Corrine reported that her parents thought criticism would help her change as a child. She still recalls a memory, after many years, of a report card with very good marks except for one "B". Her parents fixated on that singular grade and did not acknowledge the overall performance. Initially she taught like that too due to this home life experience but, through the course of her teaching experience, she realized that "the point of school is to nurture."

Due to these formative contextual and background experiences, some of the interviewed teachers viewed teaching as a means to improve their own circumstance and those of others. Gwen summarized her experience in her drive and perseverance to escape her old environment to get something better as, "Nothing was ever handed to me. So, it was exciting, nerve wracking, feeling all alone, yup, but I made it." Mandy, as an Aboriginal who lived in marginalized circumstances with a single parent, wants to be a major player in system reform and change. "I like change and I know that the system we have now is not best serving our kids." For these teachers, particularly women raised in poor families, teaching is a mobility opportunity from marginalized or vulnerable circumstances. It operates as a conduit to providing opportunity and support for others raised in similar situations. Mandy encapsulated this aspect in the way she narrated her experience:

... now that I reflect back having my single mom taken away from her family at the age of five and in Residential School for fifteen years, battling later with alcoholism early on, I wonder sometimes how the heck I made it?...My process of self-discovery as to whom I am...certainly shaped me as a teacher and it certainly facilitated the direction I have taken in my career too.

So experiences that may be best described as early formative happenings and identifications set the stage for many of the values, ideals and perceptions of how to approach teaching.

Community support and neighborhood contexts also emerged as associated with how teachers understood their teaching. Eight of the participants mentioned such experiences. Living amongst multicultural enrichment, fascinating neighbors or religious upbringings were mentioned as influential in how they approach or think about teaching. Abigail indicated her church family and relatives were supportive and encouraging after her family split apart. That sense of caring has influenced Abigail to this day as one of her guiding principles in life and certainly supports her strong nurturing profile:

We had many difficult times in our family and I think the outside influence of being part of a church, like a church family, [indicated] there were many people who showed interest through that. I think that extra encouragement continues to help you to achieve and not give up.

Still along the same vein, Beatrice claimed her multicultural neighborhood where she grew up opened up her mind to diversity and respect for differences. Beatrice recalls “I had been eating Kraft dinner and drinking Tang and all of a sudden ...I am eating Greek olives and Feta cheese, pistachio nuts and she [my neighbor] is making squid spaghetti sauce.” She also recalls a journalist neighbor sharing his work with her and a librarian aunt who took her during summer vacations as influential experiences. On a broader scale, Beatrice talked about the context of the times (1960's and 1970's) she grew up in as informing how she sees the world and experiences it. She observed that, "Canadian values and systems have probably influenced me and that belief in social justice safety nets."

The importance of community experiences and solidarity is well captured by Holly, who remembers her home life where politics, current events and world affairs were always part of dinner conversations as being influential as to her values in life. Jenny echoed similar comments in talking about her acceptance and respect for diversity due to her early life of living in "very alternate areas" with "very alternative or eccentric groups of people "who "change[d] her whole idea of what it means to be educated and capable."

Schooling experiences — both positive and negative — followed family backgrounds and community contexts with eight out of 14 interviewees highlighting them as relevant for their understanding of teaching. Some found positive role modeling, others not so positive relationships with grade school teachers, while at least one faced racism and two of them a sense of humiliation while in school. In particular, Gwen, Mandy and Kevin emphasized in their interviews the impacts of their own childhood and youth experiences in school as being an influence in who they became as a person and as a teacher. Gwen and Kevin mentioned being particularly motivated to become teachers, almost as a "mission" or "calling," to remediate the negative experiences they had experienced or observed while in school.

In terms of painful experiences, Gwen recalled teachers not believing in her and her poverty stricken friends. She felt labeled and watched from an early age in a derogatory and humiliating sense. In her narrative, Gwen talked about her drive, vision and purpose as arising "from where I grew up." She remembered the labeling and "always being looked down upon" by teachers and other students. "In getting through high school there were teachers that did not believe in us" because of where she came from. This poor reputation and the lack of acceptance in her youth, particularly by authority figures, made her feel that: "We always felt we were fighting our way through a system. Could you please believe in me? Could you give me the time

of day?" This drove her to "never, ever, let kids feel they are worthless". She concluded, "We knew it wasn't right but we always felt we never had a voice."

On his part, Kevin recalled watching his best friend "slip through the cracks." "No one ever really taught him what he was looking for which wasn't how to do math or do English." The eventual tragic circumstances surrounding Kevin's high school friend motivated him to become a teacher in order to help students like his friend:

... probably the single largest motivator for me as a teacher is all the years I have spent watching people who fall through the cracks. All the years I was in high school ... in the mid to late 90's lots of kids fell through the cracks there. People seemed not to notice or to not care. I will never forget seeing that because it's horrible ... this was the main reason I got into teaching.

Painful experiences included exposure to racism, as Mandy shared. She pointed to her experience as an Aboriginal person in school as "racism, that stigmatizing piece." She felt the expectations of her "as an Aboriginal person [was] probably lower than those of my non-Aboriginal counterparts." Those experiences shaped her as a teacher and facilitated the direction of her career. Her experiences right through high school and even into university related to her ancestry "had a huge impact."

Experiences of being supported and valued in school offer quite a different entry point into this discussion. For instance, Abigail recalled teachers who showed special interest in their understanding of her family problems. Those examples of encouraging teachers going the extra step to support and positively impact her were influential in how she relates to her students. Beatrice recalled inspiring, dynamic teachers and demeaning and negative ones. Strong emotions to this day come over her when she remembers. Such memories guide her proactively



in her practice due to those experiences. Schooling experiences, at least for some participants, were instrumental in forming views of teaching enough to motivate and influence their later teaching choices and actions.

With the exception of Kevin, a beginning teacher just out of his practicum training, few of the teachers who participated in this study mentioned their initial teacher training as being of any particular positive significance. Yet, even Kevin remarked that the time in class practicing his teaching was far more valuable than the time in a university classroom learning the theory. Those that did venture an overall opinion of their university teacher training, such as Fiona, specified it did not prepare them well. Beatrice, as a TPI dominant nurturing teacher, discerning her training from hindsight, described it as not focusing on what she eventually regarded as what teaching is really about.

Other teacher participants, such as Ivan, Holly, Kevin, Lee and Mandy, indicated that their teacher training emphasized a transmission model of understanding teaching. Mandy related, "I know that when I first started [teaching] and through my teacher education training the large focus was placed on curriculum [coverage] ... it was more about just training ... and here's the B.C. curriculum and get through it for this grade level. That's how I was drilled coming out of teachers' training whereas [due to her teaching experience since that time] I do not feel that way anymore." Teachers such as Mandy and others came into the teaching profession with an interpretation of teaching as transmission due to that preparation emphasis. Teacher education institutions do impact some teacher perceptions of teaching — at least initially.

These participant shared background experiences indicate that such prior knowledge and understandings as social capital do play a role in these teachers' initial perceptions of teaching. In particular, teacher perceptions of morals and values impacting life and subsequently teaching

as ethical action and supportive relationships are apparent. The importance of such prior knowledge is illuminatingly described in Aristotelian terms in detailing the conceptual nuances of education. The prior knowledge and social capital that teachers bring to their training and careers are largely intelligible as informing *sophia*. *Sophia* is the theoretical thinking or judgments that underpin *praxis*. *Praxis* describes reflecting upon the worthy ends of practice. This is in contrast to *poiesis* which elevates product or productivity goals as the key focus and *techne* which emphasizes the technical or craft like skills or methods of teaching.

Although distant to the actual practical intricacies of teaching due to a lack of professional experience as a prospective teacher, these teacher formative identities and ideals set the stage to impact their later teaching. These can be seen as personal, if not private, pieces of the puzzle in setting theoretical constructions of an understanding of teaching. Teacher opportunities to act upon such beliefs and intentions become a matter of personal integrity and professional satisfaction within the next working stage of their careers. The practice of teaching later refines, amends, revises or substantiates such *sophia*.

#### **4.2.4.2 Interdependence as Networks of Collegial Professional Collaboration**

Like a human pebble dropped into a collegial pond, ripples of cooperative professional interaction between teachers near and far were documented in the teacher interviews. Collaboration with fellow colleagues was mentioned by every teacher in some fashion as an influence based upon teaching as interdependence. All the teachers revealed working with colleagues close by as teaching partners, or with small groups of teachers within a school forming comfortable learning communities. Some moved beyond immediate surroundings to connect through networks with teachers in other schools and districts or, for a few, venturing even further to national or international contacts.

Fiona, for example, spoke of developing "some very strong professional relationships with colleagues...to really create a lot of momentum with learning because of that." Gwen talks about working with a teaching colleague and the mutually positive and synergizing influences that they had upon each other. She praised this interdependence as a "partnership" that is "unbeatable." Nolan talks of his collaborative experiences with a colleague as being "really powerful." "We had a teaching relationship where we could give each other feedback and know that it is not going to be taken in the wrong way." Beatrice shared that, in raising the bar and encouraging risk taking in her practice, those colleagues around her make a difference. This kept her "on track of wanting to think about doing it [teaching] better and making it more interesting and more successful for kids ... I think it would have been hard for me to do my thing if I had been all alone."

Such professional learning was cited as supportive, especially when working with kindred minded colleagues at the job site. Working alongside reassuring colleagues in collaborative learning situations was highly influential to their practice. Abigail reported this as her "strongest way to improve practice." Beatrice talked about how motivational it was to talk about how to refine and polish practice with kindred spirits. Corrine watched other teachers in her spares if she thought she could learn from them. Donna mentioned the role modeling of more experienced teachers trying things out as setting an example for her. "If they [more senior colleagues] are willing to do it, then why couldn't I try new ideas or implement new programs? So that has been influential in seeing other people try things that don't work or they do." Ivan echoed this thinking by saying, "I thought I could take risks because other teachers were doing it."

Elise cited learning from those who know what they are doing. "If you can't tell me how to do it [teaching in her context] ... with the constraints I've got or you haven't done it, I really don't have much time for it." In Elise's words she is "hyper vigilant of context" and is "very context driven." She indicates that certain outside well-meaning people telling her what is better is contrived. Telling her how to think is dogma according to Elise, an interpretation of what works she describes as "hermeneutics." Having things imposed on her does not feel right. For Elise, she prefers the growth set of working together with "people who are able to understand the practical and the philosophical together." "Putting the philosophy and the practice together" in collaboratively working with others is how she prefers to teach. "So it is really fabulous to be working with a partner right now — like I can't even explain to you how important that is — that believes in that growth set and in the true working together of people who are able to understand the practical and the philosophy together. It is very empowering."

Conversely, Elise mentioned that teacher complainers sapped her energy. Her comments point out that, although collaborative learning may be a rewarding and productive process for many teachers, it works better within certain parameters bounded by trust and positive relationships. Donna confirmed this facet of teaching by expressing her vexation with teachers not willing to change their ways despite poor student achievement. Gwen aligned with this view by stating she found the "can't be done" attitude a real hindrance to teaching progress. In other words, as often as not, collaboration is unlikely to be successful in practice unless due consideration is given to shared attitudes, beliefs and values that impact interpersonal relations. Social cultures influence whether cooperation and partnerships happen as much as any technical matters.

Advocating collaboration as the panacea for all the ills or challenges in teaching is unlikely to be successful without consideration of the particular contexts of teachers. Actions need to be aligned to beliefs and intentions and likely allied to teachers holding comparable perspectives. Such parameters likely encompass similar interpretations of the ethical ends if not the technical aspects of teaching. Ivan alluded to this similar mindset as well by stating, "He [teacher colleague] was a good guy that I could talk with and we had lots of things in common in terms of philosophies and approaches to education with assessment and things like that ... when you are with people like that you feel you are on the right track." Teachers need to share similar insights and beliefs about teaching or a need for further inquiry to partake in collaborative practice to connect the ends and means of teaching.

Fiona, meanwhile, indicated that for her the job embedded collaborative learning that went on broke down teacher isolation and encouraged professional momentum. "Having that collaborative and collegial conversation, those things, with people and colleagues makes it very supportive in helping you grow." Gwen pointed out her apprenticeship dominant profile says it all to her. Holly mentioned such collaboration as one of her core values. "It didn't surprise me when my number one core value [derived from exercise with life coach] was providing mentorship." Ivan mentioned supportive collegial feedback made him want to keep on going and created the teacher that he is. Jenny talked about learning from others with different strengths. Lee highlighted his shift in thinking from his original understanding of teaching by working alongside teachers who taught in other ways than he initially did, when he worked in Singapore in a school grounded in inquiry design. Mandy revealed her renaissance in teaching reading by learning from other colleagues. Nolan extolled the virtues of working alongside a teaching partner and of his enlightening online conversations about teaching in his blogging with other

educators. It is readily apparent that the interdependence of teachers with fellow colleagues to collaboratively work on the processes of teaching is a powerful influence on constructing understandings of teaching.

In moving from the immediate teaching location, 10 out of 14 teachers among the interviewees in this study mentioned how important and influential teacher networks were for them as a form of collaboration and a forum for learning. Fiona realized that networks "could have a huge impact on things that I was learning and was moving forward and that which was moving the students' learning forward." Holly mentioned the importance of networks in her career as well. "I think one of the things, when I think [of] what has an impact upon me, goes back maybe then ten years, has been my involvement in the *Network of Performance Based Schools*." She admires the impact this network has had on B.C.'s education system. Meanwhile, Nolan created his own blogging network to dialog about understanding teaching. The remaining plurality of teachers participated in available provincial learning networks: *Healthy Schools*, Aboriginal Education and most notably the *Network of Innovation and Inquiry* (formerly Network of Performance Based Schools). Several participants, Fiona, Gwen and Holly, indicated that these networks were instrumental to enable them to continue their professional growth. In the cases of Fiona and Gwen, this has also connected them to international acquaintances and contacts.

In addition to colleagues and teacher networks, mentors were mentioned by all participants, except Abigail, as an important influence in their teaching. Mentors are informal or formal teacher coaches due to their greater perceived contextual wisdom and skills. In Elise's case this apprenticeship-like arrangement was more formalized in her first year of teaching with a consultant working in her classroom. Most participants, however, gravitated to those educators

who had something to share that the participant felt would be useful to them in increasing their teaching skills. In some cases, these contacts were well known teachers or academics in the province, or even internationally. Many of the participants in my study did cite these "gurus" as being helpful in their understanding of teaching. Significantly, 11 of 14 participants had apprenticeship as their dominant or back-up score as a teaching perspective. Holly mentioned her mentorship values brought her into teaching. Interdependence, attributed to such pragmatic collegial guidance, was influential in constructing understandings of teaching.

#### **4.2.4.3 Interdependence as Human Relationships**

In Beatrice's summarized narrative (see Appendix B), echoed in other participant stories as well, teaching is fundamentally a human and relational enterprise. Beatrice conveyed that some of her more profound experiences in teaching were "on a spiritual and emotional level." Jenny described this facet of teaching as "having to fight to retain your humanity in a mass production system." Abigail included in her definition of teaching as "having a very positive, healthy emotional connection with kids." Even Corrine, who favors a transmission perspective in teaching, articulated that "the point of school is to nurture them [students]." Gwen talked about the important piece of teaching as seeing how your students are "transformed as human beings." Mandy shared that the "spiritual, cultural and emotional side" of learning needs to be a stronger presence in education. In working with colleagues, Fiona extolled the virtues of the personal relationships that come from developing professionally in supporting further growth.

Teaching for these teachers was not just about technique and curriculum, however important. What came from the heart of these teachers as much as their heads determined how interactions went in facing the diversity of student needs, predilections and backgrounds that came through classroom doors. Engaged learning is as much an emotional activity as it is

intellectual, and so teaching must reflect such feelings in the dance of empathetic and trusting relationships. Exploring and accommodating the human elements in teaching, as much as learning teaching techniques, is an important part of constructing an understanding of teaching. As Abigail recaps, "Some teachers ... are so intent on the teaching part that they don't realize that there are a lot of emotional components involved."

Interdependence as human relationships appears as a co-requisite in promoting teaching mastery and effectiveness. Teachers learning from fellow teachers and associated colleagues was the mainstay of how these interviewed teachers constructed their practical and theoretical understanding of teaching. The beguiling logic or deduction is that collaborative practices should therefore be more widespread. Based upon my data, those teachers who learn best from each other shared an emotional bond as well as beliefs and intentions around their teaching to enable trust. Such "kindred spirits" are needed to set the contextual conditions for support and opportunities for such potential growth to take place. Without similar beliefs and intentions it is difficult to work with others. On the other hand, Beatrice pointed out that such collaborative groups can become exclusive "secret societies" where some teachers feel uncomfortably left out. "I think it is that they are just so high with their connections with each other that I am not in the thick of it as they are ... it is not very encouraging."

#### **4.2.4.4 Interdependence as Organizational Culture**

Beatrice spoke of the "whole way the system is designed has channeled my way of teaching." Here she is likely getting at the implicit ways she is influenced by how schooling is organized and expectations set as being a factor in what she does each day. Beatrice further submits that the broader context of her life growing up in the Canadian culture with its "values and systems have probably influenced me and that belief in social justice safety nets." Ivan



emphasized his more immediate teaching context as being influential in understanding what he should do. "I find that because of the clientele [needs] certain things become important things for me when I am working with students ... the environment has influenced some of my choices." Similarly in talking about emphases in teaching perspectives, Elise said different teaching settings are like "gigantic laboratories" that "shift perspective in order to work in a way that contributes to the community and the kids."

Lee reported a conference experience he has never forgotten on this point. One conference goer was complaining about reinventing the wheel each year with students, to which another responded that if you were not reinventing the wheel you were not attending to the needs of the new students in your class. The teacher elaborated that every year you have a different group with somewhat different needs and what works one year may not work the next. Lee felt that was poignant and true. Teachers apply, search and adjust their practice to what they find works in satisfying the agentic needs of students in different instructional settings and organizational cultures.

#### **4.2.4.5 Interdependence as Power and Control**

Unlike some researchers, who point out that teachers are ignoring the "most essential and well known practices," teachers in this study emphasized their continual striving to create optimal learning for students based upon their current knowledge, wisdom and skills. Hindering interdependent environments tended to be described as apathetic or antagonistic colleagues or more commonly system failures of one sort or another, particularly around a lack of resources and adversarial district or provincial relationships. Corrine described her uneasiness with meshing with system requirements this way: "It was not to teach them [French 12 students] to communicate with someone on the street which would make a lot of sense. It was to get through

the exam with a good mark so that you might get a good scholarship and the Fraser rankings would not put us on the bottom." Fiona described her conundrum this way:

I have always been principle driven about the right thing to do... There are definitely barriers in the system about that. You know what the right is thing to do. You take a test because that is mandated but it is not the right thing to do and we are still made to do it... That kind of thing. When we used to fail kids it was wasn't the right thing to do, but we were being told by an administrator I have to do that even though I thought it is not the right thing to do. Those kinds of things always make you feel strapped I think as an educator.

Fiona's compliance to provincial mandates and district politics continued as a professional issue for her. "I was an educator believing that practice was governed by research ... and that's what we should be going with ... I was told basically that was a bunch of bunk." So she eventually left that position to go to another assignment. "It sort of freed the ropes ... I had always felt in the district like I was caged almost because I just couldn't do the things that I really wanted to do and really delve deeply into the work and influence and support other teachers."

Abigail, on the other hand, described her district concerns as "a lot of top down things going on in a sort of managerial way rather than an educational leadership way." She elaborated that in the provincial "political situation there is often a dark cloud around education that sounds like everything is a problem. It makes it sound like teachers are not doing a good job but I think if we built upon what is going well that we could move further along." Donna concurs with this by stating that "the politics in this province is not lending itself to make us feel good." On the

other hand, Holly mentioned her teacher union's negative power and control influence over her free expression of her views as intimidating and "not a smart thing to do as it jeopardizes relationships within a school." "One of my greatest negative influences [is] having to work within such a unionized environment where there just seems to be such a strong negative presence."

Meanwhile Donna decries the lack of power teachers have in procuring adequate resources as a "huge hindrance" resulting in "half a job of it." Gwen reported the same problem too when she once requested new texts. The response she was given, "Oh, well, we don't have the money for anything so it can't be done," prompted her to go out and buy the resources herself to facilitate her teaching. In addition to limited resources, poor systemic assessment practices that teachers have little control over was named by Fiona, Ivan, Mandy, Jenny and Nolan as hindering influences on their teaching. As Nolan states, "It takes a while to say okay that just because everyone else is doing it this way does not make it the right way to do things." Another systemic practice with little teacher control that Corrine talked about was class composition. She indicated that the mainstreaming of special needs students into large classrooms without adequate supports obligated teachers to work in highly demanding and inadequately resourced conditions. This sense of powerlessness by implication was very frustrating for teachers.

Some teachers in this study tactfully dealt with this lack of power by being as autonomous as possible in the classroom in pursuing teaching initiatives. Corrine reported, "I never felt interference from the principal or from anybody else to how I would teach or what I would do. I think generally speaking if you were doing a satisfactory job and weren't sending too many kids to the office and the parents were not complaining it was good (laughs)." Other teachers like Donna, Elise, Fiona, Gwen, Holly, Jenny, Lee, Mandy and Nolan changed their

ways of being and doing, despite what they regarded as authority driven perceptions of appropriate or commonly accepted practices. Initially conforming as beginning teachers to systemic and cultural expectations, they came to regard certain habitual educational practices as not as beneficial as they originally conceived, so they changed their teaching methods or beliefs.

These tactics attracted and were strengthened by collaboration with other like-minded teachers as innovations of practice. In at least one case, Jenny persuaded her principal to provide the resources for a program she devised as an alternative way of teaching students. Her success eventually awarded her a district position, as it did for Mandy, or, in the cases of Fiona, Gwen and Holly, provincial and international recognition for their teaching expertise and ideas. The informal leadership arising from being assertively creative, demonstrating engagement and affiliating with other colleagues in overcoming teaching challenges apparently is valued and recognized by some authorities or professional networks.

Holly described her experiential transformation in these words: "I don't think you can do that [holistic needs of student] when you are so course content and summative assessment driven." Mandy shared her insights this way: "As I have grown over the past 12 years within the education system, I have chosen to decide for myself the importance of that [curriculum] ... I don't feel as a teacher I am defined anymore by curriculum attainment or concepts that are structured in our B.C. system." Mandy later remarked, "We are social beings and, if we are collaborating, we are finding alliances and commonalities with our colleagues around what we are reflecting on [in] our practice; then we are more likely to have the support to move forward." Nolan, as another example, talked about the teaching shifts he has made in his practice by asserting that the system "you work in ... supports things you know may not be the best for teaching." After due reflection and increasing confidence, owing to the growing wisdom of

practice and positive feedback and support, Nolan indicated this professional growth required the teacher "to be willing to put it all out there warts and all and own it." He described this transformational alertness as going from "the teacher who learns something when they go to PD" to "the guy that learns something every single day." Some teachers become resilient and innovative in challenging systemic teaching customs and conventions and eventually show resistance to power and control by abstaining from, co-opting or individually altering what they regard as poor practice.

Teacher isolation came out as a significant poor systemic organizational practice as well. By the way the work day was organized with teachers posted to singular classrooms or other spaces to work with students, little professional contact or collaboration was possible during the work day. Fiona called teaching "such an isolated kind of act." Abigail commented that this lack of partnerships and support impacted teacher wellness. "Teachers are very isolated by the very nature of teaching. When I did some focus groups, I found that many teachers think they are the only ones struggling and they don't realize that other people have the same challenges." Abigail added that this lack of sharing and encouragement can make teachers feel "very alone and, if you don't have someone to feed off, it is hard for your own ideas to keep growing and developing as you need a bit of feedback." Many teachers endeavored to overcome this weakness by finding time above and beyond the work day to collaborate with peers or in after-hours professional networks. Beatrice, who made the effort to join such collaborative groups, indicated "I think it would have been very hard for me to do my thing if I had been all alone".

#### **4.2.5 Teaching as Judgment**

Teaching as judgment was revealed in the interviews as critical in becoming more proficient at teaching and developing a deeper understanding of its complexity. Teaching

judgments over time involved a spectrum of affirmative to disapproving decisions around pragmatic or technical matters. Teaching as judgment also significantly uncovered the ethical purpose of teacher practice. In achieving such ends, judgments took place daily on the moral implications of teacher actions as they guided their students. Learning from the consequences of previous judgments eventually lead teachers to improved wisdom about the choices a teacher could make while teaching. Teaching as judgment was based not only upon teaching knowledge and actions, but also upon teacher beliefs and intentions. These latter self-expressive criteria served as a dimension of understanding teaching as self-expression which will be examined later.

#### **4.2.5.1 Judgment as Pragmatic/Technical Decisions**

Teacher judgments, as applying teacher knowledge and skills to daily teaching choices and decisions, were cited as a critical part of teaching. Appropriate judgments helped keep lessons productive and students engaged. Fiona talked of "adjusting" the lesson, of being "nimble" and "flexible" in the moment as she teaches. Elise talked about judgments in a lesson as getting into a "flow" or that "jazz thing." "Things are going along and you are responding to what is going on in the moment. You cannot plan that. You cannot choreograph that." Nolan talked about judgment as "not me telling people what to think but it is about me firing the right questions in the right situations to help them figure out what they are learning." Nolan further elaborated about teaching as judgment by way of an anecdote regarding a friend as a beginning nature guide. This friend started with a choreographed script for what they were going to learn along the trail. Later, as his judgment and confidence grew of what worked best, he was able to support learning by tailoring his teaching to the questions people asked.

Teaching as judgment was predicated upon growing awareness and knowledge of a teacher's deliberative practice. Judgment was improved through feedback and adjustment, based

upon experience. Ivan reported, "The most important things I wanted them to pay attention to they were not doing it. So some of the ways I was delivering information I realized were not effective. I needed to change. I guess the things I was exposed to was different ideas at the right time." From such routine decisions that took place on a reoccurring basis, to those of more strategic consequences in shifting teaching practices, the ability and insight to recognize what works in your teaching constructed understandings of how to make better teaching decisions over time. Like jazz, as Elise described, or the eventual spontaneity of the nature trail, as Nolan cited, the ability of teachers to find fulfillment and accomplishment was through the virtues of honing their practice as judgments. These judgments eventually became less deliberate and mechanical and more spontaneous and fluent in meeting the outcomes teachers considered important.

#### **4.2.5.2 Judgment as Means and Ends**

Teaching as judgment concerned making appropriate decisions to connect beliefs with intentions to actions. Teachers shared their constant stream of practical judgments about what is good contextual or situational teaching, both in its technical aspects and in its ultimate ethical ends or purposes. Lee revealed that he started teaching from teacher training as a "stand and deliver" transmission perception teacher. He went overseas to an international school "that was very much grounded in inquiry design and a constructivist understanding in the work of Vygotsky, and that sort of shaped my educational beliefs on how I think students should learn." Comparable to the perceptions of the patriot and the rebel, similar circumstances can lead different teachers to different decisions based upon their values and beliefs and individual experiences. Individual reasoning brought different conclusions. Teachers such as Mandy, Jenny, Nolan and Holly, as previously portrayed, came to see teaching as different means or ends

and so changed their judgments about what was important in teaching from what many teachers were doing. What teachers thought was right, from a moral standpoint, intuitively if not explicitly, informed their judgment.

#### **4.2.5.3 Judgment as Enabling**

Judgment enables teachers to improve both their knowledge and skills over time. The degree of openness and willingness to consider the communal ideas out there in teaching was a critical aspect of teacher judgment. Research and reading were mentioned by a plurality of participants as enabling them to better understand teaching. These readings improved their depth of criteria while increasing their schema upon which to make judgments about teaching. Abigail cited the brain based learning ideas of Jensen and literacy strategies promulgated by Brownlie and Schnellert. Elise highlighted the works of Brownlie and Williams. Fiona extolled the writings of Halbert, Kaser, Bennett, Cameron, Davies and Brownlie. Gwen pointed to the works of Harris, Fullan, Kaser, Halbert, Smith and Fisher as being of importance to her. Jenny brought up Vygotsky as being influential to her teaching. Lee also mentioned Vygotsky and others such as Murdock, Wiggins, McTighe and Dweck that shaped what he does in teaching. It would not be a stretch to say that most participants read some educational writers to reflect upon and frame the parameters of their practice. This type of study by interviewees informed and contributed to teacher judgments in making decisions about their practice.

To emphasize the importance of teacher ownership of their judgments in manifesting their teacher voice, Elise also stated a cautionary corollary of applying what academic gurus or their disciples say about best practice. Best practice to Elise is contextual and consensual. She resents the cajoling that often goes with some evidence based approaches that says I'm right and you're wrong. For ideas or practices to work they must be a fit for the circumstances and the



teacher Elise asserted. "The ultimate test of your skill [is] if you can improvise in a very difficult situation. That is what teaching is all about." She has not time for academics or external advocates of one type or another who can't walk the talk, like a movie critic, in telling her what to do.

Elise stated the relationship between theory and practice the most clearly as judgments enabling practice. She indicated that in order to develop the necessary confidence in yourself, if you are a thinking person, takes a long time. She mentions initially teaching as an intuitive process. Later, through teaching experiences, reflection and exposure to the perspectives, views and opinions of other educators, Elise gradually put her philosophy and practice together. This linking of theory and practice to where she could explain why as well as how she did her teaching gave her greater confidence as a teacher that what she was doing was the right thing: "I have gone through various permutations and combinations and changes" to where a "melding of the theorist and the practitioner" is where "I think I am a blend of both."

Graduate studies were mentioned by half the participants as developing their judgments about what they do. This can be reconciled with the previous data of formative teacher training coursework being of limited impact. This apparent inconsistency can be explained by virtue of the fact that now these teachers were able to bring their scholarship of practice experiences to inform, comprehend and bridge the practice of scholarship with their past teaching. In later graduate studies, unlike early practicum training, these teachers now had a wealth of practical teaching experience to draw on. This experience provided the confirmatory substance as to what theories are helpful, applicable or not, in improving a conceptual understanding of teaching. An improved awareness of the realities of practice provided opportunities for greater insights as to how theory related to practice and, as such, graduate work tended to better connect scholarship

with practice. This holistic conceptual overview of the theory meshed with the practice of teaching made more sense as there were more dots to connect. The forest and the trees could both be seen and related as a lived experience. Kevin captured the importance of judgment based upon experience this way:

I almost think that you can't really communicate with anybody about something until they have experienced it themselves. You can show things like it. You can use those metaphors, those analogies, to try to show them the way but it's up to them to find the truth.

In Corrine's case she indicated that such study and reflection dramatically shifted her conceptions and understanding of her teaching in her final decade of teaching. Ivan indicated it helped him "crystallize" his thinking about his conceptions and methods of teaching. Working together in study groups such as graduate school enables teachers to construct judgments about their teaching.

#### **4.2.5.4 Judgment as Practical Wisdom**

This aspect of judgment is like an overall executive summary of the importance of teaching as judgment. Such judgment was evident in the teacher narratives. Their judgments were mediated by the practical wisdom that arose from their teaching experience within their beliefs and values. Such judgments essentially meant "doing the right thing at the right time for the right reasons with the right people" (Coulter, Coulter, Daniel, Decker, Essex, Naslund, Naylor, Phelan, Sutherland, 2007, p. 6). Teaching, as practical wisdom, thus included linking the broader conceptual or theoretical knowledge of the purposes or perspectives of teaching to those daily practical teaching decisions teachers made to "tweak" the lesson, to improvise in the

moment, so it comes out like "playing jazz." Teaching as practical wisdom comprehensively meant engaging and connecting the instructional methodology (the how), with learning outcomes (the what) with the understanding (the why, where, when and who) of doing something. If "what teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what children learn" (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 12) then these teacher decisions as judgments are essential pieces of the teaching puzzle.

Interviewees talked of seriously reflecting about their practice as a critical aspect of what they do as teachers, lamenting, sometimes, the lack of time in the pressing demands of the day to do this metacognition well. For instance, Corrine explained her practical wisdom as, "I think you get better over time if you realize when things weren't working and change them." Various participants alluded to their judgment as "doing the right thing" or "being reflective" in relation to their intentions around teaching. Gwen talked about making decisions in her career that work for students "because it is the right thing to do" either in methods or in the purchase of resources, despite obstacles in her way. Likewise, when Holly looks at her practice she notices changes in her decisions about teaching and judgments about what works based upon her practical wisdom gained from her experiences. Assessing students, teaching reading and math were all impacted by such reflections and judgments. "I try to reflect in my teaching the needs of the entire child and all children," she says.

#### **4.2.6 Teaching as Self-Expression**

Teaching as self-expression was reflected in the teacher narratives. Self-expression is the application of personal and professional theory behind understanding the purpose of teaching as to desired means and ends. The importance of self-expression is represented by participant statements such as Gwen's in explaining her teaching judgments as acting upon guiding

principles, "doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do." Such self-expression is instrumental in motivating teachers to act in certain ways to accomplish certain goals that relate to their beliefs and values about teaching. Teaching as self-expression refers to the self-actualization needs and desires of the individual teacher as a means of creative commitment to and sense of purpose with what they do. In a word, it provides for agency or individual initiative in practice. It reflects the authentic self and ideals of the teacher. Teaching as self-expression is much like artists who convey important ideas in their art as a sense of fulfillment and identity.

The self-expression detailed in the teaching narratives is the teacher's personal constitution expressing their principles and desires by which they guide their practice. The TPI teaching perspectives are like an executive summary of a teacher's desire to express themselves. Teaching perspectives serve as the filter by which teachers gauge receptivity to new experiences and potential opportunities.

#### **4.2.6.1 Self-Expression as Beliefs**

Self-expression as beliefs had teachers identifying with the respective nurturing, transmission, apprenticeship, developmental and social reform teaching perspectives as manifestations of their beliefs and values. When asked about their perceptions of their TPI profiles, interview comments such as the following were common: "I came out high on the nurturing ... I feel strongly that is my style," or "I can talk a lot about why I struggled with transmission," or "In talking about apprenticeship ... I am not surprised about that myself." This question also solicited remarks such as "the point of your teaching should be the curriculum ... what you were hired to pass along" from a transmission oriented teacher. Indicating the diversity or plurality of perspectives among teachers, a different ideal or preference was expressed in the words of a nurturing perspective teacher. "Creating good citizens I believe is the goal of

education, not necessarily all scholars. The world needs productive members to sustain it." Still another view from an apprenticeship minded teacher was expressed as: "They [students] have to be thinking about how this learning is making a difference. Not only for themselves, but how they have advocated for others to come in their learning journey and share what they've learned and how they are transformed as human being ... it speaks to that justice piece that learning has purpose."

#### **4.2.6.2 Self-Expression as Intentions**

Self-expression as intentions closely paralleled the dominant teaching perspectives of these teachers. As the majority held nurturing dominant perspectives a balance between caring and challenging and building high confidence and self-esteem featured prominently. Ultimate intentions for their students becoming successful in living, becoming good citizens, and effective learners were common. Beatrice indicated her teaching intentions as engaging students in concepts based upon emotional connections. Donna emphasized instruction appropriate to individual learning needs. Elise talked about engaging and stretching students. Fiona described her intentions as connected to the curriculum she is trying to do but adapting as necessary. Gwen stated that she needed to connect learning to the real world. Holly said that she wanted her students to be able to make a difference so she needed to teach skills and support students to be open minded and curious. Mandy wanted to build strong, healthy and positive relationships with her students to help them feel resilient and provide them with a "tool kit for life".

Those interviewed teachers who did not have nurturing as their dominant perspective or shared it with another perspective, acknowledged the importance of relationships in engaging students, but also stressed other intentions as self-expression. Nolan's dominant developmental perspective was not so much to teach curriculum objectives but to ensure each child pushes their

thinking to the point, “smoke comes out of their ears.” Kevin’s apprenticeship stance had him already change his mind since he started teaching. Previously he wanted to teach music and now he has enlarged his intentions “to give them [students] something of value before they leave the class whatever that might be.” Lee’s apprenticeship perspective has him engaging students to get them thinking; particularly about connecting what they are doing to what is important in the real world. Corrine’s transmission perspective had her saying that she needed to get her students to a good knowledge level for a government exam during most of her tenure in education.

#### **4.2.6.3 Self-Expression as Actions**

Self-expression as actions also matches closely with a teacher’s dominant teaching perspective as the teacher narratives may be interpreted through such lenses. Self-expression extends to the unique ways teachers use teaching techniques to get the job done in their classrooms. Like artists’ paint brush strokes creating forms of art, each teacher expresses and interprets teaching through actions as an individual personal endeavor.

Teacher interviews substantiated this dimension as a fundamental pillar of constructing an understanding of teaching in three main ways: pragmatic/technical, moral tactics and ethical means/ends thinking. Teacher engagements were made by discerning the relative success of the technical aspects of what they were teaching, the moral considerations of how they were teaching it and the ethical means/ends continuum of why their teaching was important to do. For example, Fiona explained her role and actions behind modifying assessment practices from “where you give a student one chance and no feedback.” She shared her first efforts as clarifying the unit or lesson learning intentions and criteria for assessment for students. She then described her work on avoiding just assigning “something and they are marked and that’s the end of it and then off they go the next thing and no one learns very deeply anything about that.” So she

changed her teaching methods to encourage deeper learning. “It is part of the learning process to be able to work away at something until its right and know how to get supports around that and feedback that’s related to the criteria.” Fiona’s self-expressed need for seamless assessment and learning for her students was reflected through her actions.

#### **4.2.6.4 Self-Expression as Identity**

Self-expression as identity was reflected in the TPI results and teacher interviews.

Identity refers to teaching as an expression of the uniqueness of each individual teacher as an interwoven personal and professional tapestry. Abigail identified her teaching as her “drive for lifelong learning” in terms of “not [being] entrenched in one view or one way of doing it because you are staying open to your own personal learning ... and also trying to create that desire in others.” In so doing this she recognizes “there are different paths to learning and to developing that interest in learning and ways of learning.” This type of personal view scaffolds her dominant nurturing perspective and her strong caring focus in her teaching. This is reflected by her comment in the “importance of each person and my desire to help them maximize their skills and to have a useful and meaningful life for themselves and others.”

Beatrice, another dominant nurturing perspective teacher, recognizes the spiritual and emotional dynamics of learning accentuating that “every kid is such an individual complex situation.” She acknowledges that the school system “seems to focus on such a narrow, tiny little grain of sand, of who each of us is.” Mandy, with another dominant nurturing profile, talks of providing her students with “a tool kit for their life that they didn’t have before they walked into my classroom [which] I feel is more important than a lot of content.” This focus on the individual and meeting individual needs is prevalent among teachers expressing this aspect of their teaching identities.

Gwen, a strong nurturing and apprenticeship perspective teacher speaks to social justice issues as being important whereby students connect their thinking with their situation in the world. “Everything we are reading and connecting to has an emotional connection that comes from the students in relation to social justice or injustice around cultures in our society and globally as well.” Students in her class are not only practicing literacy skills as investigators but are called upon to demonstrate how what they learned has transformed them in some way. Personal connections to what students are learning drives Gwen’s teaching.

Jenny with a dominant developmental profile also believes relating her instruction to higher ideals of social justice. “I teach the Universal Declaration of Human Rights right at the beginning and we use that as our guide for everything.” She continues that her developing teaching career is “an evolution of better understanding of who I am and what I believe in”. She continues, “What I believe is important in this world and about we humans and society and how we learn and what we need as learners. It really comes back to who you are before you can start teaching.” Jenny goes so far as to say that “you have to fight to retain your humanity in a mass production system.”

Holly, an elementary teacher, also subscribes to this sense of students ultimately making a difference as citizens and giving back to society. “I feel so strongly now that my kids are not going to maybe remember some of those specific facts that I taught them but I want them to remember the role they play in society.”

Fiona sensed some ulterior motives relating to social injustice in not improving teaching practices for students:

We are still fighting to move that agenda [assessment for learning practices]  
forward and we’re still not there because to me that’s almost a social agenda



-keeping people in their slots in society – because that’s what assessment for learning does. It frees up students to move beyond those barriers of learning that were holding them back because they can learn to represent their learning in different ways.

Among my participants however, even those who subscribed to a dominant transmission perspective, as Corrine did, as exemplified in her statement, “teaching French is not about changing society”, also did say, “I would tend to read to kids books that tended to reflect my philosophies.” When describing what she identified as good teaching she said, “There is so much that makes up a good teacher. In some teachers it is more of one thing than other.” Teachers could see in each other the understanding of teaching as a self-expression of their identities as people and professionals.

#### **4.2.6.5 Self-Expression as Mindsets/Motivation**

Self-expression as mindsets and motivation serve both as an intuitive moral compass and as the creative dynamic to grow one's teaching talents and skills. It is the essence that drives teachers to do what they do each day. It reflects the motivation aspects of having some choice over your work in things that you wish to improve upon to benefit others as well as yourself. Self-expression as mindset emphasizes the willingness to put in the effort to become more skilled.

Fiona described this sensation and conviction of doing what she believes in as being principle driven. "You know I have always been principle driven about what is the right thing to do." She provides examples of challenging obstacles by providing meaningful assessments the way she thinks is the right way, and avoiding the old practice of failing kids as damaging to kids and learning. This caring approach is indicative of her dominant nurturing perspective. Self-

expression as motivation reveals a diversity of talents and ideas that reflects not only doing things right but doing the right things as a comprehensive whole.

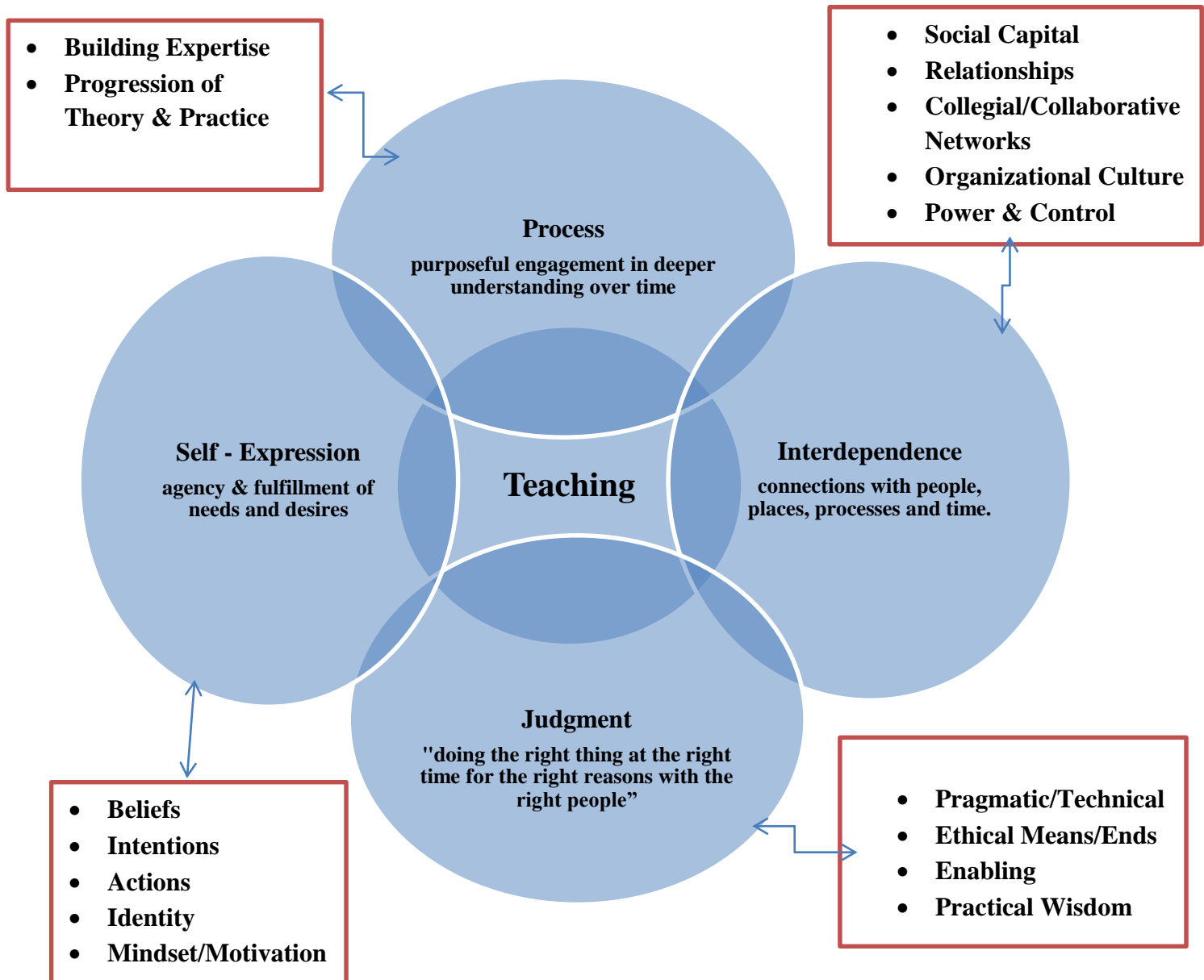
Motivational self-expression involves not only teaching acts such as applying technical strategies, tactics or questioning skills, but tying them to general outcomes or aims of what the individual teacher regards as the ideals of good teaching. This affinity and inclination of teachers to act based upon their personal principles drives their teaching vision and actions towards accomplishing certain goals. Beliefs and values were mentioned in the interviews by a plurality of participants as motivational in guiding or influencing their teaching. These narratives of self-expression featured prominently in constructing their understanding of teaching. It could be said it is their teaching. The way you perceive the world informs your actions. Or as Kevin has phrased it, "Good teaching means you are creating a better world. You are giving something back that is of very, very profound value to your society."

Virtually all the participants in this study mentioned caring relationships as necessary motivations to engage students if teaching were to be effective. Elise summarized the ability to teach as "above all is connection" as being crucial to getting students to work with you. Kevin mentioned good teaching as beginning with "love, with care, from a place of genuine care for others." Gwen extolled relationship building as well. "Wise teaching comes from really getting to know your students." This seems a widespread premise and cultural habit or need in K-12 school education as indicated by this group of teachers.

Social reform, although a recessive score for half the group, featured prominently as an inspiration and drive for some of the applicants. Mandy, Fiona, Gwen, Holly, Jenny and Kevin remarked about their goal in education as creating students who would make a difference in the world or in changing the education system to improve student learning conditions through

improved teaching. Some of these missions or callings came through as cultural and democratic values they held or were created by the crucible of personal hardships and resiliency.

### How Teachers Construct an Understanding of Teaching



**Figure 4.1 Dimensions of Practice ~ How Teachers Construct an Understanding of Teaching**

#### **4.2.7 Summary of Findings**

Based upon this study of how teachers construct an understanding of teaching, I argue that teachers construct an understanding of teaching through these four dimensions: teaching as process, interdependence, judgment and self-expression or agency, as illustrated in Figure 4.1. These Dimensions of Practice identified in blue serve as a cultural and systemic framework for personal and professional experiences to create an understanding of teaching. The influential dynamic elements captioned within the red boxes were described by teachers as experiential considerations that synergistically and interactively facilitated an ongoing understanding of teaching. Through this research these are the influences and factors identified as leading to constructing an understanding of teaching.

## Chapter 5: Reflections and Conclusions

*The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves...* Abraham Lincoln

In a radio broadcast in the fall of 1939, Winston Churchill contemplated what Russia might do in the accumulating gloom at the start of World War II. "I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest" (Churchill, 1939). This strikes me as an appropriate reflection and analogy for the conundrum I faced as a principal for many years. Not in the context of war, but in the context of what the professional learning interests of teachers might be. It certainly was a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma. My proselytizing of what research says as best practice was not striking a chord with many of my teachers. I could not then understand why such reason and insights might be contentious. My preoccupation with linear technocratic thinking did not adequately perceive and comprehend the nuanced contradictions and controversies within teaching. The eyes through which I looked at teaching filtered out such complexity, passing through it to emerge unscathed by the diversity of approaches of those who did the work of teaching.

So, I began my journey to graduate school to rise to the occasion to think anew and act anew. Initially, it was not to disenthral myself of my assumptions, as universities are often all about the primacy of research. I was going to a place of kindred spirits. My task was to get insights on how to do my job better as principal through the study of research. The answer to my riddle has come in this thesis in terms of my transformational thinking arising from my role as researcher practitioner. This study permitted me to comprehend the diversity within the plurality

of teaching perspectives and, importantly, also grasp how teachers constructed such understandings. These considerations are important to know in terms of policy and practice.

A long time mentor, who shared his wisdom from afar and in books, interspersed with occasional visits, shared with me that “teachers are like snowflakes.” I better understand now what he may have meant then. Like snowflakes, teacher repertoires arise from similar universal conditions, have some common qualities, attributes and skills, and yet persist in being uniquely different. The teachers in this study were all the same in some ways and different in others. So although they share a common vocation, their respective teaching approaches emerged from how they responded and made meaning of the many contexts and events they experienced as individuals.

It is evident to me now that the means and ends of my conceptions of teaching, as a developmental perspective advocate, was not a comfortable fit for many past colleagues. My blinkered fixation of leadership by shoehorning my ideas into their teaching spaces was too narrow a fit. The realization of this conflictual state of affairs affects how I now read the research data. In light of this shift in understanding, my reflections upon this research as to how teachers construct an understanding of teaching are elaborated on in the following pages. Likewise, some conclusions are drawn for policy and practice that have emerged from such awareness.

### **5.1 Self-Expression as Retaining Your Humanity**

Self-expression is a key dimension of constructing an understanding of teaching. At one point in an interview, a participant expressed her frustrations at having to “fight to retain your humanity in a mass production system.” Bureaucratic norms and power imbalances of the school system she described as getting “locked into this little bit of tyranny here.” Wiens (2006)

conveyed similar sentiments as worrying "in my soul, that systems and their trappings dehumanized the world" (p. 201). Compassionate and personal considerations are part of teaching and sometimes the system, as presently organized and focused, tends to lose sight of these attributes of humanity, but most front line teachers within it don't. Nurturing and relational sentiments were part of the teacher interviews.

These teachers wanted to "provide a balance between caring and challenging" in the system within which they teach. For these teachers, understanding teaching went beyond the methodologies, prescribed procedures, processes, curriculums and standards of professional practice to celebrating a social, emotional and intellectual creative pedagogical broth. Teaching was reflected in their narratives as a fundamentally humane and relational enterprise. Due consideration of understanding teaching, as ethical actions that do no harm to improve opportunities and potential for all students, required attention to balancing both the intellectual prerequisites of each student and their learner personal contexts. Retaining one's humanity required knowing teaching in its complexities without losing sight of the worthiness of the people in their tutelage. The fulfillment of, and need for, teaching as an ultimate humanitarian enterprise was a dominant self-expressive theme.

Self-expression in teaching comprises a sense of agency towards fulfillment of needs, desires and purposes in teaching. Poole (2008) indicates that policy dealing with the arbitrary changing of teaching methods impacts teacher identity as well. Teachers teach from a holistic presence as a thinking person with the ends as well as the means in mind. It is not a soulless and purely technocratic endeavor. Teaching, as this study points out, is also fundamentally about developing the important relationships with students and fellow teachers to learn. One participant expressed it as "we are all learners and we are all teachers." As the holding of

diverse teaching perspectives showed, the feeling of self-expression is a powerful one in motivating teachers with a sense of personal vision, purpose and agency. Teachers become demoralized when their sense of purpose is taken from them (Hargreaves, 2003; Poole, 2008). Singular linear technical interventions impact more than just an isolated little part of the whole.

## **5.2 Process as Playing Jazz**

Another participant described teaching as "kind of like the jazz thing" in getting into a productive "flow." Considering the technical and theoretical matters and formats of playing jazz and the similar demands of experienced intuitive teaching in distinguishing and responding in the moment to what is going on in the classroom, this seemed an apt expression of what teachers are trying to do well.

"Teaching is kind of like that jazz thing" is an apt metaphor for understanding the technical and theoretical aspects of teaching. Jazz music has many influences and many forms. It relies on group interplay and improvisation as the group interacts. It depends upon specific techniques and the interpretation of larger themes. When jazz is "swinging" musicians are hitting the right notes at the right times. Teaching is very similar. It arises from various and diverse influences or teaching perspectives and relies on the interplay of individuals. Like jazz musicians, teachers learn from the communal repertoire and knowledge that surrounds them yet create an individual identity and style. As jazz has changed in its formats over time, teaching perspectives or techniques change as contexts and experiences influence teachers. Like jazz, teaching is not a static conception or practice but a dynamic one. Different formats and creative interpretations are played or taught pending thoughtful integration of context with a gradual awakening of consciously skilled practice.



High quality teaching is the key to success. Teaching as process is about developing expertise and requires purposeful consensual engagement in deeper understanding of how to meet the challenges of teaching over time. This involves scholar-practitioner thinking and engagement, whereby teachers are not the mere recipients of research but engage in producing learning themselves in order to contextually apply it. Hargreaves (2003) emphasizes this necessary dynamic by saying, “Teachers are not deliverers but developers of learning” (p. 201). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) consider teachers as professional human capital and investing in their talent as longer term initiatives is necessary to improve expertise.

The teachers in this study related a progression of learning to get better at what they do. It was driven by pragmatic inquiry. Context was instrumental to determining practical inquiries these teachers pursue. "Practical inquiry is conducted in one's everyday work life for the purpose of improvement, and formal research is meant to contribute to a larger community's knowledge base" (Richardson, 1994, p. 7). Teaching as process initially is more focused on short term practical needs that require a more immediate response. Over time more formal research or theory comes to inform practice with useful ideas and conceptual thinking (Richardson, 1994), as it did in the stories of the teachers in this study and as this thesis did for me. Although immediate concerns may be of a technical nature, it is conceived of and driven by beliefs regarding the purpose of education. It is a continuous reflexive progression of developing expertise.

### **5.3 Interdependence as Partnerships**

This group of research participants shared the importance of close trusting relationships in working with other teachers to collaboratively gain understanding about teaching. The difficulty and challenge is in finding and developing the conditions for such desired affiliations within

present school cultures. These teachers described such interdependence as: a partnership, similar interests, collaboration, teamwork, comfortable sharing, mentoring, friendship, inclusionary, supportive conversations, and strong colleagues walking side by side with you to mention some phrases. The learning, as a study participant said, " ... is about who[m] you are learning with" and likely the setting you are learning from. Such close band of brothers and sisters type support, with those you can confide in, care about and share similar outlooks about teaching, appear to be the mostly highly prized and useful collaborations. These successful partnerships were professional associations where the relationship went beyond just collaboration to what appears to be camaraderie or fellowship. This appears to be a significant ingredient for success in constructing an understanding of teaching with colleagues.

The importance of partnerships was explained by a participant. "In workshops and courses you get ideas," but it is in the "coming together" between teachers "who have a common interest" which is "the strongest way to improve teaching practice" for "real change [to] com[e] about." Finding a kindred spirit or group to work with reduces the isolating tendency of teaching. It facilitates communal access to and safe support from colleagues to further an understanding of teaching. Ongoing opportunities and support are provided by those with whom teachers work well with for showing, guiding, suggesting, advising and extending in "little pieces ... you could handle ... where you are at."

Partnerships between people, in places and with processes in time, contribute to teacher learning as individual initiative is often based upon collective stimulation and influence. Learning is both an individual and social pursuit, so it requires time for and consideration of both. Teachers in this study were motivated to learn by getting ideas and refining their own in the give and take or push and pull of trusting fellowship. The personal and professional were

linked to create dynamic collaborations of various sorts which is how this group of teachers preferred to learn. Learning requires some reassurance of safety before engagement for many teachers. Teacher learning also requires stimulating environments to encourage participation. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) express such interdependence as “social capital” whereby the interaction between teachers increases the human capital. Groups of teachers working together are more likely to have the collective power to build upon invention to support and encourage innovations as part of more widely spread practice (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Teachers in this study were energized and motivated by the synergy and collective understanding that comes from collaborating with trusted colleagues at worksites, through networks or through study. If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a supportive school or networked community of learners to facilitate individual teacher learning. As Joyce and Calhoun (2010) acknowledge, as do the participants in this study, teachers engage in professional learning in different ways and at varying rates. Having a stimulating environment in which to learn is critical to self-improvement. Teacher collaboration or at least dialogue is foundational to constructing an understanding of teaching.

#### **5.4 Judgment as Pathways**

Lines from a Robert Frost poem, *The Road Not Taken*, spring to mind when highlighting judgment as a necessary dimension in constructing an understanding of teaching: “Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted I if I should ever come back.” Judgments are like that; where pathways diverge to provide different opportunities and experiences based upon a decision. Judgments build careers. A teacher participant shared a metaphor of judgment as guiding people along a nature trail. Each participant used their judgment of what was of interest and importance for their personal inquiries and consequently what they learned.

The teacher, or guide in this particular case, used his judgment to shift from an initial choreographed teacher-centered format to a more flexible and adaptable dialogue to meet the interests and curiosity of each learner. Similarly, teachers use their judgments to decide which pathways to take in their teaching. The variety of perspectives of understanding teaching has much to say about context and potential, of being open to divergent perceptions to construct and understand different ways to teach as the needs and opportunities arise. "Most of us operate from more than one perspective" (Arseneau & Rodenburg, 1998, p. 108). Perspectives are like pathways where teacher judgments permit conceptions of practice and behaviors to emerge and merge.

Judgment consists of "doing the right thing at the right time for the right reasons with the right people" (Coulter et al, 2007). Judgment involves decisions of a means based technical nature but also of ends based ethical purposes. Education has multiple, often conflicting purposes (Egan, 2001), thus fostering a subsequent plurality of teaching perspectives (Pratt and associates, 1998) interpreting it. Aristotelean distinctions of construing education in its outcomes as wisdom, productivity, procedural, ethical and moral ends or purposes further illuminates the complexity of the dynamics involved in teaching.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) refer to this complexity and ability to negotiate successfully as "decisional capital." "Making decisions in complex situations is what professionalism is all about" (p.5). Cuban (2004), Hargreaves (2003) and Kincheloe (2007) further argue that teaching is an intellectual endeavor and teachers cannot be considered "the mere technicians and instruments of other people's agendas" (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 202). This study supports the professional acknowledgement of developing enhanced judgment, as a prominent feature of how the teacher participants guided their learning efforts in constructing an understanding of

teaching. Expert teacher behavior has ethical means and moral ends which requires good judgment.

"Teachers make decisions on the basis of a personal sense of what works, but without examining the beliefs underlying a sense of 'working', teachers may perpetuate practices based on questionable assumptions and beliefs" (Richardson, 1994, p. 6). Improving judgment increases the likelihood that teachers will question assumptions about their beliefs, intentions and actions (Richardson, 1994). There is a necessity for reflective teachers who use discretionary judgment rather than just following prescriptions to deal with the complexities of teaching (Hargreaves, 2002). Teachers in my study shared narratives of such questioning over time, changing the teacher they are through reflecting upon the means and ends of their teaching and the moral and ethical decisions around their practice. Judgment is improved by reflecting on your practice in particular times and places rather than relying on some absolute quality or creed.

## **5.5 Understanding Teaching**

With the hindsight of this research, I now concede that understanding how teachers construct teaching is not just a matter of reducing teaching to mastering specific actions conforming to technique and production. It is about building skills and knowledge that are distinguished by who you are in terms of teaching beliefs and intentions amenable to changing learning contexts and arising from them. What makes sense to individuals in teaching is grounded in ideals. Teachers in my study frequently mentioned their values and principles in guiding their decision making. Such purpose and resolve then makes teaching political in terms of whether independent like democratic choices around teaching or more monocratic compliance drives teaching interventions. Determining degrees of control and influence over what teachers' teach as worthwhile ends, why they do so and the appropriate means to those ends becomes an

intimate professional matter of expressive importance and competence. Teaching is reflecting and progressively advancing upon the challenges found in the work in order to develop expertise.

The important point to note here is that the useful application of research may arise as frequently from teachers themselves as any scholarly expert. Such research should be used to inform the thinking of teachers and not be used as orthodoxy to prescribe only a few limited correct ways to teach. However, in dealing with teaching complexity, most solutions are thought of in more simplistic business model like productivity type terms and most interventions have such criteria for achievement (Cuban, 2004). Although these accountability standards are the dominant strategy for imposing school reform, these top down initiatives rarely meet with success (Cuban, 2004). It deskills teaching by ignoring and denigrating the judgment of the teachers who actually do the work of teaching instead of regulating teaching tasks to an assembly production line. Teaching is rarely routine and frequently requires creativity and innovation in putting all the pertinent pieces together. Teaching is as much about artistry as science, of retaining your humanity to express caring to balance with the challenge of cognitive expectations of curricula and techniques. Expertise is developed by progressively advancing on the problems constituting a field of work instead of constricting or confining your work to set ways or directed processes (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993).

Teachers in my study guided their learning by personal inquiry based upon their contexts combined with exploring the expanding options of how others may understand teaching. The key was aligning actions to warranted intentions and judicious beliefs. My interviews with teachers supported the ongoing and insightful nature of changes amenable to teaching contexts and experience. Such embedded, and often tacit, knowledge increases with experience as it develops and operates within an environment of application and practice (Sternberg & Horvath,

1995, cited in Pratt and associates, 1998). Experiential knowledge and practice are the building blocks of constructing an understanding of teaching. This is how the teachers in my study primarily reported that they learned. This aligns with the principle of subsidiarity, which espouses that decisions should be made at the level most amenable to carrying out solutions (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Those furthest away from the immediate interface of the act of teaching should therefore have more of a supportive or supplementary function. The key doers need to be involved in the determination of how best to teach as guidelines for action.

The importance of proximity to implementation of work intentions is elucidated by the research of Honig (2006). Honig describes "boundary spanners" as those bureaucrats who work on the front lines closest to the people or clients they serve. He contends that such workers in such positions have much discretion over decisions, and opportunities to interpret policy when interacting with non-routine problems. Boundary spanners regularly simplify procedures to make them work in bridging the ends-means continuum of policy and, in so doing, are key influencers and agents as to whether policy will meet its intent. Principals and teachers, by the nature of the work of teaching, interpret policy or curriculum implementation on a daily basis. Levin (2001) asserts that policy implementation is impacted by levels of commitment, skills, cultural factors and available resources. Practicality is important to teachers. They must think of the initiative as workable in their own immediate context, as without knowhow it is ignored and, if disliked, it is undermined (Levin, 2001).

Unlike Smoker (2005), who notes that the quality of teaching depends upon "the right kind of continuous, structured teacher collaboration" (p. xii), I found teachers utilizing both structured (PD workshops and networks) and unstructured collegial collaboration as the "right kind" of collaboration for them. The right kinds of collaboration were those where trust and

respect were high in attending to a task. Based upon such essential feelings, participants got the sense of working with "kindred spirits" who shared similar strategic aspirations and were amenable to work on similar inquiries of teaching tactics. The ideals of practice, although often unstated, were intuitively felt and served as common high ground for bringing teachers together. This collaborative process resembles Appreciative Inquiry methods (Hammond, 1996; Barrett & Fry, 2005). Teachers with common, often implicit, assumptions about teaching have a similar "appreciative eye" to welcome and value the best of "what is", to envision "what might be", to dialogue about "what should be" and to innovate "what will be" (Hammond, 1996).

This is akin to Bennett, Sharratt and Sangster's (2003) assertion that "extensive and separate bodies of knowledge related to classroom improvement, school improvement, valuing the teachers as learners, the process of educational change, and thinking systemically" (p. 7) come together in interactive and supportive ways to grow teacher understanding of practice. This study found teachers had similar and also varied experiences that led them to value assorted aspects of teaching as reflected by their different teaching perspectives. Comparable to the findings of Grimmer, Dagenais, D'Amico, Jacquet and D'Amico (2007) where teachers focus their energies on constructing understandings of teaching as professional self-determinations of hope and identity, my findings supported teachers expressing professional fulfillment through such synthesis.

Persuasive changes in practice usually did occur as small changes in practice that brought better results for students in the minds of my study teachers. These successful changes did shift practice and even beliefs as perspectives over time. My findings confirm Tomlinson and Imbeau's (2010) research that trying something out and finding it beneficial forms what teachers believe works and this is how an effective practice proceeds. Timberley (2008) indicates this as



more of a cyclical than linear process in challenging current assumptions about practice. This description is confirmed by what research participants explained as how they learned. Such personal, often tacit, and embedded inquiry tends to be more useful for teachers in cultivating their practice than learning from more formal research (Richardson, 1994). This "form of teacher research, practical inquiry, has the potential to respond to teachers' immediate knowledge needs" (Richardson, 1994, p. 6). This crucial pursuit of immediate knowledge necessities is voluntary and leads to adjustments in practice that identifies the teacher as not just a passive recipient and consumer of knowledge and practice (Richardson, 1994).

Cole and Knowles (2000) likewise describe good teaching as reflexive inquiry, "an ongoing process of examining and refining practice ... situated within a context" (p.2). The context is influential in shaping the experiences of teachers and many of the interviewed teachers did indicate that changing contexts, such as different schools, changed their instruction. Changing schools, classes and colleagues were mentioned by study participants as contexts that caused them to think anew and act anew. But, moreover, teachers cited the accumulating wisdom and increased contextual awareness arising from their growing teaching experience as changing and substantiating how they taught.

As well as contexts and experiences being important in improving the opportunities to increase expertise in the pragmatics of delivering teaching, so too was the requisite need for improving metacognitive or intellectual processing of teaching. Teaching is intellectual work as well as practical or technical work. One of the teachers in this study was described by her colleagues as being intuitively gifted as a beginning teacher, but is spending her career figuring out how and why what she does works. Arising from her experiential insights, connecting the

ends and the means of understanding teaching is critical in enhancing her judgments and her ability to explain her teaching and the criteria upon why it works as a professional undertaking.

Designing teaching to suit a context is a multifaceted endeavor rather than one of reductionist simplicity. Understanding teaching is not only about curriculum and teaching skills as to what we teach and how we teach. It is also about how students learn and the conceptual understandings of why teachers teach in the ways they do and the influences upon teacher thinking and conditions for student learning. Developing such clarity is relative to degrees of awareness of universal possibilities in understanding teaching due to reflecting upon ongoing and accumulating experiences. Such lucidity of purpose and understanding of teaching permits certain teachers to advocate for their promising practices with others. Teachers at various points in their careers, but particularly as novices, may be open to such assistance due to their being less certain of what they are doing is making a difference for students. Such responsiveness is based upon individual teacher respective current practice and judgment.

## **5.6 Politics**

Existing school organizations and dynamics often acknowledge the importance of communal teacher sense making as a key to teaching success (Dufour, 2005; Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2000; Little, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Marzano, 2003; Reeves, 2001; Schmoker, 2006). The present organization and regulation of schools indicates that the way school systems organize teacher work shapes what teachers can accomplish (Abbott & Ryan, 2001; Acker, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Hargreaves, 1994; Osborne, 2008; Robinson, 2010). Teachers learn about teaching through frequent conversations as active partners in the process of teaching and can't simply be the recipients of reform packages (Leadership and Teacher Development Branch,

2005; National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996). The largely disenfranchised voices of teachers need to be heard regarding the design and implementation of organizing teaching utilizing teacher judgments and knowledge about teaching. Teacher input into the way we organize and regulate schools, to better facilitate the professional dialogue and involvement of teachers in the ends and means of their work, by those who do the work, seems necessary and appropriate.

Traditional school systems maintain a hierarchy of authority and structured relationships akin to feudal social hierarchies. Teachers have diminished roles of influence and control in such systems or, if their importance is acknowledged, it is often of a superficial nature in terms of professional equality and consultation. This authoritative discrimination reduces interdependence with the teaching community and without robust interdependence education exists as a segregated community if at all (Palmer, 2007). The context of teachers' work lies largely outside the influence and control of teachers, and thus lacks the core characteristics of professional work (Hargreaves, 1994, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003; Silva, 2010).

Teaching, as a creative and complex networked undertaking, requires internal self-motivating behavior to bring about inspired engagement in the task. Simply put, demanding compliance and being bossy does not and has not worked in bringing significant sustainable desired change to the system. It certainly was not a success in my practice, commencing yet another round of well-intentioned external interventions either by me or those in the hierarchy above me. Perceptions of understanding teaching as amenable to jurisdictional pressure and support of traditional linear like stimulus-response thinking have not brought the desired outcomes to date. Those in power continue to fixate on the inadequacies of teaching results and thus persist to conjure up more plans to convince teachers what to do to correct it.

Many educational power brokers continue to focus exclusively on outside or external ideas or resources for changing teaching and education, often through top down linear type intervention reform agendas. Hargreaves (2004) laments this lack of encouraging creativity and resourcefulness in educational organizations through tunnel vision thinking obsessed with "micromanaging curriculum uniformity" (p.1). Instead of teachers having a place as respected intellectuals in a learning or knowledge society, the perception of teacher work is to "maintain order, teach to the test and follow standardized curriculum scripts" (Hargreaves, 2004, p.2). More testing, more standards, more or less curriculum, funding rewards or punishments, some newly promoted teaching panacea or idea to implement, another policy or regulation and so on, to expedite improving means to satisfy often singular educational ends, are just part of these capitulations to external mandates.

Such non-confidence initiatives as might be expected often result in alienation and antagonism of teachers. They highlight differences between what is and what is desired in technical terms of teacher performance and results without due consideration for the learning culture of constructing and understanding teaching. External factors beyond teacher control, such as the availability of adequate teaching resources and working conditions to enable teachers in their teaching, were mentioned by some teachers in this study as a common hindering influence. This lack of influence to enhance teaching conditions is supported, for example, in a letter to the editor of the *Victoria Times Colonist* of February 28th, 2014, which emphasized this lack of respect or consideration for teachers as professionals. One letter writer wrote:

There is a distinct form of authority based on acquired knowledge.

Professionals are normally considered authorities in their field

of expertise...but when B.C. teachers tell us they cannot teach well

in overcrowded classrooms, we behave as if they have no idea of what they are talking about...The B.C. government will get nowhere with the teachers until they recognize them as professionals.

To rise to this challenge of discounting the teacher voice, educational stakeholders must disenthral themselves of past notions of externally manipulating teachers in order to invigorate teaching. Teachers deciding to do the right thing and doing it right is the catalyst for refining practice and is embedded in practice. This was mentioned by many teachers in this study. This sense of agency involves teachers as both good thinkers and actors mediated by the necessity of good judgment to generate the capacity to make a responsible difference in the world (Coulter & Wiens, 2002). The technical means or processes of teaching act as tools to bring desired outcomes as tangible results. Such outcomes are somewhat problematic in that the results themselves are dialogically contestable and often only determined retrospectively, and even then, tentatively, in the developing construction of teacher understandings. Perceptions of good teaching are equally dependent upon conceptions of what are the ethical ends of teaching and the practical wisdom to achieve it. The technical conceptions of teaching receive the most attention and are the more familiar processes understood or perceived as teaching by most stakeholders in education.

This more recognizable definition of teaching, based upon more readily and easily comprehended business like productivity measures, are the most important, if not single imposed arbiter of understanding teaching. This version of success discriminates against the need for further dialogue with teachers about the broader purposes, conceptions of and implications for teaching. The pervasive technocratic liturgy limits the space or need for teachers to exercise good judgment and imagination in handling the diversity that is part of human existence. This

concern by teachers was mentioned in the January 22, 2014 commentary section of the Australian newspaper, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, where the headline read "Stop criticizing and understand the complexity of teaching." One teacher letter noted, "Until everyone realizes there is more to teaching than ticking boxes on a curriculum sheet, teaching will remain an easy target."

Teachers appear trapped between the need to define their own professional knowledge and the wider social and political accountability that pressures them to deny it. To avoid the folly of more educational reform agendas of the same outlook, intensity and frequency, predicated on improving or cajoling teacher quality by telling teachers what to do and how to do it, we need to think and act anew. Teachers and other stakeholders, such as educational administrators, policy makers, academics, politicians, parents, mature students, and the public at large, need to initiate a transparent public conversation on the role, regulation and organization of teaching in 21<sup>st</sup> century education. Coulter and Wiens (2008) emphasize the importance of such a dialogue in exploring the breadth and depth of education and teaching. The present governance dogmas and past systemic initiatives appear inadequate to explain or guide our efforts in terms of increasing the support and opportunities for constructing expertise. This dialogue needs to begin to provide clarity and recognition for a diversity of educational perspectives and desired competencies.

As small things, like conversations, lead to bigger things, such as government policies and regulations, this has implications for influencing changes in education related to teacher learning and the political power and control over it. At present, my findings suggest that the supportive experiences that construct understandings of teaching are primarily internal to the community of teachers themselves. Standards, whether they are testing or performance

expectations set by governments, or professional values and outcomes set by associations, lobby or special interest groups of one type or another, are like tour lists and are not the actual experiences or practicalities of living the teaching itinerary. The teacher traveler's "lived through" experiences are discounted relative to what needs to be accomplished as desirable on the tour. However, these teaching excursions set out in standards and expectations seem to reflect the assumptions and beliefs of interested bystanders and other stakeholders about teaching. These ideas originate from stakeholder thinking and appraising of teaching as they conceive of the means and ends of teaching.

The internal worlds of experiencing teaching, as teachers see their work, and these public worlds of perceiving teaching and its outcomes, as the more commonly held view, often stand in troubling isolated alienation from each other. This mutual fractional divide of discounting or ignoring what counts as useful knowledge of teaching even extends between university researchers and classroom teachers (Zeichner, 1995, cited in Coulter and Wiens, 2002). A bridging of these respective apartheid-like solitudes needs to be accomplished in order to build trust and confidence between all parties in comprehending diverse conceptions of teaching as a public service delivered in a responsible manner. Such dialogues would inclusively involve a feasible balancing of teacher internal autonomy with those other worlds of various stakeholder perceptions and anticipations.

## **5.7 Thinking, Judging and Acting Anew**

Despite this lack of agreement about judging what counts as useful understandings of teaching, particularly with the broader stakeholders associated with teaching, the teachers in this study frequently mentioned the thinking of others as influencing their teaching. My research findings suggest that bottom-up, or more accurately, inside-out constructions of teaching are not

totally autonomous or private affairs. Teachers in my sample universally benefitted from access to reservoirs of communal knowledge and skills including the non-teaching world. The making of meaning and search for enhanced expertise to meet teaching challenges was not done isolated from other colleagues. A reasonable conclusion of my research is that constructing understanding of teaching is a shared and collective task among teachers. The culture of teacher learning must be considered when working with any individual technical teaching components or political imperatives. This has implications for the way teacher work is organized and defined. Teachers need more democratic participation over the way their work is shaped and controlled to widen their influence in improving their expertise. More shared governance and self-determination over teaching by those who do the work should improve teacher satisfaction and professional self-actualization.

How teachers construct their understanding of teaching is important as what teachers know and can apply determines how successful they are in their teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1999). My study suggests this success is largely achieved through teacher practice and experience, particularly in conjunction with valued colleagues. How best do teachers' learn and what helps facilitate such learning is very important to teaching and student learning success. Elevating equity and quality teaching for all students in having "every learner crossing the stage with dignity, purpose and options" (Halbert & Kaser, 2013, p. 5) hinges on how well teachers learn and the level of awareness of the consequences of their practice. Curious collaboratively networked teachers with an inquiry minded orientation to teaching are documented by Halbert and Kaser (2013) in linking research and practice. Teachers in my study indicated they valued such supports and opportunities. Such applied practice with research type inquiries facilitates more highly aware, confident and accomplished teachers (Halbert & Kaser, 2013).



This pragmatic approach connects well with the scholar-practitioner paradigm that integrates the world of scholarship and the scholarship of practice (Stack, Coulter, Grosjean, Mazawi & Smith, 2006) to greater enlightenment and skill as a professional teacher or educator. Such professionalism, as "conduct benefitting a professional" (Kristensson, 2002, p. 14), would enhance the opportunities for improving teachers' judgments as expertise implies. Coulter and Wiens (2002) "argue for moving from debates between spectators and actors about knowledge and practice to discussions about how all educators can foster good judgment" (p. 15) as a promising agenda to link classroom practice and research.

As Kincheloe (2007) articulates, professionals undertake contemplative responsibilities with ethical practices and moral purpose. Teachers' practice goes beyond production and technique to encompassing decisions on what is the right thing to do which is a moral enterprise. Arendt (1958) cited in Wiens (2006) describes the classical distinctions of labor, work and action. These differences relate to the nature of teacher practice. Labor refers to the managerial or routine tasks that are necessary to accomplish such as attendance, procuring supplies, preparation and marking. Meaningful teaching moves beyond the necessities of labor to work which represents the teacher to others in the more public profile of their immediate acts of teaching. Interactions within the classroom with students would be considered work. Action, as teaching activity, would be less common and it would be expressed through word and deed of sharing your ideas with a broader audience of peers and publics. Teachers gravitate eventually to the latter if they are partnering and sharing their work and thinking in collaborative forums. Teachers need to be motivated by worthy ideas aligned to actions and energized by pursuing such actions with colleagues and developing their skills, knowledge and judgment (Hargreaves

& Fullan, 2012). These conditions are similar to the ones most teachers in this study benefited from when they shared how they gained their wisdom.

Kincheloe's (2012) book, *Teachers as Researchers*, also extolls this conception of teachers not only as a professional ideal, but also as a way out of the mystery that has stymied educational systems for some time in getting ordained desired results. The key is to elevate teachers into the role of both teachers and researchers as another means to desired ends. This necessitates a shift to a more pluralistic definition of research to enfranchise teachers as scholar-practitioners. The previously mentioned Slavin-Olson debate encompasses these challenges. Positivistic preferences arguably attempt to eliminate the bias of the human input of the researcher to one way of interpreting the research being the ideal (Kincheloe, 2012). Positivistic thinking holds sway in education and such a paradigm asserts a particular view of the world of research and how teachers should behave and organize their teaching (Kincheloe, 2012). Positivistic studies thus dictate what teachers should do, and devalue other types of research.

As my findings suggest, teacher beliefs do impact how they understand teaching. Ideas about teaching change, or are resisted, due to the thinking and judging nature of teachers, the context of their particular work and the trust in those who they work with. Teacher judgment about deciding what to do in teaching is critical. This was documented in my teacher narratives. Several more assertive teachers in my study mentioned their action research role in working with local universities as teachers as researchers contributing to "tipping" or "flipping" teaching methodology. Such teachers see the interactive nature and sharing of their practices by direct observation and liaison with university and government officials as instrumental to influencing government policies. These self-initiated efforts to produce knowledge based upon their teaching contexts sought, not only to improve their understanding of teaching and those of

colleagues, but also to bridge to the world of universities and policy makers as well. Their beliefs and intentions instigated research like actions with networked peers to improve their expertise as teachers and to communicate such research to other stakeholders as professional advocacy. These quests enfranchised them professionally in both clarity and confidence in their work.

Teaching is not a passive endeavor and neither should teacher learning be confined to "receiving, retaining and returning" what others prescribe for teachers. As one of my participants asserted, "you can't really communicate with anybody about something until they have experienced it themselves ... to find the truth." We need to disenthral ourselves from past dogmas or ways of defining teachers and teachers need to also task themselves to re-conceptualize teaching to assist in meeting the challenges of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Anything less, Kincheloe (2012) argues, means "deskilling" teachers, viewing teachers as "blue collar workers, passive recipients of the dictates of the experts...[disregarding] the special knowledge of those who actually do the everyday work" (p.2). Kincheloe advocates positioning "teachers as professionals who produce knowledge about their practice" (p. 2). This premise is supported by my research. Reducing teaching to ever smaller parts to study loses the holistic interactive and relationship context in which teachers have to function.

Improved judgment will make a difference for teachers especially with a better shared control of what teaching looks like. One promising approach for improving practitioner and researcher judgment is co-constructed knowledge, whereby participants and formal researchers cooperate to design a study and jointly interpret research data, unlike more traditional methods of researcher imposed or directed research. Participant/researcher co-constructed action research practices have academic support as a method to enfranchise excluded groups to have a voice in

understanding their particular challenges and needs (Gill, Purru, Lin, 2012). Participatory co-constructed action research is when participants "want to see and implement change in their lives" (Gill et al, 2012, p. 8). It is similar to the old maxim, give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. "By stepping in one another's shoes, we can understand each other's reasons for action and come closer to seeing each other's ventures as part of a reasonable project that can be understood and interpreted from the inside ... rather than a ... phenomenon to be explained, predicted and managed" (Kristensson, 2014, p. 21). Teachers are in a better position to share as experts when teaching from the scholarship of practice perspective with due consideration for the complexity of their work and the actual contextual lived experiences of the students they face each day in class.

Connecting and sharing such pragmatic scholarship as a practice of scholarship elevates each teacher to the sensible status of a self-directed professional to consider what they learn from practice in the light of what their research is illuminating. This blend of inquiry and interpretation of teaching was apparent with the participants in this study. This leads to broadening their professional repertoire to respond to diversity, and to creating their own teaching methods for a variety of contexts as necessary. Teachers are then able to, with greater awareness, base their teaching on connecting what and how they teach with the why, when, where and who. This is the practical wisdom of *phronesis* based upon an alliance of scholarship and practice for quality and expectations. It is deciding upon doing the right things right based upon professional self-determination and what is perceived as success for a student, which is the ultimate purpose of teaching.

Without such professional regard, teaching is reduced to a dependence on the handouts from experts and authorities as passive recipients of knowledge. In my study, teachers relied on

creating their own understandings of teaching from the communal experiences and knowledge around them. Such understandings were based upon engaging with their pertinent professional inquiry needs and what they could gather from scholarship. It is the scholar-practitioner paradigm that connects "formal knowledge" with the real world of teaching as practice, purpose, ethics, relationships, emotions and values. The "essence of professionalism" is not value free and the distinguishing characteristic of a professional enterprise is "commitments must be morally legitimate and pursued in morally legitimate ways" (Kristensson, 2014, p. 19). It is a bridging of reasoning and intuition, of perceptions of communal objectivity with individual subjective partiality and preference. It is teachers being detectives in bringing a case to their court of classroom realities in constructing an understanding of teaching. The banality of teaching is when teachers are put into positions that encourage their unthinking conformity and imply an inability to judge the significance of their actions.

## **5.8 Implications for Orienting Policy**

Policy goes beyond actions, as policy begins with a value or point of view. Gandhi defined policy as a "temporary creed liable to be changed." Teaching perspectives can be considered as implicit policies held by teachers. To change such tacit policies or perspectives requires transformations in thinking and alterations in the doing. Teachers to better understand their teaching develop their expertise based upon years of gathering practical evidence built by way of an inquiring open-mindedness. Over the years, beliefs may change when pragmatic evidence accumulates and conceptual wisdom, often arising from hindsight, supports the development of other teaching ideas. It is a very human and personal enterprise embracing both intuitive and consciously analytical thinking.

Such wisdom goes beyond the machinery-like utilitarian existence of schooling to an aroused moral consciousness of purpose, of contributing to the greater good as the teacher conceives it. Externally motivated policies that manipulate methods without due consideration of teaching cultures and change will be eventually drowned out by the complexities, contexts and pressures of teaching. Teachers are unlikely to readily abandon the idealism of humanity and the personal in their teaching in favor of rules measured by technocratic objectives of operational character. Their sense of calling as a profession – the values, feelings, emotions, wishes, personalities and purposes - is not ultimately determined by narrow testing mandates as measures of worthy ends. In teaching, the technocrat is trumped by the idealist. Teaching is more encompassing than just data, and so too must policies purporting to impact supporting teacher learning. Actions emerge from ideals and ideals therefore have much power. What is held as truth, by explicit or implicit policies, must deal with such power.

A helpful conceptual lens for looking at power and control is the structuration theory of Giddens (1984) as described by Lamsal (2012). Structuration theory refers to the interaction between human agency and social structures. Social structures are collective societal forces that reinforce and reproduce the social order of traditions, customs, habits, institutions and generally established ways of doing things. Human agency describes the human knowledge and choices that create society's structure and the inventions, values and norms that either constrain roles and limit freedoms or alternately provide impetus to facilitate action for change. Change comes about through ignoring, replacing or reproducing different ways of being and doing (Lamsal, 2012). In other words, our choices create the agency for change or constrain it.

Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) argue in *The Fourth Way* that due to human agency our educational social structures, allied to prevailing society norms, have changed since the end of

World War II. Each of the first three Ways had its strengths and limitations arising from its structures. The First Way's strengths were its spirit of innovation and inquiry that energized teacher autonomy while it succumbed to a lack of cohesion and inconsistency. The Second Way's resolve to address inequitable achievements and a desire for coherence, outlined in *A Nation at Risk*, was at the expense of increasing standardization, marketplace orthodoxy and loss of professional creativity in an accountability "discourse of disgrace." The present Third Way aims for "the right combination of market pressures, government guidelines and site level resources" (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009, p. 7). This is described as a middle ground to balance between top-down and bottom up initiatives to inform performance and partnership. The Third Way as operationalized is surrendering its original ideals of autonomy as responsibility.

Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) shared that the Third Way's principle of innovative development of strategies has yielded to an autocracy of top down delivery. Educational governance has confined to schools and teachers technocratic test based calculations of student progress targets and achievement gaps to resolve moral and societal issues of inequality and social progress (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Prescriptive fidelity to managerially contrived professional learning communities are directed to satisfy achievement targets without inspiring purpose and ownership (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). These structures have defined a different orthodoxy than the ideals originally inspired by the Third Way.

To address these concerns and build upon historical legacies, Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) propose a Fourth Way. The Fourth way addresses educational purpose, principles of professionalism and catalysts to improve coherence in building and sustaining teacher participation. The democratic and professional themes that arise from these historical experiences, as apparent enduring values amongst teachers across the decades, are worthy to

include in any policy initiatives pertaining to how teachers construct an understanding of teaching.

Democratic themes provide opportunities for creative thinking and expressive teaching as occasions to exercise judgment. These certain priorities and generated truths belong to everyone as a matter of input. Professional themes afford support for a commitment to expertise and ethical means-ends behavior which surfaced in this study. Both themes encourage attention to the challenges of addressing the social justice and equity challenges present in education and in the world. Democratic and professional values emphasize hope for inspiring teaching as a process of building expertise as well as interdependent partnerships that enhance teacher learning. Constructing an understanding of teaching takes years, based upon developing good judgment, within the idea that no teacher or situation is an exact copy of another. Self-expression as a dimension of understanding teaching is a critical precursor in self-actualizing professionally in terms of beliefs, intentions and actions.

## **5.9 Policy Orientation Themes**

In suggesting themes for policy orientations as a result of this study, with the above mentioned policy discussion and caveats in mind, policy aimed at teacher learning needs to consider the following guidelines and questions:

### **5.9.1 Democratic Collaboration – How can we work together?**

1. *Subsidiarity principles* inform policies that work *with* teachers rather than *to* them.

Subsidiarity principles empower professional work. Managerial or administrative mandates would provide the resources and working conditions to best support teachers in their immediate work. Diverse learning situations require teacher discretion and wisdom to



choose how to best implement decisions at the teaching level. Supportive cultural conditions promotes professional growth and self-actualization, while deficit driven short term productivity objectives do not — it creates survival circumstances as all schools are at different places in terms of needs. Subsidiarity principles are integral to teaching.

2. *Actions complement beliefs* so knowledgeable policies must recognize that teacher convictions and values drive policy implementation in spanning intentions to actions. Policies as expressions of beliefs must transparently inform and consult to develop common purpose to encourage support and engagement by teachers. Beliefs and values are powerful arbiters of practice. Having a say in what you will be doing and why is an essential aspect of self-expression and policy implementation. Consideration should be given to acknowledging a plurality of teaching perspectives as lenses to interpret policy.
3. *Cooperative cultures* apprise policies so that the teaching community and administrative worlds do not exist as segregated distrusting solitudes. Instead, cooperative interdependent principles connect them as working partners to facilitate understanding. Traditionally, we fragment our classrooms and schools into autonomous silos. Much effort and time is needed to unravel such stubborn systemic Gordian knots with necessary supportive structures. Cooperative cultures would entail *shared*, not autocratic-like, goals for individual and group accountability. Collaboration skills would deal with conflict resolution and the group processing of progress towards meeting challenges and fostering relationships. Cooperative cultures would tend to flatten group hierarchies in redistributing power and improve initiative. Initiatives similar to networks of joint lesson planning, teaching and peer review would enhance cooperative opportunities and collective wisdom.

4. *Expressing humanity* would involve policies addressing the human condition more than numbers thinking. Technocratic thinking has narrowed the concept of education to productivity principles. Humanitarian thinking needs to widen the purposes of education to include other ethical commitments for teaching. Teachers have an ethical contract with humanity not just test taking results. Rather than testing intended to publicize deficits and coerce and humiliate uneven contexts, frequent formative individual assessments could be favored to design instruction and monitor progress over time as criteria referenced measures.
5. *Reciprocity* would involve teachers and others acknowledging effective communication to “seek first to understand, then to be understood” (Covey, 1989, p. 237). The different ways to conceive of and understand teaching in terms of beliefs, intentions and actions would present alternatives as options for consideration rather than just proselytizing specific solutions. Teaching challenges would be considered within the overall panoply of the richness of education. Exchanging the different ways of understanding with respect and consideration builds mutual trust.
6. *A plurality of dialogically determined purposes and communicative methods* would be transparently regarded by policy makers as a multi-faceted strength for improving the perceptual resolution of teaching. Avoiding the oversimplification of teaching would help more sharply define and display its richness to meet educational challenges. Such policies would coincide with continuing public discourse regarding the multiple purposes of education both in its collective intents and its individual results. Due to the complexity of contexts, content, practices, ideals and relationships involved in teaching, the plurality of

outcomes for teaching require policies that identify teachers as professionals and not mere technicians. Professional judgment and talents are necessary to what Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) call “moral imperative realized”, actions that have an impact and make a positive ethical difference.

### **5.9.2 A Professional Approach – How can we support further learning?**

1. *Reflective practice* policies would acknowledge that most teachers’ learning is from reflexive and progressive metacognition regarding their practice. It is learned through the experience of doing but with the time to reflect and assess after the fact. Teacher professionals must acknowledge that the public expects them to apply their expertise based upon character and competence. In order to improve their skills and understanding of teaching, teachers should continually reflect and act in a positive and constructive way about their practice. Professionals identify key areas of need for attention and action as part of their role and professional purpose. School jurisdictions need to build time into, and not add on to, the working day on a weekly basis to facilitate collaborative teacher time for reflection and inquiry as a primary initiative.
2. *Leadership* is the responsibility to advocate for what you see as needed. Benjamin Franklin once said something related, “Make yourselves sheep and the wolves will eat you.” Those furthest away from the daily familiarity with teaching are usually dominating the policy agendas. Teachers must become strong advocates in word and deed for expressing the needs of education from their intimate knowledge of it. Few can speak for them — not policy makers, politicians or academics. Action means leading by sharing teacher insights with other teachers and other constituencies as agents, not

followers of change. It is not just a matter of pointing fingers at other external inadequacies, but at looking as well at what collectively and individually needs to be done by teachers themselves to further their expertise.

3. *Fellowship* would recognize collaborative partnerships and companionships necessary to support teacher learning. Trusting sociability enhances the propensity to engage due to the cohesion of the group. A professional approach means that the learning culture of schools needs to be emphasized over the systemic part — the transformative over the transactional — which much of pressured production line teacher practice does not at the present time. Teachers need to gauge their practice based upon introspection with peers. Promoting and supporting opportunities for teachers to discuss the merits of their work in teacher peer forums become matters of common practice by working interactively as teams within or between schools. Professional values guide thinking for teachers to facilitate the collaboration conducive to professional practice.
4. *Invest in collaborative PD* policies to encourage the ways most teachers apparently learn by working with each other or by learning from one another. Funding to provide further collective learning time during the work day is needed to support the work of teachers in improving their expertise. As the wood cutter lamented of no time to sharpen his saw, teachers need such time, perhaps upwards of 20% of their timetable, to work with each other in areas of common interest and endeavor. Teamwork on the side when time can be found, rather than top billing at center stage, sends a strong cultural and systemic message, that teacher research and development is not a top priority — the scholar/practitioner is a good paradigm to advocate for in building long term capacity.

5. *Specificity in diversity* policies would recognize that teachers are pragmatic learners, building a repertoire of strategies and techniques based upon particular situational needs from collective connections. From mediating past practices to creating new improvements to attend to current situations, further teacher learning comes from contextual reflection within the framework of teacher collective awareness. Teachers need both discretion and a sense of professional obligation to pursue teacher learning depending upon areas of interest and expertise to meet needs at specific work sites.

Table 5.1, *Policy Themes that Support Constructing an Understanding of Teaching*, catalogues how these orientations to policy would support teachers in constructing an understanding of teaching as determined by this study through the Dimensions of Practice.

**Table 5.1 Policy Themes that Support Constructing an Understanding of Teaching**

Policy Theme	Processes	Interdependence	Judgment	Self-Expression
<b>Democratic Collaboration</b>	✓ Subsidiarity	✓ Cooperative Cultures ✓ Reciprocity	✓ Expressing Humanity	✓ Actions Complement Beliefs ✓ Plurality of Purposes and Methods
<b>Professional Approach</b>	✓ Specificity	✓ Fellowship ✓ Invest in PD	✓ Reflective Practice	✓ Leadership

## 5.10 Implications for Practice

I began this research with an orientation of trying to fix something — why many teachers did not immediately adopt practices expounded by research to be effective in improving student learning. I desired to study further knowledge of how to bring more teachers on board with researched practices. Through the process of this research the answer came, surprisingly, not in some sophisticated transactional approach I initially thought it would be, but in my altered conceptualization of how teachers learn. In fact, my orientation to this question was the initial hurdle to overcome for answers. I was absorbed not with what teachers were interested in, but in getting them interested in what I sought to do or thought what they ought to do.

My earlier reflections in this chapter share some of my present conceptions of teaching and how these teachers went about constructing their understandings. It is similar to Brown and Moffat's (1999) assertion of the learning journey being one of insight and transformation as "arriving where we started and knowing the place for the first time" (p. 146). The answer to my question is an unexpected reconsideration of the understanding of the complexity and multiple interpretations of teaching. I ended up comprehending as much about me as a professional in the course of exploring this research question as I did about the research participants. This reassessment is similar to a film described by Palys (2003). In the film, *Passenger*:

A journalist visits a remote desert village to make a documentary about one of the peoples indigenous to the area. He is surprised to meet someone who, after travelling extensively in the industrialized world, returned to become a respected Elder in the village of his birth. The journalist asks how this man's view of his people changed after being exposed to life beyond the dunes. After some reflections, the Elder replies, "There are perfectly satisfactory answers to all of your questions ... But I don't think you

understand how little you can learn from them ... Your questions are much more revealing about *yourself* [italics in original] than any answers would be about me." The scene ends when the Elder turns the camera around so that it looks toward the journalist asking the questions. (p.3)

What did my research question, *How do teachers construct an understanding of teaching?*, reveal about me and my practice? Certainly, being exposed to the life of graduate school beyond the dunes of everyday teaching, I became better acquainted with other outlooks to interpret teaching from what I had formerly conceived it to be. I became intrigued enough to disentrall myself of what I believed to be the legitimate truths of teaching by opening up a space to explore practice from the point of view and interests of other teachers. I had been consumed with Slavinian (2002, 2004) ideals that research would discover the best ways to teach. This continued my youthful fixation of study and examination of the world about us to bring order to disorder, coherence from chaos and certainty from uncertainty. I had uncritically accepted the notions of education and teaching placed before me by outside officials and experts, as I had been successful operating within it. I unconsciously became a convert of technocratic management (the system calls it leadership) "to make individuals 'want' what the system wants to perform well" (Funnel, 1995, cited in Poole, 2008, p. 26), by "receiving, retaining and returning" a standardized view of teaching, albeit with mixed results.

The beliefs that drove me were chiefly implicitly held, concealed and unexamined, so my intentions became inflexible and unyielding and my actions habitual. Olson (2004) opened a conceptual window of the importance of human perceptual subjectivity where beliefs and assumptions that impact reality change over time. My logic around educational objectivity was in essence subjective, existing alongside other understandings of teaching. Systems theory

contributed to this insight that linear thinking was only an etching in a moment of time that tried to explain very complex interactions and possibilities. I inquisitively had pried open a Pandora's Box of perceptions that required renewed thinking.

Fundamentally, I still find the world of teaching a bit of a paradox. Education has democratic ideals within an authoritarian system. It requires professional judgment to deal with complexity, but often espouses constricted or routine-like schemes to attend to such diversity. Its tendency is to homogenize heterogeneity, yet champion heroic individualism in getting the leadership job done. It systemically tends to exclusive views of educational purpose and teaching among a plurality of feasible choices. Teaching requires long term capacity building, but is rated upon short term results. The system advocates for collaboration in improving teaching, but structures the system so teachers usually work and often struggle alone. Schooling cultures are what determines teaching, yet we persist on emphasizing or revisiting teaching tactics to change it. Schools champion the building of character, yet are ranked almost exclusively on academic achievement. Educational goals are ultimately about improving humanity; however, schools predominantly function as a factory system where compassion and individual attention are hard to come by in a timely, helpful and sympathetic manner. I could go on. As you can see, I still have much to understand about teaching and education.

So what are the new insights and greater awareness that transferred to my practice from my doctoral studies and thesis? Table 5.2, *A Principal's Continuous Learning Journey*, summarizes the main changes in practice. My pre-and post-research understandings are articulated within the Dimensions of how practitioners construct an understanding of teaching.



**Table 5.2 A Principal's Continuous Learning Journey**

<b>Dimension of Learning</b>	<b>My Pre-Research Understandings</b>	<b>My Post-Research Understandings</b>
<b>Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing techniques based upon research would improve student success.</li> <li>• My responsibility as a leader and principal was to persuade teachers that my research backed beliefs and intentions were necessary actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher engagement in adopting practices based upon research is dependent on the fit of such practices to the exigent needs of the teacher in meeting the specific challenges of their teaching situation.</li> </ul>
<b>Interdependence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher learning as formal and informal apprenticeship with current and former teachers and mentors</li> <li>• External academic research that indicated best practices would motivate teachers to adopt such practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher learning as formal and informal apprenticeship with current and former teachers and mentors</li> <li>• Teachers learn best by producing their own knowledge or research through the scholarship of practice in cooperation with colleagues near and far.</li> </ul>
<b>Judgment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are universal better ways to teach and formal research will discover them</li> <li>• Teachers were largely receivers of research</li> <li>• My leadership approach was framing educational change as a piecemeal problem in search of particular solutions.</li> <li>• Leadership as a director of teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboratively create various promising means to what teachers regard as ethical ends</li> <li>• The means and ends of teaching require the judgment of the individual teacher as a mediator in whether these practices suit particular purposes in the various contexts in which they practice.</li> <li>• Leadership as producer for teaching</li> </ul>
<b>Self-Expression</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewed teaching through positivistic and scientific rationales leading to best practices thinking</li> <li>• I needed to improve my referent authority as a knowledgeable expert in better telling teachers what to do about best practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View teaching as driven by teacher beliefs that engage teacher participation in personalized professional learning</li> <li>• The identity and integrity of the teacher needs to be a consideration in their teaching.</li> <li>• Teaching, like playing jazz, is as much about relating to artistry and soul as technique.</li> </ul>

Of what I now better comprehend about teaching perspectives and how teachers go about constructing their understanding of it, I try to act anew in my everyday practice. Teachers construct an understanding of teaching through the dimensions of interdependence, process, judgment and self-expression. As it relates to my practice, interdependence is facilitated by a more egalitarian school community of more open ended dynamic collaborative exploration, rather than ongoing principal transactional control.

Although effective leadership is likely contextual to the needs of the group — one leadership style, or perhaps person, does not fit all situations — my sense of the principalship is now more of an educational creative producer or cultural impresario. As a metaphor to describe a principal's role, I see the principal as less a film or theatre director, involved in the daily control of the creative elements of teaching akin to the directing of a film, and more as a producer, with general responsibility for the developing of the premise of the production and coordinating the logistics and resources to enable such a production.

A principal helps create the conditions for successful teaching by paying attention to the organizational cultural capacity for greater expertise. A principal helps set the cultural ambiance and resists imposing technocratic solutions upon the teachers who actually do the work. A principal enables the conditions and the talent to do great things, rather than acting like a director with the creative control of instructing and regulating the intricacies of what happens on stage. Teachers from this study actually served as their own directors, as well as actors and playwrights. Consequently, teaching is, by necessity, complex and creative professional work seeking out triumphant successful performances. Principals assist such productions to occur by coordinating and procuring human and physical resources, budgeting, scheduling and promoting and administering the school as a desirable place to be. Imposing on the self-initiative of

teachers in merging their multiple creative roles, as the play unfolds, is often seen as artistic interference and an unnecessary intrusion upon the presentation. If the production values are right, the shows are more likely to be hits. Teachers talked of supportive principals as beneficial, not interfering, ones.

Thus, the production values of their schools are more of where I think principals should focus their leadership time, in addition to their routine management responsibilities of keeping the enterprise functional and safe. By production values, I mean better understanding of both the intellectual intentions and compassionate characteristics of what their educational productions are about. Principals interpret the human condition and facilitate the telling of diverse stories about humanity to help people succeed. Each teacher and student is part of such variability. The challenge is getting the resources and time to enable great works from such diversity. In the role of producer, that is no small undertaking.

Obviously, principals will have some say into the types of shows they would like to produce according to their own values and beliefs. This is the great balancing act found in judgment, interpretation and communication. Principals need to acknowledge the necessity for much individual creative control to be in the hands of teachers, yet bounded by parameters of curriculum and audience (public) expectations. Facilitating ongoing inquiry with the teachers about the purpose of the acting (teaching) for audience enlightenment makes the cast aware of the mission, vision and values of the enterprise as shared ends through individually oriented means. This is not a singular, autocratic endeavor. It is one of a democratic nature and an ongoing consultative process, attempting to deal with respective individual success as well as a sense of community cohesion and well-being. From these discussions, teachers are best able to interpret the values into their teaching practice or assertively share any ethical concerns about

them for further potential inclusion or amendment. It is a searching of individual will for collective accord as conditions change. School communities acknowledge diversity towards shared purpose.

In constructing an understanding of teaching as a process, teacher learning requires some choice to encourage active participation. This study and Richardson (1994) found the focal point of teacher inquiries is their own practice and, thus, initially has a practical orientation. Later theory can assist by providing deeper conceptual understanding, but teacher learning is first experienced in the doing. The individual needs and circumstances of the teacher is the driving force behind what they wish to learn. Personal practice provides initial learning which is then filtered through the collective review of peer practices and general professional outreach to come to some usually transitory awareness. It is a progressive experience of understanding.

Collaboration helps in creating understanding by joint study and dialogue. Teachers have the collective human agency to change perceptions of teaching as a social structure by advocating for necessary changes in their beliefs, intentions and actions. The principal as producer, in a thoughtful questioning manner, can support such innovation for changing circumstances by championing the best of what teachers want of themselves and for their students.

In my application of these latest perceptions, teachers may have noticed some changes here and there in my practice. My efforts were slices of progressive reflection and learning – a gradual epiphany from an individual still not fully convinced that all of his past technocratic priorities were a sin. Specifically, I have, in democratic fashion, opened up some previously exclusive administrative functions to the input of teachers' professional judgment such as allocating and setting annual school budgets to support their teaching. School meetings operate

more like a cabinet meeting in listening to all perspectives and attempting to come to some agreement, rather than a traditional staff meeting of predominantly one way messaging and dealing with operational complaints. These small acts have helped to initiate democratizing the school culture, and I sense teachers feel more included in having input and a voice into the actual functioning of a more cooperative school. Little acts gradually create bigger constructions.

I continue my walkabouts to interact with the school community, determine needs and necessary supports, but now acknowledge and accept that there are ways to teach for other worthwhile intentions than the ones I particularly covet. Teachers do not now feel that they have to prepare a concept attainment strategy or enact inside-outside tactics as examples of the best teaching methods to encourage student thinking when I come into their classroom. I only residually hold the principal as responsible for pushing an agenda, now as producer rather than director.

Part way through my doctoral studies, I incorporated time within the instructional day for school gatherings, buddy class reading or daily class groupings for physical activity to create opportunities to free up teachers during the day. Teacher colleagues then were able to voluntarily get together for additional half hour times within the week in small groups for professional conversations. The intent of such learning groups was to ask questions about practice, to design and take some risks in doing inquiry research together. If teachers requested guidance, I provided examples of how it could look like as a possible option, such as joint lesson planning and teaching as done by the Japanese. I supported these peer mentoring opportunities through modelling my participation when invited by a group and by procuring the necessary resources and funding to facilitate such efforts. I encouraged participation in the voluntary provincial networks and annually participated with a school study group. I was content to know

that collaboration was more likely in the longer term to provide the dynamic support and encouragement to develop further expertise than a reliance on just solitary work. Teachers in my study had articulated how such partnerships assisted them in their professional growth as a matter of individual initiative.

In learning about teaching some sheltered, reflective individual and collegial time is indispensable to facilitate developing understandings of teaching. Such formative thinking, sharing and feedback provides the confidence to contribute to peer reviewed interactions and communications or more public forums. I encouraged the more confident teachers to share their knowledge as a regular agenda item at staff meetings. If more experienced teachers took risks, then others gave themselves permission to accept the challenge, which was something likely to eventually become a professional norm. This encouraged groups of teachers to join together due to personal and professional affinities to overcome teacher discomforts with this more public process of sharing teaching. Protocols were developed for respectful and inquiring participation by staff members. I welcomed opportunities for teachers to share their student progress inquiries as part of invitational professional non-directive coaching conversations. To improve my abilities on a weekly basis, I joined a provincially networked coaching group with other principals to practice and hone our skills.

Importantly, I became less an acolyte of district and provincial initiatives without critical thought. I now, for example, look at the new B.C. curriculum proposals through the eyes of my own research and experience. The Ministry's plan is to provide for a "more flexible curriculum that prescribes less and enables more" by way of a few core competencies and big ideas. This seems a fit for having teachers with more creative control over what they do.

Knowing that teachers are like snowflakes, in my recent schools I do not expect teachers to move uniformly on any school or district initiative. Teachers are encouraged to start small with what makes sense and is practical for them to do. Teachers need to professionally personalize what they teach and how they teach based upon why they teach. Staff discussions take the form of not telling what to do but of possibilities of what to do and why. Implementation became not a template, but an interpretation to fit our school circumstance. Professional judgments decided how best to incorporate incremental adjustments based on what their students needed. Using good judgment entails sharing your thinking and acting, by responsibly exercising your freedom (Coulter & Wiens, 2002). That is how initiatives are adopted, improved, adapted or sometimes eventually discarded as a social construction.

As someone who benefitted from informal apprenticeships and mentoring prior to doctoral studies, the idea of producing understanding from deliberations as well as being the recipient of shared knowledge was not new to me. However, the concept of scholar/practitioner was an innovative notion to me that made sense. It combined my values in research and evidence alongside the practical findings that arise from the acts of teaching. This composite paradigm of teacher as researcher bridged the gap of theory and practice as a touchstone of my current professionalism.

Near the end of a professional career, I look upon this study as a new lens to discern my habits of mind. As I recollect the 14 schools of various sizes and descriptions that I have worked in over these three past decades, with hundreds of teachers and thousands of students, I cannot clearly recall most of my past words or remember all those long ago faces. I can feel, however, the level of success I sensed in each of those schools to a lesser or greater degree, even over the passage of time. I recall the past, not sentimentally, and view the future with the vitality of an

ardent educator, ready with the recursive enthusiasm of some new and continually shifting awareness, to go forth and change the world in some small better way.

Looking back, I can see the teacher with the dramatically folded arms across her chest. I now realize that effective teaching practices are contentious. The challenge is not pointing out her misguided ways in some patronizing fashion. Rather, it is determining if such resistance is unthinking habit, or is conviction due to her beliefs and intentions. Teachers as professionals may reject certain perspectives and methods, but it should be done from the persuasion of high ethical ground. Explaining the why, as well as the how, of what works is the beginning of a professional dialogue, not reducing or limiting your practice to those things you already know to confine your teaching repertoire and possibility thinking as a matter of personal convenience. Teaching has virtuoso elements, similar to playing jazz, cooperative partnerships, decisions about different paths and expressing your humanity, but critically it depends upon having a high degree of awareness about your practice. Teaching is not mundane habitual work. Successful teachers are able to clearly articulate the ends and means of their work and are determined to shape the conditions of their work as best they can to those ends. Constructing an understanding of teaching is not just the business of teachers. It takes the rest of us to help create the conditions for improving the likelihood of their success.

What I have learned through this research is that teachers do build an understanding of teaching partially through the methods they can learn. Components can be learned or taught, although there is no single magic method or technique in this diverse teaching universe. Teachers can become better at anticipating and discriminating teaching patterns in any given situation to choose more appropriate strategies. As well, as my participants articulated, part of



teaching can't be taught but must be experienced in the doing. Much of teacher learning is contextual and not easily articulated or shared, but learned intimately through direct practice.

However, teacher practice is not solely shaped by what teaching strategies or tactics they can or can't do, something which is emphasized by the education system and by previous supervisory practices by principals such as me. Although appealing, utilitarian teaching techniques do not just make the teacher. Teaching is a humanistic endeavor, where a teacher's ideals, social skills, emotional capacities, caring nature, creativity and moral awareness are part of who they are. Often without conscious thinking, beliefs and intentions define teaching perspectives and build emotional attachments with learners. The depth of the teacher's metaphorical teaching iceberg is weighted by this humanitarianism and is fundamentally who they are as a teacher. The personal and moral faculties and judgments of the teacher are as instrumental to successful teaching as teaching techniques.

School systems tend to emphasize utilitarian futures over idiosyncratic human tendencies prompting teachers to be like each other. The vitality of teaching discriminates against such practices and therein lays the tension of teachers finding individual space for themselves in schools. What pervasively shapes teaching is teacher self-expression, who they are as individuals. Teacher self-expression determines mastery of teaching, not craftsman like teaching protocols mastering them. The cognitive, rational side of teaching is imbued with the humanism and idealism of living. To sift one out without the other loses the essence of teaching, which is the ultimate lesson I have learned about constructing an understanding of teaching.

### **5.11 Further Research**

The above conclusions from my research on how teachers construct an understanding of teaching is predicated on the supposition that teachers prefer to be identified as professionals

with the responsibilities of professionals and the self-determination aspects of professionals. This is a reasonable conclusion based upon my findings to date. An important corollary is how the public and governing bodies view teaching as well. I need to verify this professional supposition based upon further research as it is an integral value to what may improve the culture of teaching and the systems that function within it. A research question such as this directed to teachers should prove useful in answering whether teachers consider themselves as product oriented technicians, directed by others, or whether the context of teaching work requires a more professional approach, ownership of and respect for what teachers do and know. A similar study of perceptions of teaching could be done for members of the public and others in positions of authority. Any qualitative or quantitative data to substantiate or refute these orientations would provide useful information in policy and leadership decisions in education.

A further research question that would benefit from future study is the relative importance of structured and unstructured teacher collaboration in constructing an understanding of teaching. Past hierarchical or bureaucratic systems tended to favor structured or formal directed approaches, usually delivered and implemented outside the classroom, and often with expected linear cause and effect interactions. In this study, unstructured or informal approaches, usually by work within the classroom, appeared as often in teacher interviews describing how teachers constructed their understandings of teaching. Contextual, emerging student learning needs and collegial relationships, as well as ideals, are instrumental to initiating engagement and attention to what matters. Are teacher initiated informal approaches based upon inquiry and study as useful as more formal or structured approaches initiated by others who do not implement the recommended or directed changes? Is there a third or other way to do professional collaboration?

This current study was oriented to holistically explore and describe experiences and influences that constructed teacher beliefs, intentions and actions. Another more specific research focus on directly observing classroom practice would be helpful in extending this research. By having teachers describe their teaching actions on why they make certain particular teaching decisions would provide an intimate behind-the-mind view of immediate teacher considerations and reasoning. Having teachers substantiate or explain why they employ specific teaching strategies or tactics in their classrooms by viewing a videotape of them teaching a lesson afterward would be another way of explaining why, what and how they teach. The classroom full of students is the ultimate crucible or holistic pragmatic laboratory for direct observation of teaching. How and why teachers integrate outside knowledge into their practice, from whom or what and how they initiate and practice certain methodologies and teaching skills in various situations would be insightful information to have. This would provide an intimate and grounded view of classroom practice that would substantiate how teachers understand and construct teaching.

If the goal of teaching well is to interact in masterful and improvisational ways in the classroom so that it becomes like playing jazz, what are teachers thinking just before, during and after teaching decisions and actions are taken? A more detailed understanding specific to a classroom context of how teachers link their beliefs and intentions of teaching with their actions could be explored in this manner. It would be teachers' explaining in pragmatic terms their scholarship of practice and what is behind it theoretically or otherwise. Where did they get those ideas that made them teach that lesson the way they did? Is it from the framework or practice of a technician or professional that such decisions come? The classroom is an appropriate realistic setting and context to study for what teachers do in this way. Using this venue as a means to

have teachers describe their actions would be insightful as to what they regard as important and why. It would also provide evidence as to whether teachers are applying their teaching with the identity and role of a reflective professional, or whether they are applying routine production techniques more reminiscent of a technician's role and to what degree these roles are intermeshed or not. Role ambiguity leads to concerns and problems as well and may be part of our current educational dilemmas.

Further research into the implications of how pre-service education teachers construct an understanding of teaching prior to teaching employment would be equally useful in complementing the findings arising from this study of career teachers. Experienced teachers did refer to influences prior to entering teaching as underlying some beliefs and agency for their choice of career. Comparing and contrasting how pre-service teachers go about developing an understanding of teaching and what those understandings are would be useful information, particularly when significant numbers of beginning teachers drop out of the profession after just a few years. Such findings may provide insights for pre-service education and policy makers to help ameliorate this later situation in schools.

Finally, school administrator or leadership education would be well served by similar research into supervisory practices that augment or diminish support for how teachers construct an understanding of teaching. Enhancing administrative conversations about teaching beyond conventional notions of teaching practice, as primarily concerned with methodologies and what constitutes effective teaching, to more nuanced considerations of teacher identities and learning to teach would have helped a school principal like me be more worthy of the role.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Abigail

#### A.1 Demographics

Female; 32 years' experience; elementary; Coast Salish School District; B.A., M.A.

#### A.2 TPI Commentary



**Table A.1 Abigail's TPI Scores**

Tr: 27	Ap: 36	Dv: 31	Nu: 37	SR: 29
B: 8	B: 12	B: 10	B: 11	B: 9
I: 9	I: 12	I: 11	I: 14	I: 10
A: 10	A: 12	A: 10	A: 12	A: 10

Dominant Perspective(s): 36+ Apprenticeship & Nurturing

Recessive Perspective(s): 28 – Transmission

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;      Dominant:  Recessive: 

Abigail reported that the TPI as currently displayed at the time of the interview was an accurate profile of her teaching perspectives. Nurturing and apprenticeship were her dominant perspectives. Nurturing is her highest score due to her belief that caring relationships set the tone and context for teaching and learning. When asked about any changes in her profile over time, she responded that nurturing would likely have been the same. She acknowledged that her present recessive perspective of transmission would have likely been higher, or more important, when she started teaching due to her identity with transmission as the intent of teaching at that time. The Developmental and Social Reform perspectives would have been lower as she states that she was not as aware of these dimensions of teaching when she started out.

Abigail's TPI responses revealed some statements as being either strongly held as always or never guiding her teaching:

**Table A.2 Abigail's TPI Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Apprenticeship	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>To be a good teacher, one must be a good practitioner</i></li> </ul>	Always
Social Reform	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My teaching focuses on societal change, not the individual learner.</i></li> </ul>	Never
Nurturing	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My goal is to build people's self-confidence and self-esteem as learners.</i></li> <li><i>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I find something to compliment in everyone's work or contribution</i></li> </ul>	Always

### A.3 Teaching Influences

Abigail reported a number of family influences in shaping her perceptions of teaching. Her mother and her mother's friends were teachers so teaching was something she was familiar with as a career. "My mother was a teacher so I was always interested in school and what she was doing." Some of the routines and expectations of teaching were part of the conversations she heard as a young person. Parent expectations to go to university and complete a degree also set expectations and standards of success. "I think the main influence was just [an] interest in education and the expectation that I would go to university and that I would have a career." Her mother's role modeling of getting her own degree through summer attendance at university over a number of years was of primary importance in walking this talk. "She [mother] highly valued education so that made it important." Her church family, as Abigail calls it, was also instrumental in shaping Christian and humanistic values of good works, good habits, persistence, caring, and a strong work ethic.

"We had many difficult times in our family and I think the outside influence of being part of a church, like a church family, there was many people who showed interest through that. I think that extra encouragement continues to help you to achieve and not give up."

Due to these experiences, she was interested in teaching early on. She taught Sunday school in her church and spent many summers at bible and sports camps becoming acculturated to the processes of teaching, the camaraderie of social groups and the joy of learning. Her experiences as a camp counselor reinforced this prospect. Although marital discord and alcoholism fragmented her immediate family as a child, the role modeling of others around her, including relatives that showed an encouraging interest in her, set an example of positive living that was essential to supporting her and guiding her through these tough times.

“I think I spent a lot of time with other relatives; grandparents, etc. who showed special interest in me and gave me encouragement. I think they tried to build up my self-confidence and self-esteem. I think that helps.”

In her own schooling experiences, grade school teachers that showed a special interest in her and understanding of her family problems made a very favorable impression on her as a young person. The modeling of teachers going the extra step to support the personal side and providing encouragement continued to put teaching as a helping profession in a positive light. Such experiences influenced her to have an interest in education and set a personal expectation to go to university.

“I remember the teacher quite well because my parents were always working and she gave me special attention and let me stay after school and do tasks around the classroom. She showed special interest in me and encouraged me so I that that was quite influential. I think it is mostly teachers who showed a special interest or understanding when there are emotional problems or family problems that I needed encouragement and they noticed not just me as a student but me as a person...It usually involved I think around the interpersonal, like going that extra step and not just be a teacher but show the personal side or touch the emotional side of life.”

Although she took a degree in social work, she decided that a more proactive role in helping children would be the way she would like to spend her time. In her teaching practicums as a student teacher, discovering and seeing what worked with students, especially those with

challenges and problems influenced her approaches to teaching as to methodology and resources. “I specifically noticed students that seemed left out or were having behavior or emotional problems.” She later took more course work in special education, after teaching for a while to gain more theory to inform her practice and to have her view of practice inform the viability and usefulness of theory.

Teaching in her early years of practice was in multi-age rural schools where she became well acquainted with the continuum of learning and curricular expectations across the grades. Beyond the curriculum and different rates and ways of learning, she found that collaboratively working with other teachers in areas of common interest and challenge to be the strongest way for her to improve her practice. She found a degree of synergy from the combined efforts of teachers working on common problems.

“Well, I think when you go to workshops and courses you get ideas but it’s more working with other teachers on projects or coming together with common interests or challenges and working through that. Trying something, seeing how that went and then refining it and trying it again – that back and forth interaction – between teachers who have a common interest and are trying to further their practice and the success of the student. I think of this as the strongest way to improve teaching practice and the success for students...It is through working together and assessing and trying something and reassessing and continuing to work on it that real change comes about.”

Her Master’s degree taken in the latter part of her career with its conceptual perspectives arising from the study of research provided her further insights into the complexity of teaching. “When I did my research ... one of the things that came out was that teachers are very isolated by the very nature of teaching ... many teachers think they are the only ones struggling and they don’t realize that other people have the same challenges.” Reading brain research, combined with learning theory, along with the practical work of teacher/authors, like Faye Brownlie and Layton Schnellert, demonstrating how to pragmatically integrate the research into practice, were

important influences in her later career. During the last decade, a practical and local B.C. professional learning network of teachers participating in the Network of Performance Based Schools, now known as the Network of Inquiry and Innovation, supported and encouraged Abigail to continue to grow her knowledge and expertise. “You can feel very alone and if you don’t have someone to feed off it is hard for your own ideas to keep growing and developing as you need a little feedback.” The experiences arising from inquiry, teaching, reflection and persistence in adapting and changing the way she teaches over time to fit the contextual situation she finds herself in has significantly influenced her later teaching and learning.

Abigail also noted the role of being a parent with having your own children as developing people and their attendance and experiences at school as being a prominent influence on her own teaching. She grew in appreciation for the diversity and uniqueness of each child from the perspective of a parent and teacher. “I think just having your own children and realizing the challenges of being a parent and providing for your children and also that every child is different and has unique challenges and strengths and learns in their own way ... creates more awareness.”

#### **A.4 Transitions**

Her perceptions of changes or transitions in her teaching was one of a pattern of steady growth due to her being open to change and continual learning. “I think a lot of what I learned was through experience ... I have always been building on my knowledge and trying to find out more.” As she taught and worked with students directly, she grew to learn that teaching is more than just learning and listening. Student attitudes and character were impacted by their respective life experiences. She came to realize that she was helping to support a person grow not just in knowledge and academic abilities, but in improving relationships, interpersonal skills and ethical decision making.

“I was very interested to see how I could bring them [behavior and emotionally challenged students] more into the group and acceptance and building up their own self-esteem so they could achieve more and feel better about themselves. I look at the child as the whole person.”

She sees each student as a complete person not just the one learning reading, writing and arithmetic. Abigail remembers that reading research on how the brain functions, multiple intelligences and an emphasis on the processes in learning from rote practice to metacognitive thinking significantly shifted her ideas, intentions and approaches to teaching.

“As I grew in my understanding of teaching and learning, I realized it was not what the students were learning, other than basic literacy of course, but it was the strategies of learning and the processes of learning. That all became much more important and also the understanding of how the brain works, and how we learn in patterns, and how you're learning has to attach to something you already know in building connections to that learning to strength it and that sort of thing.”

Recently, the use of technology in engaging and supporting learning has also accentuated her shift from transmission to apprenticeship and developmental ways of teaching and knowing. These changes are corroborated by her stronger TPI scores in apprenticeship and developmental teaching perspectives.

“Also, with the Internet, there is so much information available now. How do we thoughtfully analyze what we are reading...not everything we are reading is true, so we have to think of how to analyze and understand it and how to use it; pushing our thinking a little bit more creatively.”

## **A.5 Teaching Intentions**

When she teaches Abigail's intention is to teach learning skills and strategies needed to advance student learning. She is aware of the curricular expectations for the ages she teaches and the diversity of learners before her. In order for students to learn and increase their skills she must be mindful of their prior learning and knowledge and build upon that. Frequent informal and sometimes formal assessments of learning help Abigail keep on track of what she needs to

do. Overall, she wants to emphasize reflective learners and in so doing she teaches skills for successful living. “You try to create an interest in learning as well as skills and the teaching of processes.”

#### **A.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Supportive influences mentioned by Abigail include continuous professional development and collaboration, her personal determination, her concern for her students as individuals and learning more about the culture of poverty to enable her to better understand and support the learning of children in such circumstances.

Influences that have hindered her alignment of intentions with her actions have been provincial politics that have given the impression teachers are not doing a good job leading to a lack of trust between the Ministry and teachers.

“We don’t have a clear vision although there is talk of working on that ... there is a lot of top down things going on in a sort of managerial way rather than an educational leadership way. This is quite discouraging.”

She finds that a lack of appropriate resources to support and teach all students, insufficient time with students so needing it and a dearth of collaborative time within the working day to work with other teachers to have hindered a match between desired intentions and tangible actions. Overall, she finds her working day consists of too many overwhelming demands placed upon her to support many needy students which lead to feelings of being unsuccessful or inadequate and an inability to fulfill her intentions in her teaching as she would like.

“Teaching is very intense emotionally, intellectually and, especially teaching elementary school, you have many subjects to prepare and integrate. The students’ needs and abilities can be a very wide range and so what you are trying to do on one end by challenging some students who can do more, you are trying to help other students who



are struggling. You are trying to create an interest in learning as well as skills and the teaching of processes. So, it is very complex because there are so many parts to focus on ...as you are trying to multi-task constantly and I think that makes it very challenging.”

#### **A.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Abigail believes in the importance of each individual and in helping each student to maximize their skills and attributes for a useful and meaningful life. “Like my beliefs in the value and importance of each person and my desire to help them maximize their skills and to have a useful and meaningful life for themselves and others.” As she experienced in her young life as a student, she wants the students in her care to feel that someone believes in them and cares about them. She believes that a little extra time spent with each student shows she is interested in them. This is certainly reflective of Abigail’s strong nurturing teaching perspective.

She believes good teachers persist on a challenge by working on the learning until a tipping point is reached and in her experience with student diversity and uniqueness you never know when that is. “Sometimes, when I am teaching, I just remind myself that I might not seem like I am making any progress at the time but I don’t know where the tipping point is in their learning.” She values clearly stated learning goals and criteria that students are involved in setting. “Setting criteria and the students’ knowing what the goals of learning are very important so they can help assess their learning. It should not be a mystery.” Students that are able to know what they need to learn, how they are doing and what they need to do next are part of the network learning she emphasizes. Students thinking about their progress and setting further learning goals are key to student engagement and success.

She endeavors to emphasize student learning conversations rather than just a reliance on teacher talk. She finds out much from students about how they are learning and how well they are learning from such student dialogue. Good teaching in Abigail’s view also gets students to

work cooperatively and with accountability. Connecting learning to much concrete teaching with manipulatives and practical things that have real life applications help engage learners in her experience. Teaching that emphasizes caring, skill development and inspiration to help kids learn is Abigail's idea of good teaching.

“You are staying open to your own personal learning but you are also trying to create that desire in others...I think you have to be open that there are different paths to learning and to developing that interest in learning and ways of learning. We are not all going to be learning in the same ways. I think that is one problem with schools that it is basically focused on only a few ways of learning and a few types of intelligence where there are many types of intelligences.”

## **A.8 Teaching Metaphor**

A helpful metaphor that illustrates the essence of teaching for Abigail is tending the garden. It has elements of hard work that you control and many other influences that are beyond the gardener's control that the horticulturalist must continually monitor and adjust for. Gardening involves having a suitable climate and environment, much like a class climate and environment, and appropriate cultivation or teaching practices for the plants or students to grow. In time the gardener knows how to respect the variety and needs of different plants for the right growing conditions as a teacher does for her students.

## **A.9 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Abigail reflected that most teachers do not think deeply about teaching as they are too preoccupied with trying to do it. “I don't think it [understanding teaching] is something that most people think deeply about. They are too busy trying to do it.” She emphasizes that what drives her in her teaching is her belief in the value and importance of each person and her desire to help students maximize their skills and to have a useful and meaningful life. Her hope is that

each student can think back that someone believes in them and cares about them. She indicates that if you cannot connect with a student it is increasingly more difficult to teach them successfully. You need to take the time to connect and to show interest in each student. She reemphasized that you do not know where the tipping point is in learning for each student and that caring, skill development and inspiration are key themes for student success.

“In the future maybe they will look back and think someone believed in me and cared about me. I think it is the caring part as well as the skill development and inspiration that go together to help children with their learning.”

#### **A.10 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Abigail’s dominant perspectives are nurturing and apprenticeship while her recessive perspective is social reform. Her early childhood experiences with supportive family members and school teachers taking a personal interest in her helped her through difficult family circumstances. Her belief and values around the importance of each individual is likely influenced by such formative role modeling and hence a strong pre-disposition to a nurturing perspective on teaching. Her strong apprenticeship perspective of teaching is likely influenced by her belief in continual learning and the job embedded nature of where most of that learning occurred. She highly values collaborative practice in learning with teachers. The influence of becoming a member of a learning network of teachers further enhanced this perception of teaching as being highly beneficial and supportive of her in her practice.

The recessive perspective of social reform comes from her focus on individual students and their achievements and success rather than overall societal change. Her idea of positive change is in the success of each of her individual students. She is dealing with each starfish on the beach.

## Appendix B: Beatrice

### B.1 Demographics

Female; 20 years' experience; elementary; Coast Salish School District; B.Ed.

### B.2 TPI Commentary



**Table B.1 Beatrice's TPI Scores**

Tr: 31	Ap: 36	Dv: 33	Nu: 38	SR: 27
B: 12	B: 13	B: 14	B: 14	B: 9
I: 9	I: 11	I: 10	I: 13	I: 9
A: 10	A: 12	A: 9	A: 11	A: 9

Dominant Perspective(s): 37+ Nurturing

Recessive Perspective(s): 29 – Social Reform

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;      Dominant:  Recessive: 

Beatrice reported that the TPI as currently displayed at the time of the interview was an accurate profile of her teaching perspectives. Nurturing was her dominant perspective. Nurturing is her highest score due to her belief that there are reliable adults in student lives who really listen to kids. Apprenticeship is also high due to her belief that it is important to help students to know themselves better in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Beatrice emphasizes the importance of role modeling for students which is also an apprenticeship attribute. In Beatrice's view the building of schema for kids is a necessary foundation for them to understand the world. When asked about any changes in her profile over time, she responded that apprenticeship, developmental and social reform perspectives are likely higher now. She is more aware of apprenticeship, developmental and social reform as ends of teaching now than she was at the start of her career. Transmission she reported would have been higher at the start of her career due to her experiences to that point in time and the emphasis on curriculum expectations when she was doing her teacher training.

Beatrice's TPI responses revealed some statements as being either strongly held as always or never guiding her teaching:

**Table B.2 Beatrice's TPI Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Transmission	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Learning is enhanced by having pre-determined objectives</i></li> </ul>	Always
Apprenticeship	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Knowledge and its application cannot be separated</i></li> </ul>	Always
Developmental	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Teaching should focus on developing qualitative changes in thinking</i></li> </ul>	Always
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Teaching should be built upon what people already know</i></li> </ul>	Always
Nurturing	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>In my teaching, building self-confidence in learners is a priority</i></li> <li>• <i>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach</i></li> <li>• <i>People's effort should be rewarded as much as achievement</i></li> </ul>	Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to build people's self-confidence and self-esteem as learners</i></li> </ul>	Always
Social Reform	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>For me, teaching is a moral act as much as an intellectual activity</i></li> </ul>	Always
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My teaching focuses on societal change, not the individual learner.</i></li> </ul>	Never

### B.3 Teaching Influences

Beatrice mentioned the importance of her mixed socio-economic multicultural neighborhood where she grew up in Vancouver as opening her eyes to see the world in different ways – “I had been eating Kraft dinner and drinking Tang and all of a sudden ... I am eating Greek olives and Feta cheese, pistachio nuts and she [neighbor] is making squid spaghetti sauce.” She also recalled the importance of adults taking time to talk to her. She fondly recollected a journalist who lived nearby sharing his insights about the world. “I remember the journalist turning me onto this article he was writing about East Germany... [about] this person who was escaping East Germany by hiding in the wheel well of a car.” She also remembered spending summers in Ontario with an aunt who was a librarian. Her mother had attended private

school and was well versed in literature and the classics. Her mother talked about politics with her daughter and “she taught me to see the beauty of the world” from “a stained glass window or sunset.” So Beatrice regards her childhood as a varied and rich experience and consequently believes that such childhood involvements develop a rich schema of the world from which to grow on.

In her schooling, Beatrice remembers the kind affirming words and constructive suggestions of teachers that showed they liked kids and supported the role of imagination. “She [teacher] had a “kind of loving, warm spirit that really touched all of us.” She also fondly recalls multicultural lunches and activities in school. Another teacher was a creative and dynamic teacher who read literature with amazing accents and performed in live theatre in Vancouver. Other teachers negatively influenced her with demeaning behavior and comments that she still remembers as a bad feeling. “He felt nothing like telling kids that they were dumb.” An outdoor education program of cycling, camping, hiking, canoeing and so on she recalls as a positive influence on her conception of teaching.

Beatrice mentioned her teacher training as having some influence on her own teaching. She recalls the apprenticeship like experiences of nurturing sponsor teachers with caring relationships with kids in class.

“She [teacher] had a beautiful kind voice. She was constantly positive to the kids and I can honestly say she influenced me more than anyone else in teaching. I find myself talking to kids and I am thinking that is exactly the way [teacher] would have done it. I just felt so connected to her and I loved the way she taught. I totally internalized her behavior.”

Beatrice states that the practice of teaching impacts her ideas on a daily basis. “Every day I go away, sort of evaluating and analyzing, thinking what can I do next time round? I think

I have evolved quite a bit.” Professional learning experiences, especially those with kindred teacher colleagues, through in depth talking about practice and how to refine and polish it proved very motivational as well. “I was just hungry to have somebody to talk about it and collaborate ... throw ideas back and forth.” Widening the circle of engaging with more teachers to learn more from them helped Beatrice “recharge my batteries” and kept her “on the track of wanting to think about doing it better and making it more interesting and more successful for kids.” The influence of teachers who are able to interpret research into practical ways of knowing and doing in practicing what they preach – where intent is matched by actions – are inspiring mentors for Beatrice. “People have to practice what they preach.”

When discussing curriculum expectations, Beatrice did observe that “the whole way the system is designed has channeled my way of teaching” although she feels she has a lot of autonomy in teaching. She also mentioned the Canadian mosaic as a cultural system has had an influence on her teaching as she perceives them to be — a belief in social justice and safety nets. The decade of the sixties in which she grew up also mentioned as a big cultural influence on how she sees the world and experiences it.

#### **B.4 Transitions**

Her perceptions of changes or transitions in her teaching were of a gradual nature over time. For Beatrice collaboration helped raise the bar and encouraged her risk taking. “I think it would have been hard for me to do my thing if I had been all alone.” The limited ways schools emphasize for learning has also been a transition for her. The “school system seems to focus on such a narrow, tiny little grain of sand of who each of us is.” Seeing her future husband struggle in school with undiagnosed dyslexia made a big impression on her. “Seeing him succeed, but also struggle I feel like I understand kids who are struggling with learning a bit more.” Some

reflections about changes to her teaching were “more than pedagogy and mechanical hands on a system” but to “a spiritual, emotional level” based upon the influence of other teachers. She learned over time to improve her classroom management as an indicator of her teaching effectiveness through her classroom experiences and persistence. “You got to keep that radar on and deal with it.” Sometimes she acknowledged feeling overwhelmed on occasions and needed to rise to the occasion. “It’s been a struggle for me in teaching with all the materials being overwhelming for me. It is still a challenge but I am enjoying my job now more ...”

### **B.5 Teaching Intentions**

When she teaches Beatrice’s intention is to engage students and have emotional connections with them in order to teach concepts. She provides opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding in a variety of ways so each student finds some means of interacting with the lesson. “Every kid is such an individual complex situation.” She wishes to be a good role model to engage “enthusiasm towards learning.”

### **B.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Supportive influences mentioned by Beatrice include various mentors that were encouraging and supportive as well as her experiences with teachers as a student as has been mentioned. Kids need “reliable, stable emotional adult[s] that they can really count on.” She mentioned her teacher training as emphasizing too much on classroom management and not enough on what teaching is about. “I got a lot of theory at university.”

### **B.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Beatrice believes that first and foremost is the importance of an emotional connection with kids and creating a safe accepting environment of a community of learners. Emotional



safety is identified as good teaching. “I think it is super important for teachers to be good listeners so kids can feel heard. I want kids to feel special. I want kids to feel valued in the environment I am working in.” This sensitivity to kids is important for good teaching as a teacher’s learning journey may not be similar to those of her students. Good teaching for Beatrice is “creating an environment where you can help kids’ lives to be enhanced.”

## **B.8 Teaching Metaphor**

A helpful metaphor that illustrates the essence of teaching for Beatrice is the idea of a sea voyage setting course for a destination but having to adjust the journey according to daily conditions and circumstance in order to get there.

## **B.9 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Beatrice reiterated the importance of Canadian values and systems that influenced her belief in social justice and safety nets. The inclusive intent of Canadian culture and multicultural acceptance also framed her teaching. The decade of the sixties during her formative years which emphasized change and civil rights left an indelible impression on her. Her husband’s learning disability and his trials and tribulations in school and ultimately successful graduation with proper support and opportunity underlies her belief that schools can both hinder and help students’ succeed.

## **B.10 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Beatrice’s dominant perspective is nurturing while her recessive perspective is social reform. Her early childhood experiences with a supportive and diverse community and school teachers creating places of empathy in meeting the needs of students connects well with her nurturing emphasis. She remembers caring neighbors and teachers enriching her schema of life.

The benefits from teacher mentors and professional learning with colleagues also substantiate a high apprenticeship score. The recessive perspective of social reform comes from her focus on meeting individual student needs rather than overall societal change.

## Appendix C: Corrine

### C.1 Demographics

Female; 32 years' experience; predominantly secondary; Coast Salish School District; B.A., M. Ed.

### C.2 TPI Commentary



**Table C.1 Corrine's TPI Scores**

Tr: 35	Ap: 31	Dv: 34	Nu: 30	SR: 25
B: 12	B: 10	B: 13	B: 12	B: 9
I: 11	I: 10	I: 10	I: 9	I: 7
A: 12	A: 11	A: 11	A: 9	A: 9

Dominant Perspective(s): 35+ Transmission

Recessive Perspective(s): 27 – Social Reform

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;      Dominant:  Recessive: 

Corrine reported that the TPI as currently displayed at the time of the interview was an accurate profile of her teaching perspectives. She was relating many of her responses to teaching secondary French rather than her elementary library years. Transmission was her dominant perspective. Corinne noted her relative consistency between her beliefs and her actions as indicated by her overall scores. She was quite pleased to see that alignment. She further elaborated at some length about why her social reform score was much lower than the other perspectives. “[Beliefs] should not be the point of your teaching. The point of your teaching should be the curriculum.” This statement certainly is a reflection of her dominant transmission perspective. “Teaching French is not about changing society.” She did reveal, however, that towards the end of her career she was saying to her students, “This is not about French anymore. This is about responsibility, accountability [and] work habits.” She expressed being appalled at

the lack of effort, homework completion and inadequate attention of students in her classes in the latter part of her career.

When asked about any changes in her TPI profile over time, she responded that, “You get mellowed by time, hopefully. I was very black and white when I started as a young teacher. It was either right or wrong. Now you say this child tried hard and is doing the best they can.” Work habits became more important to Corrine than student ability at the end of her career. This is reflected in her statement, “They didn’t deserve a ‘B’ based on the merit of the quality of their work, but they worked hard and they did everything so let’s give it to them.” She summarized the changes in her teaching as, “I think I did change over 32 years to become more accepting. I was pretty rigid at the start.” Corrine commented that these changes over time to a more caring stance were due to “having a child of my own and attending PD. Society changes.”

Corrine’s TPI responses revealed some statements as being strongly held as always guiding her teaching:

**Table C.2 Corrine’s TPI Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Transmission	B	• <i>Learning is enhanced by having pre-determined objectives</i>	Always
Developmental	B	• <i>Teaching should be built upon what people already know</i>	Always
	A	• <i>I ask a lot of questions while teaching</i>	Always
Nurturing	B	• <i>People’s effort should be rewarded as much as achievement</i>	Always

### C.3 Teaching Influences

Corrine mentioned childhood, parenthood, teaching colleagues, some experiences with students, a few mentors, attending PD, her master’s degree and a changing society as influencing her teaching. Corrine reminisced on several themes brought out in a comment made by a PD

presenter. The comment was that “children won’t remember what you taught them but they will remember how you made them feel.” She recalls thinking at that moment, “Oh, oh, I don’t think I make my kids feel that great. I think I judge them too much. So it might be time for me to let go of that and try to be more supportive.” She went on to elaborate that, “I think it comes back to the way you are raised.” She recalls one school report card where she got with all ‘A’s’ and only one ‘B’ and her parents queried the poorer math mark. “I was criticized as a child because that was a way my parents thought would help me change.” She was raised with very high and “concrete” expectations. “It was either good or it wasn’t good. It was right or it wasn’t right.” She mentioned starting out her teaching career like that. She recalls from hindsight, “I would tend to criticize the kids thinking that it would make them strive to improve but often it doesn’t. It discourages them.” Although she sometimes still catches herself treating her daughter the same way much to her motherly distress, she is more mindful of looking at the good than just the bad. She describes herself now as a more encouraging person.

After 20 years of teaching, Corrine took her Master’s degree. She considers the learning influences from that degree to have “opened up my eyes.” “When I did my Master’s, resourced based [learning] and collaboration that was a huge change for me and shift in philosophy for my final ten years.”

Societal changes over her three decades also gradually influenced her thinking about integration and accepted practices. She recalled that when she first started teaching that smoking in the staff room was socially acceptable. Now it is proscribed. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Corrine led an unsuccessful campaign in her high school to get rid of junk food. A few years later junk machines in high schools were removed. She emphasizes based on her life that attitudes change over time. "Society changes and you just go along with it."

Corrine also states that society has become more accepting of people's differences and needs accompanied or led by the integration of all students into the classroom. She mentioned schools without wheelchair ramps or handicapped washrooms when she started and now they are mandated in all schools. "We have become a more caring society. We became more accepting of people's differences and people's handicaps." Such integration "makes us more aware of children's different abilities."

Her teaching experiences in the classroom have also informed her practice in relating to students. "When you teach, you encounter situations that change your perceptions." She recalled an experience with a Gr. 9 French student with very erratic attendance with a "bright green brush cut, spikey face and hair and piercings" that was an able student when she attended school. As a dutiful teacher she called the parent about her daughter's poor attendance and incomplete assignments. Corrine remembers the mom informing her that the mom had just got out of a rehabilitation program for her addictions and her daughter had been placed in foster care for that time. The mother went on to say that her previous boyfriend had also given her Aids and had abused her daughter. Her daughter was undergoing testing for Aids. The mother then continued that when she returned to their home from her medical treatment her boyfriend had left and cleaned out the house so she and her daughter were left sleeping on the floor in sleeping bags. Corrine remembers this extreme situation as "open[ing] up my eyes to a way of life kids were experiencing that was so far beyond my experience."

Corrine also recollected a couple of memorable teachers that she had that influenced her as "being truly passionate" or "spouting off words of wisdom." She realized that "there were people that could be totally inspiring." Due to such influences she thought, "I could teach other children and I could teach other children to love it too." Her practicum experiences also

provided her with some sponsor teachers that although now they are retired she still sees them. Their enthusiasm rubbed off on her. “They enjoyed what they were doing. They put a lot of time into it themselves so you could tell it just was not the job and then go home. It meant a lot more. I felt that way too.” The enjoyment of the work and sharing thoughts and resources with her colleagues she recalls as being very helpful. Overall, living life she states as an influence.

#### **C.4 Transitions**

Her perceptions of changes or transitions in her teaching were of a gradual nature over time although such realization was punctuated by certain events. Her experiences with her graduate work in reframing ideas around teaching, as mentioned, and her ongoing learning from her teaching experiences and the influences or role modeling of others were all moments when she realized she needed to change or had changed. The lives of her students influenced what mattered. She became more students focused and less subject focused over time. She moderated her adherence to standards from her earlier days to the present with more emphasis on student effort. Societal changes also provided a context for accepting and influencing changing attitudes and expectations.

#### **C.5 Teaching Intentions**

When she taught Corrine mentioned her intention was to “get kids to a good knowledge level’ and “teaching the curriculum” for an eventual government exam. “It was not to teach them to communicate [French] with someone on the street which would make a lot of sense. It was [to] get them through the exam with a good mark so that you might get a good scholarship and the Fraser rankings won’t put us at the bottom.” She acknowledges it was not preparation for life but preparation for an exam, a shallow measure of success. She was initially a big

believer in the “bell curve.” “A certain percentage would get an ‘A’, ‘B’, and a ‘C’... I was very old fashioned in that respect.”

## **C.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Supportive influences mentioned by Corrine include feeling autonomous in the classroom and never sensing any interference in her teaching from the principal, although the constraints of various exams shaped what she was doing. “I think generally speaking if you were doing a satisfactory job and weren’t sending too many kids to the office and the parents were not complaining it was good.” Outside influences framing her teaching were the politics of the Fraser Institute in their public rankings and the constraints or mandates of the Ministry of education regarding curriculum and exams. Sharing information and resources with teaching colleagues was considered very helpful and supportive.

## **C.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Corrine believes there is so much that makes up a good teacher. “In some teachers it is more of one thing than another.” Corrine cites being passionate about your subject so that sense transfers to the students. “Mastery is not as important as inventiveness in trying to engage kids. If you are not engaging them, it is hopeless.” She mentioned that when she started teaching she was not a master in the subject but got better over time. “[Teaching] gets better over time if you realize when things aren’t working and change them.” The experience of working with students influences your teaching.

“The kids got initially a different experience than what they would have later on. I think you have to be willing to be always learning as a teacher. Always prepared ...If that doesn’t work, I will try something different. Oh, this worked great. I will use it next year and adapt it a little bit. It is always an evolving thing.”



## **C.8 Teaching Metaphor**

A helpful metaphor that illustrates the essence of teaching for Corrine is the idea of a greenhouse once suggested by a student. “The point of the school was to nurture them. To give them what they need to grow. Some plants need different things than others.” Within this metaphor Corrine talked about the impacts of cuts to public education in attending to the needs of every child. “Sometimes you have to lump a bunch of them [students or plants] together and it is not always optimal.”

## **C.9 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Corrine warmly spoke of remembering those teaching occasions when students have shown they have been paying attention and respond in ways that impress the teacher in showing understanding of the concepts under discussion. “Wow! They’re listening and they got it and want to know more.” She found those moments very encouraging as a teacher when they were able to dig a bit deeper.

Corrine also mentioned the increasing challenge of trying to meet the needs of what appears to be a growing diversity of needs within a classroom. She cites the drawing up of various lesson plans to teach to this diversity within a classroom as very difficult. Most teachers she relates want to do a good job and the growing integration of students often with less than optimal supports and the increasing need to consult with support teachers and support staff within a working day creates time pressures for top performance. She mentioned a Grade 5 class she worked with in her final year of teaching with a boy in a wheelchair with specific needs, a Down syndrome student and two boys with severe behavior problems. The student reading ability levels extended over 7 years. The teacher being responsible for 6-8 different subject areas to meet curriculum expectations and individual student needs, all this within a 5 hour teaching

day and a “barrage of stuff coming down from the Ministry” with constant changes to this or that. She ends up stating, “It is very difficult to do a good job.”

### **C.10 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Corrine’s dominant perspective is transmission while her recessive perspective is social reform. Her childhood, schooling and teacher training all shaped her focus and understanding of teaching as largely transmission based. Her comments about the goals of good teaching strongly support a transmission perspective. The influences of government exams at the secondary level strongly influenced her perception that content had to be transferred onto a test done by a student at a high level of achievement as being the sign of teaching success.

The recessive perspective of social reform comes from her contention as expressed in her interview that schooling is about teaching the curriculum and not about changing society. Her idea of success due to her teaching experiences did however evolve over time to having a more nurturing perspective. Her TPI questionnaire did have her strongly support the nurturing belief that effort should be recognized as much as achievement. Her story as articulated shows a high degree of coherence between her interview profile and her TPI profile. Her statements also show that conceptions of and actions in teaching are from an evolving practice over time.

## Appendix D: Donna

### D.1 Demographics

Female; 12 years' experience; elementary; Coast Salish School District; B.A. B.Ed., M.A.

### D.2 TPI Commentary



**Table D.1 Donna's TPI Scores**

Tr: 28	Ap: 34	Dv: 33	Nu: 41	SR: 34
B: 10	B: 12	B: 10	B: 14	B: 11
I: 9	I: 11	I: 12	I: 14	I: 10
A: 9	A: 11	A: 11	A: 13	A: 13

Dominant Perspective(s): 38+ Nurturing

Recessive Perspective(s): 30 – Transmission

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;      Dominant:  Recessive: 

Donna reported that she was not surprised that her TPI came out high on nurturing. “I feel strongly that this is my style.” She mentioned, that although she came out quite similarly on the other four, she thought they would be lower scores. In particular, she indicated that “social reform is not my huge interest.” Donna also described some uncertainty about her transmission score by saying, “I am not sure if I actually do that or not ... I don’t stand and deliver content in the traditional way ... I strongly believe that the days of stand and deliver are over and meeting the needs of the new learner is through multimedia.” For Donna the learning outcomes are important but they are just guidelines. She reflected that her other teaching perspectives were much lower as “I am strongly driven in my teaching by meeting the needs of the learner at whatever level they come to me at...creating good citizens I believe is the goal of education not necessarily creating all scholars, the world needs productive members to sustain it.” Within the context of these points she raised, she otherwise thinks that the TPI was a reasonably accurate profile of her teaching.

When asked about any changes in her TPI profile over time, she responded that she was still likely very high in nurturing when she started. Apprenticeship nor developmental would not have been as high for the fact she was very new and did not have the confidence nor knowledge to apply these perspectives in any depth. “Over the years I get more confident in my teaching and in my ability to try new things and do new things; to develop those things [other perspectives] too.”

Donna’s TPI responses revealed some statements as being strongly held as always in her teaching:

**Table D.2 Donna’s TPI Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Apprenticeship	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>To be a good teacher, one must be a good practitioner</i></li> <li><i>The best learning comes from working alongside good practitioners</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
Developmental	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My goal is to help people develop more complex ways of reasoning</i></li> </ul>	Always
Nurturing	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>In my teaching, building self-confidence in learners is a priority</i></li> <li><i>People’s effort should be rewarded as much as achievement</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My goal is to build people’s self-confidence and self-esteem as learners</i></li> <li><i>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I share my own feelings and expect my learners to do the same</i></li> </ul>	Always
Social Reform	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>For me, teaching is a moral act as much as an intellectual activity.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I emphasize values more than knowledge in my teaching</i></li> </ul>	Always

### D.3 Teaching Influences

Donna mentioned as a substitute teacher she would go into so many new situations and be not fully aware of what to do. Eventually she started to believe in herself due to those

experiences to make the best of it. In the beginning, you are “failing more and you are walking into disasters more but you are actually learning and the learning curve is huge but you are not filling your bucket. You are not feeling confident until later when you can say, ‘Oh, remember when that happened. I know what to do now’.”

Her Master’s degree was also cited as a strong influence. She reported that, regardless of discipline, you become more confident within yourself the more educated you become. You become an expert in something. She cites seeing the same pattern in children too as they become more expert in something and, due to this, their confidence grows and they blossom. This encourages her students to try new things. After the recent completion of her Master’s degree she feels more confident to try new things. If it doesn’t work out she responds that it is okay. Unlike earlier on in her career, she does not psychologically beat herself up as “believing in yourself in the beginning there is not a lot of that.” Donna states that you learn by doing. You grow in expertise through trial and error. You start to learn patterns and expertise grows as does your confidence.

Donna credits her mom as an influence in being a powerful single mom role model and support. She believed in her daughter getting an education. It was a family value and expectation as well as financial backing that helped Donna. Donna cites the role modeling by goal oriented people as influencing her to want to achieve. “I was surrounded by people who ended up being very goal oriented so that made me want to have goals and want to achieve them.” She continues to surround herself with nurturing people and role models. “Maybe doing something that just makes you feel good was why now I come out as a high nurturer now because when you do something that makes you feel good then you feel good and so I surround myself with a lot of nurturing people.”

#### **D.4 Transitions**

Her perceptions of changes or transitions in her teaching were of a gradual nature over time. Donna cites learning from failures — lessons that did not work and learning from parent/teacher experiences. She realized over time that she could not please everyone so she needed personal guidelines and expectations. “You need to find out what is important and stick to it. You can’t please everybody.” By working in special education she knows firsthand that everyone does not learn in the same way and at the same pace — students were teaching her what works best for them in their learning.

“I realized that everyone does not fit the mold. Not everybody is going to come in there and be that student you can actually move from A to B and [it] is actually going to work perfectly. [In] special education I realized they [students] come in and they have no plans to go into any direction you want them to go. You have to walk beside them to figure out how to move them from A to B. So I realized that sometimes the student is teaching you. You are following them not you leading them. You have to give that up, the lead, which is hard to do when you are used to controlling the environment or your outcomes.”

Donna also mentions colleagues influencing her. Particularly teachers in the latter part of their career as being mentors and role models “still willing to try new things and experiment with teaching. If they are willing to do it, then why couldn’t I try new ideas or implement new programs?” The style of mentorship was cited by Donna as being influential. The helpful and supportive, not know it all approach, and relational good will encourages her to continue to work on the challenges of teaching.

“It’s like a friendship too, not this is something that you should be doing as your teaching sucks so why don’t you do this and your teaching will be good. It was more like I am expanding on my teaching and trying to make it better and if you are interested I’ll help you.”

## **D.5 Teaching Intentions**

When she teaches Donna's intention is to meet the expectations of the learning outcomes, particularly those global learning intentions that better the entire class. "Are they going to be able to do it and are they going to be able to learn what I want them to learn?" Making her lessons fun and extendable to life are also important considerations for Donna. She asks herself if the instruction is appropriate to individual learning needs and if she can differentiate and extend it to all her students. "Are the kids going to be able to apply it?"

"Nurturing ... is working with problems without fear or failure. So, I think that is my main thing," states Donna. "When I teach a lesson, I think that I do not want anyone to fail at this." She wants to keep all her learners motivated. "They come with the sponge ready to absorb." She admonishes all our judging of children. "So once they get judged, doors start to close and the learner shuts down." It is up to teachers "to make sure the window is always open ..."

## **D.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Supportive influences mentioned by Donna include the Internet and access to all the resources on it. She also cites research to keep learning fun and more successful. Hindering influences she has experienced are a lack of money and resources, including library books, computers, software, texts, science materials and the like. She also indicates that there are too many learning outcomes for the time available to do a decent job. Sometimes colleagues restrict what resources to use by making them grade specific like novels or science topics. The no limits to designated students in a classroom she finds makes teaching really challenging as well. Donna mentioned that due to the time and attention needs of other students, more gifted students are not being as well served. "You can't really extend activities and challenge them."

She mentioned the classroom teacher is also competing against more schooling opportunities such as online learning. “Where you actually take the child’s social opportunity to physically learn through something hands on [as in Kindergarten] whereas when they are at home they are on the computer.” Donna also cites other teachers not being willing to change their ways to meet learner needs as being a drag on the system. “Unfortunately, some people are not willing to change their way of teaching or delivery to meet the learner’s needs.” She also indicates that “the politics in this province is not lending itself to make us [teachers] feel good”.

#### **D.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Donna believes that “creating good citizens” is the goal of education. In order to do that she stresses that the child’s needs come first. She admonishes teachers who “don’t like getting out of your chair so you teach from a desk” as an example of a mentality that doesn’t put the needs of the child as the center of all. She cites the need for all types of teaching methods to reach different students in all their learning ways; visual, auditory, kinesthetic and so on. At the center of her teaching every time she does something she makes the learner the priority. “Are you putting the student or learner first or are you putting your own needs or the principal’s expectations or the parent’s needs over the learner.”

#### **D.8 Teaching Metaphor**

A helpful metaphor that illustrates the essence of teaching for Donna is the idea of a journey. Everyone does not have the same journey nor does everyone take the same path. Her comments about her teaching are certainly reflective of her journey in teaching wisdom and skills.



## **D.9 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Donna stated “every time you teach a child that is really challenging it shapes your understanding of the purpose of education.” Those difficult learners help you understand patience, acceptance and “help you understand your own weaknesses.” She cites students as finding them [teacher faults] before you might even acknowledge them or understand how to deal with such areas to improve. She calls this a self-reflection process. Challenging kids among some teachers encourage those teachers to rise to the needs to resolve the problems. Other teachers conversely tend to avoid or not challenge themselves to meet such situations. This is due to “you realize you yourself have issues too that maybe are around learning or education or around teaching.” Donna states that atypical learners have provided her with the “most profound learning and understanding of teaching.” She concludes by saying, “You better be making a difference in their life! Otherwise, you are wasting their time and your own!” In Donna’s view teachers are nurturers who put the needs of students first if they are doing it right.

## **D.10 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Donna’s dominant perspective is nurturing while her recessive perspective is social reform. Although social reform is low, she indicated she always views teaching as a moral act as much as an intellectual activity in her TPI which is a social reform indicator. She also regularly emphasizes values more than knowledge in her teaching which also is supportive of a social reform perspective. Donna is very aware “you can influence positively or negatively very easily with a child. The more vulnerable, even more so.” This is very consistent with the TPI nurturing profile and her interview comments strongly enforce this perspective. Donna describes teachers as being “usually nurturers. We are givers. We are not takers.” Putting the student first

is her mantra and in doing so, although she may not recognize it, she is at an individual level contributing to social reform by “creating good citizens” which is her idea of good teaching.

## Appendix E: Elise

### E.1 Demographics

Female; 25 years' experience; elementary; Coast Salish School District; B.Ed., M.A.

### E.2 TPI Commentary

**Table E.1 Elise's TPI Scores**

Tr: 31	Ap: 36	Dv: 32	Nu: 38	SR: 21
B: 13	B: 14	B: 9	B: 13	B: 8
I: 10	I: 10	I: 10	I: 13	I: 7
A: 8	A: 12	A: 13	A: 12	A: 6

Dominant Perspective(s): 37+ Nurturing

Recessive Perspective(s): 26 – Social Reform

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;      Dominant:  Recessive:

Elise reported that she was surprised that her TPI came out high on nurturing. She thinks this is likely due to the inner city school context of her present job. She does not think of herself as a nurturing person per se and believes if she was teaching high school content the perspective emphasis would likely be different.

“The kids I am working with come from such high needs and they are so high risk that engagement is really an issue unless you really develop a trust with the kids. That is a very delicate process and so I am very conscious of that in the setting I am in. If I was teaching high school, I don't think to would be to that extent. I think I would have focused much more on transmission knowledge, right?”

Social reform is low due to her dislike of her religious upbringing and the proselytization of the best way to think that is propaganda and orthodoxy. She dislikes absolutes and words like “always” and “never” in the TPI survey. She reports very high standards in the transmission perspective. “I really believe it is important for the kids to learn as much as humanly possible without compromising the nurturing.” The apprenticeship perspective she acknowledged was her second highest but one that she has not given much thought to before. “That really speaks to

me about my strong belief in teacher as practitioner. That is very, very important to me. That to me is more important than that nurturing thing.”

Elise wonders if her other perspective scores are low because of her dislike for the words “always” and “never” due to her family and church raising background. “I avoid these words because I think there are too many extenuating circumstances so my practice is always tempered by the extremes.” Elise further offers when discussing her developmental perspective that intention and reality are two different things.

“I am saying to myself that I try always. Do I get there? Usually...I don’t like that word, “always”, that it implies you are 100% conscious all the time of your intentions and motivations which I am not. I am not a perfect human being. When you are in teaching in the classroom as I do full time you cannot sustain that level realistically.”

Elise concludes her TPI comments by saying that her present teaching setting is like the ER of the district – a gigantic laboratory. She reports that she had to “shift my perspective in order to work in a way that contributes to the community and the kids. This would not be my profile at my previous school. It would not be my profile ten years ago.” Elise is very context driven. She is hyper vigilant so teaching models introduced are not contrived but a fit for the circumstances.

“It is completely ridiculous coming into a setting that I know nothing about and walking in and going by the way I am here to tell you how to be a community of learners by this model. It feels wrong...this goes back to my religious background, right? Dogma! This is how you shall think.”

She defines some teaching situations as a dictatorship by telling someone how to interpret life. Elise has a “hard time with approach of I will tell you what you should value because I’m right and you’re not because I am more enlightened.” She elaborates that proselytizing and orthodoxy did a lot of damage to her in her formative years with a philosophy of life drilled into

her that she eventually needed to step outside of and the transition was traumatic for her. She therefore has a hard time with the social reform approach as she presently understands it.

Elise's TPI responses revealed some statements as being strongly held as always or never in her teaching:

**Table E.2 Elise's Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Transmission	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Learning is enhanced by having predetermined objectives.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I want people to score well on examinations as a result of my teaching.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Apprenticeship	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To be a good teacher, one must be a good practitioner.</i></li> <li>• <i>The best learning comes from working alongside good practitioners.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
Developmental	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I ask a lot of questions when I teach.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Nurturing	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It's important that I acknowledge learners' emotional reactions.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I find something to compliment in everyone's work or contribution.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Social Reform	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My teaching focuses on societal change, not the individual learner.</i></li> <li>• <i>For me, teaching is a moral act as much as an intellectual activity.</i></li> </ul>	Never Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I emphasize values more than knowledge in my teaching.</i></li> </ul>	Never

### **E.3 Teaching Influences**

Elise's view is that your sense of the world is something that arises from your life.

Outside of her family impact during her formative and teenage years, Elise had the opportunity to work alongside of a consultant with a small group of other first year teachers. She found this apprenticeship model of having a mentor at your elbow supporting you in the classroom as a novice teacher a very foundational experience. "I have gone through various permutations and combinations and changes but that kind of support set the tone for how I taught in some regard.

My husband still uses a lot of what he was taught then the very same way.” She enjoys watching someone who knows what they are doing in the context of her work and learning from them. She mentions the Toyota model of constant improvement from the shop floor whereby mentors need to work on the floor with you within the constraints of your work site; otherwise she has little time for their advice. Research that blames teachers for not incorporating certain things from people who can’t walk the talk, similar to judging people like a movie critic, even those in prestigious positions, just does not persuade her.

Earlier in her career a former principal told her that she had an intuitive gift for teaching and she likely would spend the rest of her career figuring out what and why what she does works. “I really did not get it at the time but I think it is true ... mostly I have been impacted by what has worked with me in the classroom ... what I struggled with in teaching it is the things that taught me to be creative and organized.” A comprehensive and sustained PD program and curriculum packages to try in Edmonton Public Schools was influential in that she felt some worked and others did not.

She reads a lot of educational books especially those from practitioner mentors like Faye Brownlie, who are very practical at connecting the theory with the practice. Elise states that those who can do it and talk about it are very rare. Brownlie, Elise elaborates, is hands on and can tell you why it works and substantiate it with research to prove it as well as do it.

“She to me is a melding of the theorist and the practitioner. So, I think I am a blend of both. If someone is just a sheer practitioner, but doesn’t really understand it I find it a bit hollow. But if they are just a theorist and can’t do it in the classroom, I find that sad.”

She tires of people who don’t listen to people in the classroom. “Why are they doing what they are doing?” People don’t change because you tell them she says. “Change does not

come from the outside in ... people get pissed off because you are not picking up on their good ideas.” It becomes she reports me versus you again. “It’s like religion. We are part of the in group and you are not. We’re the enlightened ones and you are still in the dark.”

#### **E.4 Transitions**

Elise’s perceptions of changes or transitions in her teaching were of a gradual process over time. Elise states that in the beginning she was teacher centered – all about reactions, emotions and reflections on her as a teacher. “It was all about do the kids like me? Was I a good teacher? It was all about me.” Now in her current teaching Elise says it is not about her anymore. She describes her best teaching as being almost unaware of herself.

“What’s happening in the classroom, what’s going through the child’s mind, how I am reacting...it’s more of an intuitive kind of reaction. The flow. It’s kind of like the jazz thing. Things are going along and you are responding to what is going on in the moment. You cannot plan that. You cannot choreograph that.”

Elise further likens her sense of teaching to practicing for sports: “Are you going to make the save when it comes when it is necessary to make the big save?”

She states you can practice on your own but when you are in the classroom you just have to hope everything comes together. Elise elaborates that she spent a long time putting her philosophy and practice together as originally she mentions they were separate for a long time. Initially she describes her teaching as intuitive — what worked — and not much use for research as it felt like it did not have anything to do with the realities of the classroom.

She enjoys the intensity of her present work in an inner city school. She describes it as a “gigantic laboratory.” Elise finds working with a collaborative partner who believes in the growth in expertise paradigm and is able to understand the practical and philosophical nature behind what they do as very empowering. Working with colleagues that share common values,

approaches, intents and standards is very important to Elise. “It is really fabulous to be working with a partner right now — like I can’t even explain how important that is — that believes in the growth set and in the true working together of people ...” Elise further explained that carrying the burden for the total responsibility of students as a teacher is overwhelmingly stressful. Finally realizing that “I don’t have to do the whole thing by myself” is a “great awakening.”

### **E.5 Teaching Intentions**

Elise’s teaching intentions brings up the elastic image or metaphor for her. Engaging and stretching students to where she would like them to be each and every time she teaches them from where they are. She likens it to daily exercise practice in training or fitness. Some days you have to be more patient with yourself, sometimes you go backwards in terms of goals or targets and often you have to go slowly to end up going quickly. You work on specific things over time as “it’s not like you have to fix everything...not everything that is broken.”

### **E.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Supportive influences mentioned by Elise were principals. She also mentioned people with high energy and drive as inspiring her to higher levels of performance. “Whiners” and “people who don’t care” who only want a paycheck she reports as psychologically dragging her down. Surrounding herself with kindred spirits and creating a cohesive team Elise finds very supportive and motivational. It “is such a wonderful thing when you are able to work with people like that.” Educational gurus, who can walk the talk like Brownlie, Snellert and Wiliams, among others, were cited as being very influential.



## **E.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Elise describes the wisdom and values of good teaching as “above all is connection”. She states this is really crucial in getting students to work with the teacher. Secondly, she says that you have to be “relaxed in your own skin” and “clear about your objectives”. Consistency and fairness were also mentioned as aspects of good teaching. She tries to be “exceedingly sharp in my focus” to be clear in what she wants to accomplish. Elise emphasizes going deeper for one thing rather than trying to do too many things where “your whole day works against that” and ends up being fragmented and scattered without the intensity of focus. “You need to be very clear on what it is you want to accomplish that day. So connection, clarity and formative assessment.”

She is also a big fan of formative assessment which she describes as the essence of what she does each day. She states this as a “sense of knowing where the kids are at and where you want to go. Just going beyond where you think they can go. Constantly getting feedback and keeping them moving, moving, moving”.

Elise goes on to describe how she connects with kids to keep them engaged and interested. This is where the art of teaching comes into the picture for Elise as she believes good teachers create a sense of mystique and intrigue amongst students of who their teacher is.

“Before they [students] can be engaged in the content they need to be intrigued by who you are.” After this sense of connection, she strives to develop a sense of curiosity about what she teaches. She believes good teachers ask a lot of questions that engages students to have to think deeply about something. She emphasizes that “the thrill of figuring something out” is addictive. “So if you can get a kid to really puzzle something out and come to an answer that is power.”

## **E.8 Teaching Metaphor**

A helpful and apt metaphor that illustrates the essence of teaching for Elise is the idea of teaching being like jazz. She is not too fond of the old garden metaphor as that is too prescriptive. Teaching for Elise has a fair amount of improvisation in the moments of teaching students. “The ultimate test of your skill [is] if you can improvise in a very difficult situation. That is what teaching is all about.”

## **E.9 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Elise stated “no teacher goes home at the end of the day saying I think I did a great job”. She reflects that this is due to the complexity and difficulty of the work teachers do and a relative sense, because of the challenges of teaching, that “teachers have a huge inferiority complex.” “I think most teachers do not feel confident about what that they do and how they do it because you know it could have been done better.” She identifies this as one of the biggest problems in education today.

“Teachers often feel angry and bitter because they work so hard and they don’t really have that inner confidence that they feel they should have. When things go bad or sideways they can’t always articulate it as it is such a complex job and most teachers do not have the time or energy or perhaps the inclination to sit down and analyze what went wrong? What went right? How did what I do how was that based on research? That is ... being able to develop confidence in yourself as a teacher if you are a thinking person takes a long, long time.”

Elise mentions that like many teachers she kept looking for “the way.” Trying to figure things out so “I don’t screw up all these kids’ lives.” She read voraciously trying to find that way that would work for her. She travelled through various stages of focusing on teaching methodologies with whole language or whatever was the thing being popular at the time. She

has come to the realization that teaching is difficult to categorize. She likens this to the reflections of Bill Evans, a jazz pianist.

“He doesn’t like to be categorized. Is this jazz? Is this classical? He says you deconstruct. You take apart. You deconstruct. You put together. You take apart. It is just what you do after a while. You take elements of this, elements of that, and so I’ve really been inspired by people who are able to do that in a certain way.”

Elise goes on to say that it has to be sustainable. Some teachers due to the demands and intensity of the work start early and work late into the evenings. She indicates that is not sustainable and those teachers tend to burn out or get sick. They rarely last. She states she tempers good practice with sustainability. Elise emphasizes that what teaching looks like for her may not be for somebody else. “So who I am I to say, this is how you should teach because it works for me.” Over the years she recalls begging, borrowing and stealing from everyone. Elise offers the advice that teachers should share their practice but not that it is “the way.” “Here’s what I’ve done. I offer it up for your perusal.”

#### **E.10 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Elise’s dominant perspective is nurturing while her recessive perspective is social reform. Her interview statements reveal that the present dominance of nurturing may be due to the teaching context she is in of teaching at an inner city school. Her reflections about and upon teaching certainly emphasize her other strong teaching perspective of apprenticeship. Her recessive teaching perspective of social reform is explained through her life experiences of growing up in a strongly religious home and later finding that was not the way she wanted to live her life. She does not want to convert certain ways for everyone. Teachers need to find their own way based upon their judgment and situation.

## Appendix F: Fiona

### F.1 Demographics

Female; 34 years' experience; primarily elementary; Coast Salish School District; B.A., M.Ed.

### F.2 TPI Commentary



**Table F.1 Fiona's TPI Scores**

Tr: 32	Ap: 40	Dv: 37	Nu: 40	SR: 38
B: 12	B: 13	B: 9	B: 13	B: 13
I: 9	I: 13	I: 14	I: 13	I: 11
A: 11	A: 14	A: 14	A: 14	A: 14

Dominant Perspective(s): 40+ Apprenticeship & Nurturing

Recessive Perspective(s): 34 – Transmission

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;      Dominant:  Recessive: 

Fiona reported that she struggled with the transmission section questions. She feels our role as teachers is changing as we are now more coaches of learning. Content is changing too rapidly for transmission to be the priority in learning. Although background knowledge is important, Fiona concedes, the inquiry kind of learning she favors demands teachers to be more learning coaches than authorities on a specific subject. “The Internet is going to be more valuable than you could ever be. We can’t keep up.” Fiona acknowledges that research is supportive of teachers knowing their content well, but “because content is changing so rapidly and learning is changing so rapidly, I don’t know if that is as big an issue in this next phase of [education] system. Systems change right?” Fiona asserts that is why transmission is a recessive teaching perspective for her.

The other results of the TPI did not surprise her she says. She admits, however, that she struggles with the notion of social reform as an outcome of her teaching. “I do not want to impose ideas on anyone.” Fiona wants individuals to formulate their own ideas. She does

believe that “changing the system” has enormous potential to enable learners to greater success. This is what drives her and she finds it very exciting. Fiona asserts that changing our approaches to teaching “could have a huge impact on our society and the future.”

Fiona indicates that her teaching perspectives inventory would have changed over time. “For sure it has ... we are always changing and growing.” When she first started teaching and learning through initiation she states that the social reform perspective would unlikely have been as strong as it is now. Apprenticeship she explains is stronger now due to the nature of learning from the context of the work that you do with others and over time. Developmental is stronger she states because of her background in enrichment education and critical thinking strategies. The nurturing perspective of education has always been important Fiona says, but ever more so now because of the emphasis on social and emotional learning in the curriculum. “Relationships for learning to support learning” are necessary if not critical now in engaging students particularly those “kids who are less fortunate.”

Fiona’s TPI responses revealed some statements as being strongly held as always in her teaching:

**Table F.2 Fiona’s TPI Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Transmission	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Learning is enhanced by having predetermined objectives.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I make it very clear to people what they are to learn.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Apprenticeship	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To be a good teacher, one must be a good practitioner</i></li> </ul>	Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I want people to understand the realities of working in the real world.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I link the subject matter with real settings of practice or application.</i></li> <li>• <i>I model the skills and methods of good practice</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
Developmental	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to help people develop more complex ways of reasoning.</i></li> </ul>	Always
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I want people to see how complex and inter-related things really are.</i></li> </ul>	Always

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I ask a lot of questions when I teach.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Developmental	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I challenge familiar ways of understanding the subject matter.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Nurturing	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It's important that I acknowledge learners' emotional reactions.</i></li> <li>• <i>In my teaching, building self-confidence in learners is a priority.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to build people's self-confidence and self-esteem as learners.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I find something to compliment in everyone's work or contribution.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Social Reform	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Individual learning without social change is not enough.</i></li> <li>• <i>For me, teaching is a moral act as much as an intellectual activity.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I use the subject matter as a way to teach about higher ideals.</i></li> <li>• <i>I encourage expressions of feeling and emotion.</i></li> <li>• <i>I emphasize values more than knowledge in my teaching.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always

### F.3 Teaching Influences

Fiona mentions research and working with colleagues as primary influences in her career. She believes practice should be governed by research although she was told in one high school that that was a “bunch of bunk.” Teaching informed by research is the “whole reason why I am a teacher and in education.” She returned to elementary teaching to “see where the holes were” in order to work on those so “we can make some changes and transitions for students better to a high school by preparing them as learners, confident learners and competent learners.” She developed some strong professional relationships with a few colleagues which she said helped “create a lot of momentum with learning [for teachers and students] because of that.”

Fiona because of those contacts soon joined a provincial teacher network of inquiry learners led by Drs. Halbert and Kaser. This network of teacher learners had “a huge impact on

things that I was learning and was moving forward and which was moving the student learning forward.” The network helped evolve her practice and leadership skills “without the compliance of politics in the district.” Fiona felt professionally freed up to try teaching challenges with the opportunities and support this professional network provided. “I had always felt in the district like I was caged almost because I just couldn’t do the things that I really wanted to do and really delve deeply into the work and influence and support other teachers and also creating that momentum.”

The network led to a pilot partnership with a professor at Vancouver Island University (VIU) whereby she realized teacher practitioners could have an effect on research and contribute to it in order to assist in systemic change. The Network and her partnership with VIU helped her “feel [more] renewed and excited about learning and the profession then I ever have.”

Exposure to high profile educators like Caren Cameron and Ann Davies, in assessment practices, and conferences and workshops with the likes of Drs. Bennett, in instructional strategies, and Fullan, in strategic change, also influenced Fiona’s teaching practices. Fiona particularly remembers her years in linking theory with teaching using Dr. Bennett’s instructional formats of having a “huge impact on my practice.” Fiona also recalls Faye Brownlie, a B.C mentor practitioner, as also definitely influencing her thinking about teaching.

In addition to these mentors and educational gurus, Fiona mentions her diverse teaching background as having an influence on her teaching by exposing her to varied experiences. From music education, to primary, to secondary partnership teaching, to intermediate grades, to a district teacher, and back to the intermediate grades has “given me a good perspective on the system as a whole, plus district work.” The job embedded collaborative and collegial learning relationships and conversations with colleagues “make it very supportive in helping you grow.”

“Since teaching is an isolated kind of act ... you don’t really have the opportunity to interact with others unless you co-teach or unless you are collaborating or link to networks.” Fiona relates that these collaborative opportunities are growing as there “wasn’t anywhere near that level of collaboration when I first started my career.” Fiona concludes by saying that “teacher preparation did not do a single thing for me ... I don’t feel like I was prepared very well.”

#### **F.4 Transitions**

Fiona’s perceptions of changes or transitions in her teaching are of an evolutionary process over time. As a reflective practitioner she has always struggled with how to be more effective. She says “it is like a puzzle” in trying to figure out how to best teach. Fiona stresses that “I just keep persevering until I figure it out.” Finding out the answers is easier she says when you have “someone to talk about it.” This helps and supports you to get over those teaching obstacles you find along the way. “Finding the answers is when you have that collegial relationship with someone.”

#### **F.5 Teaching Intentions**

Fiona’s teaching intentions are connected to the curriculum she is trying to do. She relates that type of teaching is very contextual however. You redesign the instructional intention as the lesson goes on she says. It is necessary to constantly fine tune the instruction to get it back on track or adapt to another learning intention. “I am constantly tweaking ... I will even do it in the middle of a lesson if I see it going sideways.” You adjust your interventions to meet the needs of the teaching situation as it evolves. Fiona likens this to scaffolding to eventually support what needs to be done. Fiona is reflecting, adjusting, adapting and changing the lesson as it goes on. She is in the moment. She recalls learning this flexible and nimble teaching from



the role modeling of Dr. Bennett in his various workshops. “I practiced for years to get that right [flexible teaching]. I got pretty close.”

## **F.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Fiona relates to that sense “of like the caged thing” in being able to “explore and move the system to a different place so that students can flourish with their learning.” She says you struggle with resources all the time but you don’t need a lot. It would be nice to have more technology she declares but “you can get away with a lot less than you think you can if your practice is in good shape.” She relates that she has always been principle driven about what is the right thing to do. She declares there are definitely barriers in the present system. “You take a test because that is mandated but it is not the right thing to do and we are still made to do it.” She goes on to say, “We used to fail kids. It wasn’t the right thing to do but we were being told by an administrator I have to do that even though I thought it was not the right thing to do.” Another barrier she cites is “assessment practices where you give a student one chance and no feedback.” Fiona also states that having no clear learning intentions is a barrier when teaching and assessment are not woven together to improve achievement. “It is part of the learning process to be able to work away at something until its right and know how to get supports around that and feedback that’s related to criteria.” These are all things that presently hinder the system.

Fiona cites supportive influences or highlights as “research, strong colleagues that walk side by side with you, being involved in the network, strong networks that believe in similar things as you do and are grounded in research.”

## **F.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Fiona describes the wisdom and values of good teaching as assessment for learning. She cites this as the key practice in making a difference for student learning. She backs this up by saying that “research certainly verifies that.” Fiona reflects that:

“We are still fighting to move that agenda [assessment for learning] forward and we’re still not there because to me that’s almost a social agenda — keeping people in their slots in society — because that’s what assessment for learning does it frees up students to move beyond those barriers of learning that were holding them back because they can learn to represent their learning in different ways ...”

Fiona also emphasizes good teaching as balanced approaches to literacy and inquiry approaches to personalize student learning. She continues that helping students to think metacognitively about their learning helps students to self-regulate their learning, “What’s working with your learning? Why is that? What’s supporting it and where are you thinking you might go next?” Fiona relates student learning to be a mirror. “So when they learn, I am learning. When I am learning, they are learning. We are kind of dancing around that together.” She recalls this mirror effect when students learn and teacher consequently learns as a “spiral look of energy.” “I have kind of changed who I am at the front of the class. I am more of a coach.”

## **F.8 Teaching Metaphor**

A helpful metaphor that illustrates teaching for Fiona is the mirror effect described above.

## **F.9 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Fiona stated that she has had some really good administrators that have helped her in her thinking with great collegial talks. Colleagues who work side by side you in a collaborative fashion are also necessary for teacher growth. Fiona says when those actors are not there in your

working context you need to go somewhere else to grow as a professional. The sense of kinship, connection and kindred spirits helped her understanding of teaching. Her involvement with colleagues from around the world at educational conferences on school effectiveness and improvement, where she has presented, has also influenced her thinking due to these change agents.

She states that the new Ministry education plan came out of forward thinking and researched based teaching. She contends that classroom practitioner research is setting the new agenda for the Ministry in helping inform the research. The scholarship of practice informs research. “In the next decade you will see more practitioners linking to researchers because it does have an effect upon policy. The stronger we build that bridge, the better the system will get.”

#### **F.10 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Fiona’s dominant perspectives are apprenticeship and nurturing while her recessive perspective is transmission. Her history of learning through practice and by the role modeling of colleagues and mentors certainly reinforces her dominant apprenticeship perspective of teaching. Her nurturing perspective arises in her interview through the need to engage and support the learners where they are and by formative feedback that will make them successful regardless of present skill and knowledge levels. This further comes out in her articulations about the need for systemic change to further the learning of all students. Here her focus is on reforming the system to help society rather than the direct emphasis of social reform based upon informing individual student values. Her relatively high score in social reform substantiates this focus of Fiona’s.

Although background knowledge in a subject area is important for Fiona, her interview comments clearly show why the transmission perspective is her recessive one. Fiona believes in

the teacher model of a coach not the sage on the stage. Content knowledge areas are changing too rapidly for her to have this perspective of teaching as a priority. It is more important for her to apply skills and knowledge in an apprenticeship format than to just gather knowledge for the sake of knowing subject content. Learning is more meaningful for Fiona when it is context applied and useful.

## Appendix G: Gwen

### G.1 Demographics

Female; 30 years' experience, currently secondary; Coast Salish School District; B.A., M.A.

### G.2 TPI Commentary



**Table G.1 Gwen's TPI Scores**

Tr: 39	Ap: 45	Dv: 42	Nu: 44	SR: 38
B: 13	B: 15	B: 13	B: 14	B: 9
I: 12	I: 15	I: 14	I: 15	I: 14
A: 14	A: 15	A: 15	A: 15	A: 15

Dominant Perspective(s): 44+ Apprenticeship & Nurturing

Recessive Perspective(s): 39 – Transmission & Social Reform

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;      Dominant:  Recessive: 

Gwen reported that she is not surprised about the strength of her apprenticeship perspective as another survey of her personality had her high in inquisitiveness and justice. She relates that it is important for her to bring a perspective to the class so that it is socially and emotionally engaging and speaks to understanding of social justice around the world. She connects student learning emotionally in this way. Her style of teaching is inquiry because she believes students are investigators researching in various formats synthesizing research to give an informed opinion. As framed by her apprenticeship perspective Gwen emphasizes that students “are giving their opinions on it [topic] but they also have to think how are my [student] actions towards this inquiry that I am investigating going to be demonstrating the transformation of myself.” This inquiry project based learning she reiterates is where “I talk the talk and walk the walk.” It is important to her as a teacher to see the students “thinking about how this learning is making a difference” for themselves and others. Her sense of mission is to have students find

purpose and direction through study that is meaningful and current. She attempts to bring the real world into school. This is a strong apprenticeship perspective on teaching.

Gwen reports that her perspectives on teaching likely changed. “As a starting teacher I would have conformed a lot more at the time than I do now.” She states that as a young teacher of 21 or 22 years of age she felt very vulnerable herself but felt very nurturing in her role and wanting herself to be someone the kids in her care could count on. She reports she has the same emotional connection with the students today as it was back then. It was and is very important to know if what she does is going to make a difference in the lives of her students. She wants her students to be able to talk about their learning and show their understanding. Initially she more closely followed the teacher guide books but still was “picky” as to what she would take out of it. The learning for her had to feel authentic then and now. If the students are not engaged there is no point in teaching. Over time she tended to be freer in her choices to develop lessons to be engaging and suit her students. Gwen had a strong sense of clarity about fulfilling her teaching intentions from the early part of her career. With experience came greater confidence and expertise to fulfill those intentions.

Gwen’s TPI responses revealed numerous statements as being strongly held as always or never in her teaching:

**Table G.2 Gwen’s Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Transmission	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Effective teachers must first be experts in their own subject.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I want people to score well on examinations as a result of my teaching.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I cover the required content accurately and in the allotted time.</i></li> <li><i>I make it very clear to people what they are to learn.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
Apprenticeship	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>To be a good teacher, one must be a good practitioner.</i></li> </ul>	Always

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Apprenticeship	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The best learning comes from working alongside good practitioners.</i></li> <li>• <i>Knowledge and application cannot be separated.</i></li> </ul>	Always
			Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to demonstrate how to perform or work in real situations.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect people to know how to apply the subject matter in real settings.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want people to understand the realities of working in the real world.</i></li> </ul>	Always
			Always
			Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I link the subject matter with real settings of practice or application.</i></li> <li>• <i>I model the skills and methods of good practice.</i></li> <li>• <i>I see to it that novices learn from more experienced people.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Developmental	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Teaching should build upon what people already know.</i></li> <li>• <i>My goal is to help people develop more complex ways of reasoning.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want people to see how complex and inter-related things really are.</i></li> </ul>	Always
			Always
			Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I ask a lot of questions when I teach.</i></li> <li>• <i>I challenge familiar ways of understanding the subject matter.</i></li> <li>• <i>I encourage people to challenge each other's thinking.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Nurturing	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It's important that I acknowledge learners' emotional reactions.</i></li> <li>• <i>In my teaching, building self-confidence in learners is a priority.</i></li> </ul>	Always
			Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to build people's self-confidence and self-esteem as learners.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect that people will enhance their self-esteem through my teaching.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach.</i></li> </ul>	Always
			Always
			Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I find something to compliment in everyone's work or contribution.</i></li> <li>• <i>I encourage expressions of feeling and emotion.</i></li> <li>• <i>I share my own feelings and expect my learners to do the same.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Social Reform	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My teaching focuses on societal change, not the individual learner.</i></li> <li>• <i>For me, teaching is a moral act as much as an intellectual activity.</i></li> </ul>	Never
			Always

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Social Reform	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to challenge people to seriously reconsider their values.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want to make apparent what people take for granted about society.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I use the subject matter as a way to teach about higher ideals.</i></li> <li>• <i>I emphasize values more than knowledge in my teaching.</i></li> <li>• <i>I link instructional goals to necessary changes in society.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always

### G.3 Teaching Influences

Gwen states that her sense of clarity and purpose came from where she grew up. She was raised in low socio-economic conditions and based upon this background was known in her school as one of the “Dump” kids. She recalls that her group was considered trouble makers and was looked down upon by many students and faculty. Her friend at the time, later a well-known TV and film star, said, “We got to do something to get out of here.” At the time she remembers thinking that “no one cares about us. No one will accept that we are honest, good people. We are trying but we are blamed for everything.” She felt labeled and watched from an early age in a derogatory and humiliating sense. Gwen perceived many teachers did not believe in them. “We always felt we were fighting our way through a system. Could you please believe in me? Could you give me the time of day?” She knew it wasn’t right but as a group they felt they never had a voice.

Gwen worked many jobs to make her way through university. It was total dedication to a dream of one day being out of poverty. This gave her the drive and perseverance to escape her old environment to get something better. She remembers a former high school teacher saying to her upon university graduation, “[A nickname], what are you doing here? I thought you would be down on Skid Row with the rest of your druggy friends.” These early childhood and



adolescent experiences drove her to never let kids feel they are worthless. “Nothing was ever handed to me. So it was exciting, nerve wracking, feeling all alone, yup, but I made it.”

#### **G.4 Transitions**

Gwen’s perceptions of changes or transitions in her teaching are of an evolutionary nature over time. She stresses the importance of relational trust as articulated by Alma Harris, a British educator and professor, to develop the support and opportunity to feel safe to grow. “I’ve had to be very strong inside myself to be able to let these people [colleagues] in because I have always been afraid of being judged. I have been judged all my life.” Gwen relates that even after 30 years of successful teaching she still has an ingrained fear of being looked down upon. That is why trust and close partnerships are so important to her in developing her teaching. “I needed the professional development part, the ones that wanted to work with me to develop ourselves professionally so that we can continue to do the best we can.” She also wanted the professional development to do her best “to give the kids the best life chances that they deserve.” Those experiences to improve her abilities were evolutionary. “The word is evolutionary, that is what it is.”

Professional development is so important to Gwen that in the last ten years she had to go outside of her district to be part of provincial networks to “keep our professional development alive.” She now goes outside the district for much of her professional development and currently presents at provincial, national and international conferences. She strongly supports her apprenticeship profile. She has transitioned and learned by joining different networks from Action BC [health & physical education] to become a regional trainer. Later through that network she found out about the Network of Performance Based Schools and the Aboriginal Enhancement network. She joined and participated in them all improving her leadership skills.

Presently she is focusing her growth on evidence based teaching using the inquiry method as a means of teaching and learning. Gwen remarks that in time it all just “weaves together.” It is important for Gwen to have colleagues learning together to integrate learning into their teaching context. It is also important for her to connect learning to the real world. “Everything that I am trying to get across to the kids has to connect to the real world.” As an English teacher, her student writing assignments connect to reflections about these realities.

### **G.5 Teaching Intentions**

Gwen’s teaching intention is to connect learning to the real world. She covers the learning outcomes by connecting her assignments to the real world. Gwen relates that if we don’t have purpose we can’t engage kids so it really comes from what is going on in the world what she can bring into her classroom. “I break it down into the curricular areas that are necessary for kids to meet. That’s what drives my intention.”

### **G.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Gwen remembers being told “It can’t be done” due to a lack of money has stuck with her for more than 25 years [she promptly went out and purchased the learning materials herself]. She reports herself to be ethically driven. If it is the right thing to do make it happen she says because “we can’t keep children in the dark with their education.”

#### *Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching*

Gwen describes the wisdom and values of good teaching as relationship building. “Wise teaching comes from really getting to know your students.” A different class means different dynamics. Wise teaching for Gwen has values embedded in it. Good teaching values and cares for people.

“All the experiences that I have had created the wisdom that I got ... wisdom comes from being emotionally connected to your kids because you need to have empathy around who they are as individuals ... to give anybody recognition, it just makes them walk a little bit taller.”

## **G.7 Teaching Metaphor**

A helpful metaphor that illustrates teaching for Gwen is gardening in that education is like a tangled garden. “Education parallels being a tangled garden that can be untangled so that amazing blossoms can bloom.” “Pulling the weeds out” to Gwen means, “We have to let go of some past practices that may not be very effective for kids. Recognize that there is research...that’s proving that we need to do things differently now.” Gwen indicates that teachers are facilitators and students are the ones driving the learning conversation and understanding of the topics. She relates that teachers who facilitate that discussion and teach some protocols around that results in amazing learning. “We are all learners and we are all teachers. That is just the way it is.”

## **G.8 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Gwen reiterated many of her previous points when asked to share anything else about influences on her teaching. The influence of colleagues and mentors were instrumental in developing her knowledge and skill set in teaching. She mentioned partnerships with a few key teaching partners as being particularly gratifying and significant. Gwen reemphasized the contributions Dr. Halbert and Kaser had upon her through their inquiry learning network of B.C. teachers. She also recalled some lines from a speech by another mentor, Alma Harris:

“You know I have to encourage you. You can’t do this by yourself. You have got to get a partner and you have to get out there with purpose and move forward for our kids depend upon it. The world depends upon it.”

Such comments resonate with Gwen. She articulates that her journey with these people and their guidance has got her to the well informed place she is in now. “The guidance from them and all of their teachings [has] really informed me that all that I did and all that I endured as a kid is what really is what is happening now.”

Gwen then went on to list a collection of our insights and vignettes that further influenced her teaching. She recalls reading *Six Secrets of Change* by Michael Fullan as being particularly inspirational. She then mentioned two professors at a local university that exemplified lifelong learners and change agents as being particularly persuasive and influential. Gwen’s definition of positive influence “comes from their [educators] own grounded experiences in being educators and working with educators.” Her present global connections and supporters encourage her to “get ‘er done.” She knows they do not have to be right beside her but she is comforted by the knowledge that she can connect with them at any time. Gwen says they fill her bucket.

She goes on to point out, “It isn’t easy but we are doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do.” This ethical value driven sense of her mission in teaching has got her to the point in her career where she says, “I feel we are on the tipping point right now. Actually, I have heard we are beyond the tipping point. We’re flipping right in.” She believes the classroom related work of the networks she has been involved with and the partnerships with universities in this endeavor has got the Ministry out into the field to see classrooms and the leading edge work of her colleagues to improve student learning. She takes this systematic change back to the students. “You got to talk to the kids. If it is not working for them, then it is not working ... a teacher is only as good as the compliments they will get from their students.” She uses the

hockey metaphor to illustrate her latter point. “It’s almost like a hockey player. They [teachers] are only as good as their last shift.”

### **G.9 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Gwen’s dominant perspectives are apprenticeship and nurturing while her recessive perspectives are transmission and social reform. The apprenticeship and nurturing perspectives are well supported by statements and stories from her interview. The reduced emphasis on the transmission of knowledge is explained by her focus on the skills of teaching and student metacognition and learning from real world experiences. Although her social reform teaching perspective is recessive compared to her others, Gwen comes across as a teacher on a mission to change the education system to better deliver learning and achievement results for students in ways that she has come to understand them through local, national and international collaboration. It may not be social reform in the traditional sense, but it certainly is a drive to reform the education system.

## Appendix H: Holly

### H.1 Demographics

Female; 30 years' experience; elementary; Coast Salish School District; BA

### H.2 TPI Commentary




**Table H.1 Holly's TPI Scores**

Tr: 30	Ap: 44	Dv: 42	Nu: 44	SR: 44
B: 12	B: 14	B: 12	B: 15	B: 14
I: 7	I: 15	I: 15	I: 15	I: 15
A: 11	A: 15	A: 15	A: 14	A: 15

Dominant Perspective(s): 46+

Recessive Perspective(s): 35 – Transmission

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;      Dominant:  Recessive  Co-Supportive: 

Holly reported that she was not surprised with her TPI profile. She indicates that the teacher she is today is different than the one she started out as. She states her teaching has gone deeper and she is not as content and test driven as she once was.

“When I look at the teacher I am today which is very different than who I was as a young teacher. I am not concerned with have I covered all of the learning outcomes...I am not concerned about the mark that the kids get on a test...My teaching, for myself, has gone deeper. I try to reflect in my teaching the needs of the entire child and all children. I don't think you can do that when you are so course content and summative assessment driven.”

Holly further confirms that, “My profile would have been different in the transmission because I think as a young teacher you don't have the confidence to stray from the curriculum.” In the other perspectives she states that she has not changed as much. Holly indicates that parents and administrators tend to assess teachers on the basis of content coverage and how well their children are doing on specific content. She empathizes that new teachers tend to stick to those expectations when starting out.

Nurturing she asserts has to be number one as you really have to care about kids. She looks for colleagues to determine if they really care about kids. She acknowledges that she has changed a lot in social reform in its importance. She wants kids to remember the role they play in society and how they contribute and give back to the world. She wants them to become citizens to make a difference in ways we can all be proud of. “I feel so strongly now that my kids are not going to maybe remember some of those specific facts that I taught them but I want them to remember the role they play in society.”

Holly’s TPI responses revealed numerous statements as being strongly held as always in her teaching:

**Table H.2 Holly’s Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Transmission	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Learning is enhanced by having predetermined objectives.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I make it very clear to people what they are to learn.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Apprenticeship	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To be a good teacher, one must be a good practitioner.</i></li> <li>• <i>The best learning comes from working alongside good practitioners.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to demonstrate how to perform or work in real situations.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect people to know how to apply the subject matter in real settings.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want people to understand the realities of working in the real world.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I link the subject matter with real settings of practice or application.</i></li> <li>• <i>I model the skills and methods of good practice.</i></li> <li>• <i>I see to it that novices learn from more experienced people.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always
Developmental	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Teaching should build upon what people already know.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to help people develop more complex ways of reasoning.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect people to develop new ways of reasoning about the subject.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want people to see how complex and inter-related things really are.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I ask a lot of questions when I teach.</i></li> <li><i>I challenge familiar ways of understanding the subject matter.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
Developmental	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I encourage people to challenge each other's thinking.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Nurturing	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>It's important that I acknowledge learners' emotional reactions.</i></li> <li><i>In my teaching, building self-confidence in learners is a priority.</i></li> <li><i>People's effort should be rewarded as much as achievement.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My goal is to build people's self-confidence and self-esteem as learners.</i></li> <li><i>I expect that people will enhance their self-esteem through my teaching.</i></li> <li><i>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I find something to compliment in everyone's work or contribution.</i></li> <li><i>I share my own feelings and expect my learners to do the same.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
Social Reform	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Individual learning without social change is not enough.</i></li> <li><i>For me, teaching is a moral act as much as an intellectual activity.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My goal is to challenge people to seriously reconsider their values.</i></li> <li><i>I expect people to be committed to changing our society.</i></li> <li><i>I want to make apparent what people take for granted about society.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I use the subject matter as a way to teach about higher ideals.</i></li> <li><i>I emphasize values more than knowledge in my teaching.</i></li> <li><i>I link instructional goals to necessary changes in society.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always

### H.3 Teaching Influences

Holly states that her home life where politics, current events and world affairs was always part of the conversation stimulated her interest in the world and how it functioned. She merits her parents with role modeling of common decency towards others. "When I look at my teaching I want to make sure that if those values are not being instilled or need to be



supplemented from the home that they are part of what I focus on in my classroom.” Holly asserts that she is an extrovert and a great believer in collaboration. “I sort of grew up with that saying in my head that I share with my students ‘two brains are better than one’.” She is aware that all of her students do not have an extrovert nature and need choice in how they learn so group work and collaboration needs balance in what she offers her students. She cites both peers and professors as people who influenced her teaching. “I know from myself professionally and from university, I learnt well when I learned from my fellow students as well as my professors.”

Holly claims who she is today as a teacher is due to the learning from professor, fellow students, her students, colleagues and her open and responsive manner and inclination to learn from others. She sees all her experiences as learning opportunities and what she may take or learn from others does not in any way make her look less of a teacher. Holly states that her secondary experiences led her to focus on content to cover and bell curve type thinking. Assessment when she started was on how well your students were doing in reference to the bell curve. “When I look at the different roles from teaching in a high school ... you had course content that you had to cover. You used the bell curve. You were assessed on how well your students were doing and how well your class fit that bell curve.”

Due to her extroverted nature and family upbringing she always felt confident to make her opinions known. “I think that having to make people understand who I am and what I believe is important.” She elaborates that it is important for teachers to look outside the classroom to be involved with the whole school taking on leadership roles in informal and formal ways. She finds her past roles as a teacher and current one as an instructional coordinator (helping teacher) basically taught her how to coach colleagues through change. Her involvement at the provincial level in assessment broadened her perspective on education by meeting with equally keen

educators from around the province. The work with the Ministry on provincial testing changed her practice as it made her reflect more about her practice. Her novel study teaching habit was not really teaching literacy in reading in all its scope she realized. She needed to teach more poetry in her program and required more non-fiction reading and so on.

Holly also mentioned the Network of Innovation and Inquiry Schools led by Drs. Halbert and Kaser as being very influential in her teaching. She states that the network has had a big impact at the grass roots level in B.C. education more so than any other organization she knows.

“I think that by having that opportunity to network has made a difference for me as far as my perspective about what’s really important when we look at Ministry of Education initiatives, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and what’s really important when it comes to the BCTF agenda around class size and class composition.”

#### **H.4 Transitions**

Holly’s perceptions of changes or transitions in her teaching are of a gradual process over time based upon her core values. “I think I have basic core values that lend themselves well to my profession. I have just [continually] developed those core values or they have become stronger as I have matured and as my experience has increased and my role has changed.” She recalls doing an exercise with a life coach and identifying her five core values. It did not surprise her that one of those values was mentorship. She enjoys applying such skills with friends, her social circle, parents and colleagues. That value is so strong that Holly cites that as the reason she entered teaching. “I have fine -tuned it [mentoring] but I don’t think there was any major influence. I can’t think of any one person who had that great of an influence on me that drastically changed my values in education.”

## **H.5 Teaching Intentions**

Holly's explains her teaching intentions by posing the question, "When my children leave my classroom what do I want them to walk away with?" Holly responds to her question by listing that she wants her students to read, comprehend and respond to text in a variety of genres. She wants her students to communicate effectively through writing in a variety of ways at their level. "I want them to be not hung up on the answer, not the being there, but the journey." In math she wants them to understand the strategies and processes and "not be hung up or whether an answer is right or wrong." She wants her students to be curious and open minded, to think critically and deeply. She summarizes her teaching intent by saying, "I want them to think about making a difference."

## **H.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Holly indicates that the adversarial relationship in her school district in the past has hindered and jeopardized her work with others. It is a great challenge speaking up for your beliefs in some teacher association forums and job actions, especially if yours is a dissenting or minority opinion and then try to work professionally without some repercussions from colleagues.

"That has been a real negative influence in living to work in that kind of environment when I am one who will stand up and speak my mind or my actions will go against everyone else. Sometimes I think that is not a smart thing to do as it jeopardizes relationships within a school".

Holly points out positive influences as working with people who mentored her such as her first principal. Tight working relationships with other colleagues supporting each other professionally and socially were also cited as a positive influence. "I think having really strong working friendships has had a positive influence on me. " Holly also mentions her hiatus from

teaching after she started to work in another profession at a management level gave her a perspective on teaching outside of the ordinary teacher career. “It was one of the best things I ever did.” She believes she is a different teacher today due to that experience than if she had remained in teaching over her whole career.

## **H.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Holly describes the wisdom and values of good teaching as being accepting of other people’s differences and not just the students within your class but their parents and your colleagues. “You have to accept and honor and work with those differences.” She also values and identifies good teaching as knowing her students well, just like the people she works with.

“I just feel if I know who they are and where they are coming from then I can better support their learning...if I don’t know their mom and dad by a first name basis ... or ... their little brothers and sisters, if I don’t know what goes on in their life, then how can I figure out how they work and what they need and how can I teach them?”

Holly emphasizes that being “up front and honest” with students is important if you don’t know an answer or if you as a teacher are unsure about something. “By saying something like that, it makes them realize no one knows everything. Learning is a journey and we learn together.”

## **H.8 Teaching Metaphor**

A helpful metaphor that illustrates teaching for Holly is her “rose garden of assessment” of different stages of blooming. She tells her students that learning is a journey and that we are all at different places at different times. She asks students to reflect in various areas of endeavor as to where they are on that path as a developing rose. “One day in this particular thing we might be here in full bloom. Another day with something totally different, well, you’re just a

bud and that's okay.” Holly goes on to say that for some things we are beginning, others we are acquiring and sometimes right on. “That's what learning is. It's a voyage. It's a journey.”

## **H.9 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Holly emphasizes that as teachers it is important to be responsive and open to change to develop expertise. “I think I have always been excited about change.” She realizes some colleagues get upset about change. She also uses the expression “flipping point” about the potential for positive changes in education. “Things are really coming together from so many different directions and big changes will happen in the next little while. I want to be part of it because it is past tipping. We are flipping ...”

## **H.10 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Holly has an unusual profile with four strong perspectives, three of them being similarly top scoring co-supportive perspectives, with transmission being her sole weak one. In her interview Holly comes across as a confident and masterful teacher reinforcing her TPI profile as being open and using a range of teaching perspectives to assist her. She has strong social reform scores which make her stand out from many of her teaching colleagues. Her intention as a teacher is to create students who can make a difference in the world and she states this openly. She has a mission to change the system of education as well and is reinforced in this passion with like-minded colleagues in her teaching network. Her mentoring values and practices emphasize her apprenticeship perspective. Her high desire for ensuring student success brings out her nurturing and developmental perceptions. Her coaching style of teaching confirms her lower priority of transmission as a teaching perspective.

## Appendix I: Ivan

### I.1 Demographics

Male; 16 years' experience; secondary; Coast Salish School District; B.Ed., M.Ed.

### I.2 TPI Commentary



**Table I.1 Ivan's TPI Scores**

Tr: 33	Ap: 38	Dv: 42	Nu: 41	SR: 31
B: 11	B: 14	B: 14	B: 14	B: 8
I: 9	I: 13	I: 15	I: 15	I: 12
A: 13	A: 11	A: 13	A: 12	A: 11

Dominant Perspective(s): 41+ Developmental & Nurturing

Recessive Perspective(s): 33 – Transmission & Social Reform

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;      Dominant:  Recessive: 

Ivan reported that his TPI profile brought no surprises. He reflects that his present teaching context likely shapes his present profile. “Because of clientele certain things become important things for me when working with students.” Ivan reported that if he was working at a higher socio-economic school he is not sure if his profile would be the same. He conjectured that the environment of a poor socio-economic school influenced some of his choices and helped him decide what is important when it comes to working with kids.

Ivan asserts that his transmission profile would have been higher when he started teaching. The idea of covering course content would have been more of a priority when he was starting out. He says the nurturing perspective would have been lower earlier on in his career due to a stronger fixation on transmission. He wanted to focus on course content as opposed to processes of learning. His original expectations in high school were that of teaching content rather than focusing on learning — how learning happens has been a big shift in his focus and understanding of teaching.

Ivan's TPI responses revealed numerous statements as being strongly held as always in his teaching:

**Table I.2 Ivan's TPI Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Transmission	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Learning is enhanced by having predetermined objectives.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My teaching is governed by the course objectives.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Apprenticeship	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To be a good teacher, one must be a good practitioner.</i></li> <li>• <i>The best learning comes from working alongside good practitioners.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I want people to understand the realities of working in the real world.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I model the skills and methods of good practice.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Developmental	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Most of all, learning depends on what one already knows.</i></li> <li>• <i>Teaching should build upon what people already know.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to help people develop more complex ways of reasoning.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect people to develop new ways of reasoning about the subject.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want people to see how complex and inter-related things really are.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I ask a lot of questions when I teach.</i></li> <li>• <i>I encourage people to challenge each other's thinking.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
Nurturing	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It's important that I acknowledge learners' emotional reactions.</i></li> <li>• <i>In my teaching, building self-confidence in learners is a priority.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to build people's self-confidence and self-esteem as learners.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect that people will enhance their self-esteem through my teaching.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I find something to compliment in everyone's work or contribution.</i></li> </ul>	Always

### **I.3 Teaching Influences**

Ivan states that an influence that has shaped his teaching is the amounts of prior knowledge students have or rather the lack of background knowledge with students in relatively deprived environments. He asserts that in such environments students come to school with little background knowledge for study. “You can’t just jump in and assume they are going to know the previous things that they were to be exposed to or a normal person would be exposed to.” This Ivan stresses impacts their ability to learn new content. In particular, he remembers struggling with their poor literacy skills when he transferred to a lower socioeconomic high school setting. “I remember thinking I cannot ask them to read at the same pace as a kid from a different school.” His past teaching habits had to change from his previous taking notes from an overhead transmission lecture format. “So some of the ways I was delivering information I realized were not effective. I needed to change.” He found students were not cued in on what was important in the lesson.

At that juncture in his teaching career he fortuitously describes being exposed to a variety of different teaching process ideas. “We had some teachers on staff who were further down the path about changing practice than I was and they brought in people, *Smart Learning* from New Westminster.” That program had a “huge impact on the way I thought.” He also recalls around that time being in situations where he “would say that kid can’t learn. They have hit a ceiling and it’s not possible.” His conceptions of these students changed too when “I would talk to [other] teachers of those kids and see that they could learn.” He came to the view that “They [teacher colleagues] were able to do something I couldn’t.” That motivated him to engage in further professional learning and to learn from his colleagues as well. His referent group of teachers and their collaborative efforts influenced how he taught.



“I had to rethink some of the things I was doing to find out how to pursue opportunities when they came up. Try different things. I thought I could take risks because other teachers were doing it. If I didn’t do anything, I knew what the outcome was going to be anyways. So, I had nothing to lose in a sense by trying something different.”

Ivan credits his willingness to change to his formative years which provided him with an open mind to approaching problem solving situations. Some of this openness was due to his travelling experiences to other countries where “you see other ways of doing things and other ways to solve problems. Things that are a really big problem are not so in other contexts.” His upbringing around values about the “idea of quality”, democratic values, a right to public education and “having the power [and opportunity] to change your situation in life” were foundational beliefs from his childhood.

Ivan adds that different colleagues have always had a significant influence upon him — he learns from them through example, supportive conversation and encouraging sharing. Ivan found working with teacher colleagues who had common philosophies and approaches to assessment key influences on his teaching. “When you are around people like that you feel you are on the right track.”

Ivan mentions his Master’s degree learning as also an instrumental influence in the way he understands and approaches teaching. He combined and connected such learning to what he was doing at school. *Smart Learning* and backwards design were frameworks he still uses “all the pieces” in his current teaching. His Master’s degree crystallized “a lot of stuff” he was working on in school. These influences all synthesized or came together for a changed conceptual overview of teaching. “What I am now is in terms of a teacher comes from that crystallization of things taking shape — those influences coming together at particular times.” It

was a reawakening to the potential of teaching. Those “particular times” were times when he felt the need to change and being comfortable with the support and opportunity to take risks with receptive colleagues.

“The feedback I got from them made you want to keep going. I think that was important if they hadn’t been here, if it had been a different environment, I don’t know if I would have done some of the things that I tried with my classes.”

#### **I.4 Transitions**

Ivan’s perceptions of changes or transitions in his teaching was of a more revolutionary nature. His epiphanies struck him quickly although he concedes they may have been brewing for a while. Moments in teaching galvanized his thoughts. “Doing the notes [note taking in class] this way was not going to cut it.” Ivan states that working with kids who could not handle texts or read them in the manner he taught before was frustratingly ineffective he realized. “I had those thoughts when I was troubled at the time.” Then a New Westminster lesson on *Smart Learning* happened and he remembers thinking, “I remember thinking right away, holy crap, this way is better than anything I had been doing.” He remembers watching demonstration lessons where the teacher laid out accessing prior knowledge, putting questions out to students to guide their thinking and structuring how they talked to each other, and doing notes by using structured handouts to scaffold and guide key understandings or outcomes. He particularly appreciated the idea of having students being expected to talk to the person beside them about how and what they were learning to think it through and refine it.

“And to see those kids just eating that stuff up. It was like, it was like you are setting a fire. It smolders for a bit and when it catches fire it all goes at once. That’s to me what it was like ... I had some ideas going on in my head at the time but that spark, that blast of oxygen that came in ... just lit everything else on fire for me.”

## **I.5 Teaching Intentions**

Ivan's explains his teaching intentions as now not "spoon feeding" kids. Students need to drive the learning. "I am wanting to hand it [learning objective] over as much to the kids in finding their way to that end as I can...Most of my energy goes into making sure they are ready to start learning." He emphasizes setting the stage for learning by accessing prior knowledge and "getting them to think through questions that will direct their thinking ahead of time." His approach to teaching now is to facilitate, guide and coach his students to support them in refining their thinking so "they are the ones pushing the learning" to assist him in having an idea where they are to further help them. "If they are doing it first trying to make sense of the material rather than me making sense for them, they are going to remember and understand it better at a much deeper level." As a teacher his main task is to clear up misconceptions and to facilitate the conversations students have with each other to think through their learning. "As I see pieces missing and they cannot seem to find it then I will help them add it in."

## **I.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Ivan indicates that inappropriate assessment on student performance in using marks too soon has a big hindering influence upon student learning. Ivan asserts that "First impressions about their learning carries a lot of weight." He too frequently sees the deleterious impacts of how students respond to "negative assessment, or punitive assessment, or assessment that comes across as being punishment, those are the things ... [that] can shut down kids learning and disengage them from the process." The negative impacts of using marking as a punishment versus encouragement he definitely wants to stay away from. "I want my room to be a place where kids feel positive about learning." Ivan states that if you emphasize the positive it can change kids' attitudes towards school and learning.

## **I.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Ivan describes the wisdom and values of good teaching as “let the kids drive the learning” in pace and form. Good teaching creates a safe, positive place for students to learn. His classroom becomes a “place where kids feel good about taking a risk about their learning.” He wants students to realize what hard work is so he avoids “busy work” and does not give marks for completion of work. He uses frequent formative feedback for meaning and learning and now only provides a summative assessment mark when required by reporting procedures.

“I guess dialogue is an important word for me when working with kids. I want there to be a dialogue. I want to set the framework but I want the kids to have to find what that looks like.”

## **I.8 Teaching Metaphor**

A helpful metaphor that illustrates teaching for Ivan is something that fizzes like soda pop. There is energy in the classroom that bubbles. It comes and goes and comes from different places. It’s fluid like. “It fizzes, the bubbles, the kids learning, the ideas, the inspiration, learning is happening. It does not happen in a continuous stream. It happens in fits and starts. It’s like a fizzy drink.” Ivan goes on to say that on other occasions it is like stirring peanut butter as it is really hard to get kids going and learning at first.

“Other times it’s like mixing peanut butter. Because it is really hard and it takes a long time until it is not stiff and thick as in the beginning but as you stir and get things going ... Once you got it going, once you got the kids into it, [and] they got engaged in the task it became easier.”

## **I.9 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Ivan emphasizes an important factor in understanding teaching has been collaboration. Having many opportunities to collaborate with different people in his school and district he has found very valuable to him professionally and personally. His willingness to be open to change

and to overcome challenges is part of his ability to grow into expertise. “I am willing to take risks so I was put into positions or situations where I was exposed to such things.” Being provided with opportunities to learn further, due to this predisposition, permitted him to “have had those chances to really expand some of the things we did in the school with my connections with other people.” Networking with other teachers in meeting his teaching challenges and being open to change has been an instrumental influence on who he is as a teacher. “Collaboration has been an important part in shaping the way and how I teach.”

#### **I.10 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Ivan’s dominant perspectives are developmental and nurturing while his recessive perspectives are transmission and social reform. The developmental and nurturing perspectives as important aspects of his teacher journey of understanding were substantiated by his interview comments. Ivan grew to know that the emotional attitudes and interpersonal space created by the teacher and his students are essential for increasing the likelihood of student engagement in their learning. His interview also highlighted his understanding of teaching as a process rather than as content oriented. His focus on the importance of collegial collaboration and learning in the classroom also highlights the apprenticeship perspective as one of his higher TPI scores. Ivan’s focus on individual student achievement lent itself to having social reform as a recessive perspective. His teaching experiences with transmission as a primary focus has changed over the years due to his teaching experiences so that it now plays a recessive role in his teaching.

## Appendix J: Jenny

### J.1 Demographics

Female; 7 years' experience; secondary; Pacific Ocean School District; B.A., B.Ed. & M.Ed.

### J.2 TPI Commentary



**Table J.1 Jenny's TPI Scores**

Tr: 34	Ap: 41	Dv: 42	Nu: 39	SR: 38
B: 12	B: 14	B: 13	B: 11	B: 9
I: 9	I: 13	I: 15	I: 15	I: 14
A: 13	A: 14	A: 14	A: 13	A: 15

Dominant Perspective(s): 42+ Developmental

Recessive Perspective(s): 36 – Transmission

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;      Dominant:  Recessive: 

Jenny reported that she expected more variation in her TPI profile based upon the descriptors of the perspectives. All five were close she reported and four really close. However, based upon further reflection she could see these perspectives reflecting her teaching priorities. Her transmission perspective was relatively low which she attributed to her present teaching in an alternate setting where she has realized students need explicit instruction and then breaking the concepts open. “There is a place for specific clarity of information when it is needed.” Jenny emphasizes her approach as developmental scaffolding through role modeling and the gradual release of responsibility. The caring perspective affirms and comes from her love of Vygotsky. The person inside all comes out in the classroom she says — “the flow of who is an expert at different times.”

Social reform in teaching is an interesting concept for her. “I believe very strongly in higher ideals. I teach the Universal Declaration of Human Rights right at the beginning and we use that as our guide for everything.” She says she uses it for “looking at the world through a

lens for negotiating what a classroom should look like.” She uses this concept for developing language so that students may advocate for themselves. “At the end of the day you need to look at the individual person. Where they are at and where they are going. I let them question and challenge their way there. Give them the language to empower.” She sees social reform as not teaching her ideas about society but giving students the scope and permission to “want them to pick up their own.”

Jenny’s nurturing profile is revealed through comments that achievement should be recognized from where a student started not where they finished. “It should be where they were and where they ended and they can see that and feel that and then they are rewarded.” Jenny says, “There is a place for everything at certain times to certain degrees.”

In response to the question of whether her TPI profile has changed over time she reports, “It would be different in that a lot of what I have learned in teaching in the last five years working with a very diverse little alternate group” has caused her to adapt and change. “I HAVE [emphasis in interview] to differentiate. I HAVE [emphasis in interview] to create community. I HAVE [emphasis in interview] to have an ethical code that everyone can get on board with. I have to have scaffolding.”

Jenny's TPI responses revealed numerous statements as being strongly held as always in her teaching:

**Table J.2 Jenny's TPI Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Transmission	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My teaching is governed by the course objectives.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Apprenticeship	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To be a good teacher, one must be a good practitioner.</i></li> <li>• <i>Knowledge and its application cannot be separated.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I want people to understand the realities of working in the real world.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I model the skills and methods of good practice.</i></li> <li>• <i>I link the subject matter with real settings of practice or application.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
Developmental	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Teaching should build upon what people already know.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to help people develop more complex ways of reasoning.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect people to develop new ways of reasoning about the subject.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want people to see how complex and inter-related things really are.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I ask a lot of questions when I teach.</i></li> <li>• <i>I encourage people to challenge each other's thinking.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
Nurturing	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It's important that I acknowledge learners' emotional reactions.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to build people's self-confidence and self-esteem as learners.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect that people will enhance their self-esteem through my teaching.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I encourage expressions of feeling and emotion.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Social Reform	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to challenge people to seriously reconsider their values.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect people to be committed to changing our society.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I use the subject matter as a way to teach about higher ideals.</i></li> <li>• <i>I emphasize values more than knowledge in my teaching.</i></li> <li>• <i>I link instructional goals to necessary changes in society.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always



### **J.3 Teaching Influences**

Jenny states that her teaching experiences in different instructional settings have influenced her teaching. As previously stated, she quickly realized that she needed to create a sense of community and have an ethical code that students accept before she could be successful in her teaching. She learned from a variety of students. One student informed her, “Tell me what you want me to do. Tell me how to do it and let me do it.” It made her realize that all students and settings can be so different if you are listening to what is going on about you. She reports that her recent alternative setting is a “very humbling experience for a teacher.” Students in such settings often “realize that authority is an illusion that people choose to buy into so that is not keeping them there ... so you need everyone to choose to be there ... that is the big thing.”

Jenny reports that she adjusts her perspectives and actions according to the kids in front of her. They are teaching her what works for them. For example, in some classes you may reference the word society and most students would have a conception of the term but in other classes she says she needs to break the word ‘society’ down if she wants to teach those students. “It’s constantly that responsiveness in trying something different.” Her teaching experiences have taught her to listen and be responsive to her students and her students will tell her what they need to know and what they are interested in as you go.

One of the greatest influences in Jenny’s teaching was her mother. Her mother’s maxim of identifying your objective and constantly reflecting and assessing as you move towards it has stuck with her as a helpful principle of life. “Growing up with my mother, everything, [and] everything was an absolute learning experience.” “What’s your plan? What’s your next step?” That combination of vision and action really influenced her teaching. “There is no hierarchy or shame. The only question at the end of the day is how close are you to where you want to be.”

Assessing student progress has also been a teaching influence. To Jenny formative assessment makes so much sense. “It’s not about right or wrong, good or bad or even mistakes.” Jenny finds helping her students to what they need to focus on next to learn to move to the learning objective as the key piece of the learning puzzle. “I find it funny we still use the word mistake in education ... there is no mistake ... there is only ... how does that help me focus on what I need to do to move to my next objective.”

The other influence Jenny mentioned is growing up in “alternative areas.” Living amongst eccentric or alternative life style people in her formative years changed her idea of what it meant to be educated. “It made me realize we take our assumptions and paint it about other people without meaning to do it.” She asserts that schooling per se does not mean a person is educated and capable. Such early learning has helped her work with diverse students. Jenny wants us to “loosen up the judgment thing we all have.”

Colleagues have also been instrumental in shaping her understanding of teaching. She remembers early on in her career that a principal gave her a book on formative assessment because she was actually doing it. He told her she was doing it “naturally” and thought the book would help her get further into the concept. Jenny uses the metaphor of the parachute maker to describe her understanding of assessment. You want the students to consistently pack a good parachute at the end of the learning no matter where they started out and by also improving the consistency of achievement over time.

Using school wide assessments, such as cross grade school wide writes, to develop school goals also was an influence. She reports that such assessment for, of and as learning aligns with “my mother’s teaching style and household values.” “Everything has played a role”, she asserts. Being a twin helped too in that her “concepts of collaboration, communication, the

idea that we all have different strengths and weaknesses” has helped her understanding of teaching. Her twin assisted her “fill the holes and support you in that and vice-versa.”

Jenny also mentions senior teachers who had the time to mentor, giving you the bits at a time when you were ready, was also a practical influence. Overall her sense of getting away from the idea that learning has to be competitive as the school system shapes it was a powerful motivator to change her practice.

#### **J.4 Transitions**

Jenny’s perceptions of changes or transitions in her teaching she states were ironically both evolutionary and revolutionary. The evolutionary part was the sense of her entire career in developing a better understanding of who she is and what she believes in as a teacher. The other perception was of dramatic moments.

“The other piece is the huge moments like a huge impact all of a sudden. Something sharp that has happened. The big thing is when you are paying attention to kids you have so many sharp learning moments.”

She recalls a nurturing perspective like moment when amidst the hurly burly of teaching hundreds of students she took the time to notice one that looked stressed. His mother had been taken by ambulance that morning after an apparent suicide attempt. The student sat in her class not knowing if his mother was alive or dead. “I remember it was just me asking. It was like a heartbeat ... It really impacted me realizing the role of the teacher. It was humbling ... we are all mortal beings.” She acknowledges the keen responsibility she feels for her students.

She often finds colleagues and students getting stuck in power relationships. “I am just realizing that you have an obligation to be a good human being to other human beings and in a school system we get locked into this little bit of tyranny here.” She does not want the system to

overtake the humanity. There is a need to show respect and treat people as you would like to be treated. “You have to fight to retain your humanity in a mass production system.”

## **J.5 Teaching Intentions**

Jenny explains her teaching intentions as wanting her students to be good human beings and to have them see the interconnectedness of everything. She elaborates that she wants her students to have a firm grasp of the knowledge and language of human rights based upon the universal declaration. She wants them to be able to articulate the tension between group and individual rights, when your freedom of expression hits her right for a safe environment and so on. “Just to be critically able to think that way and use that language and know what they believe in and what they stand behind I would consider myself very happy.”

Her second main intent is to see the interconnectedness of life. “Everything that they are interacting with in their lives has all these tools and complexity to it and for them to just be able to appreciate that and see the links and layering.” She often uses figurative language and thematic teaching to get at this concept. For understanding political structure and power, economy, geography and society she uses movies like *Avatar* or *Walking Dead* to see the interconnectedness of life. Inquiry questions, class research and conversations bring out the key concepts. She wants students to be able to answer what skills should we value in people and why to see such connections eventually in their own lives. Her intentions are to make learning meaningful in a personal way. “It is not about content. It becomes a lens or a tool to be able to assess, consider and weight things around them in their own world. [Learning] empowers rather than just another thing to learn.”

## **J.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Jenny indicates that her hardships in learning math was actually a supportive influence in helping her persevere and realize you do not have to be the best at it to do it and enjoy it. She likens such learning experiences as to “trying to climb up a mudslide.” Her other supportive influence as being a twin and having a mom who said, “If you don’t know something what are you going to do about that?” She is alarmed that the education system does shape many inappropriate attitudes towards learning. “Our culture associates a lot of shame with not doing well, something that you cannot do which is really interesting ... It never occurs to me that people will not want to help you learn to accomplish what you want to do.”

## **J.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Jenny describes the wisdom and values of good teaching as good assessment skills. She means this not in the traditional sense of assessment of students but in the attentiveness and readiness of teachers being responsive in their abilities to adjust what they are doing in the classroom to what best impacts the students. She believes teachers who are constantly assessing or reflecting upon their practice as good teachers. “I am a learner too,” she claims. She believes teachers need to be vulnerable in helping themselves and their students grow. Reasonable risk taking is necessary for teacher improvement as is a caring approach to their students. Ultimately she envisions moving away from grades and age group advancement as helping student learning and in meeting the diversity of student needs.

## **J.8 Teaching Metaphor**

A helpful metaphor that illustrates teaching for Jenny is having your own playgroup.

Having a group of playmates to play each day is like teaching in a classroom as it makes learning fun and meaningful. She exclaims that:

“You just go out and play with them and explore and question. You don’t know the answers to most of the questions that you ask at the time. You don’t know where it is going to go. You don’t know where it is going to end up. That just makes it so much fun.”

## **J.9 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Jenny explains that we tend to coddle our youth too much as they are more capable than we give them credit for. She says in her experience her students are desperate to be considered more capable and involved in more purposeful activities, events and partnerships. Jenny indicates that we need to give them the space to do that and accept the messiness that comes with that. She finds school a rather contrived and artificial setting. “We just keep pushing them through what we want because of what we want and when we want ... ” It is a challenge to have students become accountable in such a forced setting. Jenny asserts that we “end up teaching lessons we don’t want them to be learning by doing such things as social promotion.” She finds students in the schools today are not getting the idea “that they really need to know something before they move on.”

## **J.10 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Jenny’s dominant perspective is developmental while her recessive perspective is transmission. Her journey of developing her teaching expertise substantiates the developmental perspective as her dominant understanding of teaching. Meeting the needs of the diverse learners in her classes in their metacognitive skills and adjusting her teaching to such needs is a

dominant theme in her comments. Transmission is recessive owing to her beliefs around what is important in learning. It is not teaching what students need to know as far as content that is important but how students may have the skills and motivation to make such decisions for themselves. It is the processes of learning that are more important to Jenny and the caring culture that facilitates learning.

Apprenticeship, nurturing and social reform perspectives are quite strong also in Jenny's profile. Learning from her own learning experiences, her students and other colleagues and the nurturing influence of her mother is a large part of her profile as well. Her comments about the outcomes of teaching for her students accentuate and align with the social reform perspective in understanding teaching as well.

## Appendix K: Kevin

### K.1 Demographics

Male; 2 weeks' experience; elementary; Coast Salish School District; B. Music, B. Ed.

### K.2 TPI Commentary



**Table K.1 Kevin's TPI Scores**

Tr: 39	Ap: 42	Dv: 38	Nu: 38	SR: 29
B: 14	B: 13	B: 11	B: 11	B: 10
I: 12	I: 15	I: 15	I: 12	I: 10
A: 13	A: 14	A: 12	A: 15	A: 9

Dominant Perspective(s): 42+ Apprenticeship

Recessive Perspective(s): 33 – Social Reform

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions; Dominant:  Recessive: 

Kevin reported that he thought the TPI was an accurate profile with one exception. He thinks nurturing should have scored higher. He stays away from meaningless compliments. “I try to make compliments that are true.” He infers that thinking may have pulled his nurturing score down a bit as he thinks of himself as a very nurturing teacher. “That is probably one of the things that defines me as a teacher is that I really care you know. It’s probably true of most teachers.”

He says his martial arts teaching provided him with a unique perspective on self-confidence and self-esteem generation in students. He states that it is a good idea to teach confidence but it is a better idea to teach students to have an accurate self-assessment of themselves and their competencies. When you are made to feel confident you naturally have more self-confidence.

“You don’t want someone believing that they are capable just because they are confident. You want them to feel they are capable because they can accurately



assess the situation in themselves and find themselves adequate.”

With only two weeks of formal public school teaching under his belt, Kevin was not in a position to answer whether his TPI profile will change over time. He responded that he doesn’t know but based upon teachers he has known (martial arts instructor) he suspects that there is a strong possibility of that. “My master instructor was way harder on the kids than I was ... through the years I taught with him I grew more towards his side.” He says he usually starts off ‘soft’ trying to be everybody’s buddy so he suspects the same thing will happen with teaching band. Over time he states that he leans towards those teachers he regards as his mentors. “I try to start from a place of humility in giving students a lot of respect no matter their age, gender or anything.”

Kevin’s TPI responses revealed numerous statements as being strongly held as always in her teaching:

**Table K.2 Kevin’s TPI Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Transmission	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Learning is enhanced by having predetermined objectives.</i></li> <li>• <i>Effective teachers must first be experts in their own subject.</i></li> </ul>	Always
			Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I want people to score well on examinations as a result of my teaching.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I make it very clear to people what they are to learn.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Apprenticeship	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To be a good teacher, one must be a good practitioner.</i></li> <li>• <i>The best learning comes from working alongside good practitioners.</i></li> </ul>	Always
			Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to demonstrate how to perform or work in real situations.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect people to know how to apply the subject matter in real settings.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want people to understand the realities of working in the real world.</i></li> </ul>	Always
			Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I model the skills and methods of good practice.</i></li> <li>• <i>I see to it that novices learn from more experienced people.</i></li> </ul>	Always
			Always

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Developmental	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to help people develop more complex ways of reasoning.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect people to develop new ways of reasoning about the subject.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want people to see how complex and inter-related things really are.</i></li> </ul>	Always  Always  Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I ask a lot of questions when teaching.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Nurturing	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It's important that I acknowledge learners' emotional reactions.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I find something to compliment in everyone's work or contribution.</i></li> <li>• <i>I encourage expressions of feeling and emotion.</i></li> <li>• <i>I share my own feelings and expect my learners to do the same.</i></li> </ul>	Always  Always Always
Social Reform	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>For me, teaching is a moral act as much as an intellectual activity.</i></li> </ul>	Always

### K.3 Teaching Influences

Kevin states his whole life has been full of mentors. His mom was a mentor home schooling him and his sister to a high standard for when they returned to public high school he reported “he was ahead of the game.” Kevin also mentioned his Taekwondo instructor and several different music teachers as mentors that helped him on his way. He highlights the great music instructors at Vancouver Island University when he was taking his undergraduate music program there. He also recalled learning much from his practicum teachers and other band teachers. “The education program could have been 10% classroom and 90% practicum and I would have learned a lot more I think.” Kevin also includes his four years of learning how to be a Taekwondo instructor as a strong influence on his understanding of teaching.

However, the single greatest motivator for him as a teacher is the years he spent in school as a student watching people “fall through the cracks.” People in schools seemed not to notice or

care. “I will never forget seeing that because it’s horrible.” This he stresses is the main reason he got into teaching. His success with hard to teach students in martial arts further heartened him and reinforced his calling to go into teaching: “That is really what encouraged me to go into teaching was the fact that I saw that I could make a difference. I could help people that otherwise might not have gotten help and that has always stuck with me.”

Kevin states that the center of his teaching ethos is that the students teach him as well. He says it is a matter of listening and paying attention. He has learned “so much more teaching than I ever did as a student.”

“You are not teaching people if you are just giving them information, then you are no different than a book or a computer at that point, but what you are teaching people is how to understand themselves and how to teach themselves so they can figure it out.”

Kevin recalls his Taekwondo teaching experiences as remembering to recognize patterns and the flow of listening and paying attention over time to develop expertise. He remembers persisting on things and working on it until they became so natural that you can see a few movements and then could predict what would happen. Change for him happens within the context of what you do and see.

“I spent hours and hours holding targets, holding bags, watching people do the most basic elements of martial arts over and over again. You notice so many little things. You do that for so long that the next time you go into a competition and you are sparring with somebody and you recognize the smallest shift of weight, the smallest movement in their body, gives away everything that they are about to do. You see that because you have seen that in hundreds of students in hundreds of hours of training. It’s the same in other subject areas too.”

#### **K.4 Transitions**

Kevin’s perceptions of changes or transitions in his teaching are remembering the moments when he notices that something has changed. He doesn’t know if this means it

happened suddenly or if that is the first time he noticed but he remembers those moments. He recollects such moments on both his music practicum and in his martial arts teaching. He recalls one of those moments when he realized he had changed with a martial arts example of blocking after many years of practice. Kevin emphasizes the sense of flow that occurs to him during those moments.

“I remember sparring with a friend of mine ... I was really coming into myself as a martial artist. All at once sparring with him he threw 3 or 4 punches and I blocked them all with my front arm with hardly a movement. It was a one, two, three, four sort of thing. It was perfect. I have never before that never been good at blocking. Defensive strategies for me did not involve blocking. I was not one of those cat like reflexes sort of people. I will never forget that moment. All of a sudden [clicks his fingers] I realized, wow, I can do that! [Laughs] Who knew?”

## **K.5 Teaching Intentions**

Kevin explains his teaching intentions as having changed a great deal in working through his degree. “I had goals about what I thought music was about and what my purpose was. That changed through the music degree and the educational degree.” It changed he expounded because of what the Vancouver Island University education program did in challenging their students over and over again to explain and articulate their purpose in teaching to better understand themselves and to be able to “defend it.”

In the beginning he wanted to create more art in Canadian society, more music, and more jobs for artists. He soon realized if he could contribute to developing a musical culture in Canada that would be great, however in terms of an elementary music program very few students are going to become music professionals or even have it as a hobby. He evolved his understanding of what he does as having an obligation to give to all his students something of value in class. For most those would be the development of cognitive skills, manual skills, social

skills, all widely transferable skills that we develop in music. “My intentions are to give them something of value before they leave the class whatever that might be.”

## **K.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Kevin indicates that he has a “bag full” of positive influences. He fondly remembers his mentor practicum music teachers and their level of musicianship. “I was left with this impression of wow I hope I can do that someday.” His mentors had a sense of control of their classes and an ability to demonstrate music so perfectly. He recalls a university band instructor with an encyclopedia like mind on each of his students. He knew what each student is capable of, their relative strengths and weaknesses, and how best to use his students in the band.

His hindering influences evokes memories of teachers speaking inappropriately about students in demeaning, unproductive ways, perhaps out of frustration, but it took him right back to his high school setting watching teachers like that be the cause of students “slipping through the cracks”. He recalls a specific classmate who in Kevin’s view was brilliant but never was a fit for school and became a tragic human casualty. “No one ever really taught him what he was looking for which wasn’t how to do math or do English. He wanted to know what he was supposed to do in the real world. No one was giving him that.”

Kevin explains that he tries to keep an open mind and not to judge people. “Every time I think about that or I hear that [derogatory comments about students] I pray it is not ever going to be me.” He sets out each day to have a smile on his face “no matter how tough the day gets” and to show up to “put my best foot forward.”

## **K.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Kevin asserts that good teaching begins with love, with care and from a place of genuine caring about others. As a teacher he says you are not just showing people reading and writing. He remembers a quote from the encyclopedia of Taekwondo written by General Choi which says, “Educate the young to produce heroic leaders.” That is something that has always stuck with him as a value. “Good teaching means you are creating a better world.” Good teachers give something back that is of profound value to society. Kevin reasserts it has to begin with care, love and generosity and all of those values we have been taught to hold. He ends this section of the interview by saying, “It is funny. It is not an easy question to answer.”

## **K.8 Teaching Metaphor**

Kevin states that a metaphor is an expression of your understanding of truth. A helpful metaphor for him he suggests is that a teacher is like a farmer. The farmer needs to be aware of when and what to plant because they must be able to predict what will come out of the ground come harvest time. Nothing satisfies the farmer more than seeing the growth of his plants.

“I almost think that you can’t really communicate with anybody about something until they have experienced it themselves. You can show them things like it. You can use those metaphors, those analogies, to try to show them the way, but it’s up to them to find the truth.”

## **K.9 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Kevin ended the interview by responding to this opportunity to add any further comments by saying, “I kind of feel I just gave you my whole life there.”

## **K.10 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Kevin’s dominant perspective is apprenticeship while his recessive perspective is social reform. His learning from mentors and more experienced teachers is a theme of Kevin’s journey

in understanding his teaching. The apprenticeship type experience of practicing and learning within the context of what you do is a theme of Kevin's interview. Much of what he has to say in his understanding of teaching certainly touches upon nurturing as a strong influence and he is perplexed as to why that did not come out higher as his life experience and intent in teaching certainly emphasizes it. Teaching is a calling to him primarily based upon nurturing aspects of teaching. His recessive perspective of social reform is tempered by his teaching experiences to date. He realizes that grade school teachers basically focus on individuals in their daily work to give each of them something that is of value. He cites this specific transformation of purpose in his music teaching due to his experiences in his training in music teaching. Changing society for Kevin begins with an individual at a time and this is unlikely his understanding of social reform, although his TPI results reveal he believes teaching to be as much of a moral act as an intellectual one.

## Appendix L: Lee

### L.1 Demographics

Male; 11 years' experience; primarily elementary; Coast Salish School District; B.A., B. Ed., M. Ed.

### L.2 TPI Commentary



**Table L.1 Lee's TPI Scores**

Tr: 27	Ap: 37	Dv: 35	Nu: 34	SR: 33
B: 9	B: 13	B: 11	B: 15	B: 12
I: 9	I: 12	I: 12	I: 12	I: 10
A: 9	A: 12	A: 12	A: 7	A: 11

Dominant Perspective(s): 37+ Apprenticeship

Recessive Perspective(s): 30 – Transmission

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;      Dominant:  Recessive: 

Lee reported that he was not surprised that apprenticeship came up as his highest because of his training in inquiry based teaching (International Baccalaureate Certification). “Inquiry is the best way for students to learn as it puts them at the center of their learning.” He noted transmission was his lowest bar which he describes as a traditional style. He acknowledges at times he over talks in his classes so he was happy to see transmission as his lowest. His higher developmental perspective he says goes “part and parcel” with inquiry based teaching. Nurturing is something he cares deeply about. He states he is not sure if he is as effective there as he would like to be as he is a strict teacher with high expectations. Lee observed his TPI profile revealed his beliefs in nurturing are high but his actions are not reflective of that. His strong reform score reflects his belief that he is educating our youth for tomorrow not the way he was taught. Social reform in his view ties into teaching for future citizens.



When asked if his TPI profile may have changed since he started teaching he answered in the affirmative. When he first started teaching he explained that it was more about “stand and deliver”, more about transmission. He reported that would have come out of teachers’ college and entering the profession as an understanding. He states that “he is starting to feel like the developmental and the nurturing should be higher than what I currently have them at because of the context and the way that we are seeing children today coming to school with a lot more challenges beyond just learning.”

Lee’s TPI responses revealed some statements as being strongly held as always in his teaching:

**Table L.2 Lee’s TPI Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Apprenticeship	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>To be a good teacher, one must be a good practitioner.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I link the subject matter with real settings of practice or application.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Developmental	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Teaching should focus on developing qualitative changes in thinking.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Nurturing	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>It’s important that I acknowledge learners’ emotional reactions.</i></li> <li><i>In my teaching, building self-confidence in learners is a priority.</i></li> <li><i>People’s effort should be rewarded as much as achievement.</i></li> </ul>	Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach.</i></li> </ul>	Always

### **L.3 Teaching Influences**

Lee states that ongoing learning as a lifelong learner is the most significant influence. His initial teaching experience was in an International Baccalaureate (IB) school in a foreign country. The program was according to Lee very much grounded in inquiry design and a

“constructivist understanding of the world of Vygotsky” which shaped his educational beliefs about how students should learn. This context was very much an apprenticeship experience in understanding teaching. “I think it really transitioned me away from being that transmission based teacher that I think I probably was early in my career to be more of the apprenticeship teacher.”

In learning about inquiry design, assessment practices and the importance of mindsets in people, Lee cites some key influential mentors or educational gurus such as Murdock, Wiggins, McTighe, and Dweck that were informative to him in shaping his practice. He recalls no specific teacher as being a strong influence but just the overall culture of high teacher collaboration. Lee also notes that such collaboration has to be ongoing, regular and worthwhile. He says that B.C. primary years’ program ideas have collaboration embedded as an essential part of the program which he explains is supportive and helpful. The use of technology has also been influential. He follows educational hash tags on Twitter which has opened up a world of “different perspectives, different dialogues and discussion groups.” Overall he states, “Creating that professional learning network has really helped broaden my understanding.”

Experiences with students to try to understand them and “what makes them tick” has also been highly influential Lee reports. He was exposed to a wide diversity of students and was driven to teach to such variety and so learned from the students in the process of how best to do that.

#### **L.4 Transitions**

Lee’s perceptions of changes or transitions in his teaching are of an evolutionary nature, particularly with his willingness to take on leadership experiences and learn from that. He mentions doing his Master’s degree, as a transition in his teaching, as well as “continually

learning, continually reading, continually applying my reading to practice has allowed me to evolve and change.” He remembers transformative events too. He recalls specific parent complains about him clashing with their child’s personality and misunderstandings by parents about his developmental teaching rather than transmission focus putting pressure on him. Lee reflects that “probably developmentally they were not ready for it and of course in my efforts to try to push for the right intentions it was received wrongly ...”

Lee relates that successful moments as well are reinforcing. When you see “the light bulbs go on” for students it brings great joy to him. His present teaching role has him now working alongside colleagues as a helping teacher and he uses the light bulb analogy that his influence can extend to more students through his work with teachers. He cites his willingness to model and encourage others in trying out new things and not being afraid to fail as being particularly important in his growth as a teacher. “In order to turn on those light bulbs for other teachers, I have to be forward learning myself.”

## **L.5 Teaching Intentions**

Lee explains his teaching intentions as engaging students to get them thinking. Having students reflect on why their present learning is important in the context of the bigger picture is important to him. He would like students to transparently see the purpose in the work that they are doing with him.

## **L.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Lee indicates that influences can be both supportive and hindering. He explains it by saying that negative experiences in the end can be positives in terms of growth. In his previous

example with parent complaints about his teaching he learned that communication with parents is important for example. He learns from doing with good intentions.

### **L.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Lee asserts that good teaching is being willing not to have direct control all the time. For Lee, good teaching is like the analogy of bumper bowling ‘where you have the width of the lane and you know the ball cannot go into the gutter so the kids can bounce the ball off the gutter [bumper] and go in any which direction as long as it is in the lane and it will eventually hit pins.’ Traditional teaching is more like standard bowling in which you have to bowl straight down the line or lose your ball in the gutter he concludes.

### **L.8 Teaching Metaphor**

Lee responded that his above analogy is a good fit for this question. Another one he has heard in the IB world is “live it don’t laminate it.” Teachers have lots of posters and lots of sayings and things on their classroom walls to inspire students but teachers do not “live it and breathe it he themselves” he elaborates. Lee says “we have to walk the walk if we want to model.” He emphasizes it is okay to fail as it is all about learning and effort to get better. “It’s constantly lifelong learning.” He exhorts to “learn with the kids and model that for kids.”

Lee recalled a specific moment when another teacher complained about how they felt they were reinventing the wheel each year. To which a different colleague replied that if they were not reinventing the wheel you would not be responding to your new group of students each year. Lee remembers the teacher going on to say that every year you have a different group with somewhat different needs and what works one year may not work the next. Lee found that learning moment poignant yet true.

## **L.9 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Lee finds the significant influences on understanding teaching to be based upon his involvement in collaboration and open talk about practice about what is working and not working. He notes that idea is not as pervasive or permissive as perhaps it should be. He states that “isolation is becoming a lot more challenging” with a need for teachers to be more open and receptive to ideas. It takes a village of educators to teach a child he points out. He notes students may go from classroom to classroom and yet there is no teacher community involvement. Being insulated and insular by sticking to what you know even though the teaching context is changing is insufficient role modeling for our students in the changing world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century he contends.

## **L.10 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Lee’s dominant perspective is apprenticeship while his recessive perspective is transmission. From his interview comments regarding his contextual learning about understanding teaching and his belief in inquiry learning, his TPI results are supportive of his narration of his teaching journey thus far.

## Appendix M: Mandy

### M.1 Demographics

Female; 12 years' experience; primarily secondary; Coast Salish School District; B.A., B.Ed., M. Ed.

### M.2 TPI Commentary

**Table M.1 Mandy's TPI Scores**

Tr: 30	Ap: 35	Dv: 39	Nu: 44	SR: 41
B: 12	B: 10	B: 11	B: 15	B: 12
I: 6	I: 13	I: 14	I: 15	I: 15
A: 12	A: 12	A: 14	A: 14	A: 14

Dominant Perspective(s): 42+ Apprenticeship

Recessive Perspective(s): 33 – Transmission

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;

Dominant:  Recessive: 

Mandy reported that she thought the TPI was a reasonably accurate view of her perceptions of teaching. She mentioned that although her transmission is lower she understands and values it, but she has strong opinions around our public education system and the transmission of knowledge. Although nurturing was her highest score, she was surprised by that as she does not consider herself a particularly nurturing person, at least not to the point that it would be her highest score. As a female and aboriginal person, she was not surprised to find social reform to be very high. She expected it might be her highest score.

In responding to the question of whether her TPI profile would have changed over time, she said that when she started teaching her transmission of information score would likely have been higher. Her teacher education program placed much emphasis on curriculum integrated resource packages and the coverage of learning outcomes. “That’s how I was drilled coming out

of teachers' training whereas I don't feel that way anymore ... I don't feel as a teacher I am defined anymore by curriculum attainment or concepts that are structured in our B.C. system."

She now says that since she has grown in experience over the past dozen years of teaching, she now decides on what is important for her students.

"I am looking at results. I am looking at graduation rates. I am looking at reading results at a variety of different levels. I am looking at participation success in different courses with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students."

She prioritizes connecting the classroom to what is real in children's lives. Social reform which is now a goal for her was not at the forefront of teachers' college she reports. She summarizes her training as more about instructional preparation and curriculum coverage. The emphasis she remembered from teacher training is "get through it for this grade level."

Mandy's TPI responses revealed numerous statements as being strongly held as always in his teaching or never held:

**Table M.2 Mandy's TPI Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Transmission	B	• <i>Learning is enhanced by having predetermined objectives.</i>	Always
	I	• <i>My goal is to prepare people for content related examinations.</i>	Never
Apprenticeship	I	• <i>I want people to understand the realities of working in the real world.</i>	Always
Developmental	I	• <i>My goal is to help people develop more complex ways of reasoning.</i>	Always
		• <i>I expect people to develop new ways of reasoning about the subject.</i>	Always
	A	• <i>I ask a lot of questions while teaching.</i>	Always
Nurturing	B	• <i>It's important that I acknowledge learners' emotional reactions.</i>	Always
		• <i>In my teaching, building self-confidence in learners is a priority.</i>	Always
		• <i>People's effort should be rewarded as much as achievement.</i>	Always

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Nurturing	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to build people's self-confidence and self-esteem as learners.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect that people will enhance their self-esteem through my teaching.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want to provide a balance between caring and Challenging as I teach</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I encourage expressions of feelings and emotion.</i></li> <li>• <i>I share my own feelings and expect my learners to do the same.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
Social Reform	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Individual learning without social change is not enough.</i></li> <li>• <i>For me, teaching is a moral act as much as an intellectual activity.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>My goal is to challenge people to seriously reconsider their values.</i></li> <li>• <i>I expect people to be committed to changing society.</i></li> <li>• <i>I want to make apparent what people take for granted about society.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I use the subject matter as a way to teach about higher ideals.</i></li> <li>• <i>I emphasize values more than knowledge in my teaching.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always

### M.3 Teaching Influences

Mandy states that what influences her now is looking at results, graduation rates, participation success in different courses for Aboriginal students and improved success at reading results. “The public system, to a certain degree, has almost been a training ground for post-secondary academia”, missing, Mandy says, other services for all of our students. Success for all is going to look completely different for success for each student she emphasizes. Success will be defined by a Dogwood [graduation certificate for meeting academic requirements], honours' courses, trades, other careers and so on. She believes schools are missing out on the community and cultural pieces that make up a whole person.



The new Ministry 21<sup>st</sup> century initiatives around competencies she indicates is a powerful influence and something she values. She calls these skills like critical thinking, creativity, innovation, self-reflection, communication, interpersonal and interpersonal skills, global citizenship, and knowledge of indigenous ways as being of much more value than coverage of particular subject content of a previous era. Students she claims should spend more time on these processes with the end goal of achieving those competencies. It is a more action oriented than passive sort of learning and demonstrating. She says if students are taught to be self-regulated inquiry minded learners that know how to figure out the best way that they learn we will have facilitated their learning. Then once those skills are in place, to a relative degree, secondary school learning can launch into areas of student interest.

The role of teachers would change to become facilitators, coaches and mentors in a student's learning journey. Unlike the sage on the stage delivering content that drives most schools now. The purpose Mandy claims is to look at nurturing and social reform by giving them a set of skills rather than a pile of content.

Mandy asserts that we focus too much on content to the detriment of building other skills, abilities and independence. She notices that many students today do not have the skills to process the content to do anything with it. "I can remember from my education memorizing it and rote memorize and then spitting it back on a sheet of paper and then never remembering a thing after that. It is not right." Mandy thinks spending more time on process skills, creative thinking, and critical thinking within the context of pulling in content of interest to certain students with the end goal of achieving some of these competencies students would be better served. "I can remember it if it is useful to me but I will make that decision." By doing this she thinks students will figure out their best way to learn according to their interests. Too much of

education is “just trying to get through the content versus solidifying and celebrating the skills, abilities and independent pieces of each student.” According to Mandy students need skills and tools to process information over just cramming in content subject knowledge.

“If I was given the skills to find the information I needed that was useful and relevant to me, it would not be to teach me the information. It would be to teach me how to retrieve the information and process it, own it, transform it, [and] do whatever it is I am going to do with it.”

Mandy notes it was becoming more proficient in those processes herself as a teacher that she has struggled with. The relatively insufficient results of her teaching in reading had her doing “a lot of my own soul searching.” Mandy realized that there were processes and skills to teach reading that she had not yet been taught to teach yet. She finally became acquainted with smart reading strategies which gave her not only processes and skills to improve her teaching of reading but made so much practical sense. She celebrated it and began to systemically embed those strategies into everything she did. From the example of reading comprehension, her skills and application grew into a global view on strategies in other subject areas, including math and science at the high school level. Regardless of the content, students had to process information. She began to see commonalities or patterns which she investigated with other colleagues into more creative thinking and global citizenship as the ends of her teaching as well.

#### **M.4 Transitions**

Mandy’s perceptions of transitions in her teaching are of evolutionary change. A slow development of awakening, isolated initially to reading strategies because that was what she was teaching at the time. Later, as noted, she transferred those practices to other secondary subjects. The successes arising from teaching processes made her want to deemphasize content. She started to emphasize how to teach rather than what to teach. She acknowledges it was a

developmental process of gradual adaptation and change as she learned what worked better for her students over time. “I am assuming it is going to continue to be something different two years or five years down the road as well.”

Her involvement with Aboriginal studies has encouraged her growth as well. She looks at learning far more holistically than she used to as she reflects the education system is tipped too far to mental cognitive/academic emphases and less to the spiritual, cultural and emotional side. A better balance towards the latter would better support healthier human development in a holistic manner which she believes would lead to improved student success, particularly so for Aboriginal students.

Her experience as an Aboriginal in the school system caused her to perceive ways of knowing very differently from the mainstream students. She reports that as a student she experienced racism and stigmatizing in school. The expectations of her as a child and youth as an Aboriginal person she says were probably lower than those of my non-Aboriginal counterparts. She recollects that it was unlikely that people expected her to graduate due to her ethnicity and family background with an alcoholic mother who had attended residential school. Her single parent mom had been taken away from her family at the early age of 5 and her mother battled alcoholism early on. Mandy often ponders how she made it but she said that’s a whole other conversation. She says she brings that experience into a system that has not always been as supportive to Aboriginal people with the results of the history of colonization through the residential schools.

Her Aboriginal experience and different perspective than most teachers has had a huge impact she maintains on her teaching and her journey of self-discovery as a native person. She claims it is a huge growth piece and she now highly values her culture. Learning about your

identity, history, language and culture makes so much sense she says but none of it was included in her public education including her post-secondary years unless she brought it in. Mandy sees Aboriginal people not being reflected in the mainstream curriculum or educational programs unless they bring it in which she is doing. Mandy has been shaped by these experiences as transitions in her life and teaching. Her educational experiences have “certainly shaped me as a teacher and it certainly facilitated the direction I have taken in my career too.” Aboriginal education is now the direction for her career.

## **M.5 Teaching Intentions**

Mandy affirms that this is an important question for teachers. For Mandy she wants to build strong relationships with every student in her class. She wants to be a “player” as much as she can to contribute to the “healthy, positive based growth” of kids and it is not to stress over curriculum coverage. She emphasizes we need a foundation of relationships and collaboration so students “feel more resilient.” Mandy wants to give them a few helpful tools in the “tool kit for their life” that they may not have had before. She underscores that this does not mean taking away from who they are but wanting to contribute to who they are. Her key point is that, through the support and opportunities school can provide, students can develop a love of learning. “I want them to know what learning is. I want them to know when they are learning and why they are learning and what that feels like when they are learning.” In finding out how they learn best Mandy declares we can contribute to having students “successfully independent.”

“I feel this way about my own kid, my own kids in my family, that I want them to feel successfully independent. As much as I love my children and I want the closeness I want them to feel so strong that they can handle whatever comes their way.”

Mandy acknowledges that these tools will involve reading, writing, oral language and

numeracy as she wants them to feel “top notch academically” but developing learning skills takes priority over content coverage. Tools or skills that help them with the “social and emotional pieces” are equally necessary in Mandy’s opinion. To contribute to self-regulation in controlling mood responses, to provide them with skills in problem solving to “get themselves out of” situations if they have to. Such skills enable them to “allow them to be in a social learning environment so they can learn stuff.” Then they will be able to attend more successfully with the numeracy or literacy or whatever summarizes Mandy.

## **M.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Mandy reports that she has had some very supportive supervisors who did not direct her but supported and trusted her and allowed her to experiment and takes risks. They provided the supports be it emotional, resources or financial to do the task and then welcomed her invitation to review or debrief with them. Mandy claims that, “When you take a risk you get growth.” Her willingness “to put herself out there all the time” was a supportive influence in her career. “I think my disposition in my career is that I am a huge risk taker. I always want to think outside the box ... I certainly like change ... If it works for me I’ll take it with me on my journey.”

Mandy also mentions that she had mentors along the way and she “tapped into them” to help her with specific teaching or learning challenges. “I love being challenged intellectually and professionally.” One of these supports Mandy mentioned “that has saved my life at times” is belonging to a provincial professional network. She describes the network as a structure that helps connect people and critical friends around the province on “issues you are interested in and are grappling with or flourishing in.” Mandy declares that it is through these networks where she was able to create helpful relationships and “strong, productive, critical friend type relationships that have grown over the years.” She senses she has grown stronger as a teacher due to this

network because of the pressure and support to “try and do a lot of really great big things with their support and then I do them because they are beside me.” The sense of professional collegiality and kindred spirits has been very motivational and inspiring for her as “some of the folks I have in my life have an unconditional belief in me and who I am and what I can do that it is so overwhelming ... it’s people like that that I have been lucky enough to be in my life.”

As a hindering influence, Mandy cites her frustration of how the teaching profession as a whole seems to be disregarding evidence based practices particularly around instruction and assessment. She states that research based initiatives over time have shown results.

“We have a lot of reading research, a lot of information that we know and in the larger picture we still don’t do it. We still don’t practice that in our classrooms. I have always said to myself that I sometimes feel people don’t take those on for reasons that are outside education or outside instruction as far as I can tell. I have said to myself and close friends and colleagues that I don’t know what I could think of in my life that would keep me from doing what I know is best for kids.”

Mandy goes on to elaborate that she suspects that there is the perception by some that if it is not teacher initiated at the grassroots it has to be resisted even though it has nothing to do with the effectiveness of the practice and all about just because of the messenger. Mandy categorically states that she is “widely accepting” of research based practices whatever the source. She also values inquiry and believes this is an area of research classroom teachers can support and lead in.

“It gives us the perfect ground to begin to scan to look to see what our hunches and hypotheses are with our students because you are noticing that they are not succeeding in a particular area. Then you go and do your own research.”

Mandy declares she is committed to doing that for the rest of her professional life to make things better for her students. She says she cannot do that “unless I risk and try something

different in my class.” She proclaims that if teachers are not doing that then how can teachers expect their students to do it. “We can’t model it unless we know it deeply ... How are we going to give each of these kids these types of skills unless we know it deeply.” By doing her own research she takes ownership of her teaching and results.

“Imagine raising an entire generation of kids who are inquiry minded? They are not passively sitting around waiting for the government or what have you to make a decision for them. They are asking questions and trying to solve their own problems because we have given them these competencies.”

The apprenticeship and social reform themes are deeply embedded in Mandy’s understanding of teaching.

#### **M.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Mandy asserts that good teaching is governed by professional self-reflection. Reflection upon practice is further enhanced when teachers collaborate and debrief to grow teacher expertise says Mandy. She states that as social beings we find “alliances and commonalities with our colleagues” to mutually assist in being better informed and skilled. She goes back to her theme of risk taking as a value of good teaching. “A lot of the big learning happening is sticking your neck out and finding something different. It can be a controlled risk.” Through such a role modeling and skill processing focus Mandy declares we can foster and facilitate greater independence in our students to free up their learning. Instilling in students independence, cognitive and emotional competencies are what good teaching is about for Mandy.

“They [students] are discovering their passions. They are deciding what they want to focus on and how we are going to focus on it and how they will show you what they know and how they will be assessed.”

## **M.8 Teaching Metaphor**

Mandy could not think of an apt metaphor at this stage of the interview, although to the interviewer the theme of a journey seems to infuse her narrative.

## **M.9 Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching**

Mandy mentioned living in another country in Asia for a while gave her a perspective on Canada and the Canadian culture that she may not have had being immersed within it each day. She explains that is it difficult to “realize culture” when you are living in it and the values you are following each day. It wasn’t until she lived in another culture that she was able to contrast and compare what she saw as clear differences from what she knew and grew up with in the Canadian culture. She reports that these differences helped her critique B.C. education and how cultural nuances help shape ways of doing things you may not question.

Mandy further explained that she saw our education system and society as being very Euro-centric. Our education system is taken from models in Europe of a century or more ago. We jam huge numbers of people in small spaces for hours on end while a person talks she says. She came to the conclusion we do not have enough of our educators reflecting on our system and its appropriateness and functionality. Whether or not it is working she says, “we just keep going along and trying our best.” She very much wants to be a major player in how we may eventually reform and change our present educational system.

“I like change and I know that the system we have now is not best serving our kids. I am always open to being with people with whom and where there is a synergy and we create new ways of being and looking at the world. Therefore, new ways to educate our kids.”



## **M.10 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Mandy's dominant perspective is nurturing while her recessive perspective is transmission. Her interview narrative also strongly supports the high scoring social reform perspective which Mandy claims ought to have been her highest as she knows it from her teaching world and is certainly substantiated from her comments. The nurturing perspective is undoubtedly highlighted in her TPI profile due to her belief in the holistic education of a child and providing resiliency to take on the challenges of life with a comprehensive tool kit of skills. Her recessive transmission perspective is corroborated by her de-emphasis of mandatory curriculum coverage in her teaching. To go back to another comment by another teacher she does not believe in "spoon feeding" students, but in freeing them up to finding out how best they learn and to apply those understandings to areas of interest. The school system does not dictate, but has the flexibility to provide opportunities and support to emphasize skills and processes of learning over mandating a surfeit of specific content.

## Appendix N: Nolan

### N.1 Demographics

Male; 12 years' experience; secondary; private school; B.Sc.

### N.2 TPI Commentary



**Table N.1 Nolan's TPI Scores**

Tr: 28	Ap: 33	Dv: 39	Nu: 38	SR: 20
B: 10	B: 10	B: 11	B: 15	B: 8
I: 7	I: 11	I: 14	I: 13	I: 6
A: 11	A: 12	A: 14	A: 10	A: 6

Dominant Perspective(s): 39+ Apprenticeship

Recessive Perspective(s): 25 – Transmission

**Key:** Tr: Transmission; Ap: Apprenticeship; Dv: Developmental; Nu: Nurturing; SR: Social Reform

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;      Dominant:  Recessive: 

Nolan reported that his profile is accurate. At this stage in his career every child is unique and different. The developmental perspective of teaching, getting students as a cognitive goal to make them think harder and deeper, is his highest score and a big priority for him in his teaching. Transmission he explains is one of his lowest scores as he doesn't see that as a very effective way to teach and for students to learn. He now spends little time in front of the whole class explaining things he reports.

He acknowledges that early on in his teaching career that transmission however would have been higher. He expounds that it took him quite a few years to realize that it was not that effective a method but when he is "stressed out" he reverts to it. The development perspective he says would have been lower "not that I did not think it was important but I had no clues as to how to do it earlier on in my career, especially when I was tied to transmission." Nolan asserts that developmental and transmission perspectives to him are rather incompatible as "if you are in front of the class talking you really can't help the kids think deeper or think outside the box."

Nolan's TPI responses revealed some statements as being strongly held as always in his teaching:

**Table N.2 Nolan's TPI Benchmark Statements**

Perspective	BIA	Statement	Influence
Apprenticeship	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I link the subject matter with real settings of practice or application.</i></li> </ul>	Always
Developmental	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My goal is to help people develop more complex ways of reasoning.</i></li> <li><i>I want people to see how complex and inter-related things really are.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I ask a lot of questions while teaching.</i></li> <li><i>I challenge familiar ways of understanding the subject matter.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always
Nurturing	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>It's important that I acknowledge learners' emotional reactions.</i></li> <li><i>In my teaching, building self-confidence in learners is a priority.</i></li> <li><i>People's effort should be rewarded as much as achievement.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always Always
	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My goal is to build people's self-confidence and self-esteem as learners.</i></li> <li><i>I want to provide a balance between caring and challenging as I teach.</i></li> </ul>	Always Always

### N.3 Teaching Influences

When Nolan was approached with this question he responded, "I feel like saying read my blog." He reports that he started his own blog as making a commitment to use social media to support his learning and that began a real transformation in understanding teaching. "I think the first piece is to grow as a teacher, as a professional, you kind of have to be willing to put it all out there warts and all and own it." This created a professional learning shift for him based upon his practice and reflections of learning something every single day through social media and feedback rather than waiting for periodic scheduled professional development days. He exclaims, "I never stopped learning." The expressing of his thoughts on his blog and the dialog

arising from it helps his understanding of teaching. The use of technology has driven him to rethink teaching. “In my latest blog I kind of came to the way we really learn is the apprenticeship model. I really believe it is about mentoring and context.”

He further elaborates that you cannot do this “developmental thing” in a large class of people being talked at. “You need to be working through the problem yourself with a mentor beside to help you.” He recalls the wisdom in the expression that students should be working harder than the teacher and not the other way around if they are to learn deeply. With a class of 30 or so he says it is impossible to mentor them but technology has the potential to shift that. Nolan reflects that the industrial model of schooling may be transformed by properly using technology to help mentor students. We can do the mentorship even if we have large classes he asserts. He read on a blog that, “It is not technology that allows us to do new things but old things in new ways”.

On reflecting on his own high school years of education, Nolan states that “I went to high school and had some really good teachers but all that I remember is cramming for the test and forgetting everything the day after to be honest.” He does recall a history teacher he had in high school however that he describes as “transformative” for him. That teacher focused on developing in some detail frameworks or scaffolding student learning in thinking skills as a developmental piece in doing research and writing an essay. Nolan exclaims, “I still remember those skills as they were really helpful.” Later in his university education Nolan mentions a faculty associate who really challenged his thinking.

“It was not about the right or wrong answer, it was about the conversation. He was probably the most influential in developing my thinking in what I still like to think of a teachers’ program that was really focused on a transmission model.”

Another major influence in developing his understanding of teaching was a mentor and colleague who he taught alongside of for ten years. They had the opportunity to observe each other teach and talked about their practice afterward and mutually supported each other.

“We had a teaching relationship where we could give each other feedback and know that it is not going to be taken the wrong way. That’s been really powerful...I think improving as a teacher you have to be willing to listen to feedback and reflect on it and that takes confidence. If you are not feeling confident in your teaching it is very hard not to get threatened by feedback.”

#### **N.4 Transitions**

Nolan’s perceptions of transitions in his teaching is of a gradual evolution. “I feel like in my brain I have shifted before I shifted in my practice.” These metacognitive reflections or intuition like process prepares the way for applying his thinking to his actual practice. He provided the example of marking and grading students as such a transition to where he is all criteria based assessment now.

“I was uncomfortable with marks way before I was able to say have you had enough of this. There is a system you work in that supports things you know may not be the best for teaching. It takes a while to say okay that just because everyone else is doing it this way does not make it the right way to do things. I feel that a lot of my shifts I’ve known before I have shifted. It has taken me a year or two to feel it out and try some things and talk to people about other resources before I am able to shift the practice to feel more proficient or comfortable in it.”

#### **N.5 Teaching Intentions**

Nolan describes his teaching goal is to “make smoke come out of their ears.” He explains that he is less concerned about what they are thinking about than that they are thinking. He further explains that in subjects such as math he will have a curricular outcome objective which he will share with the class and another to determine how well that they have learned past

concepts. “The truth is”, he says, “all I am looking for is every child in there pushes themselves to learn something.” He does not want his students to passively sitting there not getting anything from his teaching.

Nolan explains that he covers curriculum in a loose way by picking and choosing what he teaches. He would rather students learn something well rather than to slough through lots of content to memorize and forget. He points out that this was a transformational understanding for him as a teacher.

## **N.6 Supportive or Hindering Influences**

Nolan reports that the summative assessment process of providing marks to students and the ethical dilemmas around grades and marking schemes was a negative experience for him. In the end this challenge has gotten him closer to where he is comfortable as a teacher in knowing what he does now better works for most students. He has gravitated to the current position where he says here is a list of things you have to learn and you must find evidence of such learning by you in your portfolio to support that.

“I still remember to this day the pain I felt when I have this math test and add up the marks and I have kids who try so hard and the look on their faces when they got that awful mark. I just felt what am I doing? This is not helping them learn at all.”

Now he has evolved to a place where he sits down with his students every three weeks to go over their portfolio to showcase learning. He provides formative feedback and teacher support to further the learning based upon that portfolio. He reports being a big Alfie Kohn fan. He claims that grading is one of the biggest negatives in school.

“I have seen not just the negative impact it can have on students with how it makes some students not care less about the grade and others just care about getting that ‘A’. It all becomes about the ‘A’ and less about the learning. That influence

has been a big influence on me in terms of negative.”

#### **N.7 Wisdom and Values Identified as Good Teaching**

Nolan asserts that good teaching looks like students clearly knowing what they are doing. It means being able to show their learning in different ways. It is about students taking their learning in a different direction they are passionate about. Good teaching means being comfortable with different students and different learning styles. A good teacher Nolan says is invisible in the classroom. You should look around to find a teacher not one on the stage. Teachers should be working alongside students to help them out. For Nolan, good teaching is not contained. Learning is engaging enough he says. “If students really feel they are learning something they are engaged.”

#### **N.8 Teaching Metaphor**

Nolan describes teaching and learning like a nature trail (recently written on his blog). When you start out as a nature guide you have a structured talk as you move down the trail and what you want to say. When you get experience he explains and get more confidence in what you are doing you let people ask more questions. The more the participants get involved in that learning journey, by observing and asking questions pertinent to their needs and interests, the deeper and more engaging is the learning. It becomes the participants’ agenda and the guide or teacher facilitates the learning experience. Nolan emphasizes that the key to that metaphor is that every time you travel that same nature trail with someone else they may learn something different or emphasize different things. “The learning is about who you are learning with.”

Nolan concludes by saying it is not the sage on the stage with a choreographed script. That is not the way most people learn. He says students are on a learning journey and questions come to their minds about what intrigues them on the nature trail.

“The learning happened by putting them in situations and seeing what happened. I didn’t tell them what to think or feel ... It is not me telling people what to think but is about me firing the right questions in the right situations to help them figure out what they are learning.”

#### *Additional Comments on Understanding Teaching*

Nolan reflected that his initial outdoor educator experience through the lens of hindsight was an excellent preparatory experience in leading him to become a teacher. “When I think back, I think that was really a great foundation. When I went into classroom teaching, I took a little deke into a more traditional role, but I think I always had that outdoor education foundation.”

### **N.9 Merging TPI & Interview Findings**

Nolan’s dominant perspective is developmental while his recessive perspective is social reform. His emphasis on getting students to be engaged and thinking about their learning and demonstrating their learning in different ways supports his developmental TPI dominant profile. It is somewhat ironic to this researcher that one of Nolan’s greatest challenges in overcoming the dilemmas in marking was of adapting or changing his school’s assessment system to what in his view is better meeting the needs of students. It is evident Nolan took the social reform perspective in its traditional definition. It is also interesting, if not reassuring, to note that his private school experiences have influenced him to similar understandings about teaching as his public school contemporaries.



## Appendix O: Interview Questions

### Research Question – *What influences your understanding of teaching?*

#### *Interview Questions*




1. How long have you been teaching and what grades or subjects did you teach over that period of time? *[demographics]*
2. Please comment on your perceptions of your TPI profile? *Possible Follow-up: Was your TPI a reasonably accurate portrayal of describing you currently as a teacher? [checking validity of the TPI as perceived by the teacher]*
3. Do you feel your teaching profile has always been this way or has it likely changed over time? *[Documents possibility of changing perceptions of teaching]. Follow-up: If it has changed, please describe how it was different before [documents possible trajectories].*
4. Share the influences that have shaped your perceptions of teaching.
5. In your teaching journey, please share your feelings and thoughts about the moments or longer transitions that shifted your teaching beliefs, intentions or actions. *Follow-up: Please describe the influences that led to these transitions... or... Describe the reasons for your teaching perceptions remaining similar to when you started teaching [identifies transitions or paradigm shifts in understanding instruction]*
6. The TPI provides BIA (beliefs, intentions, actions) scores related to your respective perceptions of teaching. Through your eyes, what are your intentions when you teach? *[intentions]*
7. Describe how you perceive your teaching actions aligning or not with your intentions. *[actions] Follow-up: Describe any influences that helped you support or hinder your teaching actions in matching your intentions [identifies influences that shape or hinder transitions].*
8. Please describe the wisdom and values you have come to identify as standing for good teaching. *[gets at beliefs which is often difficult to talk about]*
9. A metaphor is something that helps represent or describe another idea or situation. If you have heard of or could think of a good metaphor for teaching, what would it be? *[metaphors assist in explaining concepts — in this case how they view teaching]*
10. Do you have anything else you would like to share on what has influenced your understanding of teaching? *[opportunity for any further responses or comments]*

## Appendix P: Participant Demographic & TPI Profiles

Participant	Gender	Degrees	Experience & District	Subj. & Gr.	Transmission			Apprenticeship			Developmental			Nurturing			Social Reform		
					27			36			31			37			29		
Abigail	F	BA & MA	32 years Coastal	Gr. 1-7; SST	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
					8	9	10	12	12	12	10	11	10	11	14	12	9	10	10
					31			36			33			38			27		
Beatrice	F	B.Ed.	20 years Coastal	Gr. 1-7; SST	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
					12	9	10	13	11	12	14	10	9	14	13	11	9	9	9
					35			31			34			30			25		
Corinne	F	BA & MEd	32 years Coastal	K-7 library, ESL,	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
				FSL & secondary Eng.& Fr.	12	11	12	10	10	11	13	10	11	12	9	9	9	7	9
					28			34			33			41			34		
Donna	F	B.A., B.Ed. & MA	12 years Coastal	K-7 & student support	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
					10	9	9	12	11	11	10	12	11	14	14	13	11	10	13
					31			36			32			38			21		
Elise	F	B.Ed. & MA	25 years Coastal	Gr. 2-7 & Library	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
					13	10	8	14	10	12	9	10	13	13	13	12	8	7	6
					32			40			37			40			38		
Fiona	F	B.Ed. & MA	34 years Coastal	Gr. 2-12 & elem.	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
				Music; EG	12	9	11	13	13	14	9	14	14	13	13	14	13	11	14
					39			45			42			44			38		
Gwen	F	B.A & MEd	30 years Coastal	K-12;	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
					13	12	14	15	15	15	13	14	15	14	15	15	9	14	15
					30			44			42			44			44		
Holly	F	B.A.,B.Ed., MEd	30 years Coastal	Gr. 1-9;	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
					12	7	11	14	15	15	12	15	15	15	15	14	14	15	15
					33			38			42			41			31		
Ivan	M	B.Ed.& M.Ed.	16 years Coastal	Gr. 8-12 science & math;	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
					11	9	13	14	13	11	14	15	13	14	15	12	8	12	11
					34			41			42			39			38		
Jenny	F	B.A. B.Ed.	7 years Pacific	Gr. 8-12 Eng. & SS.;	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
		M.Ed.		FN Lit; Alt; & Tech Cord.	12	9	13	14	13	14	13	15	14	11	15	13	9	14	15
					39			42			38			38			29		
Kevin	M	B. Mus.	2 weeks Coastal	Gr. 6-7 Band & martial arts	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
		B.Ed.			14	12	13	13	15	14	11	15	12	11	12	15	10	10	9
					27			37			35			34			33		
Lee	M	B.Ed.	11 years Coastal	Gr. 3-7; ESL; IB;	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
					9	9	9	13	12	12	11	12	12	15	12	7	12	10	11

Participant	Gender	Degrees	Experience & District	Subj. & Gr.	Transmission			Apprenticeship			Developmental			Nurturing			Social Reform		
					30			35			39			44			41		
Mandy	F	B.Ed. &	12 years Coastal	Gr. 1-12 & FN Educ.	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
		M.Ed.			12	6	12	10	13	12	11	14	14	15	15	14	12	15	14
					28			33			39			38			20		
Nolan	M	B.Sc.	13 years Private School	Gr. 4-10; Outdoor Ed., math, P.E.	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
				Science, tech, private school	10	7	11	10	11	12	11	14	14	15	13	10	8	6	6

B: Beliefs; I: Intentions; A: Actions;

Dominant:  Recessive:  Co-Supportive 

## Appendix Q: Study Group TPI Results Compared to K-12 TPI Norms

	Transmission	Apprenticeship	Developmental	Nurturing	Social Reform	Belief	Intent	Action	Total				
%ile	43	E	S	44	E	S	E	S	70	72	71	209	%ile
98%	42	44	43	S	44	40	68	70	70	204	98%		
	41	43	E 42		39	67	69	69	202				
95	40	42		43	38	66	67	68	197	95			
	39	41	41	42	37	65	66	66	193				
90	S		40 M		36	63	65	65	190	90			
	38	40		41	35	62	64	64	188				
85			39		34	61	63	63	186	85			
	37		38		33	60	62	62	183	80			
80		39		40		60	62		182				
75%	36							61	180	75%			
		38	37	M 39 M	M 32 M	59	61		179				
70	35				31	58	60	60	178	70			
65								59	176	65			
	60	34	37 M	38	30	57	59	58	175				
		M 36	M 35			57	58	58	173	60			
55	m	f	f	f		56f	f	f	171f	55			
			35	37	29f	57	57		170				
50%	33f	36m	m		m	m			169	50%			
					28	55	m	56m	168m				
45			34	36			56		167	45			
	32		S	m	27	54	55	55	166				
40	E	35		35					165	40			
			33	34	26	53		54	163	35			
35	M 33						54		162				
	M 31	E	32	E	25	52	53	53	161	30			
30				33					160				
25%	30	33	31	32	24	51	52	52	159	25%			
			31	31					158				
20	29	32	E	32	23	50	51	51	157	20			
	S		30		22		50	50	155				
15		31		30		49	50	50	154	15			
	E		29	30	E	48	49	49	152				
10		S	28	29	S	47	48	48	150	10			
			27	27		46	47	47	147				
5			26	26		46	46	46	144	5			
			25	24	17		45	45	141				
2%	23	26	25	24	15	43	43	43	137	2%			
1%	21	25	24	22	14	41	41	41	132	1%			

**E**=elementary; **S**=Secondary; **M** = Mean of participant sample; **Study Group** N=14; **K-12 TPI Norms** N = 21, 828