

Rethinking Scholarship in Education in Hong Kong: Implications for Educational Research

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Discontent with the emphasis on research versus teaching in higher education and the bias in the evaluation of scholarly activities of institutions by the University Grants Committee have led to the articulation of a broadened and multidimensional conception of scholarship in education in Hong Kong. Following Boyer's (1990) classification, four categories of scholarship related to discovery, integration, application, and teaching are described and elaborated with respect to the interdisciplinary field of education. Implications for educational research suggested by these categories of scholarship are discussed.

Key words: scholarship; education; teaching and research.

It is generally acknowledged that scholarship is an essential element of academic life. A young academic, first inducted into the reality of academic life in a university or an institution of higher education in Hong Kong, will be carefully coached by an administrative senior about becoming a scholar and other career prospects in the institution. The helpful mentor will inevi-

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tably admonish that an academic is expected to be actively involved in scholarship throughout his or her career, even though the nature and scope of contributions might change over the course of a career. Scholarship, viewed in this manner, informs all that an academic does in the classroom, laboratory, or other settings in the institution.

Teaching and Research

More specifically, from the institution's point of view, a scholar contributes to the trilogy of teaching, research, and community service. However, when it comes to the time for staff appraisal, the three are rarely assigned equal merit in the evaluation of professional performance in many, if not all, institutions (see Fairweather, 1994). The young academic will soon realize that while service to the community and humankind is a noble aim, it has to be reluctantly given up to allow for due emphasis on teaching and research, the well-accepted primary activities of a scholar. Further, it is reassuring to know that a scholar should always strive to become a good teacher and a good researcher. Failing to become either, it is again comforting to know that to be outstanding in both is a rarity, and teaching and research can be compensatory. Hence, one might aim to become an outstanding teacher and a mediocre researcher, or a mediocre teacher and an outstanding researcher. Nonetheless, there is a general agreement that teaching and research are recognized for their centrality in academic life.

Teaching versus Research

This notion of striking a balance between teaching and research in the teaching versus research debate has slowly become a well-accepted tradition in academic life in Hong Kong. This reality however is shattered when the University Grants Committee (UGC) in Hong Kong started the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 1993, and subsequently another one in 1996. The next one is coming in 1999.

Since its establishment, the UGC has maintained to fund institutions on the basis of the two principal activities of teaching and research. With in-

creasing demand for public accountability, the UGC has started to implement the RAE, which represents a move toward a performance-based funding model in the research component. Based on the results of the RAE, needs assessment and subsequent allocation of the public recurrent funding in the research component for institutions in the next triennium are now made contingent on the research performance of the institutions in this triennium. It is therefore natural for administrators in institutions to place a higher value on research than teaching in their judgment of scholarship, and in their consideration of a candidate for substantiation and promotion. Contributions to research in the form of published papers in high-prestige journals constitute not only the prototypical example of scholarship, and they are fast becoming the predominant yardstick for measuring scholarship.

The view of scholarship as virtually synonymous with research is unnecessarily restrictive and unfortunate, as it might have unduly influenced the commitment and emphasis on research versus teaching at the institutional as well as individual level. Thus, it has to be noted that the assessment of the research output performance of individual scholars of an institution such as the assessment initiated by the UGC in RAEs represents only the assessment of a part of the scholarly activities of individual scholars of an institution. It is now recognized that scholarship needs a broader definition, is multidimensional, and encompasses a range of activities that advance and promote knowledge (Boyer, 1990; Halpern et al., 1998). In refining the 1999 RAE, the UGC therefore intends to redefine research activities to be assessed to reflect the multidimensional aspects of scholarship.

Four Types of Scholarship

In essence, the UGC follows the classification of four types of scholarship adapted from the Carnegie Foundation's Special Report (Boyer, 1990), which recognizes that knowledge is acquired through research, synthesis, practice, and teaching. These are the scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching. The scholarship of discovery comes closest to the traditional meaning of research that aims to reduce the unknown and create new

knowledge. The scholarship of integration serves to draw together findings from different sources to bring new insight to bear on original research, or to interpret findings from research to fit into the larger intellectual patterns. The scholarship of application focuses on the interplay or dynamics between theory and practice, as their interaction serves to renew each other. The scholarship of teaching refers to the transfer and extension of an intelligible account of knowledge to learners.

It has to be noted that the evaluation of quality of scholarly activities or their end products should not depend on the type of scholarship, it is the pursuit and achievement of excellence that distinguishes the best scholars from their mediocre peers. Further, no scholar can be expected to excel at every type of scholarship, although every scholar will be expected to expend their talents to serve individual and institutional goals. In this connection, Diamond (1993) defines work that reflects any of the four types of scholarship to include six characteristic features: (1) expertise in the discipline, (2) innovation, (3) replicability, (4) documentation, (5) peer review, and (6) significant impact. Conversely, these six features define criteria against which judgments of the quality of scholarship can be made.

The UGC assessment on the research component, broadened to include assessment of the products of scholarly activities in discovery, integration, application, and teaching is anticipated to be a welcomed move in the RAEs. However, it is also recognized that the different types of scholarship as related to the process and/or outcome of research activities might not have tangible outputs or products that can be readily evaluated. Thus, in assessing different types of scholarship, there can be a bias against those types of scholarship with products not appearing nicely in the form of publications, patents and art forms.

Scholarship in Education

The broad and multidimensional definition of scholarship introduced by Boyer (1990) has received widespread attention not only in North America but also in Asian countries (see Wright & Walkuski, 1998). Since knowl-

edge is generally disciplinary-based, different disciplines have thus generated different disciplinary-specific definitions of scholarship (Adam & Roberts, 1993; Diamond, 1995). Education is a broad interdisciplinary field with many paradigms, perspectives, and disciplines. Scholars in education might have allegiance to different disciplines. For example, education faculty in the areas of philosophy of education, sociology of education, educational psychology, educational administration and policy, and curriculum studies might have allegiance to the disciplines of philosophy, sociology, psychology, administration and management, and different subject areas such as economics, biology, or chemistry. Yet, scholarship in any of these areas can be cutting edge and of high quality. Thus, scholarship in education has to include more than traditional research in which original data are collected, and findings are published in preferably high-impact peer-reviewed journals. Boyer's definition and the RAEs have alerted us into looking more closely at what scholarship in education can be and should be. In rethinking scholarship in education, we need to focus on what we want the priorities of scholarly work in education to be, and then we need to create opportunities that help us achieve these goals.

The Multidimensional Concept of Scholarship in Education

Along the lines of advocating a broad definition of scholarship as that of Boyer (1990), many disciplines and professional associations, including history, management and business, the arts, chemistry, geography, and mathematics, have also redefined scholarship as a multidimensional concept (see Adam & Roberts, 1993; Diamond, 1995). Psychology, for example, has also redefined scholarship in psychology as encompassing five categories of scholarship, namely, original research, integration of knowledge, application of knowledge, pedagogy, and teaching in psychology (Halpern et al., 1998). Any one single category or any of the five categories in combination can be considered scholarship. The following categories of scholarship in education follow the types of scholarship introduced by Boyer (1990), and provide a framework for the multidimensional conceptualization

of scholarship in education.

Discovery. The scholarship of discovery in education can be readily equated with original research. Original research refers to the creation of new knowledge through collection of original and empirical data for theory generation or hypothesis testing, and for advances in methods of inquiry, and includes the dissemination of findings in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal or outlet. Original research in education can be discipline-based or interdisciplinary, can be cross-sectional or longitudinal, and can be carried out using experimental designs or surveys with quantitative data analytic procedures, or using observation and interviews with qualitative protocol analysis or case studies. Scholarly original research should conform to the six characteristic features of scholarship delineated by Diamond (1993). Original research can and should include applied areas of inquiry such as understanding the effects of ability grouping on teaching and learning, designing effective programs for students with learning problems, and evaluating the effectiveness of using bilingual media of instruction. It is evident that original research in education frequently crosses over to areas of integration, application, and teaching.

Integration. New knowledge needs to be integrated into a larger body of concepts and facts. Appropriate synthesis might reveal new patterns of meaning, and create new knowledge based on the integrative framework. In many ways, education is interdisciplinary, and scholarly work is by nature integrative in that sense. The scholarship of integration is exemplified by review articles, books, and meta-analyses. Since education lies in the public domain, communication to the lay public about findings and educational policies based on findings assumes great importance. The importance of communicating to the public cannot be overemphasized, considering that critics have generally asserted that some of our institutions are poor in quality and wasteful of resources, and business employers have claimed that many of our graduates cannot write effectively or speak convincingly in both English and Chinese and are unprepared for positions that require computer, interpersonal, and problem solving skills. Nonetheless, commu-

nication to the public requires excellent communication skills and skills in presenting simplified accounts of complex topics. This kind of synthesis also serves a valuable scholarly function, helping the profession of education in the sharing of advances in the field with the general public in ways that enhance the achievement of educational ideals.

Application. Education is essentially an applied field. Applications in education can take many forms. One form can be interpreted as the neglected service component in the trilogy of teaching, research and service. Service activities might include sitting on committees in the Examination Authority, advising government on policy issues in the provision of special educational services, and providing consultation to individual school boards and school administration on education reforms. However, service activities or activities in application should be tied directly to one's special field of knowledge, and will be considered scholarly only when they adhere to the six characteristic features of scholarship as delineated by Diamond (1993). Other forms of application include, among others, the design and evaluation of educational programs for specific populations of learners such as students with learning difficulties or disabilities, the design and implementation of programs to reverse underachievement in talented underachievers, and the development of tests for the assessment of academic attainment or inventories for the assessment of interests for academic and career counseling. It is evident that the scholarship of application in education very often overlaps with that of teaching.

Teaching. The scholarship of teaching in education refers to two specific yet interrelated dimensions. Unlike the scholarship of teaching in other disciplines where teaching in that specific discipline is involved, the scholarship of teaching in education includes the science of pedagogy and teaching in teacher training. Regarding pedagogy, scholarly activities include research on teaching and learning at different levels (e.g., preschool and school ages, college years), in different settings (e.g., in school, at home), and with different specific populations (e.g., students with learning difficulties, students with specific talents), and the evaluation of the effec-

tiveness in teaching and learning for the enhancement of educational outcomes. Scholarly activities in this category include the design and development of learning software and programs, textbooks, resource and curriculum materials for use in school settings and outside regular classrooms. Thus, scholarly activities in this category may overlap with scholarship of discovery, integration, and application.

The second dimension of the scholarship of teaching in education focuses on teaching *per se*, and is the component of teaching in the teaching-research dichotomy. Teaching should be accorded great importance, as only inspired teaching is able to keep the flame of scholarship alive. Since teachers in education are teachers who teach students how to teach, they should all aspire to the highest standards in this category of scholarship. Quality teaching as substantiated by teaching portfolio, peer visitation, and team teaching needs to be honored. Scholarly activities in this dimension of the category include rigorous updating of one's teaching in the content area, remaining current in one's field, developing thoughtful and innovative teaching methods and strategies, and providing learning opportunities for students, colleagues, and the public in understanding the profession and the practice of education in meaningful ways.

These four categories of scholarship in education contain a considerable degree of overlap, and form an independent whole as the four categories dynamically interact. A scholar in education may engage in scholarly activities that fit into two or more categories of scholarship in education. A faculty member who mentors a student in original research or supervises a student in teaching practice provides typical examples. While no scholars in education will be expected to excel at all categories of scholarship in education, scholars should be able to choose to distribute their efforts across multiple areas of scholarship according to their expertise, interests, and strengths. Accordingly, educational research can be generated from different articulated categories of scholarship, and publications documenting any of the four categories of scholarly activities should be legitimate bases for evaluation. Further, research activities should be accorded merit not on the

basis of the categories or types of scholarship, but on the basis of the quality and rigorousness of research and the extent to which these activities adhere to the six characteristics of scholarship. Educational research activities might be as diversified as theory-based investigations, model testing, meta-analysis and review, program development and evaluation, and innovative teaching methods or strategies. The recognition and articulation of different categories of scholarship in education by institutions as well as the UGC RAEs hopefully will help promote an educational ethos that places high values on all categories of scholarship and their related educational research and publications.

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