

Is Reflective Teaching Scholarship?

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Is Reflective Teaching Scholarship?

Timothy Stewart

内省的教授法は教育実践について更に多くを習得すべく使われることがあるが、授業者が自己観察し、自らの授業に関するデータを集め、変化を目的とする資料としての使用を目指した分析を伴っている。本稿では授業者それぞれの内省的教授法研究が学問として成立するかを問い、アカデミズムに浸透する実践研究に関する今日的見解を概観した後に、ボイヤー（1990）による影響力の大きい研究に見られる新しい学問観に注目する。また、第二言語としての英語教育における「新研究」の実例に基づき、宮崎国際大学の教員に研究者／実践家として認知された研究スタイルを実証するまたとない機会が得られることを示すものである。

Reflective teaching is the process some teachers use to learn more about their own teaching practice. It involves instructors observing themselves, collecting data about their own teaching, and analyzing that data to use as a basis for change. The question this article poses is, can this type of classroom research conducted by individual teachers be construed as scholarship? After outlining current views prevalent in academia about practitioner research, the article turns to new views of scholarship embodied in the seminal work of Boyer (1990). From illustrations of the so-called "new scholarship" in the TESOL field, the article suggests that MIC faculty have a unique opportunity to work toward legitimizing the types of scholarship common to scholar-practitioners.

Situating the Question

In December 1995, the first volume of *Comparative Culture* was published. Two years later, David Rehorick launched the "Reflections on Teaching" section of the journal. I was invited to write one of the six manuscripts for that original *Reflections* section. Since that time, I have been asked by several colleagues about the worth of such reflections to the journal. Ensuing discussions have led me to ask: "Is reflective teaching scholarship?" Some colleagues have said that this journal should have fewer articles about teaching and more on "academic" questions. Others have expressed the opposite view. This article is one response to these contrasting views. I make no claims to find a satisfactory answer to the question posed above, but as one of the former editors of the discontinued "Reflections on Teaching," I hope that it might encourage open discussion among those with an interest in the relationship between theory and practice, and the boundaries of scholarship. This matter has taken on a new significance since the journal editorial board agreed that beginning with this issue, all articles will be published in a single section of the journal.

In the very first article published in *Comparative Culture*, Dr. Hisayasu Otsubo, Miyazaki International College President, raised the question of the place of research and scholarship in the academy (Otsubo, 1995). He was tapping into a debate continuing for several years now on the relationship of research to knowledge for and about teaching. A major source of this debate has been the dissatisfaction with a university-generated knowledge base for teaching amongst practicing classroom teachers (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992). I would characterize this debate as one where dominant paradigms are judging a new domain of inquiry by reasserting the conventions, expectations and language of established frameworks. Let us consider here whether the relationships between teachers' research, knowledge and practice are really "new territory" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998, p. 27).

I will frame the general discussion that follows within the field of second language education by reviewing several recent publications pertinent to this question. I begin with a brief summary of some key arguments in the current literature.

Critical Views

Positions in this debate are largely decided by how participants pose their questions. Traditionalists define knowledge as being either formal or practical. These scholars tend to limit their purview of scholarship to research falling under the rubric of formal knowledge, that is, disciplinary-based content. Others in the academy are now arguing for an expanded and, indeed, elevated definition of practical knowledge. They see the formal knowledge/practical knowledge dichotomy as artificial and unproductive.

... the assertion [by traditionalists] that teacher research generates practical knowledge means it generates knowledge that is, from a certain perspective, low status knowledge – bounded by the everyday, excessively local and particular, and possibly trivial. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998, p. 24)

The critique of research conducted by practicing teachers as scholarship centres on this point. Scholars such as Fenstermacher (1994) argue that there exists formal, theoretical and scientific knowledge that is separate from practical knowledge. He conceptualizes teacher knowledge as: “how to do things, the right place and time to do them, or how to see and interpret events related to one’s own actions” (p. 12). Huberman (1996) supports this argument by classifying teacher knowledge as situated knowledge that, with repeated reflection, could lead to practical knowledge. He further challenges the idea of teachers’ research by contending that it is nearly impossible to understand events when one is a participant. Indeed, supporters of teachers’ research warn that its increasing popularity risks serving too many educational agendas, so that “it is in danger of becoming anything and everything” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998, p. 21). It seems that what is now being called the “new scholarship” (Boyer, 1990; Zeichner, 1999), is in need of a new epistemology (Schön, 1995).

Boyer (1990) and his Carnegie Foundation colleagues are credited with focusing this debate in the higher education literature. They reconsidered “teaching versus research” with the intent of shaping a broader definition of scholarship. The *scholarship of teaching* is one of four areas of scholarship proposed by Boyer, in addition to *discovery*, *integration* and *application*. He argues his point in the context of the history of research in universities. Boyer’s conclusion is that academics define scholarship in a very narrow way with basic research (*discovery*) generating publishable knowledge that is then applied in some way or, perhaps, used to enhance teaching. In today’s restricted view of scholarship, it seems that conveying knowledge to students or the application of knowledge are not considered to be a part of scholarship. Schön (1995) lays out the dilemma of such a restricted view of scholarship:

In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the use of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowlands, problems are messy and confusing and incapable of technical solution.

The irony of this situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or to society at large, however great their technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern. The practitioner is confronted with a choice. Shall he remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to his standards of rigor, or shall he descend to the swamp of important problems where he cannot be rigorous in any way he knows how to describe? (p. 28)

Let me turn now to a consideration of the alternatives to the restricted view of scholarship as "original" or "basic" research.

New Perspectives on Scholarship

As stated earlier, Boyer (1990) introduces four areas of scholarship: discovery, integration, application and teaching. His central point about the *scholarship of teaching* is that university faculty should stop looking on teaching as something almost anyone can do, or as some kind of annoying *load* tacked onto other more important tasks. Instead, Boyer advises university faculty to adopt the view of teaching as "the highest form of scholarship" (Boyer quoting Aristotle, p. 23). While affirming the important place of research in universities (the *scholarship of discovery*), Boyer makes the case that "inspired teaching keeps the flame of scholarship alive" (p. 24). He calls for "a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar – a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice, and through teaching" (p. 24).

The new scholarship must take the form of action research according to Schön (1995). He emphasizes that the challenge for supporters of the new scholarship of teaching is "to introduce action research as a legitimate and appropriately rigorous way of knowing and generating knowledge" (p. 31). Under the current standards of scholarship that dominate in academia, however, the *scholarship of teaching* remains unacknowledged and unrewarded. That is, the puzzles that teachers are drawn to investigate will often need to be studied in the contexts of practice. Therefore, the control and distance demanded by the epistemology of logical positivism and scientific empiricism cannot be established. This makes it all but impossible to achieve a level of rigour acceptable by the positivist standards of research underlying the modern research university (Schön). As a result, some good teachers are denied tenure because they are unable to see the research potential in practice and/or cannot carry out a program of action research. At the same time, the positivist paradigm is so deeply institutionalized, that even liberal arts universities have difficulty recognizing the legitimacy of reflective action research in practice.

Preoccupations with issues of methodological sophistication can be challenged. These concerns are emphasized most when interpretation and analysis are done away from research settings, and when investigators have little interest in the particular case (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). This research reality is far removed from the classroom in which concerned teachers attempt to understand and develop their practice. Teacher-participants who conduct classroom action research, must "live with the consequences of the transformations they make" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 592). As Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) explain, this direct connection with the research situation serves as a powerful check on the quality of teachers' transformative work.

The impetus for shaping research on teaching by practitioners into a new form of scholarship stems largely from the perception that “much formal research has little bearing on the most immediate and central problems of education” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998, p. 30). Furthermore, universities view colleges of education as lacking in intellectual rigour, while classroom teachers consider what they offer to be too theoretical and detached from teaching realities. In the past, research in education, following the natural sciences model, has separated theory and practice, thus viewing practice as something theories are about (Carr, 1987). New conceptions of teachers’ research propose that teaching practice has both practical and theoretical aspects. Therefore, teachers’ research generates “knowledge of both how teachers theorize practice and how they practice theory” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998, p. 30). This idea is central to Boyer’s (1990) concept of the *scholarship of application*. In some activities directed to serve their particular field of specialization or the larger community, professors can be engaged in research in which “theory and practice interact, and one renews the other” (Boyer, p. 23). It is this cycle of interaction that most interests those engaged in reflective teaching.

Anderson, Herr and Nihlem (1994) view teachers’ research as a new genre related to qualitative research. A key difference for them is that this new form of research is conducted by participants rather than outsiders. They claim that standard academic criteria for validity are meaningless because of the fundamental difference of purpose between the academic qualitative research model of applied knowledge and “participatory inquiry” (Thesen & Kuzel, 1999). The academic traditions of participatory inquiry are “oriented toward reform rather than simply toward description or meaning” (Thesen & Kuzel, 1999, p. 270). Thus, educators engaged in participatory action research seek to change, not simply describe schools. This position can be traced back to Dewey’s ideas on democracy in the classroom and the need for reflective inquiry to improve teaching and learning.

Another way in which teachers’ research is being reconsidered is by exploring how it can make teacher education and professional development more critical, in the sense of critical inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998; Gore & Zeichner, 1995). Proponents of this stance define “professional development” as a critically reflective activity that continues across the professional career-span in support of social justice and social change (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998). Situated as a critical enterprise, localized teachers’ research can be conceptualized as knowledge that other teachers can draw from to understand and promote social change in their own schools and communities. This conception of teachers’ research reflects the currently predominant view in my own field of English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL). I turn now to a discussion of the issues raised relative to the field of English language education.

Reflective Teaching in ESOL

We can trace the idea of reflective teaching back to the work of Dewey (1933) in which he claims that reflective thinking means giving a subject “serious and consecutive consideration” so as to allow for action “in deliberate and intentional fashion.” Today, peer mentoring, case discussions, and teaching portfolios are all ways in which faculty attempt to change their teaching through reflective practices. When such reflections on teaching are done systematically in a disciplined cycle of action, observation, reflection and revision, they might become worth publishing at

some point. Since many of the most prolific authors in the ESOL field work as teacher educators in universities, they can become distanced from challenges facing the broader ESOL community. This leads to a situation in which ESOL teachers become frustrated because the teachers' reference books and textbooks published are often of little use to them. For these reasons, the reflective observations of practicing ESOL teachers are increasingly being sought for publication.

The nature of how teachers develop and change professionally is crucial to the field of second language teacher education. Reflection is seen as being paramount to effecting change in teaching practice since changes in behaviour often follow changes in beliefs (Bailey, 1992; Golombek, 1998). The number of books on reflective practices in ESOL is growing rapidly, following the lead of the education field. It would be impossible to comment on all of the major works in this area, but I would like to spotlight some of the most important volumes. These books spring from two categories of research: action research and narrative inquiry.

Under the rubric of action research, there are a number of influential books. *Action Research for Language Teachers* (Wallace, 1998), describes action research as "the systematic collection and analysis of data relating to the improvement of some aspect of professional practice" (p. 1). Data may be collected as part of a case study, through interviews or questionnaires, or using observation, field-notes, logs, journals and diaries. For example, a teacher might structure his/her field-notes as a teaching log. Levels of effectiveness of a lesson can be defined and used to evaluate the lesson on a time-line. Once field-notes have been recorded for several lessons, they can be analyzed either: as a source of issues for deeper investigation; or, if the data is already focused on a particular issue (e.g., teacher talk time vs. student talk time), deciding if there's enough data to see some solution. Wallace situates action research in professional development contexts. For teachers, professional development is an ongoing process continuing throughout a career. Wallace outlines a reflective cycle that he calls a process of *reflection on professional action*. He stresses that action research is concerned with applying discoveries about practice to professional action and not with what is universally true, or generalizable to other contexts.

Another respected how-to book for ESOL teachers is *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms* (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). The authors view reflection as essential to professional practice since teacher-training courses, at the very best, can only prepare teachers to *begin* teaching. Teacher-initiated action research is typically manifested in small-scale investigative projects. The phases of typical classroom investigations, according to Richards and Lockhart, are planning, action, observation and reflection. These phases recur in cycles of investigation. Topics in this volume come from various important issues in ESOL encouraging teachers toward a "critically reflective approach to teaching" (p. 202). It follows that projects of critical reflection on teaching practice guided by a disciplined pattern of investigation could be suitably developed into manuscripts for publication.

Many advocates of action research stress the importance of collaboration. In *Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teachers*, Anne Burns (1999) presents the case for collaborative inquiry. Like Burns, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) maintain that action research cannot be action research without collaboration between colleagues or students and their teachers. Burns points out correctly that the original goals of action research "were to bring about change in social situations as the result of group problem-solving and collaboration" (p. 12). She sees action

research as a way to bridge the divide between theory, research and practice. She maintains that it “fulfills basic research requirements in that it encompasses a researchable question/issue, data and interpretive analysis” (p. 25). Furthermore, many methodologists see action research as one type of qualitative research similar to approaches such as *grounded theory*, which presumes that there is a direct link between observed phenomena and theories of practice. Finally, according to Burns, a key point in support of collaborative approaches to research is that action researchers can work as a team to test their findings through the process of triangulation in order to increase reliability and validity.

The last of the selected sources of teacher reflection through action research adds an interesting dimension to complement the other books. In *Continuing Cooperative Development*, Julian Edge (2002) supports Burns’ collaborative approach to action research. He too advocates the use of colleagues as sounding boards to help formulate ideas about teaching practice. Cooperative Development (CD) is the label Edge gives to his method for reflective practice. In CD, a teacher talks about his/her teaching with a non-judgmental colleague who listens to and helps focus this talk, with the aim of uncovering professional development issues for investigation. The ultimate goal is to empower teachers through professional actions based on *their own understanding of* their classroom teaching situation. To achieve this understanding, Edge outlines alternative patterns of discourse for colleagues to follow. This talk about teaching leads toward the choice of a focus for action research. As the focus is sharpened, a concrete goal for action is set. Next in this process is a spoken rehearsal “to make sure that the steps toward the set goal have been thought through and that they are coherent” (p. 116). Following this, action research is conducted and observations are made. CD techniques can later be used to reflect on the outcomes, and lead into a new cycle of discovery.

Two well-known names in ESOL, Bailey and Nunan, published *Voices from the Language Classroom* (1996) “to serve as a ‘sampler’ for people interested in learning more about qualitative research in the naturalistic inquiry tradition,” since “studies utilizing qualitative data gathered in naturally occurring settings” had not often been published in ESOL (p. 1). Their book of narrative inquiry examines sociopolitical and curricular aspects of language teaching, as well as the perspectives of learners and teachers. Following this lead, Johnson and Golombek (2002) published *Teachers’ Narrative Inquiry as Professional Development*. While the volume edited by Bailey and Nunan features many prominent university-based ESOL researchers, *Teachers’ Narrative Inquiry* includes the voices of practicing teachers. Johnson and Golombek describe narrative inquiry as “systematic exploration that is conducted by teachers and for teachers through their own stories and language” (p. 6). They maintain that teachers engaging in narrative inquiry are in fact theorizing about their own practice. This theorizing is not linear in nature but “reflects a dynamic interplay between description, reflection, dialogue with self and others, and the implementation of alternative teaching practices” (p. 7). What needs to be done is to make the fundamental theoretical knowledge base of second language teacher education relevant to teachers’ own social contexts. In other words, enhancing common sense and building on what teachers know-in-practice (Schön, 1995).

Another book reflecting this current trend in TESOL research is *Understanding the Courses We Teach: Local Perspectives on English Language Teaching* (Murphy & Byrd, 2001). According to the subtitle, this is a volume of local perspectives on English language teaching. Murphy and Byrd envision their book as a response to

the generic discussions that have “for too long” dominated the ESOL literature. Since the 1970s, applied linguists situated in universities in the UK, USA, Australia and Canada have been producing global approaches and methods for second language teachers to consume. A major theme underlying the *Understanding* collection is, however, that “all instances of English language teaching take place within particular settings and sets of circumstances” (p. 450). The purpose of this volume is to record diverse experiences of teaching practice. The authors intend to fulfill this purpose further through a dedicated website (<http://www.gsu.edu/~wwwesl/understanding>). Teachers are encouraged to contact them for support, guidance and resources. They are hoping to help more teachers become teacher-researchers.

This is a very short sample of recently published second-language education books representing the trend of viewing the practical knowledge generated from teachers’ specific situations as scholarship. Areas that could also be cited include classroom interaction analysis (Johnson, 1995; Spada, 1994), classroom ethnography (Hornberger, 1994; van Lier, 1988), and exploratory teaching (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). The international TESOL organization also publishes several series composed primarily of articles written by practitioners, including the *Case Studies* series. The trend toward publication of teachers’ reflections on their practice continues to grow in the fields of education and TESOL. Does this work constitute scholarship?

Discussion

“New” scholarship in teacher education makes use of naturalistic and interpretive research methodologies including biography, life history, ethnography, action research and narrative inquiry. Furthermore, much of this research is being conducted by teachers as scholar-practitioners instead of external social science researchers. Reflection is central to this new scholarship of teaching. Its usefulness is that it attempts to illuminate the tacit knowledge that unreflective practitioners often cannot describe. These features of the scholarship of teaching, however, make it “inimical to the conditions of control and distance that are essential to technical rationality” (Schön, 1995, p. 34).

The continued rejection of most practitioner knowledge on the grounds that it is “nonempirical” mirrors the epistemological debate that marginalized naturalistic/qualitative research over thirty years ago (Anderson & Herr, 1999). Gaining acceptance for reflective practice as scholarship is indeed a struggle against very well-entrenched ideologies. A search of major publication in the field of education is revealing. The 1986 *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (Wittrock) contains no research compiled by practitioners. The next volume of the handbook (Richardson, 1998) has one chapter dedicated to teachers’ research; however, this chapter was not written by scholar-practitioners.

The situation is changing rapidly. Today, courses in practitioner research are being offered in many teacher education programs, an increasing number of books of teachers’ research are published every year, and refereed journals are publishing more and more practitioner research articles. There is even an international journal, the *Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly*, solely dedicated to enhancing educational leadership and change in schools and universities. In addition, the *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* was established to legitimize the scholarship of teaching at universities in the United States. At the same time as this shift in the perception of

scholarship is occurring for some in the academy, promotion and tenure committees continue to refuse to recognize teachers' research as legitimate (Anderson & Herr, 1999). The situation is reaching the point at which "some kind of showdown is imminent, reminiscent of that which occurred when qualitative research could no longer be ignored" (Anderson & Herr, p. 14).

The issues discussed in this paper find expression in our educational context at Miyazaki International College (MIC). MIC is not a research university; it is a small liberal arts university. This is an institution in which colleagues handcraft courses in interdisciplinary teams composed of specialists in ESOL, humanities, social sciences and natural science subjects. The faculty of MIC are certainly dedicated and resourceful teachers. The collaborative enterprise of team teaching brings faculty together in ways that could not occur otherwise. By breaking down the artificial divisions between faculty that are fortified in many universities, MIC faculty members enjoy unique opportunities to learn from one another. This relationship has led to ESOL "practitioners" engaging in research projects with their disciplinary colleagues. Some of the collaborative research projects have been centred in the pedagogy of the disciplinary fields. Much of the research collaboration that I am aware of between ESOL and disciplinary colleagues relate to the courses they develop and how they have dealt with specific pedagogical issues. For example, how effective is the "quick write" cooperative learning technique in sociology courses, or what are the effects of student video journals on content and language acquisition?

By recognizing that classroom research about teaching should concern all disciplines, we can see that the research stances (e.g., inside vs. outside investigators), and political differences between faculty members in most universities (e.g., power and status relations of PhD vs. MA, and subject-area teacher vs. language teacher) might not be as large as we imagine. The kind of collaborative research on teaching that many MIC faculty members engage in can help to legitimize this new scholarship. When discipline specialists and ESOL specialists research their teaching together, the rigour of scholarly training can meld with the practical realities found in teaching. These research teams have a unique opportunity to work toward supplying new definitions of "rigour" for the scholarship of teaching.

The recent decision by the journal editorial board to do away with the division between reflective teaching articles and other articles is a very positive step. However, the pre-conception that writing a reflective piece on teaching practice has less value than a "research article" is prevalent on our campus too. I was recently asked by a colleague whether the now defunct *Reflections* section of this journal was only open to submissions from language teachers; others have said that reflections should be confined to short narrative articles only. While these views may not be widely held at MIC, they do represent further evidence that the effort to legitimize teachers' research and the scholarship of teaching is a long-term struggle to change prevailing attitudes in higher education. We have an opportunity to embrace the emerging epistemology of the new scholarship on teaching in *Comparative Culture*, and to work toward legitimizing it, at least in our small academic community.

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