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The Scholarship of Teaching

Stephen Varvis

It has been beneficial for us at Fresno Pacific University to witness the development over the last fifteen years of the idea and practice of “The Scholarship of Teaching.” In fact the intention of Ernest Boyer when he first proposed the idea in 1990 was that it would become a characteristic practice in both liberal arts institutions and comprehensive institutions dedicated to teaching.¹ It has been argued that definitions and standards of scholarship used by institutions in promotion and tenure reviews, or what we would call three-and six-year reviews, and five-year, post-continuing status reviews, ought to grow out of institutional mission statements, which for many institutions focus on teaching.² Thus, a definition of teaching as scholarship would seem to be necessary for professional development and review. In places too numerous to cite, colleges and universities have been criticized cogently over the decades for placing too much emphasis on research and neglecting teaching (and particularly undergraduate teaching) as calls for reform have been issued regularly. The proposal for a category of scholarship called the scholarship of teaching was developed to extend the commonly understood definition of scholarship beyond research on the model of the physical and life sciences, and by extension the social sciences, to the work and mission of teaching in universities and colleges. It is an act of reform for colleges and universities, directed specifically to the work that we at Fresno Pacific hold to be at the center of both our daily work and mission.

While the meaning of the phrase and its uses are not always clear, and have not been consistent over time, it remains, I would contend, one of the most useful notions to direct and guide our work as professors in an institution whose central work is teaching, and could provide a common standard for us. It is important for two central reasons: First, it highlights the work of teaching by declaring it and explaining it as an act of scholarship. It provides an appropriate prominence to the intellectual and professional insight and creativity involved in university-level teaching. Second, it raises the standards for teaching by explaining how, why and when it can be considered a form of scholarship, the necessary elements involved in the activity, and hints about how it might be practiced effectively.

Definitions

Since the phrase has not been used consistently, I would like to point to its basic variations and then affirm its original intention. In the years following Boyer’s work, the scholarship of teaching has been sometimes rephrased as “the scholarship of teaching and learning.” In this formulation the meaning shifts towards the incorporation of learning theory, research into how students learn and pedagogy or teaching methodology as central elements in the definition and practice.³ At other times it has drawn in assessment of student outcomes as central to its role. The shifting emphases have not received consensus, beyond an agreement that professors who practice the scholarship of teaching are curious about and may use theoretical models of learning and pay attention to outcomes (what is learned, understood and retained), but this is not sufficient to describe an activity as the scholarship of teaching.⁴

Building on the classification of scholarship advocated by Boyer, the characteristics identified by Glassick, Huber and Maeroff for “any scholarly activity” still seem the most applicable and useful and seem to have gained something closest to a scholarly consensus.⁵ An activity may be considered scholarly when it meets the following criteria.

It must:

- have clear goals
- be based on adequate preparation
- use appropriate methods for the discipline
- achieve significant results
- have an effective presentation for public or peer evaluation
- result in some kind of reflective critique

To summarize, the scholarship of teaching ought to be characterized by these qualities, as will the scholarship of discovery, of integration and of application. Effective teachers will care about and be interested in how students learn and what they learn, integrating both into their scholarly teaching.

Specific disciplines have also picked up the agenda, some developing practices out of it, and some have moved away from it.⁶ Characteristically those disciplines considered more “scientific” than others tend to revert to definitions that reflect the scholarship of discovery, and those considered more akin to the arts or humanities, and which are interpretive in practice, retain the broader definition as proposed originally by Boyer. An alternative general definition was proposed by Diamond and Adams in 1995.⁷ It proposed that an activity, in this case teaching, might be considered scholarly or professional when:

- the activity requires a high level of discipline-related expertise
- the activity breaks new ground, is innovative
- the activity can be replicated or elaborated
- its results can be documented
- its results can be peer-reviewed
- the activity has significance or impact

In my reading this definition moves toward a scholarship of teaching understood on the basis of research. Especially the second, third and sixth elements of the definition borrow rhetorically from the terminology of scientific experiment: “new ground,” “replication” and “impact.” The definition proposed by Glassick, Huber and Maeroff allows for and even requires disciplinary expertise, peer review, scholarly methodology and results that will be important for college and university level teaching, without requiring and pseudo-scientific methodology in the humanities and arts.

The Necessity of Disciplinary Discussion

As part of the effort to develop this notion within the academy, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching initiated in 1998 the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). Colleges and universities from around the country were invited to join the project of defining scholarly teaching for themselves and implementing it throughout their institutions. We indicated our intention to join the effort, discussed the definition a number of times, but the effort was stalled by competing agenda. The definition they proposed was as follows:⁸

The scholarship of teaching is problem posing about an issue of teaching or learning, study of the problem through methods appropriate to disciplinary epistemologies, application of results to practice, communication of results, self-reflection, and peer review.

Note that the elements of the definition follow the characteristics of Glassick, Huber and Maeroff's definition. Problem posing correlates with clear goals, study with adequate preparation, disciplinary epistemologies with appropriate methodologies, application with effective presentation and self reflection and peer review with reflective critique. The Carnegie group's statement added an emphasis that was perhaps too weak or even lacking in the earlier discussion—the importance of disciplinary methodologies and peer review.

This definition pointed to the significant insight that the scholarship of teaching is related to the distinct ways in which we pursue our academic disciplines, and that these are to be respected in the discussion. Donald Schon argued that the scholarship of teaching requires a new epistemology not dominated by the scientific research paradigm. He described it as action research or knowing-in-action. This he linked to Deweyan "inquiry," and Polanyi's "tacit knowledge" that comes from deep experience in any form of human practice.⁹ This may not be a new epistemology so much as a recognition of the different ways in which we know and learn, and from which we develop and pursue deeper understanding beyond the paradigm of the natural and social scientific research (which may exclude this form of reflection on tacit understanding and experience). Because our scholarly disciplines have their own unique practices and methods, the scholarship of teaching must link itself to these and build upon our personal, collective and professional experience.

And so as Boyer's, Glassick's and the Carnegie group's definitions propose, the scholarship of teaching must be developed as an activity unique to the practices of academic disciplines. Each of the disciplines will share some common patterns—goals or problem posing, appropriate methodology, presentation or communication of results, and some form of public and/or peer review. As Hutchings and Schulman explained, "the scholarship of teaching is the mechanism through which the profession of teaching advances" in much the same way that research (or "the scholarship of discovery") is the way in which general and specialized knowledge advances.¹⁰

An Illustration

The scholarship of teaching might be explained by relating it to how we pursued our research in our disciplines in our own individual education. We learned the methodologies of the field, we posed problems, sought data and evidence, interpreted that evidence, communicated it in various ways, submitted it to review (mentor and peer) and then rethought and revised as seemed appropriate. In the same way, we might pursue our teaching. As an illustration, I have had to ask how does one teach an ancient and foreign thought form? I use my own discipline and experience as an example, since it is the only one I can speak to directly. Perhaps each of us can consider an example of their own from with our own disciplinary ways of learning and teaching. One must first learn the field, and its interpretive methodologies. Then one must consider the audience one is communicating to—what do they bring and need to bring to the effort? We must seek to bridge the gap between what we have learned and what needs to be gained by others. One must gather experience, look to what others have done, make some attempts in the classroom and reflect on their outcomes. Then these must be critically reflected upon by us, and by our peers in our disciplines, in a public forum of some kind.

A few years ago I made such an attempt to teach Confucian philosophy and ethics to undergraduates. I had done some prior study, but needed more. And so I pursued some independent reading as well as consulted with a Confucian philosopher to test my understanding of the field. I listened to other experts on various strategies at professional conferences and began to experiment. Eventually I developed a

particular classroom approach, adopted from Confucius's own method, to demonstrate simultaneously what Confucian learning was, how it proceeded and its basic conceptual content. According to Confucius, one only develops morally and understands ethics when one submits to traditional ways of behavior (manners and ritual). Through action one gains the ability to understand virtue, or benevolence, and can begin to act as a mature person. We developed mannered behavior in and for the class, performed it, analyzed the experience and then turned to the Confucian text to explore the meaning. I developed this over time, requested feedback from students, listened to their responses, modified what I attempted in the classroom and finally presented it to colleagues in philosophy and history from around the country at a conference of the Association for Core Texts and Courses, where the agenda is specifically the interpretation and teaching of texts and topics in liberal arts core series. It was eventually published through the peer-review process.¹¹

A number of us subsequently published essays on teaching in cores series, particularly a topic we specialize in here, the integration of biblical studies and religion with history and philosophy.¹² Each time we have worked within the discipline, reflected on interpretive methods, experimented in the classroom, drawn up proposals and benefited from collegial critique. It has been a remarkable experience for me to observe my colleagues deep in discussion of religious texts and how they might be taught with scholar-teachers from prestigious institutions around the country, struggling with the same issues that engage us, and learning from our experience and proposals.

The sequence of events and procedures here described has all of the elements identified by Glassick, Huber and Maeroff, and includes the emphases added the Carnegie Group. I might add that the experience of working through the process described provides opportunity to experience all of the fears, doubts and anxieties that one experiences developing a work of the scholarship of discovery or basic research, from the fear that the idea or project is not original enough, that the methodology will not be adequate, the knowledge that the egos present in scholarly forums can quickly rise to combat and that one's work might suffer rejection. (This might be an alternative way of judging scholarship in itself.)

Our Practice at Fresno Pacific University

A number of us at Fresno Pacific have contributed to the scholarship of teaching through academic and professional forums. I will list only a few of the examples I know of, gained largely during my tenure as dean of the undergraduate college, where I enjoyed witnessing the ongoing creativity of my faculty colleagues. I wish I could mention more of the activities of the faculty in the other current schools as well, but I do not have the first-hand knowledge, though I know through many conversations that the scholarship of teaching is practiced throughout the faculty of the university. Some of the examples might be considered part of the scholarship of application or integration as well as teaching. I include them here because of the fluid boundaries of the work we do.

Our faculty has contributed in the following ways:

- written and published texts for teaching
- reviewed texts in their discipline for publishers or for academic journals
- served on editorial boards for teaching resources, collections, publications

- written books for non-college audiences, such as adult teaching materials for churches, based on the writer's professional, scholarly and classroom experience
- presented and/or published essays on teaching particular disciplines and texts or topics, which have been peer reviewed through the process of presentation and discussion at scholarly conferences
- demonstrated teaching practices at professional forums that are particularly appropriate to individual disciplines and discussed and reviewed the implications of these for scholarly teaching
- written reviews, editorials, commentaries for non-scholarly, professional publications extending teaching beyond the classroom, and subject to editorial and public review
- presented the results of assessment efforts as they relate to teaching methods and practices and their effectiveness within particular disciplines
- presented interpretations of texts, topics or problems directed towards shaping how we teach in particular disciplines

We should note as well that many of us have worked on these kinds of projects without the benefit of a formal definition of the scholarship of teaching from which to work. We have gravitated toward this, I gather from my discussions with many, through dedication to our teaching, to our disciplines and through professional practice. One of the best tests of a proposal, it seems to me, is whether it meets the standards of our best informal practices and professional experience. Here, with the scholarship of teaching, we can recognize a proposal that meets both.

Further Implementation Possibilities

Scholarly teaching is not something we do simply in the classroom or alone in our offices. It is a public and professional practice and discipline. It requires employing our disciplinary understanding, communicating it effectively to professional peers and defending and modifying it through dialog and critique. It involves hearing the responses of students as we engage them and train them to think through our disciplinary lenses. It grows through the reflective critique we bring to it through presentation and writing and through the critical and collaborative work of others as we engage in the enterprise together.

It probably should not go without saying that the scholarship of teaching is not merely teaching: working on our classes, meeting with students for discussion, engaging in extracurricular activities, leading discussion groups on campus (though this may shade into it), reading to keep up with course content, etc. Nor is it testing an idea with a colleague down the hall. All of these may be necessary for effective teaching. But they do not meet the criteria for teaching as scholarship. They are good practices for the effective teacher. But they are not part of the scholarly development of the field of teaching in and through our disciplines.

The formal recognition of the scholarship of teaching in our policies and procedures would have distinct advantages to us as a faculty. First, it is something we can do both practically and within the context of our current work. Our teaching loads keep us busy. Practicing and developing our teaching as scholarship allows us to develop what we are doing in preparation for and in the classroom in a more thorough and tested way. It develops our teaching as a scholarly practice, encouraging effectiveness and keeping us current with developments in our professional fields. It allows and requires that what we do be professionally tested and credible. It puts us out among professional colleagues for our ongoing

development as teaching professors, and for our contribution to our disciplines and the practice of teaching them. It raises a central part of our mission, the practice of teaching, to the level of scholarship.

Furthermore, engaging in the scholarship of teaching is practically and financially workable. In 1995 Astin and Chang analyzed the costs of those schools that emphasized both teaching and pure research in an article subtitled "Can You Have Your Cake and Eat It Too?" They concluded that this dual emphasis added from \$5,000 to \$12,500 to the annual per-student tuition costs of an institution.¹³ This was a year in which the national average tuition cost at an independent college or university was about \$12,500. Roughly speaking, the investment required from 50 percent to 100 percent more in resources per student for the professor who would be engaged in both teaching and research effectively. These costs are largely due to the time needed away from teaching to develop the specialized project. No doubt many of us practice both forms of scholarship, and enjoy them. Research does not have to be in fields outside of which one teaches, and even may be integrated into our teaching, as Rod Janzen and Alan Thompson make clear. But the practicalities are that until a concentrated effort is made and achieved to make available the time and financial resources with which we can pursue both, we will pursue our research intensively when special funds, sabbaticals and other resources or release time can be arranged.

We can, however, pursue the scholarship of teaching as we continue to work as teachers, and as part of our central mission as an institution. Because of our mission, because of the kind of institution we are, we can and should become a leading faculty in the scholarship of teaching consulted by peers across North America. The scholarship of teaching was proposed for us, and to counter the neglect of teaching in the dominant forms of our institutions of higher learning today. We can practice our art, our science, our disciplines of teaching and learning at the highest levels of professional competence and creativity. The practical question is simply this: How can we encode this in our handbooks, our policies and the ongoing practice of our work together as a faculty and administration?¹⁴

Notes

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¹ John H. Braxton, William Luckey and Patricia Helland, *Institutionalizing a Broader View of Scholarship through Boyer's Four Domains*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, Vol. 29, no.2 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 67. For the beginning of the discussion see Ernest Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professorate* (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990)). See also Marvin Lazerson, Ursula Wagener, and Nichole Shumanis, "What Makes a Revolution? Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 1980-2000," *Change*, May/June, 2000, 12-19.

² Braxton, Luckey and Helland, 103.

³ See for a summary Pat Hutchings and Lee Shulman, "The Scholarship of Teaching: New Elaborations, New Developments," *Change*, Sept./Oct. 1999, 11-15. See also Mary Taylor Huber, "Designing Careers Around the Scholarship of Teaching," *Change*, July/Aug., 2001, 21-29.

⁴ Braxton, Luckey and Helland, 63.

- ⁵Charles E. Glassick, Mary Taylor Huber, and Gene I. Maeroff, *Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 22-36.
- ⁶See Robert M. Diamond and Bronwyn E. Adam, *The Disciplines Speak: Rewarding the Scholarly, Professional and Creative Work of Faculty* (Washington, DC: American Association of Higher Education, 1995), 30 and Diamond and Adam, *The Disciplines Speak II* (Washington, DC: American Association of Higher Education, 2000), 21 for a comparison of the approaches in history and psychology.
- ⁷Diamond and Adam, *Disciplines*, 14.
- ⁸See the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, www.carnegiefoundation.org/CASTL/
- ⁹Donald A. Schon, "The New Scholarship Requires a New Epistemology," *Change*, Nov./Dec. 1995, 30-31.
- ¹⁰Hutchings and Schulman, 14.
- ¹¹Stephen Varvis, "Confucius in Dialogue with the West and Today's Students," *Uniting the Liberal Arts: Core and Context*, ed. B. Cowan, and J.S. Lee, Selected Papers from the Fifth Annual Conference of The Association of Core Texts and Courses (Lanham: University of America Press, 2002), 117-124.
- ¹²See Greg Camp, "City Centered: Isaiah and the City," Richard Rawls, "Genesis within the Context of the Ancient Near East," and Stephen Varvis, "Ibn Battuta's Culture Shock," all in *The Wider World of Core Texts and Courses*. Ed. A. Brunello, M. Chiariello, J. S. Lee. "Selected Papers from The Association of Core Texts and Courses' Seventh Annual Conference, April 5-8, 2001, University of Notre Dame." (Association of Core Texts and Courses, 2004) 25-30, 19-24, and 31-38 respectively.
- ¹³Alexander W. Astin and Mitchell J. Chang, "Colleges that Emphasize Research and Teaching: Can You Have Your Cake and Eat it Too?" *Change*, Sept./Oct. 1995, 47.
- ¹⁴A broad summary of the activity around the scholarship of teaching and its reception and impact in the academy at large has recently been published in *Change*, September/October, 2005, by Eileen T. Bender, "CASTLs in the Air: The SOTL 'Movement' in Mid-Flight." This article brings the larger discussion up to the immediate present, including both some of the continuing forces retarding the effort and its influence.

Conclusion

The four essays (and one response) included in this monograph provide different perspectives on Boyer's four scholarship types. While noting important idiosyncrasies each article also suggests continuous overlap between forms of scholarly activities. Boundaries are arbitrarily drawn and to some extent artificial. Yet there are also singular characteristics that provide differentiation between different types of scholarship.

One new endeavor at Fresno Pacific University is the Scholars Speak forum, whereby faculty members write short op-ed pieces that speak to local, regional and national issues from the foundational perspective of scholarly areas of expertise. . . . Each week a new article is sent to 70 regional newspapers and is also published on the Fresno Pacific University website. These articles often mix discovery, application, integration and teaching.

At Fresno Pacific faculty and administrators continue to grapple with ways that different scholarship types and interpretations have an impact on faculty evaluation processes. We are hopeful these essays will motivate ongoing conversations of what it means to be a scholar.