

# Book Review/Recension d'ouvrage

---

## **Five Perspectives on Teaching: Mapping a Plurality of the Good (2nd ed.)**

Edited by Daniel D. Pratt

Malabar, Florida, USA: Krieger Publishing Company, 2016, 335 pages

ISBN10: 1575243199 (hardcover)

## **Reviewed by / Revu par**

Eric Feldman, Adly Norelus, Ivan Rodriguez, & Gustavo Roque

Florida International University

*Five Perspectives on Teaching: Mapping a Plurality of the Good*, 2nd edition is the first update to the 1998 volume which introduced five perspectives: transmission, apprenticeship, developmental, nurturing, and social reform. The perspectives emerged from a multi-year study in which 253 adult educators from several countries were interviewed and observed. The book should be read after taking the free Teaching Perspectives Inventory (<http://www.teachingperspectives.com/tpi/>), an online instrument that allows the reader to discover their own dominant perspectives. An overarching theme of the book is the “discordance between espoused theory and theory-in-practice” (p. 129). Teachers “often believe their courses are developing critical thinking in learners. Yet, many of them teach in ways that discourage these noble aims” (p. 36).

The book is organized into three sections, the first of which explains the theoretical and conceptual basis for the emergence and understanding of the five perspectives.

Specifically, Chapter 1 introduces a general model of teaching that served as the conceptual framework for the original research from which the five perspectives on teaching emerged. Chapter 2 discusses how actions, intentions, and beliefs, otherwise collectively known as “indicators of commitment” (p. 17) make up each of the perspectives, and the difference between perspectives on teaching and teaching techniques or strategies, which are actions alone. According to Pratt in Chapter 2, “unless we understand what a person is trying to accomplish (intentions) and why they think that it is important or reasonable (beliefs), we are in no position to judge the effectiveness of their actions” (p. 20).

Pratt writes that each chapter in Section II, which consists of one chapter for each teaching perspective, is a personal elaboration of one perspective, as if the authors were asked, “What does it mean, to teach from this perspective; and what characterizes effective teaching from that perspective” (p. 69). This section is particularly effective in that each of the chapter authors speaks with their own style and from their own experiences, while incorporating engaging vignettes and even prompting readers to respond to thought-provoking questions or to react to thought experiments that aim to help readers. For example, in Chapter 6, the reader is asked to read a paragraph about an unfamiliar topic in order to demonstrate the principle of prior knowledge. The reader is also asked to read vignettes about students and write down the students’ motivating driving forces in each story, to better explicate intrinsic motivation.

Chapter 4 takes a deep and objective look into the transmission perspective, which is most generally associated with lecturing, without intimating the perspective as being out-of-touch, instead showing the positives and negatives, and how to actively engage with an audience. Chapters 5 through 7 delve into the apprenticeship, developmental, and nurturing perspectives. This section concludes with Chapter 8, which, like the Social Reform Perspective that it covers, is the most fiery and controversial, indicating that “there is no neutrality in teaching and learning” because “learners, and therefore, teachers, are socially, culturally, and historically situated” (p. 198).

Readers of Section II will not know what to expect from one chapter to the next, as each author organizes their thoughts differently. For example, Chapters 7 and 8 flow quite differently. The former, which has a total of 12 sections, some of which are brief and underdeveloped, has the reader following principles, foci, and conditions of the Nurturing Perspective. This causes some confusion over whether there is any difference

---

among the three. In contrast, Chapter 8 flows very differently, laying out seven sections, each covering the philosophies of thinkers such as Paulo Freire, Pierre Bourdieu, and John Egan. The multi-author approach to Section II also creates some redundancy; each author takes time out of their own chapter to explain what a teaching perspective is.

The book concludes with Section III (Chapters 9 to 12), which introduces analytical tools that allow for deeper analysis of teaching and applies them to each perspective, and makes a case for the use of the Teaching Perspectives Inventory.

The most glaring issue with this book is that throughout the chapters, much of the cited literature has not been updated since the first edition. The average publication year of the citations in the 2016 edition is 1993. Chapter 6 cites studies from 1984 and 1992 to inform us that students are limited in their critical thinking skills, being more able to reproduce factual information on demand. *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, which explored this very topic in 2011, and other contemporary sources, are not included.

With the unfortunate acknowledgement that one will encounter dated information and a few disorganized chapters, we wholeheartedly recommend this book to all students from the undergraduate to doctoral levels who do or will be in front of any classroom, as well as seasoned educators who have not had the opportunity during their career to reflect on the intentions, beliefs, and actions of their teaching; it is necessary to take the Teaching Perspectives Inventory to maximize the utility of this book.