

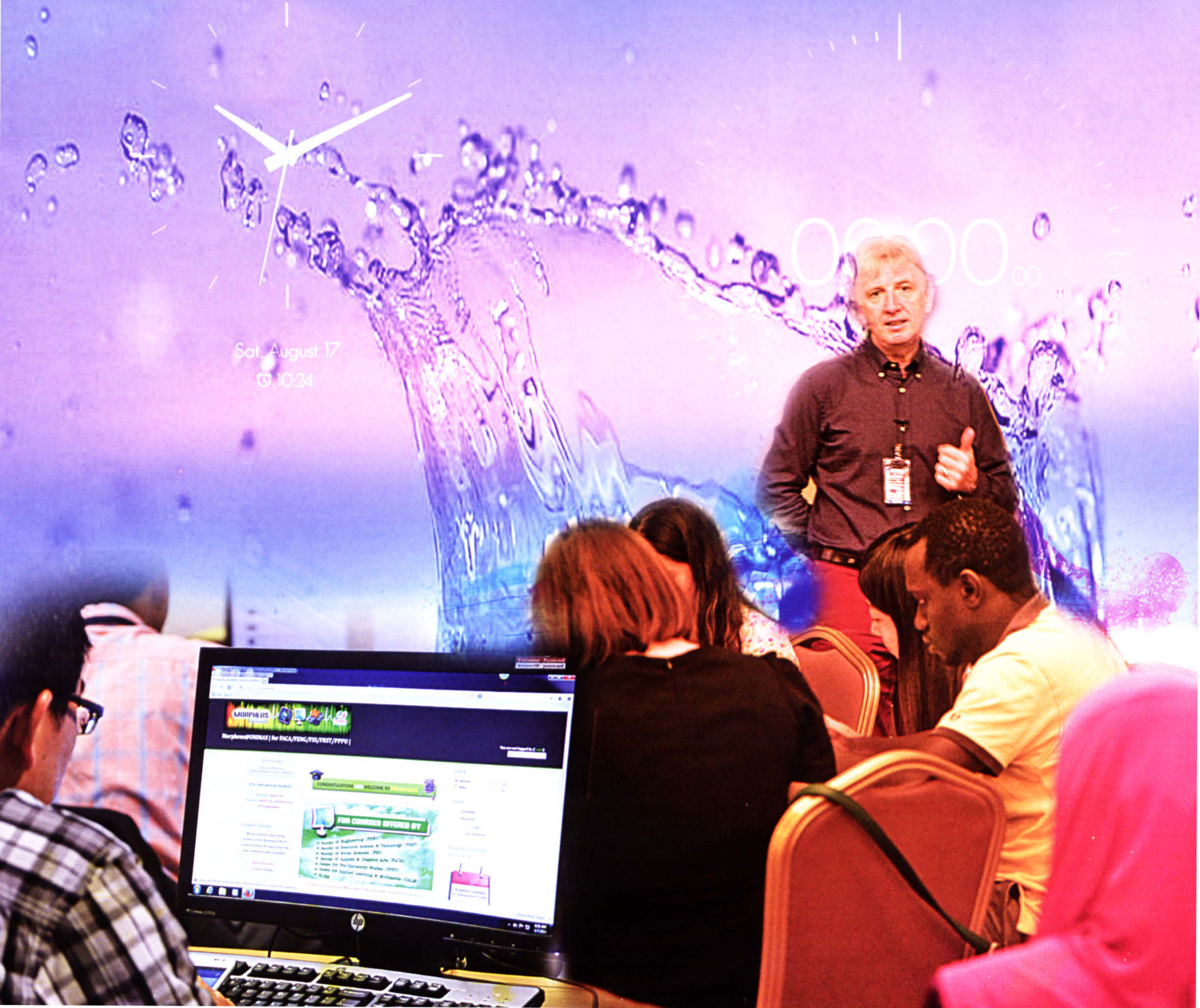
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INSIGHT



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SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING: CHALLENGES FOR ACADEMICS



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Dean Message

I wish to welcome all readers to this volume of INSIGHT. The theme for this volume is “Scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL): Challenges for academics”. SoTL is a movement of scholarly thought and action drawing on the reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning with the key goal of enhancing learning among and between individual learners. This is achieved through investigating the features of discipline specific expertise and best pedagogical practice. SoTL invites academics to examine their classroom practices, record their successes and failures, and share their experiences to enable others to reflect on their findings and enhance the teaching and learning processes. Thus, SoTL serves as a mean to disseminate contemporary research findings and provide access to practical applications of educational theories and practices on teaching and learning for all who are interested in improving the education processes.



In this volume, three lecturers in UNIMAS shared their experiences with SoTL and how it affects their teaching and learning, research and professional development. The first article, “Researching Our Teaching: The Importance of Being Informed” by Assoc. Prof. Dr Fitri Suraya Mohamad, Director, Corporate Planning and Communications Division and her student Rachel Sheow Kai Wen, reported a small scale SoTL study that investigated how students are coping with the integration of soft skills into the university learning environment. The findings of the study indicated a need for a more detailed study on how to better integrate the teaching and learning of soft skills in core courses and points to the need for us as academics to actively question and think about our classroom planning, teaching, and assessment. The second article “Pursuing Excellence in Teaching, Research, and Scholarship: Re-envisioning the Roles of UNIMAS’ Scholars”, by Assoc. Prof. Dr Norazila Abd Aziz, the Director for Curriculum Development and Management Division, discusses on what constitute scholarship for a university’s academic and provide some steps to start getting oneself in SoTL. The final article by Assoc. Prof. Dr Ting Su Hie from the Centre for Language Studies is titled “Research: The Antithesis of Teaching?” In this article, she differentiated between research in one’s expertise area and those on teaching of expertise or subject area (SoTL). The article looks at the Who, Why, What, When, and Where of carrying out SoTL. I am sure that these three articles will provide ideas for and provoke further thoughts on how to carry out SoTL in UNIMAS. On behalf of the editorial board, I wish to thank all articles contributors for this volume of INSIGHT. We also wish to invite articles for our next volume with the theme “Challenging and supporting first-year university students”. We welcome articles that describe and share best practices on how we can enhance the learning experiences of first-year students in UNIMAS.

In this forthcoming issue of INSIGHT, we invite lecturers to share their experiences and best practices on how they are able to challenge and support their first-year students to move beyond memorization into the realm of problem solving, collaborative learning, creative thinking and higher order thinking.

Thank you
Dean, CALM
Prof Gabriel Tonga Noweg

Researching our Teaching: The Importance of Being Informed



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René Descartes once said, “Cogito ergo sum”, which literally meant, “I think, therefore I am”. His philosophical became the basis of Western perspective about the foundation of all knowledge. Thinking is part of our job as lecturers. We think through our thoughts, books we read, experiences we seek, and dialogues we have with people in our field and those affected by things we do in our field. Researching our teaching is part of the thinking process. We make informed decisions and educated guesses where necessary, when we are able to view all sides of an issue fairly and sufficiently.

In this issue, we talk about the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). A top-down Key Performance Indicator for all public universities in Malaysia, it is seen to be an crucial process that academicians in Malaysia are asked to engage in, to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the national level. To provide insight into why SoTL is necessary, this article focuses on another directive – the integration of Soft Skills in all university courses in Malaysia.

Around 2008, when we were asked to map our Course Learning Outcomes to the seven required Soft Skills elements identified by the Ministry of Education, many of us were up in arms about the top-down instructions. Many of us began to question the need to change their course learning outcomes, and consequently the scope of their courses, when the courses they have been teaching have been proven to be useful for various batches of students. Many were asked to rewrite and rescale their learning outcomes for each of their courses.

The top-down instruction has also led to many of us to start reading and finding out what exactly was the motivation behind making it compulsory to include all seven Soft Skills elements in university teaching. In sum, the directive made us rethink our teaching and things we teach in each of our courses.

While we were busy trying to fit the soft skills into our course syllabus, there is a group of stakeholders that we may have overlooked

Although all UNIMAS courses have already integrated the seven soft skills into all of its programme curricula, most respondents in the study were unable to determine if their core courses addressed the integration of soft skills.

– the students themselves. How are they coping with the changes in the syllabus? Was there any glaring difference between how they learned before and after the nine soft skills were integrated into their programme curriculum? Did the Soft Skills make any significant impact on the quality of their character development?

How did the students view the relevance of Soft Skills to the development of their emotional intelligence, since it was said that the key reason why soft skills had to be included intentionally into all programme curricula was because today's undergraduates lack emotional intelligence? Was there any other skill besides the ones listed in the directive that may have been more important for character building?

To acquire a fair perspective on the matter,

a small study was conducted on a group of undergraduates studying at one of the eight faculties in Unimas. The students were asked to complete an adapted questionnaire which was designed based on Bar-On Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EQ-i). It contained five main components:

- 1) Intrapersonal skills
- 2) Interpersonal skills
- 3) Stress management
- 4) Adaptability
- 5) General mood scale

The questions with these five components are mapped to the seven soft skills that are:

- 1) Communication
- 2) Critical and logical thinking
- 3) Teamwork
- 4) Life-long learning and information management
- 5) Entrepreneur skills
- 6) Professional moral ethics
- 7) Leadership skills

The students are required to mark or map on the soft skills that are related to the emotional intelligence questions based on their perceptions. 200 students participated in the study, and the results were remarkable.

The students were able to relate some of the soft skills to components of Emotional Intelligence, but some of the soft skills were not directly perceived to be relevant to their emotional intelligence development. Soft skills such as Communication skills, logic and critical thinking skills were seen to be important, and these were highly correlated to their personal perceptions of their own emotional intelligence development.

Other soft skills noted were teamwork skills, life long learning skills and leadership skills. The rest of the soft skills were not perceived to be important nor significant by the students.

The same study also asked the students to



identify the courses which they perceived to have had the soft skills elements embedded. Almost all respondents were able to identify the integration of soft skills in the generic courses (language courses, mostly). Although all Unimas courses have already integrated the seven soft skills into all of its programme curricula, most respondents in the study were unable to determine if their core courses addressed the integration of soft skills.

The findings indicate that perhaps the level of integration of the soft skills is not at an observable stage yet, as many of the participants were not able to identify the existence of soft skills integration in these courses. In sum, the findings show a pending need to study the impact and effectiveness of implementing the nine soft skills in tertiary education, and also how the integration of soft skills is in reality done within each course.

The study illustrates how important it is to consider the impact of the changes we introduce to our courses bring onto the students, and what they would become when they complete their learning with us at the university.

The soft skills integration into our programme curricula is just one example of why we should actively question what we do and decide in our teaching. We groom young minds in our classes, and with the relevant questions, we may just be able to make a significant impact in the way they view the world. To be effective lecturers, we have to be experts in our fields of study, and at the same, learn to become great at delivering our learning content as well.

We have to continue learning and questioning our practices, to become effective in our tasks as lecturers. It is just as important for us to think, just as we ask our students to think when they come and learn with us in our classes.



Pursuing Excellence in Teaching, Research and 'Scholarship': Re-envisioning the Roles of UNIMAS' Scholars



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A scholar is someone who is often considered to be knowledgeable, who has expertise in a particular field of study, a learned person who others look up or refer to for ideas, advice and guidance. At higher education settings, the scholars are the academics, the group of people with advanced knowledge and expertise in their respective field of study and are considered instrumental to the development of the university students' learning, acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitude, as well as the development of their employability skills.

To further expand their knowledge and expertise, the scholars would engage in original research activities and carry out consultation works, and most importantly would publish their research findings in refereed journals, preferably those with impact factors as this is often considered as testimony of scholarship.

Boyer (1990), in his seminal work entitled 'Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate', however believes that there's so much more to scholarship than just engagement in original research, most often linked to the specific knowledge of the subject matter in which the scholar has expertise in. He stresses that "the work of the scholar also means stepping back from one's investigation, looking for connections, building bridges between theory & practice, and communicating one's knowledge effectively to students (p. 16).

In the higher education context, this act of communication refers to the process of teaching. Subsequently, the teaching process is expected to result in the students' achievement of the learning outcomes. This paper argues for the need to re-envision what scholarly activities mean at higher education setting so that university



scholars will have a more complete view and understanding of what their roles are and how they can contribute towards the achievement of the university's mission of excellence in scholarship.

According to Boyer (1990), the concept of scholarship actually involves a number of interrelated and overlapping areas (see figure 1), namely the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching.

The scholarship of discovery basically refers to the research activities carried out for the purpose of discovering new knowledge or theories or building on the existing ones. It involves "commitment to knowledge for its own sake, to freedom of inquiry and to following, in a disciplined fashion, an investigation wherever it may lead" (Boyer, 1990, p. 17). This is often regarded as the most important role of university scholars. Recognitions are always bestowed upon those who manage to secure research

grants, particularly those involving hefty funding. It therefore comes as no surprise to find most university academics preferring to spend more time on research and publication activities compared to the other activities which they are expected to also do at the university.

Closely related to the scholarship of discovery is the scholarship of integration, which refers to the need for scholars to interpret their research discoveries into larger intellectual patterns, and "create more interdisciplinary conversations" (Boyer, 1996, p.26). By doing so a more coherent and integrated use of knowledge is made possible (Hofmeyer, Newton & Scott, 2007). What it means here is that university academics "need to move beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries, communicate with colleagues in other fields, and discover patterns that connect" (Boyer, 1990, p. 20). The understanding that the new knowledge discovered or advancement of knowledge resulted from research endeavors is only for the consumption of the academic community within the same

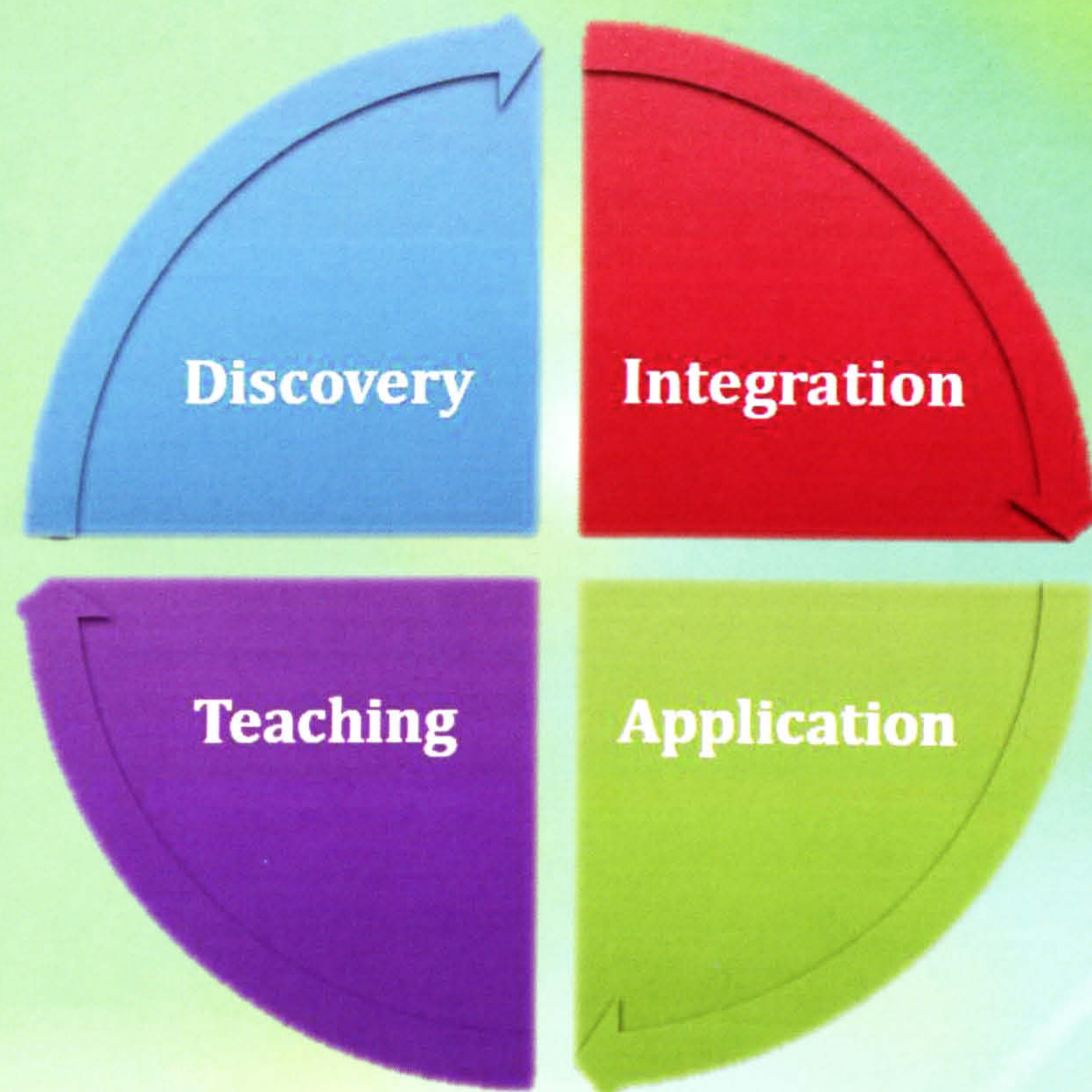


Figure 1. The interrelated areas of scholarship.

discipline of inquiry therefore needs to be re-examined. Hence, it is asserted that academics should assume a more holistic and integrated viewpoints in order to play a more significant role as scholars in today's complex 21st Century educational settings. Community engagement and service, consultation works, involvement in deliberation or participation in addressing societal issues with policy makers are examples of the scholarship of application.

It basically suggests the need for scholars to apply what they have acquired, their knowledge and expertise for the benefit of the surrounding community, either professional or non-professional ones. Although this is not a novel concept at the university level, it needs to be acknowledged that the academics' involvement in the scholarship of application largely depends on their individual efforts to promote their knowledge and expertise to those in need of service. Becoming active members of professional bodies and being actively involved in community services are examples of how this can be done.

In his later writings, Boyer (1996) renames this scholarship as the scholarship of engagement and stresses the need for scholars to continuously reflect on how they can make their knowledge useful in order to create "a special climate in which the academic and civic cultures communicate more continuously and more creatively with each other, helping to enlarge ... the universe of human discourse and enriching the quality of life for all of us" (Boyer, 1996, p.33).

Being a university scholar also means being a teaching scholar. This is in essence what the scholarship of teaching generally refers to. It involves the need to become effective teachers in order to educate and entice future scholars (Boyer, 1990).

This emphasis on teaching as a significant part of scholarship implies that the practice of teaching at higher education should not be perceived as having lesser value than the other aspects of scholarship described earlier because "it is inspired teaching that keeps the flame of scholarship alive" (p. 24).

It is further argued that in order to become effective teachers, the academics must also become effective learners of the practice of teaching and learning. This notion of the scholarship of teaching is later refined by Hutchings and Shulman (1999) who argue for the need to make a clear distinction between scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching. Scholarly teaching is informed by the latest ideas in the field as well as influenced by current ideas about teaching the field. In addition, it invites peer collaboration and review and includes certain practices of classroom assessment and evidence gathering. Scholarship of teaching, on the other hand, can be described as follows:

- “a kind of “going meta,” in which faculty frame and systematically investigate questions related to student learning—the conditions under which it occurs, what it looks like, how to deepen it, and so forth—and do so with an eye not only to improving their own classroom but to advancing practice beyond it” (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999, p.13).
- “a public account of some or all of the full act of teaching—vision, design, enactment, outcomes, and analysis—in a manner susceptible to critical review by the teacher’s professional peers and amenable to productive employment in future work by members of that same community” (Shulman, 1998, p.6).

Despite the emphasis on the need for the scholarship of teaching to also be part of the ‘priorities of the professoriate’, it appears that this aspect of scholarship has long taken a back seat and received little prominence among the academic members. Of late, however, there seems to be a renewed interest in bringing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) into the forefront so that it can be accorded equal attention as the other aspects of scholarship. If academics are committed towards driving the university’s vision of pursuing excellence in scholarship, then a re-envisioning of their roles is required.



Hence, it is asserted that academics should assume a more holistic and integrated viewpoints in order to play a more significant role as scholars in today's complex 21st Century educational settings.

There are a number of ways to get this started, if it has not already become part of the academics' scholarly practices. It is suggested that the first step should be the engagement in a metacognitive process about their involvement in all aspects of the scholarship. Which has taken most of their time and which one has been given little attention? As for the development of the scholarship of teaching, similar metacognitive process can be applied and the questions to be asked should revolve around the effectiveness of the teaching decisions made so far – what works, what does not and why.

Once answers to these have been established, the next move involves making them public - sharing with peers, writing or documenting about the teaching experience, and involving others in efforts to enhance the process of teaching and learning. It is through the sharing of the experience, of making the full act of teaching public that advancement can be made in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

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Research: The antithesis of teaching?



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“What happens if they do so much research that it affects their teaching?” I have heard this said as quips, but more often as serious statements in the context of decision making at various levels of university discussions. This statement expresses the assumption that research and teaching are mutually exclusive. In this article, allow me to show you that research is not the antithesis of teaching.

For the purpose of this article, I differentiate research into those that reside in our expertise areas where we hope to make discoveries and add to the body of knowledge and those that are on the teaching of our expertise area or subject matter. For most, the latter is what falls into the scope of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) - with the exception of educational research where the subject of research is also the subject of teaching.

SoTL involves “systematic inquiry, leading to an in-depth understanding of a particular teaching intervention rather than a surface evaluation of the success of the intervention” (Martin, 2007, p. 3). This reminds of me of the term “action research” which we have been using. McKinney (2006) who has written extensively on SoTL sees it as systematic reflection and study on teaching and learning and the public sharing of and review of such work through live and virtual presentations, performances, or publications” (p. 39). Mettetal (2012) sees classroom action research as fitting comfortably under the umbrella of SoTL. To me, action research is a means of achieving SoTL. (For a discussion of philosophical and methodological distinctions among various schools of thoughts on action research and SoTL, see McKinney, 2006).

To borrow Professor Mustafa Abdul Rahman's analogy used during an AKEPT seminar conducted by Tony Harland in Malacca in 2009, SoTL is the side meal whereas his research on birds is the main meal. Both satisfy gastronomical cravings and needs. While one can get satiated on

the main meal, a side meal completes the gastronomical event. When lecturers make systematic inquiries into their teaching of the subject matter, the purpose is to improve the quality of teaching as well as learning outcomes for students. In this sense, the research complements the teaching and is not antithesis of teaching.

As a matter of duty, the lecturer marks the assignments and examination papers, and awards marks based on the marking criteria. The marks tell us what proportion of the students understand how much of the content. A researcher is not satisfied with this and searches for the answer to why students are getting these marks. Which parts are they not doing well? Who is not doing well? The lecturer analyses the student output in the assignments and examination scripts so that they can address the problems in the next module or next semester of teaching.

Another example of systematic inquiry into the teaching of the subject matter is to find out students' perspective on the content, method of teaching and so on. This can be through properly designed questionnaires or interview guides. In this manner, the lecturer is able to obtain student feedback to compare with their own evaluation of the teaching-learning situation and process. Such a systematic inquiry is more useful than anecdotal accounts. Times have changed, and the characteristics of students and the way they learn have also changed. Research on how students take to our teaching will enable us to adjust the preparation and delivery of lecture materials so that they are more compatible with today's students, and hopefully they learn better.

I would say systematic examination of classroom contexts with the aim to improve teaching strategies in order to enhance student learning (Raubenheimer, & Myka, 2005) is student-centred in its focus. SoTL has brought about new ways of thinking about teaching that are transformational for the teacher (Harland, Raja Hussain, & Bakar, 2014). I think that lecturers who feel that

teaching is their primary duty should really consider embarking on research on the teaching and learning of the subject matter.

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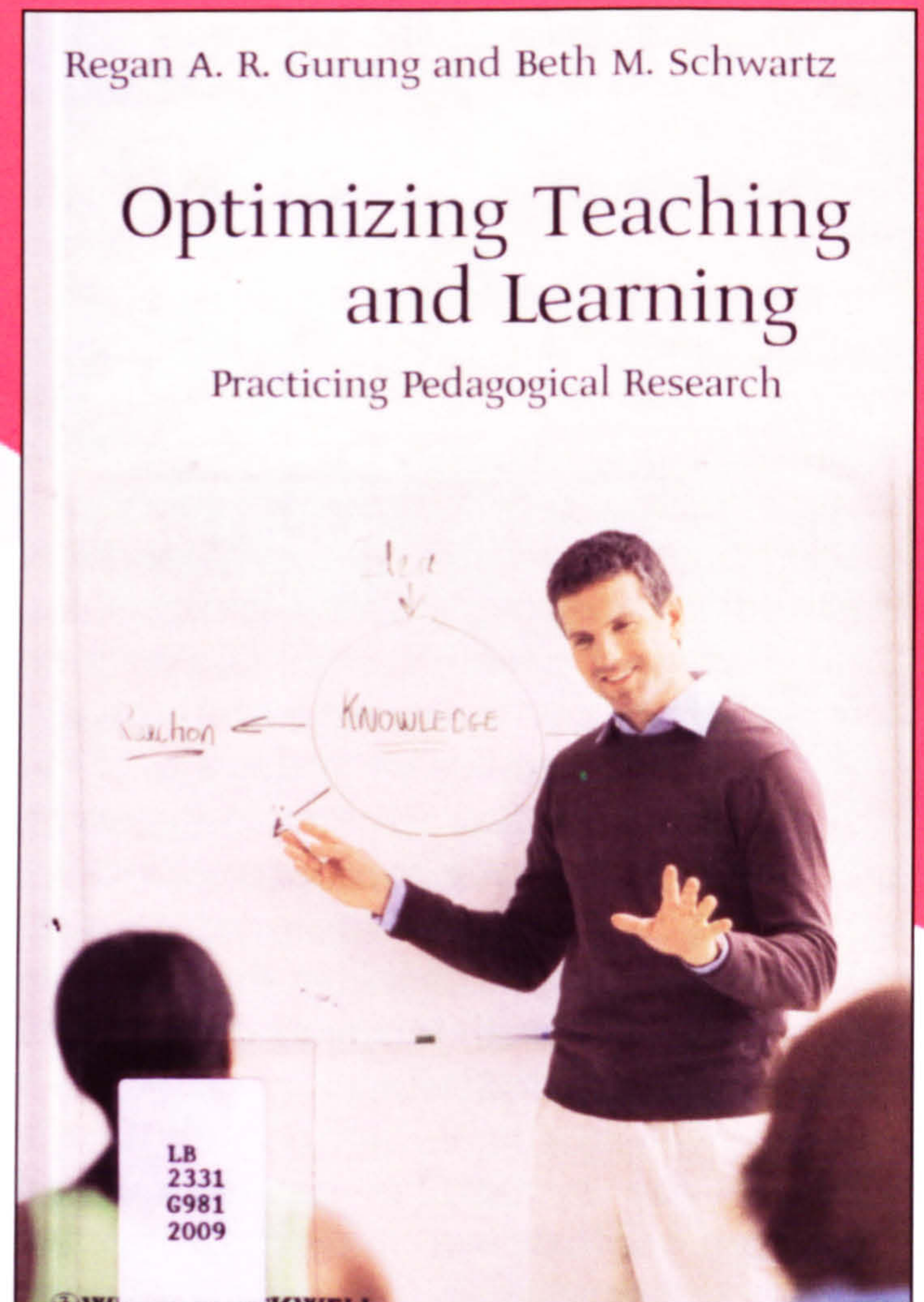
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Two Books on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at the Centre for Academic Information Services

1. Optimizing Teaching and Learning: Practicing Pedagogical Research

Gurung, A.R.R., & Schwartz, B.M. (2009)
Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell LB 2331 G981

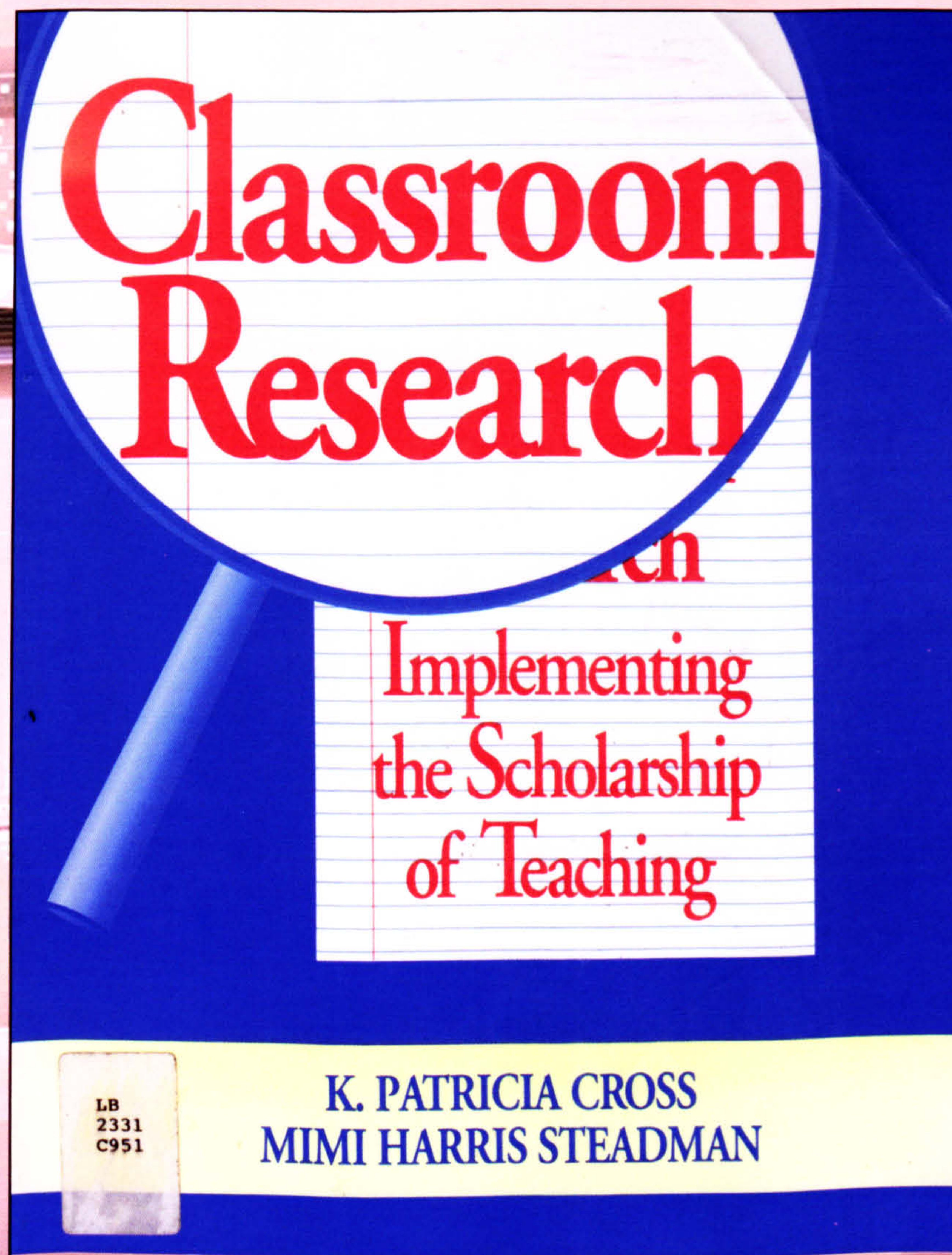
Pedagogical research or research on teaching and learning are also commonly known as the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). SoTL is an area of research in the field of higher education which is gaining momentum throughout the world. In SoTL faculty continuously evaluate the quality of their teaching and its effect on student learning. This book is designed to be a resource for faculty developers who promote SoTL. The book is also useful to faculty who is interested to examining his or her teaching and students' learning as part of becoming an effective teacher. It provides faculty with methodologies to conduct SoTL and to strengthen supporting data used in teaching portfolio. This book can also be part of graduate courses on teaching and learning in higher education, and should also be useful reading for beginning and midlevel faculty. There are five chapters in this book. The first chapter clarifies the nature of pedagogical research and the various labels used including SoTL. This chapter also reviews the history of the field. Chapter two focusses on teaching while chapter three looks at learning, by reviewing and summarizing the relevant literature and then providing guidelines for conducting SoTL in the classroom. In chapter four the authors provide explicit and straightforward guide to the statistical analysis of pedagogical research on



teaching and learning. The final chapter provides resources for faculty interested in setting up teaching and learning center in his or her institution. This book will provide the tools needed for faculty to be a more effective teacher in the classroom.

2. Classroom Research: Implementing the Scholarship of Teaching

Patricia, C.K., & Steadman, M.H. (1996)
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass LB2331 C951



This book focused around four learning case studies, which illustrate students' experiences and perceptions in the process of learning. After each case there is an analysis, including some hypotheses as to what occurred, and a brief synthesis of the relevant research on the issues arising in the case. Each chapter ends with an annotated reference list for further exploration of the learning issues raised. This book extends the concept of Classroom Assessment Techniques which are quick and simple techniques for finding out what students are learning and how well they are learning. Classroom Research attempts to answer how students are learning and shows instructors how to find the answers to this question. This book is designed for use in faculty discussion groups, workshops, and seminars to prepare discipline-oriented faculty for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. The book's real-life learning case studies illustrate basic principles of learning and provide provocative materials for discussion along with practical suggestions for research that can be conducted by faculty from all disciplines in their own classrooms.



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