

Conceptualizing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

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In the early stages of ISU's involvement in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, various groups of faculty members invested considerable thought and discussion toward determining a suitable definition for the scholarship of teaching and learning. The result was this definition: "Systematic reflection on teaching and learning made public." While "teaching and learning" has been a phrase few on campus have had difficulty operationalizing, conceptualizing "systematic reflection" and "made public" have been more problematic.

Faculty and administrators at the other 200 or so colleges and universities also participating in the Carnegie Academy have no doubt experienced similar confusion regarding the meaning of scholarship of teaching and learning. Carolin Kreber, Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta, has noted it will continue to be difficult to promote, demonstrate, assess, and institutionalize this enterprise as long as academicians fail to arrive at a shared conceptualization. To advance the goal of shared meaning, Kreber conducted a Delphi survey of noted academics of excellent reputation for their scholarly work on postsecondary teaching and learning and faculty evaluation, nearly all of whom have published explicitly on the scholarship of teaching. While most of the panelists for the study were from the United States, a fourth of the group were from abroad. The results of the study, along with essays by a number of the panelists and other experts, are featured in a recent issue of *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* entitled "Scholarship revisited: Perspectives on the Scholarship of Teaching" (No. 86, Summer 2001). Key findings of the study, as well as highlights of several essays in the issue, are summarized below.

Panelists participating in Kreber's Delphi study demonstrated high agreement and strong group consensus that the following were important features and/or components of the scholarship of teaching (pgs. 15-16):

- The scholarship of teaching involves constant reflection of the process and outcomes of teaching and learning and acknowledges the contextual nature of teaching.
- People practicing the scholarship of teaching focus on change; they develop their practice through a cycle of action, reflection, and improvement.

Michael B. Paulsen's essay examines the relationship between research and the scholarship of teaching, with an emphasis on the central role of the creation of pedagogical content knowledge. He elaborates on these features and/or components for which the panelists had high agreement and strong group consensus regarding the scholarship of teaching and learning (pgs. 2-27). (Paulsen is professor of education in the Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations at the University of New Orleans.)

- The conduct of research on teaching and learning (less formal and formal) contributes to the advancement of pedagogical content knowledge and presents forms of the scholarship of discovery that overlap with, and are part of, the scholarship of teaching.

- The scholarship of teaching has characteristics that make it different from other forms of scholarship, but it also has characteristics that encompass the dimensions of the scholarship of discovery, integration, and application.
- Individuals practicing the scholarship of teaching investigate the relationship between teaching and learning.
- Engaging in classroom research is important but is not sufficient for the scholarship of teaching.
- Learning to pose questions about teaching and learning is a starting point in the scholarship of teaching; gathering evidence, interpreting it, sharing results, and changing practice continue the process.
- The scholarship of teaching entails a public account of some or all of the following aspects of teaching: vision, design, interaction, outcomes, and analysis, in a manner that can be peer reviewed and used by members of one's community.
- The scholarship of teaching is an activity that, in the context of promoting student learning, meets these criteria: requires high levels of discipline-related expertise, breaks new ground and is innovative, can be replicated and elaborated upon, can be documented, can be peer reviewed, and has significance or impact.
- A key feature in the scholarship of teaching is having an understanding of how people learn, knowing what practices are most effective, and having knowledge about what we have learned about teaching.

Laurie Richlin, president of the International Alliance of Teacher Scholars, director of the Regional Lilly Conferences on College and University Teaching, and executive editor of the *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, shares her perceptions regarding the distinction between scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching in her essay. Providing a preface for a diagram illustrating what she calls the cycle of scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching, she has this to say: “Scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching are closely interrelated. However, they differ in both their intent and product. Because both scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching are vital to the life of the academy, it is important to clarify and operationalize each of them. In my view, the purpose of scholarly teaching is to impact the activity of teaching and the resulting learning, whereas the scholarship of teaching results in a formal, peer-reviewed communication in the appropriate media or venue, which then becomes part of the knowledge base of teaching and learning in higher education” (p. 38).

The cycle of scholarly teaching involves an orderly progression of these actions on part of the teacher: Observing and noting a performance problem experienced by either a teacher or a student, or perhaps both, documenting baseline performance, consulting the literature with regard to the problem at hand, identifying a suitable intervention and apply it, conducting systematic observation of resulting performance, documenting observations, analyzing resulting data, and comparing to baseline data. To become intertwined with the cycle of scholarship of teaching, the teacher solicits initial peer review of his/her efforts at scholarly teaching. Should the results be deemed significant and positive, the teacher can decide to engage in the scholarship of teaching by continuing onward

to identify key issues, synthesize results, place the results into context of knowledge base, prepare a manuscript, submit for further peer review, and hopefully find a venue for disseminating the findings through publication, perhaps even presentation as well. The outcome of this cycle is the expansion of the knowledge base of teaching and learning.

This effort to distinguish between teaching in a scholarly manner and being a scholar of teaching is continued in an essay written by Ronald Smith, director of the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching at the City University of Hong Kong. Regarding this, he says, “Perhaps the essential difference between being a scholarly teacher and a scholar of teaching (at any level of development) is the degree of interest in the wider implications and impact of the results of inquiries into one's practice” (p. 76). “In order to contribute to the scholarship of teaching, the results of one's inquiries into teaching and learning must, at a minimum, be public to some audience, permanent in some way, and judged to be scholarly by some community of practice” (p. 71).

In his essay, Smith also highlights three different perspectives on how one develops expertise, including expertise in scholarly teaching as well as expertise in being a scholar of teaching. One perspective to which Smith gives attention is that formulated by Dreyfus and Dreyfus. In their view, one becomes an expert by first becoming a novice, then an advanced beginner, followed by then becoming competent and proficient. For example, someone who has finally developed expertise, or has become an expert, is totally engaged in skillful performance, does not normally think about a given situation or what to do, just does it. Applied to scholarly teaching, one intuitively recognizes situations and responds automatically based on previous situations, without apparent thought. Applied to the scholarship of teaching, one intuitively recognizes important areas or problems to investigate and the appropriate way to study or experiment (Dreyfus and Dreyfus as cited in Smith, 2001, p. 74.)

In another essay by Cynthia Weston and Lynn McAlpine, both associated with the Center for University Teaching and Learning at McGill University in Montreal, a three-phase continuum of growth toward the scholarship of teaching is discussed. Phase One is characterized by an intention to grow and develop knowledge about one's own teaching. This begins a process of reducing the conceptual isolation of teaching from the primary scholarly work of the disciplines and departments. Phase Two entails a transition from one only thinking about his or her own teaching to discussing it with colleagues in the discipline. During this phase, instructors increasingly demonstrate responsibility for enhancing the value of teaching within their departments and among their colleagues. Phase Three is “characterized by an intention to share expertise and develop scholarly knowledge about teaching that has a significant impact on the institution and the field. In this phase, professors are actively and intentionally integrating teaching and the scholarship of discovery to become scholars of teaching” (p. 90). Among the activities that could be undertaken during this phase are: publishing and making presentations about teaching; obtaining funding for research on teaching; carrying out research on teaching using an approach to inquiry consistent with understanding teaching and learning; publishing and making presentations about research on teaching; mentoring others in doing research on teaching; and having a comprehensive knowledge base of the research and literature on teaching and learning.

One final essay in this publication worthy of mentioning is that written by Carolin Kreber (pp. 79-88). In this passage, she offers suggestions for how the scholarship of teaching might be

incorporated into faculty development programs and graduate education. She also discusses the components of a model that could be useful in serving as a framework for courses on learning to teach in the context of higher education. These are five recommendations Kreber has for incorporating SoTL into faculty development programs:

- Introduce department-wide collaborative action research programs in which professors and faculty developers explore teaching and learning in the discipline,
- Allow faculty to contract for and focus on the scholarship of teaching for a given number of years, and allow for sabbaticals to be dedicated to the scholarship of teaching,
- Base workshops and seminars on educational theory and research,
- Establish department readings circles on teaching and learning in the discipline, and encourage team teaching; and
- Base courses on postsecondary teaching and learning on a model of the scholarship of teaching.

To likewise be successful in incorporating SoTL into graduate education, Kreber recommends the following:

- Changing the doctoral program curriculum to include at least two courses,
- Allowing dissertations to focus on pedagogy in the disciplines;
- Providing opportunity for graduate students to teach and receive feedback on their teaching by those who practice the scholarship of teaching,
- Basing workshops and seminars, such as TA training programs, on educational theory and research, and
- Identifying professors who practice the scholarship of teaching and have them serve as mentors to graduate students.

Perhaps a good way to bring this summary to a close is to outline Kreber and Cranton's model of the scholarship of teaching. Kreber collaborated with Patricia Cranton to describe the model much more fully in an article entitled "Exploring the scholarship of teaching" which appeared in the July/August, 2002, issue of *The Journal of Higher Education*. What follows here is a brief version that also appeared in this collection of writings (p. 84).

A Model of the Scholarship of Teaching: Content, Process, and Premise Reflection on Instructional, Pedagogical, and Curricular Knowledge

Instructional Knowledge

(Knowledge about various components of instructional design)

- Content reflection: What should I do in course design, method selection, and student assessment?

- Process reflection: How did I do? Were my course design, methods, and assessments effective?
- Premise reflection: Why does it matter that I use these designs, methods, and assessments?

Pedagogical Knowledge

(Knowledge about student learning and how to facilitate it)

- Content reflection: What should I do to best facilitate student learning?
- Process reflection: How did I do? Am I successful in facilitating student learning?
- Premise reflection: Why does it matter if I consider how students learn?

Curricular Knowledge

(Knowledge about the goals, purposes, and rationales for courses or programs)

- Content reflection: What do I know about the goals and rationales for courses or programs?
- Process reflection: How did I (we) arrive at the goals and rationale for courses or programs?
- Premise reflection: Why do our goals and rationale matter?

As the faculty and administration on this campus continue efforts to promote scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning, the ideas put forward in this special volume for the New Directions for Teaching and Learning can encourage some thoughtful and productive discussion. The working definition of SoTL we devised several years ago has provided a good foundation. In future months and weeks, arriving at a more complete conceptualization could pave the way for developing dynamic new approaches for undertaking this enterprise.