

Shaping academic staff development through a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning programme at a teaching-intensive university

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The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) can be described as an approach whereby communities of teachers who are committed to pedagogical inquiry and innovation meet to exchange ideas about teaching and learning and subsequently apply those ideas to address the challenges of educating students. While there are accounts of SoTL initiatives at other universities at the (teaching-intensive) university under study there was an absence of an institutional SoTL programme exclusively for its academic staff. This paper reports on the feedback from candidates regarding the initial implementation of a SoTL programme as an initiative to shape academic staff development. Activity theory was chosen as a theoretical framework so that the SoTL programme could be viewed as an activity system. A major contradiction identified was that at a teaching intensive university, efforts to promote research (even) in teaching were thwarted because teaching trumped research, and the dropout rate was high. The candidates who remained capitalized on the SoTL programme to embark on Masters and Doctoral degrees. They were using the SoTL programme to advance their careers and not simply to improve educational practice and publish; thus shifting the outcome. This will have implications for the objectives and duration of future SoTL programmes and the relevance of course materials used.