

Article

Aligning Teaching Philosophy Statements with Practice: An Evidence-Based Approach Using Retrospective Think-Aloud Protocols

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Abstract: Teaching philosophy statements are often declarations of beliefs interspersed with descriptions and metaphors. The disjuncture between the stated philosophy and actual teaching has been raised by numerous academics. This case study addresses the neglected area of grounding teaching philosophies on actual teacher behaviour rather than on espoused beliefs. This study includes a replicable framework for teachers to create evidence-based teaching philosophy statements through a systematic investigation of their actual teaching practices. A retrospective think-aloud protocol was used to recount a lesson. Using a transcript of the recount, the teacher's actions were identified, extracted, and justified following pre-determined protocols. References to theoretical and empirical studies supporting or contradicting the justifications were checked in the research literature. To counteract potential self-bias, colleagues' views on the reasons selected were surveyed. The discrepancy between the teacher's justification of actions and the peers' perspectives revealed hitherto hidden idiosyncrasies and underlying values.

Keywords: evidence-based teaching; teaching philosophy statement; teaching practice; teaching values; think-aloud protocol



Citation: Blake, J. Aligning Teaching Philosophy Statements with Practice: An Evidence-Based Approach Using Retrospective Think-Aloud Protocols. *Educ. Sci.* **2024**, *14*, 795. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14070795>

Academic Editors: Orit Avidov-Ungar and Sara Zamir

Received: 29 February 2024

Revised: 11 July 2024

Accepted: 19 July 2024

Published: 22 July 2024



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1. Introduction

Teaching philosophy statements (TPSs) are used to document teachers' views on learning, learners, content, and teaching. However, a disconnect between the stated teaching philosophy and the actual implementation in practice may be observed. This discrepancy has raised concerns among scholars, sparking a critical discourse on the functionality and validity of TPSs. The pedagogic and research literature often portray TPSs as a manifestation of beliefs and metaphors [1–6]. Many TPSs, particularly those written by novice teachers, incorporate buzzwords and abstract concepts to create an impressive statement. However, the concrete actions and realities of classroom teaching are often not mentioned directly. This discrepancy suggests that while theoretical knowledge is valuable, there may be a gap between what is articulated in TPSs and what is observed in everyday educational practice.

Writing a teaching philosophy is often an integral component of teacher training programs. These programs require educators to articulate their beliefs and approaches to teaching and learning. However, this underscores the importance of not only engaging in theoretical reflections but also grounding these reflections in actual teaching practice. Novice teachers, in particular, often find their teaching philosophies in flux. Initially, their ideas may be heavily influenced by textbooks and guidance from mentors. However, as they face the reality of implementing these ideas in the classroom, they gain new insights from their own practices. The processes of observation, reflection, and feedback shape their teaching philosophy. Consequently, novice teachers experience more rapid and dramatic changes in their TPSs compared to the incremental changes seen in the approaches of more experienced educators.

The disconnect between what is stated in TPSs and what is observed in the classroom diminishes the credibility of TPSs. Therefore, there is a pressing need for a structured approach that bridges this gap, ensuring that TPSs are not just idealistic statements but are reflective of and informed by real-world teaching experiences.

Educators have a multitude of resources for constructing philosophies based on educational theories. For example, Ruge et al. [7] identified six different frameworks that teachers can use to construct their TPSs. However, there is a shortage of empirical resources for drafting TPSs based on actual teaching practices [8]. The potential divergence between espoused theories and actual teaching practices has, therefore, paved the way for a move to evidence-based TPSs that are firmly grounded in actual teaching practices.

1.1. Three Concepts: Values, Alignment and Evidence

Three core concepts are fundamental to the development of TPSs: values, alignment, and evidence.

Firstly, values are integral to teachers and profoundly shape their approaches to education. However, these values are not static entities but dynamic forces that both influence and are influenced by evidence derived from actual teaching practices and development strategies. This reciprocal interaction implies that values within TPSs are not merely declarations but reflections of ongoing professional growth and experiential learning. People tend to live their lives following their own sets of values and principles, although these tend not to be explicitly written down and may also be in a state of flux. As educators engage in reflective practice and refine their instructional methods, their teaching values may also evolve. Value-based TPSs, which are among the most commonly observed types of TPSs, prioritise the articulation of values. Such TPSs serve as frameworks through which teachers elucidate how their core beliefs and principles inform their instructional decisions and classroom practices.

Secondly, alignment is crucial for the credibility and usefulness of a TPS. There needs to be a clear and consistent alignment between what teachers state in their TPSs and what they actually do in their classrooms. This means that the principles and strategies outlined in TPSs should be demonstrably implemented in teaching practices. Without this alignment, TPSs risk being perceived as mere rhetorical exercises with little relevance to everyday teaching. It is essential for educators to “walk the walk, not just talk the talk”. For instance, if a teacher’s TPS emphasises a learner-centered approach, advocating for student autonomy, active learning, and collaborative activities, yet in practice, the teacher adopts a wholly teacher-centered approach, such as delivering long lectures with minimal student interaction, this discrepancy undermines the credibility of the TPS. The misalignment between the stated philosophy and actual teaching behaviour not only diminishes the effectiveness of the TPS but also potentially erodes trust and respect. Ensuring alignment between stated beliefs and classroom practices is, therefore, fundamental to maintaining the integrity and impact of TPSs. The primary source of evidence to ensure the alignment of a TPS and actual practice is teacher actions.

Thirdly, the evidence on which a TPS should be based is critical. TPSs are grounded in concrete, observable behaviours and outcomes rather than solely in abstract beliefs or theoretical ideals. This involves systematically collecting and analysing evidence from actual teaching practices, such as classroom interactions, student feedback, and assessment results. By anchoring TPSs in tangible evidence, educators can ensure that their philosophies reflect the realities of their teaching environments and are capable of guiding practical, effective instruction. However, it should be noted that teacher actions can be attributed to multiple factors, including reflective practice [9], teacher training programmes, teacher development sessions, teaching resources, and scholarly publications, including action research.

1.2. Evidence-Based TPS

While a value-based TPS is grounded in the values that a teacher holds, an evidence-based TPS is grounded in practice. The primary evidence from actual teaching forms its

foundation. Teachers may justify their actions and behaviours with reference to secondary evidence, drawn from diverse sources such as experience, case studies, action research, experimental studies, or empirical research. Case studies offer in-depth analyses of specific educational contexts, providing qualitative insights that enrich both theory and practice. Action research, conducted by practitioners within classrooms, offers immediate insights into instructional dynamics, emphasising practical application and iterative improvement. Experimental and empirical research use systematic observation and measurement to rigorously validate educational theories, offering robust evidence for effective teaching strategies and policies. Among these methodologies, experimental and empirical studies are particularly valued for their rigorous methodologies and capacity to generate evidence-based insights, crucial for fostering informed and effective teaching practices.

An evidence-based TPS that is not only grounded in primary evidence from actual teaching practice but is also grounded in secondary research evidence demonstrates commitment to informed and reflective practice. This integration involves linking teaching practices to their underlying rationales, thereby enhancing the credibility and impact of TPSs. In short, evidence-based may mean based on evidence of teaching practice, or it may also refer to supporting statements in a TPS with research evidence, such as theoretical studies. To date, there is a notable gap in research specifically exploring the linkage between teaching practice and scholarly evidence within TPSs.

1.3. Research Contribution

This study aims to address the absence of evidence-based TPSs by implementing a replicable framework grounded in an introspective investigation of actual teaching practice. The proposed method employs a retrospective think-aloud protocol and integrates peer review to shed light on the unseen idiosyncrasies and values influencing a teacher's practices.

This study contributes to the extant research literature in three significant ways. First, to the best knowledge of the author, this is the first documented study on the use of systematic introspection and peer review to create a TPS. By incorporating these methodologies, the study introduces a novel approach to reflective practice in education, offering a structured way for teachers to critically analyse and articulate their teaching philosophies based on concrete evidence from their own experiences.

Second, this study provides a replicable framework for creating TPSs that are not only practice-led but also provide an avenue for teachers to ensure that their practice is evidence-based. The framework is designed to be adaptable across various educational contexts, making it a versatile tool for educators seeking to align their teaching philosophies with empirical evidence. This replicability ensures that the approach can be adopted widely, promoting a culture of evidence-based teaching that can enhance educational outcomes across different settings and disciplines.

Third, this study shows the inexplicably intertwined nature of teaching practice, teaching philosophies, and teacher values. By systematically documenting how personal values and beliefs influence teaching actions, the study highlights the complex dynamics that underpin effective teaching. Specifically, despite the intentions of the author to create an evidence-based TPS, underlying values or beliefs impacted the author's actions and were only discovered through peer feedback. This finding underscores the importance of peer review in uncovering these hidden influences, demonstrating that even well-intentioned efforts to base teaching on evidence can be subtly shaped by personal values. This insight is important for educators aiming to develop a more self-aware and reflective practice, as it emphasises the need to consider and address these underlying factors.

The following section reviews the relevant literature, honing in on the research gap, namely the lack of evidence-based studies that tie TPSs to practices and practices to published research. The method section describes the four-phase framework that was followed to draft TPSs based on actual practices and then relate the practices to the research literature. The results section presents the findings created at the end of each of the four

phases. The discussion and conclusion sections that follow relate the findings to the wider educational context.

2. Literature Review

Most teachers have developed a teaching philosophy [10] (p. 40). Fewer have formalised their philosophy into a written document, namely a Teaching Philosophy Statement (TPS). However, some educators have discovered that the act of drafting a formal TPS can have significant benefits. It provides an opportunity to introspectively review their teaching practices, better align these practices with their values, and constructively receive feedback from their peers [11]. By sharing their TPS, teachers can foster a culture of openness and mutual learning within their professional community, gaining insights from their colleagues' feedback and different perspectives on teaching. Despite the potential benefits, the creation of a formal TPS is not a universal practice. The disjuncture between the intuitive formation of teaching philosophies and their formal written representation points to an area that warrants further investigation and support in the field of education.

In academia, TPSs may be requested by university administrators for a variety of purposes, particularly in the recruitment of new faculty and consideration of tenure [11–20] and so can be considered a high-stakes document, affecting the career of academics. Although university administrators request TPSs, the format is rarely specified [21]. It should be noted that institutional requirements for TPSs has not gained much traction in many Asian countries [18].

There are various definitions and descriptions of TPSs, many of which share common themes of beliefs, descriptions, and metaphors. Schönwetter et al. [19] provide an oft-quoted definition of a teaching philosophy statement as “a systematic and critical rationale that focuses on the important components defining effective teaching and learning in a particular discipline and/or institutional context” (p. 84).

A review of the literature revealed a substantial body of research on teaching philosophy statements [10,11,17,19,22–25]. Guidance on the creation of TPSs may be general [22] or discipline specific (e.g., Payant [26] for English as a second language, Alexander et al. [27] for teaching with technology, and Grundman [28] for mathematics). Guidance may be broadly classified using the process-orientated and product-orientated dichotomy of approaches to writing. Process-orientated approaches include preparatory tasks such as card-sorting [29] or guided writing tasks, such as answering questions [19,23,24]. Product-orientated approaches may advocate the inclusion of particular content, such as a statement of beliefs on learning process [30–32] or descriptions of activities and metaphors [33,34]. McCormack and Kennelly [35] investigated the use of social models of reflection in order to construct TPSs and teaching portfolios through writing stories.

When drafting a TPS, teachers tend to start by describing their teaching or their beliefs. Humphreys [36] notes that creating a TPS provides teachers with the opportunity to articulate “espoused beliefs related to teaching and learning” (p. 39). This is echoed by Laundon, Cathcart and Greer [37] who state that the TPS articulates “educator’s beliefs about what makes learning happen” (p. 577).

There appear to be two common problems with TPSs, namely the disjuncture between actual teacher practice and the stated philosophy, and secondly, the disjuncture between research findings and teacher practices. Ideally, what the teacher does in the classroom accurately reflects what is described in the TPS, which itself is based on research evidence, such as the findings of empirical, experimental, or action research.

The first problem is the disjuncture between actual practice and stated teaching philosophy [38–41]. The difference between espoused views and educator actions is problematic at multiple levels. Some TPSs are more of a “how-I-want-to-be-teaching philosophy” [3] (p. 264) than a description of actual activities. There are multiple reasons for this, though. TPSs serve multiple purposes, of which one key purpose is promotional. The TPS may be used to bolster a teacher’s claim for promotion, tenure, or a job. Few mediocre teachers would claim that they are just average, and so rather than describe their current reality, they

may describe what they want their teaching to be, and so (judged positively) this could be classified as an aspirational TPS.

The second problem is the grounding of TPSs in beliefs [10,24] rather than evidence-based results. Theory should inform practice. Research evidence provides support for or against particular theories, and so in a research-orientated setting, such as a university, one would expect that teaching is also based on evidence-based practices rather than beliefs.

There is a myriad of information on creating TPSs; however, this is in stark contrast to the paucity of studies available on justifying teaching philosophies in the research literature. Only one recommendation for grounding teaching in research findings was discovered in a search of the published literature on TPSs. Diana [42] advocated the incorporation of current research into TPSs in the context of teacher education programs for pre-service teachers.

This study aims to address both of these disjunctures by creating an evidence-based TPS through a systematic investigation of actual practices. The systematic investigation enables teachers to recall and reflect on specific actions during a particular teaching period. This ensures that the TPS is developed from specific teacher behaviours during class. The evidence-based aspect also stems from behaviours since the teacher needs to justify each action. However, this stage continues with an investigation of the research literature to determine whether there is support for a specific teaching practice. If not, this is a practice that is not based on research evidence, and then the teacher must determine whether to drop or continue the practice. The starting point for the TPS is practice-led, then evidence-based. This contrasts with typical TPSs that start with teacher beliefs.

3. Method

An introspective analysis was chosen to investigate the actions and behaviours realised during teaching practice. Recognising that introspective analysis can be susceptible to accusations of subjectivity and bias, several strategies were implemented to mitigate these concerns. As Peshkin [43] notes, “taming one’s subjectivity” is essential in qualitative research. To this end, a textual approach was selected to provide a more concrete and replicable basis for analysis. Given their ephemeral nature, the analysis of thoughts and decisions is not replicable, whereas the analysis of an artifact, such as a transcript, is. The artifact in this study is a synchronic description of one lesson, captured in a transcript.

To further increase academic rigour and reduce bias, strict protocols were harnessed at the levels of analysis and interpretation. Additionally, peer views were sought to validate the results, providing an external check on the researcher’s interpretations. While researcher bias is unavoidable and can lead to both missing and making discoveries [44], the use of strict protocols and the creation of examinable documentation help to ameliorate this bias by providing tangible evidence for decisions.

The method, that is the TPS creation framework, comprised four distinct phases, namely:

- (1) Recounting and recording;
- (2) Transcribing and extracting;
- (3) Coding and classifying; and
- (4) Peer debriefing.

Phase 1 aims to create a reflective recount of an actual lesson that serves as the basis for analysis, and thus ensures that the TPS is firmly grounded in teacher actions and decisions in practice. Phase 2 focuses on identifying actions and reasons for the actions contained within the text. Phase 3 harnesses template analysis [45] to classify the actions and reasons. References to the research literature are also added in this phase. Finally, phase 4 triangulates the analysis to reduce subjective bias.

3.1. Phase 1: Recount and Record

A 50-minute lesson was planned, prepared, and delivered for a class of 15 intermediate learners of English taking a non-credit course in conversational English. Immediately after delivering the lesson, the author recounted and audio-recorded the activities and occur-

rences in the class while referring to a teacher-created student handout (see Appendix A) and a brief lesson plan (see Appendix B). During the first-person recount, actions were described in chronological order. Explanations of the activities and justifications of micro-decisions were provided. A consistent format of stating the action followed by the reason for the action was adopted. This adapted think-aloud protocol [46,47], termed a retrospective free recall protocol by Kuusela and Paul [48], was selected to visualise, describe, and explain the actions after the fact. This reflection-on-action [9] serves as the foundation for analysis conducted in Phase 2.

3.2. Phase 2: Transcribe and Extract

The recording of the think-aloud protocol was transcribed verbatim. The veracity of the transcript was confirmed by a third party to reduce the possibility of human error during transcription [49]. Each dynamic verb, i.e., each verb indicating activity or process [50] (p. 902), was identified manually. A list of action statements was created by extracting each dynamic verb. The direct object was also extracted for transitive verbs, i.e., verbs that need a direct object to complete their meaning. Reasons were added to the list of action statements according to the following protocol:

1. Use the reason stated in the transcript;
2. Add a reason *post hoc* if none stated in the transcript;
3. Select the most important reasons;
4. Select a different reason for each action.

3.3. Phase 3: Code and Classify

Each action statement was initially classified into one of three broad categories, namely: learners, learning, or lesson content. As the focus on this class was on teaching English to non-native users of English, the content area was language. Action statements in each of the three groups were then coded through template analysis [45], which may be viewed as occupying the middle ground between grounded theory (in which codes are not determined *a priori*) and content analysis (in which all codes are predetermined). Codes were grouped by similarity (proximate genus) and specific difference. Codes were merged, subsumed, or re-classified during the process.

The aim was to create a concise TPS [8,22] to which administrators, peers, and students alike would all be able to refer. With this in mind, a three-column table was chosen rather than using continuous prose. This tabular format may be read vertically to understand the gist or horizontally to find specific details.

Action statements were inserted in the first column. The reasons were input into the second column and the third column was reserved for references to the research literature. It was envisaged that learners would read the first column vertically to find out what actions would occur in lessons, while peers and administrators would read horizontally as well to understand the justification for and research support for the actions. The rationale for this was that it would be easier for non-native English speakers to read a table since there would be fewer words to parse.

Literature searches were carried out and references added to the research literature into the third column. References were added according to the following two-step protocol:

1. Select the most important reference;
2. Select a different reference for each action.

3.4. Phase 4: Peer Comments

Given the possibility of falling into the “introspection illusion” [51–55] and being aware of the concept of being “unaware of [one’s] unawareness” [56–58], peer comments were used. The tabular TPS was circulated to six peers with requests for written comments. The peer group had been teaching English as a foreign language for between 3 years and 30 years, with the mean length of teaching being 16 years (See Table 1). Three colleagues shared the same educational background as the author, while three colleagues shared

the same cultural background. Two colleagues shared both the same educational and cultural backgrounds, while two other colleagues had both different educational and cultural backgrounds.

Table 1. Teaching experience and comparative educational and cultural background of peers.

Colleague	Teaching Experience (Years)	Educational Background	Cultural Background
1	5	Different	Different
2	3	Same	Same
3	15	Same	Different
4	30	Same	Same
5	22	Different	Same
6	21	Different	Different

All six peers submitted comments, and discussions were held on a one-to-one basis to clarify comments. Where comments were unclear, clarification was sought directly with peers. The TPS was revised based on the comments received.

4. Results

The results of the TPS creation process are presented in the following subsections. Section 4.1 describes the action statements that were created. Section 4.2 details the categorisation of the TPS, focusing on identifying sections and subsections. Section 4.3 introduces the assignment of the reasons and academic references that relate to the actions identified. Section 4.4 presents the results of the peer comments.

4.1. Action Statements

Transcription of the twenty-minute audio recording of the think-aloud protocol resulted in a text of slightly over 3500 words. The relevant dynamic verbs and associated grammatical objects were identified manually. Items that were repeated or not generalisable to my teaching were deleted. Four items concerning needs analysis and five items regarding assessment were also added *post hoc* to provide a more complete picture of my teaching philosophy. The final list consisted of 121 items.

Both the transcription and the identification of dynamic verbs were straightforward. The choice of wording for the statements and categorising of the statements, however, was naturally subjective. Some statements became subsumed within other broader statements. It was at this stage that choices had to be made about the primary audience of the TPS.

As with any written text, the audience and purpose need to be identified in order to target the message accurately. The audiences of TPSs vary and include prospective and current students, peers, and university administrators. The purpose of a TPS needs careful consideration as one TPS may not be the most appropriate for the differing audiences of students, peers, or administrators [22,59].

TPSs may be used for developmental, accountability, and promotional purposes, namely to persuade students to join or participate in classes taught by that member of faculty. The TPSs disseminated online may be for promotional purposes, intended to persuade prospective students to enroll in a particular course, or a TPS submitted as part of a job application may be for accountability purposes while that submitted to the training coordinator could be for developmental purposes.

Students may use TPSs to gain insight into their teacher and better understand the expectations demanded of them. Academics may maintain homepages with details of their TPS at the behest of university administrators [60,61]. Prospective students may read the online TPSs and use their contents as a basis for course selection. TPSs may therefore function as a way of promoting enrolment. In cases when enrolment numbers are considered in contract renewal, this could be a teacher's primary motivation.

The decision to target university administrators as the primary audience for the TPS was driven by pragmatic considerations. The tabular format of the TPS provides a clear, concise, and evidence-based snapshot of teaching practices, which is particularly valuable for administrators tasked with assessing the alignment of a teacher’s philosophy with institutional goals and educational standards. While this format is equally suitable for students or fellow teachers, targeting administrators ensures that the TPS serves a practical purpose in the context of job applications and professional evaluations, where demonstrating a well-reasoned and research-based approach to teaching is paramount.

A three-column draft tabular TPS was prepared. The first column was for action statements, the second for the reason for the action, and the third for any scholarly reference in support of the reason. Each action statement was allocated one row in the draft tabular TPS.

4.2. Sections and Subsections

These action statements were categorised into three distinct sections, namely learners, language, or learning, which is quite popular among language teachers. However, to avoid the fallacy of *ad populum*, viz. appeal to popularity, the format selected was not chosen because of its frequency. The easiest-to-understand TPSs appeared to be those organised by views on content (language), learners, and learning. Table 2 shows the breakdown of my TPS by each section in terms of the number of subsections and action statements. Preamble was added to contextualise the creation of the TPS and only contains one statement.

Table 2. Breakdown of subsections and statements in TPS.

Section	Preamble	Learners	Language	Learning	Total
Number of subsections	0	5	6	9	20
Number of action statements	1	24	29	33	87

Some of the 121 action statements were combined, subsumed, or reclassified either more specifically or more broadly. The final list consisted of 87 action statements, divided into 3 broad categories and 20 subsections (See Table 3).

Table 3. Labels for sections and subsections.

Learners	Language	Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and analyse needs Create a positive learning environment Tailor tuition to individual learners Set expectations Inject humour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise language consciousness Select frequently-used language Show cultural differences and similarities Use authentic contextualised language Focus on communication Focus on language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise interaction Build self-esteem and confidence Facilitate independent learning and promote life-long learning Assess and act on results Encourage critical thinking Integrate technology Scaffold learning Experiment Develop writers

4.3. Reasons and References

Each of the 87 statements was allocated a different reason, as shown in Table 4.

When selecting reasons for each action, it was necessary to take into account the specific cohort of learners in the class, the culture, and the institutional context. Many actions appeared to be guided by theory, which came from pre-service and in-service teacher training. However, there were also a number of actions that were based on my own experience and intuition. Intensive teacher training courses in the world of teaching English as a foreign language, such as the Certificate in English Language Teaching for Adults

(CELTA), focus on the practicalities of classroom teaching while the more rigorous Diploma in English Language Teacher for Adults (DELTA) is aimed at ensuring that teachers can link the theory to their actions. Although I had benefitted from such courses and had a general understanding of the theory underpinning teaching techniques and methods, I had not read many of the original research articles, and so had relied on others to summarise their ideas.

Table 4. Extract from Teaching Philosophy Statement.

Action	Reason	Literature Reference
Get students talking	Group dynamics	
Listen	Interactive approach	
Integrate grammar	Communicative approach ¹	

¹ An approach to language teaching in which the focus is placed on the use of language for communicative purposes [62].

My actions appeared to be generally “guided by theory, but informed by practice” [63]. Selecting specific reasons for actions is a complex, ill-defined process which raised various problems. Although reasons were allocated to all the action statements, this process was bound by the standard operating protocol, which at times resulted in causal oversimplification and neglect of common cause. The selection of an appropriate reason was frequently problematic as the relationship between action and reason was not necessarily one-to-one. Some actions had multiple reasons while some reasons had multiple actions. The causality of classroom actions was far more complex than initially envisaged. Causes for any one action could be sufficient or necessary, distal or proximal, rival or contributory. The four-step protocol to systematise the selection of reasons simplified the TPS, resulting in a more reader-friendly document. However, the downside of this simplification was that when examining the TPS discretely rather than holistically, a single line of actions, reasons, and references may provide a skewed view of the TPS.

Once each action had been allocated a different reason, references in support of the reasons were sourced in the applied linguistics and education literature. However, given the parameter of avoiding repetition for some items and the number of decisions involved in the selection, this became challenging.

The initial idea of one reason and one reference per action was to ensure that the most important reason and reference were selected. The advantage to the rule was that the TPS remained reader friendly and did not become too overwhelming. Nevertheless, as with the selection of reasons, there were a number of issues in the selection of references.

In addition, the complexity of the selection of academic sources was underestimated at the outset. This oversight resulted in a reference selection protocol that did not provide sufficient guidance. The retrospective decision matrix shown in Table 5 illustrates the multitude of choices that needed consideration in the selection of a reference for each action statement. The choices are actual endpoints of a continuum.

Table 5. Decision matrix for selection of academic references.

	Choice 1	Choice 2
Generalisability	To my current classes	To most classes
Validity	Strong standpoint	Contentious standpoint
Institutional context	Institutionally dependent	Institutionally independent
Global context	Country-specific	Globally valid
Language dependency	Language-specific	General focus
Time orientation	Earliest reference	Recent reference
Researcher orientation	Well-known researcher	Not well-known researcher
Influence	Stronger influence	Weaker influence

In order to create a TPS that reflected the depth and breadth of the research influences, I opted to select references from each of the categories, since the influences on my teaching were not one-dimensional. With hindsight, these dilemmas could have been solved by introducing another parameter, such as selecting the most recent reference.

In the end, each of the 87 statements was allocated a different reason. Table 6 shows an extract from the teaching philosophy.

Table 6. Extract from Teaching Philosophy Statement.

Action	Reason	Literature Reference
Get students talking	Group dynamics	Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997 [64]
Listen	Interactive approach	Brown, 2001 [65]
Integrate grammar	Communicative approach	Burns, 2009 [66]

4.4. Peer Comments

The comments received varied greatly in terms of quality and quantity, yet there were two notable results. First, the agreement on my actions and reasons was generally high. Second, disagreement with my reasons centered around three main areas, namely experimenting, using technology, and efficiency. The reasons allocated for particular actions were firmly justified in the literature, but the comments of my peers indicated that underlying reasons for the actions were different. The relevant comments received are classified in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Categorised comments received during peer debriefing.

Experimenting	Using Technology	Efficiency
Low boredom threshold	Hates paper	Exit and rush for coffee
Trying something new	Technophile	Too lazy to print out paper ¹
Using ideas from MBA	Engineers like toys	

¹ The intended meaning was clarified as “aims for paperless classroom”.

The feedback from my peers was accurate. I enjoy experimenting, I maximise the use of technology to inspire students to harness its power to learn languages, and I try to be efficient by drawing on my managerial background. It appears that although I created an evidence-based TPS, the underlying reasons for some actions were not actually evidence-based. I had succumbed to the introspection illusion [51], a cognitive bias in which people believe they are able to understand their own motivations for choices of action. My own personal predilections were more central to my behaviour than expected.

The peer debrief was the most illuminating stage and showed how easy it was for researcher bias to affect results. The hidden motivator for some of my actions appeared to be a set of personal values or principles. Values may affect both personal and professional domains; these values may be unwavering or may fluctuate. The effect of these values can explain the discrepancies between the justification of my actions and the comments I received from my colleagues.

To understand my teaching philosophy more fully, these values needed to be identified. After reviewing the literature on values in education [67–70], I began the process of uncovering the set of values that influence my teaching practices. Brainstorming, selecting, classifying, and rewording were harnessed to identify the underlying values or primary drivers of my teaching behaviour. The resultant values were expressed using abstract nouns in conjunction with slogans to reduce lexical ambiguity (see Table 8).

Table 8. Values and associated slogans.

Value	Slogan
Integrity	“zero distortion between words and action”
Inspiration	“spurring students into action”
Innovation	“trying out novel ideas, always experimenting”
Integration	“mixing management, computer science, education, and language research”

5. Discussion

Professional development in teaching often follows a two-stage process: first mastering the practical skills and techniques, then studying the underlying theories and principles. In the context of English Language Teaching to Adults in the United Kingdom, this progression can be exemplified by qualifications such as an introductory certificate, (e.g., CELTA) and a more advanced diploma (e.g., DELTA). Certificate-qualified teachers are expected to be able to deliver effective classes but may not be able to justify the activities that they carry out, while diploma-qualified teachers should be able to explain the choices made with reference to underlying theories. The process of creating an evidence-based TPS served in a similar manner. The action statements describe how teaching is conducted, while the addition of the reasons and references forces consideration of the theoretical and empirical evidence behind each teaching choice, ensuring that the practice is not only practical but also pedagogically justifiable.

The reciprocal interaction between teaching practice, personal values, beliefs, and research evidence forms the core of an effective educational philosophy that can be codified as a teaching philosophy statement. The symbiotic relationship between these different aspects results in the evolution of teaching philosophies in response to new insights, experiences, and technological advancements. One such example is the impact of Large Language Models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT and Gemini, on language learners. Students who, until recently, submitted error-ridden prose in basic language, can now submit beautifully crafted sentences. However, the challenge now is to ensure that the use of LLMs boosts rather than bypasses learning.

As educators, it is imperative that our teaching philosophies reflect our actual teaching practices while being grounded in our core values, which include but are not limited to our beliefs. This alignment ensures a deeper sense of coherence and authenticity in the educational approach. When teaching philosophies align with real-world practices, they enhance self-awareness and enable informed and reflective decision making. Additionally, this alignment helps educators to build credibility with students and colleagues, demonstrating that their teaching strategies are founded in well-considered beliefs and evidence-based practices. Ultimately, aligning teaching philosophy with practice supports professional growth, reinforces commitment to educational goals, and contributes to a more reflective and effective teaching environment.

In addition to training and knowledge of the underpinning educational theories, approaches, methods, and techniques, our intrinsic values guide our decision-making processes and resultant actions. These values are deeply interconnected and imbue every aspect of teaching practice, influencing how educators interact with students, design lessons, and implement educational strategies. However, these values are not immutable. They evolve as educators engage with new teaching practices, learn with and from our students, and incorporate findings based on the latest scholarly work. Recognising the interconnectedness of these values is crucial, as it allows us to uncover and examine the underlying principles that shape our actions. By doing so, teachers not only enhance their self-awareness but also ensure that their teaching practices are continually refined and aligned with their evolving teaching philosophy. This reflective process ultimately leads to a more authentic approach to education, benefiting both teachers and students.

Evidence, obtained from published research, such as journal articles and conference proceedings, also changes over time. A simple example taken from the field of chemistry is

the number of states of matter. At school, I learned that there were three states of matter, gas, liquid, and solid, yet students are now taught that there are four states of matter, since plasma is included as a state. Research continues to promulgate new theories and new ideas in the fields of education, linguistics, language teaching, and educational technology, all of which impact my teaching. Evidence continues to change, and so teachers need to keep abreast of the latest developments.

The integration of technological advancements into teaching and learning practices, as noted by Beatty, Leigh, and Dean [71], highlights the necessity of a teaching philosophy that is responsive to the digital age. The advent of LLMs and digital translation tools, such as Google Translate and DeepL, has revolutionised language teaching and learning, demonstrating the potential of technology to impact educational outcomes. However, it is vital that these tools are integrated in a manner that complements and enriches the educational experience, rather than diminishing the role of the educator or undermining the value of direct human interaction.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, I was able to create a tabular TPS that linked my actions in the classroom with a justification of each action that was, in turn, linked to the research literature. This TPS can be viewed as a living document [27], which describes teaching synchronically. Adopting a more pedagogic perspective, Ratnapradipa and Abrams [72] portray the TPS as a roadmap through which educators can identify pedagogical strengths and weaknesses (p. 39).

My evidence-based teaching philosophy statement draws upon a wide range of references within the interlinked fields of education and applied linguistics. Yet the reasons attributed to the actions provided only a partial picture of my teaching, since it became obvious during the peer debrief that personal predilections were at play. Despite my desire to prove that all of my actions as a teacher were based on research, it did not turn out to be the case. I was unable to escape from the fact that “teaching is a value-laden activity” [73]. Although I could justify my choices using the literature, the guiding force for some decisions was a set of values rather than evidence-based practices. This was in line with many of the teaching philosophies I had read, the difference being the starting point: I aimed to create an evidenced-based teaching philosophy, while the ones I read started from the vantage point of a set of beliefs, i.e., a value-based TPS.

The quest was for an evidence-based teaching philosophy, but the final TPS is a truer representation of what guides my behaviour as an academic and a teacher: an evidence-based teaching philosophy that is fully aligned with my teaching practice and acknowledges my teaching values. Through this evidence-based approach, educators can create teaching philosophy statements that are robust, reflective, and practically relevant. Such TPSs bridge the gap between theory and practice, enhancing their effectiveness and ensuring they are meaningful components of teachers’ professional development.

This study contributes to the research literature in three ways. First, it is the first reported study of the use of systematic analysis of introspection to create a TPS. Second, it starts to address the neglected area of grounding teaching philosophies in research evidence. Third, this study provides a framework for other teachers to create their own evidence-based TPSs. This paper echoes calls for grounding actions and behaviours on a solid base of theory and evidence found in the pedagogic and research literature [42].

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Data are contained within the article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Appendix A. Student Handout: Describing Food

Activity 1. Vocabulary. Tick the types of food you like.

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> sweet | <input type="checkbox"/> sour | <input type="checkbox"/> bitter | <input type="checkbox"/> salty | <input type="checkbox"/> spicy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bland | <input type="checkbox"/> rich | <input type="checkbox"/> oily | <input type="checkbox"/> greasy | <input type="checkbox"/> healthy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> crunchy | <input type="checkbox"/> chewy | <input type="checkbox"/> sticky | <input type="checkbox"/> crispy | <input type="checkbox"/> smelly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> delicious | <input type="checkbox"/> tasty | <input type="checkbox"/> disgusting | <input type="checkbox"/> cheap | <input type="checkbox"/> expensive |

Activity 2. Drill. Describe these foods, e.g., Sugar is sweet. Lemons are . . .

- | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. sugar | 2. coffee | 3. fish sauce | 4. chilli peppers | 5. rice soup |
| 6. lemons | 7. KFC | 8. fried bacon | 9. Thai food | 10. durian |

Activity 3. Common questions. Ask and answer these questions.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. What kind of food do you like? | I like Thai food |
| 2. Which Thai food do you like the most? | I love green curry |
| 3. What does it taste like? | It's spicy and a little sweet |
| 4. What's it made from? | The main ingredients are . . . and . . . |

Activity 4. Question, Answer and Response. Read, and then practise the dialogues.

There are four common responses to open questions, namely: sound, copy, comment and follow-up question.

Question	What kind of food do you like?	What's your favourite dish?
Answer	I like Thai food.	I love Mama noodles.
Response	Sound	Oh,
	Copy	Thai food.
	Comment	Me too.
Follow-up question	What's your favourite dish?	How often do you have them?

Activity 5. Pair work or group work.

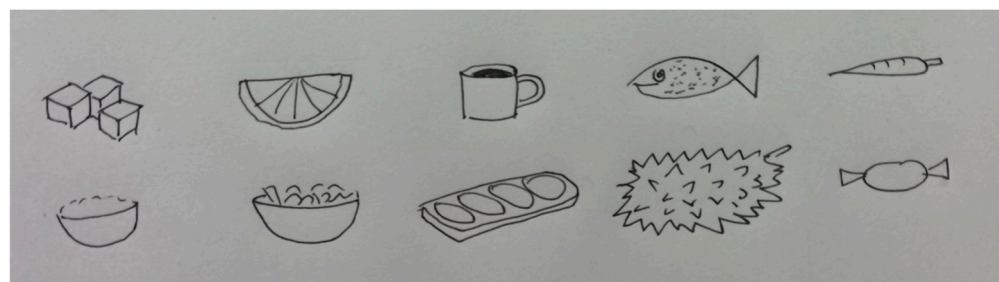
In pairs or threes, discuss your tastes in food. Show interest by using all four types of response every time.

Activity 6. Question time.

Ask your teacher about his or her taste in food. Find out which foods he or she is familiar with. Introduce some special dishes to him or her.

Appendix B. Brief Lesson Plan

Activity 1. Use simple line drawings on board to elicit adjectives.



Activity 2. Use pictures as prompts for sentences like:

- Sugar is sweet.
- Lemon is sour.
- Coffee is bitter.
- Fish sauce is salty.

Teacher points to prompt image on board, students create sentence.

Students work in open pairs nominated by the teacher.

Students work in closed pairs with their partner to say all sentences.

- Activity 3.** Use dialogue build for each of the four questions.
Practice each question and answer in turn.
Then practice full dialogue with whole class.
Then practice in pairs.
Encourage students to improvise.
- Activity 4.** Practice responses with whole class one by one.
Practice in groups with each person saying only one response.
e.g., in groups of 4 students.
Students change roles to ensure they practice a variety of responses.

Student 1 Question	What kind of food do you like?
Student 2 Answer	I like Thai food.
Student 3 Response: sound	Oh,
Student 4 Response: copy	Thai food.
Student 1 Response: comment	Me too.
Student 2 Response: follow-up Q	What's your favourite dish?
Student 3 Next Question	...

- Activity 5.** Collect examples of common errors to provide feedback to whole class.
Put selection of common errors on the board.
Get students to work in pairs to identify, correct and explain the errors.
Provide feedback as necessary.
- Activity 6.** Use opportunity to get students to recall new vocabulary.

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