

LEARNING MATTERS at LINGNAN

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From the Editor:

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'Learning Matters at Lingnan' are short papers that aim to promote a dialogue on teaching and learning. I encourage all staff to consider this as a vehicle for sharing thoughts on educational issues as they might affect us at the University. If you feel you have something which might be appropriate for inclusion in an issue of this publication, then please forward it to the TLC. I would be delighted if staff (and not only academic staff) from outside the Teaching and Learning Centre were to be prominent or even occasional contributors.



Let's Talk About Teaching

Many of us still conceive teaching as a private and solitary activity that takes place behind closed doors — my course and my classroom, as we always put it. Hence, the call to make teaching 'community property' runs contradictory to the strong norm of privacy that is embedded in the culture of teaching in higher education settings.

The idea of teaching as community property has been promoted vigorously by Lee Shulman of Stanford University and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Making teaching a topic for communal discourse addresses the goal of elevating teaching as a form of scholarship. Just as with other forms of scholarship, public examination, debate, and reflective critique enriches the inquiry of teaching and learning, resulting in an increased understanding of the complexity of teaching, and promoting teaching as a valued activity discussed and reflected upon by individual scholars as well as by the professional community.

Scholarship of Teaching

The Carnegie Foundation publication *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990) suggests that there are at least four kinds of scholarship: discovery, integration, application and teaching. The first three categories of scholarship sound very familiar, in concept if not in terminology. *Scholarship of discovery* is about research and performance that add to our knowledge base and the intellectual climate of a campus. *Scholarship of integration* draws together and interprets diverse kinds of knowledge; and *scholarship of application* applies knowledge to practical problems. The term *scholarship of teaching*, however, offers a new way of thinking about the intellectual and applied work of teaching within one's own field and across disciplines and professions. The scholarship of teaching is 'problem posing about an issue of teaching and learning, study of the problem through methods appropriate to disciplinary epistemologies, application of results to practice, communication of results, self-reflection, and peer review' (Carnegie Teaching Academy, 1998).

Lunchtime seminars on teaching

To call something scholarship is to claim that it is public rather than private, that it is susceptible to peer review and criticism, and that it can be built upon by others. Shulman (1993) argues that only when teaching becomes 'community property' rather than isolated, individual action will it be valued. By talking about teaching, we are moving towards a public and exchangeable discourse about teaching and learning, which is a key ingredient in transforming conversations about instructional matters to a scholarship of teaching and learning that occupies a central role in the teaching academy and on the university campus.

There are many possible ways of promoting the teaching academy and the scholarship of teaching on campus. One approach is to create a community of scholars who feel obligated to share their ideas through publication, presentation, and talking about teaching and learning because going public is the ultimate test of the quality of an idea. A scholar is someone who is communal. Scholarship entails a responsibility to 'pass it on', to exchange what you have learned, what you have found, what you have invented, what you have created, with the other members of your community, assuming that they will do the same for you.

To support serious scholarship directed at teaching and learning at this University, the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), starting in the new academic year, will organise and host a series of lunchtime meetings for colleagues to come together to talk about teaching and learning; and to share practices and insights into strategies for solving practical and intriguing problems both within and outside the classroom.

The idea behind this is to overcome intellectual isolation by creating a new, multidisciplinary community of shared interests and work. I believe that in the long run advances in the scholarship of teaching can no longer be sustained by the efforts of isolated scholars working alone or in loose networks. Institutions must therefore develop more formal structures to support it and to provide platforms for the work of scholars of teaching, including forums for their scholarly exchanges and experience sharing.

I look forward to seeing you at the lunchtime seminars on teaching and learning.

Maureen Tam
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References

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Shulman, L. (1993) Teaching as community property: Putting an end to pedagogical solitude. *Change*, 25(6), 6-7.