

Teach & Tell: enhancing both teaching and publications through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Kate Chanock, Humanities Academic Skills Unit, HUSS, La Trobe University

Why SoTL?

While academic staff are expected to devote twice as much time to teaching as to research, until recently research was much better rewarded than teaching. With the new government emphasis on teaching (DEST, 2004), the pressure to publish is not about to ease, but it will be compounded by pressure to demonstrate commitment to teaching. This will apply at both institutional and individual levels, in decisions about funding for universities and in decisions about promotion of members of staff. Previously, when applying for promotion, we had to show competence in both teaching and research, with excellence in one of these categories (and it had better have been research); now, we will have to demonstrate excellence in both. Lecturers and academic skills advisers alike have often felt that a change in the rewards system to fully acknowledge the value of teaching is long overdue (e.g., Gaither, 1998, p. 90), but we probably envisaged some means of freeing time from research to focus on teaching. Commonly, academics experience some degree of conflict between research and teaching, as each competes with the other for scarce time and attention. However, there is a way to bring them together and to get recognition for both our research and our efforts to improve our teaching: this is to participate in the “Scholarship of Teaching and Learning” (or “SoTL”). The project of this brief paper is to draw attention to the possibilities of SoTL by

- describing it,
- suggesting ways into it,
- referring readers to further sources of information about it, and
- providing lists of journals and conferences engaged in SoTL, where publishing opportunities may be found.

The development of SoTL was initiated by Ernest Boyer in 1990, when he distinguished between four kinds of scholarship -- discovery, integration, application, and teaching – and called for academics to “move beyond the tired old ‘teaching versus research’ debate and give the familiar and honourable term ‘scholarship’ a broader, more capacious meaning, one that brings legitimacy to the full scope of academic work”. SoTL is not teaching informed by scholarship, in which we are all engaged already, but rather scholarship about teaching and learning: how learning happens and what we can do to make it happen more effectively.

SoTL has been given impetus, as Huber and Morreale (2005) have put it, “by at least four historical developments that are driving new interest in teaching and learning in higher education: new students [in the sense of ‘non-traditional’ kinds of students], national priorities, public accountability, and changing pedagogical technologies”. These have been experienced variously as problems or as opportunities, and SoTL is a story of problems turning into opportunities, and of the meaning of a teaching problem being transformed in the process. Randy Bass’ (1998-1999) article in *Inventio* is a wonderfully concise introduction to (and instance of) SoTL, in which he says:

One telling measure of how differently teaching is regarded from traditional scholarship or research within the academy is what a difference it makes to have a "problem" in one versus the other. In scholarship and research, having a "problem" is at the heart of the investigative process; it is the compound of the generative questions around which all creative and productive activity revolves. But in one's teaching, a "problem" is something you don't want to have, and if you have one, you

probably want to fix it. Asking a colleague about a *problem* in his or her research is an invitation; asking about a problem in one's teaching would probably seem like an accusation. Changing the status of the *problem* in teaching from terminal remediation to ongoing investigation is precisely what the movement for a scholarship of teaching is all about. How might we make the problematization of teaching a matter of regular communal discourse? How might we think of teaching practice, and the evidence of student learning, as problems to be investigated, analyzed, represented, and debated?
....

The "how might we" here is two kinds of "how", one of which has to do with overcoming the lowly status accorded to teaching (cf. Huber & Morreale); the other is "how" in the sense of what methods are appropriate to this project, and Bass sees scope for a great variety of methods.

It takes a deliberate act to look at teaching from the perspective of learning. Actually, it takes a set of acts--individually motivated and communally validated--to focus on questions and problems, gather data, interpret and share results. The range of questions may take many different forms. The nature of the data may be quantitative or qualitative; it may be based on interviews, formative assessment instruments, test performances, student evaluations, or peer review The object of analysis may range from the acquisition of basic skills to the development of personal values or the transformation of whole knowledge paradigms. (Bass, 1999)

What is SoTL and how is it done?

This is not the place to go into whether SoTL is in any sense a discipline or interdiscipline, but a lot of writing has been devoted to that staple of discipline-building, defining the nature of the work. Cerbin's (n.d.) definition shares with others the core idea of systematic, public enquiry:

SoTL is a form of inquiry. Specifically it is a kind of practitioner research that focuses on teaching and student learning in one's own classroom. SoTL starts with faculty questions about student learning. Instructors explore those questions through systematic, disciplined inquiry, and then report their findings for peer review. This type of inquiry has two major purposes--to improve the instructor's own teaching and to advance the practice of teaching more generally.

<http://www.uwlax.edu/sotl/index.htm?sotldefinedpage.htm>

Cerbin's list of methods that might be employed in SoTL overlaps with Bass', but goes further:

Strategies to gather evidence may be extremely diverse, and include such things as

- close reading of student papers
- focus group discussions with students
- case study of a single student over time
- inviting a colleague to observe the class
- videotaping collaborative learning groups
- analysis of course materials
- analysis of students thinking aloud as they read and interpret a text
- tracking patterns of achievement and attainment
- keeping a teaching journal or log
- mapping/analyzing students' on-line interactions\

- surveys or individual interviews
<http://www.uwlax.edu/sotl/index.htm?sotldefinedpage.htm>

There is a growing literature on the aims and methods of SoTL; points of entry are identified in the Appendix to this paper.

Ways into SoTL

Many opportunities exist to develop and exchange ideas in SoTL, as well as to contribute to refereed publications. There are conferences that publish refereed proceedings; journals devoted to university teaching and learning; and in the “call for” announcements in the pages of these journals, opportunities can be found to contribute chapters to edited collections. Some of these are wide-ranging in coverage. Others are more specialised, focussing, for example, on stages of education (transition; first-year experience; postgraduate teaching); categories of students (international; “non-traditional”); modes of teaching (online; distance); or particular discipline areas. There are some in Australia and New Zealand, and many more in other parts of the world.

In our own region, conferences are more plentiful than journals, and offer a supportive way in to publishing. La Trobe has been very active in developing this field in Australia, since 1994 when our LAS units founded the National Language and Academic Skills (LAS) Conference, which meets every two years, and has been hosted by LTU Bundoora on four occasions. In addition, the Communication Skills in University Education Conference is held in alternate years, and, like the LAS Conference, this publishes a refereed proceedings. There is also an annual Conference of HERDSA (the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia), which also publishes the journal *HERD*. The University of Wollongong has launched the *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, which will further promote local publishing in this area. Most recently, the Association for Academic Language and Learning, the national professional association for academic skills advisers in Australia, has founded the refereed *Journal of Academic Language and Learning (JALL)* at <http://www.aall.org.au/journal>.

Overseas, the list is endless (both in the sense that it is very long, and in the sense that new journals and conferences are being founded every year). See the Appendix for a selection. As in any other field, contributions are often rejected, or returned for revision, by the first journal(s) to which they are submitted, but may be better suited to another.

Contributors from the disciplines might take advantage of the fact that they bring a point of view not often heard in publications of this kind in Australia and New Zealand (in the U.S. it is more common for academics in the disciplines to engage in SoTL as well). Those of us engaged in helping students with their writing tend to talk amongst ourselves – not because we would not like to exchange ideas more widely, but because lecturers in the disciplines focus their research on the subject matter of their discipline. It has not proved easy to include them in discussions of learning and teaching, beyond the in-house meetings for professional development arranged by programs or Faculties. Their ideas, therefore, may be welcomed by reviewers for journals and conference proposals.

Nonetheless, writers interested in SoTL will face the usual challenges of moving into any unfamiliar ‘field’. In addition to forming a picture of the venues where this kind of scholarship is disseminated, they will have to situate their own thinking in the context of the existing literature, and then identify needs and opportunities for changes in their practice that

would make a valuable contribution to the field. A good way into this may be to consult somebody who is already familiar with practice and publishing of this kind: the LAS advisers, including LAS (ESL) lecturers, and Academic Staff Developers in their institution.

These people may be able to help with identifying a relevant body of theory to inform the lecturer's thinking about a particular project. For example, if a lecturer were thinking of developing a staged assignment that moves from easier to more difficult tasks and incorporating feedback at each stage, a LAS adviser might suggest that she look at the work of Bruner or Vygotsky on "scaffolding". If someone planned to revise the assessment in his subject to encourage more engagement and deeper understanding, a LAS adviser might direct him to the literature on "deep" and "surface" learning. If somebody thought of getting her students explicitly to examine the forms of writing required for her subject, she might be advised to look at the literature on genre (e.g. Swales or Johns). If a lecturer wanted to revise her teaching to be more inclusive of international students, a LAS adviser might suggest some reading on contrastive rhetoric (e.g. Fox, Leki, or Matalene). SoTL draws on (at least) the disciplines of psychology, rhetoric, linguistics, education, sociology, management, communication, composition, and literary criticism in framing its discussions.

Another strategy for developing one's teaching while also studying one's students' learning is to collaborate with a LAS adviser or ADU member to conduct action research, involving a cycle of framing a problem, trying out a solution, reflecting on the result, and refining the process. "Collaborative research, undertaken to answer teachers' questions about their own and their students' practices is ... essential", according to McCarthy and Walvoord; "this research is based on the assumption that knowledge is gained not only through action but also for action" (1988, p. 86). One form that such research can take is what McCarthy and Walvoord call

The Focused Pair. In this model ... a writing specialist pairs with a teacher from another discipline, and together they study the writing going on in the latter's classroom Focused pairs, in many cases, produce not only professional growth and change but also publications (p. 80).

Conclusion

The primary aim in all of this is to develop our teaching. At the same time, as I have suggested here, SoTL may help us to demonstrate, when we need to, that we are thoughtful and committed teachers. Furthermore, SoTL in refereed publications earns DEST points just as publications in the disciplines do. I hope that the online articles and bibliographies which follow the references below may engage colleagues' interest in this field of study, and that the collection of venues for publication may encourage them to teach and tell.

References

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- Vygotsky, L. (1978) *Mind in Society: the Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

Appendix:

A Bibliobuffet of venues for learning about, and publishing in, SoTL

Compiled by Kate Chanoock, HASU, HUSS

This is in no way comprehensive, as SoTL is huge; but it may give an idea of the sorts of journals and conferences there are, and where to look for more.

Before seeking to publish in SoTL, you may like to orient yourself to this field by reading about what SoTL is, why it's done, how it's done, where it's to be found, etc.

For a brief definition and introduction, go to:

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning @ University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.
“SoTL Defined” <http://www.uwlax.edu/sotl/>

For the book by the scholar who invented it, look for:

Boyer. E (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*,
Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

For 3 reasons to do it, read:

Shulman, L (2000) 'From Minsk to Pinsk: Why a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning?' *The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* Vol 1 No 1, pp 48-52. Available online at
http://titans.iusb.edu/josotl/VOL_1/NO_1/shulman_vol_1_no_1.htm

For an influential early work, see:

Schon, D (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

For the article you should read if you're only going to read one, see:

Bass, Randy. 1999. The Scholarship of Teaching: What's the Problem? *inventio* 1 (1):
[\[http://www.doiit.gmu.edu/Archives/feb98/rbass.htm\]](http://www.doiit.gmu.edu/Archives/feb98/rbass.htm).

However, if you're up for a couple more, try:

Bender, Eileen and Donald Gray. 1999. *The Scholarship of Teaching, Research & Creative Activity* (April 1999) XXII:1 and on the Web:
<http://www.indiana.edu/%7Eercapub/v22n1/p03.html>.

"Situating the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: A Cross-Disciplinary Conversation," in *Disciplinary Styles in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Exploring Common Ground*.
<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/publications/sub.asp?key=452&subkey=610>

Next, some sites where you will find both works in SoTL and further orientation to SoTL:

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: An Annotated Bibliography Revised and Updated, Fall 2002, by Pat Hutchings, Marcia Babb, & Chris Bjork, at the website of The Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: The Carnegie

Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/elibrary/docs/bibliography.htm>

Hakim, Musa Abdul. 2002. Navigating the Web of Discourse on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: An annotated Webliography. Association of College & Research Libraries:
<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/crlnews/backissues2002/julyaugust/scholarshipteaching.htm>.

Some journals in SoTL:

Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education
<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/02602938.asp>

Journal of Academic Language and Learning [www.http://www.aall.org.au/journal](http://www.aall.org.au/journal)

inventio: creative thinking about teaching and learning. Fairfax, VA: Division of Instructional and Technology Support Services (DoIT), George Mason University:
[\[http://www.doit.gmu.edu/inventio\]](http://www.doit.gmu.edu/inventio).

The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (JoSoTL), Indiana University South Bend: [<http://www.iusb.edu/~josotl/>].

Arts and Humanities in Higher Education <http://www.sagepub.com/journal.aspx?pid=298>

Brookes eJournal of Learning and Teaching <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/publications/bejlt/>

Higher Education Journal <http://www.jstor.org/journals/00221546.html>

Higher Education Research and Development <http://www.herdsa.org.au/journal.php>

International Journal for Academic Development
<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/1360144X.asp>

International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
<http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/>

Journal on Excellence in College Teaching <http://ject.lib.muohio.edu>

Journal of Language, Identity and Education <http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/LPRU/JLIE/>

Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (JOLT) <http://jolt.merlot.org>

Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice <http://jutlp.uow.edu.au>

Studies in Higher Education <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/03075079.asp>

Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development
<http://sleid.cqu.edu.au/index.php>

Teaching in Higher Education <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/13562517.asp>

For those interested in demonstrating the “impact” of a publication, see this article at the University of Newcastle’s website explaining how education journals are ranked according to “EScore” (esteem) and “QScore” (quality):
<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/sorti/Banding/mehtod.html>

To find many more listings, go to publishers' websites such as:

<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/sublist.asp> Taylor & Francis Journals: Journals by Subject

<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/indexof.asp?site=1> Blackwell Publishing: Subject Index (for journals)

or databases such as:

Journals Indexed in ERIC (education resources information centre)

<http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?nfpb=true&pageLabel=JournalPage&logoutLink=false>

or

Indiana University Bloomington Libraries, at <http://www.indiana.edu/%7Elibsalc/SOTL/#journals>

“Selected Library Resources on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

[Selected Journals on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning](#)

[General](#)

[By Subject: Accounting](#) | [African American Studies](#) | [Anthropology](#) | [Architecture](#) | [Art](#) | [Behavioral Science](#) | [Biological Sciences](#) | [Business & Economics](#) | [Chemistry](#) | [Communications](#) | [Computer Science](#) | [Criminal Justice](#) | [Dentistry](#) | [Education](#) | [Engineering](#) | [English](#) | [Geography & Geology](#) | [Gerontology](#) | [History](#) | [Interior Design](#) | [Journalism](#) | [Law](#) | [Library Science](#) | [Mathematics](#) | [Medicine](#) | [Modern Languages](#) | [Music](#) | [Nursing](#) | [Pharmacy](#) | [Philosophy](#) | [Physical Education & Kinesiology](#) | [Physics](#) | [Political Science](#) | [Psychology & Psychiatry](#) | [Religion & Theology](#) | [Sciences](#) | [Social Studies](#) | [Social Work](#) | [Sociology](#)

[Databases in Education](#)

[Guide to Literature Searches for SOTL Research](#)

[Current Awareness Tools for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning](#)

[Consult a Librarian About Your SOTL Research”](#)

or

Center for Instructional Development and Research

<http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/journals.html>

“Some resources identified here focus exclusively on teaching and learning. Others address broader disciplinary issues, but also occasionally feature scholarly work on teaching and learning in the disciplines.

- [Disciplinary Journals that Feature Teaching and Learning Research](#)
- [Interdisciplinary Publications on Teaching and Learning”](#)

Or ACER Australian Council for Educational Research , to access the Cunningham Library – Australian Education Index <http://www.acer.edu.au/aei/journals.html> for core journals listed.

Or sites at other universities where lists of journals have been compiled:

Warwick Centre for Academic Practice: Online Journals Relating to Teaching
<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/cap/resources/journals>

Teaching and Learning Support: “Discipline Journals about Teaching”
<http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/teaching/toolbox/journals.html>

DeLiberations, at http://www.city.londonmet.ac.uk/deliberations/journals/subj_journal.html .

Next, there are sites where you will find information and notices of conferences and other activities, as well as links to journals:

Deliberations on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/deliberations/>

Higher Education Academy <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk>

WAC Clearinghouse <http://wac.colostate.edu/index.cfm>. Follow link to “WAC & Writing journals”. To view or contribute work-in-progress, see the “Research Exchange” at <http://wac.colostate.edu/research>

ACER <http://www.acer.edu.au/aei/conferences.html> .

A few of the very many regularly held conferences on higher education (google these, and to find more, or more current ones, also check the sites above):

ASCILITE (Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education) conferences (2)
Association for Academic Language and Learning national conference (Biennial)
Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association International Conference
Communication Skills in University Education (Biennial)
Conference on Tutoring and Mentoring
International Symposium on Improving Student Learning (UK)
Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA)(Annual)
International On-line Conference on Teaching On-line in Higher Education
National Conference of the Association of Tertiary Learning Advisors of Aotearoa/New Zealand (ATLAANZ)
National First Year Experience Conference
New Zealand Tertiary Writing Network Colloquium (NZ)
Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education (Annual)
Quality in Postgraduate Research conferences
International Conference on Improving University Teaching (UK)
International Literacy and Education Research Network (LERN) Conferences
Writing Development in Higher Education