TOWARDS A TEACHING COMMONS FOR ARCHITECTURE: THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

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Abstract
Ernest Boyer (1928-1995) distinguished himself as a key figure in American higher education, serving as the United States Commissioner of Education and as President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. His publications and initiatives concerned educational issues spanning from pre-school to postgraduate education. This paper considers two of his chief publications in tandem; Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate (1990) evaluated the relative weightings of research, teaching and service within the academy, and recommended a rebalancing of their relative values. This publication influenced the development of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), a movement which espoused Boyer’s views. Together with Lee Mitgang, Boyer also published Building Community: A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice (1996), a report which suggested some key recommendations for the pedagogy and the focus of architecture programmes. Based on data gathered from fifteen schools of architecture in the USA, this work simultaneously celebrated many of the educational strategies within these programmes while reflecting on numerous conflicts within architectural tuition, many of which remain problematic to the present day. Building Community proposed a number of key goals for architectural education in order to benefit students, academics, practitioners and the wider society. These goals, in short, were set as:

Goal 1: An Enriched Mission; whereby students are empowered with a duty to promote a wider agenda of beauty in support of an enriched environment and society
Goal 2: Diversity with Dignity; promoting inclusive, varied, accessible and creative educational environments
Goal 3: Standards without Standardization; maintaining diversity in provision and offer while maintaining rigorous, fair and open professional and educational standards
Goal 4: A Connected Curriculum; fusing the scholarships of teaching, inquiry and engagement

These respective publications suggest an approach to scholarship that emphasises the sharing of teaching and learning inquiries in a public domain, and in a way that is open to scrutiny. This paper draws on these ideals to propose a range of ways in which a teaching commons might provide a framework for underpinning, celebrating, critiquing and disseminating the scholarship of architectural education, including proposals to share learning materials and content, establish teaching exchanges, observations and studio swaps, and cooperate to jointly fund exhibitions, overseas lecturers, etc. These proposals are explored to prompt debate around the potential role of the new Association of Architectural Educators.
with other communities within and outside the academy and the profession

Goal 5: A Climate for Learning; providing learning communities which are supportive, transparent and sharing of common purposes between students, academics, support staff and professionals

Goal 6: A Unified Profession; seeking closer collaboration and understanding between the academy and the architectural profession

Goal 7: Service to the Nation; establishing an ethical and socially activist agenda in architectural education for the betterment of society and the environment. (Boyer & Mitgang, 1996)

‘Building Community’ could be considered as a discipline focused development of themes that emerged from Boyer’s previous publication ‘Scholarship Reconsidered’, a report produced for the Carnegie Foundation on the health of Higher Education in the USA at the end of the 1980’s. This report challenged the commonly accepted hierarchy of research, teaching and service in the academy. Boyer argued that this narrow view of scholarship maintained a divisive and false separation between ‘researching the new’ and ‘teaching old knowledge’, manifesting itself in:

1) a disproportionate bias in the academy towards the tenure and promotion of research staff,
2) an assumption that teaching excellence requires minimal effort and support, and is subordinate to research,
3) a consequent depletion and lack of regard for the undergraduate’s learning and social experience.

To challenge this culture, Boyer called for the idea of ‘Scholarship’ to be broadened beyond the narrow limits of singular disciplinary research. Instead, Boyer proposed that four distinctive forms of ‘scholarship’ should be acknowledged, developed and rewarded within the academy.

First, Boyer assigned ‘traditional’ inquiry and research to the ‘Scholarship of Discovery’. Second, he proposed that the ‘Scholarship of Integration’ should incorporate academic work that is multidisciplinary, contextual, adventurous, and developed through and for a wider academic community. Third, the ‘Scholarship of Application’ revitalised the idea of academic ‘service’ as pursuits informing practice and providing social and economic benefits; this function had previously informed strong traditions of extending knowledge beyond the campus (Glassick et.al, 1997, p.viii). However, ‘service’ had subsequently been usurped by undervalued yet essential administrative duties. Boyer noted that aspects of architectural design fell within this scholarship, where ‘theory and practice vitally interact, and one renews the other.’ (Boyer, 1990, p.23). Finally, the ‘Scholarship of Teaching’ sought to recognize and reward efforts to establish critical and rigorous cultures of teaching and student support within the academy for the enrichment of learning communities; ‘Without the teaching function, the continuity of knowledge will be broken and the store of human knowledge dangerously diminished.’ (ibid, p.24)

Boyer’s report sought to assign equivalent value to each scholarship, viewing all four as being interlinked and essential to the continued health of the academy. It also stressed the importance of developing communities of learning wherein students, academics and administration shared common goals and values.

‘Scholarship Assessed’ and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Scholarship Reconsidered prompted the publication of Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate, which (in response to academic demand) proposed practical and common values for assessing the quality of the four scholarships: ‘in order to recognize discovery, integration, application and teaching as legitimate forms of scholarship, the academy must evaluate them by a set of standards that capture and acknowledge what they share as scholarly acts.’ (Glassick et. al., 1997, p. 22). Through a systematic evaluation of institutional criteria for the assessment of service,
teaching and research, this report distilled a set of six qualitative standards by which ‘scholarship’ could be identified and assessed: ‘clear goals’, ‘adequate preparation’, ‘appropriate methods’, ‘significant results’, ‘effective presentation’, and ‘reflective critique’.

Both Scholarship Reconsidered and Scholarship Assessed had been commissioned by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This organisation employed the recommendations of these reports in the formation of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), which in turn informed the ‘Scholarship of Teaching and Learning’ movement (SoTL). In short, SoTL was established to encourage critically reflective inquiry into teaching methods and theories that promoted successful student learning. One of the guiding principles of the SoTL movement was a shift from ‘teaching’ to ‘learning’, placing the student at the centre of her own education. By contrast, many schools of architecture continue to support a traditional master-apprentice model of education, with ‘knowledge as power’ underpinning the pedagogical approach (Parnell & Sara, 2007; Webster, 2007).

Another key driver of SoTL is the importance of the open dissemination of scholarly inquiry, making pedagogic research findings public and open to scrutiny. As such, it can be viewed as outward-facing, collaborative, and supportive of dialogue, in contrast with normative educational research (Kreber, 2002a).

**Some Issues with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning**

SoTL has subsequently developed into a movement of considerable popularity and influence for many educationalists. The International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) was established in 2004, and several journals, notably the ‘Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning’ (JoSOTL) and the ‘International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning’, disseminate a variety of outputs. However, some issues continue to act as obstacles to a consensual understanding of the movement: For example, whether a clearer distinction between outputs of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and ‘standard’ educational research can be made remains highly contested. Commentators continue to seek a definitive interpretation of SoTL’s unique qualities to elucidate what separates the two modes of inquiry, (Kreber, 2002a,b). Such consensual categorisation of SoTL could both clarify its distinct operations, and define its scholarly outputs. Without this agreement, it is questionable whether the practice and outputs of SOTL could be successfully aligned with assessment criteria for teaching and learning recognition and awards (e.g. in the form of National or University Teaching Fellowships, or for advanced fellowships of the Higher Education Academy). As the lack of recognition and reward for teaching excellence underscored Boyer’s (1990) foundational writings, explicit criteria of such scholarly excellence should exhibit commonality. Similarly, the time required for accruing the procedural and declarative knowledge expected of an exemplary ‘scholarship of teaching’ is heavily dependent upon University support. It is therefore of value that the attributes of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning can also be successfully mapped against the Research Excellence Framework, in order to be accepted as legitimate scholarship by vice-chancellors and university managers.

More positively, the trans-disciplinary and inclusive ethos of SOTL, with an avowed aim of ‘clear goals and effective presentation’, demands an accessibility and clarity of writing which transcends the hegemonic writing styles of individual, narrowly focused subject disciplines. With respect to the self-referential languages often employed in Architectural practice and education, a commitment to clarity that transcends ‘protectionist’ boundaries would clearly contribute to the discipline’s wider engagement with the academy as a whole. Similarly, The best intentions of SOTL to engender
a public, collective and collaborative scholarship still appear to be hampered by entrenched beliefs, policies, and behaviour: ‘Those without sole publications are not rewarded for their team-playing skills’ (Blaxter et al. 1998a:144, in Murray, 2005).

Finally, Shulman (2011) asserts that a central tenet of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is the dissemination of scholarly, peer-reviewed research in order to stand critical comparison with academic research in other fields. ‘An act of intelligence or of artistic creation becomes scholarship when it possesses at least three attributes: it becomes public; it becomes an object of critical review and evaluation by members of one’s community; and members of one’s community begin to use, build upon, and develop those acts of mind and creation.’ (Shulman, 2009). However perhaps not all scholarship needs to be undertaken at this level. The multi-dimensional model of SoTL proposed by Trigwell et al. (2000), encompasses opportunities for a variety of levels of engagement with pedagogy, ranging from informal peer discussions to the dissemination of rigorously argued research enquiries. Encouragement of the wider discussion of individuals’ pedagogical interests may lead to collaborative research of publishable quality, with the result of a truly collegiate ‘community of practice’ being established within and between schools and institutions. However, whether such democratic and inclusive practices could be squared with Badley’s assertion that ‘scholarship’ must adhere to the aforementioned standards of clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation, and reflective critique (Badley, 2003) is questionable, as it has already been asserted that research into teaching and learning often suffers from a lack of methodological rigour (Murray, 2005), a charge that also has equivalent resonance for architectural research (Macmillan, 2010).

The Teaching Commons and Architectural Education

The development of SoTL has championed educational inquiry as community property. This principle has been extended by Huber and Hutchings into the conceptualization of the ‘Teaching Commons’, an academic space whereby ‘communities of educators committed to pedagogical inquiry and innovation come together to exchange ideas about teaching and learning and use them to meet the challenges of educating students for personal, professional, and civic life.’ (Huber & Hutchings, 2005, p.x). This paper argues that perhaps, of all the transferable lessons from the SoTL movement, the extended concept of the ‘Teaching Commons’ has potentially the greatest value for architectural education.

The charge of architecture programmes being expensive and resource-demanding is common held by university managers. Studio spaces have become a battleground of institutions, being regarded as another example of ‘special pleading’ on behalf of the discipline. Architectural and design teaching is often seen as fundamentally at odds with the structures of modularisation and timetabling. However, a counter argument based upon educational research from the wider academy, could effectively reframe the studio as a unique, authentic and invaluable educational learning resource, underpinned by a host of validated pedagogical theories, including, ‘constructive alignment’ (Biggs & Tan, 2009); subject specific ‘ways of teaching and practicing’ (Entwistle, 2009); discipline-specific pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986); and communities of design practice (Wenger, 1999), amongst others. In spite of the competitive pressures for individual Schools of Architecture to sell themselves as uniquely capable of delivering a high quality curriculum, it would hopefully be agreed that collective architectural education constitutes a ‘Scholarship of Integration’ that supports valuable, relevant and ‘good’ work (Gardner et.al., 2001), and thereby develops key academic, professional and transferrable skills in its scholars. As such, the authors assert that schools will not lose their distinctive values and philosophies by sharing...
common knowledge, skills, resources and expertise with one another. If Boyer and Mitgang’s goals of ‘a unified profession’ and ‘service to the nation’ are to be achieved, closer collaboration towards common goals is clearly desirable, not least to show solidarity in espousing the potential of architectural education. An ‘Architectural Teaching Commons’ could share the means to drive economies of time, money and effort through open and constructive collaboration. Possible examples of collaborative ventures (many already being practised through local agreements) could include:

- the sharing of learning materials, particularly copyright free images, ‘old’ and common knowledge;
- reciprocal arrangements for staff exchanges for studio reviews, peer observation, critical friendship, and sharing of good practice;
- the shared use of studios as bases for national field study trips;
- the co-operative funding of visiting speakers from overseas, teaching and learning conferences, student design awards etc.

These could reap benefits above and beyond a collective celebration of architectural education as a transferable model of learning for other disciplines in Higher Education. An outward facing ‘Teaching Commons’ could reciprocally learn from subjects such as Education, Neuroscience, Psychology and Health Studies, when seeking to address the concerns of Building Community.

Further opportunities for SoTL within Architectural Education

‘...we are convinced that architecture education, at its best, is a model that holds valuable insights and lessons for all of higher education as a new century approaches.’ (Boyer & Mitgang, 1996, p.5)

Higher education institutions and individual programmes of study in the UK are facing multiple challenges which threaten their continued survival. The introduction and increase of tuition fees has put financial sustainability at the centre of the conversation. Where institutional management has embraced the quasi-privatisation of universities, students have been re-assigned as ‘customers’ rather than ‘scholars’. ‘Policy makers, legislators, and the media increasingly view higher education not as an investment in the collective public good but as a private benefit to individuals.’ (Glassick et al., 1997, p.6) Concurrently, research funding is being targeted by overseas competitors, alternative forms of educational provision are being offered by ‘for-profit’ organizations, and the market for higher education is becoming simultaneously internationalised and virtual. In sum, the traditional University model and its certainties are set on shifting ground. As a community of architectural educators, it is incumbent on us to develop a shared and inclusive narrative of our disciplinary values in order to sustain and ensure the survival of the profession we love.

References

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