

# Determination of the Content of Teachers' Presentism through a Web-Based Delphi Method

Tsai-Hsiu Lin

**Abstract**—Presentism is one of the orientations of teachers' teaching culture. However, there are few researchers to explore it in Taiwan. The objective of this study is to establish an expert-based determination of the content of teachers' presentism in Taiwan. The author reviewed the works of Jackson, Lortie, and Hargreaves and employed Hargreaves' three forms of teachers' presentism as a framework to design the questionnaire of this study. The questionnaire of teachers' presentism comprised of 42 statements. A three-round web-based Delphi survey was proposed to 14 participants (two teacher educators, two educational administrators, three school principals, and seven schoolteachers), 13 participants (92.86%) completed the three-rounds of the study. The participants were invited to indicate the importance of each statement. The Delphi study used means and standard deviation to present information concerning the collective judgments of respondents. Finally, the author obtained consensual results for 67% (28/42). However, the outcome of this study could be the result of identifying a series of general statements rather than an in-depth exposition of the topic.

**Keywords**—Delphi Technique, teachers' presentism, sociology of teaching, teaching culture.

## I. INTRODUCTION

EDUCATION is a long-term national plan. It takes much longer to educate a person than to grow a tree. Both these thoughts are deeply rooted in the heart of Chinese culture. However, the education empowerment projects initiated by government have been hurried to demonstrate effectiveness. Moreover, we justify whether a teacher is teaching well or a student studying successfully by their immediate performance. Thus, there is a strong atmosphere of presentism. According to Lortie [1], presentism is a kind of teaching orientations. However, there are few studies on it. The purpose of this study is to explore and construct the content of teachers' presentism using the Delphi method.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Aside from Lortie [1] and Hargreaves [2]-[4], few authors have addressed teachers' presentism. Jackson's concept of immediacy [5] is similar to Lortie's presentism. Thus, this study explored the works of Lortie, Hargreaves, and Jackson.

### A. Jackson's Immediacy

The nature of classroom life is pressing and insistent for teachers, who are responsible for organizing, orchestrating, and reacting to the needs and demands, vagaries, and vicissitudes of large groups of energetic children gathered together in one

place [1], [2].

Jackson discussed immediacy in chapter 4, "teachers' views" of his book *Life in Classrooms* [5]. Jackson was astonished that the excellent elementary teachers he interviewed did not view the students' standardized test scores as reflections of their teaching nor did they view the standardized test scores as sources of satisfaction. In contrast, they derived satisfaction from their students' responses in the classroom. For example, the interviewer asked teachers how they knew how to teach well. A grade 8 teacher answered that it was by watching the students' faces. A grade 4 teacher answered that it was by listening to the students. A grade 5 teacher expressed that it was an easy question, and that there were problems when the students dozed off in the classroom.

Jackson wondered why schooling was focused on long-term, future education goals, considering that teachers paid attention to students' immediate feedback in the classroom, and confirmed students' learning by observing their facial expressions or body language; he wondered about the discrepancy between the education goal and the teachers' immediacy. In fact, teachers could do both well. However, Jackson found teachers felt anxiety over whether they were teaching well or not.

In summary, Jackson's immediacy is a kind of here and now approach in classroom interaction. Such immediacy makes teachers' work varied and exciting.

### B. Lortie's Presentism

Jackson's observations convinced Lortie that classroom teachers make hundreds of decisions daily; probability is low that an experienced colleague will be present for anything but a small fraction of the novice teacher's decision-making [1], [2].

Lortie [1] linked presentism to teachers' careers being "front-loaded." Because teachers' salaries change little over the course of their teaching career, they have little incentive to innovate. Thus, it is not necessary for them to collaborate to build a stronger technical culture, and they are encouraged to pursue individualism.

Moreover, because teachers' salaries remain fairly constant, their satisfaction is derived from their students in the present. Teachers gain satisfaction from students' immediate responses; it is a type of psychological reward. However, because classroom teaching is constantly changing, it is difficult for teachers to feel complete mastery; they therefore focus simply on the present and do not consider the future.

Another factor enhancing teachers' presentism is the nature of teaching work, which involves breaking instruction into short units. Teachers may feel gratification upon completion of each short task. This makes them lose sight of the goal of

Tsai-Hsiu Lin is with the Department of Education, National Taichung University of Education, Taichung, Taiwan, TW 40302, ROC (e-mail: lintsaihsu@yahoo.com.tw).

education.

In summary, Lortie's idea of presentism was derived from the "front-loaded" nature of teachers' careers and the special nature of teaching work.

### *C. Hargreaves's Adaptive and Addictive Presentism*

Hargreaves insisted that presentism was an important factor of teaching culture, and identified three forms of presentism: endemic, adaptive, and addictive- to investigate its effects on teaching.

#### 1. Endemic Presentism

Hargreaves criticized Lortie's work on presentism for inadequately addressing its effects on teaching culture [2]. Based upon Jackson's observations and Lortie's interviews, Hargreaves gained data on endemic presentism from 14 Raising Achievement/Transforming Learning (RATL) schools. He found that teachers and leaders in RATL schools "alter the culture of presentism by creating and co-ordinating long-term, medium-term and short-term efforts to raise achievement and transform learning, through networked school improvement" [3]. However, the persistence of presentism appeared more manifest than ever.

Hargreaves found that teachers and leaders in RATL schools were willing to change, but tended to select programs with short-term objectives. This was not an effect of the endemic presentism described by Lortie; it was attributable to two other aspects of presentism, namely adaptive and addictive presentism.

#### 2. Adaptive Presentism

Teachers were expected to respond to increasing pressures and comply with multiple innovations under educational conditions [4]. Hargreaves [3] found that adaptive presentism was characterized in three ways:

- 1) Innovations and simultaneous initiatives rewarded immediate results, powerfully influencing teachers and their schools towards the present time and short-term goals.
- 2) The effects of adaptive presentism were worsened by a funding structure and intervention process that typified many policy initiatives and their short-term cycles for implementation.
- 3) Educational reform focused short-term, performance-driven, and results-oriented improvement, and consequently, short-term and calculated adaptations or coping strategies can easily become accepted culture.

In sum, adaptive presentism describes the phenomenon by which teachers are expected to respond to reform, but adapt reluctantly to unwanted educational changes.

#### 3. Addictive Presentism

Addictive presentism, according to Hargreaves [2], is characterized by teachers' unquestioning and enthusiastic commitment to delivering more efficient, customized, or even personalized versions of agendas for change developed by others. Teachers did not re-evaluate the moral aims of the agendas or develop transformational change agendas of their

own.

Hargreaves [2] found that some teachers were more collaboratively involved in data-informed improvement and education. However, addiction to the immediate, the short-term, and the here-and-now might explain the inverse relationship between individualism and presentism. Addictive presentism additionally led to greater conservatism in teaching and educational change.

In sum, addictive presentism describes the phenomenon by which teachers do not review educational goals and when implementing short-term programs and strategies.

### *D. Dimensions of Teachers' Presentism in This Study*

For Lortie, presentism was an endemic feature of teaching resulting from organization of teaching work and the way teachers derive their rewards from it. Jackson referred to this concept as immediacy. Hargreaves, building on the work of Jackson and Lortie, identified three aspects of presentism: endemic, adaptive and addictive. The present author employed Hargreaves' three dimensions of teacher presentism, and identified the sub-dimensions of each. The sub-dimensions identified for endemic presentism are classroom interaction, individual students, and pedagogical knowledge. The sub-dimensions identified for adaptive presentism are volunteer participation and outside pressure. The sub-dimensions identified for addictive presentism are short-term strategy and educational aim.

#### 1. Endemic Presentism

There are three sub-dimensions of endemic presentism. They are classroom interaction, individual students, and practical knowledge. The definitions are as follows:

- 1) Classroom interaction: when teachers and students interact, teachers are more concerned with the students' immediate performance and reactions than their learning or other long-term goals.
- 2) Individual students: when teachers and students interact, individual students are the root factor for teachers in determining the success or failure of their own teaching.
- 3) Practical knowledge: teachers hope to quickly gain practical knowledge related to on-site teaching, dislike acquiring theoretical knowledge, and criticize the ineffectiveness of general teacher professional development programs (or advocate for the effectiveness of other unofficial programs).

#### 2. Adaptive Presentism

There are two sub-dimensions of adaptive presentism. These are volunteer participation and outside pressure. The definitions are as follows:

- 1) *Volunteer participation*: teachers are proactive in responding to requests from outside the school, such as requests for time-consuming paperwork and other increasingly tedious tasks.
- 2) *Outside pressure*: teachers respond passively to request from outside the school, such as requests or time-consuming paperwork and other increasingly tedious tasks.

### 3. Addictive Presentism

There are two sub-dimensions of addictive presentism. These are short-term strategies and educational aim. The definitions are as follows:

- 1) *Short-term strategies*: with respect to new proposals and plans, teachers pay special attention to flexibility and quick adaptation, but neglect stability and accuracy.
- 2) *Educational aim*:
  - a. teachers accept all new proposals or plans without questioning whether they fulfill the moral objectives and long-term goals of education.
  - b. teachers adhere to the reform plans of others without examining their moral objectives or proposing modified plans.
  - c. teachers enthusiastically implement customized and seemingly effective reform programs without critical examination.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. The Modified Delphi Method

A modified Delphi method was adopted for this study. The Delphi method is “a survey technique, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative processes that draws on the opinions of selected experts and aims to obtain group consensus on a topic” [6]. The Delphi method traditionally begins with an open-ended questionnaire; however, an acceptable and common modification of the Delphi process is to use a structured questionnaire, as was employed in Round 1 of this study based upon an extensive review of the literature [6]. In this study, teachers’ presentism was an unfamiliar concept to teachers and educators, but they had experienced it and their opinions were important in constructing its contents. Thus, the researcher summarized the literature to design the questionnaire for Round 1.

### B. Questionnaire

Based upon the works of P.W. Jackson, D.C. Lortie, and A. Hargreaves, the researcher employed Hargreaves’ three dimensions of teachers’ presentism: endemic presentism, adaptive presentism, and addictive presentism. The researcher collected items (or statements) from a Likert-scale type questionnaire on teacher culture, educational reform, principal leadership, and so on. These were then assigned to appropriate sub-dimensions. Subsequently, the researcher invited two colleagues to choose and revise the assigned statements. Finally, the researcher checked whether each statement satisfied the definition of each sub-dimension, and revised it. Ultimately, questionnaire included 42 statements to be used as items in Round 1 (see Table I).

Endemic presentism comprised three sub-dimensions. The five statements concerning classroom interaction focused on the teachers’ evaluation of their teaching effect through interaction with students in the classroom. The seven statements concerning individual students focused on teachers taking pride in their work based on the achievement of individual (not all) students. The six statements concerning

pedagogical knowledge focused on teachers paying more attention to students’ responses in the classroom than to building their teaching techniques.

TABLE I  
DISTRIBUTION OF ITEMS (ROUND 1)

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Items
endemic presentism	classroom interaction	5
	individual students	7
adaptive presentism	pedagogical knowledge	6
	volunteer participation	6
addictive presentism	outside pressure	8
	short-term strategy	5
	educational aim	5
Total		42

Adaptive presentism comprised two sub-dimensions. The six statements concerning volunteer participation focused on asking teachers to respond to education reform they perform actively or otherwise. The eight statements concerning outside pressure focused on teachers responding passively to educational reform.

Addictive presentism comprised two sub-dimensions: short-term strategy and educational aim. These two sub-dimensions are similar to the two faces of a coin. The five statements concerning short-term strategy focused on whether teachers were more willing to take on short-term projects than long-term projects. The five statements concerning educational aim also involve a kind of short-term vision; however, they focus on both the targets set by individual teachers and long-term education goals.

The researcher used a Google form to edit the questionnaire. According to Giannarou and Zervas [7], a 5-point scale is most common when investigating level of agreement. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether participants agreed that each statement was important for the sub-dimension. Basically, it was a study to investigate level of agreement, and as such followed Giannarou and Zervas’s finding, with the questionnaire designed as a 5-point Likert scale. However, each item ranges not from disagreement to agreement, but from very unimportant to very important. Each item also included a blank space for participants to express their opinions, including revising the item or making other comments. In addition to the question items, the questionnaire included a letter from the researcher and definitions of all the sub-dimensions.

### C. Sample

A purposeful sample that selected “information rich” participants was employed to gain expert opinions on the study topic [8]. Participants were selected if they were knowledgeable, could provide valuable input in the process, and were interested in participating [8]. As described by Giannarou and Zervas [6], “A sample of between 10 to 15 people can yield sufficient results and assure validity.” This study included 14 participants, all experts related to teaching: two teacher educators, two educational administrators, three school principals, and seven school teachers. The participants demonstrate heterogeneity in a homogeneous group.

#### D. Data Collection

Data were collected using a Google form electronic questionnaire [9], [10]. Participants were not made aware of the content of other participants' responses. After each round, the results were analyzed by the researcher and sent back in the form of another questionnaire. The participants were shown only the combined results, not the statistical analysis or detailed results.

In Round 1, every participant was invited to fill out the questionnaire [9] using the Google form. After they submitted their electronic form, the researcher reviewed their feedback, revised some of the existing items, and added new items for Round 2.

After Round 2, the author did not include participants' previously submitted personal answers in the Round 3 questionnaire.

#### E. Data Analysis

"The major statistics used in Delphi studies are measures of central tendency (means, median, and mode) and level of dispersion (standard deviation and inter-quartile range) in order to present information concerning the collective judgments of respondents. Although the uses of median and mode are favored" [6]. In this study, because of the Likert-type questionnaire format, mean and standard deviation were used.

### IV. RESULTS

#### A. Round 1 Survey Results

The Round 1 Delphi survey took place from November 10–18, 2017. A total of 14 experts responded to Round 1 of the Delphi survey (response rate=100%).

Following Round 1, the researcher retained items with a mean score greater than 3.75. Some of the retained items' statements were modified according to the experts' feedback. The researcher also added new statements based the experts' opinions that were helpful and suitable for the sub-dimension. The outcomes of Round 1 and the modifications made to the Round 2 questionnaire are shown in Table II.

TABLE II  
OUTCOMES OF ROUND 1 AND ITEMS FOR ROUND 2

Dimensions	Round 1 Questionnaire	Outcome of Round 1	Round 2 Questionnaire
<b>endemic presentism</b>			
classroom interaction	5	4	4 (4 revised)
individual students	7	7	7 (3 revised)
pedagogical knowledge	6	5	5 (2 revised)
<b>adaptive presentism</b>			
volunteer participation	6	3	5 (2 added)
outside pressure	8	5	6 (2 revised, 1 added)
<b>addictive presentism</b>			
short-term strategy	5	4	5 (3 revised, 1 added)
educational aim	5	4	5 (1 added)
Total	42	32	37

#### B. Round 2 Survey Results

Round 2 of the Delphi survey took place from November 24–December 2, 2017. A total of 14 experts responded to Round 2 (response rate=100%).

The researcher retained those items with a mean score

greater than 3.75 and a standard deviation lower than 1.00, a total of 32 items. For the Round 3 questionnaire, because revision or addition of items would take away from the objectives of the study, the researcher used the retained items from the Round 2 questionnaire. The outcomes of Round 2 and the Round 3 questionnaire's items are shown in Table III.

TABLE III  
OUTCOMES OF ROUND 2 AND ITEMS FOR ROUND 3

Dimensions	Round 2 Questionnaire	Outcome of Round 2	Round 3 Questionnaire
<b>endemic presentism</b>			
classroom interaction	4	3	3
individual students	7	6	6
pedagogical knowledge	5	5	5
<b>adaptive presentism</b>			
volunteer participation	5	4	4
outside pressure	6	3	3
<b>addictive presentism</b>			
short-term strategy	5	4	4
educational aim	5	5	5
Total	37	29	29

#### C. Round 3 Survey Results

Round 3 of the Delphi survey took place from December 8–12, 2017. Thirteen out of 14 experts responded to Round 3 of the Delphi survey (response rate=92.86%). The researcher deleted only one question, which did not achieve a mean greater than 3.75 and a standard deviation lower than 1.00; no items were added or revised in the Round 3 questionnaire. However, the researcher asked participants to express the reason when their selections differed between Round 2 and Round 3. Other comments were still welcome as well. The outcomes of Round 3 are shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV  
OUTCOMES OF ROUND 3

Dimensions	Round 3 Questionnaire	Outcomes of Round 3
<b>endemic presentism</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>
classroom interaction	3	3
individual students	6	6
pedagogical knowledge	5	5
<b>adaptive presentism</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>
volunteer participation	4	3
outside pressure	3	3
<b>addictive presentism</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
short-term strategy	3	3
educational aim	5	5
Total	29	28

As an outcome of the three rounds of the survey, the means of all items were higher than 3.75. Only one item in the volunteer participation sub-division, which had a standard deviation greater than 1.00, was deleted. Thus, the researcher obtained consensual results for 67% (28/42) of the items (see Table V).

As shown in Table V, the consensual results rate for endemic presentism was 78%, meaning the panel agreed that the teachers in Taiwan focus on classroom practices and take pride in individual students' achievement, but neglect to construct pedagogical knowledge. These results are similar to Lortie's observation. However, on the topic of classroom interaction concerning Jackson's observations that teachers confirm

whether students have learned by observing their body language, there were little consensus, so the rate for classroom interaction was lower.

TABLE V  
RESULTS

Dimensions	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Results	%
<b>endemic presentism</b>	18	-	-	14	
classroom interaction	5	4	3	3	78
individual students	7	7	6	6	
pedagogical knowledge	6	5	5	5	
<b>adaptive presentism</b>	14	-	-	6	
volunteer participation	6	5	4	3	43
outside pressure	8	6	3	3	
<b>addictive presentism</b>	10	-	-	9	
short-term strategy	5	5	4	4	90
educational aim	5	5	5	5	
Total	42	37	29	28	67

% is result/Round 1

The consensual results rate of adaptive presentism is only 43%, it meant there is only a little agreement between the panel that teachers in Taiwan are eager to change and have little outside pressure. These findings are different Hargreaves' observation.

Addictive presentism seemed to be accepted by the panel. Targets are set by individual teachers, and teachers do not consider long-term education goals.

#### V.CONCLUSION

This study showed the feasibility of a web-based Delphi procedure for determining the contents of teachers' presentism. Results showed that teachers' presentism in Taiwan is manifest in endemic and addictive presentism. Teachers focus on classroom practices and are eager to acquire strategies they can use immediately, and thus they neglect the development of pedagogical knowledge. Moreover, teachers set their own targets independently, without heed for the long-term goals of education. Finally, teachers are unwilling to actively participate in empowerment projects outside the schools. They did not feel external pressure from the outside world. Although reform beyond the school may have been vociferous, it seems not to have disturbed the teachers inside the schoolyard. The results of this study could be used for further statistical works aiming to understanding the circumstances of teachers' presentism in Taiwan.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Ministry of Science and technology, Taiwan, ROC through its grants MOST 106-2410-H-142-010-SSS

#### REFERENCES

- [1] D. C. Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago, 1975.
- [2] A. Hargreaves, *The Persistence of Presentism and the Struggle to Secure Lasting Educational Improvement (Professorial Lectures)*. Institute of Education, University of London, 2008.
- [3] A. Hargreaves and D. Shirley, "The persistence of presentism," *Teachers College Record*, vol.111, no.11, pp. 2502-2534, 2009.
- [4] A. Hargreaves, "Presentism, individualism, and conservatism: the legacy of Dan Lortie's Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study," *Curriculum Inquiry*, vol.40 no.1, pp.143-155, 2010.
- [5] P. W. Jackson, *Life in Classrooms*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1968.
- [6] C. Hsu, and B. A. Sandford, "The Delphi technique: Making sense of consensus (A peer-reviewed electronic journal)," *Practical Assessment, Research & T Evaluation*, vol.12, no.10, August, 2007.
- [7] L. Giannarou and E. Zervas, "Using Delphi technique to build consensus in practice," *International Journal of Business Science and Applied Management*, vol.9 no.2, pp.65-82,2014.
- [8] R. Boulkedid, H. Abdoul, M. Loustau, O. Sibony and C. Alberti, "Using and reporting the Delphi Method for selecting healthcare quality indicators: A systematic review," *PLoS One*, vol.6, no.6, e20476. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0020476>. June, 2011.
- [9] S. Moynihan, L. Paakkari, R. Valimaa, and P. Mannix-McNamara, "Teacher competencies in health eEducation: Results of a Delphi study," *PLoS One*, vol.10, no.12, e0143703. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0143703>, December, 2015.
- [10] M. Debin, C. Souty, C. Turbelin, Y. Blanchon, P. Boelle, T. Hanslik, G. Hejblum, Y. Lw Srrat, F. Quintus, the DelfuWeb study group and A. Falchi, "Determination of French influenza outbreaks periods between 1985 and 2011 through a web-based Delphi Method," *BMC Informatics & Decision Making*, vol.13, no.138, <http://www.viomedcentral.com/1472-6974/13/138>, 2011.