

A note on the link between teaching and research

By

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For most of us, being in the world of academics has meant straddling the two poles of teaching and research. I am often asked-does being a researcher helps in teaching and vice versa? I never know how to answer this in a simple manner. I see these two aspects deeply linked to each other and yet fundamentally different from each other. Each has its own grammar, its own craft and its own language. While research is about delving into the unknown, the lesser known aspects of a subject, teaching is about making accessible what is already known in the subject. Yet, what is common to the two is the act of questioning combined with the art of listening. So naturally the two activities feed into each other.

While teaching *Gender* in a classroom, often a question posed by a student makes me ask myself questions I might not have asked otherwise in my research. Or approach answers in a novel and fresh way. Sometimes even if the question is familiar, the student's reason for asking the question can be different; the quest to understand might be shared between us but the paths –to the questions and the answers- may be different. Making the student conscious of the context of their own questions is part of the pedagogical principle of learning to contextualise a question. Making myself conscious of this is part of my own development as a researcher.

Sometimes a student opens a window in my mind which I did not have access to earlier. It could be the content of the question or the manner of the question, the way in which it is asked that can be deeply instructive-not only of the personality of the student but also of a unique way of approaching the subject. In the classroom, therefore, I encounter multiple ways of being reflected in the multiple ways of questioning. What more can my 'researcher'self ask for? While mostly, students bring in their common sense knowledge on any issue, there are times when they bring in the germ of a fresh, unformulated thought process. To help the student navigate through this is the greatest service one can do to one's discipline. And to my own understanding of my discipline. That is what makes me enter the class with anticipation. And leave it with joy.

Teaching is not only about teaching. It's also about learning. We learn as we teach. We learn as we listen.-to questions and ways of questioning. And that is what research is all about too!