

How do Institutions Encourage the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning?

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Aim

This paper aims to address the question, “How do institutions encourage the scholarship of teaching and learning?” Through a consideration of the current strategies, activities and developments of key British Higher Education institutions. The paper draws upon relevant published sources and incorporates the insights, experiences and examples provided by colleagues from across a range of diverse disciplines and departments nationally, in the attempt to present an informed, discursive consideration of this important question.

The paper considers key examples of common practice developed by HE institutions in their encouragement of the scholarship of *teaching and learning*. Whilst common approaches are evidenced, this paper also identifies and considers the specific nature, needs and nuances of the scholarship of teaching and learning in the context of art, design and media education. This is considered through the related activities and developments of the author’s home institution, The Arts Institute at Bournemouth (AIB).

Context

The AIB is a highly successful specialist HE Arts, Design and Media institution located on the south coast of England. The AIB has approximately 2,000 students and its portfolio of courses includes Foundation degrees, BA (Hons) undergraduate degree courses and an emerging postgraduate provision (including current developments to enhance the PGCE course through to MA status). As a reflective community the AIB takes responsibility for student learning and thus makes significant contributions to the scholarship of teaching and learning through formally structured and monitored policies and committees and it is committed to *learning by doing* and learning with, and from, others. It has a clear commitment to learning and teaching as evidenced through its Mission statement and core values, Teaching and Learning Policy, Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Development Committee and the success of the National Teaching Fellow in 2004. The AIB has a conscious strategy for reinforcing and celebrating pedagogy. It identifies four central activities that encompass; learning and teaching, knowledge transfer, widening participation and research and scholarly activities. John Last, Deputy Principal reports that support of each of the activities is reflected institutionally by the allocation of funds to staff in ways that equally privilege the activities.

Scholarship of Learning and Teaching

As Randy Bass comments “scholarship of teaching” has come to imply not merely the existence of a scholarly component in teaching, but a particular kind of activity, separate from the art of teaching, that can be considered scholarship itself’ (http://www.doiit.gmu.edu/Archives/feb98/andybass_1a.htm). The scholarship of teaching and learning is essential to intellectual discourse and the professional integrity of the institution and the individual. It is an enduring experience that feeds from, and into, the academic development, rigour, culture, curriculum and profile of the institution and wider contexts and communities. Scholarship activities create, inform, support and ensure the currency, relevance, and vibrancy of learning and teaching for students and staff and contribute to subject disciplines, extending the boundaries of knowledge, understanding and experience. Collaborative scholarship can be particularly rewarding and increasingly important and continues the journey of learning how to learn and can offer satisfying and rewarding paths and final destinations.

Educational and Staff Development Centres

'Throughout the Higher Education sector, educational and academic development has become increasingly important and significant throughout the current HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council in England) strategic planning period' (Fisher, 2005). Within many British HE institutions, the creation of specific *centres* in support of the scholarship of teaching and learning have been developed in recent years. The centres address a number of activities that are key to the overall academic development of the institution and are identified by a number of titles, for example Aberdeen University's Centre for Learning and Professional Development, University of Reading's Centre for Staff Training and Development, University of Kent's Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. In many institutions the responsibility and coordination of the support for the scholarship of learning and teaching is through the Human Resources department of the Institution.

The relationship of the work of the centres to Institute mission statements, strategic plans and learning and teaching is important to consider. Sue Palmer (NTF) comments, 'We have an institutional and faculty teaching and learning strategy that is both supportive and enabling'.

In some Institutions it has been noted that the preference for the tradition of Research and the Research Committee has meant that the Scholarship of teaching and learning and related Learning and Teaching Committees has been slower to be established. It was perhaps surprising to find that some large universities established a Learning and Teaching committee as recently as 2000.

At the Arts Institute at Bournemouth the Academic Development Unit (ADU) was formed in 2004 to lead initiatives and projects to inform academic development and to address areas of quality assurance, staff development, learning, teaching and curriculum development and widening participation and access. The Unit's work relates to Institute, regional and national strategic agendas and works across the Institute to achieve its objectives.

An example of the Unit's work includes the ADEPTT project—Art and Design: Empowerment of Part-Time Tutors—led by the University of Hertfordshire and funded by HEFCE's Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL).. Using a networking strategy, the project embraces the sharing of knowledge, the design of staff development tools and resources and the review and creation of new materials.

The work of the centres is important and many institutions encourage scholarship of teaching and learning through considered promotion of opportunities and presentation of supporting material and examples. At Keele University, Steve Bostock, Advisor for Technology and Learning has created a valuable website that clearly identifies and shares information relating to activities in 'Support for Scholarship of Learning and Teaching' that is useful to colleagues throughout the sector. (<http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/aa/landt/>.) The SALTIRE central unit at St. Andrew's University assists learners and teachers and 'aims to encourage excellence and innovation in learning and teaching by providing support and guidance for students and staff through regular workshops, external events, one to one sessions, tailored sessions for academic schools and the funding of project and courses' (<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/altire/index>). The SALTIRE website and newsletters clearly outline how the university encourages and creates opportunities for staff to engage in teaching and learning scholarly activities, including for example the Web Developers' Forum as an area for staff to share and exchange information and ideas relating to their WebCT skills and experiences.

University websites are useful sources that encourage, inform and evidence the scholarship of learning and teaching and its dissemination. A number of very interesting sites currently exist.

Staff Development Events and Activities

Dedicated staff development days are organised by institutions to engage all staff in the scholarship of learning and teaching and to share in the scholarly contributions of others. The responsibility of the organisation of such events differs from institution to institution—Keele University's programme is

organised by the Education department in liaison with and between departments whilst other institutions operate via a central learning and teaching unit.

Externality is an important aspect of such events and the involvement of guest speakers provides opportunity for staff to be informed by, and through, others. At the AIB external speakers have included representatives from the Subject Centre for Art and Design, and the HE Academy, as well as colleagues from other HEIs, and have explored themes such as Teaching Large Groups, Group Assessment and developing curriculum models.

Across the HE sector staff development events evidence key programmes that address a range of learning and teaching considerations. Sue Palmer comments upon ‘...twice yearly research days where staff and invited speakers talk about their pedagogical research’) and Paul Bartholomew (NTF) reports ‘Our Faculty runs a full programme of learning and teaching events and has a learning and teaching research cluster (36 members currently)’.

Deliberations on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, based in the Centre for Academic Professional Development at London Metropolitan University, provides some very useful information that colleagues from across the sector can draw from via their website:

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/deliberatons/>

Internal, national and international symposia, workshops and conferences are important activities encouraged and provided by HEIs in their quest to address scholarly engagement. Such events are essential and the publications that are produced as a result make significant contributions to the sector. Institutions encourage staff to attend key conferences (usually through the payment of fees and through encouraging staff to present papers). These include: The H.E. Academy Annual Conference, The International Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning organised by the Educational Development Centre, City University and London, Society for Research into Higher Education Annual Conference as well as the myriad of discipline specific events held nationally.

The UK Subject Centres are discipline specific and provide a core base for institutions and their staff to develop their knowledge and understanding of debates, developments, issues and activities across their related sector. The Subject Centres provide opportunities for collaborative work and offer a wealth of information and advice relating to a variety of topics as well as facilitating and promoting networking opportunities.

Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)



The profile of staff qualifications is important for institutions and the encouragement of staff to undertake PGCE courses is firm. Institutions require all new and inexperienced staff (less than 2 years teaching) to undertake the qualification whilst established staff without such are encouraged to secure H.E. Academy registered practitioner status.

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, like many HE institutions, has established a dedicated in-house course leading to a PGCE, with HE Academy accreditation. Staff who undertake the course are supported by mentoring provision and allocated remission from teaching (30 hours). Courses make an important contribution to the culture of the academic community. The AIB course explores and informs a variety of issues and aspects relating to learning and teaching themes, styles and demands of art and design and media specialisms. PGCE graduates act as mentors to new staff and their work celebrated by an internal conference that shares the pedagogic outcomes across the institute. In other institutions internal fellows are encouraged to act as mentors for new staff on the PGCE.

Research and Scholarship Policy and Committee—Towards Funding

The funding of scholarly and research activities is critical and this is addressed through professional development funds and grants that support the development of new initiatives in teaching and learning. Sue Palmer comments “Pedagogical research is funded internally to a greater extent than blue sky

research” and Paul Bartholomew states “My Faculty offer a curriculum innovation fund to support small scale projects in learning and teaching.”

Funding enables staff to present and publish their teaching experiences, innovations and practice regionally, nationally, and increasingly, internationally.

The AIB acknowledges the importance of staff development through a variety of activities that aim to inspire, inform and develop the individual. The annual Staff Development Review process enables staff to review and discuss their activities and aspirations and to identify required support. As an institution the AIB is relatively generous in its encouragement and support of staff development and research and scholarly activities. The Research and Scholarship Committee equally funds projects relating to pedagogy and practice and supports and funds Masters and other postgraduate awards in teaching and learning. The Institute’s Teaching Quality and Enhancement Funding targets key areas that have cross Institute importance, such as e-learning and strategies to integrate theory with practice.

Teaching Fellowships, Awards and Chairs

Institutional encouragement through reward schemes appears to take various forms including teaching prizes, Vice Chancellor’s awards for excellence in teaching, and the award of Chairs for excellence in learning and teaching, although the practice varies throughout the sector.

One contact commented that the financial incentives and rewards offered can be viewed as an additional pressure upon staff to perform and achieve. The institutional encouragement of staff has to be sensitive to staff perceptions.

Increasingly a number of institutions have organised Internal/University Teaching Fellowship Schemes and promoted the notion of ‘champions’ to acknowledge excellence in learning and teaching to reward and celebrate staff achievement. The reward scheme acts as an incentive to staff to pursue scholarly activities and encourages appointed Fellows to share their knowledge and experience with colleagues. As Mary Thornton (NTF) comments “Institutional Teaching Fellows are required to contribute to the Centre [for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching] for a day a week and take a lead half a day a week in their own disciplines’.

Paul Bartholomew, Senior Academic in Learning and Teaching, Faculty of Health and Community Care at the University of Central England (NTF), comments, “We have a university Teaching Fellowship Scheme which includes a small yearly honorarium for three years. Within my faculty there is a learning and teaching task group fellowship (nominally) that has backfill funding for two days per week release plus a small yearly honorarium—this typically runs for two years.’

Financial reward in particular appears to encourage and facilitate the opportunity for further scholarly activities and increasingly supports team activities. Financial reward initiatives enabled the pilot studies that otherwise might not exist. Jeff Hellyer, Dean of Art and Design at University College Falmouth reports that in the current academic year (2004-05) six mini-fellowships of £3,000 each have been funded to reward and encourage staff as the institution aims to move towards greater participation in, and contribution to national debates, research and scholarly outcomes.

Excellence in learning and teaching is now a criterion for promotion embedded within many institutions. John Last, Deputy Principal at the Arts Institute at Bournemouth identifies this reward structure as clear evidence of the institution valuing the importance of learning and teaching achievements and recognising the work of the individual accordingly.

Nomination and support of applications to the HE Academy’s National Teaching Fellowship Scheme is a very important institutional move which acknowledges, encourages, and supports staff in relation to scholarship achievements. Within the Art and Design sector institutions are increasingly encouraging staff to prepare for nomination as it is recognised that the nature and nuances of their specialist discipline should be positioned increasingly within the context of contributions to the scholarship

of learning and teaching. For many staff this has not been the emphasis or perception of their activities in the past. Art and Design institutions are increasingly drawing upon the experience of National Teaching Fellows to help their staff in the development of their applications. Likewise institutional support and encouragement of HE Academy membership is also important to facilitate the opportunity for staff to engage with and contribute to regional and national debates and developments relating to learning and teaching. At AIB staff have embraced the benefits and opportunities made possible by HE registered practitioner status and 28% of staff are members whilst the national percentage is 10.4% (HE Academy website data.)

HE Art and Design

Within the Higher Education sector in the UK many Art and Design institutions are less developed in areas relating to learning and teaching research and scholarship activities than fellow institutions and disciplines. Indeed there is evidence to suggest that there has been less written about art, design and media teaching and learning than other disciplines. Art and Design institutions recognise that they are fairly young or relatively new to the area of scholarship of learning and teaching, however, there is clear evidence that institutions are 'quietly proactive' (Hellyer, 2005) and very much determined to contribute to, and indeed work at the forefront of such, in relation to their specialist fields.

Conclusion

The Report 'Review of current pedagogic research and practice in the fields of post-compulsory education and lifelong learning' comments that 'Teaching and Learning are frequently used co-jointly, to cover all possibilities with little recognition of the distinctiveness of each' (2002, 43). Thankfully this relationship is being addressed increasingly through research, debate and the dissemination of information and experiences. Strong evidence exists within the UK HE sector to confirm that the scholarship of teaching and learning is very much alive and kicking in institutions, and across the disciplines, and that the nuances and distinctiveness of teaching and learning are increasingly understood. Universities celebrate their intentions, activities and achievements. Project studies and their outcomes, as presented and published, identify the rich diversity of this scholarship. The drive of the individual, encouraged and supported by their institution, working within and across the sector and beyond is important. Thankfully a wealth of events, opportunities and material is increasingly available to allow the reflective practitioner to engage with the scholarship of learning and teaching in real depth.

How institutions encourage the scholarship of learning and teaching is clear. How this is monitored and the extent to which staff respond requires greater consideration and investigation. The responsibility for the development of the scholarship of learning and teaching is a shared one. Some colleagues from universities commented upon the apparent complacency of their institutions and suggested a 'pretty primitive' approach to the scholarship of learning and teaching and that a top down vision and strategic plan for teaching and learning were missing. Comment was made that institutions give money but there is very little emphasis on deliverables or support/encouragement to publish/disseminate outcomes. Conversely observations suggest that there are staff who appear to perceive other activities to have greater importance than institutional teaching and learning agendas.

Learning and teaching related activities depend heavily upon the available funding and how institutions respond to learning and teaching issues. Financial constraints limit the extent of scholarship activities. However, institutions and organisations do appear to invest in, encourage and celebrate the scholarship of teaching and learning positively through a variety of grants, prizes, awards and promotion opportunities. There is still much work to be done to ensure an appropriate understanding and engagement with the scholarship of learning and teaching within HE institutions and their staff.

Lee S. Schulman, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching argues that, "for an activity to be designated as scholarship it should manifest at least three key characteristics: it should be public, susceptible to critical review and evaluation, and accessible for exchange and use by other members of one's scholarly community." http://www.doiit.gmu.e/Archives/feb98/andybass_1a.htm

How these three characteristics are addressed needs to be considered carefully. Professor Lesley-Jane Eales-Reynolds (NTF) comments that 'Projects seem to be completed, but from what I can gather, there is no central repository of skills/expertise (something we're hoping the CETL [Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning] will address) and the outcomes are very localised to a particular department or even programme and so there is little opportunity for wider embedding' (2005). This observation is interesting and highlights the need for further development to ensure that institutions do embrace the embedding of scholarly activities and outcomes so that they are shared, critically reviewed and evaluated by the wider community.

Schulman talks of 'pedagogical solitude' <http://www.stolaf.edu/depts/cila/InnovateConf//Proposals.htm> and the need for the individual to communicate, self reflect, peer review and share. Communities are supportive of collaboration in increasingly diverse and dynamic ways. What is particularly exciting is the increasing opportunity to work with international colleagues. We in the UK have a great deal to learn from the exquisite wealth of material that has been produced by our colleagues internationally.

The scholarship of teaching and learning is an essential professional activity that must incorporate appropriate dissemination debate, analysis and evaluation. It is an important field in which our engagement may further enhance the quality and depth of professional practice in higher education and will ultimately lead to enhancement of the student learning experience.

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