



Research activities in the teaching intensive university:

Scholarship reconsidered & repositioned

Anthony G Shannon

Fellow, Warrane College, The University of New South Wales

PO Box 123, Kensington, NSW 1465, Australia

tshannon38@gmail.com

Abstract

A quarter of a century has passed since Professor Ernest L. Boyer's landmark book, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, challenged the publish-or-perish status quo that dominated the academic landscape then and has continued to do so through a variety of research league-table games. His powerful and enduring argument for a broader approach to academic roles and rewards within universities continues to be important as higher education providers balance the varying expectations of their role in society. This paper is more an examination of the provenance of the Boyer model than a review of the book.

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Introduction:

Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate by Ernest L. Boyer [1] has been updated and expanded in 2016 by Drew Moser, Todd C. Ream, John M. Braxton [2]. The purpose of this review is to outline how the Boyer model of scholarship can permeate an academy which is focused on the quality of learning (Table 1). It is, in a very real sense, a twenty first century application of Newman's nineteenth century idea of a university [3].

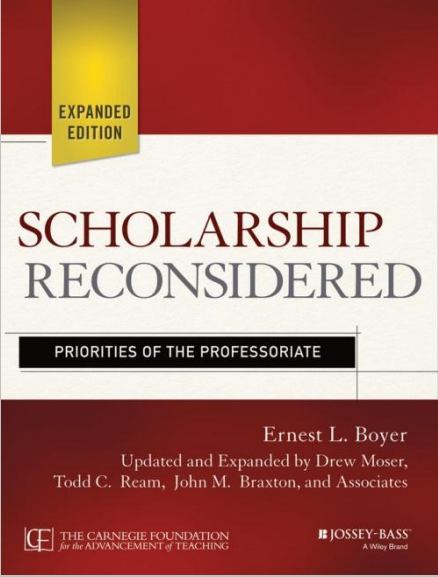
| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Foreword: <i>Scholarship Reconsidered's</i> Influence in later Carnegie Foundation work by Mary Taylor Huber:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and perspective | <p>Chapter 1: "The Origins of <i>Scholarship Reconsidered</i>" by Drew Moser and Todd C Ream:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context, image, development and key individuals |
|  | <p>Chapter 2: "Boyer's Impact on Faculty Development" by Andrea L Beach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergence of scholarship of teaching and learning |
| | <p>Chapter 3: "The Influence of <i>Scholarship Reconsidered</i> on Institutional Types and Academic Disciplines" by John M Braxton:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How institutions have embraced the four domains |
| | <p>Chapter 4: "<i>Scholarship Reconsidered's</i> Impact on Doctoral and Professional Education" by Anne E Austin and Melissa McDaniels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance to doctoral education and modes of learning |
| <p>Afterword: "Advancing the Conversation around <i>Scholarship Reconsidered</i>" by Cynthia A Wells:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of Boyer to the future of higher education | <p>Chapter 5: "How <i>Scholarship Reconsidered</i> disrupted the promotion and tenure system" by KerryAnn O'Meara</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New language for promotion and tenure |

Table 1: Outline of Boyer [2] (2016)

The topic is timely because we work in an era of obsession with world university rankings which affect not only international comparisons but influence national goals such as ERA in Australia (Excellence in Research for Australia). These have dubious validity and reliability and depend to a large extent on being able to play the game, a game which has seen a decline in the value of expository writing and curiosity-driven research [4;5;6]. The issue is further complicated in graduate research degrees with varying or no coursework components [7].

The Measurement of Scholarship

So what is this thing called "scholarship"? Boyer's approach to scholarship has become a benchmark for those institutions which plan to be teaching-intensive higher education providers in which scholarly activity informs teaching. Boyer disputed the assumed cause-and-effect of scholarship on teaching [cf.8].

research ⇒ publication ⇒ application ⇒ teaching



For Boyer, the arrow of causality can, and frequently does, point in both directions. Theory surely leads to practice. But practice also leads to theory. Teaching, at its best, shapes both research and practice. This is an important point in the scholarly investigation of assessment in its contribution to learning.

Attention to the place of scholarship in a higher education provider falls in the category of minimisation of strategic risks. While risk management policies usually try to take into account preventable risks and external risks, scholarly activity is among those risks taken for superior strategic gains. It is a risk, but it can impact cost-effectively if the resource allocation is appropriate [9]. Furthermore, as we are in an environment which requires more and more reporting of measures, particularly quantitative data, we also need to consider how we measure scholarship, and to what extent such measures have meaning.

Boyer proposed an expanded definition of “scholarship” within teaching based on four functions that underlie quality teaching and assessment. These are summarized generally in Table 2 and more specifically in Table 3.

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Discovery | Application |
| Integration | Teaching |

Table 2: Boyer Model of Scholarship

The first point to note is that although the Boyer model distinguishes the four categories, it does not entirely separate them. They are all part of an integrated whole under the rubric of *scholarly activity*. The relative emphases will vary from institution to institution and within an institution from time to time and department to department; they will also vary from academic to academic, even for the one academic at different stages of their career. The point is though that an institution or an academic will be missing a vital part of their functionality as an institution or as an academic if any one of these four is missing entirely. Those which lack one or more of these are often characterised by a false sense of superiority over those who value all four. Not that any one institution or academic is going to be equally expert in all four; it is rather that a good institution or an effective academic values all four pieces of the whole.

To some extent Boyer’s unconventional approach to the “measurement” of scholarship, while it does not exclude current methods, embraces much more, such as the genuinely multidisciplinary, the performing and creative arts, and so on. The check on research, scholarly and creative activities can be based on answers to the questions:

- Is it publicly observable?
- Is it amenable to critical appraisal?
- Is it accessible to other scholars?

More specifically, the assessment of any form of scholarship is around responses to six criteria:

- clear goals,
- adequate preparation,



- appropriate methods,
- significant results,
- effective presentation,
- reflective critique.

If these had been applied at the outset to some of the doctoral dissertations that I have been asked to examine in recent years, then the candidatures in question would never have commenced! The points above are perennial macro-guidelines which, however interpreted at the micro-level, go beyond the fashion of the day in the assessment of research outcomes. Their possible relations to data collection are listed later in the conclusion. All forms of scholarship benefit from documentation and public assessment.

The Boyer Model of Scholarship

| Type of Scholarship | Purpose | Examples of Measures of Performance |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Discovery | Build new knowledge through traditional research. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing in peer-reviewed forums • Producing and/or performing creative work within established field • Museum exhibit • Creating infrastructure for future studies |
| Integration | Interpret the use of knowledge across disciplines. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing a comprehensive literature review • Writing a textbook for use in multiple disciplines • Collaborating with colleagues to design and deliver a core course |
| Application | Aid society and professions in addressing problems. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving industry or government as an external consultant • Assuming leadership roles in professional organizations • Advising student leaders, thereby fostering their professional growth • Technical report, study, presentation, pamphlet, survey, building a prototype, developing a methodology or protocol, a significant speech |
| Teaching | Study teaching models and practices to achieve optimal learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancing learning theory through classroom research • Developing and testing instructional materials or new teaching methods • Developing on-line materials, running a wiki or blog • Mentoring postgraduate students • Designing and implementing a program-level assessment system • A funded teaching or training initiative • Contribution to accreditation or quality systems and documentation |

Table 3: Scholarly Criteria

- **Discovery** is the one type of scholarship most closely aligned with traditional research. Discovery contributes not only to the stock of human knowledge but also to the intellectual climate of a college or university. He stresses that new research contributions are critical to the vitality of the academic environment, and that his model does not diminish the value of discovery scholarship.
- **Integration** focuses on making connections across disciplines. One interprets one's own research so that it is useful beyond one's own disciplinary boundaries and can be integrated into a larger body of knowledge. He stresses that the rapid pace of societal change within a global economy have elevated the importance of this form of scholarship.



- **Application** focuses on using research findings and innovations to remedy societal problems. Included in this category are service activities that are specifically tied to one's field of knowledge and professional activities. Beneficiaries of these activities include commercial entities, non-profit organizations, and professional associations.
- **Teaching** is a central element of scholarship. Too often teaching is viewed as a routine function and is often not the focus of professional development. Many higher education teachers state that they are primarily interested in teaching, but they feel that their institutions do not value or reward excellence in teaching. The academic community continues to emphasize and assign high value to faculty members' involvement in activities other than teaching.

Boyer argued that, within this framework, all forms of scholarship should be recognized and rewarded. He feels that, too often faculty members wrestle with conflicting obligations that leave little time to focus on their teaching role. Boyer also proposes using "creativity contracts" that emphasize quality teaching and individualized professional development. He recommends that this model be based upon the life patterns of individuals and their passions.

Where this will fit with the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in the UK may have a flow on in other parts of the Anglosphere [10]. If we're serious about measuring teaching quality at university, where is the metric for qualified teachers? The advent of the TEF has, not surprisingly, met with mixed response in the higher education sector. Most agree that it is both important and worthwhile to assess teaching but there has been some criticism that the proposals are a poor measure of the quality of actual teaching, or indeed learning. How it will work has yet to be decided, but the government has stated that the TEF will aim to:

- ensure all students receive an excellent teaching experience that encourages original thinking, drives up engagement and prepares them for the world of work
- build a culture where teaching has equal status with research, with great teachers enjoying the same professional recognition and opportunities for career and pay progression as great researchers
- provide students with the information they need to judge teaching quality
- recognise institutions that do the most to welcome students from a range of backgrounds and support their retention and progression
- include a clear set of outcome-focused criteria and metrics.

It is a separate, but not totally distinct, issue to relate these to institutional graduate attributes of a generic nature. The awareness of these among staff and their acquisition by students loom large in the current era of high unemployment and under-employment rates among young people, who have to be aware that not only the Bachelor degree, but also increasingly the Master degree, is not necessarily a meal ticket into their chosen field.

It can be argued that the holistic approach to scholarship inherent within the Boyer model can play a part in the potential employment mobility of students who are trained *in* some particular field and also educated *through* that field. It is claimed in the Boyer book that genuine scholarly communities communicate to and provide their students with the deepening learning experiences needed to work with a variety of stakeholders.

The Scholarship of Teaching

Following on from this and included as an example of a misunderstood and under-rated aspect of the university scene, even at times where lip service is paid to its role, are some aspects of the scholarship of teaching. Sometimes it will inform teaching directly by virtue of the content of the material being taught. At other times it will be an indirect influence arising from the passion of the teacher for scholarly activity and the related inspiration for learning that he or she instils in their students. The scholarship of teaching is similar to, but different from, 'scholarly teaching'.

In considering the *scholarship of teaching* the University of Queensland collected responses from about 175 staff to some statements about teaching [11]. Those statements with only single figure disagreement are listed



in abbreviated form in the following table - in order of agreement from highest to lowest. (The bullet points have been added here for emphasis.)

| |
|---|
| <p>The scholarship of teaching involves three essential and integrated elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engagement with the scholarly contributions of others on teaching and learning; • reflection on one’s own teaching practice and the learning of students within the context of a particular discipline; • communication dissemination of aspects of practice and theoretical ideas about teaching and learning in general and teaching & learning within the discipline. |
| <p>If the scholarship of teaching is to match that of research there needs to be comparability of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rigour, standards, and esteem. |
| <p>Developing the scholarship of teaching is more than striving to be an excellent teacher or being scholarly... a <i>scholarly approach to teaching</i> entails being familiar with the latest ideas in one’s subject and also being informed by current ideas for teaching that subject... .</p> |
| <p>There is a scholarship hierarchy...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all teachers in higher education should strive to be scholarly in the way that they approach their teaching; • some will be involved in investigating teaching and learning within their discipline; and • a few may wish to engage in full-blown pedagogic research. |
| <p>The scholarship of teaching involves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>discovery</i> research into the nature of learning and teaching; • <i>integration</i> of material from several disciplines to understand what is going on in the classroom; • <i>application</i> of what is known about how students learn to the learn-teaching process; and <i>teaching</i>. |
| <p>Teachers practising the scholarship of teaching are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well-informed, • stimulate active not passive learning, and • encourage students to be critical, creative thinkers, • with the capacity to go on learning. |

Table 4: University of Queensland Scholarship of Teaching

Context and institutional isomorphism

‘Boyer Mark I’ had an impact on tenure and promotion in many colleges and universities in the USA in that it affected the reward structure. It forced many institutions to review elite notions of university research and competitive individualism and the subsequent loss of serendipitous discoveries with the discouragement of curiosity-driven research.

‘Boyer Mark II’ tries to untangle the causes and effects. In particular, it emphasizes that institutions must be faithful to their mission and vision, rather than “isomorphic to Harvard” which is a sure way to lose individual distinctiveness. Competitive rankings of universities cannot measure everything in the mosaic of talent required in a teaching intensive university. The Times Higher Education (mock TEF) rankings has Loughborough number 1 in teaching and number 38 in research where Oxford featured as number 1 in the UK. There are multiple ways of measuring data [12] and multiple models of unmeasurable success such as

- public engagement,
- the focus on the undergraduate experience,



- accessibility of staff for students, and so on.

Thus, even sitting for two hours in a coffee shop helping a student discern career options can contribute to an institution's goals. However, the relatively intangible does not sit well with accountants and regulators. Nelson [13] refers to "the case for conformity – or institutional 'convergence'" so that regulators can "read from a common script when it comes to knowledge policies and institutional models – the stage for institutional isomorphism in global higher education".

Even graduate destination surveys by their very nature overlook the liberal virtues of education *per se*. Boyer Mark II points out how the Land Grant (Morrill Act) of 1862 aimed to support education in the liberal arts as well as training in the skills needed by society. The focus in higher education has drifted from general to specialized education, yet the value of liberal education in the arts in general, or the creative and performing arts in particular, can lay the foundation for vocational education. An institution has to be true to its own values, usually enshrined in its mission, vision and objectives: the reasons for its existence. The context in which it achieves this through communication, which is often the Achilles heel of a higher education provider.

Conclusion

Regulators, both internal and external, place importance on data collection and reporting. As Davis [14] puts it: "With Australia's universities now virtually rid of the Newmanesque spirit that made them great, true scholarship has become a guerrilla art"! The positive response is that the niches abound for those higher education providers with vision to go beyond the restrictions of the reporting required by the Regulators. Some of it is meaningless if it is trying to measure completion rates when students have enrolled in some subjects out of interest or to measure graduate destinations for those who completed a degree merely to be better educated! Some measures are also statistically meaningless because they do not account for standard errors with variations in size or utilise parametric statistics when distribution-free measures are more appropriate.

Nevertheless, measurement of Scholarship within a 'teaching-intensive' higher education provider can include

- *qualitative* measures such as
 - changes in attitudes (more enthusiasm) of teachers and students,
 - sharing of ideas among staff,
 - increased esprit de corps,
 - broadening the range of appropriate teaching techniques, and
 - relations with regulators, and
- *quantitative* measures associated with
 - student satisfaction questionnaires,
 - feedback from stakeholders,
 - graduate destinations,
 - improved pass, retention and completion rates,
 - exploratory data analysis techniques, and so on,

depending more specifically on the mission, vision and objectives of the provider. While attitudinal changes can be quantitatively measured [15], it is not suggested here that this be generally attempted since scholarly attitudes vary with the personality of the scholar, the field of discourse and the culture of the provider. More generally, according to [16] scholarship must

- have clear goals,
- show adequate preparation,
- use appropriate methods,
- show significant results,
- exhibit effective presentation, and
- have a reflective critique.

In any case, at one level, the specifics are less important than the processes of continuing development of all staff: staff who are not worth developing are not worth keeping. This sounds harsh in theory, but in practice it has less to do with staff and their age, length of service, expertise, nature of employment or seniority within an institution, than it does with the nurturing environment of the provider. If this is deficient, then all the data



collection in the world will not give the regulator a true picture of the corporate health of any institution as a quality provider of higher education.

The earlier mention of Newman might sound antiquated to young academics, but the volume to which reference was made place his ideas firmly in the twenty first century. In any case, his four discourses on knowledge are timeless [17;18;19]. This leads to a further discussion at another time on a related emerging and evolving tri-partite higher education:

- undergraduate liberal education as a foundation for professional education;
- graduate professional education and training for employment;
- postgraduate research degree training.

The extent to which this is a reality strengthens the case for the Boyer model as a framework for staff selection and development. It also has implications for more efficient operational procedures in universities where there is sufficient depth in educational IT expertise [20]. More broadly, it conforms to Coates' call for transparency "relating to an entity acting in ways that make it easy to see and understand what it is doing and why", and, in conclusion his plea: "all other fields, it is claimed, are available for research and development, except higher education which is far too difficult, complex or expensive to study. Present forms are 'good enough' and it is more important to defend politically rather than improve scientifically" [21]!

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