A Fine and Private Place
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“Had we but world enough, and time,” Marvell’s suitor opines to his reluctant lady, using the saucy subjunctive to camouflage his eagerness. While I hesitate to equate my work with seduction or, worse still, with inciting colleagues to expose themselves, part of the educational developer’s challenge is to entice professors to “go public” with their teaching, thereby assailing their natural coyness: “I promise you, if you present this in public, no one will flinch, flee, or faint; in fact, some will be so grateful, they’ll even try it themselves . . . maybe even openly.” It’s a hard sell!

Publishing or presenting to colleagues, who can then review our work, comment upon it, and perhaps even add to it, are indispensable elements of all scholarship, including the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. And while definitions of scholarly work may vary, they are consistent in emphasizing the centrality of publication in one form or another.

What is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Anyway?
The practice of scholarly teaching is not new; it is 15 years since the term became part of the lexicon. In 1990, Ernest Boyer, former President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, wrote Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate. Seeking to overturn the dominant view that to be a scholar is to be a researcher, Boyer argued, "Faculty must assume a primary responsibility for giving scholarship a richer, more vital meaning." Boyer’s paradigm posits four overlapping and interdependent scholarships:

• **Discovery:**
  - Includes research, inquiry, creative performance

• **Integration:**
  - For example, interdisciplinary work

• **Engagement:**
  - “Service”: Applying our disciplinary knowledge to real problems

• **Teaching and Learning:**
  - More than simply the transmission of content

Figure One: Boyer’s Four Overlapping Scholarships

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The Scholarship of Teaching involves planning, assessing, and modifying one’s teaching and applying to it the same exacting standards of evaluation as those used in research. According to Boyer, the “elusive” scholarship of teaching means “transforming and extending” knowledge, not merely transmitting it (24).

Andresen (2000) counts a “willingness to be open to public scrutiny and challenge” amongst the three quintessential elements of scholarship. Lee Shulman (1999), President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement for Teaching, gives a cozier, but nevertheless overlapping, definition of scholarship, saying that an intelligent act is scholarly when

- it becomes public
- it is critically reviewed and evaluated by one’s community
- one’s community begins to use, build upon, and develop it.

Who is your community? Many professors see their community in fairly circumscribed, disciplinary terms; it comprises other historians, accountants, or linguists. Others have a broader definition: their community is much more catholic and includes other university teachers, regardless of specialty. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning transcends disciplinary boundaries and moves us into “common trading zones” (Huber, 2004), where wide-ranging issues such as student writing, problem-solving, critical thinking, and academic integrity replace subject-based questions of measurement, plot, angles, and formulae.

Hutchings and Shulman (1999) say that teaching is scholarly work when it involves inquiry into student learning, and is made public in a way that can be critiqued, reviewed, built upon and improved. Therefore, applying to teaching “the same exacting standards of evaluation” (Boyer, 1990) that apply to research, including public presentation, ensures that it can be counted as scholarly work.

So what’s the problem? Why are professors more likely to go public with their disciplinary scholarship than their teaching? Why the insistence on privacy? Without meaning to sound cryptic, I would suggest that the problem is the problem.

Most disciplinary research begins with a problem, a moment of difficulty or realization that something could be improved. While teaching is no different, most professors like to keep their teaching problems to themselves. (Of course, this secrecy and reluctance perpetrate the ridiculous myth that teaching problems worth grappling with are rare, and this misconception lead[s] to further secrecy!)

Randy Bass (1999) tells us that we need to alter our view of the teaching problem: “[C]hange the status of the problem in teaching from terminal remediation to on-going investigation.” Bass goes on to exhort a reframing of teaching problems as opportunities which lie at the very heart of scholarly teaching. While we may uncover “solutions worth implementing,” he says, we should measure our success by “discovering problems worth pursuing.”

The scholarly stumbling block here it is that professors seldom go public with their teaching successes, let alone their teaching problems. The classroom is “a fine and private place” whose doors are opened to colleagues’ scrutiny only at peer review time, when stakes are high, and professors are seeking promotion and tenure. If, as Bass (in Huber, 2004) suggests, “Visibility is key to one’s scholarship, one’s professional reputation,” how can educational developers encourage teaching colleagues to make their teaching visible?

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That’s the conundrum: Going public is a crucial element of scholarly work, but teaching has tended to be “private.” Therefore, an important step in having teaching recognized as scholarly work (even by its practitioners) is to open the classroom doors—perhaps initially in small ways—but wide enough to let our community use, build upon, and adapt what we’re doing.

When university teachers have problems, they may go to their Teaching Centre. Too often, a Centre is seen as a confessional. Or perhaps it’s an academic triage unit, where educational developers “diagnose” the teaching problem and, after the careful but superficial application of a bandage, it’s once more into the fray. Problem “solved,” confidentiality preserved, and honour intact.

But that’s not enough for most educational developers. Like Marvell’s lover, we are not that easily satisfied; however, we want more than a fleeting encounter . . . we desire a long-term relationship, and we want the world to know about it!

We want our coy colleagues to realize that the richness in their teaching, its scholarly aspect, springs from the problems themselves—not their solutions. Educational developers agree with Bill Cerbin (1993) that teaching, like other forms of scholarship, is “complex, problematic, intellectually challenging and creative work.”

How, then, can Teaching Centre staff help colleagues embrace their teaching problems and transform them into teaching scholarship? We can assure them that it will be as painless as a fleabite (wrong poem!) or we can simply point out to them that it is not a giant leap after all.

Figure Two shows how a moment of teaching difficulty can be transformed by asking the right, reflective questions, such as: What’s the problem? Where can I look for a solution? Is it working? How do I know? Who else might it work for? How do I tell them? These questions, applicable in the disciplines, are just as applicable to teaching. They are scholarly questions that should be asked and answered in public. Hutchings and Huber (2005) call this public sharing a “teaching commons.” Such a commons is a fine and public place that professors and educational developers can comfortably inhabit together.

In conclusion, then, while I am not advocating for wanton exhibitionism and for classroom doors to be

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unhinged around campus, I am suggesting that only by making teaching visible, by demonstrating to our colleagues that it is demanding, intellectually stimulating work, will we be able to situate it appropriately and permanently within scholarship. Further, I believe that a strong relationship between the educational developer in the Teaching Centre and the professor in the classroom is essential to effect this visibility.

“Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, Professor, were no crime. . . .”

Don’t let the subtle subjunctive camouflage the urgency; “Time’s winged chariot” is driven by tenure committees, programme reviewers, authors of strategic planning or integrated planning documents. If we do not make teaching more public, and do it soon, we run the risk of its being invisible when decisions are made, resources allocated, or scholarship rewarded. Carpe Diem!

**References**


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