Scholarship and Research in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

What is scholarship and research in learning and teaching?

Scholarship of teaching involves

- engagement with research into teaching and learning;
- critical reflection of practice by self and peers; and
- communication and dissemination about the practice of one's subject. [1]

It engages with the customary principles of academic enquiry:

1. critical questioning;

2. critical review by self and peers;

3. evidence-based conclusions;

4. wide dissemination of research outcomes; and

5. ethical behaviour.

- It is practice based so that students benefit from the process of the research as well as outcomes;
- It is trans-disciplinary as it focuses on the processes of learning and teaching in higher education; and
- It is also discipline specific because the processes of teaching and learning may vary by discipline.

USQ's definitions

Research is taken to mean systematic and rigorous investigation aimed at the discovery of previously unknown phenomena, the development of explanatory theory and its application to new situations or problems, and the construction of original works of significant intellectual merit.

Scholarship refers to the analysis and interpretation of existing knowledge aimed at improving, through publications, teaching or by other means of communication, the depth of human understanding.

http://www.usq.edu.au/resources/71.pdf

Why is the scholarship of teaching and learning important?

Benefits for teaching and student learning?

- Knowledge about how students learn in specific disciplines
- Evidence based change
- Evidence for effective teaching and curriculum
- Expand repertoire of ideas and strategies

Benefits for academic staff

- Inform teaching and learning practice
- Develop your teaching portfolio
- Evidence for applications for teaching awards
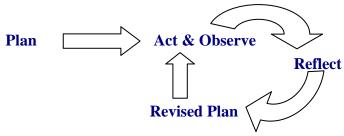- Gather evidence towards promotion
- Produce RQF publications

---

[1] Healey, M. (2000) Developing the scholarship of teaching in Higher Education: a discipline-based approach. Higher Education Research and Development 19(2), 169-189.

How do I research teaching and learning in higher education?

(http://www.sitesupport.org/actionresearch/ses3_act1_pag1.shtml#)

- Teaching and learning scholarship is **practice-based**. Therefore, normally it involves some kind of intervention to address a perceived problem, or evidence that students are not learning. This evidence may be derived from a review of student performance on assignments or student evaluations of their learning in a particular course. As a consequence, teaching and learning scholarship engages with a reflective, action research approach, which may include the **full range of qualitative or quantitative** research methods.

- **Action research** involves an intervention, or piece of social action, designed to enhance a particular situation. The outcomes, in terms of process and product, are monitored. As depicted in the following diagram action research is reflective and self-critical: one piece of social action may raise further questions, further research and result in more social change.

Plan → **Act & Observe** → **Reflect** → **Revised Plan**

Getting started with Teaching and Learning Scholarship

1. Identify an issue
2. Develop researchable questions that will give rise to improved teaching practice
3. Read background literature
4. Develop a strategy or intervention
5. Gather and analyse data
6. Reflect on the action, dissemination of results
7. Address teaching and curriculum matters arising from the results

USQ's examples of Teaching scholarship from ePrints

- Preliminary essay plans: assisting students to engage academic literacy in a first year communication course. (Kiernan, Lawrence and Sankey, 2006), **http://eprints.usq.edu.au/archive/00001145/**

- Progressive teaching of mathematics with tablet technology. (Loch and Donovan, 2006) **http://eprints.usq.edu.au/archive/00001716/**

- Computer Assisted Assessment of SQL Query Skills. (Dekeyser, de Raadt and Lee, 2007) **http://eprints.usq.edu.au/archive/00001180/**

If publication is envisaged, then projects must have ethics clearance.
http://www.usq.edu.au/research/ethicsbio/human/

Resources

LTSU Contact Associate Professor Janet A Taylor, X2821; taylorja@usq.edu.au

Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) See HERDSA Guides on:

- Improving Teaching Through Action Research by David Kember and Mavis Kelly
- Up the Publication Road by D Royce Sadler
  http://www.herdsa.org.au/)