Strengthening Your Teaching Philosophy through Reflection on Your Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

Ashlynn Kogut
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OUTLINE

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1. BACKGROUND

A bit about me and the impetus for this research study
Teaching Philosophy

“A teaching philosophy statement is a systematic and critical rationale that focuses on the important components defining effective teaching and learning in a particular discipline and/or institutional context” (Schönwetter, Sokal, Friesen, & Taylor, 2002, p. 84).

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A Bit About Me

- Education & Social Sciences Librarian at Texas A&M University
- My teaching philosophy
  - Student-centered
  - Develop students’ confidence
  - Active learning
  - Connecting to the immediate need of an assignment
  - Assessment through reflection
Impetus for this Study

- Literature review on how librarians teach
  - Teaching philosophy level not “nitty gritty of instructional strategies”
- Lack of explicit discussion on how we conceptualize teaching and learning
- Why?
What was in the Literature?

On the Job Instruction Training

Research on Librarian Teaching Roles and Teaching Identities

• Four conceptualizations of teaching role – *teacher-librarian, learning support, librarian who teaches,* and *trainer* (Wheeler & McKinney, 2015)
• Teaching identity studies found external factors influence librarians’ self-perceptions (Davis et al., 2011; Julien & Genuis, 2011; Mattson et al., 2017)

ACRL Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians – Teacher Role

• “The teacher employs best practices of teaching and learning for integrating information literacy into higher education...The teacher employs a learner-centered approach, encouraging learners to be agents in their own learning” (http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/teachinglibrarians)
2. RESEARCH STUDY

Study methodology and findings
Research Question

How do teaching librarians at Texas doctoral universities describe their beliefs about undergraduate teaching and learning?

Teaching Philosophy Components

- Professional Development
- Beliefs about Teaching
- Beliefs about Learning
- Learner/Teacher Relationship
- Content Taught
- Teaching Methods
- Classroom Environment
- Assessment/Evaluation
- Outcomes
Beliefs

Teaching Beliefs
- “ideas on how teachers can facilitate the learning process” (Chism, 1998, p. 2)
- personal assumptions about teaching, “the meaning of teaching in my context,” and one’s “personal view of post-secondary teaching” (Schönwetter et al., 2002, p. 89)

Learning Beliefs
- personal assumptions about learning, “understandings of how students learn,” and “discussion of learning parameters (styles, diversity, difficulties)” (Schönwetter et al., 2002, p. 89)
- Some conceptions of student learning “are intuitive and based on experiential learning, rather than on a consciously articulated theory” (Chism, 1998, p. 1)
Methodology

• Qualitative case study research design
• Three doctoral universities in Texas
• Participants recruited via email in Fall 2020
• Interviews with 13 teaching librarians via Zoom
  • 4 at Regional Research University
  • 4 at Northern Research University
  • 5 at Metropolitan Research University
• Testing the interview protocol
Reflection Activity 1

Describe a typical instruction session, including topics covered, teaching methods, activities, format, etc. (See Reflection Worksheet)
Beliefs about Teaching

Understanding students’ unique learning needs

“I feel like sometimes we had taught where you're going to meet the professor where they're at. And I'm really trying to make my classroom and my teaching practices meeting the student where they're at.”

Sarah

Understanding students’ affective dimensions

“When I'm in a classroom or when I'm working with them in a one-on-one consultation, I try to be mindful and compassionate about where they're coming from.”

Elizabeth
Beliefs about Teaching

Respecting the knowledge and experiences of students

“Respecting that students might know more than I do on a topic and allowing them the space to bring in their knowledge and share it with others.”

Elle
Beliefs about Teaching

Creating a supportive atmosphere

“I spend a lot of time thinking about and reading and learning about what makes for an inclusive classroom. And what do I need to be doing to create a space in which every learner can learn equitably.”

Elle

Being available to help students

“I always encourage the students to come back”

Elizabeth
Reflection Activity 2

• What is your initial reaction to the teaching belief findings?
  • Do any align with your beliefs?
• What could you change (i.e. add/delete) to make these better fit your conceptualization of teaching? (see Reflection Worksheet)
Takeaways from Beliefs about Teaching

• These beliefs represented beliefs of teaching librarians with a range of teaching identities
• Librarians use student-centered teaching
Beliefs about Learning

Undergraduates learn in a variety of ways

“There's no one best way I think is the thing to remember”
Olivia

Undergraduates learn throughout their college experience

“It's not something that like any of us can manage to do all at once, or with a single class ...it's really something that has to be thought of over the long term”
Edgar
Beliefs about Learning

Learning process entails:

- **Interacting with others**
  
  “If you're doing group work or group activities and they can start learning with each other” — Elizabeth

- **Learn by doing**
  
  “Actively working on something rather than just sitting and listening to me lecture, I do think that they learn better” — Valerie

- **Reflection**
  
  “We also try not to burn students out like activity after activity after activity with no real like sit and think time” — Kate
Beliefs about Learning

Conditions for Learning:

- Seeing the applicability of the content
- Having emotional needs met

“Not only what the assignment is expecting them to do, but why they are doing the assignment. So, I explain a lot of why”

Rene

“Everybody learns better when they feel empowered in their learning, when they feel like they're actively participating in their learning”

Nicole
Reflection Activity 3

• What is your initial reaction to the learning belief findings?
  • Do any align with your beliefs?
  • What could you change (i.e. add/delete) to make these better fit your conceptualization of learning? (see Reflection Worksheet)
Takeaways for Beliefs about Learning

• Feeling of not knowing enough about learning theories to describe beliefs about learning
• Can see alignment between experiential beliefs and articulated theories
• Theory of threshold concepts not mentioned in regard to learning process
3. IMPLICATIONS

What these findings might mean for instruction in our contexts
Implications for Practice

- Conflicts between beliefs and instruction context
- Consideration of beliefs in regard to research consultations
- Role of library’s instruction culture
Reflection Activity 4

What connections can you make between your teaching and learning beliefs and the instruction session you described in the first reflection?
(see Reflection Worksheet)
THANKS!

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References


References for Teacher Beliefs


Questions?

Ashlynn Kogut
awkogut@library.tamu.edu