

1-2008

Book Review: *Teaching as Community Property* by Lee Shulman (Jossey-Bass, 2004)

Lynne McVey

Salve Regina University, lynne.mcvey@salve.edu

Recommended Citation

McVey, Lynne (2008) "**Book Review:** *Teaching as Community Property* by Lee Shulman (Jossey-Bass, 2004)," *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*: Vol. 2: No. 1, Article 27.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2008.020127>

Book Review: *Teaching as Community Property* by Lee Shulman (Jossey-Bass, 2004)

Abstract

Excerpt: *Teaching as Community Property* is a collection of Lee Shulman's speeches, papers and presentations from 1987-2004. It is an inspiring and practical volume of Shulman's profound and influential contributions to the field of teaching and learning in higher education. For readers' individual interests, it is conveniently divided into three sections; Learning, The Profession of Teaching, and Practices and Policies. In his introduction, Russell Edgerton suggests that readers view this collection from three perspectives: pedagogy, prescription and philosophy. A useful aspect of this book is that each chapter can be read individually for the purpose of finding a solution to a specific problem or to expand our vision when facing a particular challenge. The titles of each individual chapter serve as a clear guide for this purpose.

Keywords

Lee Shulman, Discipline-specific pedagogy

Creative Commons License

Creative

Commons

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0](#)

Attribution-

Noncommercial-

No

Derivative

Works

4.0

License

Book Review

Teaching as Community Property
Lee Shulman (Jossey-Bass, 2004)

Review by

Lynne McVey Salve Regina
University Newport, Rhode
Island, USA
lynne.mcvey@salve.edu

Teaching as Community Property is a collection of Lee Shulman's speeches, papers and presentations from 1987-2004. It is an inspiring and practical volume of Shulman's profound and influential contributions to the field of teaching and learning in higher education. For readers' individual interests, it is conveniently divided into three sections; Learning, The Profession of Teaching, and Practices and Policies. In his introduction, Russell Edgerton suggests that readers view this collection from three perspectives: pedagogy, prescription and philosophy. A useful aspect of this book is that each chapter can be read individually for the purpose of finding a solution to a specific problem or to expand our vision when facing a particular challenge. The titles of each individual chapter serve as a clear guide for this purpose.

One of Shulman's seminal ideas is that of discipline-specific pedagogy. In Chapter 5, "Knowledge and Teaching," Shulman reflects on the notion that there is the knowledge of teaching; the knowledge of one's own discipline; and finally, and most salient to those in higher education, the knowledge of teaching the knowledge of ones' own field to others. Excellent teaching presupposes the union of these three types of knowledge and transforms understanding, skills and attitudes into pedagogical representations and actions by which students can comprehend and discern and "by which the unskilled become adept."

For example, Chapter 7, "Toward a Pedagogy of Substance," gives us a set of crucially important criteria by which to judge good teaching. Here, Shulman talks plainly and amiably about why Jaime Escalante of "Stand and Deliver" fame is one model of a great teacher. He also explains how great teaching evolves over time and through experience. It is "the masterful intersection" of a complex knowledge of subject matter and an understanding of how to make that "knowledge accessible to the knowing processes of those who do not yet understand."

Chapter 12, "From Idea to Prototype, Three Exercises in the Peer Review of Teaching," is a lucid and pragmatic plan of action for those wishing to begin the process of becoming great teachers by integrating their scholarship and teaching in their courses. This journey can begin almost immediately through a guided, detailed examination of the syllabus, classroom practice and focus on student learning.

However, in Chapter 8, "Teaching as Community Property, Putting an End to Pedagogical Solitude," Shulman reveals his naiveté in believing that the importance

of teaching in higher education is not intentionally diminished and that it is not the case that research is seen as being more valuable than teaching. There is often an elitism displayed by those in academia toward working on improving teaching skills. Much can be learned from our colleagues on the K-12 level who have more readily embraced Shulman's ideas in this chapter. Such strategies as peer review and providing artifacts that capture the "richness and complexity" of teaching that are a standard part of the repertoire of K-12 education can guide the academy in changing the status of teaching from private to community property, thus giving teaching its well deserved and long overdue recognition.

Academia must begin to seriously value good teaching as much as it values research. It must actively seek and reward evidence of such teaching ability. This culture will be difficult to change. While higher education has taken pride in "commitment to inquiry and criticism in all fields," its own hidden curriculum of dogmatism needs to be brought into the open. Shulman advises the academy to turn its "tough scrutiny on our own practices, traditions and culture."

The globalization and diversity of today's college students demand that higher education better prepare them to successfully meet the challenges of the 21st century. These students are increasingly diverse in many ways, including in physical, developmental, and intellectual abilities. *Teaching as Community Property* by Lee S. Shulman not only gives us answers, but guides us in asking the right questions. It maps out a highly creative and cogent path for the academy to reinvent itself and offers a fine blueprint for developing the excellent teaching faculties necessary to educate this student population.