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New Zealand and Queensland teachers' conceptions of learning: Transforming more than reproducing

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Abstract

Background: Two major conceptions of learning exist: reproducing new material and transforming material to make meaning. Teachers' understandings of what learning is probably influence their teaching practices and student academic performance. **Aims:** To validate a short scale derived from Tait, Entwistle & McCune's (1998) ASSIST inventory and to determine and compare the strength of agreement New Zealand and Queensland primary and secondary teachers had for both conceptions. **Samples:** Two survey studies with three populations provided valid data: 235 NZ Primary teachers in 2001, and 784 Primary and 614 Secondary Queensland teachers in 2003. A survey of 81 NZ secondary teachers in 2000 did not have enough participants to generate stable estimates. **Methods:** Five items defining learning were administered using a six point, positively-packed agreement rating scale. Data were analysed with MMLE confirmatory factor analysis with Oblimin rotation. Multiple models were compared and results from the best fitting model (CFI and TLI>.90; RMSEA<.08) for all three samples are reported. Cohen's d effect size was used to determine significance of differences in conceptions mean scores. **Results and Conclusions:** Psychometric properties of the two scales were good. Conceptions of learning were structured as two inter-correlated factors related to transforming and reproducing conceptions of learning. All samples agreed more with the transforming than the reproducing conception of learning; however, there were small group differences in mean scores. The response scale and items generated sufficient variation to detect differences in teachers' attitudes towards transforming and reproducing conceptions of learning.

[Link to full text paper pdf \(175KB\)](#)

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