

# SCHOLARSHIP REVISITED

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Currently there is enormous emphasis on undergraduate training and on the outcomes that we wish students to achieve. Students are aggressively recruited and assured of excellent teaching programmes, but the rewards for dedicated teachers who present such programmes, are scarce. Frequently teachers who spend much of their time advising and counseling students are passed by when it comes to promotions and salary increases. Research and publication have become the norm for promotion and academic status and therefore little time is left for the education of the students. Even those academics who were drawn to higher education precisely because they wanted to teach and educate young students in the skills of a profession are forced to comply with the dictum: Publish or perish.

Excellence of service is also restricted because of the emphasis on research and publication. Often the argument is that excellence in research automatically predicts excellence in teaching. This has never been my experience in physiotherapy. Excellent researchers are exactly just that and excellent teachers are possibly not so devoted to research and publication. To each his own and everybody should be rewarded for their area of excellence! Otherwise we may sink into a sea of mediocrity. It has also become imperative to connect academia to the social and environmental challenges of today and so while research is essential we also need a commitment to service.

The time has come for universities to break away from the exhausted arguments in the debate of teaching versus research and to take a hard look at what scholarly activities imply in our changing world. Ernest L Boyer suggested that we look at four distinct entities of scholarship. They included discovery, integration, application and teaching. He also suggested that universities developed their own unique identities and pursue excellence in education. The improved education would depend on the way scholarship was defined, implemented and rewarded.

Scholarship according to Boyer refers to a variety of creative work carried on in a variety of places and its integrity is measured by the ability to think, communicate and learn. The term research was first used in the 1870's when Oxford and Cambridge wished to make their universities not only "a place of teaching but also of learning" and it was only at that time that the word "research" became a part of the academic vocabulary. I am sure that scholarship does

mean engaging in original research but it must mean more. There is overlapping of the four areas i.e. **discovery, integration, application and teaching.**

The scholarship of discovery is what we understand as "research". Advancement of knowledge as a result of disciplined investigative effort in universities is a process that should be strengthened and not weakened but it is by no means the exclusive activity of academics. To this should be added the scholarship of integration. This is the ability of scholars to give meaning to isolated facts and put them into perspective. **Integration** implies making connections across disciplines and so interpreting data in an informative way. It means fitting research findings into larger intellectual patterns.

The scholarship of application is based on the understanding that universities should serve the interests of the larger community. It has been suggested that scholarship may equip the scholar for service. To be considered scholarship, service activities must be tied directly to one's special field of knowledge and relate to and flow directly out of this professional activity. By applying the knowledge gained by research and integration new understanding of professional fields are likely to result. Boyer quotes Oscar Handlin saying "Scholarship has to prove its worth not on its own terms but by service to the nation and the world".

The final scholarship is that of teaching. The work of researchers becomes of consequence to the student only as they understand it. In this context teaching both educates and entices future scholars. This then makes it quite clear that the teacher must be well informed and specialized in the knowledge of their fields. The role of the teacher is to try to bring the most honest and most intelligible account of new knowledge to all who try to learn.

Boyer concludes that the modern day scholar should recognise that knowledge is acquired through research, synthesis, practice and through teaching. Research, integration, application and teaching tied together should become the essential features of scholarship. This broader vision of scholarship may prove especially useful to future academics.

**SIELIE EALES (Editor)**

### REFERENCE:

Boyer E L Chapter 2: Enlarging the Perspective. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching: 15 - 25; xi - xiii