Faculty Learning Communities: The Heart of the Transformative Learning Organization

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This paper explores some of the theoretical background Faculty Learning Communities and Teaching Commons and the locations of their cultures as they develop through the dialogues of those members of faculty in North American higher education who are interested in the scholarship continuum, from Scholarly Teaching through to the myriad aspects of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) along with the collegial contact and conversations that nurture this work.

1.   A Need for Inclusion and Transformation

Dr. Heather Kanuka, Associate Director, of the Teaching & Learning Centre at the University of Calgary writes about faculty becoming more and more stressed and dissatisfied over time in teaching and notes that "The reasons behind faculty dissatisfaction include: lack of collegial relationships resulting in experiencing isolation, separation, fragmentation, loneliness, competition, and sometimes incivility; lack of integration between personal and professional lives; little or no feedback, recognition and/or reward; lack of a comprehensive tenure system, and; unrealistic expectations and insufficient resources and support systems (Johnsrud, 1994; Rice, Sorcinelli, & Austin, 2000; Sorcinelli, 1994)."

> *"A community of inquiry is based upon discourse and the security to explore and challenge ideas. It bridges the private reflective world of the individual and public shared world of society. A community of inquiry provides the opportunity to iterate between the reflective and shared worlds. The purpose and value is for learners to take responsibility for the construction of knowledge and learn to learn while being open to societal knowledge and the experiences of others. – University of Calgary paper on Communities of Inquiry (2006)*

There is a hunger for connection and conversation that permeates all of these spaces, both physical and virtual, as well as a declaration of a desire to share and encourage sharing of ideas, artifacts, and projects. As institutions of higher education strive to remake themselves in a constantly changing world of increased globalization coupled with local concerns and focus, the older paradigms of isolation and 'ivory towers' need to give way to institutions of learning becoming 'learning institutions' themselves. The interplay of these globalizing forces does not exist so much in opposition but rather in a contradictory and "… massive two-fold process involving the interpenetration of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism" (Robertson 1997 p.73) where the particular – situational decisions according to a group standard – are becoming more universal as information and connectivity expand exponentially via the internet and the ease of travel for many people. Meanwhile, the "global village" is becoming more particular. This complex interaction and synthesis of globalizing and localizing tendencies has been called "glocalization" (Spybey, 1996; Appadurai, 1990; A. Scott, 1997) and is a key facet of the

globalization of knowledge. Glocalization, particularly where a merging of global opportunities and local interests occurs, is at the heart of both engaging in good teaching practice as well as expanding and sharing it across disciplinary, institutional, and national boundaries. This academic work of teaching is also deeply embedded in cultural and intercultural practice and reaches well beyond the 'halls of learning' and on into 'communities of learning' where academics have the opportunity to become transformational leaders through their ethical and moral applications within the scholarly teaching that they do. Supporting this view, Wilcox and Ebb, in The Leadership Compass: Values and Ethics in Higher Education, 1992 note that:

> *Work in academic life, like any other kind of work, is laden with values and has a moral dimension that emerges from the ethical reflection characteristic of institutional self-scrutiny. Students are vulnerable before and unequal to the scholar; trust must characterize faculty-student relationships. Ultimately, however, professorial knowledge is not proprietary but communal, dedicated to the welfare of society through the transmission and extension of knowledge. The role of the scholar can be conceived in four phases: teaching, discovery, application, and integration, each of which has its own ethical assumptions and problems (Boyer 1990). Often the competing needs of these roles cause conflicts for the scholar teacher/researcher. In responding to these problems, the scholar must balance individual with group realities and requirements. An important pedagogical conception to help achieve the balance is the learning community."* (ERIC, 1992, p.1)

Further to this necessity of finding ways of balancing the myriad impacts of acting within the complex and changing structure of modern society and one's own local community, those who dedicate themselves and focus on teaching and learning need the critique and support of other like minded individuals to build a framework to further and also share human knowledge.

> *Both scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching are vital to the life of the academy. The purpose of scholarly teaching is to affect the activity of teaching and the resulting learning, while the scholarship of teaching results in a formal, peer-reviewed communication in appropriate media or venues, which then becomes part of the knowledge base of teaching and learning in higher education. (Laurie Richlin and Milton D. Cox, 2004. p. 127-128)*

In real terms, it means that every member of the institution now has a need to learn and develop themselves in reflexive ways that support student learning. Sondra Patrick and James Fletcher (1998, p. 158) "We believe that, because it is student centered, focusing learning offers great promise for colleges and universities as they attempt to address current challenges … In other words, colleges and universities must themselves become what Peter Senge (1990) calls a "learning organization". The key features of learning organizations are: shared ideals, collaboration, flexibility, and reflection." Senge cautions us "All disciplines matter. … People discover that the best systemic insights don't get translated into action when people don't trust one another and cannot build genuinely shared aspirations and mental models." (p. xviii)

The concept of shared vision started with two people wanting a similar outcome coupled with the commitment that each will help the other to achieve it. For sharing to occur there must be a dialogue (from the Greek dialogos – dia meaning through and logos being words) that leads to mutual understanding and what Gervase Bushe (2001) describes as "learning conversations" among those who engage in these dialogues. He points out that we all have experiences and then we try and make sense of these. "Experience is not what happens to you but the reactions you create out of what happens to you moment by moment." (p.8) It is only when we describe our observations, what we are thinking about them, how we feel, and what we want and then let others do the same, that we are able to get beyond our assumptions and learn from our dialogues. This fits well with Richard Tiberius' 1995 description of "individualized consultations", where, "The consultation process is described by Bergquist and Phillips (1977) as "a systematic, confidential, structured exchange of ideas, perceptions and suggestions between a faculty development consultant … and an individual faculty member, the purpose of which is to identify and improve teaching strengths and weaknesses" (p.69). the typical process includes four stages: gathering information about he instructor's teaching, analyzing that information, developing and implementing strategies for improvement, and evaluating the impact those strategies through the collection and analysis of new information." (p. 192).

These "exchanges of ideas, perceptions and suggestions" can be expanded across both small and large faculty communities of interest and is the type of conversation that builds relationships with others to foster the "Team Learning" that Senge says is at the heart of the learning organizations, where two or more people, pursuing common goals, make meaning together and become aligned through dialogue, critically analyze the systems in which the team functions with the intent of realizing a shared vision of a preferred future. Lave and Wenger (1991) conceptualize learning as a social relationship process where people participate in learning within a community at a variety of levels. This interaction is dependent on their connections, length of time with the group, and how they are seen by others. Over time and dialogue, these social relationships develop, along with attendant intersubjective learning among the members leading to the potential emergence of a supportive learning community.

Communities of Practice describe not only the grouping of people who are interested and intent on practicing in a particular area, but also the community that develops and affects each member in their personal practice. Jeanne Lave and Wenger identified this in terms of social practice, (*Situated Learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, 1991) where learning takes place through our interactions with others. There is an intersubjectivity that develops through the interactions, interpersonal communications and interdependences within the community which co-creates itself through participation and mutuality. Stewart, in *Foundations of Dialogic Communication,* (p.186) describes this as the "subject-object relationship". As Wenger points out, this intersubjectivity is a necessary part of being a community member and affects individual power and influence. Wenger, writing with McDermott, & Snyder (2002), in *Cultivating Communities of Practice – A Guide to Managing Knowledge*, cautions:

> *But with a community, your power is always mediated by the community's own pursuit of its interest. You cannot violate the natural developmental processes*

and dynamics that make a community function as a source of knowledge and arbiter of expertise, including members' passion about the topic, the sense of spirit and identity of the community, and its definition of what constitutes expert performance. Rather, you must learn to understand and work with these processes and dynamics. (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder 2002, p.13)

They define:

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.

These people don't necessarily work together every day, but they meet because they find value in their interactions. As they spend time together, they typically share information, insight, and advice. They help each other solve problems. They discuss their situations, their aspirations, and their needs. They ponder common issues, explore ideas, and act as sounding boards. They may create tools, standards, generic designs, manuals, and other documents—or they may simply develop a tacit understanding that they share. However they accumulate knowledge, they become informally bound by the value that they find in learning together. (p. 4-5)

This connectivity is not unique to the academy. In fact, the academy in its present state would be well advised to return to an older practice of learning communities. In 1902, in his preface to the second edition of The Division of Labor in Society (New York: Free Press, 1964), sociologist Emile Durkheim traced the history of professional groups from ancient times through the twentieth century. Durkheim argued that occupational communities could provide the social connections that were needed to strengthen the fabric of societal trust and mutual commitment. (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, footnote 2, Chapter 1)

More recently, David Kaufman (1995), noted in his article, Preparing Faculty as Tutor in Problem-Based Learning, that:

Knowles' (1980) principles of adult learning also provided useful criteria for the design of our faculty development process. These principles have been elaborated by Carroll (1993) as follows: faculty need to know "why" they should learn something; faculty already possess much experience to be used as a learning resource; faculty will become ready to learn after a "need to know" is experienced; the faculty development program should be task-centered with an emphasis on immediacy and application; and faculty demonstrate a high degree of self-direction and therefore should not be "forced" to participate in exactly the same way. (p.116)

This rationale fits will with both Durkheim's history lesson and the need for connection and learning that individuals and organizations have in our ever changing educational environment. These deep and meaningful learning conversations and discourse are at the heart of higher education. In a presentation titled, *Learning in Communities of Practice: a journey of self*, Etienne Wenger invites his audience to join him in a learning conversation to explore the implications of a social learning theory for

transformational learning networks and to examine how we think about institutions of learning including both schools and other institutions where situational learning occurs when people interact. (http://www.iathe.org/eng/media-community.asp)

Further, Wenger, et al (2002) suggests that "because communities of practice are organic, designing them is more a matter of shepherding their evolution than creating them from scratch" (p.51). They caution that "Community design is much more like life-long learning than traditional organization design. 'Alive' communities reflect on and redesign elements of themselves throughout their existence." (ibid, p.52) and attention must be paid to opening a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives where the insider's "understanding of the community's potential to develop and steward knowledge" is coupled with "an outside perspective to help members see the possibilities." (ibid p.54)

This form of active development requires the members to possess or develop a deep tolerance for ambiguity as there is no 'problem' to be solved, but rather a process of inquiry, reflection, and action to be undertaken that can deepen and enrich the educational environment.

2.   A Desire for Belonging and Transformation

The first year in a new teaching position, even if one is not new to teaching, is a time of learning and adapting to a new community such as Wenger describes and a new community member needs to interact with other community members to find where they fit and how they will influence the community to evolve in a direction that fits for them. Within a learning organization, this implies development and change and the need for continuous learning by individual instructors.

Henryk Marcinkiewicz and Terry Doyle, in New Faculty Professional Development, advocate, "promoting a culture of continuous learning among faculty" through an "extended program" that "showcases faculty development services, and demonstrates to new faculty the value and commitment that the institution places on continuous learning." (2004, p.20) He also notes that, "Being a new faculty member should not be a "trial by fire" but rather a development process. An academic year allows enough time for the new faculty to be presented with new ideas, practice what they are learning, to share what they know, to get acquainted with the culture and systems of the new institution, in short, to make the transition to their new profession and institution." (2004, p.2)

Faculty Learning Communities (FLC) are one way to develop and sustain and inter-collegial conversation that supports faculty at all levels of their acclimatization and enculturation, and can lead to intercollegial explorations of scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). According to Milton Cox "A faculty learning community is a special kind of 'community of practice'." (2004, from Wenger, 1998) Cox in 1999 defined "a faculty learning community as a cross-disciplinary group of ten or so teachers who engage in an extended (typically yearlong) planned program to enhance teaching and learning and which incorporates frequent activities to facilitate learning, development, and community building." (1999, p. 40) After working with FLCs for another five years, Cox has further expanded his views to move past cross-disciplinary

to interdisciplinarity: "A faculty learning community (FLC) is a cross-disciplinary faculty and staff group of size 6-15 (8 to 12 is the recommended size) engaging in an active, collaborative, yearlong program with a curriculum about enhancing teaching and learning and with frequent seminars and activities that provide learning, development, interdisciplinarity, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and community building."

Cox, (2004) is clear the FLCs are related to action learning sets and as such:

…are more than just seminar series or formal committees, project teams, or support, self-development, or counseling groups. They have several aspects in common: Both meet for a period of at least 6 months; have voluntary membership; meet at a designated time and in an environment conducive to learning; treat individual projects in the same way; employ the Kolb (1986) experiential learning cycle; develop empathy among members; operate by consensus, not majority; develop their own culture, openness, and trust; engage complex problems; energize and empower participants; have the potential of transforming institutions into learning organizations; and are holistic in approach."

This would be a good working application of the theoretical concept of intersubjectivity – how the experience and consciousness of participants is affected and/or influenced by the level and types of engagement with others – as proposed by Wenger, et al. The dialogic communication process creates shared meanings that are grounded in the evolving values of the group and the affects of the external environment in which it resides. Or, more specifically, these interactions allow the co-construction of interpretation and understanding of an individual's experience in the context of their collegial exchanges with peers and a community of peers develops who share these experience and meanings within a shared and relational (but not necessarily agreed to) worldview.

The idea of Faculty Learning Communities is also a way of working with and around the traditional academic culture that tends to be individualized, isolated, and focused only on disciplinary knowledge. This is often a hostile environment for faculty, particularly new instructors, who not only are striving to become good teachers but are embedded in institutions that are increasingly advertising the strength of the learning experience to students, increasing the pressure to excel in teaching. Couple this with the summative evaluations of new faculty and there is little room for creativity. Unlike the classical scientific problem, I subscribe to Randy Bass' notion that SoTL is not a "problem" but rather a study of those elements of teaching and learning that we want to know more about. As 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? (Bass, R. 1999, p. 1)

I believe that by taking a more appreciative and constructionist approach to development and change we can acknowledge the human-based organism that is the underpinning of our collective intersubjective reality. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a process to develop positive change in organizations. Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987) describe their development of appreciative inquiry as a form of action research that attempts to create new theories/ideas/images that aid in the developmental change of a system (Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987) quoted in Bushe (1998) p. 1). It is more than an organization development tool, rather, it is a "philosophy and orientation to change" (Watkins & Mohr (2001) p. 21) that is intended to take a positive and hopeful view of what is happening among the personnel in an organization and turn that into a pattern for organizational learning, design, and development.

The dominant theoretical rational for AI is post modernist European philosophy. From this point of view there is nothing inherently real or true about any social form. All social organization is an arbitrary, social construction. Our ability to create new and better organizations is limited only by our imagination and collective will. Furthermore, language and words are the basic building blocks of social reality. Rather than seeing language as a passive purveyor of meaning between people, post modernists see language as an active agent in the creation of meaning. As we talk to each other, we are constructing the world we see and think about, and as we change how we talk we are changing that world. From this perspective, theory, especially theory that is encoded in popular words or images, is a powerful force in shaping social organization because we "see what we believe". (Bushe, 1998, p.2)

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a Strengths based (appreciative) approach that works very well in changing human systems or in solving human systems problems (organizations, small and large groups – including classrooms, relationships, departments, etc.) Traditionally we have tended to use deficit-based approaches that see systems as mechanical and having problems that need to be fixed. AI sees the organism of organizations, like life itself, is a mystery to be embraced & understood

Gervase Bushe suggested "3 things that can form the basis of using AI as a change strategy:

1. Organizations have an inner dialogue made up of the things people say to each other in small confidential groups that are undiscussible in official forums of organizational business.

2. This inner dialogue is a powerful stabilizing force in social systems that accounts for the failure to follow through on rationally arrived at decisions. It is here where people's real thoughts and feelings about what is discussed in official forums are revealed and communicated.

3. This inner dialogue is mainly carried through the stories people tell themselves and each other to justify their interpretation of events and decisions." (p. 5)

He also offers that "all sizes of social systems can become stuck in an undiscussible paradoxical dilemma. One way out, and perhaps the only way out, is the development of new images that jostle conventional thinking and offer new ways of acting." (p. 6)

Dan Bernstein (2002) in an EDUCAUSE presentation on their National Learning Infrastructure Initiative argues that teaching is serious work and that it requires equally serious inquiries through the scholarly activity of inquiry into teaching and learning through a variety of means to build a community of intellectual work. He has pursued this inquiry very seriously himself, using his own classes and a carefully constructed series of instructional interventions that engaged his students and increased their interaction with the course materials. (in 1999 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) Workshop). Bernstein shares his methods and results with colleagues and creates high energy among them about how they might adapt these processes to their own classroom. Mary Taylor Huber, Senior Scholar, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching quotes Bernstein in 2006 as saying:

> *My desire is to subversively incite the SoTL within my institution. This includes encouraging interdisciplinary conversations, sharing, and collaborations that lead to real positive impacts on the teaching learning environment. Currently, I am using a viral approach. Everyday, there are opportunities to start and sustain conversations in this area. (UBC, SoTL presentation March 1, 2006)*

This "viral approach" develops the new images required to move forward in positive and productive ways with the individual, group, and organizational learning process that will sustain the academic community and contribute to society as a whole.

3. The Transformative Nature of Faculty Involvement in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

We have traditionally valued the scholarship of discovery, that is, primary disciplinary research and the subsequent publishing in peer reviewed journals, where the standard metric is numbers of articles published and how many times others cite these works, particularly within the discipline that they have risen from. Boyer broadened this focus to recognize Scholarship of Integration, Application and also of Teaching. The Carnegie Foundation has continued in this direction and currently supports a range of initiative through their Carnegie Advancement of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) program.

Scholarship starts with the solitary instructor in a classroom of students. Anyone who wishes to improve their practice might start with the basic inquiry of "What am I doing now? What is the effect of these practices on my student's learning? What might I do differently and how will this affect my students? However, when faculty start from this isolated and solo perspective, the lack of social construction may be enough of a barrier that their scholarly teaching never gets out of the classroom to be disseminated to their institutional colleagues and beyond to a larger community. If this is overcome and a

focus on scholarly teaching that enhances student learning in the classroom of one faculty member takes place then those students will benefit.

Is it then possible to move scholarly teaching into the realm of the scholarship of teaching and learning through dissemination of these results? Milton Cox (1999) identifies two types of FLC – "cohort-focused and issue-focused" and asks us to consider that:

> *Taylor (1997) examined research done at two large Australian universities on the way academics respond to pressures to adopt more flexible teaching practices. Four themes emerged from the research—tribalism, community, refuge (for safety), and the value of guiding principles for new practice; from these Taylor suggests five principles that might underlie the creation of faculty learning communities. They include time to do intensive learning, opportunities for cross-tribal conversation and collaboration about teaching, probing of belief systems and evaluation of teaching practices, refuges in which to explore new practices, and organizational support for these endeavors. (p.41)*

In an issue of New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 97, Spring 2004 which was devoted to building faculty learning communities, he also describes the long-term goals of an FLC program at most institutions as:

• *Build university wide community through teaching and learning*

• *Increase faculty interest in undergraduate teaching and learning*

• *Investigate and incorporate ways that diversity can enhance teaching and learning*

• *Nourish the scholarship of teaching and its application to student learning*

• *Broaden the evaluation of teaching and the assessment of learning*

• *Increase faculty collaboration across disciplines*

• *Encourage reflection about general education and the coherence of learning across disciplines*

• *Increase the rewards for and prestige of excellent teaching*

• *Increase financial support for teaching and learning initiatives*

• *Create an awareness of the complexity of teaching and learning (Cox, 2004, p. 10)*

Communities are a way to support SoTL and to publicize this work. In addition the premise of Appreciative Inquiry is that the direction of inquiry affects data collected, so that communities of practice that hold a particular focus, such as the SoTL, are more likely to locate useful information that can be implemented. All forms of scholarship include:

1. *Clear goals*

2. *Adequate preparation*

3. *Appropriate methods*

4. Significant results

5. Reflective critique

6. Effective presentation (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff 1997)

This basic criteria gives us the framework to start developing scholarly inquiry based learning communities of practice. There are many well educated people whose main interest and focus is on good teaching in their discipline. They want to make a difference in their own areas of expertise in the area of teaching. Where they connect with like minded colleagues, Communities of Practice develop where there are shared interests that develop into shared visions of what might be created together. Within educational institutions these are often called Learning Communities. The original term first appeared in academic surroundings to refer to groups of faculty and students who met to discuss and compare readings at the University of Wisconsin. This type of group have recently resurfaced and encompassed more models, including faculty learning communities where peers take the opportunity to reflect on and evolve their scholarship and conceptualization of any and all elements of their teaching and their students' learning. Some of the drivers of faculty learning communities and their accompanying scholarship of teaching and learning include: diversity of students, new educational and professional technologies, new ways of teaching and learning (service learning for example), increasing complexity in disciplines, interdisciplinary possibilities, research on learning, and an increasing return to teaching as a focus of education.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning has been defined by a group of Kwantlen faculty as: "The public display of the individual understandings and truths that educators have around their roles and what they do with that knowledge. This includes what we know about our diverse disciplines, subject matter, and how students learn coupled with our reflections on how we utilize this knowledge within the educational process. A vital part of this scholarship of teaching is our reflections on our practice as we further our understanding of the interplay of both process and content." (Gurm, Macpherson, et al. unpublished manuscript from 2005 Scholarship Project at Kwantlen)

These elements affect all faculty members to some extent, from providing an exciting new range of possibilities for research, using teaching techniques to improve student learning and retention, to, in some situations, being a nagging annoyance when individuals believe that what they do is both necessary and sufficient. Wenger, et al, note that: "Communities of practice do not reduce knowledge to an object. They make it an integral part of their activities and interactions, and they serve as a living repository for that knowledge." (2002, p.12)

This echoes the work of Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner back in 1969, in their book Teaching as a Subversive Activity, where they encourage "subversive teaching" as consciously and reflectively teaching using an "inquiry method", which creates quantum changes in both teaching and learning. Rather than delivering the truth to learners they advise teachers to delve into the complexity of how knowledge emerges in context. They describe the impact that they envisioned:

The inquiry method is not designed to do better what older environments try to do. It works you over in entirely different ways. It activates different senses,

attitudes, and perceptions; it generates a different, bolder, and more potent kind of intelligence. Thus, it will cause teachers and their tests, and their grading systems, and their curriculum to change. It will cause college admissions requirements to change. It will cause everything to change. (1969, p. 27)

Where can we find like minded colleagues to pursue this ideal? Where do these academic learning communities situate themselves in space and time? Where does the time come from to slow down enough to really listen, identify and then suspend assumptions and to build a connected learning community?

4.   Transforming the Space and Locations for Faculty Learning Communities

"All adventures, especially into new territories, are scary." - Sally Ride, astronaut

In all of this there is a need for heart, the courage to step out of the comfortable and into new territory. There is a need to create a "Teaching Commons" such as that postulated by Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchings (2005) where information can be freely shared to enhance everyone's teaching and learning, a conceptual space where educators can come together to share their scholarship of teaching and learning, both within and across disciplines. Their teaching commons is a place where knowledge circulates and becomes community, rather than private, property. Paradoxically, dissemination of this scholarship of teaching and learning is a key to further populating a Teaching Commons. Here, the aim needs to inclusive rather than exclusive. Huber and Hutchings (2005) describe this as a "big tent" where "the most important progress comes in the form of visions and images of what the future might look like if the scholarship of teaching and learning delivers fully on its promises." (p. 31) Mick Healey (2006) in his presentation at the University of Alberta Summit on the Integration of Research and Teaching, offered a plethora of quotes about the nature of the scholarship of teaching and learning and then asked his audience to consider why there might be so many opinions. It is clear that the field is broad and the scope of scholarship beyond easy containment, so this "tent" will need to be a big one. What 'container' shape, size, and invitation that will entice people to participate and create the conditions that will engage them and ease the beginning of these transformational dialogical conversations? This may be physical spaces or virtual spaces or even moving spaces that relocate in space and time depending on the needs of the community members. I would add that this is more than a sharing of information; it needs to be a thoughtful interaction that shares concepts and builds the meanings that actualize the learning community that meets the core needs of the members. The following are a few examples of ongoing processes and attempts to do this in higher education in the province of British Columbia.

Physical Locations

The grouping of faculty into Faculty Learning Communities – small groups to interact in a collaborative program that is intended to enhance teaching and learning, with seminars and activities spaced over a year – is the type of group that we developed and evolved at Kwantlen in the Fall and Spring semesters of 2005/2006. The project started as a way of oriented new faculty and connecting them to experienced faculty during their first year at Kwantlen. There is also an internal focus within the institution to

encourage and foster learning on all levels. Kwantlen's Vision is: "We are creating a new kind of undergraduate institution that combines learning, quality and community service in new ways to meet the needs of our students and our communities. Our strength is teaching and service excellence. We have the best teachers supported by the best services for students." (Kwantlen's Strategic Framework document, p. 1)

This was the first time a project like this has been implemented at Kwantlen, so we started with a small pilot and a targeted approach to new faculty coupled with a general invitation for experience and continuing faculty. A comprehensive series of teaching and learning focused workshop were scheduled for primarily half days in August. This series included a possible 60 hours of teaching/learning focused workshops. The educational divisions supported this initiative by earlier hiring and encouragement to take part. 80 faculty members spend a total of 822 hours in August at a variety of events before the start of the 2005 Fall semester. Current faculty responded to the opportunity to participate as well and there were 80 individuals who took part in events in August, 2005.

In conjunction with this core process, the inaugural Peer Mentoring groups, on August 24, 2005, started with the 31 faculty who signed up. The theme was Welcome to the "C-Side" and included beach decorations by Implementation Team and the creation of a relaxed space where faculty could get acquainted. This one day event culminated with the formation of peer mentoring groups and plans to meet over the next two semesters. This was a creative process among peers and a way to have everyone learn through collegial conversations, collaborative interactions, and sharing of information around teaching, learning, and professional development, including two internal lunches at the beginning of January and end of April. An online space was also set up on Lotus Notes for the sharing of information. Some faculty felt that they did not have the time to commit to this processes and the final grouping was 22 faculty who continued through to May. Participants were asked to give feedback at various points during the process and responded with suggestions that will make the program stronger for the next year.

Online Locations

The Institute for the Advancement of Teaching in Higher Education (IATHE) describes their Learning Community as focusing "focuses on the sharing of knowledge and resources relating to higher education" which fits this Teaching Commons model. They describe this Community as:

> *Our discussion group within facultydevelopment.ca provides the entry to our Virtual Community. This space offers a means to connect with others as we develop our own practice as teachers and developers. This learning community is constantly evolving and we encourage you to revisit often. In addition, our learning community is open to your contributions of materials and resources for use and further development within facultydevelopment.ca. When you login to facultydevelopment.ca you will find guidelines for submission of artifacts for the site. We operate as many other learning communities within higher education do. Much like a scholarly journal, we welcome your contributions, provide guidelines for your submissions, and we employ our own learning community in peer review*

to ensure the quality of our collective efforts. (Online at:
http://www.iathe.org/eng/community.asp)

The Learning and Instructional Design Centre (LIDC) at SFU has just opened another such space where their mission is t: "SCoPE brings together individuals who share an interest in education research and practice." This site was created to provide a forum, either short or long term, for communities of practice to communicate and archive resources that can be shared with other community members. (Online at: http://scope.lidc.sfu.ca/

BCcampus is "an online service provider connecting students and educators to programs and resources across all public post-secondary institutions in BC. Through BCcampus educators can:

- access development funds for creating online learning resources

- contribute and discover reusable online learning resources through a Shareable Online Learning Resources (SOL*R) repository

- find and participate in education technology professional development activities

- network with colleagues across the system and share best practices through communities of practice

- get support for delivery of online learning (Online at: http://www.bccampus.ca/

They are looking at ways to connect and link professional development initiatives around the province and across the country such as NCSPOD, STLHE-EDC, UCIPD, ACCC, and others that might be interested.

Moveable Locations

The University, Colleges, and Institutes Professional Development Committee (UCIPD) is a groups that has evolved over a number of years in BC, initially under the guidance of Diane Morrison at the Centre for Curriculum, Technology, and Transfer and more recently through the efforts of a small steering committee that maintains a listserv and organizes two meetings a year in various locations within the province. Here there is no specific home, either physically or virtually. Instead each institutional representative brings the news to the group at the semi annual meetings, where there is general sharing of what has happened, and collaboration and planning for the future. A key feature is the sharing of information and resources that has allowed various group members to avoid isolation and to engage in the collegial contact and conversations that nurture their scholarship.

Expandable Locations

The Instructional Skills Workshop is a comprehensive instructor development program that serves as the foundation for several professional development activities. The ISW Program has evolved over the past 25 years and has a council that oversees its operations. There are trained facilitators and contact people in most post secondary

institutions in BC and a web presence at http://www.iswnetwork.ca. As well, the network hosts two Facilitator Development training events in various locations and two Institutes (Spring in Naramata, and Fall on Bowen Island). This enduring learning community is also connected to others who deliver ISWs around the world.

5.   Finally

The enduring theme in working with Faculty Learning Communities and their nurturing of and through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is that focused collegial conversations and sharing of teaching/learning expertise are highly important when it comes to deepening and enriching scholarly practice and improving student learning to develop transformative learning organizations.

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