

The Rationale for the Application of Perry’s Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory at the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College

Established in 1988, the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College (CFBC) serves as a community college, offering diverse programs in teacher education, technical studies, vocational studies, hospitality and tourism, health sciences, and general sciences. As a two-year institution, we equip students for the challenges of a four-year university, providing associate degrees in various disciplines. Over the past three decades, CFBC has been a prominent educational force, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for both higher education and the professional realm.

While our original mission focused on nurturing globally competent and well-rounded individuals, recent shifts in regional syllabi, curricula, and global educational norms have altered students' cognitive processes over the past decade. This shift has resulted in noticeable gaps in learning, critical thinking, and the application of knowledge. Concerns about declining grades and slowed intellectual development have permeated discussions from the Board level to departmental meetings.

Recognizing the need for intervention, the application of Perry's Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory emerges as the most promising approach. This strategic shift aligns with our commitment to address the challenges highlighted in recent years and uphold the core principles outlined in our Board Pillars of creating a collegiate culture and 21st century competitive programs fit for context and community as seen in Figure 1.

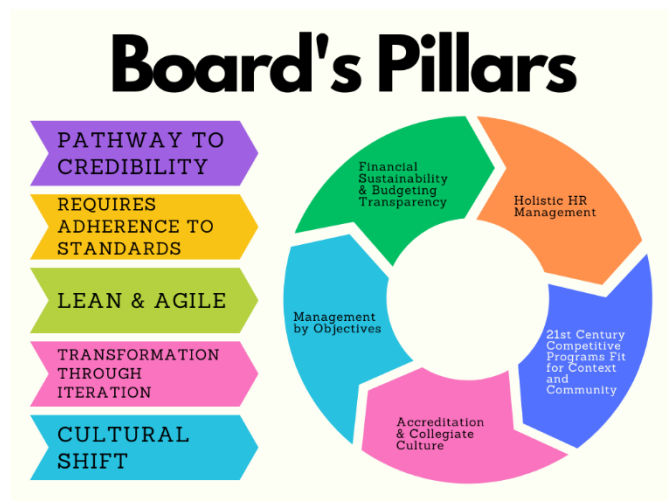


Figure 1

The Theory

The application of this theory aligns seamlessly with CFBC's current Board Pillars. I delved into the theory's foundational context. Originating in the 1950s and 60s, William G. Perry crafted this theory while directing Harvard's Bureau of Study Counsel. His research scrutinized

students' meaning-making and interpretation of the teaching-learning process, leading to the formulation of a developmental continuum with nine static positions as seen in Figure 2.

Category	Position	Description	
Evolving of commitments	Developing Commitment	Commitments expanded or remade in new terms as growth. Balances are developing in the alternation of reflection and action.	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="flex: 1; border-left: 1px solid black; margin: 0 10px;"></div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Highest-order processes</p> <p>↑</p> <p>Lowest-order processes</p> </div> </div>
	Orientation in Implications of Commitment	Implications of commitment realized; tensions between feelings of tentativeness and finality, expansion and narrowing, freedom and constraint, action and reflection	
	Initial Commitment	Acceptance of first commitment or affirmation in self's experience and choices	
Realizing of relativism	Commitment Foreseen	Commitment perceived as a logical necessity for action in real world	
	Relativism (Correlate, Competing or Diffuse)	Relativism perceived as a way of perceiving, analyzing, and evaluating	
	Multiplicity Correlate or Relativism Subordinate	Duality restructured in complex terms – "Anyone has a right to their own opinions"	
Modifying of dualism	Multiplicity Subordinate	Multiplicity perceived with implications – learner does not have all the answers but trusts in authority	
	Multiplicity Pre-legitimate	Multiplicity perceived – "I am right, they are wrong"	
	Basic Duality	World perceived in terms of right vs. wrong	

Figure 2

Aligned with the nine positions are three fundamental concepts embodying distinct phases in the meaning-making process: dualism, multiplicity, and relativism, all underpinned by commitment. Dualism, an initial position, perceives the world in basic dualities, progressing to multiplicity where acknowledgment of knowledge gaps leads to reliance on authoritative figures.

Multiplicity embraces flexibility, recognizing multiple views, fostering independent thinking. Relativism marks a transition recognizing the value of diverse opinions. As students mature, they distinguish between opinions' significance, using relativism to analyze based on facts and evidence. This understanding prepares students for real-world applications. Commitment, the pinnacle, involves ethical choices in a contextual world. Rooted in relativism, students affirm commitments, achieving growth through reflection and action. This balance extends to social choices in politics, relationships, and careers, encompassing both external and subjective dimensions.

Perry's theory, a cognitive structural model, draws from Jean Piaget, supported by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, Tarule's *Women's Ways of Knowing*, King and Kitchener's Reflective Judgment Model, Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development, and Magolda's *Self-authorship*. These theories, grounded in extensive research, collectively inform CFBC's situation, offering reliable frameworks for intellectual and ethical development.

King and Kitchener's Reflective Judgment Model explores how individuals make meaning and solve complex problems. It delineates seven stages of reflective judgment, ranging from simplistic dualism to nuanced contextual relativism. The model highlights cognitive development in resolving uncertainty, incorporating diverse perspectives, and navigating ambiguity, emphasizing intellectual maturation in epistemic reasoning.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development proposes six sequential stages, organized into three main levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Individuals advance through these stages by grappling with moral dilemmas, progressively internalizing more sophisticated ethical principles. Kohlberg emphasizes the role of reasoning and moral reflection in shaping one's moral orientation, highlighting the evolution of moral reasoning across the lifespan.

A SWOT Analysis of Perry's Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory

Strengths:

Perry's theory provides a comprehensive and systematic framework for understanding the intellectual and ethical development of individuals. It delineates nine positions that individuals traverse, offering a nuanced view of cognitive and moral growth. The theory seamlessly integrates cognitive and ethical dimensions, emphasizing the interplay between intellectual development and ethical reasoning. This holistic approach allows educators and researchers to address both cognitive and moral aspects in understanding an individuals' growth. Perry's theory has been widely applied in educational settings, guiding curriculum design and pedagogical strategies. It helps educators tailor their approaches to students' developmental stages, fostering a more effective learning environment. Perry's work is grounded in empirical research conducted during his tenure at Harvard's Bureau of Study Counsel. The theory's foundations in systematic observation and analysis contribute to its credibility and reliability.

Weaknesses:

Critics argue that the initial stages of Perry's model rely on overly simplistic dichotomies, such as the black-and-white thinking associated with dualism. This may oversimplify the complexity of individuals' cognitive and moral processes. The theory's origins and much of its early application were within Western educational contexts. Some scholars critique its limited consideration of cultural variations, suggesting a need for adaptations to encompass diverse cultural perspectives.

Opportunities:

Perry's theory could benefit from integration with other developmental theories and frameworks to provide a more holistic understanding of human development. Combining insights

from various perspectives may enrich its applicability across diverse contexts. Opportunities exist to adapt Perry's theory to different educational levels, professions, and cultural settings. Customizing the model can enhance its relevance and applicability to a broader range of individuals and contexts.

Threats:

The landscape of education has evolved since Perry's initial research. Critics argue that the theory may not fully capture the complexities of modern educational environments, potentially limiting its practicality in contemporary settings. Some scholars have raised ethical concerns about the stages of development outlined in Perry's theory, particularly regarding the implied hierarchy of moral reasoning. Ethical relativism, a key component, has faced criticism for potential implications on moral objectivity.

Critiques:

Scholars have noted a gender bias in Perry's original research, primarily involving male participants. Critics argue that this bias may limit the theory's generalizability to female developmental experiences. Perry's model implies a linear progression through stages, which has been criticized for oversimplifying the non-linear and multifaceted nature of intellectual and ethical development. Critics advocate for more flexible and individualized developmental trajectories.

Despite the weaknesses and critiques, Perry's theory has been extensively used in educational settings to inform curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and faculty development. It helps educators understand and cater to students' diverse cognitive and ethical needs. The model has been applied in professional development programs, guiding individuals in various fields to reflect on their cognitive and ethical development. It offers insights into decision-

making processes and ethical reasoning in professional contexts. Perry's theory serves as a valuable framework for researchers studying intellectual and ethical development. It provides a structured approach for designing studies and analyzing data related to cognitive and moral growth.

Comparison of King and Kitchener's Reflective Judgment Model and Perry's Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory:

Similarities:

Both theories center on cognitive development, specifically how individuals progress in their ability to think critically and make meaning of complex issues. They share a focus on understanding the stages through which individuals navigate intellectual challenges. Both models propose a sequential progression of stages. Both highlight a developmental continuum, emphasizing transitions between stages. Both theories integrate ethical considerations into their developmental frameworks. Perry's model explicitly addresses the ethical dimension of decision-making, while King and Kitchener's model underscores the importance of reflective judgment in ethical reasoning.

Differences:

Perry's theory broadly encompasses intellectual and ethical development, whereas King and Kitchener's model specifically emphasizes reflective judgment. Perry's model includes a broader spectrum of cognitive and moral development, while the Reflective Judgment Model narrows its focus to the reflective aspect. Perry's model has found applications in various contexts, including education and professional development. It addresses cognitive and ethical development across diverse settings. King and Kitchener's model, with its specific emphasis on reflective judgment, is often applied in educational contexts, especially in understanding how individuals make meaning in academic settings. Perry's theory places a significant emphasis on relativism as

a crucial stage in intellectual and ethical development. In contrast, King and Kitchener's model, while acknowledging the importance of considering multiple perspectives, does not explicitly highlight relativism as a distinct stage.

Comparison of Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development and Perry's Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory:

Similarities:

Both theories acknowledge the intertwining of cognitive and ethical development, recognizing that individuals' moral reasoning is linked with broader intellectual growth. Both theories initially present a linear progression, suggesting that individuals move through stages or positions in a specified order. However, both acknowledge the potential for non-linear development based on individual experiences.

Differences:

Kohlberg primarily focuses on the development of moral reasoning and ethical decision-making. He emphasizes principles such as justice and fairness. Perry however encompasses both intellectual and ethical development. Perry's model extends beyond moral reasoning to include broader cognitive processes and the construction of meaning. Kohlberg concentrates specifically on the moral domain, exploring how individuals approach ethical dilemmas and make moral decisions. Perry integrates cognitive and ethical dimensions, examining how individuals construct meaning, navigate intellectual challenges, and address ethical considerations in decision-making. Kohlberg emphasizes the development of principles of justice and ethical norms, particularly in the post-conventional stages. Perry highlights the role of relativism in ethical reasoning, emphasizing the importance of recognizing diverse perspectives and understanding that individuals may have different but valid viewpoints.

Subjective Strengths and Weaknesses

Given the imperative for intervention at CFBC, Perry's Theory emerges as highly relevant. Offering a comprehensive framework, it seamlessly integrates cognitive and ethical dimensions, aligning with our Board Pillars. Despite potential challenges due to institutional silos and varied educational levels, the theory's strengths in guiding intellectual and ethical development far outweigh potential obstacles. Balancing merits against challenges will likely yield significant impact.

Student Development Using the Theory

Assessing student development with Perry's Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory involves examining their progress along the continuum. Initial steps include identifying their positions and evaluating cognitive reasoning through surveys, assignments and group therapy activities. Assessing ethical reasoning involves recognizing diverse opinions and contextual understanding. Integration with academic performance is emphasized, reiterating exercises used in class discussions -

<https://westernonline.wiu.edu/d2l/le/219520/discussions/threads/1280362/View>. This opportunity enabled me to examine how students' intellectual and ethical development aligns with academic achievements, critical thinking, and information synthesis. Using these assessments, a continuous feedback mechanism will be implemented at CFBC. Regular reassessment will permit adjustments and address emerging challenges in students' growth. Ensuring alignment with The Board Pillars, all assessments will be synchronized with institutional goals, reflecting the mission for a comprehensive education.

One Scenario that can be presented is Matt, a first year student, faced two disciplinary issues last semester, involving inappropriate sexual advances towards fellow male students. The

Student Services Unit and the disciplinary committee opt to assess Matt using Perry's theory. It has been revealed that he is in the perceived multiplicity stage where he has clearly stated that he does not understand why he was being disciplined, "they" clearly over reacted and should be flattered by his advances. A comprehensive evaluation will guide him through the remaining positions on the continuum, advising him based on the results. Matt is then educated on appropriate behavior and urged to reflect on his actions. Continuous feedback, including input from administration and faculty, shapes his improvement journey, providing ongoing opportunities for reflection and growth.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the robust framework provided by Perry's Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory serves as a valuable tool for enhancing student performance and institutional development at the CFBC. Its comprehensive approach, integrating cognitive and ethical dimensions, aligns seamlessly with our educational goals. By utilizing Perry's theory, institutions like ours can foster intellectual growth, encourage ethical reasoning, and create a foundation for holistic student development, ultimately contributing to a more enriched and dynamic educational environment and society.

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