

## **Studying the Art of Teaching: A Personal Reflection on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning**

***Sean Conway, Faculty, Academic and Career Preparation Department, Kwantlen University College***

Good teaching, as we have all heard, is an art. However, when people say this, more often than not, they mean that good teaching is a talent, a natural ability, something one is born with, a gift - an art; it is not a craft, developed over long hours of careful and deliberate practice, not something that one can simply learn, from others and certainly not from books, let alone investigation and research. Yet, clearly, so much of art involves precisely the latter: practice, study, learning from others, investigation, and research.

When I first began teaching, I certainly subscribed to the idea that good teaching was a talent; and, in many ways, it is hard for me to deny that it is not. Some people do have a seemingly natural ability to articulate ideas clearly, to speak eloquently, to engage an audience, to share their enthusiasm, to think on their feet, to listen to others, or to bring out the best in those around them. However, now, I feel that teaching is more like a craft, and like any craftsperson - and like so many teachers - I have benefited immensely from sharing ideas with colleagues, from learning and reading about methods and approaches that people have articulated, from trying new approaches, from a wide range of experiences, and, of course, from putting a lot of effort and thought, I hope, into what I am doing and the effect that this has.

Nevertheless, I still feel that I could do far, far more of the above and in a more comprehensive, studied, and fruitful way. This, as I understand it, is what the scholarship of teaching and learning provides: a wide-ranging, academic, and productive way for teachers to investigate, improve upon, and exchange, not simply ideas and approaches, but also their active research into how they teach and how students learn.

The scholarship of teaching and learning looks at teaching and learning themselves as fields of study. It gives teachers the opportunity to examine and analyse their own methods of teaching and to measure how students respond to and learn by way of these methods. Also, it allows teachers to share their findings with a wide network of colleagues; these teachers, in turn, can explore the research into teaching and learning upon which their colleagues have embarked.

Through the scholarship of teaching and learning, teachers can study, in a formal and academic way, what methods best help their students learn and succeed, not only to benefit their own work but also the work of fellow teachers. Likewise, teachers can benefit from the work of a wide-range of other teachers engaged in similar research. Through this research, study, and exchange, the scholarship of teaching and learning allows teachers the opportunity to, quite simply, become better at what they do.

For myself, the scholarship of teaching and learning gives me a practical and valuable opportunity to continue to study and improve how I can help students learn. Also, it can allow me to benefit from and share approaches to teaching with a

widespread community of other teachers. Ultimately, I believe this kind of scholarship reveals that although good teaching may indeed be an art, it certainly should not be a mystery.