

Scholarship of Teaching: What Do PhD Students Know?

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Abstract. The development of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is essential to foster learning for all students and to enhance the practice and profession of teaching. Little is known about the knowledge PhD students have about the SoTL or the value they place on it. The purpose of this study was to assess the understanding and intended use of the SoTL by PhD students. An online survey was sent to 61 CSD programs in the United States and Canada. The results indicated that PhD students may have heard of the term SoTL but over a third of the participants did not have a working model. Also, many participants did not distinguish between the different levels of scholarly teaching.

1. Introduction

The development of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) is essential to foster significant, long lasting learning for all students and it enhances the practice and profession of teaching [1, 2]. There have been several initiatives by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association and the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders to document the current shortage of PhD students in our professions. With fewer students graduating and moving into university positions created by retiring faculty, not only is the shortage made worse, but mentoring of new faculty members is compromised. We need to provide knowledge about the scholarship of teaching so that new faculty in CSD can continue the positive cycle of quality teaching. Little is known regarding the value that current PhD students place on the scholarship of teaching. As a result, the art of the SoTL may be declining at our universities as professors retire. We need to identify if significant numbers of our future faculty members have this knowledge and whether they plan to incorporate these skills into their teaching.

2. Experiment, Results, Discussion, and Significance

Method: An online survey was sent to 61 CSD programs in the United States and Canada. Program Directors distributed the survey link to PhD students in their programs. The survey was designed to elicit information regarding students' teaching experiences, their knowledge of SoTL, and the value of SoTL. Participants were 108 students who responded to the survey and of those, 95 participants who completed it ($M = 18$, $F = 86$).

Results: The doctoral students in this study are unfamiliar with the SoTL but believe that it will be important to their success as teachers, to their future students' success, and that it has a place within their profession. They report that they reflect on their teaching, draw on literature to design their lectures, and attempt to engage in innovative teaching practices. They also reported that they would like to learn more about SoTL and would like to complete research in this area. (See means and standard deviations in Table 1.)

PhD students were also asked to respond narratively to the question, When I hear "Scholarship of Teaching and Learning" I think of...? Many participants could not distinguish good teaching from scholarly teaching from the scholarship of teaching and learning. 35 students responded that they didn't know, 40 students described good teaching, 9 students described scholarly teaching, and only 9 students had appropriate descriptions for the SoTL.

Table:1
 Doctoral students' knowledge and value of the scholarship of teaching and learning

Knowledge of SoTL (n = 100)	Mean ± SD	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
<small>Data from 5-point likert scale ranging from (1) "strongly agree" to (5) "strongly disagree"</small>			
1. I am familiar with the phrase "the scholarship of teaching" (SoTL)	3.7±1.41	28%	63%
2. The body of literature regarding teaching and learning will/be is important to my success as a teacher.	1.9±.79	77%	2%
3. The body of literature regarding teaching and learning will/be is important to my students' success.	2.0±.82	74%	4%
4. Research regarding teaching and learning does not have a place within our discipline.	4.4±.83	2%	88%
Knowledge Based on Teaching as a Doctoral Student (n=72)			
5. I routinely reflect on my teaching.	1.5±.67	93%	1%
6. I draw on teaching and learning literature in designing my lectures.	2.7±1.09	49%	28%
7. I attempt to engage in innovative teaching practices.	2.0±.94	76%	7%
Value of SoTL (n = 98)			
8. My academic department places value on research about teaching and learning for the purposes of tenure and promotion	2.9±1.12	33%	27%
9. I would like to engage in research regarding teaching and learning	2.8±1.07	42%	29%
10. I would like to learn more about literature on effective teaching	1.9±.73	84%	3%

Discussion: Although PhD students may have heard of the term SoTL, over a third of the participants in this study did not have a working model of it. The majority of PhD students were not familiar with the SoTL however, most indicated they would like to learn more. Additionally, many of the participants did not distinguish good teaching from scholarly teaching from the scholarship of teaching and learning. Although there are connections in the different stages of teaching, it is important to distinguish among them [3].

Significance: With fewer students graduating and moving into university positions created by retiring faculty, not only is the shortage made worse, but mentoring of new faculty members is compromised. Information about the scholarship of teaching is essential to new faculty in CSD to ensure the positive cycle of quality teaching. The results of this survey indicate that the majority of PhD students are not familiar with the term SoTL, therefore, potentially comprising the future positive cycle of quality teaching.

3. Conclusions

Most PhD students were not familiar with SoTL, however, they appeared to recognize the value of evidence-based education principles. The development of the SoTL is essential to fostering significant, long lasting learning for students and enhances the practice and profession of teaching. It will therefore, be critical to continue to provide PhD students with the necessary information pertaining to SoTL.

[1] E. Boyer, The basic school: A community for learning: The Carnegie foundation for the advancement of teaching, 1995.

[2] C. Glassick, M. Taylor-Huber, and G. Maeroff, Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the professoriate, 1997.

[3] K. McKinney, The scholarship of teaching and learning: Past lessons, current challenges, and future visions, 2004.