

The Educational Marathon of a New Scholar: Reflections on a Newcomer's Understanding of the Power of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

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When one runs a marathon he or she encounters a myriad of emotions ranging from jubilation to desperation, anger to calmness, fear to confidence and courage to regret. Each corner one curls over the pavement, each hill one's training shoes surmount, and each breath one inhales battling a mental game of physical exhaustion, releases the sensation of a new wave of emotion that one encounter's in completing the physical challenge of running the distance of 42 continuous kilometres. This is not unlike the emotional landscape one may encounter as a new educator in the post-secondary climate in the new millennium. Each new educational technology awaits to be implemented in a new course design; each new student you encounter brings a varied educational history waiting to be decanted, and each new colleague offers an opportunity for an exchange of pedagogical interests that may promote a sense of being overwhelmed and excited, frightened, yet competent, and eager, while timid.

When new to the role of being an educator, one cannot help but stop and reflect, as one may very likely do their entire career: What are my values as an educator? What can I offer my students academically? How can I effectively teach to the widest audience of students? What "turns on" student learning? In four months, from the start to the finish of the semester, what do I want students to leave your course having learned about your discipline? And finally, in a best-case scenario, what will students take away from our educational exchange leaving the doors of our classroom for the last time? Though these questions may appear simple in language and structure, the answers are much more complicated. Through the advancement of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) at a local, regional, national and international level, I have come to value the importance of personal reflection, scholarly enquiry and the benefit of making such research public.

Just as I am new to the profession of educational instruction, I am equally new to the scholarship of teaching and learning family. However, through reviewing the public literature produced by the exemplars and practitioners of SOTL, and by being involved in a SOTL project devoted to investigating students' perspectives on the conditions that create a stimulating and conducive classroom setting, I have come to understand that the meaning of SOTL lies in its strength to foster educational relationships between students, educators, colleagues and other interested parties that allow for sparks of innovation in approaches and applications to educational research, equally promoting the public dissemination of said research. The profundity of SOTL resides in its collegial networks of supporters who intimately understand your frustration, roadblocks, pursuits and outcomes as a person dedicated to investigating the intricacies of teaching and learning. You are not alone

as a researcher in what could otherwise be a potentially alienating academic research experience. Building on this, SOTL provides inter-sectional opportunities to learn from educational areas distinct from your own, allowing for collaboration across disciplines, faculties, communities, institutions, and international borders. In some cases, removing disciplinary and institutional barriers allows for the promotion of ingenuity and a synthesis of perspectives that would not otherwise be achieved in a closed research setting related to the educational enterprise. This speaks to the transformative ability of SOTL. SOTL means engaging eager practitioners of the educational profession who wish to explore the work in which they so passionately engage on a class-to-class, student-to-student, and scholar-to-scholar basis to come to a deeper understanding of our powers and strengths on a micro-individual scale impacting the macro-educational environment. Finally, SOTL allows a new budding scholar, dedicated to the art and craft of teaching and learning, run their educational marathon of research and contribute to the discourse and history of a valiant profession.