

## RECLAIMING A PEDAGOGY OF INTEGRITY

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When I began teaching in 1986 I reinvented the model I was educated with. It was, after all, the only one I knew. But at some level I recognized that this model worked for me neither as a learner nor a teacher. My students were performing well on exams, but it was increasingly clear to me that they did not have the conceptual clarity or the ability to "uncover" material that would serve them well as learners. Ironically, as I became more discontent with the climate of my classroom and my behavior as a teacher, a rich literature on feminist pedagogy was developing. By the mid-1990s I was mesmerized with the works of such feminists as bell hooks (1989, 1990, 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998), Nel Noddings (1984, 1992), Mary Belenky, et al. (1997), and Carol Gilligan (1993). This literature turned out to be just what I was looking for as a teacher. In the wake of these influences, the world of teaching and learning forever changed for me—and, as one colleague said, I created a "real mess" on campus, was undisciplined, and a "loose cannon."

### Epiphany and Change

One aspect of the change in my attitude was that I looked at my students and myself differently, and realized that I had to leave the lectern, figuratively and literally. I abandoned essentialist assumptions about pedagogy—that some universal template of the teaching transaction existed—and began to introduce multiple pedagogical methods into my work to accommodate the multiple styles of learning expressed by my students.

I stopped lecturing on a routine basis. When I did lecture, I made two assumptions about the place and quality of lectures in my classes. I believed that my students could read and comprehend the basic facts presented in the text, and I believed that maximum content coverage by me in lecture did not necessarily maximize student conceptual understanding. Therefore, my lectures were directed, more times than not, toward the philosophical issues and dilemmas surrounding the factual material (i.e., the why and how and the unexamined assumptions and implications).

I also began sending students out into the community to experience the connection between theory and praxis. Many educational psychologists remind us that the absence of experience might explain why students misunderstand. Through theory/practice or service learning opportunities students were challenged to negotiate the tension between their strongly held beliefs and the discrepant images and information gained from their actual experiences in social service agency work. They were compelled to reflect on the limitations of theories and assumptions in making sense out of and reconciling real world problems.

I also abandoned the use of tests and examinations in the service of projects, critical analysis papers, group discussions, and journals. Both formal and informal writing was the common denominator in virtually all of these methods. I found that writing allowed for thinking and understanding to become explicit and helped students synthesize the material studied. Similarly, I found myself in a better position to evaluate students' struggles and hurdles through this explicit material. I arranged student desks in a circle so that they could actually converse with and see one another rather than the back of one another's heads. I supported students in their questioning of the traditional curriculum and affirmed their anger in not seeing themselves reflected in it.

### Alienation and Community

In most of these changes in my teaching—though I saw gratifying changes in my own classroom—I felt alienated and alone. Like most colleagues, I closed my classroom door and made my journey of transformation alone—or so I thought. I would soon learn, however, that I was not standing on a desert island but rather on a busy terrain with very good company. Last year I was chosen as a Carnegie Scholar and would soon experience this good company on a national level. At the same time many colleagues in my own institution were beginning to talk about the scholarship of teaching and learning, and I began to feel less alienated and alone on my own campus as well. Colleagues from virtually all of the disciplines on my campus began to meet over coffee and brown bag lunches for the sole purpose of discussing teaching. We began to have lively conversation around issues of pedagogy, our own learning as teachers, our students' paths toward understanding, and approaches to the assessment of such learning and understanding. For the first time in my teaching experience, I began to share with others, both on a local and national level, a common vocabulary, a vision, and a commitment to inquiry about teaching and learning. What we also shared was pleasure at breaking out of our previous isolation and alienation. Not surprisingly, many of our students have also been alienated. They have little confidence in their own native intelligence, and they often distrust one another's knowledge and experiences. They dismiss both their own and their peers' sense of authority, and they have learned to seek answers from very specific types of external sources. And in many ways, we, as teachers, have also been active participants in alienating them from us.

### Insight into Insight

I was reminded of the profound ramifications of this alienation when I began my current research. Funded by my own institution and the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, I am examining the moments that students experience as breakthroughs and insights. Although educational and cognitive psychologists are quick to define and write about insight, little research is available to assess its occurrence in the classroom. The

research that is available often employs a methodology that estranges the learner from the researcher and privileges the teacher's perception of insight over the learner's. Very little emphasis has been placed on the voices of learners and the interactions between learners and teachers as important and necessary assessment tools. A focus on the student's voice is still considered by many to be subjective, unscientific research; it sometimes appears as if alienation is an imperative for scholarly research. Students also demonstrated this estrangement in their insight descriptions. I was stunned to find that one third of my student sample described their insights using passive voice and in a vocabulary that implied a received knowledge. It was as if they too were alienated from their intuitive selves; they appeared unable to conceive of owning their knowledge or claiming their own voice. In partnering with my students and listening to their own experiences with and descriptions of insight I have been able to construct a two dimensional model of insight development. The categories and dimensions of insight that emerged from student descriptions and the documentation of these categories and dimensions reflect our voices and our realities.

### Credo

So what does all this have to do with my vision for the scholarship of teaching and learning and the changes I hope to see in my own institution, my professional and scholarly organizations, and society at large? It seems to me that the scholarship of teaching and learning has the potential to alter dramatically our sense of alienation in both the academy and the greater society. In making our private academic lives public (Lee Shulman's eloquent phrase), in listening carefully to our students, encouraging their voices, and in speaking clearly and loudly with one another about our teaching questions, problems, and successes, we "crack open" this sense of alienation and we find support for what we have perhaps always known about ourselves and our students as teachers and learners. This is not easy in a society that eroticizes individualism and often pathologizes community and collaboration. But, as teachers in the privileged world of the academy, it seems to me that we have a moral mandate to join with our students and colleagues rather than disconnect from them, and in so doing we are positioned to serve our communities with honor and intelligence. I believe we have great power as scholars who care deeply about our practice. I believe that the scholarship of teaching and learning not only recognizes teaching as critical intellectual work, but also as work that can do enormous good for humankind. Finally, I believe that the scholarship of teaching and learning is much greater than the scholarship of teaching and learning. For me, it has become a paradigm for an academic life and a pedagogy of integrity.

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The article above examines how one professor took some risks to make her teaching and student learning more effective. It is number 14 in a series of selected excerpts from the National Teaching and Learning Forum newsletter. NT&LF has a wealth of information on all aspects of teaching and learning. National Teaching and Learning Forum Newsletter, 2001, Volume 11, Number 1. © Copyright 1996-2002. Published by Oryx Press in conjunction with James Rhem & Associates, Inc. (ISSN 1057-2880) All rights reserved worldwide. Reprinted with permission.