

Scholarly Teaching – Getting the Infrastructure Right (0210)

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Discussion

The higher education sector now largely separates the functions of teaching and research. Funding streams are different; institutional organisation is different - teaching occurs in departments, research in research centres. For some academics, there may be career choice: although research achievement has traditionally been the path to promotion, many institutions now offer a path via teaching achievement. For others, it is not a matter of choice, but rather one of finding oneself in a teaching-focus position. In either case, it can still be hard to use teaching as the basis of a promotion application. There is a widespread lack of confidence in the sector about judging the quality of teaching for the purposes of promotion. Out of this has emerged, over the last decade, the *Scholarship of Teaching* movement. This has offered a way for academics to claim credit for teaching achievement: teaching practice becomes an object of systematic enquiry, the outcome being publication or public documentation for award applications. The discourse of these accounts is usually more educational than disciplinary in flavour.

The value of this work is not disputed; it is important that there is some subset of academic staff whose scholarly focus is research into teaching. The issue is that this version of documenting teaching quality has come to dominate in a way that excludes other versions that may have equal or more value. Various commentators (Kreber 2005, Trigwell and Shale 2004) have raised questions about the place of *scholarly teaching* where this phrase refers to teaching which incorporates, in an optimal way, the scholarship of the discipline and successfully transforms it into pedagogy. For a teacher engaged in this project, the primary knowledge base remains that of his/her own discipline, rather than the generic teaching-and-learning knowledge base. The teacher manifests his/her scholarliness in the discipline in the activity of teaching. Such teachers, if they are not also researchers, are often in a no-man's-zone: they are not necessarily doing primary (discovery) research, and yet they have not thrown in their lot with SOLT, even that part of it which finds expression in the research-led teaching project (e.g. Jenkins et al, 2003).

These academics are problematical for the characterisation of scholarship because it is difficult to say in what way they are contributing to a scholarly community. Put crudely, it might be alleged that they are not engaging in the risks of critique, qualification and non-acceptance that are a routine part of the interaction for scholarship based around first order research. We may nonetheless want to make a case for their teaching as demonstrating a necessary, albeit second order, scholarliness. It produces a second site of knowledge construction as learners are encouraged to scrutinise methodology, to consider implications within the field and to identify the further questions that breakthroughs or new perspectives bring with them. For the teacher, this is a different kind of engagement with the scholarly community; it is serious action of dissemination in such a way as to broaden that community and to extend informed interaction. In this case, it is the teacher's re-presentation of new knowledge and his or her configuration of it for intellectual interaction that would need to be the object of scrutiny and review, and that constitutes the contribution to

the advancement of knowledge in the field. (I think that Jan Parker is arguing along the same lines, if differently, in her 2005 piece.)

This formulation is inevitably contentious – many would claim that it is not going beyond what is taken for granted in a degree-granting institution. I think, however, that this conception of ‘demonstrating scholarliness through teaching’ is asking for more than that. It is asking for researcher quality knowledge at the same time as it is asking for ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ at a depth which will incorporate students into the broader community of enquiry via critique, appreciation and application.

There are two very important questions which arise out of this situation. The first is the question of how to make visible, how to recognise and reward teaching achievement, where it is achievement of this second kind. The seminar will explore what constitutes evidence for such scholarly teaching and how it might be gathered and presented.

The second question goes to whether we can envisage – and then put in place - institutional infrastructure which might support this version of teaching quality. At its heart, this is the question as to whether institutions can bring teaching and research back together again, particularly in a context in which there are pressures to push them further apart (teaching-only appointments, whole-year teaching). Are there ways in which the functions of teaching and research can be brought into a new dialogue with each other, possibly to the benefit of both?

The seminar will make proposals in answer to both questions and will invite audience interaction as to both conceptual and practical possibilities. Specifically, it will move to consider three areas where further resolution and development would be needed. These are:

- the ways in which university infrastructure might better support a version of teaching quality which is grounded in discipline research rather than in the scholarship of teaching and learning.
- the forms of evidence and documentation which would attest to scholarly teaching
- the institutional academic development initiatives which would bring the functions of teaching and research into closer relationship.

References:

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