Being a scholarly teacher: how do we evidence excellence in teaching?

Dr Saranne Weller
Director for Research Informed Teaching

Defining Scholarship: Challenges and Perspectives
University of Dundee
1 September 2017
Metrics for teaching: The TEF

“There is no commonly agreed definition of what constitutes good teaching in higher education [...] In the absence of any agreed definition of teaching quality, the Government is proposing to use measures, or metrics as proxies for teaching quality. Therefore the challenge is to identify those metrics which most reliably and accurately measure teaching quality” (BIS, 2015).

Proxy/ˈprɒksi/
Noun
1. The authority to represent someone else, especially in voting
   – A person authorized to act on behalf of another
   – A document authorizing a person to vote on another's behalf
2. A figure that can be used to represent the value of something in a calculation

Become what you want to be
“Every time a student interacts with their university – be that logging into their virtual learning environment or submitting assignments online – they leave behind a digital footprint. Learning analytics is the process of using this data to improve learning and teaching” (Sclater et al., 2016)
Refocus on who teachers are

Being a scholarly teacher

Being a scholar of teaching

Become what you want to be
Teaching for holistic student learning

“As the policy discourse in higher education has shifted to one of economics and consumerism, we risk losing a language for conversation about holistic student development. One of the first challenges is to reintroduce a discourse that includes character, ethics, values, virtues, meaning-making, feeling and spirituality, as well as problem-solving and critical thinking […] As we adopt the language of bureaucracy, we need to be wary of its de-personalisation.”(Quinlan, 2011)

Become what you want to be
Research and teaching connections

“Being an academic [...] means being an expert in complex learning not just in what is to be learnt” (Blackmore, 2016)

“rather than telling students what we know, we should show students how we learn” (DiCarlo, 2009)

Become what you want to be
What is a scholarly teacher?

“One is a **scholarly teacher** if critically-reflective practice, evidence-based teaching, and theory-guided teaching are intentionally, systematically, and strategically **integrated into one’s identity and behaviours as a teacher**.” (Potter and Kustra, 2011:12)

“The **excellent teacher** appears to be someone who is ‘**dedicated**’ and ‘**committed**’, able to establish motivational learning **relationships**, has expertise in their subject discipline and is skilled in pedagogic approaches that encourage learner independence and critical thought” (Wood and Su, 2017: 462)
Being a scholarly teacher

“Teaching is a performative act. And it is that part of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in the classroom. To embrace the performative aspect of teaching we are compelled to engage ‘audiences’, to consider issues of reciprocity” (hooks, 1994).

“Scholarship means engaging in original research. But the work of the scholar also means stepping back from one’s investigation, looking for connections, building bridges between theory and practice, and communicating one’s knowledge effectively to students” (Boyer, 1990).

“Scholarship is recognised in the UKPSF as an area of activity [A5] and as a professional value [V3] – an output and a disposition” (Fanghanel et al., 2016).

Become what you want to be
Dimensions of critical being

“learning becomes understood as the development of embodied ways of knowing, or in other words, ways-of-being [...] learning is not confined to the heads of individuals but involves integrating ways of knowing, acting and being within a broad range of practices.”
(Dall’Alba & Barnacle, 2007; Barnett, 1997)

Become what you want to be
“Bodies [...] are pedagogical”

“the body ‘at the front of the room’ with power, influence, and knowledge – resonates throughout social discourse as the ‘normal’ expectation of the role of an instructor [...] it becomes crucial to question the ways in which this positionality of the ‘instructor as powerful’ in relation to the ‘students as powerless’ can be disrupted” (Kannen, 2012)
What we teach

“educators who are willing and able to be their research in the teaching setting”

“rather than seeing the researcher/teacher as the person charged to tell the story of their discipline and field (where talk recounts a process which happens elsewhere), these people are more fundamentally the form the story takes; deserving of direct exhibit in the lecture theatre” (Hay, Weller and Ashton, 2015)
“Building a new pedagogy” (UCISA, 2016)
How we teach it

Figure 1. Making visible teacher proxemics and eye gaze. The series of four video recording screen shots are transformed into proxemics sketches.
“think of the texts they teach as layered in complex and interconnected ways. The lecturers perceive the text as not only embedded in the social and cultural context of its production but also a multidimensional palimpsest in which the text, their own reading and that of others are overwritten by subsequent acts of rereading” (Weller, 2010)
Making disciplinary concepts real (2)

“legal teaching already relies on the unspoken symbolism of specific ideas, such as justice, fairness, obedience, rules […] However, these are normally approached through texts not objects” (Morgan, 2017)
“the ability to embody [a] neuron’s perspective during brain development—to imagine the behavior of a cell from a cell’s perspective—would seem a central imaginative step that characterizes experienced research neuroscientists” (Hay et al., 2013)
Reflecting on your practice

Think about a recent teaching session (f2f or virtual):

• How would you describe your body or presence in the learning space?

• How do you show what it means to be a nurse, historian, engineer, biologist, architect, creative or dentist etc.?

• How are disciplinary objects or artefacts used in teaching and learning?

• What do your answers tell you about your approaches to learning and teaching in your discipline and how you might carry out an enquiry into your practice?
A “disciplined enquiry”? 

“expect that academics will study, assimilate and adopt a ‘socio-scientific’ approach when they undertake educational enquiry. For those of you from almost any subject area other than education […] it is highly probable that this will confront you with unfamiliar paradigms, language, research approaches and methods and understanding of ‘validity’” (Cleaver et al., 2014).

Become what you want to be
“one way to fashion such a scholarship is to embrace the idea of window shopping: **to try on (and try out) various methodological masks and guises; to dress in other disciplines’ and inter-disciplines’ clothes**, with the intent of identifying a style appropriate to a given interdisciplinary context. This is not to suggest we can be cavalier or unsystematic in appropriating methods and methodologies, but rather that we should be open to and playful when first undertaking a scholarship of interdisciplinary teaching” (Tremonte, 2011).
Modalities of enquiry & audiencing

“what counts as educational enquiry, how we create knowledge about learning and teaching and how we communicate it to others in meaningful ways” (Weller, 2016)

“lacunae in dominant research forms […] especially around human experience and perception” (Trowler, 2013)

“evoke emotional and aesthetic responses in their audience as well as cognitive ones” (Trowler, 2013)

“audiencing [is] the process by which a visual image has its meanings renegotiated, or even rejected, by particular audiences watching in specific circumstances” (Rose, 2016)

Become what you want to be
Storytelling, collage, photographs, concept maps, film, cartoon, modelling

Gourlay (2009); Roberts (2014); Bogumil et al. (2015); Weller and Kandiko Howson (2013)

Become what you want to be
Journal outputs are not the only way

“Because SoTL inquiry typically is iterative and highly contextual, the most appropriate ways to go public should capture and reflect the evolving nature of this form of research. In many cases, that is not possible in a traditional scholarly journal [...] however, good practice in SoTL requires that both the process and the products of inquiry are public so that colleagues can critique and use the work” (Felten, 2013).
Example 1: A research-informed comic

Vigurs et al. (2016)
(https://www.srhe.ac.uk/downloads/vigurs-katy-003.pdf)
Example 2: UAL Practices of Enquiry Exhibition

Images:
https://sparkjournal.arts.ac.uk/index.php/spark/article/view/64/58

Become what you want to be
Being scholarly about teaching

• Metrics are proxies for teaching quality that “de-personalise” the educational experience
• Teaching and research are embodied and value-based and we should evidence this in our claims for academic excellence
• Scholarly investigation into disciplinary teaching and learning can adopt a range of modes of enquiry
• And in going public with enquiries we can exploit the potential for “audiencing” as a way to make meaning about complex interactions
Thank you!

Please contact me: s.weller@lsbu.ac.uk
References

References cont.


References cont.