

Chapter 11

Engagement, Publishing, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Reconsidering the Reconsidered

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ABSTRACT

Following a critical appraisal of research and teaching in U.S. higher education, Ernest Boyer advocated that teaching should be recognized and rewarded as an activity that was at least as important as traditional disciplinary scholarship. He insisted that teaching had its own scholarly component which deserved fuller recognition, appreciation, and dissemination. This chapter explores Boyer's reconsideration of the activities and priorities of higher education and the emerging history of what would become known as the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). From an early stage in its historical trajectory, SoTL explorations were linked to a publication imperative. Publication was seen as essential for consolidating the discipline's status and for improving the efficacy of teaching. The chapter reconsiders the publication requirement, its impact on the vision and mission of SoTL, and the degree to which it has repositioned and reprioritized teaching in the academy. It also provides suggestions for furthering SoTL's impact and for new directions for research, practice, and publication.

INTRODUCTION

Those who wish to teach within higher education soon find that the academy is a complex place in which they are expected, encouraged, and required to assume multiple roles. The roles assumed are predetermined by a set of interlocking structures: the proclaimed mission of the institution, the social hierarchies it has created, the demands and expectations of departmental politics, allegiance to disciplinary tribes, and the existing framework of institutional reward. For the new faculty member, entry and subsequent socialization into the academy can be a confusing and disconcerting experience—an experience that

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requires learning, discovery, and an awareness of the “litany of voices calling on universities that prepare future faculty to more meaningfully evaluate, reward, and value teaching, mentorship, and a wide range of scholarship” (Anderson & Anderson, 2012, p. 249).

For some newly immersed faculty members, the primary role and responsibility will be seen as teaching—sharing knowledge, initiating new knowledge creation, and encouraging learners to reach levels of understanding that they could not otherwise have obtained. For others, scholarly research will be considered paramount—advancing the boundaries of knowledge, sharing newly-minted knowledge, and promulgating different understandings within the community of scholars. Faculty members may have role preferences, but they do not necessarily have choices; whether a teaching role or a research one materializes depends on the nature of the institution, its value and reward systems, and increasingly on the nature of the appointment, the health of enrollment statistics, and any external funding that might be available. Although both teaching and research can—and indeed should—be part of the function of higher education and of its faculty’s agenda, the historic reality is that most academic communities prioritize research. Within such a “narrow paradigm” of scholarly activity, teaching has often been seriously neglected or relegated to a low priority. Although there is a potentially symbiotic relationship between teaching and research, this does not mean that an optimal balance between them has been decided by the institution or achieved by its incumbent faculty.

This chapter considers the historical trajectory and evolutionary accommodation of what we know recognize as the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). It suggests that this history can be traced to the publication of Ernest Boyer’s (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* and to the equally important, but considerably less known, *Scholarship of Engagement* (1996). In these works, Boyer (1990) radically moved the argument away from a putative trade-off between the faculty’s research and teaching efforts. Instead of presenting a zero-sum scenario—in which teaching activities necessarily detracted from research excellence—he advanced a win-win proposition that acknowledged the importance of both, their borderless fluidity, and their potential for synergistic enhancement. Boyer presented teaching as the legitimate priority of the faculty and, in doing so, opened up a new academic territory for discovery and scholarly activity. Within the academy, new territory is a scarce resource and it is quickly colonized and cultivated. This chapter considers how the disciplinary territory of a scholarship associated with teaching and learning was colonized, the competing disciplinary claims that were made for the new territory, and how these still-disputed claims have shaped the way in which many faculty members accept—or indeed reject—what such a scholarly approach to teaching and learning might mean.

This chapter examines the presumption of a publishing imperative in the scholarship associated with teaching. Although a number of variants of a scholarly approach to teaching have been proposed, the most robust has been the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Since its inception, SoTL practitioners and scholars have been exhorted to publish their work—literally to make that work open and available to the public, or rather to *a* public. This imperative, which has been used to define and promote SoTL, raises a number of questions. First, has the publishing requirement contributed to a broader understanding of how teaching is done, or how the learning process is understood? Second, to what extent has Boyer’s connection between research, publication, and teaching been realized? Third, has publication promoted the infusion of SoTL values and understandings in the academy? And finally, has the preoccupation—some might even say the fixation—of demonstrating SoTL *scholarliness* through publication had the unanticipated consequence of separating it from promoting *teaching excellence* and advancing engagement with learners?

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