

Change and transition to the scholarship of teaching and learning

***Dr. Balbir Kaur Gurm,
Transformative Dialogues Editor-in-Chief***

One thing that is constant in our lives is change. In the work-life of an educator, change is part of the teaching and/or learning process and part of how educators think about teaching. In teaching, there is a trend to think of teaching as intellectual work, as another profession. Pat Hutchins of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching observes teaching is a set of practices that include preparation, documentation, inquiry and improvement in relation to standards. Viewing teaching as intellectual work was not new for Aristotle, one of the prominent philosophers of Western thought, who stated “teaching is the highest form of understanding.” Since Aristotle, what has changed is the international teaching community’s view on teaching in higher education.

For centuries the focus of universities was research and the creation of knowledge. Over the last decade, with the efforts of many scholars and the creation of several organizations focused on teaching/learning such as the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), there is a move to realize that when educators accept employment in post-secondary organizations, they become members of two professional communities, that of their discipline and that of the teaching profession. Many post-secondary organizations encourage all their educators, including those with doctoral degrees, to take courses on teaching and complete post-graduate teaching diplomas. I recently learned from colleagues in the United Kingdom that some of their universities are even making a teaching certificate mandatory for all educators who want to teach in the universities.

All professions include the characteristics of service (work toward improving society), understanding (bodies of theory that are tested and reformulated), practice (the real world test of theories), judgment (making decisions in the complex world in changing realities of application), learning (changes due to knowledge gained from experience) and community (both public and specialty group). These characteristics apply to everyone who teaches. As post-secondary educators make personal transitions themselves and as members of the teaching profession, post-secondary organizations must also change to create a supportive culture as educators work through uncertainty. Post-secondary educators are mainly hired for their discipline expertise and not their expertise in teaching. While educators try to learn about the profession of teaching through experience, reflection and collaboration, organizations need to create a culture that supports this process. Educators need to be able to write about their intentions, goals and practice, and reflect on what they did and why they did it. Educators need to be able to dialogue openly about what worked and what didn’t work without worrying about repercussions. Organizations need to create a culture where collaborative learning is encouraged. Central to this open collaboration is a climate of trust, open communication, interdependence, and social justice. Organizations need to support these personal and community transitions. This transition by educators and

organizations will improve understandings of the academy. When dialogues and transitions occur in public spaces, they are the foundation of the scholarship of teaching and learning. Yet, the scholarship of teaching and learning is in constant transition because post-secondary educators are always engaging, documenting, questioning, displaying, dialoguing and coming to new understandings of new sets of learners with whom they interact in complex environments. Also, as educators engage with students and try to understand students' perspectives, they co-create knowledge and this teaching/learning environment. Another change that is making this transition more complex is the advent of technology. As more courses are offered in on-line or hybrid formats and many more resources are being posted online, what constitutes a teaching/learning environment or teaching/learning interaction is also changing. This constant battle to engage with new technologies and multiple resources is a constant challenge that contributes to the change and uncertainty of SoTL. It is exactly then that new understanding emerges and goes through transformation with each teaching/learning experience that is the scholarship of the teaching profession.

This journal, *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal*, is the evidence of the scholarship of teaching and learning. It brings together experiences and reflections from multiple disciplines from the international community of educators to examine, reflect and discuss their transition and engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning, not only through traditional academic papers but also other digital formats. This journal does not privilege submissions based on type of submission or source of knowledge. Knowledge can be generated from disciplines, materials and teaching settings, organizational research, learning, and from practice. The intent of this journal, *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal*, is to make visible the complexity of the enterprise of teaching to improve our understanding of the teaching/learning process. This journal is one way to collect the knowledge of educators and create a community, so the community can create principles and establish case literature as well as deepen understandings of teaching/learning theories and principles. Although there are assumptions, by Instructional Skills Workshop Facilitators, that good teaching includes a bridge or hook (motivation and rationale for learning), learner objectives (intent of learning), pre-assessment (assessment of what the learner already knows), participatory learning (learner engagement), and post-assessment (demonstration of learning) and summary or closure (reflection and integration of new learning), there is no generally accepted clear precise definition of what good teaching is. By constantly reflecting, coming to new understandings and acting, an emerging understanding of the complex elements that constitute good teaching will emerge.

I am grateful to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching for accepting us into the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) cluster on building SoTL communities (<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/programs/sub.asp?key=21&subkey=2021&topkey=21>) and giving us the impetus to start this reflection and dialogue with international partners so we can take this journey together. It is my sincere hope that we, the educational community, can encourage colleagues to join our journey to understand SoTL and then to challenge the assumptions that only academic papers are worthwhile and that only educational theorists engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Sincerely

Balbir Kaur Gurm, Editor-in-Chief