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INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

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This book examines the area of scholarship that has come to be known as SoTL, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Starting with an introduction to the field as it has developed, we continue to a series of chapters that take up a number of its aspects. These chapters constitute an anthology of SoTL work by a variety of authors in a variety of contexts. The book is the concrete result of a research collaboration, which spanned three groups of academics from Swedish and South African universities, and was funded by the Swedish Research Council Committee for Educational Science and the South African National Foundation for Research through long-term funding from the Swedish International Development Agency. The three groups of academics were educational researchers with a focus on learning and teaching in higher education, academic developers who are charged with supporting academic staff in developing pedagogical competence, and teachers in the disciplinary and professional subjects of study who have a SoTL interest. They were from the Universities of Gothenburg, Jönköping and Lund in Sweden, and the University of the Witwatersrand and Vaal University of Technology in South Africa. In the chapters they describe their own backgrounds and interests, as well as the results of their research, reflections and own developments in the field.

The scope of the project was twofold. First, it was to investigate the constitution of SoTL in consideration of the similarities and differences between national demands and expectations on the one hand, and individual interests and possibilities on the other. Second, it was to research the potential of SoTL as an agent of change in three respects: improving the quality of student learning, transforming the pedagogical practices of institutions of higher education, and potentially transforming society in the age of the knowledge society. To this end, we met on several occasions for seminars and workshops, sometimes joined by lecturers and teachers from the

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involved universities who were making a move towards SoTL, or experts in the field from other universities.

The main purpose of the book is to relate ways in which academics, as exemplified by the members of the project, may contribute to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning through their disciplinary knowledge and through their experience as university teachers. More generally, its purpose is to offer a reflection on the research questions that underpinned the project, namely:

- What constitutes the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning?
- What is its transformative potential at the individual, the institutional and the societal levels?

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES

The concept of SoTL was introduced by Ernest L. Boyer in 1990 as a complement to the concepts of scholarship associated with research, namely, discovery, integration and application, in an effort to raise the status of teaching as a foundational activity of the university, to make teaching count in the research universities. In the introduction to his seminal book, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, he wrote:

Research and publication have become the primary means by which most professors achieve academic status, and yet many academics are, in fact, drawn to the profession precisely because of their love for teaching or for service – even for making the world a better place. Yet these professional obligations do not get the recognition they deserve, and what we have, on many campuses, is a climate that restricts creativity rather than sustains it [...]. It's time to recognize the full range of faculty talent and the great diversity of functions higher education must perform.

(Boyer 1990:xii)

His work found a ready audience among educational researchers, academic developers and teachers in higher education, and since then, there have been a number of extensions and elaborations to the initial concept. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning brings student learning to the fore for teaching, since so much research has emphasised the importance of teachers' understanding of their students' learning for the success of their own teaching (Biggs & Tang 2011; Marton, Hounsell & Entwistle 1984; Prosser & Trigwell 1999; Ramsden 1992). At the same time, it is emerging as a field of research in itself, both for the academic staff who are actively engaged in adopting a scholarly approach to their teaching activities, and for the higher education research community who see the movement as important for the pedagogical development of the institution (Bowden & Marton 1998; Huber

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& Morreale 2002; Kreber 2001). There are now conferences and journals devoted to the field. It is a recurrent theme in the more established journals of research into higher education and it has become a central force in the training and development of academic staff. Thus, a community of scholars has formed who both share the research interest and also participate in dissemination of scholarly teaching practices to their colleagues.

As Boyer conceptualised SoTL, it involved teachers taking a systematic and reflective approach to their teaching; “habits of rationality” is a term he took from Wayne Booth’s essay ‘The Scholar in Society’ (Booth 1981, cited in Boyer 1996). Boyer did not strongly differentiate between scholarly teaching and excellent teaching. Ashwin and Trigwell have elaborated the notion, and have proposed a three-stage model of becoming a scholarly teacher (Ashwin & Trigwell 2004). In the first place, teachers investigate their teaching for their own ends, validate the insights with respect only to their own experience, and then make use of it in subsequent teaching: an ongoing process of development as an academic teacher. In the second stage, they investigate in order to inform colleagues; the knowledge is made public locally and it is validated locally. This can inform practice in a department; it contributes to ongoing academic development and is thus the form most widely considered to be scholarship in a narrow sense within the institution. At the third stage, scholarship is carried out in order to contribute to knowledge globally, through publication in journals and at conferences in the wider world, being validated by peer scholars of teaching and learning, and can therefore be classed as scholarship in the broadest sense, on a par with research in the disciplines.

In a number of works, Carolin Kreber has problematised aspects of the notion of scholarship in relation to the practices of teaching, questioning what characterises excellence, expertise and scholarship of teaching (Kreber 2002). She characterises the production of knowledge as the essential feature, though this differs between the three kinds of teaching. According to Kreber’s perspective, the excellent teacher can be seen as having an innate or well-trained talent, and his or her performance as a teacher is what is judged to be excellent. The expert teacher, on the other hand, engages in a self-regulatory process of critical reflection over their teaching, informed by the literature as well as their own experience: they are producing pedagogical content knowledge, as described by Shulman (1987), which can contribute to the improvement of their own practices and is communicable to colleagues. The scholarly teacher, according to Kreber, goes one step further, both relating theory to practice and making it public, as in Ashwin and Trigwell’s second and third stages of becoming a scholarly teacher.

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A question that has arisen, and has been often debated during our collaboration, concerns the extent to which scholarship is a desirable and an attainable state in the prevalent culture of higher education, with specific reference to Sweden and South Africa. And are there further features of teaching practices that can or should be considered before the rubric of 'scholarly' can be applied in those cultures? One such feature is the relation of the teacher's knowledge production to the student learning that it affords. Is the 'scholarly' teacher, who relates theory to practice in order to be judged an 'excellent' teacher, truly a scholar? Or should there be features of student learning in the intentions of a scholarly teacher? This question has been brought into focus in an interview study on how teachers perceive SoTL, conducted by educational researcher/developers who have student learning as a research focus, (Trigwell, Martin, Benjamin & Prosser 2000). They found four categories, the first pair of which focus on reading relevant literature, either for its own sake or in order to improve teaching. The second pair of categories are qualitatively different, in that they involve an intentional investigation of students' learning in the natural contexts of being taught and thereby improve the conditions for that learning.

An excellent example of such work is that of a medical academic who over six years consistently worked to improve the conditions for learning anatomy, in two year stages: first to find out how students went about their studies and their learning tasks, and to restructure them in order to bring about a deeper approach to the tasks; then to see how they conceptualised difficult concepts, and to revise the material around those concepts; and lastly to totally re-conceptualise the ways of teaching the subject and to write a new text-book that made use of the results (Eizenberg 1991). A teacher of business economics tells a similar tale, of 11 years of restructuring his teaching – a less systematic but equally intense knowledge production – in order to support his students' learning (November 1997). These two examples demonstrate how subject knowledge, the literature of research on learning and teaching in higher education, and systematically documented experience can relate the scholarship of teaching to the practice of teaching, can relate the whole to student learning, and can lead to scholarly publications in international journals.

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE NATURE OF SoTL

Although SoTL is now a well-established movement in academia, there remains some debate about its nature and how best to define or describe it. It will be apparent from the discussion so far that while there have been a number of issues and concerns that have shaped the development of the SoTL movement, its key features include a concern to improve student learning through a scholarly approach to teaching.

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This involves, among other things, systematic research and the dissemination of the knowledge generated by that research. Attempts to define SoTL formally have generally included these features. For example, Potter and Kustra have offered the following definition of SoTL:

The systematic study of teaching and learning, using established or validated criteria of scholarship, to understand how teaching (beliefs, behaviours, attitudes, and values) can maximize learning, and/or develop a more accurate understanding of learning, resulting in products that are publicly shared for critique and use by an appropriate community.

(Potter & Kustra 2011:2)

Although a general consensus seems to have emerged about what the key features of SoTL are, a degree of uncertainty and difference of opinion remains about the constitution of SoTL to the extent that a unifying conceptualisation or a common definition seems elusive (Trigwell 2013). Hutchings' statement in 2000 that "the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is not yet fully defined or conceptualized" (Hutchings 2000:2) still seems to hold true. For example, Gordon (2012) has called for the conceptual focus of SoTL to be strengthened; Kreber (2013b) has stated categorically that the constitution of SoTL is still something of a contested issue; and Felten has proposed a set of principles which can help to "clarify and demystify SoTL to those on our campuses who evaluate our work" (Felten 2013:121).

A comparison of Felten's principles with Potter and Kustra's definition of SoTL mentioned earlier is illustrative of the problem. His five principles of SoTL work are: "(1) inquiry into student learning; (2) grounded in context; (3) methodologically sound; (4) conducted in partnership with students; and (5) appropriately public" (Felten 2013:121). All the principles except the fourth correspond with points in Potter and Kustra's definition but are less exact about the "necessary conditions" (Potter and Kustra's words) that must be satisfied in order for work to be considered as SoTL work. This illustrates the nature of the contestations that make it difficult to establish a generally accepted unifying conceptualisation of the constitution of SoTL. This includes differences of opinion about the kind of enquiry that SoTL should recognise as systematic study, about what SoTL should recognise as being methodologically sound, and about what SoTL should recognise as 'appropriately public'. There are also differences in emphasis: Felten's principles draw attention to the grounding of SoTL work in context and in partnership with students whereas Potter and Kustra's definition pays more attention to teaching and the 'products' of research.

Other differences of opinion and of emphasis are evident in the literature about the constitution of SoTL. Some prefer 'the Scholarship of Teaching' over 'the Scholarship

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of Teaching and Learning' as a title for the field (Chalmers 2011; Kreber 2013b). A tension is evident with regard to the distinctions between scholarly teaching on the one hand and scholarship on the other. For example, Trigwell and Shale (2004) point out a tendency "to take aspects of scholarship rather than of teaching as starting points [for understanding SoTL], and to give priority to the construction and critical review of the knowledge base for teaching" (Trigwell & Shale 2004:523). Potter and Kustra (2011) go so far as to take issue with the assumption that scholarly teaching is inherently an outcome of SoTL and argue that the two should be considered to be separate and important, though overlapping, fields of their own. All these differences of opinion are exacerbated further by different views about what constitutes 'scholarship', which is not surprising given the contested view of that term in general (Andresen 2000).

Some of the different views on the nature of scholarship appear to arise from not appreciating the distinction between Mode 1 and Mode 2 research frameworks defined in the seminal work of Gibbons *et al.* (1994). While Mode 1 research is closely related to established disciplines and paradigms, Mode 2 is characterised by inter- and trans-disciplinary ways of working, with consequences for dissemination and for scholarly communities. The defining features of Mode 2 research, according to Gibbons *et al.*, can best be seen in contrasts with traditional Mode 1 research. It is carried out in a broad context of application whereas Mode 1 research is largely of interest to the specific academic community; it is transdisciplinary while Mode 1 research is confined to the discipline; it is heterogeneous compared to the homogeneity of Mode 1 research; it lacks hierarchies in contrast to the hierarchical nature of Mode 1 research; and it is transient in contrast to the preserved forms of Mode 1 research. It is evident in the literature and in all of the chapters of this book that research in the domain of SoTL falls to one extent or another in the ambit of the Mode 2 form of research – an issue that could bear more attention from the SoTL community. This view is endorsed by Gordon's suggestion that greater consideration should be given in SoTL work to 'transversal measures' – such as "the use of concepts that bring together different lines of inquiry or [locating the] work within a theoretical or conceptual setting" (Gordon 2012:177).

Despite the apparent foment, there has been recent progress with regard to the efforts to find a unifying conceptualisation of the nature of SoTL. For example, Trigwell reports that at the 2011 annual conference of ISSOTL (the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) "it was widely acknowledged ... that there is a range of ways of conceiving of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, that there is respect for such diversity, and that it is time to move beyond the search for a common definition or a unifying conceptualization" (Trigwell 2013:95). He goes on,

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however, to state that “the corollary of the acceptance of such diversity is a need for clarity in communicating about SoTL, because what is meant by SoTL is related to its intended purpose and how the value of that purpose is perceived” (p. 95). This can be interpreted as meaning that he is recommending that the focus of a discussion on the nature of SoTL should shift from academic to pragmatic concerns.

The pragmatic concerns which Trigwell has particularly in mind are the purposes behind SoTL. However, here again, there is considerable diversity of opinion. For example, Trigwell lists the following purposes: “a way to enhance university teaching; a way to raise the status of teaching; a means through which teachers may come to teach more knowledgeably; a means through which the quality of teaching may be assessed; a way to enhance students’ experience of learning; a means by which the research profile of an individual or department may be enhanced; a way of stimulating interest in teaching; a means of strengthening development programs for higher education professionals; and a means of informing changes in institutional policies and procedures” (Trigwell 2013:95-96: the last two items in Trigwell’s list derive from Ciccone (2008)).

To this list should be added purposes that have been voiced or implied by other workers in regard to the further development of professionalism in teaching (Kreber 2006; Shulman 2000) and of the community of practice associated with teaching in higher education (Gilpin & Liston 2009). In some cases, the implied purposes behind SoTL derive from the educational mandate placed on tertiary institutions by society, namely, to facilitate the development of citizenship (Kreber 2006; Shulman 2000) and the development of “authenticity” and generic graduate attributes in students (Kreber 2013a, 2013b).

What is immediately evident from the purposes that have been listed is a considerable expansion in the perceived scope of what SoTL is or can be about, and by comparison, the somewhat narrower view of the constitution of SoTL that arises when this question is addressed only from an academic or definitional perspective. Also evident is a proliferation in the range of purposes or objectives of SoTL compared to the purposes or concerns that have shaped its development. Reference to the previous section (which described the development of SoTL concepts and practice) suggests just six such concerns: a concern for the status of teaching in higher education, vis a vis research; a concern to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and of student learning; a growing concern in today’s university for an increased focus on student learning; a concern that teachers engage in scholarly research related to their teaching; a concern to disseminate the knowledge gained through such research; and a concern to professionalise teaching in higher education. We conclude that this proliferation

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of SoTL purposes is a consequence of a growth in the recognition of the value and broad transformative potential of being more scholarly and professional with regard to teaching and learning in higher education. A corollary to this conclusion is that any discussion about the constitution of SoTL and of its transformative potential must accept not only the diversity of features and purposes behind SoTL activity but also that this diversity is likely to grow in the future.

To conclude this discussion we return to Trigwell's comment quoted earlier that although the features and purposes of SoTL are too diverse for a single unifying conceptualisation or definition to be expected and that such diversity should be accepted and respected, there remains a need for "clarity in communicating about SoTL, because what is meant by SoTL is related to its intended purpose, and how the value of that purpose is perceived" (Trigwell 2013:95). The purpose of this book is less to describe a single purpose or character of SoTL but to investigate and analyse the constitution of SoTL in the diversity that makes it such an exciting field to work in.

THE CHAPTERS IN THE BOOK

The body of this book comprises 9 chapters written within the collaboration of the project described earlier. It has been largely the third of Ashwin and Trigwell's stages (Ashwin & Trigwell 2004), or Kreber's scholarly teacher (Kreber 2002) that has been in focus in the collaboration, offering Swedish and South African university teachers the opportunity to meet and debate both their own work and the issues arising from SoTL by holding seminars and symposia in their respective universities, and hosting visitors with expertise in the field. But while this third stage was the foundation for the project, the goals of the project were more tightly tied to the issues we perceived in the role of SoTL in the transformation of pedagogical practices, in the transformation of institutions of higher education and, in the long term, in the transformation of society, the knowledge society of this age. The Swedish-South African span has provided a tension of similarities and differences to address these two issues productively in all our meetings and discussions.

The chapters are ordered in line with our research question: to consider SoTL as a transforming contribution at the individual, the institutional and the societal levels. Thus they range from SoTL highlighting the individual student-teacher relationship (Chapter 2) through issues of teaching classes or cohorts of students (Chapters 3, 4 and 5), then to institutional issues (Chapters 6 and 7), and finally to the societal issue of preparation for school teaching (Chapter 8).

In Chapter 2, Tina Kindeberg of Lund University in Sweden brings her own field of disciplinary scholarship, the philosophy of pedagogy and rhetoric, to our thinking

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about teaching and learning. It has its roots in the philosophy of Aristotle, analysing the rhetoric of the teacher-student relationship. This, the argument goes, is an essential consideration for the establishment of trust as a foundation for meaningful communication in their encounters – both formal and informal. Here, a long-established philosophical standpoint and its conceptual framework has been brought to bear on the experience of the lecture hall, the tutorial room and the corridor or other places where teachers and students meet with an intention to communicate.

Kreber has argued that Scholarship of Teaching and Learning needs to be informed by “a broader conceptualisation of *professionalism*, one that is not limited to ‘best teaching practices’ but is inclusive of the notion of *citizenship* (contributing to the university’s moral and civic purpose)” (Kreber 2006, italics in original). In our collaboration we have asked what the possibilities and the limitations are of bringing about teaching grounded in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. A paper that has its starting point here is in Chapter 3, from the conceptually rich work of Teboho Pitso, a professional developer at the Vaal University of Technology in South Africa. The essence of professional engineering is conceptualised as creativity, and the question is addressed of what scholarly form of pedagogy is capable of developing the creativity of student engineers. In the “learnshops” that were devised, grounded in the notions of invitational pedagogy, students were given a choice of ways of thinking about creativity and the opportunity to enact them in long-term projects related to issues in the local environment in their area of South Africa.

The work described in Chapter 4, from Laurie Woollacott, a metallurgical engineer at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, is reminiscent of the work of Eizenberg and that of November, mentioned earlier. He describes a consistent approach to refining a pedagogical innovation, intended to engage students in large classes in subject-focused and problem-solving dialogues, where each refinement is built on a better understanding of the learning afforded and possible gaps as well as the potential for scaling up to whole classes. In the chapter, Woollacott describes the innovation in four stages, and at each stage a further refinement is developed, grounded in evaluative studies. It could be seen as an engineering approach to SoTL in as much as it describes a process of design, specification, evaluation and redesign, with prototypes that are successively refined.

The extended potential of taking the third step to scholarship in the model from Ashwin and Trigwell (2004) is illustrated in Chapter 5 from Shirley Booth, an educational researcher with focus on higher education, of the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa and the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. There the potential for a particular methodological approach to the study of learning, and hence to

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teaching, is brought into focus. The methodology, known as phenomenography, has been widely employed in educational research and SoTL for many years. In this chapter, its utility is demonstrated by reviewing five instances of its use in research in health science pedagogy to show what it takes and what it means to take a scholarly approach to pedagogical issues, grounded in a sound methodology, and directed to developing insights that can lead to improvements in teaching and learning. Taken together, the five examples of SoTL work reviewed offer an interesting macro view of SoTL in the health sciences. Of particular interest is the employment of SoTL outside of classroom settings because practitioners in the health sciences can have a dual pedagogical role: on the one hand they have students to teach and mentor, and on the other hand, they have patients and clients to support and mentor. The approach can be applied not only in the scholarship of the educational practices of health scientists, but can also be brought to bear on their professional practices, with the intention to build professional practice on greater understanding of the experience of students, patients and clients.

The work described in Chapter 6, by Thomas Olsson, a chemical engineer turned professional developer and Maria Larsson, cognitive scientist turned professional developer, both from the centre for educational development in Lund, and Elsie Anderberg, educational researcher at Jönköping University, is a good illustration of collaboration between a teacher from the disciplines, a professional developer and an educational researcher. Such work as this can take methodological practices from the educational researcher, subject and collegial understanding from the discipline academic, and issues for special attention from the educational developer. They have examined the evolution of a scholarly approach to the development of teaching among the academic staff of the Lund engineering faculty, based on an analysis of the papers and abstracts submitted to faculty conferences and of pedagogical portfolios submitted for entrance to the faculty's Pedagogical Academy. Data was examined from the early and late stages of a thrust to strengthen the awareness of the staff to the potential for personal and professional growth by taking a more scholarly approach to teaching, by bringing about parallel assessment processes and parallel rewards for teaching as those that are traditional for research.

It must be acknowledged that such thrusts as these were at the time of the collaboration more common in Sweden than in South Africa, but that is changing. While in Sweden it has for some years been obligatory to undergo training to teach in higher education (albeit somewhat limited in extent) (Lindberg-Sand & Sunesson 2008), training in South Africa is developing rapidly. The main shift has been from the earlier focus on supporting students directly through language counselling and curriculum design to

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working with teachers as agents of the necessary support as well as bringing research into the picture (McKenna 2014). There are numerous isolated projects to foster greater awareness of teaching practices and potential for change to bring about quality learning among students – this despite very large classes and students who come to higher education with relatively poor preparation for their studies. Chapter 7 tells of the experience of one such project, in the faculty of science at the University of the Witwatersrand, where Ann Cameron works directly with novice teaching staff and staff who, for one reason or another, are seen to be having problems with their teaching. Scholarship might not be the prime goal of such projects, but rather to ensure that there is a well-functioning staff. However, in the intensive dialogues that take place the seeds of scholarship are sown through introducing staff to new ways of conceptualising teaching and bringing focus on affordances for students' learning. It should be added here that at the time of writing, such isolated initiatives are coming together through the South African Council on Higher Education and its Quality Enhancement Project where all institutions of higher education are involved in a multi-focussed thrust to improve the conditions for teaching and learning through collaborative scholarly interventions (Grayson 2014).

Chapter 8 explicitly addresses the issues around transformation of society through SoTL. In this chapter, Ruksana Osman, a teacher educator at the University of the Witwatersrand, and Shirley Booth consider the effects of SoTL in teacher education, with its direct outreach to society through schools and their pupils. In South Africa, where multiple social inequalities are prevalent, quality education and quality teacher education are challenges to be faced and an appropriate response is essential. Systematic research and scholarship, grounded in the concerns and problems of educational practice, could make the difference in quality education and teacher education and this issue is taken up in the chapter. It is proposed that SoTL in the context of teacher education could make a major contribution to transforming education in the necessary direction and thence to the transformation of society. In particular, it is proposed that SoTL work by teacher educators can be combined with student teachers' research projects and projects involving practising school teachers, and that in order to bring about a focus on learning and knowledge, the focus of such projects is the "object of learning" as conceptualised in variation theory of learning and teaching (Marton 2014).

The final chapter, Chapter 9, reconsiders the book as a whole and discusses some of the themes that have emerged from this introductory chapter and from the contributions of the various authors in the book. It also addresses more explicitly the research questions that originally characterised the project and develops a framework

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for thinking about and evaluating the nature, purposes and impacts of SoTL and its role in higher education.

In this book, we have asked what constitutes the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, as practiced and experienced, and what potential it has for transformation at the individual, the institutional and the societal levels. You, the reader, are invited to peruse the chapters of this anthology, consider them in the light of your own experience and interests in teaching and research, and judge to what extent the framework offered here resonates with your own view of the constitution of SoTL and enables you to think about and better communicate your work in this field.

Writing, reviewing and critiquing these chapters iteratively over a number of project meetings in the two countries, and meeting with local practitioners as well as participants in the international conferences, has considerably deepened our own understanding, and we hope that the collection will contribute to the global body of knowledge that is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

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