Journeys of growth towards the professional learning of academics: Understanding the role of educational development

5 authors, including:

Susan van Schalkwyk
Stellenbosch University
97 PUBLICATIONS **703** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Francois J Cilliers
University of Cape Town
33 PUBLICATIONS **951** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Hanelie Adendorff
Stellenbosch University
10 PUBLICATIONS **243** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Karin Cattell
Stellenbosch University
5 PUBLICATIONS **22** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:

Project   SUCCEED View project

Project   Bellagio Global Health Education Initiative View project

International Journal for Academic Development

Journeys of growth towards the professional learning of academics: understanding the role of educational development

Susan van Schalkwyk [a] , Francois Cilliers [a] , Hanelie Adendorff [a] , Karin Cattell [a] & Nicoline Herman [a]

[a] Centre for Teaching and Learning, Stellenbosch University , Stellenbosch , South Africa
Published online: 26 Apr 2012.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Journeys of growth towards the professional learning of academics: understanding the role of educational development

Susan van Schalkwyk*, Francois Cilliers, Hanelie Adendorff, Karin Cattell and Nicoline Herman

Centre for Teaching and Learning, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

This article foregrounds the iterative journey of a group of educational development (ED) practitioners at a research-led university towards an enhanced understanding of the ED opportunities we offer. Reflecting on the intention of our interventions to facilitate academics' professional learning, we developed a framework within which the range of growth opportunities we provide might be meaningfully situated. Our objective was to extend our insight into both the journeys that academics follow towards adopting a more scholarly approach to their teaching and our own journeys of growth in ED as well as professionally.

Keywords: educational development; professional learning; scholarly teaching; scholarship of teaching and learning

Introduction

As a group of educational development (ED) practitioners situated in a Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at a research-led university in South Africa, we facilitate an extensive range of ED activities and opportunities to support the teaching function of academics at the university. One example of such a growth opportunity is a teaching and learning conference that is hosted each year for all staff at the university and advertised under the banner of the scholarship of teaching (SoT). The conference provides a platform for lecturers to showcase innovative teaching and teaching-related research. We are always struck by the diversity of the submissions, the commitment of the participants and the many different perspectives that emerge – some of which might be quite different from those that we adopt and share in our various interactions with academics. This has led us to reflect on the journey that academics at the university embark on during their 'professional learning' (Brew, 2004, p. 5). We pondered the extent to which the growth opportunities we offer actually create a path towards scholarship that lecturers can follow. We sought to establish a framework within which our work might be more meaningfully situated. Specifically, we wished to determine whether the growth opportunities we provide encourage academics to embark on and progress along a journey towards becoming a scholarly teacher or even a teaching scholar.

We used the literature on the scholarship of teaching (and learning) – or SoT(L) as it has become known – as an initial framework against which to plot our

---

*Corresponding author. Email: scvs@sun.ac.za

different ED offerings. This action was to prove both unsatisfactory and yet illuminating, prompting a more critical stance that led us to ask more incisive questions. In this article, we describe our iterative journey towards validating the initial framework. This process was strongly supported by the 'constant professional reflection on our data' (Leshem & Trafford, 2007, p. 94), our ongoing research (Adendorff, 2011; Cilliers & Herman, 2010; Leibowitz, Van Schalkwyk, Van der Merwe, Herman, & Young, 2009) and our work in ED over many years. The aim of this article is to advance the debate about the role of SoTL in contributing to the professional learning of academics and to share the insights with other ED colleagues about the different ways in which academics respond to growth opportunities in terms of their teaching practice. Ultimately, we also hope to emphasise the value, drawing on Brew (2002), of extending a credible research agenda for ED practitioners.

Theoretical perspectives

A common sense understanding of the outcome of ED activities is that of academics being or becoming (Leibowitz et al., 2009) 'good' university teachers. Descriptions of 'good' or quality teaching typically include features such as strong interpersonal relationships, advanced presentation skills, expert subject knowledge, a dynamic personality and the ability to mediate the so-called teaching/research nexus. An important common theme that emerges from the descriptions in the literature is the need for university teachers to adopt a reflective approach to their work (Elton, 1998; Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2004; Schön, 1987).

Another strand of literature supports the development of the SoT as an outcome of ED activities, with two broad objectives. The first is 'to enhance the quality of teaching in faculties and departments' (Kreber, 2003, p. 94), because it should enable teachers to 'teach more knowledgeably' (Trigwell & Shale, 2004, p. 524). The second purpose is to raise the stature of teaching. Hutchings and Shulman (1999) argue that SoTL offers a 'mechanism through which the profession of teaching itself advances' and becomes more than a 'seat-of-the-pants operation' (p. 14). Neither concept – reflection nor the SoT – is straightforward, however. The popularisation of the notion of 'reflection' has led to an obfuscation of the meaning of the term (Morrison, 1995), and careful conceptualisation of the different understandings of the term is, therefore, necessary. Hall (1997, p. 7) describes 'everyday' or 'random' (non-pedagogical) reflection as a non-deliberate reflective response to practice that may remain at the level of 'thinking, remembering or talking' about teaching. An early proponent of the term 'reflective practitioner', Schön (1987, p. 31), argues that true reflection occurs when it influences future behaviour. We believe that a reflective practice implies a level of structured questioning and of systematic review that is carefully considered and often documented. An inevitable product of such reflection should be new understanding and altered perspectives. It could be argued that a 'non-reflective' or static teaching practice represents a potential starting point for a journey of scholarly growth. Mezirow (1991) considers the notion of layers of reflective practice and provides a three-level framework on which such practice can be mapped. At the first level, content reflection, the focus is on describing the problem. Typically, questions at this level focus on what is done and what actions are taken. The next level, process reflection, focuses on how we do something, or the methods we use. Finally, premise reflection points to adopting a critical stance towards our teaching, questioning our decisions and the

approaches we follow. Drawing on this work, Kreber and Cranton (2000, p. 477) suggest that Mezirow's levels of reflection provide a viable framework to explain how reflection, particularly critical (premise) reflection, might contribute to developing 'scholarship in teaching'. It is to this scholarship that the discussion now turns.

When Boyer (1990) introduced the notion of a SoT, along with his three other scholarships (discovery, integration and application), a clear definition of this scholarship was not supplied. The variety of conceptions of the SoT in the literature further attests to the original lack of clarity around the terms *scholarly teaching* and the *SoT* (Trigwell & Shale, 2004). The term *scholarly* usually refers to a 'particular sort of activity' illustrated by the use of appropriate literature (Trigwell & Shale, 2004, p. 525). According to this definition, scholarly teaching 'draws upon educational publications'. Scholarly teachers 'reflect on their teaching, use classroom assessment techniques, discuss teaching issues with colleagues, and read and apply the literature on teaching and learning'. The reflective practice of scholarly teachers – in a deepening engagement with their teaching development – thus moves beyond personal reflection to focus on dialogue with colleagues about the innovation of teaching and learning in their disciplines.

Scholarship, however, has proven to be the more difficult term to clarify. The increasing interest of scholarly teachers in sharing their reflection on and knowledge about teaching and learning is regarded as a 'critical attribute' in developing as a teaching scholar (Weston & McAlpine, 2001, p. 95). Hutchings and Shulman (1999, p. 13) define scholarship as work that is 'public (community property), open to critique and evaluation, and presented in a form that others can build upon', adding that it involves, 'question-asking, enquiry and investigation, particularly around the issues of teaching and learning'. According to McKinney (2006, p. 39), 'teaching scholarship' involves not only a systematic study of teaching and learning, but also 'the public sharing and review of such work through live or virtual presentations, performances or publications'. The aim of this engagement in dialogue is to enhance the value of teaching at the institution and in the discipline as well as the growth of knowledge related to teaching in general or in the discipline (Weston & McAlpine, 2001).

These understandings of reflection, scholarly teaching and scholarship point to an intricate hierarchy of potential participation in teaching and learning on the part of a university teacher. We felt that they resonated with our own understandings and provided a clear lens through which we could review our ED activities.

Enabling ED at Stellenbosch University

The professional learning of lecturers at Stellenbosch University (SU) is facilitated by a range of growth opportunities offered by the CTL (see Table 1). We aim to enable academics' journey towards scholarly teaching and even possibly the SoT, encouraging the development of reflective practice and particularly critical reflection. None of the offerings are compulsory, although all newly appointed academics are expected to attend a four-day teaching retreat, known as Professional Educational Development for Academics (PREDAC).

PREDAC functions as the basis for further opportunities created by the Centre to enable academics to grow towards scholarly teaching. It provides academics with an overview of teaching at university, introducing them to key educational constructs and helping them acquire some understanding of the logic and discourse of

Table 1. Initial categorisation of growth opportunities according to scholarly dimensions (Phase 1).

Growth opportunities categorised	Reflective practice	Scholarly teaching	SoTL
PREDAC	×		
Class visit by ED advisor with follow-up reflective discussion	×		
Conduct formal student feedback using university questionnaires	×		
Consultation with ED advisor	×		
Attend workshop: typically half-day events focusing on an aspect of teaching and learning and including educational research	×	×	
Short course on the assessment of student learning comprising four modules	×	×	
Participate in teaching-related policy task team	×	×	
Complete a teaching portfolio	×	×	
Attend an Auxin session	×	×	
Contribute to online in-house teaching journal	×	×	×
Attend in-house SoTL conference	×	×	×
Apply for/receive an award/grant	×	×	×
Attend a national/international teaching-related conference	×	×	×
Attend an educational research writing retreat	×	×	×

educational research. Follow-up growth opportunities, such as requesting a class visit by an ED practitioner, attending a teaching- and learning-focused workshop or the in-house annual SoTL conference, or participating in an educational research writing retreat, further the professional learning initially mediated by PREDAC. The enthusiastic uptake of these opportunities led to a new initiative, the Auxin Project, where academics are invited to share their experience on a specific aspect of their teaching and learning with other academics during a lunch-hour seminar. These academics can form a focused interest group that meets regularly under the guidance of an ED practitioner to read papers on their topic of interest and discuss their own efforts, and possibly even undertake collaborative research. This initiative is aimed at enhancing academics' access to the educational literature and aiding the development of their educational research skills.

The research process: towards an explanatory framework

Each year, as part of our annual planning, we reflect critically on our activities from the preceding year. In 2009, a number of activities, including the completion of three key research projects and our review of the SoTL conference, serendipitously came together to inform our deliberations in a more structured manner than before. The first research project was a comprehensive study focusing on the impact of PREDAC on lecturers' subsequent teaching practice (Cilliers & Herman, 2010). A second perspective was provided by a study conducted by a colleague, herself a chemistry PhD, describing how SU academics experienced their scholarly journeys (Adendorff, 2011). Adendorff's study resonated with the work of Trowler, Fanghanel, and Wareham (2005, p. 435), who argue that, 'the most significant aspects of change processes in teaching, learning and assessment involve social

interaction at the level of the work group' – thus within the department, a place where ED practitioners often do not function.

The third study focused on a group of lecturers who had been identified by the university's top-performing first-year students as the lecturers who had had the greatest influence on their success. This study showed that, while many of the lecturers had adopted a reflective practice towards their teaching, 'few engaged directly with the discourse of pedagogy' (Leibowitz et al., 2009, p. 265). These lecturers spoke of their frustration as they felt unable to describe their teaching using the discourse of the terrain.

Informed by these findings, we set about a critical review of our activities (premise reflection) in order to establish an explanatory framework to enhance our understanding of the ED work we do, and consequently, enable us to more effectively serve the academics at SU. This required utilising a different lens through which to revisit the data generated by the above-mentioned studies, following Leshem and Trafford (2007), and supported by formal and anecdotal feedback on the growth opportunities we facilitate as well as our shared ED experience over many years.

Thus, a four-phase process evolved. In Phase 1, we categorised the different growth opportunities using the literature on reflective practice (as described by Mezirow, 1991), scholarly teaching and scholarship as discussed earlier as organising concepts (see Table 1). In each instance, we considered our intended purpose for the intervention.

We specifically noted some of the enablers or barriers that university teachers often experience, particularly when they attempt a teaching innovation, encourage debate about teaching or embark on educational research. Our findings concurred with three main themes we encountered in the literature. The first is the value of belonging to a community of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998), where a group of academics can engage in a process of collective learning towards a shared enterprise (Coto & Dirckinck-Holmfeld, 2008; Knight & Trowler, 2000; O'Sullivan & Irby, 2011; Webster-Wright, 2009). Knight (2002, p. 232) argues that the CoP is probably the most important site of professional learning, adding that: 'messages are screened through the CoP's systems of meanings and have to compete with other rules, conventions and discourses and with the influences of other elements in the system'. Clearly then, communities of practice that do not value teaching or the SoT can hamper the growth of university teachers who participate in them.

Linked to the first theme, the second concerns the need for enabling environments (EEs) in which teaching and the SoT are valued both by peers and by those in power (McKinney, 2006), where there is a chance, 'to talk seriously about teaching and learning, to have one's ideas listened to and taken seriously, to slow down for a moment and reflect, and to be recognised by peers as contributing to an important larger enterprise' (Hutchings, 2000, p. 65) and where attention is paid to matters such as workload (Dunkin, 2001).

The last theme, which is closely related to the first two, is the importance of the department, faculty, institution and/or one's peers in demonstrating regard and offering appropriate reward for teaching activities (Kreber, 2003; McKinney, 2006; Scott, 2009; Theall & Centra, 2001; Wankat, Felder, Smith, & Oreovicz, 2002). Problems in this area have been described in terms of narrow views dominating institutional opinion (McKinney, 2006), unreceptive institutional cultures that could

pose risks for both appointment and promotion (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999), the lower monetary value of teaching rewards (Kreber, 2001) and uneven 'playing fields' in terms of promotion and appointments (Wankat et al., 2002, p. 8).

The above findings and related literature encouraged us to undertake a second iteration of categorisation (Phase 2) in which we considered each intervention in terms of its potential to provide a suitable context within which reflective and/or scholarly teaching practices or even SoTL could occur (Table 2).

During Phase 3, we reflected on the relationship between Tables 1 and 2, which led to us creating a triangular framework of growth (Figure 1). The triangle comprised four levels of scholarly dimensions, with everyday random reflection (Hall, 1997) forming the base and representing the largest group of lecturers with whom we have contact during all the growth opportunities. In this initial framework, our assumption was that the levels were not discrete and that upward movement along this path, as indicated by the arrow, subsumes previous practice: by implication, a scholarly teacher will practice both content (everyday) and premise (critical) reflection, whilst a teaching scholar would be a scholarly teacher. Typically, only a small group of academics will engage as scholarly teachers and even fewer will ultimately become scholars of teaching. The figure therefore depicts the different levels in the framework and the transition zones between levels. At each transition, the role of regard and reward (R&R), the local CoP and the presence or absence of an EE can help or hinder the transition from one level to the next.

Validating the framework

The next step (Phase 4) was to validate the framework by seeking to map the journeys of certain academics at SU against it. We drew on personal experiences of working with academics across the institution and revisited the extensive repository of transcribed interviews and questionnaire responses from our research projects as well as the feedback received on our activities. We soon realised, however, that our initial categorisation of the growth opportunities and the explanatory framework

Table 2.   Subsequent categorisation of growth opportunities according to themes (Phase 2).

Growth opportunities	CoP	EE	R&R
PREDAC		×	
Class visit by ED advisor with follow-up reflective discussion		×	
Conduct formal student feedback using university questionnaires		×	
Consultation with ED advisor	×	×	
Attend workshop: typically half-day events focusing on an aspect of teaching and learning and including educational research	×		
Short course on the assessment of student learning comprising four modules	×	×	
Participate in teaching-related policy task team	×		×
Complete a teaching portfolio			×
Attend an Auxin session	×	×	
Contribute to online in-house teaching journal		×	×
Attend in-house SoTL conference	×	×	
Apply for/receive an award/grant		×	×
Attend a national/international teaching-related conference	×	×	×
Attend an educational research writing retreat	×	×	

Notes: CoP = Communities of Practice; EE = Enabling Environment; R&R = Regard and Reward.
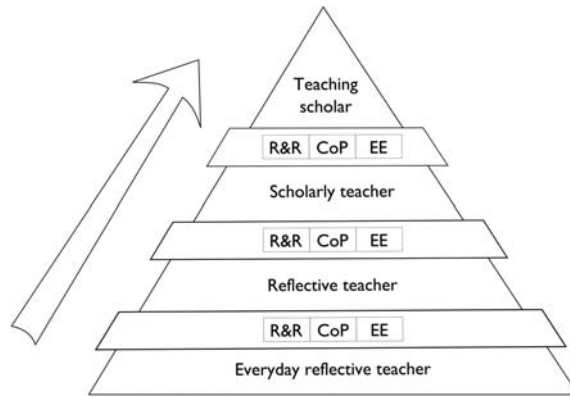
Figure 1. Explanatory framework (Phase 3).

was flawed. For example, a review of responses to PREDAC (the four-day teaching retreat) – which we had determined to be a 'baseline' event – demonstrated a range of experiences that spoke to every level in the framework (see Table 3). While Mina,[1] a young lecturer with a PhD, spoke about PREDAC having provided her with 'nice tips and tricks', Lerato (an experienced professional new to academia) spoke of how she adapted her teaching here and there but had 'found the recipe, a successful recipe', which she now adhered to. In this instance, Mina's response could be regarded as a form of everyday random reflection. Lerato, however, has considered her teaching (content reflection), but now that she has found a pattern that works for her, applies it seemingly uncritically. Godfrey, a well-known professor, described how hearing about how student learning can occur had an impact on him and 'on the structure of [my] lectures'. His comment indicates something deeper, possibly process reflection. Ultimately, Piet, a young lecturer teaching large

Table 3. Individual uptake of growth opportunities (Phase 4).

Lecturer	Growth opportunities attended	Level on framework
Chantel	PREDAC	Everyday random reflection
Hannes	PREDAC, Class visit Auxin session: invited presenter Participated in teaching-related policy task teams	Reflective practitioner
Sarah	PREDAC, Class visit Auxin session: invited presenter Assessment short course and compiled assessor portfolio Applied for FIRLT and participated in a writing retreat Attended SoTL conference Participated in various ED workshops	Scholarly teacher
Liesl	Attended a predecessor of PREDAC Applied for FIRLT Presented at SoTL conference and served on abstract review committee Participated in teaching-related policy task teams Presented at national/international teaching-related conferences	Teaching scholar

Note: FIRLT = Fund for Research and Innovation in Learning and Teaching.

classes, spoke of how PREDAC led to him conducting classroom-based research and questioning his data. This response echoes the findings of Leibowitz et al. (2009) and speaks to growth and a more scholarly approach to one's teaching.

A further indication of the limitations of our framework emerged when we attempted to map the journeys of four specific lecturers. These lecturers were selected based on their level of uptake across the full range of growth opportunities, and each represents a larger group of academics who have followed similar journeys (Table 3) (Phase 4). The narratives of these lecturers described each one's scholarly journey and correspondingly further informed the validation of the framework.

Chantel

Chantel attended PREDAC when she started teaching at the university, but regarded the teaching principles she learnt there as inapplicable to her teaching practice. Its value, to her, was in providing her with 'a few tips' to enhance her teaching style and delivery, such as the guidelines to small-group facilitation. Chantel equated teaching to entertainment and referred to it in terms of a set of 'techniques'.

In her third year of teaching, Chantel was nominated by one of the top-achieving first-year students at the university as the lecturer who had had a profound influence on her learning (cf. Leibowitz et al., 2009 regarding this event). Chantel's response to whether she would consider researching aspects of her teaching indicated a mechanistic view of teaching. She compared herself to a colleague, whom she described as a 'teaching guru', stating that since he uses many different techniques – unlike her – his teaching might merit research, but not hers. Her reflection centred on how to keep students entertained. She viewed teaching as a private act, calling it a more 'personal type of thing', and although she revised her curricula annually, the focus was on the inclusion of her research interests and on keeping the content interesting. Chantel actively participated in a disciplinary research community and alluded to a tension between teaching and disciplinary research when she spoke of the colleague who invested much effort into teaching at the expense of completing a higher degree.

Although Chantel received accolades for her teaching, her reflection remained at the everyday/random level and did not include structured questioning or the systematic review of pedagogical aspects of what she did.

Hannes

Hannes received poor student feedback at the end of his first semester of teaching. Then, having attended PREDAC, he integrated what he had learnt there into his teaching. He invited a CTL advisor for a classroom observation visit during the following semester and this invitation led to a number of follow-up class visits and feedback discussions. His implementation of ideas from these consultations resulted in improved student feedback and an increased sense of competence as a lecturer.

Hannes' reflection on his teaching practice indicated an interest in increasing the understanding and effectiveness of his teaching (Weston & McAlpine, 2001). In addition, he started influencing teaching and learning in his faculty through the mentoring of newly appointed lecturers in his department, where his teaching expertise is now highly regarded. The affirmation he currently receives within this community (the work group) is significant for Hannes. As a result of his involvement

with new colleagues, and specifically because of his reflective approach to student feedback, Hannes was nominated to participate in a teaching-related policy task team and was also invited to share his experiences of student feedback during a lunch-time Auxin session. Yet, through the years, Hannes has attended few of the workshops offered by the Centre. While his careful and considered reflection on student feedback has undoubtedly influenced his teaching practice (and that of his colleagues), he has not taken up more scholarly endeavours that would enable him to explore why the changes he has made to his teaching are valuable.

Sarah

Sarah attended PREDAC as a newly appointed junior lecturer in her department. During her first semester of teaching, she requested a class visit by a CTL advisor, and during the rest of the year, she completed the short course on the assessment of student learning and attended various CTL growth opportunities, including the annual SoTL conference. From the beginning, she showed a keen interest in teaching and asked the 'why' questions (Mezirow, 1991). She soon embarked on research projects that focused on the factors affecting student learning in her classes. When faced with making sense of her findings, and being unfamiliar with the basics of educational research, she sought the help of educational experts outside her department. Through this collaboration, she was introduced to texts on (disciplinary) classroom research. During her second year of teaching at SU, she enroled for a Master's degree in higher education and applied for funding from the Fund for Research and Innovation in Learning and Teaching (FIRLT) to research aspects of her teaching. Based on her growing theoretical knowledge and the practical application thereof, she was invited by CTL to be a presenter during a lunch-time Auxin session where she shared her experiences with other lecturers.

During an interview conducted as part of one of the earlier studies, Sarah spoke of the support she received from her head of department (HOD) and also stated that she feared that colleagues would disregard her work in the area of teaching as 'unscientific'. She also expressed concern that her HOD's position could change if too many people in their department started doing classroom research (as an 'easy option' alternative to disciplinary research), especially if those projects lacked scientific rigour. Nevertheless, Sarah now uses a scholarly approach to her teaching, informed by critical reflection, including 'what' (content), 'how' (process) and 'why' (premise) questions, appropriate literature and systematic classroom research. At the time of writing, she has submitted an abstract to present her research at an educational conference. Clearly, Sarah is well on her way to embracing the SoT.

Liesl

Liesl is a professor who works in a discipline with a strong educational research tradition. As a passionate teacher, she received the Rector's Award for Teaching Excellence in her faculty three years ago, after being nominated for a similar award by her students. Liesl has been at the university for many years and attended a predecessor of PREDAC. She was subsequently invited to be part of a panel of established academics at PREDAC, sharing her thoughts on good teaching practice with newly appointed academics. By then she was devoting considerable attention to teaching, and research into her teaching, despite pressures to produce disciplinary

research outputs, which she was also continuing to do. This led to her being nominated to participate in both a working group reviewing an institutional teaching-related policy and the university's committee for teaching and learning.

Refining her conceptualisation of her teaching practice, Liesl applied for funding for a collaborative research project from the FIRLT. She presented her findings at the SoTL conference, and her presentation won the award for the best paper, which funds attendance at an international teaching and learning conference of the winner's choice. She was thus able to present her research into her teaching to an international audience.

Recently, Liesl accepted a proposal to undertake a year-long teaching fellowship and has received recognition as a scholar, within both her discipline and her teaching. Several of her publications have been in collaboration with ED advisors from the Centre. In reflecting on this collaborative work, Liesl described the ED practitioner as a fellow 'content expert' in another field where interpretation functioned differently. She experienced the collaboration as liberating, commenting that the ED practitioner challenged dogmas and was not limited by the constraints she felt were imposed on her by her own discipline.

The narrative of this teaching scholar, along with the three other narratives, challenged our initial explanatory framework (Figure 1) as we identified many different journeys, some of which did not 'fit' the frame. In the following section, we discuss the key findings of our reflections.

Discussion

From the outset, it had been clear that neither the journey nor the destination was the same for all academics, yet ultimately our framework helped us to better understand the complex growth journeys that lecturers undertake as teachers. For some the process might be cyclical (Richlin, 2001), while for others it was changeable according to, for example, shifting demands in their environment. The same opportunity can take different lecturers to different places within the framework. Each path is uniquely fashioned, influenced by the context within which growth is enabled or hampered, and directed by the individual's own agency and identity (Leibowitz, Van Schalkwyk, Adendorff, Farmer, & Ruiters, 2011) – a feature which cannot be mapped in the framework, but which essentially determines its application. The context constitutes aspects of environment, the nature of the CoP within which the lecturer functions and the extent to which choices made are recognised and rewarded. The differing contexts result in a variety of responses to growth opportunities and academics opting to establish themselves at different places along the journey.

Importantly, not every lecturer will or needs to become a scholar of teaching (McKinney, 2006; Weston & McAlpine, 2001). Furthermore, some academics, such as Hannes, may become teaching scholars without following the growth path offered by the CTL or similar centres, but they are potentially champions for teaching and learning in their faculties.

What does this mean for the work of ED practitioners, particularly for those seeking to encourage more scholarly approaches at their institutions? If there are so many variables influencing both our effectiveness and the responses of the academics we endeavour to support, how do we make appropriate decisions about the growth opportunities we offer? What is our role regarding influencing the external conditions, whether at the level of the work group or across an institution?

Our experience has been that the framework can serve as a heuristic that we can utilise both in our planning and in our discussions with lecturers. Too often the service nature of ED work results in it being reactive as we seek to respond to the ever-changing needs and contexts of our institutions. The framework provides a benchmark and rationale for ED endeavours that is grounded in theory, yet also practical and applicable across a range of contexts. It cautions us to avoid being uni-dimensional in our work and rather remain cognisant of the diverse needs of those we work with. Our focus is to create the sort of EEs where university teachers will be able to talk about what they do, slow down and reflect. To do this, we need to know our 'customers', understand their contexts and participate in their communities of practice. This may not be easy. Recent approaches by the CTL to engage in interdisciplinary, collaborative work, especially in a one-on-one context (see Sarah and Liesl), while rewarding, have been resource-intensive and have required hard choices in terms of our priorities and focus. As calls go out for university teachers to adapt their practice in the shifting higher education landscape, the diverse understandings emerging from this study point to a need for ED practitioners to be similarly adaptive. We also need to maintain a critically reflective stance that is informed by the most current and relevant work in our field. Our own practice ought to be scholarly and held up for peer review.

This study also affirms that our work can support academics towards becoming, at the very least, reflective about their teaching. While we acknowledge that there are influences beyond our control that may result in different responses and uneven uptake of our growth opportunities, we are challenged to address those influences that are not beyond our control. If we are convinced of the potential of adopting a scholarly practice for enhancing the quality of teaching, then we may need to take a stronger advocacy role on board to influence external conditions that may be hindering a scholarly journey.

A limitation in our study is the fact that in our analyses, the voice of the academic has only been factored in so far as it responds to these external conditions. The important role of identity and agency is investigated in subsequent work (Leibowitz et al., 2011).

This study has provided us as ED practitioners with an opportunity for critical reflection on what we do. It has informed our own professional learning, affirming that we are also following a journey towards scholarship and that there is indeed an emerging research agenda for ED practitioners (Brew, 2002). Ultimately, it points to the importance of working as an ED team within its own CoP and highlights the potential for adding richness and depth to our work when we draw on our combined knowledge, experience and individual research.

Acknowledgements

Note

1. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the study.

Notes on contributors

Susan van Schalkwyk was a deputy director at the Centre for Teaching and Learning when this article was written. She holds a PhD in higher education and her research interests include academic literacy, doctoral education and curriculum development. She recently moved to the Centre for Health Sciences Education at the University.

Francois Cilliers holds an MPhil in higher education from Stellenbosch University (and a medical degree from his 'first life'). He is currently completing his PhD on the learning effects of consequential assessment with the University of Maastricht. He is a deputy director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning and a FAIMER fellow.

Hanelie Adendorff is a senior advisor in higher education at the Centre for Teaching and Learning. She holds a PhD in chemistry and started her academic career as a chemistry lecturer. She has been involved in educational development since 2003. Her research interests include academic development and science education.

Karin Cattell is a senior advisor in higher education at the Centre for Teaching and Learning. She has taught Afrikaans literature and linguistics and holds a PhD in Afrikaans literature and philosophy from the University of the Witwatersrand. Her research interests include academic literacy, complexity theory and cultural studies.

Nicoline Herman holds an MPhil in higher education from Stellenbosch University and is currently a senior advisor in higher education at the University's Centre for Teaching and Learning. She has been the driving force behind the educational development initiatives for newly appointed academics and is currently registered for a PhD in the field.

References

Adendorff, H. (2011). Strangers in a strange land: On becoming scholars of teaching. *The London Review, 9*(3), 305–315.

Boyer, E. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Brew, A. (2002). Research and the academic developer: A new agenda. *International Journal for Academic Development, 7*(2), 112–122.

Brew, A. (2004). The scope of academic development. *International Journal for Academic Development, 9*(1), 5–7.

Cilliers, F.J., & Herman, N. (2010). Impact of an educational development programme on teaching practice of academics at a research-intensive university. *International Journal for Academic Development, 15*(3), 253–267.

Coto, M., & Dirckinck-Holmfeld, L. (2008). Facilitating communities of practice in teacher professional development. In V. Hodgson, C. Jones, T. Kargidis, D. McConnell, S. Retalis, D. Stamatis, & M. Zenios (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 6th international conference on networked learning* (pp. 54–60). Lancaster: University of Lancaster. Retrieved March 5, 2012, from http://www.networkedlearningconference.org.uk/past/nlc2008/abstracts/PDFs/Coto_54-60.pdf

Dunkin, R. (2001). Teaching and learning in universities. *HERDSA News, 23*(2), 1–4.

Elton, L. (1998). Dimensions of excellence in university teaching. *International Journal for Academic Development, 3*(1), 3–11.

Hall, S. (1997). Forms of reflective teaching practice in higher education. In R. Pospisil & L. Willcoxson (Eds.), *Learning through teaching. Proceedings of the 6th annual teaching learning forum* (pp. 124–131). Perth: Murdoch University.

Hutchings, P. (Ed.). (2000). *Approaches to the scholarship of teaching and learning*. Menlo Park, CA: Carnegie.

Hutchings, P., & Shulman, L. (1999). The scholarship of teaching: New elaborations, new observations. *Change, 31*(5), 11–15.

Kane, R., Sandretto, S., & Heath, C. (2004). An investigation into excellent tertiary teaching: Emphasising reflective practice. *Higher Education, 47*(3), 283–310.

Knight, P. (2002). A systematic approach to professional development: Learning as practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 18*(3), 229–241.

Knight, P., & Trowler, P. (2000). Department-level cultures and the improvement of learning and teaching. *Studies in Higher Education, 25*(1), 69–83.

Kreber, C. (2001). Observations, reflections, and speculations: What we have learned about the scholarship of teaching and where it might lead. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 86*, 99–104.

Kreber, C. (2003). The scholarship of teaching: A comparison of conceptions held by experts and regular staff. *Higher Education, 46*(1), 93–121.

Kreber, C., & Cranton, P.A. (2000). Exploring the scholarship of teaching. *Journal of Higher Education, 71*(4), 476–495.

Leibowitz, B., Van Schalkwyk, S., Adendorff, H., Farmer, J., & Ruiters, J. (2011). 'It's been a wonderful life': Accounts of the interplay between structure and agency by 'good' university teachers. *Higher Education, 63*(3), 353–365.

Leibowitz, B., Van Schalkwyk, S., Van der Merwe, A., Herman, N., & Young, G. (2009). What makes a good first year lecturer? In B. Leibowitz, A. van der Merwe, & S. van Schalkwyk (Eds.), *Focus on first year success: Perspectives emerging from South Africa and beyond* (pp. 255–270). Stellenbosch: Sun Press.

Leshem, S., & Trafford, V. (2007). Overlooking the conceptual framework. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 44*(1), 93–105.

McKinney, K. (2006). Attitudinal and structural factors contributing to challenges in the work of the scholarship of teaching and learning. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 129*, 37–50.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Morrison, K.R.B. (1995). Dewey, Habermas and reflective practice. *Curriculum, 16*(2), 82–94.

O'Sullivan, P.S., & Irby, D.M. (2011). Reframing research on faculty development. *Academic Medicine, 86*(4), 1–8.

Richlin, L. (2001). Scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 86*, 57–68.

Schön, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Scott, I. (2009). First-year experience as terrain of failure or platform for development. In B. Leibowitz, A. van der Merwe, & S. van Schalkwyk (Eds.), *Focus on first-year success: Perspectives emerging from South Africa and beyond* (pp. 17–35). Stellenbosch: Sun Press.

Theall, M., & Centra, J. (2001). Assessing the scholarship of teaching: Valid decisions from valid evidence. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 86*, 31–45.

Trigwell, K., & Shale, S. (2004). Student learning and the scholarship of university teaching. *Studies in Higher Education, 29*(4), 523–536.

Trowler, P., Fanghanel, J., & Wareham, T. (2005). Freeing the chi of change: The higher education academy and enhancing teaching and learning in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 30*(4), 427–444.

Wankat, P.C., Felder, R.M., Smith, K.A., & Oreovicz, F.S. (2002). The scholarship of teaching and learning in engineering. In M.T. Huber & S.P. Morreale (Eds.), *Disciplinary styles in the scholarship of teaching and learning: Exploring common ground* (pp. 217–237). Washington, DC: AAHE/Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Webster-Wright, A. (2009). Reframing professional development through understanding authentic professional learning. *Review of Educational Research, 79*(2), 702–739.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Weston, C.B., & McAlpine, L. (2001). Making explicit the development towards the scholarship of teaching. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 86*, 89–97.