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Lessons Students Teach Us: Pursuing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning through Text-Based Methods Of Inquiry

John Habel  
Western Carolina University, habel@email.wcu.edu

Cynthia S. Deale

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Lessons Students Teach Us: Pursuing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning through Text-Based Methods of Inquiry

SoTL Commons 2010
Facilitators:
  Cynthia S. Deale, Hospitality Management
  East Carolina University

  John Habel, Educational Psychology
  Western Carolina University
IU-Bloomington SoTL Model
Introduction

- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) work has sometimes been criticized for focusing too much on teaching strategies and the teacher’s point of view.

- We will focus on the student’s point of view and how to use student generated data to find out more about learning and teaching.
Disciplinary differences in the meaning of SoTL tend to be around issues of methodology.

For example, sociologists use methods such as interviews, questionnaires, or quasi-experiments.

In some related disciplines, researchers use focus groups or content analysis.

In creative writing, one might be reflecting on teaching and publishing a poem about this reflection and this could be SoTL.
However, one of the criticisms of SoTL work...

- "is that it is often about teaching and that there is very little empirical data used to indicate that learning has occurred (McKinney, 2006)."
Of the 25 percent or so with data...

- McKinney (2006) found that they dealt with:
  - student reactions
  - student satisfaction
  - faculty reflection
  - occasionally some specific measure of learning for a particular teaching strategy or assignment
  - learning in the discipline (approx. 50%)
So how can we move that focus to learning and to lessons our students teach us?

- In SoTL— We can begin to explore what our students tell us through text and their use of written words.

- What can we study? What kinds of questions can we ask that text-based information about learning?
What can our students teach us through our text-based SoTL inquiry?
SoTL questions may include...

- **Simple questions:**
  - For example an instructor might ask:
    - What do you think is the purpose of this assignment?

- **More complex questions such as those concerning pre and post tests about student knowledge, attitudes, performances, etc.**
  - For example: How do students decide what is essential in texts?
Examples of sources of text-based sources of inquiry

- Completed assignments
- Reflections
- Essays
- Projects
- One-minute papers
- Written responses to specific questions
- Interviews
- Portfolios
- Student presentations
- Other
  - * The form varies--eq. papers, web designs, photos, artwork, diagrams, etc.

Cynthia S. Deale@ECU
What are typical sources of text-based data for SoTL work in your field?

What specific text-based data do you have access to that you could use to learn about student learning in your own SoTL work?
How can we analyze text-based data?

- How can these text-based items be analyzed to learn about student learning (and your own teaching in SoTL work?)
These text-based data may be used...

- To tell a story about learning--
  - Qualitatively
    - Content analysis
  - Quantitatively
    - Descriptive and/or inferential statistics
Analysis of text-based data generated by students

- Content analysis
  - Manifest (surface) and latent (deep) content
  - Look for patterns
  - Use coding
    - Comb data for themes, ideas, concepts, etc.

- Now go back to that student product you read at the beginning and think about coding it—this time—share your ideas with others
How are or can students be involved in SoTL work that involves text-based inquiry?
What ethical and institutional issues are there related to the use of students’ text-based data in SoTL inquiries?
Principles to guide our study of students’ text-based data in SoTL inquiries

1. Identify SoTL projects as inquiry or research projects.
2. Plan the project before the class begins.
3. Design an informed consent process.
4. Seek external review.
5. Inform students at regular junctures of the project.

(Source: Burman and Kleinsasser, 2004)
Additional Principles ...

☐ 6. Acknowledge that students control the way their work is used.
☐ 7. Consider ways to involve students.
☐ 8. Share findings with students.

(Source: Burman and Kleinsasser, 2004)
Tips for finding and using text-based methods of inquiry in SoTL...

- Think simply
- Plan your SoTL work—ask a question
- Review the literature
- Start out small and go from there
- Be creative
- Think about how to make it public
- Go for it!

Cynthia S. Deale@ECU
Questions? Comments? Ideas?

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Cynthia S. Deale@ECU
References

More references
