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Growing and Developing as a University Teacher—Variation in Meaning

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ABSTRACT This article reports the outcomes of a study, undertaken from a phenomenographic perspective, of academics’ conceptions of their own growth and development as a university teacher. A range of ways of understanding teaching development emerged, representing in particular a varying focus on development experienced as an increase in: the teacher’s comfort with teaching; the teacher’s knowledge and skills; and learning outcomes for students. This work builds on previous studies of university teachers’ conceptions of teaching, which has been shown to be related to their approaches to teaching and, thus, to student learning outcomes. Relationships between conceptions of teaching and conceptions of growing and developing as a teacher are also presented and discussed.

Introduction

Over the last decade, a substantial literature has been developing based on research investigating university teaching from the perspective of teachers themselves. These studies have examined university teachers’ conceptions of and approaches to teaching (Dall’Alba, 1991; Martin & Balla, 1991; Samuelowicz & Bain, 1992, 2001; Martin & Ramsden, 1992; Gow & Kember, 1993; Kember, 1997; Van Driel et al., 1997; Murray & MacDonald, 1997; Pratt & Assoc., 1998; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Wood, 2000), as well as teachers’ perceptions of student learning and of the relative responsibilities of teachers and learners (Åkerlind & Jenkins, 1998; Trigwell & Prosser, 1996). Core assumptions underlying these studies are the importance of understanding the meaning, or range of meanings, of teaching, as experienced by university teachers, and the intentional nature with which teachers approach their teaching.

Commonalities between the Studies

While the outcomes of these studies differ in the specific detail of each conception or approach described, significant commonalities have emerged in themes running across the conceptions. All show, as key dimensions of variation in the meaning that teaching holds for university teachers, a primary focus towards:

• transmission of information to students vs. the development of conceptual understanding in students; and an associated focus towards
• the teacher and their teaching strategies vs. the students and their learning and development.
This consensus is striking given the independent nature of the studies and the diverse range of countries, institutions and academics sampled across the studies.

Samuelowicz and Bain’s (1992) description of the distinction between student-centred and teacher-centred conceptions may be used to illustrate the key differences which have been found between different understandings of teaching:

In student-centred teaching, students’ existing conceptions are the starting point of an interactive teaching/learning process and students are helped by teachers’ activities to construct their own knowledge, to make their own sense of reality, and adopt the conceptual framework in line with that shared by experts in the field.

In teacher-centred teaching, students’ existing conceptions are not taken into account, a teacher possesses the knowledge (gained or constructed) and transmits or imparts it to students, learning outcomes are expressed in quantitative rather than qualitative terms, the knowledge acquired by students is the knowledge transmitted/imparted by a teacher, and learning is subject oriented not reality oriented, and is often seen as preparation for higher level subjects. (p. 104. NB: references to constituent dimensions have been removed from this quotation for ease of reading.)

A teacher-centred focus is consistently seen across the range of studies as constituting a less sophisticated view of teaching than a learner-centred focus, and is regarded as less likely to produce high quality learning outcomes amongst students. (Pratt is an exception here, as he deliberately avoids any form of judgement of different conceptions of teaching in terms of teaching effectiveness or quality.) Furthermore, an empirical relationship between teachers’ views of teaching and students’ approaches to learning has also been shown (Kember & Gow, 1994; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). Prosser and Trigwell report that ‘university teachers who focus on their students and their students’ learning tend to have students who focus on meaning and understanding in their studies, while university teachers who focus on themselves and what they are doing tend to have students who focus on reproduction’ (p. 142).

In a review of 13 studies investigating conceptions and beliefs about teaching amongst university academics, Kember (1997) attempted to synthesise the findings. He posited two broad orientations to teaching, which he saw as positioned along a continuum ranging from a teacher-centred/content-oriented pole to a student-centred/learning-oriented pole. He proposed two conceptions of teaching associated with each orientation, plus a fifth, intermediate conception focused on student-teacher interaction (see Fig. 1). However, Samuelowicz and Bain (2001) have challenged the idea of an intermediate conceptual category, suggesting that all conceptions of teaching are primarily teacher-centred or student-centred.

**Differences between the Studies**

Despite the similarity in findings between the studies of conceptions of university teaching, there are distinct differences between researchers in the ontological assumptions made about the nature of the conceptions, in particular:

- whether the different conceptual categories are seen as independent (e.g. Samuelowicz & Bain, 1992; Kember, 1997; Pratt & Assoc., 1998), even if they can be ordered according to sophistication, or as related in a hierarchy of inclusiveness (e.g. Martin & Balla, 1991; Dall’Alba, 1991; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999); and
whether the conceptions are seen as relatively stable constructs requiring substantial effort to shift (e.g. Kember, 1997; Pratt & Assoc., 1998), or as a relational response to varying contexts and situations (e.g. Samuelowicz & Bain, 1992; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999).

Some authors speak not just for their own findings, but for conceptions of teaching in general. For instance, Samuelowicz and Bain (1992) consider in detail whether conceptions of teaching are best regarded as ordered or hierarchical, based on the findings of a range of studies, including phenomenographic studies which claim hierarchically inclusive relationships between conceptual categories. Using the quantitative–qualitative dimension in learning as an example, they conclude that the dimensions which distinguish the categories are often bipolar in nature, so that one cannot subsume the other and they are best represented as occupying the extremes of an ordered continuum rather than a hierarchy. Repeating their arguments, Kember (1997) also concludes that conceptions of teaching, in general, are best regarded as ordered in an exclusive way rather than hierarchical in an inclusive way. In contrast, I would like to argue for the potentially inclusive nature of relationships between different conceptions of teaching, an issue that is relevant to the discussion of my findings.

From a phenomenographic perspective, conceptions of teaching may be categorised according to the awareness shown of key aspects or dimensions of teaching, where awareness of an aspect is indicated by the perception of the potential for variation in that aspect (Marton & Booth, 1997). From this perspective, awareness of the quantitative–qualitative dimension in learning, for example, would be indicated by an awareness that learning may be both quantitative and qualitative in nature, even if the value of one type of learning (such as the quantitative accumulation of information) is negated by the teacher. Lack of awareness of this dimension of teaching and learning would be indicated by a taken-for-granted assumption that learning is all of the same nature. From this more limited view of learning, another type of learning cannot be rejected at an ideological level, because the understanding of learning does not include awareness of that as a possibility.

Empirically, quantitative understandings of learning have been shown to occur without an awareness of the possibility of qualitative forms of learning, but not vice versa (Trigwell & Prosser, 1996). Consequently, from a phenomenographic perspective, qualitative understandings of learning are seen as inclusive of quantitative understandings. The unidirectional and inclusive nature of this expanded awareness is illustrated even in the interview quotations chosen by Samuelowicz and Bain (1992) to illustrate the bipolar nature of the quantitative–qualitative dimension in understandings of learning:
• quantitative understanding: ‘[students have learned in a course] a little bit more than a repetition of what they’ve heard at lectures … to display knowledge of the subject in words similar to mine’;
• qualitative understanding: ‘I expect students to engage with the experience of the world and to think about things at a deep level and to come with what they really think about something rather than just to give answers in terms of … some alienated body of knowledge. I expect them to take knowledge in and do something with it’ (p. 108, emphasis added).

This difference in interpretation as to the inclusive nature of different understandings of teaching comes, I suspect, from a misunderstanding of the nature of the inclusive hierarchy being posited in phenomenographic studies. Kember, and Samuelowicz and Bain appear to be looking for a hierarchy of inclusive beliefs about teaching. However, the hierarchy of inclusiveness that phenomenographic analysis searches for is one of increasing breadth of awareness of different aspects of the phenomenon being investigated. Consequently, the conceptions of teaching constituted during a phenomenographic analysis are based on different combinations of awareness of key aspects of teaching and learning, not on different systems of beliefs about teaching and learning.

Implications for Teaching Development

The implications of this research for approaches to teaching development deserve further investigation. While existing research into conceptions of teaching has the potential to revolutionise approaches to development, precisely what form this revolution should take is not yet clear (although some experiments are certainly under way: Gibbs, 1995; Trigwell, 1995; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997; Wood, 2000). An important starting point for further consideration of the implications for teaching development is to investigate academics’ understandings of their own development as a teacher, and the relationship between their understandings of teaching and of teaching development. This is the aim of the study presented here. Making this a starting point for further development of our understanding of the area is in accord with the core principle underlying the research into academics’ perceptions of their own teaching; that is, that any development in the area should be based on an awareness of the range of meanings that these activities hold for those engaged in them.

Aims and Methods

The article reports the outcomes of a study, undertaken from a phenomenographic perspective (Marton, 1981, 1986; Marton & Booth, 1997), of academics’ conceptions of their own growth and development as a university teacher. As with all phenomenographic research, the aim was to investigate variation in the underlying meaning of, or ways of experiencing, a phenomenon—in this case, growth and development as a university teacher. The desired outcome was constitution of a structured ‘space’ of variation, representing key aspects of the qualitatively different ways of viewing teaching growth and development represented amongst the group interviewed. The structure of the resulting ‘outcome space’ is based on the relationships between those different views, in terms of the critical aspects of variation which both distinguish and relate the different meanings from and to each other. This focus on critical aspects of and structural relationships between different ways of understanding a phenomenon is seen as having powerful heuristic value in aiding insights into teaching and learning.

Highlighting the relationships between different ways of understanding growth and development provides a way of looking at the phenomenon holistically, despite the fact that
it may be experienced differently by different individuals, and by the same individuals at
different points in time and context. The aim is to simultaneously portray the whole as well
as the parts in a single outcome space of variation. In keeping with the phenomenographic
approach, this was achieved by taking a collective view of the range of ways of experiencing
teaching growth and development across a sample group of academics. In order to capture
this collective experience, it was necessary to focus, not on the richness of each individual
experience, but on critical aspects of the range in experience across individuals, as well as the
structural relationships between these different ways of experiencing.

The outcomes presented are based on interviews with 28 academics, all on teaching and
research appointments at the Australian National University (ANU), a traditional, research
intensive university in the capital of Australia. Within the ANU context, the academics
interviewed were selected with the aim of capturing as much variation as possible:

- **Discipline**—6 from social sciences, 2 economics/commerce, 8 natural sciences, 8 humani-
ties/languages, 4 information sciences;
- **Academic experience**—from a few months to 35 years;
- **Appointment**—12 tenured/tenureable appointments, 12 fixed-term (3–5 years), 4 short-
term (12 months);
- **Gender**—18 men, 10 women;
- **Age range**—mid-twenties to late fifties;
- **Language background**—20 native English speakers (including some from North America
and New Zealand), 8 from non-English speaking backgrounds (4 European/Russian, 2
Middle Eastern, 2 Asian).

Interviews were semi-structured, asking academics what growth and development meant to
them, how they went about it, what they were trying to achieve, and why they did it that way,
but working primarily from examples of development activities volunteered by the inter-
viewees during the course of the interview. These questions were preceded by questions
about the academic’s understandings of teaching *per se*, to provide a context for the questions
on teaching development. This included questions about their aims as a teacher, how they
went about teaching and why they went about it that way.

Unstructured follow-up questions were used to encourage further elaboration of a topic
or to check the meaning that interviewees associated with key words that they used. These
questions commonly took the form of, ‘Could you tell me a bit more about that?’; ‘Could you
explain that further?’; ‘What do you mean by that?’; ‘Why is that important to you?’; ‘Could
you give me an example?’ In many cases the follow-up questions were more important in
eliciting underlying meanings than the predetermined questions. However, the aim at all
times was to provide opportunities for the interviewees to reveal their current understanding
of the phenomenon as fully as possible without the interviewer introducing any new aspects
not previously mentioned by the interviewee.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. I then analysed the interviews in an
iterative manner, repeatedly reading through transcripts, searching for the underlying foci
and intentions expressed in them, comparing and contrasting them for similarities and
differences, and looking for key relationships which related as well as distinguished them to
and from each other. As I started to constitute key meanings, dimensions of variation and
structural relationships within the data, I proceeded to iterate between alternately focusing on
the analytic outcomes and the original transcript data, looking to confirm, contradict and
modify my emerging hypotheses about meanings and relationships. This continued until a
consistent set of categories of description, representing different meanings or ways of
understanding, eventuated.
Phenomenography argues for a non-dualistic ontology, which is also an assumption underlying the approach (Marton & Booth, 1997). This leads to the expectation that different ways of experiencing a phenomenon would typically be internally related—related through the phenomenon being experienced and through the inherently related nature of human experience. Consequently, one would expect that the qualitatively different ways of understanding a phenomenon constituted during a phenomenographic analysis would typically represent more or less complete experiences of the phenomenon, rather than different and unrelated experiences. Thus, the set of conceptual categories which emerges may commonly be ordered along a hierarchy of inclusiveness.

Within this study, the ordering of categories and the positing of hierarchical relationships between them emerged through an iterative process, involving interactive alternation between searching for logical and empirical evidence of inclusiveness. That is, hypotheses about likely orderings and inclusiveness sometimes originated from logical argument and sometimes from the content of transcripts, but in all cases needed to be confirmed by the data before being accepted. Empirical confirmation required evidence that at least some of the transcripts from which particular categories of description were constituted showed some reference to aspects of growth and development present in categories lower in the hierarchy, but not vice versa.

Outcomes

Three qualitatively distinct categories of description of different ways of experiencing growth and development as a university teacher were constituted. The categories are distinguished by variation along one primary dimension of variation, from a self to other focus, in the experience of developing as a teacher. Development as a university teacher was varyingly experienced as an increase in:

- the teacher’s comfort with teaching, in terms of feeling more confident as a teacher or teaching becoming less effortful;
- the teacher’s knowledge and skills, in terms of expanding content knowledge and teaching materials, and/or an expanding repertoire of teaching strategies;
- learning outcomes for students, in terms of improving students’ learning and development.

Each category is described in more detail below, with a brief illustration of key aspects of the categories through verbatim quotations from relevant interview transcripts. It is impossible for any one quotation to illustrate all aspects of the category described, and I have selected those which emphasise the differences which emerged between categories more than the commonalities. Nevertheless, I hope that they provide a more concrete sense of the nature of the category than would be possible from an abstract description alone.

Category 1. Teaching development as a change within the teacher—increasing comfort and confidence with teaching

This category is distinguished by an experience of growth and development which is strongly focused on the teacher’s feelings about teaching and themselves as teachers. In this sense, the developmental experience is entirely self-focused, with the aim of feeling comfortable and confident with teaching. The category may be divided into two subcategories, based on whether the experience of development is focused on: (A) teaching becoming easier, or (B) growing confidence in one’s abilities as a teacher. Each subcategory is described further below.
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Category 1A. Teaching development as teaching becoming easier. This category may be illustrated through the following quotation:

Physics, male: As far as teaching goes I look forward to the day when teaching a course isn’t hard and does not occupy such a large fraction of my time. I see that as coming especially when I’m teaching a course a second or third time. It has the negative side that it could become stagnant but there has got to be a period when I’ll be familiar with the course but it will still be a new enough experience that it will be OK. After that it could become boring. Then I would switch courses.

What will happen for you when you are more familiar with the courses and teaching will feel easier?
I will know the material better. I will know what to expect from students better.... I think that teaching would be easier if I was more familiar and I knew what to expect from the students.

These comments indicate a focus on teaching development as building towards a steady state of comfort with the subject material and student expectations or requirements. Once this state is reached, further development in teaching would require starting afresh with a new course or subject.

Category 1B. Teaching development as growing confidence in one’s abilities. Although there is a different focus in this subcategory, representing a slightly different meaning, Categories 1A and 1B are very similar in key qualitative aspects. Both represent a self-focus, based on personal feelings about teaching, leading up to relative mastery of or familiarity with the current subject matter and teaching situation. Consequently, any further development is seen as requiring a change in the subject or situation. To illustrate:

Geography, male: There’s still a lot of growth in teaching that I can make. I want to be so comfortable with teaching that I can walk out there with hardly any preparation and deliver a wonderful lecture.

Why does that appeal to you? Why is that an aim?
I don’t know, it’s probably just an ideal thing. I see, for example, our Head of Department, he conveys so much confidence in his lectures. But maybe I do the same thing, I don’t... I’m not aware of it, I don’t know. [?] The more confidence I have the better.

One of the first few lectures I gave in first semester was to 250 first year students in this huge lecture theatre ... I never did anything like that ... and they were all watching me ... and that felt really good ... I think that’s the key to it, I think it’s just improving my confidence that helps me feel good about myself.

Category 2. Teaching development as a change in teaching practice—increasing teachers’ skills, strategies and knowledge of the area

As with Category 1 (A and B), the experience of teaching growth and development is again strongly focused on the teacher, but in this case on development in teaching skills, in terms of strategies and methods, teaching materials and/or knowledge of the area. In this sense, whilst still strongly self-oriented, the experiential focus has expanded to include teaching practices as well as feelings. The intention is to become more effective as a teacher. To illustrate:
Cultural studies, male: Well really, it means lots of things. One of them is, although I have my Diploma of Education, at the university level I think it would be a great idea to have courses essential for developing lecturers’ [?] and helping lecturers and teachers developing delivery styles, disseminating information, imparting knowledge. Because some of us are very knowledgeable, but that doesn’t mean they can impart that knowledge. And I think that is all part of being a learner or a teacher. It’s no good if you know so much, but you can’t really share enough of that knowledge …

I’ve always asked colleagues if I can attend their classes, and actually I’ve done that a lot. They’ve been like models to me. I want to be as good as they—the way they speak, the way they articulate ideas, the way they organise lectures, the way they deliver them, the techniques they use … Usually I took notes. I’m not passive, so I’m actually writing notes and suddenly I find myself, while taking notes and observing, comparing myself and thinking, ‘ah, I can’t do that, and I don’t do that, I’ve never done this’. So it’s really alerted me to my weaknesses basically, so I really appreciate that.

Although expanding one’s teaching skills emerged as the primary focus of this category, feeling more comfortable as a teacher also came through as a background aspect of the experience. This was seen in interview transcripts through comments such as the following: ‘Growth and development—well, there is always the fantasy that it gets easier’. Comments like these are taken as evidence that the experience of developing as a teacher represented by this category is inclusive of those aspects of experience represented in the previous category, even though these aspects may now be in the background rather than the foreground of awareness.

Underpinning the desired expansion in teaching skills is a desire to achieve greater effectiveness as a teacher. On the surface, this may seem to indicate a concern with student learning, but actually has more to do with student satisfaction with courses and teaching than with learning outcomes per se. For example:

Engineering, male: I think students are kind of customers, I want them to be happy at the end of the day. I also achieve some personal things out of it, like just seeing that I’ve done a good job, that somebody learned something after this lecture I guess gives (?) satisfaction. So, really for students to be satisfied, to be happy at the end of the day and for my (?) to be satisfied at the end of the day, to feel that I’ve done a good job, I’ve done my job properly. It’s just like the student is here as a customer to get some services and I have to provide these services to the best quality I can.

There is an underlying, self-focused view behind the experience of development represented by this category, which is to feel increasingly good about oneself as a teacher. Having students also feel good about you as a teacher can be seen as a potential part of that experience. There is a clear focus on the quality of the teaching, not the quality of the learning.

Category 3. Teaching development as a change in outcomes for the learner—increasing student learning and development

The conception of growth and development represented by this category shows a critical expansion in the experience to include awareness of developmental changes for students, in terms of student learning outcomes and their development as learners in the subject. I call this an expansion because, while students’ experiences of teaching and learning become the
primary focus of awareness (rather than the teacher’s experience), there is also awareness of
the potential for changes in the teacher’s feelings and skills, as in the previous categories. So,
the understanding represented by this category is seen as being inclusive of that represented
by the two previous categories. To illustrate:

*Law, female:* Yeah, well I have done quite, I mean compared to other people, very
useful things to help me develop as a teacher. I have done some courses … I use lots
of opportunities to go and look at people teaching, when they let me do it … But
other than that, no, I think, I mean, I have read books and things like that.

*… if I just pick up on the last thing you mentioned, which was observing other people. Why
is that a good thing to do and how do you know when it has been useful?*

Yeah, well there is nothing I think more useful in the workplace because you see,
well you’re observing, you’re seeing the effect it has on you, as somebody who is a
potential learner and you also are, having taught for a while, you see what they are
attempting to do from the technique that they are adopting. So you see it from both
ends, and you then see the reaction it has on you as a potential learner and you try
to discern whether that’s a technique that will adapt itself. It has, whenever, you’re
always working within your own personality as a teacher, so there are some things
which never quite work for you but there are other things which then are the
techniques that you might pick up and explore. To pick up and use sometimes, to
lesser and greater effect depending upon the situations. Yeah, I think it’s one of the
best ways to learn about teaching, is to watch people doing it.

These comments provide an interesting contrast to those in the quotation illustrating
Category 2. In both cases, the interviewees describe the benefits of observing their colleagues’
teaching. However, in the former quotation, what is experienced is self-focused, in terms of
what the interviewee learns about techniques he does and does not use in his own teaching.
In the quotation presented here, while the interviewee is also concerned with teaching
methods, there is a focus on the other as well as the self, in terms of the potential impact on
learners.

*Structural Relationships between the Categories*

While Categories 1A and 1B appear to represent two faces of the same type of experience,
Categories 1 to 3 are seen as representing qualitatively different experiences, linked in a
hierarchical relationship based on inclusivity (see Fig. 2). That is, the experience of growth
and development represented by categories higher in the hierarchy includes awareness of the
aspects of growth and development represented by categories lower in the hierarchy, though
these aspects need not be the primary focus of the experience, tending to be in the
background rather than the foreground of awareness.

It is important to acknowledge here that experience occurs holistically. Consequently,
although each category may be presented as consisting of a combination of different aspects,
this is for descriptive and analytic purposes. The experience represented by each category of
description would be a holistic one, and necessarily different to the sum of its parts or aspects.

*Patterns of Combinations of Conceptions of Teaching and Teaching Development*

In order to explore the ways in which different understandings of developing as a teacher may
combine with different understandings of teaching *per se*, I also investigated the range of
conceptions of teaching amongst the academics interviewed. Given the substantial number of existing studies of conceptions of teaching, this analysis started with a search for dimensions of variation which had already been found in existing studies of academics’ understandings of teaching. This was equivalent to entering the analysis at an advanced stage, when preliminary hypotheses about key dimensions of variation and structural relationships between categories are already being formed and tested against the data. Otherwise, the usual process of iterating between analytic hypotheses and the transcript data was undertaken until a consistent set of categories of description emerged. The following four categories were constituted:

1. **Teacher transmission focused category.** In this category, the teacher is seen as imparting information to students who are experienced as then absorbing that information in a passive way. The role of students in the teaching–learning process is largely unconsidered, although it is recognised that material may be easier to absorb if presented in some ways than others. The primary aim of the teacher is to cover material, which the teacher may modify and structure for students or simply recycle from existing texts. In terms of what the teacher may gain personally from the teaching–learning process, if they are very familiar with the material presented they are seen as gaining nothing, but if they are not so familiar with the material they are seen as potentially gaining knowledge of new content and techniques.

2. **Teacher–student relations focused category.** The emphasis here is on teaching as developing good relations with students. The teacher wants students to be satisfied and to respond positively to their teaching. The teacher aims to motivate students, and to help develop students’ problem-solving ability and practical skills. Nevertheless, there is a clear focus on the teacher, in terms of what they are doing within this relationship, with students experienced primarily in terms of their responses to the teacher. As a product of the teaching–learning process, the teacher him/herself is seen as potentially gaining both content knowledge and satisfaction from a sense of teaching well.

3. **Student engagement focused category.** In this category, there is a greater focus on the student in terms of what they are doing, rather than the teacher and the students’ reactions to the teacher. The aim is to engage students with the material or subject in order to develop students’ enthusiasm and self-motivation for learning. The teacher achieves this by
building students’ interest, including involving students in active learning activities, and using real-world and relevant examples. Again, the teacher sees him/herself as potentially gaining both content knowledge and satisfaction or enjoyment from the teaching experience.

4. **Student learning focused category.** The emphasis in this category is on students’ learning and development. The aim is to encourage students to think critically and originally, to question existing knowledge, explore new ideas, see new dimensions and become independent learners. This may include a focus on helping students to develop a broader sense of the discipline and underlying principles of the discipline. In this category, not only is the teacher seen as gaining both knowledge and enjoyment from the experience of teaching, but also an opportunity to extend their own understanding of the area. Furthermore, they see the potential for broader benefits to the discipline and/or society arising from students’ learning.

As would be expected, the resulting set of categories of description showed similar themes and dimensions of teaching to those found in previous studies, although the precise constitution of the four categories does not repeat that of previous studies. Given the substantial number of existing studies of conceptions of teaching, and the space limitations, I will not illustrate the categories with excerpts from the interview transcripts. The four categories are seen as linked in a hierarchy of inclusiveness, based in particular on two key dimensions of variation:

- increasing awareness of the role of students in the teaching–learning process; and
- increasing breadth of impact or benefit from the teaching–learning process.

Nevertheless, the four categories may still be grouped as primarily teacher focused or student focused in nature (see Fig. 3).

Each transcript was coded according to which category of description of different ways of understanding both teaching and teaching development it was seen to best represent. Each combination of conceptions that was found is marked with an asterisk in Fig. 4. However, the number of times each combination was found is not presented, as this would be inconsistent with the method. Phenomenography provides an approach to investigating the **range** of ways in which different phenomena may be experienced, not the relative frequency with which each way of experiencing may be found in the relevant population. The categories are constituted on a collective, group basis, not on an individual transcript basis, and the sample is selected to maximise variation, not to be representative of the population on other criteria.
A strong theme in the different experiences of growing and developing as a university teacher presented here is the distinction between teacher-focused understandings of development and learner- or student-focused understandings. This is in line with the studies of academics’ conceptions of teaching described in the introduction to this article, where the distinction between teacher- and student-focused understandings appears as a consistent finding. The recurrence of this theme is also found in work in progress on university teachers’ ways of experiencing change in their teaching over time (McKenzie, 1999). Based on a longitudinal study, McKenzie found four qualitatively different ways of experiencing change in teaching, two primarily teacher-focused and two primarily student-focused. The finding that this dimension forms part of academics’ understanding of growing and developing as a teacher further reinforces the significance of this particular dimension of variation in academics’ experiences of teaching and teaching-related activities.

This dimension forms a useful basis from which to consider the ways in which conceptions of teaching combine with conceptions of teaching development, based on the data presented in Fig. 4. At one level, we can see that increasingly sophisticated understandings of teaching tend to be associated with increasingly sophisticated understandings of teaching development. However, at the same time, Fig. 4 shows combinations of more student-focused conceptions of teaching with more teaching-focused conceptions of teaching development in some cases. The full range of combinations of understandings are outlined, as follows:

- **A teacher transmission focused understanding of teaching** was found combined only with a teacher comfort focused view of teaching development. That is, those teachers who were primarily focused in their teaching on imparting information to students were at the same time focused in their teaching development on increasing their personal comfort and confidence with teaching and their teaching abilities. So, the experience of both teaching and teaching development was teacher-focused.

- **A teacher–student relations focused understanding of teaching** was found combined with a teacher comfort focused and a teaching practice focused experience of teaching develop-
ment. That is, teachers who were focused in their teaching on developing good relations with students, in order to have students respond positively to them as teachers, were simultaneously focused in their teaching development on both increasing their comfort and confidence with teaching and/or increasing their knowledge, strategies and skills as a teacher in order to more effectively satisfy students. Again, the experience of both teaching and teaching development was primarily teacher-focused.

• A student engagement focused understanding of teaching was found combined with a teacher comfort focused and a teaching practice focused experience of teaching development. That is, teachers who were focused in their teaching on engaging students, in order to develop their enthusiasm and self-motivation for learning, also experienced teaching development in terms of increasing confidence as a teacher and/or increasing teaching knowledge and skills in order to more effectively engage students in the teaching–learning process. This means that a primarily student-focused experience of teaching was combined with a primarily teacher-focused experience of teaching development.

• A student learning focused understanding of teaching was found combined with a teaching practice focused and/or student learning focused view of teaching development. That is, teachers who were focused in their teaching on encouraging students to think critically and become independent learners were simultaneously focused in their teaching development on increasing their teaching knowledge and skills in order to more effectively enhance students’ learning, and/or increasing their students’ learning and development per se. Here, we see a student-focused understanding of teaching being combined with both a student-focused and teaching-focused understanding of teaching development. However, this particular understanding of teaching was not seen combined with the most extreme teacher-focused view of teaching development, as increasing personal comfort and confidence with teaching.

On the surface, some of these combinations of conceptions may appear inconsistent, as primarily student-focused experiences of teaching are being combined with primarily teacher-focused experiences of teaching development—though importantly, not vice versa. The ontological assumptions about the nature of conceptions described in the introduction to this article become important in explaining this. Whether these particular combinations of views of teaching with views of teaching development are seen as consistent or inconsistent is largely a product of whether one regards the different understandings of each phenomenon as being independent or as inclusively related.

Where the different conceptions of teaching and teaching development are seen as related in a hierarchy of inclusiveness, as in this study, there is nothing inconsistent about the combinations of conceptions which appear. From an inclusive perspective, academics with a student learning focused understanding of teaching are not seen as focused on students’ learning and development to the exclusion of a concern with student engagement, teacher–student relations and information transmission. Rather, the different conceptions of teaching are seen as linked in a hierarchy of expanding awareness of the range of aspects which constitute university teaching. Thus, someone experiencing a student learning focused understanding of teaching is also aware of more teacher-focused aspects of teaching, but not vice versa.

This extended awareness may be expressed in a variety of ways, as additional primary foci in their teaching, as subsidiary foci in their teaching, or as an aspect of teaching which they knowingly reject. However, whether it is something that they reject or incorporate into their teaching, the key issue is that they show an awareness of this aspect of teaching, where awareness of an aspect of a phenomenon is defined in terms of discernment of variation within that aspect (Marton & Booth, 1997). From this perspective, the ‘either/or’ relationship
between conceptions of teaching presented by some authors is reconceived as an ‘and’ relationship, and it ceases to be a surprise that student-focused conceptions of teaching may be combined with teacher-focused conceptions of teaching development.

Similarly, Murray & McDonald’s (1997) report of a disjunction between lecturers’ conceptions of teaching and their claimed educational practice presents some lecturers as showing mixed or confused conceptions of teaching. However, their findings only appear surprising where each conception of teaching is seen as independent of the others. Where they are seen as inclusively related, the kind of internal variation in views reported by Murray and McDonald can be explained as due to the different breadths of awareness of various aspects of teaching represented by the different conceptions, rather than as internal inconsistency within a conception or individual.

The kind of spread in relationships reported here between understandings of teaching and understandings of teaching development has been found in other studies examining the relationships between different aspects of teaching and learning, though not previously discussed in this way. For instance, the relations between conceptions of teaching and approaches to teaching presented by Trigwell and Prosser (1996) show that more sophisticated conceptions of teaching may be combined with less sophisticated approaches to teaching, but not vice versa. Furthermore, in the same article, more sophisticated conceptions of teaching were found combined with less sophisticated conceptions of student learning, though not vice versa (at least, not clearly so, as there were two ambiguous instances). Similarly, Åkerlind and Jenkins (1998) found that more sophisticated views of how academics can best assist students to learn were combined with less sophisticated views of how students can best help their own learning, but not vice versa.

The trend in each of these studies is for the spread to occur in only one direction, indicating that at any one point in time an individual may have a more sophisticated view (i.e. discern more aspects) of one phenomenon than of a related phenomenon. Based on the studies above, in the area of teaching-related phenomena, that raises the possibility of the simultaneous experience of a more sophisticated conception of teaching than conception of learning, approach to teaching or conception of teaching development. From a developmental perspective, this suggests that an expanding awareness of phenomena related to teaching and learning may follow a predictable direction, with a broader awareness of aspects of teaching preceding a broader awareness of aspects of student learning, approaches to teaching and growth and development as a teacher.

With regard to this article in particular, this raises the possibility of a hierarchy of expanding awareness of the combined aspects of teaching and teaching development, as follows:

1. a teacher transmission focused understanding of teaching combined with a teacher comfort focused understanding of teaching development;
2. a teacher–student relations focused understanding of teaching combined with a teacher comfort focused understanding of teaching development;
3. a teacher–student relations focused understanding of teaching combined with a teaching practice focused understanding of teaching development;
4. a student engagement focused understanding of teaching combined with a teacher comfort focused understanding of teaching development;
5. a student engagement focused understanding of teaching combined with a teaching practice focused understanding of teaching development;
6. a student learning focused understanding of teaching combined with a teaching practice focused understanding of teaching development;
7. a student learning focused understanding of teaching combined with a student learning focused understanding of teaching development.

This hierarchy may be explained through the positing of an internal relationship between conceptions of teaching and conceptions of growing and developing as a teacher, based on the holding of different aspects of the two phenomena in focal awareness at the same time. Thus, it would be possible in principle for an individual to discern a full range of aspects of teaching without simultaneously discerning a full range of aspects of teaching development. This is in contrast to, for instance, the positing of a causal relationship between conceptions of teaching and conceptions of growing and developing as a teacher, such as Kember (1997) suggests for the relationship between conceptions of teaching and approaches to teaching. A causal relationship would imply a much more one-to-one relationship between understandings of the two phenomena than was found in this study.

In summary, this article has investigated the range of meanings that growing and developing as a university teacher holds for academics. The ways in which these different understandings of teaching development may combine with academics’ understandings of teaching per se was also investigated. A range of combined understandings was found, and in each case the understanding of teaching development as either less sophisticated or of an equivalent sophistication to the understanding of teaching. The different understandings and combinations of understandings were explained in terms of an inclusive hierarchy of expanding awareness of different aspects of teaching and learning. These findings raise the possibility that, developmentally, a broader understanding of teaching may precede a broader understanding of growth and development as a teacher. However, further research is needed to establish whether this is a consistent finding and to clarify the extent to which a similar developmental ordering may be found between understandings of teaching and other teaching related phenomena.

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