

# Professor of Teaching: The Quest for Equity and Parity

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## Abstract

Emerging from the contested site of a new university campus, this article reflects on the transformative process of reconceptualizing and rebuilding a professional and an academic stream in a 21st-century Faculty of Education. In order to maximize her own capital, an assistant professor sought tenure in an innovative new stream introduced to her campus, professor of teaching. The novel rank reflected the commitment of the university to provide educational leadership, outstanding teaching, and curriculum innovation to higher education. However, guidelines for promotion to professor were not directive and exhaustive but more suggestive of being situated in place-based environments. Within the context of a market driven and policy-laden post-secondary institution, this was problematic. Since evidence supporting promotion to full professor is dependent on the discipline and the faculty, a myriad of interpretations of what exactly constituted a professor of teaching emerged. Based on the ambiguity of these policies, the discussion surrounding the experiences of *otherness and marginalization* which arose as this scholar-practitioner focused on her work as a teacher educator and a researcher in an emerging rank became of singular interest.

*Keywords:* professor of teaching, higher education, tenure, promotion, research, marginalization

## Résumé

Tirant sa source du site contesté d'un nouveau campus universitaire, cet article propose une réflexion sur le processus de transformation lié à la reconceptualisation et à la refonte d'un volet professionnel et universitaire au sein d'une Faculté d'éducation du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle. En vue de maximiser son propre capital, une professeure adjointe a cherché à obtenir sa permanence dans un volet novateur introduit dans son campus, celui de « *professor of teaching* », un nouveau niveau de poste reflétant la volonté de l'université de promouvoir le leadership en éducation, l'excellence dans l'enseignement et l'innovation en matière de curriculum au postsecondaire. Toutefois, au lieu d'être directifs et exhaustifs, les critères à remplir pour accéder à ce niveau de poste étaient plutôt de nature suggestive et fondées sur le milieu. Dans le contexte d'un établissement postsecondaire axé sur le marché et ancré dans des politiques, cela posait un problème. Comme les données venant appuyer la promotion au poste de professeur titulaire dépendent de la discipline et de la faculté, une foule d'interprétations de ce qui constitue exactement un « *professor of teaching* » a surgi. Étant donné l'ambiguïté de ces politiques, la discussion entourant les expériences d'*altérité* et de *marginalisation* qui est survenue lorsque cette universitaire-praticienne a concentré son attention sur son travail comme professeure de pédagogie et comme chercheuse dans un nouveau niveau de poste s'est avérée particulièrement intéressante.

*Mots-clés* : *professor of teaching*, enseignement supérieur, permanence, promotion, recherche, marginalisation

## Introduction

This essay reflects on the impact of the transformative process of reconceptualizing the scholarship of teaching and learning in a professional and an academic stream in a 21st-century Faculty of Education. Specifically, this discussion will focus on my experiences as a tenure-track faculty member who was hired into a newly founded, research-intense university at a time when the campus did not possess resources and parameters for conceptualizing, supporting, and developing inquiry-based explorations. In order to maximize my own capital as an assistant professor, I sought tenure in an innovative new rank introduced to the campus, professor of teaching. The novel rank reflected the commitment of the university to endorse teaching as an ongoing and scholarly process, to provide educational leadership, and to promote curriculum innovation in higher education. Despite the fact that outstanding achievement was required in this new stream, guidelines for tenure and promotion to professor were not directive and exhaustive but more so suggestive and situated in place-based environments relating to educational leadership, teaching, curriculum development and pedagogical innovation, and service. While the criteria are carefully enumerated in a five-page document entitled “Guidelines for Promotion to Professor of Teaching” (UBC Human Resources, 2011), there has been little to no experience in interpreting and applying those measures. Within the context of a market-driven and policy-laden postsecondary institution, this was problematic. Since evidence supporting promotion to full professor is dependent on the discipline and the faculty, a myriad of interpretations of what exactly constituted a professor of teaching emerged. Of note is the fact that the provision of evidence to support outstanding contributions in the field of teaching and learning was necessary to attain the highest academic rank for this stream, as was the verification of recognition and impact beyond the university at national and international levels.

Confronted with the inherent complexities and indistinctness of this new rank, this analysis examines how working in the area of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) affects personal, professional, and academic integrity and identity. This narrative details how I, as a scholar in a Faculty of Education, struggled to comprehend and to conceptualize the practical application of the academy’s educational formative mission: to develop intellectual and cultural resources to prepare ourselves and our students for lives of significance and responsibility (Sullivan & Rosin, 2008).

Within this context, this chronicle posits that university educators, as committed agents of change, should be advocating for practices that benefit society at large as well as emergent transformative scholarly cultures in academia in order to build just, inclusive, democratic communities. Historically, Faculties of Education have suffered the brunt of marginalization and focused biases relating to the perceived lesser quality of research such as poor conceptualizations and definitional problems done in professional contexts (Pajares, 1992). As an evolving position, the professor of teaching validates and acknowledges the importance of the scholarship of teaching and learning at a micro-level in Faculties of Education, and at a macro-level across the university campus (Boyer, 1990; Shreeve, 2011). Since criteria related to promotion in the professor of teaching stream is adaptable and amenable to diverse interdisciplinary contexts, career progression in this position has the potential to provide consistency and adherence in teaching and in scholarly inquiry, not only in Faculties of Education but also across the campus, acknowledging the primary pedagogical mandate of all universities.

Higher education faculties, particularly Faculties of Education, can be forums where university educators practice institutional, cultural, political, intellectual, and pedagogical innovations by modelling paradigms which deconstruct the reproduction of meanings of individual success, competitiveness, egotistic desires, sexism, and racism that emerge out of normative ideology and worldviews. On the part of the modern, contemporary professor of teaching, this requires evidence of outstanding teaching, critically creative consciousness, curricular innovation, and distinction in educational leadership at the local, national, and international levels.

In keeping with the above and in particular with Peters, Alter, and Scharwtzbach's (2010) normative positions about the roles and contributions of academic professionals, this essay also investigates the schism between teaching and research as well as the influences that shape an academic's role and practice. In order to infuse objectivity into the discussion, critical pedagogy provided the means and the methods to facilitate reflection upon equity and parity in educational settings.

## **Critical Pedagogy**

Taking its roots in Western Marxist philosophy and postmodern ideals of emancipation and liberatory approaches to teaching and learning, critical pedagogy provides a forum in which to reflect on, identify, and question dominant ideology (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Kanpol, 1999; Kanpol & McLaren, 1995; Ragoonaden, 2014a). By recognizing that public institutions covet the reproduction of the economic, political, social, and cultural mores of a dominant worldview, educators can develop awareness of the lack of opportunities available to those *other, hidden* voices that populate their classrooms. In the same vein, it is important to critically reflect on the challenges faced by scholar practitioners progressing toward intellectual autonomy and emancipation from the traditional research university status quo. Within the confines of a university culture, those of us in the teaching stream have unwittingly adopted the mantle of *otherness* and *marginalization*.

### **Reconceptualizing an Academic Pathway: A Personal Perspective**

As I progressed through my tenure-track position as an assistant professor in a Faculty of Education in a new institution, I quickly realized that the criteria in this highly competitive and self-positioning process were ambiguous and not clearly defined. Despite promises to the contrary, the progression from a university college to a research-intensive university was not being considered in tenure and promotion applications. As a result, colleagues' tenure applications were being delayed and, in some cases, denied. Adding to this lack of continuity, cohesion, and transparency, over the course of seven years, the Faculty of Education had seen three deans and their respective associate deans come and go through a series of upheavals and resignations. As I approached the end of my tenure clock, this was cause for much consternation. Who exactly possessed the necessary qualifications to shepherd my dossier through the tenure and promotion process? Who could truly understand the complexities of an environment that had just transitioned from a university college to a research intensive university? Rapid program and curriculum developments, heavy teaching loads at the undergraduate and graduate levels, high numbers of graduate students, and unrelenting committee work and service were all causes for concern.

Historically, the purpose of tenure at European universities during the Middle Ages was to protect a scholarly culture where teaching and writing could proceed without reprisals from dominant powers. In contexts where university colleges are rapidly transformed into research intensive universities, the reality of tenure and promotion is fraught with strife: questions surrounding the quality of research; productive faculty straining under the combined pressures of research, teaching, and service; faculty focusing on research and neglecting teaching and service; tenured teaching faculty abandoning early scholarly ambitions, making no contributions to scholarship nor to the mentorship of junior colleagues; and contentious relationships with corporate partners (Côté & Allahar, 2007; Emberley, 1996). Striving for survival, most untenured voices at emergent research-intensive universities dare not question the reigning regime of faculty, grandfathered in from a university college, struggling to mentor junior faculty through the complications of peer-reviewed publications, Tri-Council funding, and graduate level supervision.

Boyer (1990) states that the work of a professor is, unequivocally, the scholarship of teaching and learning. The former president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching perceived the traditional definition of scholarship to be restrictive and prohibitive. He identified the four domains of scholarship as discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Acknowledging the importance of reflecting analytically on knowledge about teaching and learning, Boyer (1990) suggests that scholars must respect the fact that knowledge is not only acquired through research but also through synthesis, through practice, and through teaching (p. 24). In fact, he postulated that scholarship should be conceived as a juxtaposition of both teaching and research where engaged scholars apply and disseminate knowledge to academia and to society at large through an informed practice. If scholarship is not reconsidered in this manner, Boyer warns that the academic culture will lose sight of what it means to view teaching as a scholarship. Yet, despite this caution from a renowned scholar, tertiary institutions have placed increased emphasis on research productivity as a concrete measure of scholarship. Is this the scenario being played out in the professor of teaching stream, with teaching faculty being stripped of their scholarship and being coerced into technical, automated pedagogical roles?

Much as I recognized that the criteria defined in the rank of professor of teaching clearly aligned with the scholarship being done in a Faculty of Education, the “Guidelines

for Promotion to Professor of Teaching” (UBC Human Resources, 2011) clearly stated that:

The Professor of Teaching rank *does not require achievement in the scholarship of teaching and learning* [emphasis added] but scholarship of teaching and learning and its application can be used as evidence of educational innovation and teaching excellence. (p. 2)

To further clarify this pathway the university produced specific examples of educational leadership, excellence in teaching, and curricular innovations found in this succinct five-page document. In fact, by all indications, the professor of teaching, considered to be the highest academic rank for the teaching stream, was designed to mirror the position of the research professor. Yet the rich, historical tradition of the scholarship of teaching and learning was not necessarily a requirement.

## **Deskilling in a Faculty of Education**

Seeking and attaining tenure in a rank which did not necessarily recognize the validity of SoTL in its career progression, I began my slow march away from a research-oriented stream toward a teaching stream. Yet, despite the ambiguity surrounding SoTL, I sought to make a difference; however, before I embarked on this journey, in my own professional life as an assistant professor, subtle signs of change, particularly demotion, were becoming present. To begin with, I was granted tenure not as associate professor but as a senior instructor. Funding relating to conference presentations was refuted, graduate students were removed from my supervision, and participation in important departmental committees like tenure and promotion was denied. When I questioned and interrogated these policies, I was met with condescension and indifference. Senior administrators imperceptibly implied that faculty in the professor of teaching stream, known as instructors and senior instructors, did not possess the necessary qualifications to discuss and to disseminate new knowledge relating to the scholarship of teaching and learning, nor to make grounded, objective judgements relating to colleagues’ research dossiers in the tenure and promotion process. Time and time again, I was met with a scalding rhetoric about my place and position as a teaching faculty member both within the Faculty of Education

and in the campus-wide community. Through the steady devaluation of my academic identity, the attempt to muzzle my questions, and the abrupt dismissal of my concerns, I recognized the deskilling that was permeating my academic environment.

Taken from 19th-century industry, Kincheloe (2004) explains the similarity between the phenomenon of deskilling the industrialized worker and deskilling an educator. Like an industrialized, mechanized task, a teaching practice can be reduced to an automated, technocratic, bland output mandated by set rules (curricula) and regulations (educational outcomes). Kanpol (1993) emphasizes the critical need to address the deskilling of educators by removing oppressive, alienating, and subordinating educational conditions by reconceptualizing the curriculum through socially negotiated value frameworks related to race, class, and gender.

Contrary to the established criteria for promotion in the Guidelines, interpretations made by senior administration positioned a professor of teaching solely in a technical, regulated teaching context and ignored the necessity of keeping abreast of current pedagogical developments and establishing a nationwide reputation. Within this bureaucratic environment, systematic analysis of praxis resulting in research was neither encouraged nor funded. In this instance, the lack of analytical consciousness being promoted by senior administration was impeding the progression of creative, critically infused innovative pedagogy. Reflective and inquiry-based teaching became secondary since teaching intentionally occupied 80% of a teaching professor's workload. This translates to 24 teaching credits spaced out over the four terms of an academic year. Within the context of a scholarly culture, this left no time to interrogate, explore, and create innovative pedagogical paradigms representative of the academy's educational formative mission (Sullivan & Rosin, 2008).

One of the aims of critical pedagogy is to empower the voices of educators who, through systematic bureaucratic impositions, have lost their ability to critically assess information and tasks prescribed by the pedagogical hierarchy (Kanpol & McLaren, 1995; Kincheloe, 2004). Developing critical consciousness in a methodic and calculated manner is necessary to counter hegemonic, traditional stances related to pedagogical applications. In higher education, researchers acknowledge that when critical reflection is missing from teacher education programs, teacher candidates adopt a technocratic rational approach in the classroom, unaware of the effect of the pedagogical and moral consequences of their actions (Bartolomé, 2004, 2008; Brown, 2005). Due to this fact,



it is vitally important that scholar practitioners, like faculty in the professor of teaching stream, be required to critique all aspects of their work through conference presentations, peer-review publications, and inquiry-based initiatives focusing on the scholarship of teaching and learning. This type of rational consciousness involves interrogating the multiple, complex interpretations of pedagogy while interrupting mainstream ideological discourses that reinforce the reproduction of normative curricular and assessment practices. Educators who demonstrate critical consciousness can then begin to question their own positions, assumptions, and beliefs about themselves and others, thus leading the way toward transformative praxis making an impact on antiquated university policy and practice. In theory, the educational leadership and curricular innovation espoused by the professor of teaching rank should have been promoting analytical reflection leading to processes of transformative praxis. In this stream, however, access to criticality was being denied due to institutional policies disallowing funding for travel, the dissolution of supervisory duties at the graduate level, and participation on tenure and promotion committees. These were contrary stances to conceptualizations of SoTL espoused by Boyer (1990) and critical pedagogues alike (Kanpol, 1993; Kanpol & McLaren, 1995; Kinchloe, 2004).

## **Recognizing Academic Culture and Self-Knowledge**

As I progressed through my academic career as a senior instructor in the professor of teaching stream, I continued my teaching, place-based research, and service focusing on culturally relevant pedagogy in hegemonic, mainstream contexts. Through my writing, I came to understand the multilayered parallels that existed between my academic work and my career progression. The sense of alienation and marginalization that I felt when I participated, without the right to vote, at committee meetings; the surprise of finding out that my rank, as senior instructor, did not exist in the complex web of internal funding as well as Tri-Council funding (I had to indicate that I was *other*); and hearing my concerns being hushed and passed over at public forums with the faculty association and at town hall meetings with senior administration added another deep level of confusion and ambiguity to my position within the academic culture. Despite my ability to secure funding, to publish books and peer-reviewed articles, to present my papers at local, provincial,

national, and international well-regarded conferences (Ragoonaden, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c), I was told subtly and not so subtly that this type of academic work was not necessary in the professor of teaching stream. I was shocked. My endless years of graduate work were, in essence, a training exercise in academic writing, scholarly research, and the chase of Tri-Council funding. I came back to critical pedagogy to reflect on how to counter this hegemonic, hierarchical approach to teaching and learning. How do I move away from this obvious deskilling toward a reskilling, reaffirmation, and validation of faculty mired in the professor of teaching stream? Furthermore, a broader consideration arose: considering the challenges of my own quest for equity and parity in a teaching stream in postsecondary, how exactly were Faculties of Education, whose *raison d'être* revolved around teaching and learning, being positioned by senior administrators and academic peers in tertiary institutions? By choosing to be tenured into the professor of teaching rank, I had been positioned into a minority, marginalized career path. Having chosen an academic path focusing on teaching, I had inadvertently ventured into a subordinate stream where I was gradually being deskilled and pulled away from my own critical consciousness and research initiatives.

As indicated, coupled with a substantial teaching load, access to the cultural capital and habitus of university life was withdrawn: internal funding, graduate supervision, and participation in tenure and promotion committees. The act of reskilling deskilled teachers begins with the development of critical awareness and actions that foster change and progress. In higher education, this critical awareness is developed through local, national, and international conference presentations, and peer-reviewed publications (Shreeve, 2011; Trigwell, Martin, Benjamin, & Prosser, 2000; Trowler, 2005). By negating opportunities for funding, supervisory duties, and participation on important committees, the hierarchical, conservative university culture was, in effect, removing any potential or ability to develop national and international recognition, a necessary prerequisite for promotion. It was, in fact, attempting to industrialize and to deprofessionalize teaching faculty. I was being directed to distribute knowledge in an efficient manner without question or discussion. In the professor of teaching stream, exploration, criticality, and creativity were not being promoted.

Acknowledging that Dewey (1938) called for teachers to engage in reflective action and that Schön (1983) depicted professional practice as a cognitive process of posing and exploring questions relating to pedagogy, the mandates laid out in the professor of

teaching stream seem to directly contradict the epistemological traditions of the SoTL. Notably, Hansen (2005) emphasizes teaching as a moral and intellectual practice positioned as an opportunity to construct meaningful experiences. By virtue of these emergent intentional experiences, creativity can arise only through the unfolding of substantive attention and responsiveness to the present moment. This is the pathway toward innovative, novel approaches leading to educational leadership, teaching, and curriculum development; all important criteria in the career progression of the professor of teaching stream.

### **Reflective Communities of Practice**

In keeping with my new career path, I recognized the changes that I had instinctively wanted to bring to my practice and now, based on my professional and academic progression, would implement. I contemplated my own practice through the lens of Bourdieu's (1977, 1991) assertion that schools legitimize the privileging of dominant discourses to the detriment of the multiplicity of alternative perspectives. Reflecting on this, I acknowledged the centrality of the concept of *practical wisdom* or *phronesis* in pedagogical contexts (Dunne, 1993). Taken from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, practical wisdom, that is, the ability to deliberate well and to make appropriate judgements, is the kind of knowledge and capacity that guides action. Dunne (2005), a neo-Aristotelian author, reflecting on the concept of *practical wisdom* in education, states that education has been lured into a technical orientation accentuating predictability and dispensing measures which aim to control (p. 377). He sees this reductionist movement in education as being a part of a larger western cultural trend to rationalize and constrain not only societal practices but also educational practices (pp. 7–8). This technocratic approach, similar to the approach taken in the professor of teaching stream, impedes practical wisdom and the emergent knowledge arising from praxis. Faced with this possibility, how would I, within dominant academic discourse, validate democratic and equitable practice for professors of teaching? Since this type of transformative work cannot occur in isolation, I realized that it would be important to develop a reflective community of practice among interdisciplinary university educators. For example, Sullivan and Rosin (2008) suggest a new agenda for higher education by shaping the mind for practice. Within the context of the professional practice of teachers, they carefully considered the role of theoretical and

professional knowledge in higher education. Recognizing the need for change in teaching and learning in postsecondary education, an interdisciplinary four-person study group was formed to discuss how liberal arts disciplines should be oriented toward careers of professional practice. Acknowledging the role of philosophy and its relationship to social understanding, this valuable initiative provided the impetus to change the campus-wide perceptions regarding the professional practice of professors.

Responding to this new agenda, Faculties of Education can spearhead campus-wide initiatives in developing and sustaining the mind for educational practice through scholarship and through signature pedagogies (Boyer, 1990; Shulman, 2004). Signature pedagogies are representative of how particular, specific types of knowledge are defined, analyzed, and recognized or not recognized. Serving as parameters to determine scholarship, signature pedagogies, when adopted by Faculties of Education, can influence the vision and design of educational programs, thereby validating the characteristic forms of teaching and learning of a profession and/or a specialization. Likewise, scholarship is representative of the sharing and application of knowledge and the engagement of scholars with students, colleagues, and communities, supported by an examination of teaching praxis. Campus-wide reflective communities of practice, positioned into inquiry-based models and sustained with contributions from interdisciplinary colleagues, can provide spaces where pedagogical practices can be carefully planned and continuously revised, curriculum can be renegotiated to be representative of the diversity of society, and knowledge can become imbued with practical wisdom.

When supported by critically conscious communities, the scholarship of teaching and learning can generate rigorous, intellectual praxis favouring the development of criticality and creativity (Hansen, 2005). By virtue of critical reflection focusing on my marginalized career path, I recognized that university identities are deeply implicated in classical European traditions that prioritize research and productivity. Innovative teaching and learning, community-based service learning experiences, cross-cultural field experiences, and collaborative initiatives between interdisciplinary professors are important initiatives to counter the existing status quo in universities.

This reflection provided a powerful mechanism to examine and discuss anachronistic campus wide policies that seek to annihilate pedagogical autonomy by subtly negating the impact of SoTL in a higher education teaching stream. Professors of teaching, as transformative scholar practitioners, possess the ability to shape and to explore the

influences of institutional benchmarks in reconceptualizing and redefining the scholarship of teaching and learning. As so many wise minds have stated (Boyer, 1990; Hansen, 2005; Kanpol, 1993; Kincheloe, 2004; Shreeve, 2011; Shulman, 2004; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008), critical, sustained reflection and engaged action in pedagogical contexts can serve as platforms to generate and share knowledge influencing educational leadership, community engagement, and contributing to the emergence of innovative practices and informed curricula. Coming back to the rough ground (Dunne, 1993), let's all sully our minds and our hearts as we unearth the dichotomy that is teaching and research in higher education.

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