A milestone in the maturation of the scholarship of teaching and learning: The inauguration of a new journal

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Introduction

Worldwide there is growing interest in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and many exciting developments are occurring. Commitment to finding the best ways to engage students and to sharing the excitement when students succeed have always created common ground for academics of varied disciplines. However, communication about developments in teaching across disciplines was once quite limited. There were one-on-one conversations, of course, but few in-depth exchanges about what all tertiary level teachers have in common versus those aspects of teaching and learning that are specific to individual disciplines. This has changed dramatically. Those who have a passion for teaching now seem more eager to examine their craft and to share information about the processes that undergird the cognitive and affective development of the students entrusted to them. They are looking at teaching and learning with a wider angle lens, seeing the programmatic as well as the course contexts and documenting more specifically what they do and the effects of various strategies on how students acquire knowledge and skills. Differences in students' own backgrounds and learning styles are also being studied and responded to more carefully.

Teaching and the issue of privacy

The best teachers have often been described as those who are reflective and who are responsive to feedback. However, teaching seems to have been viewed by teachers themselves to be essentially a private activity. Traditionally the autonomy of the teacher in the classroom, office, laboratory and studio has been carefully protected. "Only the teacher really knows what happens in his or her own classroom." "One has to really experience the interactions with the class and within the class across time to fully understand." "No one can really know if the marking of student performance is accurate except the teacher." Statements such as those above resonate in most teachers' minds. In our class, *we* know best. Perhaps this is why in-class peer evaluations of teaching have always seemed somewhat intrusive. One or two visits to a class are rarely seen as sufficient to make a judgment about the quality of instruction. The dynamics of the class can't be fully comprehended and the sequencing and evaluation of the students' conceptualisations of course content can't be grasped. The observation window during visits is too small and the task too complex for an observer to evaluate deep learning.

The observer can make only superficial judgments and react to the attentiveness of the students and the performance attributes of the instructor {e.g., voice, rate, clarity of expression}. It is obvious that sporadic classroom observations provide only one perspective on learning and teaching and are valuable only as long as they are viewed, as student class evaluations should be viewed, as incomplete perspectives on a complex, multidimensional activity.

As long as teaching is viewed as a private act, opened briefly to scrutiny by an occasional observer, the sanctity of student–teacher interactions and their privacy is maintained. This is comfortable for most of us who have become accustomed to our private domain of teaching. It is probably true that most of us feel very comfortable with the 'experiential model' which assumes that, if you haven't actually been present throughout the whole class and experienced it, you can't fully understand the successes or failures of the teaching and learning that occurs. Yet, in order to gain the respect that it deserves, teaching must become a more public activity. Gaining a wider variety of perspectives relevant to the evaluation of teaching requires the involvement of a wider audience. Inquiry-based teaching provides good opportunities in this regard and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is providing ways to exploit this potential.

Perspectives on teaching and learning observed through tangible products

The challenge of capturing more aspects of the alchemy of teaching and learning involves the generation of tangible products to disseminate to other professionals. This has been addressed to some extent in the recent past. Course portfolios prepared by individual teachers are being used, as are student portfolios. These have the advantage of being able to be disseminated electronically and they are being used in both student and staff evaluations, although more refinements are needed. Portfolios provide more comprehensive material than their close relative, the hard copy packets, which include an academic's course profile, course materials and sample student assignments. These are sent by mail for review by an academic at a different institution who is usually asked to evaluate the material as part of promotion and tenure reviews. However, the efficacy of the practice of asking colleagues who do not teach at a candidate's home institution to review either a packet or an electronic portfolio depends on the validity of the procedures used and the questions developed to obtain the reviewers' responses. Additionally compilations of materials have been usually reviewed only by members of the same discipline who teach the same types of courses. They are valuable in the way that they provide a perspective on content quality and sequencing, as well as on the type of pedagogical strategies typically employed within disciplines.

A wider and more transdisciplinary audience is available when articles (and books) are written by academics who have completed philosophical, qualitative or quantitative studies in response to issues related to teaching and learning. When teachers apply their research skills to the investigation of salient aspects of teaching and learning, and publish their findings, their efforts can be disseminated very widely indeed. Scholarly teaching then evolves into scholarship because it can be held to certain standards, similar to those applied to research activities. Thus scholarly products related to teaching and learning, having their genesis in a specific professional context, become stand-alone testimony to the academics' ability to address salient questions that spring from their own teaching experiences. He or she therefore takes the on-site or online instructional role a step further by experiencing existing barriers to learning, examining outcomes and designing

evidence-based alternative strategies and programs. By becoming a scholar not only of the course content but also of the pedagogical context and process, the teacher assumes a proactive role and pilots and refines procedures more systematically. Above all, the teacher who espouses the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning component of the academic role and then publishes about that scholarship benefits from receiving feedback from a worldwide, transdisciplinary audience.

The body of knowledge about teaching and learning

The knowledge base which is currently expanding in the area of teaching and learning increases in response to the energy generated and transmitted through campus centres, programs and conferences. This occurs in institutions with varied missions and niche markets, where transdisciplinary discussions of teaching are encouraged. Typically the passion exhibited by individuals and small groups of colleagues fuels these discussions initially and then infects other colleagues and administrators subsequently. It is remarkable how pervasive the idea of a teaching and learning community can become. The word 'community' suggests that we are recognising the way that all of us benefit from an emphasis on the experiences and rewards that we share with all of our colleagues who teach. Because we live in the electronic age, our community is now not only our colleagues in our home departments, or even those in other organisational units on our campuses, but all those who teach in universities worldwide. We can be responsive to feedback and ideas from colleagues we have never seen face-to-face and *vice versa*. Electronic journals are a wonderful way to disseminate our work, provide access to the work of others and consolidate the knowledge base that sustains and invigorates the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning movement.

Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation And Development: A new avenue for making teaching more public

The inaugural double issue of this new refereed electronic journal presents us with a range of examples of articles focusing on current topics related to teaching and learning. Because it is a double issue, examples from a wide variety of disciplines are represented. An especially noteworthy aspect of this collection of papers is that it reflects the depth of the infiltration of the commitment to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning throughout Central Queensland University. Also demonstrated is the pervasiveness of this institution's attention to recognising and addressing students' needs in the area of information literacy. Since Central Queensland University has an especially heterogeneous student body in many geographical locations, assessing, evaluating and adapting to diverse consumers are continual challenges. The rationales and themes underpinning the articles in this issue reflect the way that academics across disciplines at Central Queensland University are responding to these challenges. The articles reveal a variety of methodological approaches to addressing barriers to student learning at the course, program and institutional levels. There is also a discernible thread in all of the papers that ties disciplinary work to the institutional mission.

The effects of innovations on the organisation

Some of the papers in this first issue of the journal present an interesting blend of vision and pragmatism. This is particularly evident when changes in practices are examined in terms of the university as an evolving organisation and when the impact on people within the university is considered. Philosophical questions related to institutional identity and unity were examined as Luck, Jones, McConachie and Danaher studied the impact of course management systems (commercial software packages that provide web-based tools, services and resources for both online and blended delivery of courses) on the institution as a whole. They surveyed multiple stakeholders within the institution and distilled their differing views of 'best practice'. Gallie and Joubert described changes that occurred within two individuals as they transitioned to online distance education. They showed the personal adjustments that two academics made in response to the institutional culture and priorities. Jones illustrated how a tool such as the work systems framework can be used for analyses to assist individuals understand aspects that are salient to the implementation of e-learning.

Student engagement

Kofoed focused on the effect of online delivery of materials and assessment on students and reflected on student engagement. Kehoe, Tennent and Windeknecht compared students in introductory courses in three different disciplines of management, law and accounting. Their survey indicated a positive response to online technologies. Their interpretation of the results of the study, however, also provided insights into student engagement issues relevant to both internal and distance students and to teaching and institutional priorities. Purnell, Callan, Whymark, and Gralton demonstrated that information and communications technologies, such as the Zing Team Learning System, result in transformations in the management of learning as social relationships change. Their work indicated that technical processes might enhance purposive interactions and engagement. Whymark, Callan and Purnell also discussed the Zing Team Learning System in relation to adult learning to encourage collaboration and emphasised the important role of the facilitator.

Programmatic initiatives

Anastasi described a broadly based, contextualised, adult education program aimed at returning previously registered and enrolled nurses to the health care workforce. She described a paradigm shift from the biomedical model of nursing to the sociological, holistic approach. Courses are conducted in the distance mode and students may progress at their own pace. The emphasis is on the application of human resource development principles and personal attention to students' psychosocial development. A similar emphasis on the holistic development of students can be seen in Brown's description of the Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music program. It is reassuring to see a paper related to the education of creative artists included in the first issue of this journal. Far too often this is an underrepresented area of teaching and learning research. Dekkers explained issues inherent in the development of materials for the Mathematics Learning Centre at Central Queensland University to support students entering Engineering programs. He provided guiding principles for their design and the program is embedded with a series of macro-and micro-topic features and instructional strategies. Sander and Cleary used the results of a mathematics screening test to 120 first year Bachelor of Nursing students to propose several strategies designed to enhance the students' medication mathematics competency.

Sturgess and Kennedy described a peer mentoring program designed to address the geographical isolation experienced by distance education students and the chain of support created to ensure that the needs of all participants, including the coordinator, are addressed.

Plagiarism is an issue that concerns all academics and there is a need for explicitly defined institutional policies to address this problem. The inclusion of two papers on this topic underscores its importance. Hinton argued eloquently that it is not merely a moral issue but also a learning difficulty exhibited by students with complex motivations and deficits. She provided philosophical as well as practical insights and elucidated the need for institutional and programmatic policies and procedures to change the academic environment that students enter. Kennedy provided succinct examples of strategies to change students' expectations as well as their behaviour. She described required assignments for students studying the Skills for Tertiary Education and Preparatory Studies (STEPS) at Central Queensland University and the importance of the evaluation of such initiatives within programs.

Conclusion

Reading the rich body of work represented in the inaugural double issue of this journal provides us with a window on the world of teaching and learning at Central Queensland University. There are examples of scholarship from many different disciplines and across disciplines. The intersections between new technological advances and traditional approaches and values and the juxtaposition of student and academic development are examined. The tension between retaining and strengthening the institutional mission and exploring the benefits and risks of innovation is recognised and addressed. The launching of this journal provides all who have a passion for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning with an opportunity to benefit from the work that these authors are sharing in this forum and to respond in either a public or a private way.