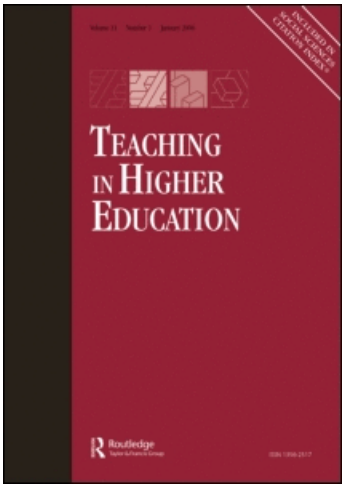

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Service as collaboration: an integrated process in teaching and research. A response to Greenbank

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This article is a response to Greenbank's (2006) *The academic's role: the need for a re-evaluation?* It is also a contribution to the ongoing debate about the need to develop a broader view of scholarship and the different activities related to it such as 'teaching', 'research' and 'service to the community'. Arguments related to current research are presented to enhance a deeper understanding and more nuanced definition of 'service', which has been perceived by many academics as a confusing term that lacks professional status. 'Collaboration' is a better term for describing the interactivity between universities and the community, implying collaboration with practitioners. A holistic view of scholarship is suggested, where the integration of collaboration, teaching and research is seen as an interdependent whole instead of a hierarchy of functions.

Introduction

There is an ongoing debate in the United States and Europe about the need to develop a broader view of academic scholarship and the different activities associated with it, including 'service to the community' (Boyer, 1990; Rice, 1992; Rice & Richlin, 1993; Paulsen & Feldman, 1995; Knight, 2002; Macfarlane, 2005; Greenbank, 2006). In a recent point for debate article in this Journal, Greenbank (2006) draws upon the work of Boyer (1990) and argues '... for a broader definition of research, a greater recognition of the role of service — and the integration of teaching, research and service as interconnected scholarly activities' (p. 109). He also presents a model of this interconnectivity, and draws conclusions from his own experiences from research on small firms and as a business mentor for the Prince's Trust. This view of re-evaluating the academic's role is welcomed and much needed in higher education in Europe and the United States, where the dominant approach is to focus on research, teaching and service as separate units (Boyer, 1990). Greenbank (2006) discusses teaching and research thoroughly and the relationship between the two, but does not focus on service in the same comprehensive manner. Unfortunately, he also limits his model by simply exchanging the positions of

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research and teaching, which makes it similar to the restricted traditional view in that it creates a new 'hierarchy of functions' (see Boyer, 1990).

In this response to Greenbank's (2006) debate article, I first provide a historical background of the concept of service and the confusion connected to it as well as its low status. Then I argue for a more nuanced definition of service activities, one better referred to as 'collaboration', which more clearly reflects its contents. I also argue for the need of a new epistemology that includes the practical interests of research activities. Finally, I discuss a holistic view of scholarly activities in which teaching, research and service/collaboration are seen as an 'interdependent whole' (Boyer, 1990). Like Greenbank, I base my conclusions on personal experience as an educator and self-employed entrepreneur of 20 years, and on my research involving collaboration activities of universities in Sweden. This research describes the learning that takes place in the interaction between academics and practitioners and how this influences teaching and research (Karlsson & Booth, 2006; Karlsson, Booth & Odenrick, in press).

Why keep 'service' — a fuzzy and tenacious term nobody likes?

The role of 'service' has its roots in the American university tradition from the mid-nineteenth century, a period when many academics supported the revolutionary and rapid developments in manufacturing and agriculture. Land grant universities were established, composed of academics applying their research to practical problems, instead of as in the earlier tradition where universities were primarily devoted to the intellectual and moral development of students (Boyer, 1990). In the United States there is still a tradition of universities consciously and successfully developing collaborative relationships with their communities. The industrial dynamics of Silicon Valley and the Bay Area in California are made up of interactive relationships between universities, such as Stanford and Berkeley, and business enterprises in the vicinity (Brulin, 1998b). In spite of this successful American tradition, Boyer argued beginning in the 1990s, 'Colleges and universities have recently rejected service as serious scholarship, partly because its meaning is so vague and often disconnected from serious intellectual work' (1990, p. 22). Fifteen years later, there is still substantial confusion among academics about what 'service' really is. A recent study by Macfarlane (2005) of the academic staffs from universities in the UK, North America, Australia, Canada and southern Europe resulted in five different interpretations of service: administration, customer service, collegial virtue, civic duty, and integrated learning carried out by students, not academic staff. A general conclusion was that service is not regarded as something that gives professional credit: 'There was a keen awareness among academics that service work suffers both a lack of status and, further, "won't get you tenure, promotion or a pay rise"' (p. 173).

Greenbank's article does not comment on the prevailing confusion and existing negative attitudes among academics about what service is and what it can be used

for. These problems need to be taken into account when discussing the 'integration of teaching, research and service as interconnected scholarly activities' (Greenbank, 2006). If not, the neglect will only add to the confusion. Similar difficulties with conceptions, attitudes and lack of status about service can be found in Swedish universities, in spite of the Swedish legislation on university activities governing service and practice-oriented engagement with the community, referred to as the 'third task' (Regeringens Proposition 1996/97:5). When the law was passed in the late 1990s, it encountered resistance from the academic establishment (Brulin, 1998a). Today, most Swedish universities and colleges espouse the third task in policy, but do not often realise it in practice, or in support of academics who try to establish such activities (Tydén & Axelsson, 1998; Tydén, 2005).

My basic critique of Greenbank's model (p. 109) is that *shifting* the emphasis from research to teaching does not benefit 'the interconnection of scholarly activities'. Greenbank argues: 'The model also deliberately places teaching in the apex of the triangulation of academics' roles [teaching, research and service] in order to emphasise the priority that should be given to teaching' (p. 109). This only creates a new 'hierarchy of functions' (see Boyer, 1990). What is needed is a more holistic view of the scholarly activities of teaching, research and service, where none is emphasised more than the other, and where all are seen as an 'integrated whole' (ibid.). Therefore, a more nuanced definition of 'service' is required which includes the creation of new knowledge through 'interactivity' with practitioners.

What happens to teaching and research when academics choose interactivity?

A definition of service from the literature in recent years distinguishes between *contributions within the institution*s such as administrative tasks, peer review, participation in committees and *contributions to the community* such as consulting, public speaking, seminars for laypersons, or providing expert witness (Paulsen & Feldman, 1995; Knight, 2002; Macfarlane, 2005; Greenbank 2006). These activities are often regarded as 'contributions' or 'a way to serve', implying a one-directedness from the expert/academic to the layperson. I would like to argue for a more nuanced definition of service that is close to Boyer's (1990):

> 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. Such service is serious, demanding work, requiring the rigor — and the accountability — traditionally associated with research activities ... theory and practice vitally interact, and one renews the other. (Boyer, 1990, pp. 22–23)

In this activity, the professional process of application is dynamic and *interactive*. Theory and practice interact and are not in a traditional hierarchical relationship (where research and theory are considered superior) but are, instead, complementary and mutually enriching (Rice & Richlin, 1993). A recent study indicated that transdisciplinary interactivity with practitioners creates a learning context for all

parties that demands learning and the creation of new knowledge, which is both useful and general. Engaging in this type of learning process is valuable and enriching for the academics' learning, professional growth and competence as well as research and teaching (Karlsson & Booth, 2006). Here, the academics' *teaching* benefits from the interactivity and from their own learning: '... good teaching means that ... scho- scholars are also learners' (Boyer, 1990, p. 24). This agrees with Greenbank's (2006) view of service to the community that provides opportunities for academics' 'learning and professional development' (p. 110).

Karlsson and Booth (2006) also state that service is a 'collaborative activity' between universities and the vicinity. This '... implies a new form of knowledge, viz., knowledge generated in interactive collaboration with practitioners' (Brulin, 1998a, p. 1). Here, academics are interested in developing knowledge *together* with practitioners that is of practical interest and relevance (Norbäck, Olsson & Odenrick, 2006). Thus, a more nuanced definition of 'service' includes this interactivity in knowledge production and is better referred to as 'collaboration' to avoid the implication of one-directedness.

This calls for a new way of looking at knowledge which is generated through the academics' 'special field of knowledge' (Boyer, 1990). A new epistemological view is needed according to Brulin (1998b) and Barnett (2000). The practical interests of research activities are becoming increasingly important, at least against the background of demands of society (Barnett, 2000). 'The academy's epistemologies were always social in character; now, they are also becoming practical in character too' (p. 37). These new epistemologies are shifting from being contemplative to being more pragmatic in nature today (ibid.).

The end of the ivory tower era and the beginning of a holistic view of scholarship

There is a great need for universities to integrate their activities and to open up their traditional boundaries and engage more in society's practical demands and in contexts of application (Boyer, 1990; Gibbons *et al.*, 1994; Barnett, 2000). The era of the university as an 'ivory tower' is over (Barnett, 2000). Greenbank strikes precisely the right note in his conclusion by exemplifying this type of *integration* from his experience as a lecturer in management, in his research on small firms and as a business mentor, and how these activities have complemented each other:

> These activities have complemented each other—my research improving the quality of my mentoring to young entrepreneurs, whilst the work with the Prince's Trust provides me with insights into small business owner-management that are helpful to my research. Both these activities have also been useful to the teaching I undertake on a small business module. In addition, teaching has informed my research and service activities. For example, in order to effectively communicate my research to students, my findings have to be clearly conceptualised in my own mind. (Greenbank, 2006, p. 110)

This is an excellent example of how *interactivity* results in 'holistic approaches to learning' (Svensson, 1997) for the academic, both on practical and intellectual levels in collaboration activities. The new knowledge that is generated is *integrated* with research and teaching into an '*interdependent whole*' (see Boyer, 1990). No hierarchical relationships exist in which teaching needs to be prioritised over research and service, as in Greenbank's model. Instead, they are all complementary and mutually enriching.

Greenbank's point in prioritising teaching is that: '... with considerable research funds at stake, the research elite are unlikely to prioritise teaching over research' and therefore he wishes: '... a more inclusive definition of research ... that contributes to teaching (and service) and may not necessarily result in academic publications, which may be avoided by academics who do not regard this type of research as career enhancing' (Greenbank, 2006, p. 110).

In my opinion, policy-makers, politicians, research institutes, university managers and institutions need to support collaboration, research and teaching as an interdependent whole (see Boyer, 1990). Therefore, it is better to allocate funds that support research and collaboration activities and teaching all together, which is a more holistic view of scholarship that can spur academic interest and improve the status of collaboration and teaching. In one study I conducted, academics engaged in collaboration activities related that a major professional problem was that they could not use their experiences, competence and expertise from these activities as qualifications for tenure and promotion, since most developmental projects are directed towards business improvement and do not allocate funds for research and time for academic writing (Karlsson, Booth & Odenrick, in press). Other studies also indicate that collaboration activities are not career enhancing for the academics involved (Macfarlane, 2005; Tydén, 2005). On this point, I disagree with Greenbank's suggestion of creating a more inclusive definition of research with activities that would be avoided by some academics, that would only contribute to teaching and service, and that would not necessarily result in academic publications. This would undermine the opportunities for academic career enhancement even more than is already taking place, and would not support the integration of collaboration, teaching and research in a holistic manner. Therefore I advocate academic publication of research that is inclusive of service/collaboration activities, research, teaching and their interconnectedness.

Conclusion

Greenbank's article (2006) is an important contribution to the debate of a broader view of scholarship and I agree with his request for a '... a greater recognition of the role of service — and the integration of teaching, research and service as interconnected scholarly activities' (p. 111). But I also argue for a deeper understanding and more nuanced definition of 'service', which has been perceived by many academics as confusing and lacking in status. 'Collaboration' is a better term for

activities involving universities and the community and implies 'knowledge generated in interactivity collaboration with practitioners' (Brulin, 1998a). This calls for a new epistemological view that includes the practical interests of research activities constituted by the demands of society (Brulin, 1998a; Barnett, 2000).

I disagree with Greenbank's model (p. 109) in the way that teaching is prioritised over research and service/collaboration. This will not broaden the view of scholarship and will only reduce it to a new 'hierarchy of functions' (Boyer, 1990) by trading teaching for research. It would be more useful to structurally and financially support the learning and interactive knowledge production processes that take place when academics earnestly engage in collaboration activities that relate to their teaching and research. This is a more holistic view, which can also affect student learning and improve their job opportunities.

In one study, academics engaged in collaboration with small and medium-sized enterprises related how their insights from research and development projects on the complexity, practical reality and conditions these companies operate under were used in relation to the theories discussed with students. They also arranged traineeships for students through their business networks, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and personal experience of the current situation as it relates to the students' future working lives (Karlsson, Booth & Odenrick, in press). This shows both the result of 'holistic approaches to learning' (Svensson, 1997) and an important aspect of a pragmatic academic role in a time when people with good academic training are facing high unemployment (Alvesson, 2006). Likewise, it is an example of how society's practical demands can be met by a new academic epistemological and holistic view, which can open up possibilities for academics' research funding: 'Research monies become available because of the potential *practical* yield from the new site of epistemological interest' (Barnett, 2000, p. 37). By acknowledging and supporting different academic roles in a holistic way, integration can take place where collaboration, research and teaching together reach their true status, and potential, and '... dynamically interact, forming an interdependent whole' (Boyer, 1990, p. 25).

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