

Book Review

***Enhancing Scholarly Work on Teaching and Learning:
Professional Literature that Makes a Difference***

Maryellen Weimer (Jossey-Bass, 2006)

Review by

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The scholarship of teaching and learning is quickly gaining recognition as a viable form of scholarship. Maryellen Weimer's contribution to the growing literature in this field moves us even closer to acceptance of this form of scholarship as tenure-worthy scholarship that does make difference in the lives of faculty, administrators and students.

Dr. Weimer's argument is that as this literature grows we need to not only encourage new methodologies, but also learn from what we have already done by looking at previously published works in the area. Her book is divided into three sections. The first section helps us understand why this approach is necessary and sets the reader up for the meat of the book in the second section where she analyzes the literature and categorizes the types of approaches used. The final section focuses on advice to those who want to start or continue a scholarly agenda in this area and to administrators to help them advance this practice.

As I read Dr. Weimer's book, I kept saying to myself, "I wish I had this book when I was first beginning to explore writing in this area." Ten years ago I was fortunate to belong to a small faculty learning community sponsored by the Center for Academic Excellence at Portland State University called the Scholarship of Teaching Resource Team (STRT). We read the literature that was available at that time and all began to work on our own projects. While I felt supported and encouraged in my process, I was frustrated that there seemed to be so many ways to approach my research question. Coming from psychology with a strong background in experimental design, I didn't think much of my paltry convenience sample nor was I convinced that the results really supported what I learned about my students' learning process. However, the results were helpful to me the next time I taught the course and the resulting paper was part of my scholarly agenda for tenure review. No complaints; but still I was skeptical of some scholarship of teaching claims.

Given the increasing interest in and amount of SoTL research being conducted, Dr. Weimer provides a way to understand the what and how of this type of scholarship. Chapters four and five analyze the approaches used in published SoTL research and are the center of this book. She categorizes the work into two broad categories: Wisdom of Practice (using the lens of experience as the unit of analysis) and Research Scholarship. She discusses four experimental approaches that she observed: personal accounts of change, recommended-practices reports, recommended-content reports, and personal narratives. She also identifies the three

most frequently used methodologies used in these studies: quantitative, qualitative, and descriptive.

These chapters alone are worth the price of the book. They will serve as a guide to those who want direction or want to improve their scholarly work on teaching and learning. The final chapters with advice to future authors are also very helpful. She has included in her appendices a list of pedagogical journals which will provide scholars with a beginning point when submitting their work for publication.

Dr. Weimer's book also addresses those who do not typically read the literature in this area. They may represent faculty and academic leaders that care about teaching and learning but who have not understood that there is a literature that enables them and those they support to improve practice in the classroom and beyond. This book will serve as a catalyst for those not familiar with the literature to expand their horizons and inspire them to experiment with new ideas.

Enhancing Scholarly Work on Teaching and Learning has a permanent place on my bookshelf. It is engaging, filled with lots of examples of good practice, and inspiring. I've already developed three research questions I want to explore in my classroom! Whether you are an administrator or faculty member, this book will likely find a place on your shelf also.