

Queen's Law Virtual Symposium

Keynote Address and Reflective Conversation with Dr. Denise Stockley, 23 June 2026

Michele Leering: Super. Thank you so much, Sharry, and thank you to all the presenters in that last session. Just so incredibly rich. Thank you.

I'm really delighted now to move into a reflective conversation and keynote address with Dr. Denise Stockley. And she is a Professor and Scholar in Higher Education here at Queen's. And she's the past president of the Canadian Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

She's going to speak with us and share a PowerPoint, I think, Denise, for the first ten minutes or so. Then she and I are going to have a little bit of a reflective conversation, and we'll be watching for the questions that you might be putting into the Q&A. It would be wonderful to have some of those. She's talking about strengthening the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in law through reflective practice. And I am really looking forward to hearing about this.

And hopefully she's going to tell us a little bit about the new institute that she founded, that can support law teachers too, here at Queen's, the Queen's Institute for Educational Scholarship and Research. So welcome, welcome. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Denise Stockley: Thank you so much. I have to say, though, I thought, being online, I wouldn't be worried about being in the session right before lunch or breaks and things. And then you set it up that it's like, 30 more minutes and then you can have your life. But thank you all for coming. And for those on different time zones, good morning, good afternoon and good evening.

As Michele mentioned, I will discuss a bit about the institute that we're starting. And actually, all of you are invited to be part of the institute, because we do have an international scope for that.

But I just wanted to touch base on the title. I just want to repeat it here: "*Strengthening the Scholarship of Teaching in Learning in Law through Reflective Practice*." And of course, depending on where you are, there is no strengthening, because you already have that influence and that work. But for some of you, you're working in environments where this area of work that you're doing is sort of down the hall, in the deepest, darkest corners of your building. And so that's part of the conversation we want to have.

I loved the panel before this, and talking about the different ways that we use language, how we use empowerment, where our strength comes from. I mean, this is what scholarship is.

And so, part of the discussion that we're going to have today, and in a few PowerPoints, is really just highlighting things that you probably already are doing, or things that you are doing sort of without people knowing it. How often I talk to people and they say, well, I do this, but nobody in my department knows. And that's okay, because if they did, then they'd stop. And so, we want to talk about, how do we bring this kind of work into more of an open environment? And of course, part of that, we'll talk about how reflective practice really aligns itself well with scholarship.

I know there's a chat function, and I know Michele and I are going to talk, so I'll just have a few slides.

So, for those in Canada, as part of our truth and reconciliation, we talk about the lands that we sit on. And I'm sure you've done this already. And for us, we sit on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe lands in Kingston, and at Queen's. And I put this here intentionally, because part of what we do when we do a land acknowledgement is really talk about the experience. So, we get told, in our institutions, that we are supposed to say where we work, play, and so on. But when you talk to people who are Indigenous, they say, but it has to be deeper, it has to be more. And it is about the reflective practice of what we do. And I wanted to just start there before I move forward, and intentionally chose the picture of the jigsaw puzzle, because if you're anything like me, you're missing pieces all the time.

Like, I'm just not a puzzle person, I've learned about myself. I really want to be, I really do. And that's what this idea of reflective practice and scholarship is all about. You don't have to have all the pieces of the puzzle. You don't have to have thought about everything. But we come together as one on this great land, and we talk about what does that actually mean, and who do we need to have as part of our community? What do we need to have in order to move forward? And, yeah, if you have a puzzle, I'm not the person you want to help with the mission. Trust me on this one.

So, I wanted to put this here, and I'm going to challenge each of you to really think about what I'm going to describe here and see where you are on the continuum. So, this is my fancier version, of me having a picture of somebody and everything else, because this is one of my favourite slides. And not this version of it, but this concept, it comes from Carolin Kreber's work in the early 2000s.

And it's really about, how do we transition to that idea of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning? Think about where you are now, or if you're in a faculty, where's your DNA? Depending on where you are, your thinking goes. But the idea of being an excellent teacher - this idea of, what does it mean to be an excellent teacher? An excellent teacher could be an award-winning teacher. It could be anybody. But the idea is you want to improve the experience for your learners. You want to improve the experience of how you teach. But it's really about being excellent and just being aware that that's where you are.

I would argue that all of you at this conference, and the conferences preceding and afterwards, are already scholarly teachers, where you're focusing on inquiry. What are you doing that's informed by evidence, by inquiry? How are you enhancing the learning experience, and so on and so forth? But the scholarly teacher keeps things a little bit tighter, meaning it's still just local use. And then I would even argue that the majority of you who are presenting are stepping over to the other side. But of course, I don't know which way I'm tipping, because you may be seeing this in reverse, and you're thinking I'm tipping to the excellent. But no, it's really not a pendulum.

I'm now at the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. So, the idea is, what advances understanding, informs others. So, the idea is that you're not just doing things for yourself anymore. You're actually doing things for the other.

How do we communicate? Whenever I hear somebody, and again, I work across the disciplines: "But we can't do that in my area, or that's not my discipline, or we're special," or any other words like that. The whole point of doing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is improving practice, not just within law, but within the field.

So, there are international journals such as *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, and others. There are international law journals that some of you will be presenting and publishing in, and things like that. But how do you go public? Because something that you do in law may be the greatest thing in the world in another discipline, but you don't know that. And this is part of going public. But more importantly, with law, how do you inform others that there are different ways to do things? Because often we teach how we were taught. The expression is, we supervise, for graduate students, how we were supervised. So how do you break that trend is part of what we were talking about. How do we move it forward?

And again, looking at the program, it's incredible, the overall program.

So, this slide here is just one. Reflection becomes scholarship.

I heard very clearly about the language issue, meaning that for many people it doesn't sit well to say, oh, I do Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, or I do education research, or, fancy people say, discipline-based education research. And it doesn't sit well because I say, well, I was trained as a lawyer, or I was trained as this or that, so I can't be that person.

Well, this is where we in education love you all, and we want you all. In fact, education is one of the few professions where you can get a PhD in education irrespective of what your master's was in, if you're interested in teaching in that field. Because what we're saying, and what we believe to be true, is that the idea is, how do we encourage, support, do research in all of these different areas?

So, if you're doing reflective practice, and again, this is from my area, reflective practice usually looks at, what am I noticing? What's working, what is challenging? And again, you have other questions, because language will depend on where you're coming from. As soon as we move that far to scholarly inquiry, about why might this be happening, what does the literature suggest, how can I gather evidence, all of a sudden you've sort of tipped more into, okay, I've been curious, but now I'm really curious. I want to know what's happening. Educational scholarship again goes to one level: what can others learn from what I'm doing? How does this advance practice? How can this knowledge be shared?

One of my biggest issues, I don't know if issues is the right word, but one of the things that I say regularly to people who are doing this kind of work, and I'm talking about the work they're doing, is, if you're not telling your story, who is? And so, what do I mean by that? You go to this amazing conference, you go to other places, and you talk about the amazing things you're doing in your work, in your world. But if you don't take it that step further, with whatever your discipline is excited by, from either publication or website or blog, then what happens is you've told your story just this much, but you actually haven't told it so others can hear. So, I will challenge you to think about, what are your stories, and how will you share them?

Again, looking at the program, you're already so far, all of you. I'm doing it collectively, not individually, you. But the idea is, what are the kinds of questions, from a reflective practice, can you ask? Well, basically, it's bottomless. So, the bottom line is that good legal education teaches students how to think like lawyers. Reflective legal education asks what kind of lawyers we're hoping and helping them to become.

With that, this is one of my favourite images, one of my favourite stock images. I'm a systems researcher. It's all about the ripple effect. And so, we don't know where we will end up when we throw that first stone, or the first raindrop happens. We don't know where a thought can lead us. Sometimes people say, well, "I don't have enough time. I only have them for 30 minutes. I only have them for this. I only have them for that." But at the end of the day, as we've learned in history, and in fact the group before quoted some amazing people, it only takes one line to change the world, and sometimes it's one word or one action to change the world.

So, think about your work and what you're doing, and how you are creating the ripples. Or if the ripples were created for you, how are you joining in? Because we can actually start side ripples at the same time.

Last but not least, I'll introduce our institute. As I was mentioning, it is something that we want to embrace, anyone who's excited by doing educational scholarship and research. Basically, we have invited scholars, for those people outside of Queen's University, and we have internal scholars. We have people who are faculty, staff, postdocs, librarians, students, all contributing and engaging in this work. And really, all we're doing is we're looking at where teaching meets research. That's our moniker. Because often we forget that just stepping into a classroom, whether it's physical or metaphorical or online like this, we don't just step into a classroom and just say whatever comes off the top of our head. Because even things that are off the top of our head, we spent time learning about, researching about, and of course, with the work you're doing, reflecting on.

So, whenever someone says, well, is that true? Like, people who are teaching practitioners, they're doing research? Of course it is. You don't walk into a classroom without thinking about what you're about to do. So, we're trying to change how we think about research, and looking at it from the idea of, how do we again tell the stories that we have? But more importantly, how do we bring together individuals and collectives of people who are excited by different things?

My last slide, and I'll turn it back to Michele. These are our QIESR dimensions. So QIESR, pronounced "quasar," is the Queen's Institute for Educational Scholarship and Research. Given your topics, your interest, what you're doing, and why you're at this conference, even though these are the ones that we chose, I want you to think about them from a reflective practitioner point of view, and how you're doing this in your own environment. Because when we talk about being down the hall, and people not recognising it, or how are we being celebrated, it's partially our job in order to do these things. So how are you building capacity, in our case for inquiry, but your reflective practice? How are you making that space for people? How are you connecting people? So here you have an international connection. How are you bringing that home?

How do we align, in our case, institutional priorities? And I would suggest thinking about your profession, in this case, how do you align the profession's priorities with the kind of work you're doing? How do we amplify, or disseminate, and recognise impact? And then, of course, how do we sustain it?

One of the hardest things for me as an education scholar is how often we start repeating things, in the sense that we haven't created paths to sustain. So as leadership changes, as, you know, even our personal life, all these things change. If we haven't built sustainability in, how do we do that? And so that's creating those ideas, communities of practice at your own institution.

So, whenever we do large scale change things, we have these different sessions where we ask department heads and others to bring a buddy, because it's very lonely to be the one. So, find your buddies, find your people who you can do these kinds of things with, because sustainability is based on how many people are engaged and excited by it.

I love this conference. I love the ones that were before this. I'm looking forward to the ones after. But it's the idea, how do you sustain this? So, a year from now, you've seen change for yourself, but also for the others you work with. And that I will close off the formal presentation.

Michele Leering: Super. Thank you, Denise, for sharing those insights with us from your extensive experience. Very helpful.

Something I discovered in my own research, of course, is that the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Canada is not as strong in law as many of us would like it to be.

So, I have been inspired by the resources that you have listed on your website. I should tell everyone that this centre has just recently been launched. It's a very new initiative. And when I started thumbing through, or whatever you call it, clicking through the website, I discovered a number of resources that I sure wished I had when I started my PhD work and research.

And I wonder if you can just comment for a moment on the resources that you created. We'll be sure to link to your website in our resources too, but I wonder if you can just comment on a few of the things that you decided to share, and why you decided to share them with people who are contemplating contributing to this area of work.

Denise Stockley: Sure. And although our institute is new, going back to that sustainability part, we were actually identified as the only Canadian university, one of two post-secondary institutions in Canada, in 2006, as a Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. And we still are starting fresh.

But with our resources, these aren't necessarily ones we've made ourselves. We do have colleagues we work with who've made them. But what we did is, with QIESR, we're trying to look at the gaps in between. If somebody's already developed an amazing resource, if you have an amazing resource, we would love to amplify it on our website. But the ones we chose are ones that we thought were the starting points for people coming into the field. Like, there's a great resource from Utrecht on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Another great resource from Calgary, looking at different education sources. So, we're not building anything within QIESR unless there's a gap.

I'd like to tell our senior administration, anyone else who will listen, this is a great thing to say, because I'm happy to say that QIESR is the space in between the words. So, every time there's a new report, or a new this or new that, we are the space in between, as what we're doing, and the work you're doing as reflective practitioners, as a single, you're the space there.

And so, our resources are, if you look at our website and you say, oh, they're missing that, well, we're missing it just because no one shared it. So, if you have fantastic things that you want to amplify, we'd love to do it on our Canadian website.

Michele Leering: Super. Thank you. And I will remind people, if they have any questions, that they can put them in the Q&A, and I'll come to them after I've asked a few more questions myself as part of this reflective conversation.

So, many educators today, I think, the ones that are here, would tell you that they reflect on their teaching, but they don't see themselves as scholars. So, what would distinguish their reflective practice from the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning? And how does reflection actually become scholarship?

Denise Stockley: So, I think part of the issue is that it's not about whether you're following the methods of educational scholarship. For me, when I talk to people, it's usually about identity.

And so sometimes I hear the words imposter syndrome, which, even though I'm an educational psychologist, drives me batty, because really the imposter syndrome is recognising the limitations of your own knowledge. That's not an imposter. That's actually something that's brilliant and very self-aware, and reflective. So, for me, when I think about seeing themselves as scholars, it's, who's labelling you, and are you willing to have that? Meaning that I get labelled all the time in my world, and I say, hold on, this is who I am, or I'm not. So, I really think it's thinking about yourself as a researcher. Reflective practice is a form of scholarship. That absolutely is, because reflective practice in and of itself is about inquiry, and that is scholarship in and of itself.

So, I would say that really the issue is thinking of adding an identity to one that you consider you exist as. So, I would absolutely call everybody in this group a scholar.

Michele Leering: Great. Thank you.

And I've also been wondering about your own observations of the work that we've been doing with curating this international symposium, and also our plans for creating resources on our website. And I might say all of this was undertaken with "a hope and a prayer." We've had wonderful support from Queen's and from our collaborators, lots of in-kind contributions towards our work. But when I think about trying to sustain this, I think about the efforts that we'll put into curating some resources on our website and posting all the presentations. But what are your thoughts for the advancement of reflective practice in legal education, or in the profession more generally, given your own experience and vantage point?

And I should mention, for people who don't know, that Denise was one of the leaders on the movement to competency-based medical education here at Queen's, which is how we met, because she and I co-presented on that at a Canadian Association of Law Teachers conference, about competency development.

And I see that also as very related to reflective practice, because you can't become more competent without reflecting.

But back to the question I actually asked you, which is, what hope do you see for us? What is it that we can do to strengthen a movement towards reflective practice? How to support this change in thinking about ourselves and what we do at every level, whether we're a law student or a law teacher or researcher and writer like myself, former social justice practitioner, probably still a social justice practitioner, and just-retired lawyer. What do you see as possible for people in the profession? Any observations you might share?

Denise Stockley: Sure. So, I should mention, thank you, Michele, for the CBME, competency-based medical education reference.

Just so people know, as an educational psychologist, I play everywhere. So, I've actually taught full length courses in law. I've taught full length courses in every faculty and school at Queen's. And I've also been a funded researcher in every faculty and school, because I simply study how people learn. So, there's no environment where people aren't learning. Even if they say they aren't, they've learned to say they aren't. So that's where that goes.

But with regards to resources, and these amazing conferences and the journals that are coming out, and as I mentioned, over the idea of ebbs and flows with leadership, how you actually sustain the practice is you build community, you build relationships with others, and you bring new people in regularly, where they feel like they belong. Because what happens is, if you don't, then the repositories, the journals, they sit there until somebody stumbles across them, or they don't, and they think they came up with this brand new idea that was like 50 years old, right?

So, the idea is, how do you bring people in? How do you gather? Being in an online forum like this is an absolutely beautiful way to gather people from around the world to have these conversations. But really it comes down to, what are you gaining from being part of a whole versus what you're gaining from not? Everything is a value proposition at the end of the day. And so, for me, it's really about ensuring that people feel engaged and excited by it, because then your resources, what you do, will live on. And it goes back to what I said earlier. When we try to do big change, we always have the buddy system, that "bring a friend along." So, who from your network are those friends, and bring them in. And that's how you ensure sustainability, because sometimes it's lonely at our own institutions. But collectively we're pretty mighty.

Michele Leering: Wonderful. Do you want to mention a little bit about your QIESR Scholars program? I thought you might be interested in telling people about that, because people might be interested possibly in applying to be such a scholar.

Denise Stockley: I would love for them to. So, I put the website in the chat part. So, with QIESR, we have people called *invited scholars*. Those people who are at Queen's, you're our *QIESR scholars*. But for the invited scholars, for people who are doing incredible work, and when I mean incredible work, I'm not saying there's a bar here, incredible work means that you're really excited, passionate, motivated to do education scholarship and research. We ask you to submit a page, and a five page or your full CV, because some people with grants have five pages, because that's what our grant council has asked for. Other people say, I have like a 60, 70 page CV. I can't even spend time breaking it up, and just highlighting what are the kinds of activities you want to do. And so that's our invited scholar program.

We are welcoming. There's no limit, meaning that we're not saying, oh, we've reached tenure, out. It's really about people who are excited.

We also have the Nexus program. So, one of the things Michele and I have talked about is potentially having a Nexus, like a QIESR Nexus, on reflective practice. And so, the idea is, again, bringing together people to have that community of practice, but also potentially more than a standard community of practice, where you're doing scholarship together, you're building capacity.

And so, both are things that I would love to have any one of you contribute to and be part of.

If you are a student, you say, well, I'm a student, and I don't think, we have students as partners as well. And so, we welcome students as well.

And so, I'm happy to have conversations at any point about that, and happy to have more fulsome conversations about what QIESR Nexus are meant to be. But really, it's responding to the fact that we need more community, because it's a lonely place.

Michele Leering: I think that sort of captures how we felt about the field of reflective practice in law.

And I think one of the most joyful things for me has been to see the level of engagement of people sending in abstracts. To read 150 abstracts across the five events in this series has just been incredible. And all sorts of people who may not have written in this area before, and just so passionate about it, and from across the world.

And I just wonder if you can just say, what opportunities do you see for legal educators to use the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to increase their impact on students and on the profession? What do you see as possible for us? Because I think we're trying to grow a bit of a movement. It feels like that anyway.

Denise Stockley: So, I would argue that you already are. And not just because of the conferences, but if you look at not just legal education journals, but if you look at things like the *Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, and in Australasia, their name is just slipping off my tongue right now, but there's lots of articles already being published.

But what I think, and this is where I see the gap, is this idea of what I'm sharing with you, the work you're doing with Michele and others leading this initiative, is the idea of bringing together all these voices. Because when we

publish an article, even if it's with an amazing team, it's still a single entity that sits somewhere. So again, for me, when you're trying to create a movement, you have to know who you're moving for or against. First of all, it goes back to what I've said about the gaps, the spaces in between.

So what spaces are you filling with this community? And that's how you start building it out. For me, every time I look at trying to make a change, I always get asked what the value proposition is, what's in it for the institution, and what's in it for me, or what's happening in the world.

For us here at Queen's, QIESR is in the perfect space and place. It could not have launched two years ago, or five years ago, or ten years ago when I was first asked, because it wasn't the right time within our institution. So sometimes I also say it's playing the long game. I would argue, for this group, and then talking about the larger group, you've already played the long game, and this is your moment.

I said this to another colleague of mine. 2026 is your year. Own it and embrace it. And make sure that everybody knows that you're present, you're here, and shaking things around a bit. And so that's where I think real change happens, is knowing why you're changing, how you're changing it, where it needs to be changed.

And some of you will be in countries where this is theoretically, practically and legally almost impossible. This is where you work with your colleagues elsewhere and start building that up. Because, of course, you heard about safety in numbers earlier. So, it's not about doing this alone.

2026 is the year. I mean, look, all next year all those journal articles will be out. The presentations will be live. All of that. This is your year. And so, when you look back and you say, we were building up to 2026, then it sounds better.

One of my colleagues at the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, I was there last week, when they launched the society over 40 years ago, they actually called their very first conference the fourth conference. And they said, because it just sounded better.

Michele Leering: Oh, that's too funny. Well, this was the first, the inaugural year.

Denise, thank you so much for your remarks, and for joining us today to share all your scholarly and practical and pragmatic insights, and your passion for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. I know I've learned so much from you, and I'm certainly looking forward to our future collaboration, and how QIESR can even help with this particular movement that we're trying to build.

And I think about a Rod Macdonald quote, who's a famous Canadian law professor who has since passed, but who was an inspiration to so many of us. And he was quoted as saying, "if it's not impossible, it's not worth doing." So that is something we need to remember in this way.

And I just want to again thank you for your remarks, and for joining. It's just been so rich. And to our future collaborations!

And I just want to remind everyone that we're now going to have a half hour break, and we'll be joining up with those who are part of the next session, which is about what law can learn from health care providers. The session also that I'm particularly passionate about, and that I can't wait to moderate. That's going to start at 1:30. So, a half an hour break. Have I forgotten anything, Sharry?

Sharry Aiken: Good. You're good. Good, good.

Michele Leering: Thank you. And thanks so much, Denise, for joining us. And I'm going to slip by and give you a hug at some point. So, thank you.

Denise Stockley: Thank you for that.

Michele Leering: Yeah. Good. See you all at 1:30. Thank you.