Trial by Hire: The Seven Stages
of Learning to Teach in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study describes seven stages of learning to teach at the university level. Through the use of narratives, twelve Canadian university professors reveal their beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning as they struggle to become better teachers within various academic settings. The purpose of the study was to develop a better understanding of self-directed and transformative learning as it relates to adults who engage in on-the-job-training. Data analysis resulted in eight themes which occurred in seven developmental stages: Warming, Forming, Informing, Storming, Performing, Reforming, and Transforming. The findings suggest that a better understanding of the stages of learning to teach in higher education could: 1) enable faculty to gain confidence in their teaching ability earlier on in their careers (Bain, 2004); 2) assist faculty developers to better meet the changing needs of faculty (Cranton, 2001); and 3) guide administrators in their efforts to promote the scholarship of teaching and learning within their academic milieu (MacKeracher, 1996).

Keywords: Teaching; Higher Education; Stages: Adult Learning; Self-Directed Learning; Transformative Learning; Development

INTRODUCTION

T eaching, like learning, is a deeply personal and time-consuming process. Outside the halls of higher education, it is well known that acquiring new knowledge or mastering new skills takes time. However, the arduous and often isolated process of acquiring teaching skills *within* academe is relatively uncharted.

This phenomenological inquiry explored the learning-to-teach stories of faculty members from several disciplines who were teaching in three maritime Canadian universities. Four assumptions informed the study: 1) that all the volunteer participants were adult learners; 2) that they were hired for their expertise and competence in a specific academic discipline rather than their ability to teach; 3) having proven by their academic prowess that they were capable of learning, it was assumed they must also be capable of learning to teaching; and 4) that learning to teach would continue to be a lifelong, self-directed learning project.

PURPOSE

The impetus for the study was based on the conviction that a better understanding of the developmental stages of learning to teach would enable university and college teachers, from novice to veteran, to be better teachers, to better support one another in becoming skilled professionals, assist faculty developers to better meet the changing needs of faculty as they move through the developmental process, and guide administrators in making more informed decisions about how best to support the scholarship of teaching and learning in their institutions.

METHOD

A phenomenological approach was applied in order to pay homage to every-day self-directed learners as opposed to collecting data from award winning veterans which can result in inspiring reading but is not always applicable to the hard reality of acquiring new skills. Taken fairly literately from Husserl's initial philosophy,

phenomenology simply means the study or description of phenomena; and phenomena are anything that appears or presents itself to someone. It does not involve any sense of the strange or spectacular but involves identifying the essence of human experience. Such experiences may be perceived directly through the senses - seeing, hearing, touching; or understood through analysing, believing, remembering, deciding, judging, or evaluating texts about experiences (Hammond, Howarth & Keith, 1991). The phenomenon under investigation here was the teaching-related learning that results from years of engagement in on-the-job training of university professors.

A phenomenological study typically involves gathering data about the phenomenon from a small number of participants through in-depth interviews "to develop patterns and relationships of meaning" (Cresswell, 2003, p. 15). To gather data, thirteen male and female professors from three maritime Canadian universities were interviewed. Through a series of responses to open-ended questions, they were asked to talk about their personal backgrounds, their attitudes towards and beliefs about teaching and learning, and their individual avenues to professional development.

ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES

As this study was mainly concerned with *how* the study participants learned to teach rather than how they may have been taught, the principles of andragogy played an integral role in the research approach. Andragogy, or adult learning, involves making sense of experience resulting in an increase or modification in knowledge, skills, strategies and values (MacKeracher, 1996). Approaching the learning of adults within an andragogical framework and using naturalistic research methods allows the researcher to pay attention to the participants' characteristics as adult learners and thereby opens up new layers of clarity in perceptions, conceptions, action and practices (Stanage, 1987). Moreover, the self-help ventures and self-motivating decisions, plans and actions revealed by the participants during the interviews came into clearer focus using these approaches (p. 45). Andragogical principles are now widely accepted in the fields of adult, continuing and higher education (Cranton, 1998).

Adult learning principles describe, among other things, the characteristics of typical adult learners. The participating professors were viewed as adult learners who shared important characteristics with other adult learners (Knowles, 1980; MacKeracher, 1996). Adult learner characteristics that were deemed relevant to the participants' situations were:

1   *Years of past experience and a wealth of knowledge grounded in their prior learning.* One aspect of prior experience related to how the participants were taught as students. If their previous experience with teaching was positive, they began by emulating this style. If their previous experience with teaching was negative, they chose to teach using a different style.
2   *Established values, beliefs and attitudes that are part of their understanding of reality and self-concept and that form the basis of their self-esteem.* Those who had a vested interest and pride in these values, beliefs and attitudes were reluctant to change them thinking that such changes may be potentially damaging to their existing self-esteem and therefore too stressful.
3   *Learn by relating new knowledge and experience to previously learned knowledge and experiences.* If the new knowledge contradicted previously learned knowledge, participants had trouble accepting and integrating the new knowledge.
4   A*ble to manage their own learning through being self-directed.* Asking for assistance was contrary to their conception of themselves as competent and independent learners.
5   *Motivated to learn on the basis of the problems and real-life situations they encountered.* Some responded to problems; some were curious about alternative teaching methods; some were motivated by need, especially when something (e.g., an audiovisual aid) did not work; some were adventurous and enjoyed trying new teaching methods. If they did not encounter problems in their teaching or they remained unaware of any problems related to their teaching, they were unlikely to try to learn more about teaching.
6   *Concerned with performing their roles and responsibilities to the best of their ability and were motivated to improve their performance.* This principle assumed that they received feedback about their performance of these roles and responsibilities from reliable sources.

Other adult learning principles are also important (MacKeracher, 1996) but were less clearly connected to the issues addressed in this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature brought to light a range of facts, fallacies, and fancies about the culture of academe and the role of faculty members. For instance, several writers, such as Whitt (1991) and Reynolds (1988), indicate that while faculty members do worry about their teaching, they are often hesitant to discuss their concerns because they are aware of the "unwritten rules" of department heads or administrators that "too much attention to your own teaching is an indication of your misguided sense of priority" (Cross and Steadman, 1996, p.19). Unfortunately, this apprehension to 'fret aloud about one's teaching' was echoed in the interviews.

It also appeared from the literature that professors are yet another group of successful and misunderstood adult learners around whom a proliferation of tangled tales and theories have grown like weeds in the garden of academe. According to Long (1996), the general population, and working class Baby Boomers in particular, hold negative perception of professors due to the media's portrayal or professors as "pompous, arrogant, unethical, foolish and completely out of touch with mainstream society"(p.32). Although this observation was made in 1996, the recent popularity of the television comedy, *Big Bang Theory*, attests to the fact that these opinions may still apply. Much of the literature, if taken at face value, indicates that professors who write about themselves as human beings - do so mainly for the benefit of other professors and represent three categories of writers: those who claim to be unappreciated but brilliant teachers; those who blame the system or the students for poor results and negative evaluations; those who write autobiographies of retired professors from prestigious institutions and collect essays and teaching tips from award winning teachers. Missing from the literature were stories of "just plain folks" (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989) --or narratives of the trials and tribulations of more ordinary professors from smaller universities such as those who contributed to this study.

BACKGROUND: AVENUES TO LEARNING HOW TO TEACH

There are at least three avenues one can take to learn how to teach in higher education. The first is the formal approach in which potential teachers attend courses for credit in educational institutions and receive credits towards a recognized credential. This avenue includes instructor training programs that are required for future employment as a teacher, degrees offered within faculties of education which produce a licensed practitioner, and diplomas in university teaching.

The second avenue includes organized contexts in which participants learn teaching-related skills and strategies although the learning is not always formally credentialed. The classes are often smaller and less formal than in the formal approach and focus more on developing an individual's abilities and attitudes than on acquiring certifiable skills. Examples include workshops on learning style, short courses on assertiveness training, or weekly sessions on public speaking.

The third avenue – the one most germane to this paper – is also the most common yet least recognized because it occurs unobtrusively in the form of self-directed learning (Tough, 1979). In such learning, learners are the agents responsible for planning, designing and conducting their own learning activities (Candy, 1991). When left to their own devices – that is, in the absence of coercion or interference from someone or something in a position of authority – beginning professors engage in at least three types of experiential or self-directed learning: situational, action, and incidental.

Situational learning takes into account such factors as the context in which the teaching and learning occur, the discipline or subject to be learned, and the culture of the organizational setting. Like anyone starting a new job, professors must take all these into account and they are given a relatively free rein when it comes to designing and implementing their own courses. Nonetheless, one of the first things any novice professor must learn is how to survive and succeed within the particular culture of their workplace. By "finding out how things work around here"– which can range from how to use the photocopier to where to collect mail, from expectations about what constitutes basic knowledge within one's discipline to how one relates to students – professors engage in situated learning

which is based on the premise that knowledge is not independent of the situation in which it is used but rather emerges through participation in the actual practices of the culture and its typical social interactions (Damarin, 1993; Orey & Nelson, 1994).

Action learning involves a systematic process in which individuals learn by selectively testing out new behaviours (Lewis & Williams, 1994, p.11). Cross and Steadman (1996; also Angelo & Cross, 1993) describe such processes as classroom-based research projects that are based on being aware of one's own teaching concerns, systematically planning activities to address these concerns, implementing these plans, and then evaluating the consequences.

Incidental learning is defined as "a spontaneous action or transaction, the intention of which is task accomplishment, but which serendipitously increases particular knowledge, skills or understanding" (Ross-Gordon & Dowlin, 1995, p. 623). Such learning includes elements of both situated and action learning, and includes learning from unanticipated mistakes, when doing something that does not involve teaching, and through talking about teaching with others. The challenge in validating incidental learning is that it is not anticipated, and therefore not easily assessed. Because incidental learning is a by-product of another activity, it often comes as a surprise to the learner. Although unintentional and often unexamined, it nonetheless embeds itself in the learner's actions.

The participants in this study all demonstrated both the ability and motives to be self-directed. Higher education institutions rarely provide much pedagogical training for newly-hired faculty members, although they may provide orientation sessions in which teaching strategies are discussed. However, such sessions are more likely to focus on the requirements of the institution for such things as a course syllabus, which clearly outlines course objectives and expectations, introduction and training on new technological advances, and fair student evaluation practices. Knowledge about teaching strategies and how to improve one's teaching may be provided through voluntary activities such as workshops and seminars organized by a committee or office tasked with the professional development of faculty members (Roy, 2003). However, it appears that most professors improve their teaching through a self-directed trial-and-error learning process.

SEVEN STAGES OF LEARNING TO TEACH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The data analysis resulted in the identification of eight themes: perceiving self in relation to teaching, acquiring teaching styles and skills, perceiving students as learners, understanding the nature of learning, managing the feeling associated with teaching, changing commitment to teaching and research, assessing teaching, and dealing with course content. These themes were then identified as occurring in different forms through seven developmental stages which follow.

Stage One – Warming: Baby steps to a scholarly future

The Warming stage embodies various influences around learning and teaching in the participants' young lives and was an integral part of who they were, or will become, in the classroom. The word "warming" implies that significant others in the lives of the participants held welcoming and open attitudes toward learning and were successful in passing these positive attitudes on to their young charges.

Early childhood socialization led them to perceive learning and higher education as both positive and accessible. Parents, teachers and friends exerted considerable influence on their choices to pursue higher education. Perhaps as youngsters solving mathematical problems in their spare time or soaking up poetry while curled up with the cat, they continued to find these activities rewarding. Most grew up in an environment with families and friends who valued higher education even though they may have had different ideas of what it meant. One professor in the study perceived higher education to be a haven where she could read undisturbed, another saw it as a place to think, while another perceived it as a place to find answers to burning questions. Previously, those interested in the development of university instructors (Baldwin & Blackburn, 1981; Kugel, 1993) began their exploration of learning to teach only after the faculty member was hired. My data analysis indicates that life experiences occurring much earlier than graduate school have a profound effect, whether negatively or positively, on an individual's attitudes towards learning and teaching.

Stage Two – Forming: The rites of graduate school

A form can be anything that gives shape to something else. It can also refer to procedures or methods. Both definitions can be applied to the graduate school experience. Graduate school is a time of rapid development on all fronts. The Forming stage usually lasts several years and encompasses a variety of opportunities to develop changing relationships to students, mentors, colleagues and peers. It is in the Forming stage when participants gave serious consideration to a career as an academic and turned their lives over to their areas of expertise.

For most participants, contact with other graduate students was part the forming process. In graduate school, those who were termed "bright" by family and encouraged by teachers to go on to university, encountered graduate supervisors and mentors who took on the supportive roles once held by family and teachers. That being said, not everyone was prepared for the variety of challenges ahead. Traditionally, the emphasis in graduate school is on one's ability to advance to a higher level of study by conducting research, not on one's potential as teachers. As one observant participant in the study pointed out, "Grad school doesn't teach you how to teach. Grad school teaches you how to be an academic and that's a very different thing."

The graduate school experience also socialized them into disciplines through both formal and informal activities that involved interactions with students, mentors and supervisors, colleagues and peers. Khleif (1980) describes a rite of passage into a profession as being, in essence, a form of adult socialization by which the individual acquires a new identity and gains acceptance within the professional group. Within this evolving process, professional identities as members of an academic discipline emerge during the Forming stage.

Stage Three – Informing: I'm talking as fast as I can

Disseminating information is paramount in the minds of instructors who are new to the university classroom. Novices are saturated with the belief that they are in the classroom for one reason: to inform; to profess, to impart knowledge, to talk, to test and to mark, as quickly as they can. They are driven to cover every paragraph of the text at all costs. The dictionary defines this urge to *inform* as "a manner of pervading or permeating a subject matter with manifest effect."

A symptom that someone is in the Informing stage is the use of mimicry in formulating a teaching style. "It all starts out rather by imitation, you know," said one participant "you give your best imitation of what your professors did to you." Emerging teaching styles usually start when novices model themselves on those "good teachers" from the past (Kugel, 1993; Moir & Baron, 2000).

In the Informing stage, loyalty for and responsibility toward content weighs heavily on the instructor. The first day of teaching is filled with angst, and the term "teaching load" takes on new meaning. Participants who had been in the classroom for decades confessed to still waking up to a case of "first day jitters" which did not abate until they become comfortable with new course material, a new room, new technology, and a room full of strangers. This is also the stage in which they had to find ways to cope with teaching loads and their commitment to research. One participant summed up the Informing stage this way:

The first five years are the toughest. Teaching as many course as I could and still no prospect for a full-time position, I had to fight the temptation to please the students to get good teaching evaluations, along with being under a lot of pressure to publish whatever I could. I did it but I don't where I found the energy. I could never do that now.

Finding a teaching style, or a sense of authenticity about teaching can be problematic and definitions of authenticity change over the years. The Informing stage is characterized by a need to disseminate information and to find a personal teaching style.

Stage Four – Storming

The fourth stage, Storming, implies a disturbance of the normal condition of the environment. Just when they thought they had survived a reasonable adjustment period, a four-pronged bolt of problems arrived: one prong

for the debate between research and teaching, one for marking student papers and examinations, one for the assessment of their teaching, and one sharp, pang of emotion over their many, unexpected internal conflicts that affected their classroom behaviour.

Storm No.1: teaching versus research

Professors can often be divided on issues surrounding the scholarship of research and the scholarship of teaching. Some enjoy teaching while others prefer to conduct research. Some are particularly resentful of attempts to have their love of teaching socialized out of them in graduate school by a "culture where emerging as anything but a researcher involves failure" (Katz & Hartnett, 1976, p. 161). "Which comes first, the teaching load or the research opportunities?" Some choose to put teaching first, while others felt pressured to give attention to their research. A few simply chose to follow their original passion for research which was their initial reason for "becoming an academic in the first place".

Storm No. 2: assessment

The act of assessing student work appears to be universally distressing. The mere thought of spending another weekend chained to the desk, deciphering student hieroglyphs and bleeding red ink onto the coffee-stained pages of badly written essays and examinations produced a thunderous groan from all the participants. One put it this way: "After all my careful preparation and repetition, they still didn't get it!" The issue of marking in the Storming stage was marked by differing perspectives about the role of assessment and brought negative emotions to an otherwise positive relationship between faculty and students.

Storm No. 3: student assessment of teaching

Another atmospheric disturbance encountered in the study occurred when the topic of student assessment of teaching was raised. A few participants found these assessments "somewhat helpful" but the majority found them more disconcerting than helpful. "Even though my stats looked good, compared to the rest of the faculty, it was that one bad comment from a student scribbled on the bottom of the form, that had me waking up in the middle of night wondering where I went wrong."

Storm No. 4: the result of internal storms

Three participants admitted to suffering slight to moderate occasional pangs of guilt. For example, one participant wondered if he was committing an offence by sometimes "spoon-feeding" students when he "gives them the questions" but rationalized that spoon-feeding "doesn't hurt the good students and it might help the mediocre students. The bad are going to fail anyway." Another felt "guilty" when he had to leave the lab for any reason while students were working. Even after checking with all the students and ensuring that all questions were answered, he still felt an overwhelming sense of responsibility.

The Storming stage encompassed several conflicts related to the relative importance of teaching and research, marking dilemmas, student assessments of teaching, and private, internal concerns. Once the Storming stage abated and the participants gained more confidence in their ability as teachers and found more ways to cope with the major and minor annoyances of their job, there followed a period in their development when the formerly pragmatic practitioners turned their attention to the *audience* and tried their hand at performing.

Stage Five – Performing: Joining the show

Unlike the Forming and Storming stages, in which participants collected content and disseminated knowledge in a rather methodical manner, entrance into the Performing stage turns the spotlight away from the subject matter and shift it onto students who are now seen as a discriminating audience rather than a collective mass of recipients. The choreography for this move is dictated by the size of the class, the length of term, the culture and personality of classes, the personality of the professor, and the time of day and the season of the year. This stage is characterized by the amount of time and energy allotted to designing and planning courses, and the energy put forth in the performance of the job.

Some participants in this stage began injecting humour into their performances. They found that humour, if used appropriately, could be a powerful tool for encouraging positive changes in students' knowledge, attitudes and skills. Performing seems to be related to both maintaining enthusiasm and maintaining student interest. Participants agreed that a class in which everyone is interested has a very positive effect on both teacher and students.

Having solved a variety of difficulties in the Storming stage, most moved into a Performing stage. Some of the reasons for viewing teaching as a performance include the need to gather feedback from students – performances generate lots of feedback – and the need to keep oneself motivated and energized. Performing strategies included not staying behind the podium, using humour, storytelling, PowerPoint shows, props and artefacts to focus attention, incorporating student experiences and cultures in their examples, and designing intriguing and innovative examination questions.

Stage Six – Reforming: Doing things differently

Given time and circumstance, the *self* contemplates and reflects upon its own course of development (Cranton, 2001). The Reforming stage encapsulates how the participants changed the way they used their instrumental or how-to knowledge about teaching, and their communicative knowledge or teaching style. This is a time when some altered their previous techniques with strategic adjustments while others almost completely abandon their old ways of teaching. This stage is also marked by an increasing interest in how students acquire information, construe knowledge, and learn. The overriding theme for this stage is recognizing and accepting change.

This stage is also the juncture between learning for practical reasons and learning for personal reasons. The outcome of the Reforming stage, and whether individuals will go on to experience the Transforming stage depends on the intensity of their previous commitment to their own professional development and their ability and willingness to judge and reflect on their teaching experiences.

Stage Seven – Transforming: Integrating teaching and learning

Few participants in this particular study had reached the Transforming stage. It can be characterize as the stage in which one begins to articulate self-knowledge about teaching; knowing when one is doing well as a teacher without external validation, being aware of which aspects of one's teaching should be changed, and having confidence about how good teaching should proceed – a synthesis of coming to terms with persistent ethical issues. Another aspect of the Transforming stage is that the participants were able to describe a teaching approach that integrated both teaching and learning activities.

The Transforming stage is characterized by a desire or need to share wisdom gained through experience and self-reflection with others and to embrace the emotional energy it takes to be a committed teacher and scholar. Participants who had experienced this stage of learning to teach found they had the confidence to celebrate the public aspects of their teaching by linking to like-minded others through active participation in list-serve discussions and speaking openly at public forums about and conducting action research on teaching. They discovered that sharing this information with others was the best way to pay tribute to personal knowledge they had acquired.

Table 1: Seven Stages Of Learning To Teach

1. Warming	Focus on early educational, social and cultural influences, economic status. Attitudes of parents, teachers and peers encourage development of positive attitudes toward learning and higher education.
2. Forming	Focus on graduate school experience and coping with the pressure, isolation, humiliation, accepted "rites of passage." Early trauma (or euphoria) of initial teaching experiences. "New identity" formed in relation to discipline.
3. Informing	Focus on first real teaching experiences. Overwhelmed by need to inform and disseminate knowledge with compulsion to share everything in one semester. Overwhelmed by teaching load.
4. Storming	Focus on future need to do research while still wrestling with teaching demands. First pangs of assessment angst. Feelings of responsibility toward students.
5. Performing	Focus more on student's needs. Concerns for "performance" in teaching. Need to maintain own enthusiasm and to increase student interest and attendance. Finding a compatible teaching style.
6. Reforming	Focus on trying new teaching techniques and strategies. Burgeoning interest in pedagogy and how students learn.
7. Transforming	Focus on finding teaching approach that encapsulates both teaching and learning activities, active involvement of students. Development of identity as the "self that teaches."

HOW TO USE THE SEVEN-STAGE MODEL

With the exception of the rare coffee break with a colleague, and excluding the annoying student who visits immediately before the mid-term and immediately after office hours, most agreed that, for the most part, college and university teaching is a lonely profession. For all its claims of being a public act, once the classroom door is closed, there is that little voice, the anxious part of the self, that says, 'Okay. Time to get it together. Now you're on your own.' Although the "voice" may be a little more insistent with novices in the Forming and Informing phases, this research indicates that it never really goes away. The one element that makes all the difference between allowing the voice to drown out one's thoughts, acknowledging the nibble of doubt, and carrying on like a "professional" is experience. The voice changes its tune from stage to stage. In the Informing stage it may ask, "Have you succeeded in covering all the material?" It spreads internal doubt about responsibility to students and devotion to research during the Storming stage. "And when the heck are you going to find the time to sit on any committees?" The self-talk continues through the Performing stage by wondering how to maintain an appropriate level of energy and enthusiasm even for the dull and nasty bits of content. By the time the Reforming stage rolls around, the voice is almost lost amidst self-reflective choristers. It no longer screams insults but takes on a more encouraging tone. There may even come a time, in the Transforming stage, when the "self" who teaches, makes friends with the inner-teacher who once was so concerned with custodial duties that it was unable to discern its true purpose – to be the messenger between the true-self and the "authentic teacher" (Cranton, 2002).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: INSTITUTIONAL CONCERNS

Need for interpersonal connection

The stories shared by the participants and the seven-stage model which emerged indicate that good teachers can be developed through hard work and dedication. In the case of the teaching professor, 'hard work' means paying attention to one's own practice, reflecting on the consequences, planning new or revised teaching strategies, and continuously assessing and reflecting upon one's own teaching. The seven stages model of learning to teach suggests that faculty members need to talk more about their teaching on the basis of the stage they are currently experiencing with someone who has survived and moved on from that stage. Faculty members do not need to be told what they are supposed to learn but do need the opportunities, time and resources to do the necessary learning.

Using the seven-stage model as a starting point for discussions about teaching could become part of a demystification process.

Lack of genuine administrative support for the learning to teach process

Participants agreed wholeheartedly that they would be more motivated to commit more time and energy to improving their teaching if institutional priorities actually reflected the institutional rhetoric that "teaching comes first." A lack of administrative support for the scholarship of teaching is a systemic problem and is not within the scope of this paper but it remains a politically charged issue on Canadian campuses.

Lack of diversity in faculty development programs

Faculty developers continue to look to research in order to gauge the pulse of their charges, knowing that it is illogical to assume that all new faculty on their campus are at the very beginning of their development as teachers or that the majority of veteran faculty members are effective teachers, yet they continue to offer "one size fits all" orientation sessions at the beginning of each fall term. The participants in this study fell between the two extremes and felt marginalized by the advertised offerings. The development of a seven-stage assessment program could help them develop on-campus programs which would address the diverse needs of faculty members who are moving into and moving through a series of stages in their learning to teach journey.

SUMMARY

The Seven Stages of Learning to Teach in Higher Education are not intended to be used as examples of how one *should* develop as a university teacher. They evolved as stimulants for 'teacher-talk' among university faculty, and to open windows for personal reflection, and perhaps contribute to innovative professional development programs and a serve as a point of reference for administrative decisions. They are meant to be considered from different angles and in different ways. Although the stages appear as a structured unit, they celebrate individual differences, an area that has previously been overlooked or merely touched upon in the literature and in professional development programs. By placing oneself within the context of The Seven Stages of Learning to Teach in Higher Education and sharing the findings with others in the field, it may serve to bring individuals together with one common goal - to improve the quality of their teaching experience and university life in general

The seven-stage model is not an antidote for bad teaching, nor is it guaranteed to turn a mediocre teacher into a marvelous teacher overnight, but it may be a first step for those faculty members who have neither the time nor confidence to attend workshops, nor the opportunity to attend valuable academic conferences. However, the wisdom and inspiration gleaned from the stories of people like themselves who have "been there, done that, got the mortar board" may in themselves be sufficient to put one lonely teacher on the ship to self-reflection and change, and thereby taking that first step up the long gangplank of the scholarship of teaching and learning.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

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ENDNOTES

If the terms used to describe the seven stages of learning to teach sound familiar, you probably have encountered Tuckman's (1965) Stages of Group Growth – Forming, Norming, Storming, and Performing. The appellations for my seven stages evolved with a little assistance from a rhyming dictionary but much more evidence evolved from the words of the participants themselves. ..." In reviewing Tuckman's work, I found that he added a fifth stage in 1975, called "Adjourning." I supposed if I were to add another stage at the end of my seven, it might be called "Retiring." Unlike Tuckman's departing stage when the group ceases to be productive, for many academics, the Retiring Stage appears to be a continuation of the Transformative stage in which the love of learning is unleashed rather than ceases to exist because that kind of energy never dies, it simply changes form. Instead of reading journal articles at the breakfast table and marking papers all weekend, the retirees I know are learning to paint with water colours, are completing the novel they began twenty years ago or are volunteering in the community; all activities which involve gathering brain cells and energy and entering yet another stage of self-directed learning.