

Introduction to Educational Scholarship

Excerpted from “Educational Scholarship Guides”

Available at www.aamc.org

What is Educational Scholarship?

Educational scholarship refers to any material, product or resource originally developed to fulfill a specific educational purpose that has been successfully peer-reviewed and is subsequently made public through appropriate dissemination for use by others.

The History of Educational Scholarship:

In 1990, Ernest Boyer, then President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, called for a radical realignment of emphasis among the scholarly functions that make up the full scope of academic work. He argued that the term “scholarship” correctly applies to four domains¹, or areas of academic endeavor. They are:

1. The scholarship of **discovery**, which is consistent with traditional research;
2. The scholarship of **integration**, which makes connections across disciplines and places specialties in a larger context;
3. The scholarship of **application**, which demonstrates the vital interaction between research and practice, wherein the one continuously informs the other; and
4. The scholarship of **teaching** (educational scholarship), which emphasizes the creation of new knowledge about teaching and learning in the presence of learners.

By 1992 several medical schools had signaled their acceptance of the validity of educational scholarship by encouraging faculty members to provide evidence of their educational work in portfolio-like documents used in conjunction with teacher recognition.² As of 2000, at least half of all medical schools affirmed the value of their faculty’s educational activities, with many schools providing detailed advice to faculty members as they assembled their best educational materials for promotion packets.³

Scholarship Defined:

Once the concept of scholarship was expanded, a new concern quickly arose regarding how one could determine if work done in a domain other than discovery/research was suitable to be called scholarship. Building on Boyer’s work, Glassick, Huber and Maeroff⁴ identified six characteristics that all works of scholarship, including educational scholarship, have in common. They are:

1. **Clear goals** – the educator explicitly states the basic purposes for the work, and defines realistic, achievable objectives, including desired goals and outcomes.
2. **Adequate preparation** – the educator shows an understanding of existing scholarship relevant to the endeavor and has skills and resources drawn from this research and from prior experience to advance the project.

3. **Appropriate methods** – in conjunction with the material and the context, the educator chooses, applies and, if necessary, modifies methods wisely.
4. **Significant results** – the educator achieves the goals, and contributes notably to the field in a manner that invites further exploration.
5. **Effective presentation** – the educator uses a suitable style and organization to present the work with clarity and integrity in appropriate forums to reach the intended audience.
6. **Reflective critique** – the educator thoughtfully assesses the work him/herself and uses the resulting perceptions, along with reviews and critique from others, to refine, enhance or expand the original concept.

Peer Review and Dissemination:

The expansion of the concept of scholarship to include other kinds of academic work besides traditional research and the widespread acceptance of Glassick's six criteria for scholarship only compliments the roles that peer review and dissemination continue to play in all higher education, including health education. Peer review has always been a systematic evaluation tool in assessing research and now, given Glassick's criteria, peer reviewers are readily able to judge whether work in any domain meets the quality and standards of scholarship in the academic community.⁵

In addition to traditional forums of disseminating scholarship (for example, journals) a number of new venues are available to support peer review and dissemination in health education across the country. Faculty members may submit educational products such as syllabi, videotapes, e-learning courses, PBL cases, OSCE tools among others for peer review. As suggested above, these products are reviewed using a peer review process that closely parallels that which journals use, with standards for acceptance consistent with Glassick's established criteria for scholarship. Rather than publishing in a journal these products are published in educational repositories.

The advent of online publishing venues has increased the ability for health educators to offer their work for peer review and dissemination without diminishing the intellectual rigor long associated with such a process. Moreover, the impact factor (e.g. breadth and size and type of audience) associated with the new repositories should be judged as with any traditional form of dissemination.

In summary, educational scholarship has emerged as a valid domain in which health educators may produce meaningful work suitable for rigorous peer review using processes and criteria that parallel traditional academic models. Furthermore, the peer-reviewed and disseminated products of educational scholarship can rightly be counted as evidence of scholarly worth in academic promotion decisions.

1 Boyer EL. *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities for the Professoriate* 1990; The Carnegie Foundation the Advancement of Teaching: Princeton, NJ.

2 Simpson DE, Hafler J, Brown D, Wilkerson L. Documentation Systems for Educators Seeking Academic

Promotion in U.S. Medical Schools. *Acad Med.* 2004; 79(8): 783-90.

3 Hafler JP, Lovejoy FH Jr. Scholarly Activities Recorded in the Portfolios of Teacher-Clinician Faculty. *Acad*

Med. 2000; 75(6): 649-52.

4 Glassick CE, Huber MR, Maeroff GI. *Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate.* 1997; San

Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

5 Shapiro ED, Coleman DL. The Scholarship of Application. *Acad Med.* 2000; 75(9): 895-8.

How do Promotion and Tenure Committees view educational works – as distinct from works of research – that are published?

As early as 1992 several medical schools were encouraging their faculty members to provide evidence of their educational work in portfolio-like documents that could be sources of teacher recognition.¹ As of 2000, at least half of all medical schools showed evidence that they valued the educational activities of their faculty with an emphasis on peer review and dissemination, with many schools providing detailed advice about how faculty members could assemble their best educational materials for promotion packets.²

1 Simpson DE, Hafler J, Brown D, Wilkerson L. Documentation Systems for Educators Seeking Academic

Promotion in U.S. Medical and dental Schools. *Acad Med.* 2004;79(8):783-90.

2 Hafler JP, Lovejoy FH Jr. Scholarly Activities Recorded in the Portfolios of Teacher-Clinician Faculty. *Acad Med.* 2000; 75(6):649-52. Revised