

## **Reconsidering Boyer's Reconsideration: Paradigms, Sharing, and Engagement**

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### **Abstract**

Ernest Boyer provided a purpose for a scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) although he might not have provided a description of the process. Boyer's contribution concerned the nature of scholarship and research and, as such, it implicitly questioned existing assumptions, paradigms and epistemologies. Disciplinary paradigms are examined through the work of Thomas Kuhn in order to appreciate their strengths and limitations. An analysis of Boyer's reconsideration of research and scholarship of engagement then provides purpose and direction for the scholarship of teaching. As an emergent discipline, SoTL finds itself defined and described. In that description there are concerns about paradigmatic exclusivity and exclusion and it is suggested that consideration be given to the inclusion of the voice of students and to dialogue with them as co-creators of knowledge.

**Keywords:** Authenticity, Boyer, dialogue, inclusion, paradigm, scholarship of teaching, , students.

### **Introduction**

The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) has become a well established feature of the academic landscape. It provides a locus for faculty for research into the dynamics of the practice and process of effective teaching. It has sparked initiatives to promote SoTL and inspired centers for excellence in learning and teaching (CETLs). Yet, despite the considerable interest in SoTL, Carolin Kreber (2007a) notes that 'what precisely the expression stands for is rarely made sufficiently clear by those employing the term' (p. 1). This is perhaps understandable in a new discipline, where a defining paradigm is still in the process of emerging.

The work of Ernest Boyer is central in the genesis of SoTL. Boyer considered research paradigms that focused efforts, but which also served to isolate scholars and restrict their engagement with other stakeholders and communities of interest. An examination of his writing on scholarship provides insight into a vision of the engaged scholar and the engaged college. His emphasis on engagement, at personal and collegiate levels, can be seen as a critique of traditional research paradigms and scholarship. An understanding of the value and limits of these paradigms is important in reconsidering scholarship; such an understanding is also critical when the paradigm associated with SoTL is still emerging.

### **Paradigms: Maps, Boundaries, and Journeys**

The scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990) proved to be 'a catalyst for thought and action' (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999). As a new area of disciplinary engagement, it tentatively formulated a defining paradigm, mapped out its territory, and imposed boundaries on its scope (McKinney, 2010). Paradigms are the lenses through which we view our academic discipline. Paradigms are epistemological and ontological constellations that has historically shaped ideas, assumptions, models, methodologies, and research agendas in a field of discovery. The success of a paradigm rests on its ability to provide a cohesive integrity for what is presently known and to stimulate new exploration.

Paradigms came into being, and subsequently changed, when (Kuhn, 1996), 'their achievement was sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from a competing mode of scientific activity... [and] was sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefining group of practitioners to resolve' (p. 10). Paradigms eventually collapse under the weight of new discovery that cannot be accommodated; under problems that are unresolved, or irresolvable. Then, between the tensions of revolutionary change and conservative resistance, the old is replaced by formulations that demonstrate more robustness. Kuhn (1996) suggests that paradigms are the consequences, not always intended, of all attempts to explore and come to terms with knowledge. They are constructed collectively in order to make sense of what we do, what we anticipate, and what we eventually find.

Robust paradigms help disciplines by providing four key elements: assessing the theoretical significance of a problem; focusing effort on problems that might have solutions; evaluating competing formulations of theory; and, providing a catalyst for disciplinary growth (Berger, Willer, & Zelditch, 2005; Cole, 2001). Robust paradigms generally have at their core strong theories that not only address underlying processes but are (Sutton & Staw, 1995. p. 378) 'laced with a set of convincing and logically interconnected arguments.... implications that we have not seen with our naked (or theoretically unassisted) eye ...implications that run counter to our common sense. As Weick (1995) put it succinctly, a good theory explains, predicts, and delights' (p. 378).

Paradigms map the territory, impose boundaries and borders, and suggest journeys and destinations. While useful in delineating disciplinary territory, a map as Korzybski (1948) famously remarked 'is not the territory it represents, but if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness'. Echoing Korzybski, Gregory and Mary Bateson later added (Bateson & Bateson, 1987): 'Insofar as the name is never the thing named and the map is never the territory, "*structure*" is never "*true*" ... "*structure*" is always a somewhat flattened, abstracted version of "*truth*" – but structure is all that we can know' (p.161, italics in original).

In reconsidering research, Boyer (1990; 1996) challenged the rigidity of the paradigmatic boundaries that defined disciplines. The evolution of a discipline is linked with its changing paradigm; however, maps are easily confused with the territory and research can easily become the preoccupation of cartographers rather than explorers. In defining four domains for scholarly research, Boyer (1990; 1996) stressed that they have permeable boundaries that allow for the flow of communication and engagement, not only between disciplinary territories but between them and the communities of interest within which they operate. University research and scholarship can often result in the (Barker, 2004) 'increasing specialization of academic knowledge into discrete disciplines, each of which produces highly

complex and technical knowledge that is not effectively communicated to the public... expert knowers institutionally separate from the lay public' (p. 125).

Boyer did not see the concrete blocks of disciplinary research but rather envisaged the fluidity with cross-boundary dialogue, shared understanding, communicated knowledge, and engagement with wider publics. This was, and remains, critical when (Duke & Moss, 2009) 'education has become a private benefit rather than a public good and ... universities are now seen as places where students get credentialed, academics get tenured and that their work does not necessarily address the most pressing needs of society' (p. 31).

### **Four Domains of Engagement**

Ernest Boyer's (1990; 1996) reconsideration of academic research focused on its purpose, function, and relationships, rather than its internal dynamics and process. In earlier writing, he placed paramount value in scholarly engagement (Boyer, 1987): 'scholarship is not an esoteric appendage; it is at the heart of what the profession is all about. All faculty, throughout their careers, should, themselves, remain students. As scholars, they must continue to learn and be seriously and continuously engaged in the expanding intellectual world' (p. 131).

In reconsidering scholarship, he argued (Boyer, 1990) that 'a more comprehensive, more dynamic understanding of scholarship can be considered, one in which the rigid categories of teaching, research, and service are broadened and more flexibly defined' (p.16) with scholarship having a 'broader, more capricious meaning, one that brings legitimacy to the full scope of academic work' (p. 16). Likewise, he suggested 'stepping back from one's investigations, looking for connections, building bridges between theory and practice, and communicating one's knowledge effectively to students' (p. 16).

The theme of scholarly connection and dynamic engagement is taken up more urgently in a paper that was published posthumously (Boyer, 1996). Here, the transition has been made from scholarship that maps out four domains of interest to a broader agenda that sees these domains constituting, as it were, pillars that support an overarching scholarship of engagement. It is not so much a transformation, or evolution, of his early work; rather, a restatement with an unambiguous clarity. It views all research and scholarship as an engagement between scholars and with those in the communities of interest and practice within which academic scholarship is embedded.

Each domain of research and scholarship provided overlaps and connections that could provide a collective synergism for creating engagement with bordering communities of practice, interest, and concern. A comparison of domains of scholarship identified by Boyer in his earlier (1990) and later (1996) works indicates the emergence of a unified purpose and scholarship of engagement (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Four domains of scholarship that constitute a single focus on scholarly engagement.

<i>Scholarship Reconsidered</i> , Boyer (1990).	<i>Scholarship of Engagement</i> , Boyer (1996).
<p>Scholarship of Discovery</p> <p><i>... the commitment to knowledge for its own sake, to freedom of inquiry and to following, in a disciplined fashion, an investigation wherever it may lead (p. 17)</i></p>	<p>Scholarship of Discovery</p> <p><i>... universities, through research, simply must push back the frontiers of human knowledge... we argue against shifting research inordinately to government institutes... that could directly or indirectly diminish the free flow of ideas (p. 16)</i></p>
<p>Scholarship of Integration</p> <p><i>...making connections across the disciplines, placing the specialties in larger context, illumination data in a revealing way, often educating nonspecialists... serious, disciplined work that seeks to interpret, draw together and bring new insight to bear on original research... interpretation, fitting one's own research – or the research of others – into larger intellectual patterns (p. 18-19).</i></p>	<p>Scholarship of Integration</p> <p><i>... place discoveries in a larger contexts and create more interdisciplinary conversations into what Michael Polanyi ... has call the 'overlapping [academic] neighborhoods or in the new hyphenated disciplines, in which the energies of several disciplines tend enthusiastically to converge ... we need a new formulation, a new paradigm of knowledge, since the new questions don't fit the old categories (p. 16).</i></p>
<p>Scholarship of Application</p> <p><i>How can knowledge be responsibly applied to consequential problems? How can it be helpful to individuals as well as institutions? (p.22).</i></p>	<p>Application of Theory</p> <p><i>... becoming what Donald Schön of MIT has called 'reflective practitioners', moving from theory to practice, and from practice back to theory, which in fact make theory, then, more authentic (p. 17).</i></p>
<p>Scholarship of Teaching</p> <p><i>... not only transmitting knowledge, but transforming and extending it as well... active, not passive, learning and encourages students to be critical, creative thinkers, with the capacity to go on learning... a dynamic endeavor involving all the analogies, metaphors, and images that build bridges between the teacher's understanding and the student's learning ... carefully planned, continuously examined, and relate directly to the subject taught (p. 23-24).</i></p>	<p>Scholarship of Sharing</p> <p><i>Scholarship is a communal act... academics must continue to communicate not only with their peers but also with future scholars in the classroom in order to keep the flame of scholarship alive. And yet, on many campuses it's much better to prepare a paper and present it to colleagues at the Hyatt in Chicago than to present it to the students on campus, who perhaps have more future prospects than one's peers. (p. 16).</i></p>

The scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990) placed critical emphasis not on transmission but on a process that transformed and extended knowledge. A scholarship of teaching not only appreciates and acknowledges those who participate, faculty and students, but seeks to build bridges and bring about change. In his last publication, however, Boyer (1996) reframes the scholarship of teaching with a fresh urgency. It is has now become a 'scholarship of sharing', in which sharing means active engagement with current students, the scholars of the future. Teaching and its scholarship have become a shared enterprise, a communal act.

Purposeful engagement finds expression among many who reconsidered the dynamic exchange between the academy and broader communities of interest. Colbeck and

Wharton-Michael (2006) note that 'faculty who engage in public scholarship necessarily engage their students in discovery and learning with and for the community' (p. 25). Wider communities of knowledge and practice are not simply impinged upon by academic research; they can be included in that scholarship and their exclusion impairs our own collective understanding (Duke & Moss, 2009). For instance, engagement with communities of practice has significant ramifications because universities are (Klay, Brower, & Williams, 2001) 'the cradle of the professions and the primary socializers of future professionals.... making any profession more community-oriented must, therefore, begin with making universities more community-oriented' (p. 46).

To what extent is a dynamic of engagement included within the paradigm of SoTL and with whom do teachers engage?

### **Sharing and the Voice of the Students**

Boyer (1990; 1996) noted that a scholarship of teaching had outcomes: extending knowledge, transforming knowledge and people, and sharing with those who learn. As general propositions these were to inform the evolving SoTL paradigm. A scholarship of teaching can mean (Healey, 2000): 'communicating and disseminating about the teaching and learning practices of one's subject. It also entails investigating questions related to how students learn within a discipline' (p. 172). The within-discipline focus makes teaching and learning experiences salient to those in the subject area, rather than the province of those in education or cognitive psychology. There is a sharing, although not necessarily with those who participate in the learning experience.

Shared engagement is echoed by Kathleen McKinney (2007) who argues that SoTL 'goes beyond scholarly teaching and involves systematic study of teaching and/or learning and the public sharing and review of such work through presentations, performance, or publications' (p. 10). As reflective practice, teaching and learning are viewed as part of a dynamic process rather than as products. Kreber (2002) understands that 'academics who practise the scholarship of teaching engage in content, process and premise reflection on research-based and experience-based knowledge in the areas of instruction, pedagogy and curriculum, in ways that can be peer reviewed' (p. 153).

Perhaps the strongest resonance of Boyer's transformation, extension, and sharing is found in Keith Trigwell and Suzanne Shale (2004), who differentiate between a knowledge *about* teaching and a knowledge *in* teaching, and argue that 'if we are interested in making knowledge in teaching ... then our students and their experiences of our teaching constitute a crucial part of the critical scrutiny' (p. 528). Referring to the dynamics of the learning environment they consider a 'pedagogic resonance', which they describe as 'the bridge between teaching knowledge and the student learning that results from that knowledge. It is ... constituted in the individual acts of teaching, and it is the effect of pedagogic resonance that is experienced by students' (p. 532). Mirroring Boyer's engaging that goes beyond peers and sharing that extends to students, Trigwell and Shale (2004) suggest that a descriptive level SoTL accords 'proper priority to the idea that teaching is an activity that emerges in collaboration with students as partners in learning' (p. 534). At a purposive level, SoTL should 'honour and publicly acknowledge the scholarly energy that is creating situations in which students learn, rather than a scholarly energy which creates situations in which teachers instruct' (p. 534).

Creating situations that allow learning to take place is a critical dimension of SoTL. A brief review of recent contributions to the *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, considered from phenomenological perspective, suggest that teaching as a collaboration and engagement with students resonates with many practitioners. Lorraine Stefani (2008), for example, considers that 'promoting and encouraging student engagement, retention and completion requires us as academics to reflect on how we develop an inclusive and engaging curriculum and how we enhance our understanding of our students and their learning needs' (p. 6). Michael Prosser (2008) considers that the main point of engaging in SoTL is 'to work towards improving our students' learning... reflect upon evidence of our own students' learning... draw upon the more generic research, but carefully situate that within our disciplines.... monitor the success or otherwise of our efforts to improve our students' learning... communicate the outcomes of those efforts to our colleagues' (p. 4).

A scholarship of sharing can result in hearing the voice of the student, engaging in the beginnings of dialogue, and collaborating. Mihans, Long, and Felten (2008) note that 'we have learned the value of really listening to our students.... we are more attuned to student needs and expertise, and we have wholeheartedly embraced the concept of student collaboration in course design' (p. 8). Practitioners, better informed about student needs, undergo changes, seeing empowerment and democratization within their practice (Dees, 2008): 'I have now committed myself as an educator to create learning environments *with* my students, not for them... the SoTL project ... served to free me as an educator, moving away from an instructor-driven perspective to a more learner-centered approach' (p. 3).

Freedom to consider others as legitimate participants within the learning experience leads to new journeys, new discovery, and ways of redrawing the SoTL map. As John Tagg (2010) says, 'SoTL should seek to reveal what is now hidden, should seek to counteract and diminish the fog of learning.... it should explore the way students learn, their attitudes and expectations about learning, and the way the academic environment affects their choices about learning' (p. 4).

### **Partners in Learning and Coming Face to Face with Alterity**

Boyer's (1990) extended reconsideration of scholarship within the university identified domains of scholarship, interconnected and potentially extended to larger communities of interest. It is within this plane of connectedness that a scholarship of teaching is situated. In later work (Boyer, 1996), connectedness is seen not as a passive attribute but as an active imperative. It is within this engagement that a scholarship of sharing rests. Boyer tacitly acknowledged the power of disciplinary paradigms; however, his reconsideration of scholarship – a priority for the professoriate, he suggested – argues that paradigmatic myopia can limit opportunity and obscure engagement.

The power and the limitations of entrenched disciplinary paradigms are particularly relevant when considering emerging areas of engagement, presenting opportunities for growth and consolidation, and warning about drawing premature maps. If SoTL does have clear and firm roots in Boyer's powerful work, then it would be expected to accentuate extensions of knowledge, transformations of knowledge and people, and a sharing of new knowledge with peers and students. And yet, as has been remarked (Trigwell & Shale, 2004, p. 534)

... it is particularly striking how absent students are from some representations of scholarship of teaching and the less clearly spelled out notion of a scholarship of

teaching community. Students do not appear as partners in learning. They do not appear as neophyte scholars in the community. They do not appear as critics or connoisseurs of teaching. When they do appear it is as objects of concern, objects of analysis, or presumptively passive consumers.

Kuhn (1996), examining the scientific paradigm, drew a comparison between the knowledge constructed in such systems and language: both, he said, are 'intrinsically the common property of a group or nothing else... to understand it we shall need to know the special characteristics of the group that create and use it' (p. 210). Language is the quintessential factor in understanding, knowing, and communicating. Language, however, can also operate as a barrier: providing the enclave with cohesiveness and limiting the inclusion of those outside.

As SoTL evolves, the challenge is to know more about the special characteristics of its practitioners without creating a paradigm of exclusiveness and non-sharing. The opportunity is to ensure that the language that we use includes the voices of those who are our 'partners in learning, neophyte scholars, and critics and connoisseurs'. Those voices invite dialogue, and to engage in dialogue is (Kostogriz, 2006) 'to listen and to be open to the Other; it is to be immersed in the discursive space where the self becomes response-able and answerable when face to face with alterity' (p. 8). Within such discursive space there is an opportunity to understand more about what we do as teachers and to approach an authenticity of self through, and within, SoTL (Kreber, 2007b; Kwo, 2007). A critical issue in understanding SoTL as a practice of engagement and sharing will be to recognize that (Kostogriz, 2006) 'self is dependent for its existence on the Other who provides a source of new meanings and a new semiotic basis for becoming, or enabling new selves to come' (p. 10).

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