

Benefit of scholarship of teaching and learning for teaching practice

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Pope-Ruark, R. (2012). Back to our roots: An invitation to strengthen disciplinary arguments via the scholarship of teaching and learning. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 75(4), 357 –376.

Pope-Ruark (2012) asserted the importance of a scholarly research plan in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) because it expands professional communication by differentiating SoTL from other kinds of teacher-scholar practice, specifically, anecdotal publications, action research, conventional educational research, and academic teaching. Pope-Ruark (2012) provided a short history of the Association for Business Communication (ABC) and the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) because they are the proponents of professional writing pedagogy. In SoTL, the researcher is an instructor of any discipline who seeks to enhance personal, disciplinary, and/or higher education training in general or for specific students, certain teaching methods, and teaching or learning problems and opportunities (Pope-Ruark, 2012, p. 365). The primary methods of SoTL are wide-ranging literature reviews in disciplinary pedagogical journals and SoTL scholarship; qualitative or quantitative scientific methods, and other empirical approaches (Pope-Ruark, 2012, p. 365). Furthermore, the implications and distribution of SoTL includes the development of a research agenda to understand teaching and learning practices and outcomes and to share learning through peer-reviewed journals or conferences in related disciplines or the SoTL community (Pope-Ruark, 2012, p. 365). Pope-Ruark (2012) concluded that implementing an SoTL research agenda in the field of professional communication will shape

teaching and publishing activities, theory-building, and disciplinary identity by improving how SoTL researchers and practitioners see themselves in relation to other fields and how they can contribute to the latter's communication skills development, thereby boosting (inter)disciplinary communication knowledge and practices.

The evaluation of the paper reveals several strengths and weaknesses. The strengths of the article are its differentiation of SoTL from other teacher-scholar practices and provision of a case study of SoTL practice. First, the delineation through comparison and contrast helps readers understand what SoTL is in comparison to others and why it offers something more. The differentiation further captures the relevance of SoTL to those who want an empirical approach to the disciplinarity and teaching and research-agenda support of SoTL to teacher-scholars. Second, the case study shows SoTL in practice. SoTL in everyday practice shows the centrality of an empirical research agenda in understanding and examining teaching and learning practices for purposes of enhancing school outcomes and theory-building. SoTL supports the pedagogy that ABC and ATTW promote. The article has its weaknesses, however, because it does not show statistics or qualitative research on how SoTL has directly improved the disciplinarity of professional communication in any specific way. Readers would also be interested in a further discussion of SoTL's future research plans that contribute to specific emerging professional communication issues and trends that the paper lacked. Despite these weaknesses, I find the article useful in determining the roots of SoTL in two respected communication organizations. These roots showed the origins and purposes of SoTL in defining the nature and direction

of professional writing as a discipline. I learned something new also from the article because it showed how SoTL can help scholars shape their research agenda from existing professional communication issues and how it can support them in finding new theories and teaching practices that fit modern technological advances and communication pattern changes. Finally, the article is important in underscoring the role of peer-reviewed publication in expanding professional communication theories and practices through knowledge-sharing that invites further research and theory-testing. This aspect encourages me to one day publish my own professional communication studies.