

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and the Neo-Liberalization of Higher Education: Constructing the “Entrepreneurial Learner”

Laura Servage
University of Alberta

ABSTRACT

This article examines the strong interest in the scholarship of teaching that has developed since Ernest Boyer introduced the idea in 1990. Although there are many benefits to be realized from a greater emphasis on teaching in higher education, the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) “movement” has been subjected to little critical scrutiny. This work, however, proposes that SoTL is inextricably tied to the entrenchment of neo-liberalization in higher education. Marshall’s (1996) notion of “busno-power,” an extension of Foucault’s thinking on governmentality, is used to demonstrate how SoTL may be viewed as a force that shapes both instructors and students into “entrepreneurial learners” who conceptualize education primarily for its use value. The article concludes with a consideration of how this eventuality may be guarded against by using Foucault’s methods to situate SoTL socio-logically, and historically.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article, l’auteur examine le grand intérêt s’étant développé envers l’« érudition de l’enseignement » depuis qu’Ernest Boyer a introduit l’idée en 1990. Malgré les nombreux avantages pouvant être tirés en plaçant un plus grand emphase sur l’enseignement en éducation supérieure, le mouvement de l’érudition de l’enseignement et de l’apprentissage (ÉdEA)

n'a subi que très peu de critiques. Dans cet article, l'auteur propose que l'ÉdEA est inextricablement lié à l'enracinement du néolibéralisme dans l'éducation supérieure. La notion « busnower » de Marshall, une extension de la pensée de Foucault sur le gouvernementalisme, est utilisée pour démontrer à quel point on pourrait voir l'ÉdEA comme une force unissant les instructeurs et les étudiants en tant qu'« entrepreneurs apprenants » qui conceptualisent principalement l'éducation à sa valeur utilisée. L'auteur conclut en considérant comment on peut éviter cette éventualité en utilisant la méthode de Foucault afin de situer sociologiquement et historiquement l'ÉdEA.

INTRODUCTION

A scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) “movement” is afoot in North American universities and colleges. This movement seeks to both improve pedagogy at the post-secondary level and enhance the value of effective teaching in higher education institutions (HEIs) relative to the traditional emphasis on research as the most prestigious and valued form of scholarly activity. SoTL has been actively studied, and the results disseminated, in the United States by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Bender, 2005; Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997; Huber & Hutchings, 2005). In Canada, the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) has recently adopted the advancement of SoTL as one of its four pillars, or mandates (Hughes, n.d.); in addition, the society is presently launching the *Canadian Journal for SoTL* and, since 1984, has held annual conferences focused on teaching and learning in higher education. As Hughes (n.d.) observed, although no formal, funded initiatives like those of the Carnegie Foundation have occurred within Canada, the SoTL movement has grown in a “grassroots” fashion, on a campus-by-campus basis (p. 1). Globally, the *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* has been providing an interdisciplinary forum for post-secondary-level instructors and administrators to exchange ideas and practices since 2007.

Yet, while SoTL has attracted attention and interest, little of it has been of the critical variety (Boshier, 2009; Hanson, 2005; Kreber, 2005). Instead, the analysis has focused largely on questions of effective pedagogy and on policies and programs for enhancing the role of post-secondary teaching. In order to dig deeper than these more-instrumental treatments of SoTL, I have drawn on the work of Foucault to consider *why* a focused interest in teaching at the post-secondary level has emerged over the past 20 years. And, I am proposing that the SoTL movement in higher education, like the preceding reform movements in elementary and secondary education that were spurred by the 1983 *Nation at Risk* report in the United States, can only be fully understood and evaluated within the context of the concomitant growth and globalization of neo-liberalism since the early 1980s.

I do not, with this work, aspire or pretend to offer a full, empirical accounting of the development of SoTL as a discourse, which would be necessary to apply Foucault's genealogical approach (Scheurich & Bell McKenzie, 2005). However, I do draw upon some of Foucault's methodological principles in my treatment of this topic. Much in the spirit of a "history of the present" (Foucault in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 118), it is my wish to challenge, and in doing so denaturalize, some of the foundational assumptions of SoTL by treating it as a phenomena that has emerged under specific historical conditions. I wish to illuminate the ways in which the humanistic and progressive aspirations of improved teaching, so central to SoTL, serve in many ways to advance higher education's deepening implication in the advancement of the twin forces of neoliberal policy and flexible capitalism.

I also wish to consider how these neoliberal underpinnings come to shape the educational experiences of instructors and students. For Foucault, subjects are constituted and then governed through technologies of power (Edwards, 2008; Nicoll & Fejes, 2008). These technologies, or strategies for regulating the conduct and movement of populations within a society, vary historically, and move fluidly across and through individuals, social structures, and social institutions. They are expressed and activated through a wide range of social discourses and practices. Foucault's collective works build the case that order in modern societies has depended not on the overt exercise of centralized power, but on the willingness of populations to self-regulate and self-govern. Foucault recognized education as central to crafting both the will and ability of individuals to govern themselves (Olssen, 2006).

By applying Foucault's concept of governmentality to SoTL, the beliefs, values, and norms that loosely unify SoTL as a "movement" may be analyzed as technologies through which teachers and students become themselves and govern themselves. Norms of teaching and learning practice, such as anticipating and measuring learning outcomes, codifying both teaching and learning practices, and reflexive self-monitoring on the part of teachers and students, may be regarded as technologies that cultivate self-governing and entrepreneurial neo-liberal subjects who come to understand "learning" primarily on the basis of its performative value. This performativity, as many critics have argued, emphasizes vocationalism in higher education at the expense of liberal humanist and emancipatory aims (Boshier, 2009; Edwards, 2008; Field, 2006). Critics especially draw attention to the ways in which education, at all levels, effectively conditions individuals to take on the norms and behaviours required of subjects living and working within neo-liberal regimes (Coffield, 1999; Olssen, 2006).

I conclude with some thoughts on the importance of historically and socially situated meta-critique for SoTL. Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered*, which is widely held to mark the inauguration of SoTL, begins with a synopsis of historical changes in the nature and roles of the professoriate. It is perhaps ironic, then, that the scholarship on teaching flowing out of this original work has been so devoid of broader social and historical perspectives.

THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The publication of Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* in 1990 marked the beginning of what has proved an enduring interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning (Bender, 2005; Kreber, 2005). *Scholarship Reconsidered* reviews the history of scholarship in the United States, observing a progressive emphasis on research at the expense of undergraduate teaching, and a narrowing conceptualization of research. The four-dimensional model of scholarship proposed by Boyer, which incorporates scholarships of discovery, integration, application, and teaching, was intended as an alternative to the research, teaching, and service triumvirate, a model that, he argued, had not only failed to capture or facilitate the breadth and complexity of scholarly work but had also led teaching and research to become antagonistic competitors for scholars' time and attention. Advocates of the scholarship of teaching (later, the scholarship of teaching and learning) zeroed in on Boyer's particular critique that undergraduate teaching had suffered a continuous decline in the post-World War II era. This critique, combined with many arguments that traditional teacher-centred pedagogy is ill-suited to a more globalized, complex, and technology driven world, has underpinned teaching reform efforts in post-secondary instruction.

A review of the published literature on SoTL confirms Kreber's (2005) observation that academic study has focused largely on matters of pedagogy (e.g., Innes, 2007; Lin, 2008; Walker, Baepler, & Cohen, 2008). Other works have concerned themselves with the sorts of restructuring that must occur for SoTL to thrive in the academy (e.g., Brint, 2008; Chanok, 2007; Glassick et al., 1997), with a particular emphasis on overturning institutional-level policies and practices that act as barriers to good teaching.

The essential thrust of SoTL is similar to that proposed for teaching reform in K-12 education, namely, that teaching activities should always be focused on generating effective student learning and that individuals' teaching practices must be de-privatized and brought into a community of practice (Bender, 2005; Huber & Hutchings, 2005). A "scholarship" of teaching requires that post-secondary teaching itself (in other words, the pedagogy of post-secondary instruction) be made the object of research, inquiry, and peer review (Boyer, 1990), although, as many have observed, the exact nature of what makes SoTL "scholarly" remains unclear (Boshier, 2009; Trigwell, Martin, Benjamin, & Prosser, 2000). Kreber and Cranton (2000) distinguished three broad perspectives on the scholarship of teaching: "discovery research," which generates knowledge of effective teaching practices for scholarly peer review; "excellence in teaching," which focuses on recognizing, analyzing, and sharing what highly skilled teachers do, and finally, reflective practice – an dialectical engagement between educational theory and the experiential knowledge gained through practice.

Because much of SoTL is undertaken by those engaged directly in teaching, qualitative research methodologies, including action research and practitioner research, figure prominently. Connolly, Bouwma-Gearhart, and Clifford (2007) drew attention to the neglected similarities between SoTL and the established

bodies of theory and methodology in action research, practitioner research, and teacher research in K-12 education. However, SoTL research also includes quantitative and mixed-methods research designs. As Connolly et al. (2007) pointed out, much of what is regarded as “scholarly” research of teaching practices depends on the norms and values of the disciplinary field within which the pedagogical research is undertaken.

Pedagogy for student engagement (Abdi-Rizak, 2008), integrating instructional technologies (Lin, 2008), and evaluation and assessment of learning (Brew & Ginns, 2008) are typical topics of scholarly teaching inquiry. Other approaches examine more social and political dimensions of teaching, seeking, for example, to infuse SoTL with critical pedagogy (Gilpin & Liston, 2009). Qualitative studies may examine the more-relational aspects of teaching and learning, focusing on personal growth, authenticity, ethics, or spirituality (Lindholm & Astin, 2007).

The field of SoTL has been lively for a number of reasons. First, there can be little doubt that higher education has long suffered a dearth of discourse on effective teaching; this was an impetus for Boyer’s book (Bender, 2005). Making teaching in higher education a subject of “scholarly” attention and inquiry also lends legitimacy and status to a facet of academic work that has always resided in the long shadow of academic research, which is more prestigious and more highly rewarded in tenure reviews (Bender, 2005; Chanok, 2007; Kreber, 2005). Second, in recent years, increased competition for students has pressed universities and colleges to focus on improved teaching as part of a broader mandate to attract and satisfy student “customers” (Newman, Couturier, & Scurry, 2004); institutions that are highly dependent on tuition for revenue must go the extra distance to meet student needs (Brewer, Gates, & Goldman, 2002). Further, the growth and the increased diversity of student populations have led to a greater emphasis on teaching to meet a range of student-learning needs – particularly to support those who have traditionally been less likely to pursue higher education and less likely to succeed when they do (Boylan, 2004; Newman et al., 2004). Finally, as will be considered in further detail here, SoTL has emerged at least in part as a consequence of an expanded emphasis on assessment for accountability purposes in higher education (Brint, 2008; Hanson, 2005; Newman et al., 2004).

CONTEXTS OF THE SoTL MOVEMENT

Although the scholarship of teaching and learning has received little critical attention, some authors have expressed concern that such attention is necessary if SoTL is to foster anything more than technocratic and standardized outcomes for higher education (Hanson, 2005; Kreber, 2005; Shavelson & Huang, 2003). As Hanson (2005) noted, “In current discussions of teaching and learning, the broad sociological concept of education as a social institution is rarely, if ever included” (p. 412). A critical evaluation that incorporates this “broad sociological” conceptualization requires scrutiny of the prescriptives and normative

assumptions that guide SoTL, as well as thoughtful examination of the social, political, and material contexts within which the movement has developed. The meaning of teaching reform, which has permeated all levels of education in North America since the early 1980s, should not be taken as self-evident, particularly in that this reform movement coincides with a profound, global-scale ideological shift toward neo-liberalism, that is, the liberalization of capitalism from the state and an accompanying valorization of individualism and economic self-sufficiency.

Foucault's genealogical method may be used to account for the historical conditions contributing to the legitimization and circulation of a knowledge regime and, in turn, to analyze how this regime positions people or "subjects" in relation to one another and in relation to the institutions and ideological or "truth" apparatuses that govern, limit, or facilitate individual agency (Scheurich & Bell McKenzie, 2005). What I believe to be the most significant of these apparatuses are considered below.

Neo-liberalism

Much of the literature related to SoTL focuses on improved pedagogies and the institutional practices that best support them. However, the movement cannot be properly understood stripped from its context of the wider-scale reforms that have taken place from the 1980s to the present, reforms that have marked a turn from Keynesian economics and the welfare state to a renewed classical liberalism. Olssen (2002) summarized the tenets of classical liberalism as: a faith in the self-interested and rational individual – *homo economicus*; the superiority of the market as the most efficient means to allocate all of a society's resources; minimal government intervention in these markets; and, along with this, free trade or maximum opportunities for goods and services to flow freely among various global markets. In recent decades, under this return to classical liberal economics (i.e., neo-liberalism), government services and government-owned industries have been privatized, and individual choice in the marketplace has been reasserted as the most effective means of distributing resources.

However, as both Olssen (2006) and Harvey (2005) pointed out, neo-liberalism is distinct from laissez-faire capitalism in that the government takes an active role in nurturing and protecting markets. Further, neo-liberalism collapses the notion of political freedom into the freedom to choose and consume products and services in the marketplace. Freedom and citizenship are thus constituted in economic and individualistic terms as the ability to thrive in labour markets and in the attainment of economic goods. Extending this idea, Olssen (2002) added that under neo-liberalism, the state "seeks to create an individual who is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur" (p. 59). In other words, neo-liberalism operates not only as a set of economic practices but also as a set of distinct social values, wherein the virtuous are individualists who care for themselves and their own and ask for little or nothing from the society in which they live (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Liesner, 2006; Simons & Masschelein, 2006).

Personal responsibility for one's own life course is the guiding value for work and learning practices.

In education, as in other public or quasi-public services, neo-liberalism is expressed through "new public management" (NPM) practices that emphasize accountability, or a clear assurance that the organization is operating as efficiently and effectively as possible (Olssen, 2002). NPM, or "new managerialism," refers to both the ideology and the practices that support maximum efficiency in an organization (Deem, 2001). It includes fostering competition, both internal and external to the organization, in the interests of efficiency, as well as forms of monitoring and of appraising the organization and its workers to hold them accountable for maximum efficiency (Deem, 2001). Further, as Liesner (2006) observed, as new managerial practices come to dominate the administration of higher education institutions (HEIs), it becomes easier for them to align their cultures and interests with those of industry.

Another key component of NPM, or new managerialism, is that the contract replaces the centralized control of an operation (Olssen, 2002). Ephemeral contractual relationships therefore replace more durable ones, and work generally is rendered precarious. The precariousness of work and the resulting individualized and non-linear career paths through work and learning have been widely observed as among the most significant outcomes of neo-liberal management practices (Brown, 2006).

Lifelong Learning

One response to the issue of precarious labour has been an emphasis on the need for workers to cycle in and out of learning in order to develop, upgrade, or retool the skills and knowledge they require to adapt to a constantly changing labour market. Lifelong learning has thus been central to work and learning policy in OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries since the early 1990s (Coffield, 1999; Field, 2006; Simons & Masschelein, 2008). Developed countries consistently articulate the need for their citizens to "learn continuously" in the interests of a competitive national economy; indeed, failure to do so (along with any consequent failure to thrive in the labour market) amounts to a failure to act as a good citizen – a failure to take responsibility for oneself (Edwards, 2008; Liesner, 2006).

In higher education, lifelong learning has manifested itself in terms of the massification of higher education, an increased presence of adult learners, and a growing diversity of both accredited and non-accredited offerings (Bash, 2003; Kohl, 2000). Kohl (2000) notes, for example, the dramatic growth in postbaccalaureate certificates and accreditations, with private and for-profit HEIs driving escalating competition for mature professional students.

For Lambeir (2006), this sort of ongoing education has emphasized ephemeral processes and flows of information, in other words, "permanent training in information management" (p. 352). Liesner (2006) echoed this observation, citing Heydorn's concern that "material content is relativized, the material com-

ponents of education appear as (ever) changing film content; what is taught today is already outdated tomorrow” (Heydorn, 1972, in Liesner, 2006, p. 489); Liesner went on to argue that the absence of any greater frame of reference for this learning makes the provision of “education” almost indistinguishable from the provision of any other consumer “service.” Although it is unfair and inaccurate to so pessimistically characterize all post-secondary learning, it is also important to note that much of this learning “with expiry date” is presented as an inevitable and reasonable consequence of, or reaction to, the growth of “knowledge economies” (e.g., Gibbons et al., 1994).¹

Lifelong learning has thus been targeted by many critics for being reduced, both in rhetoric and practice, to training for work, which in turn serves the neo-liberal economic and social order (Boshier & Huang, 2008; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Field, 2006; Lambeir, 2006; Olssen, 2006). This is a far cry from the iterations of “lifelong education” in the 1960s and early 1970s that emphasized learning for human emancipation and social justice (Boshier & Huang, 2008; Field, 2006). HEIs have also been widely criticized for acquiescing to this state of affairs and readily adopting the dispositions and behaviours of profit-seeking corporations (Deem, 2001; Mount & Belanger, 2004), which, as Barr (2002) observed, has included the technocratic appropriation of many adult education principles originally conceived as emancipatory in their aims.

Accountability

As a key concept within new managerialism, accountability theoretically counterbalances the increased autonomy afforded by the decentralization and de-layering of bureaucratic structures with reporting practices that ensure the needs and interests of “stakeholders” are protected and served (Leveille, 2005; Newman et al., 2004; Pals, 2006). Accountability is founded on the belief that institutional efficiency is – and should be – the primary objective of any enterprise, public or private (Leveille, 2005; Welch, 1998).

Because accountability concerns responsibility and/or a fiduciary relationship, it invokes a moral position, and lends a certain respectability and high ground to calls for “greater accountability,” or offers to provide it. Brint’s (2008) account of the 2006 Spellings Commission in the United States, for example, justifies standardized exams and more standardized training in higher education teaching on the basis of a public desire for accountability to improve the quality of higher education. Brint’s (2008) article reflects the pronounced and widespread mistrust of bureaucracies and governments which Pals (2006) states formed a strong impetus for reforms starting in the 1980s. However, it is also important to retain within any analysis other neoliberal reforms occurring throughout the same era. Some have proposed, for example, that mistrust in bureaucracies and government was largely manufactured in very deliberate efforts to undermine the welfare state and justify steep cuts to public services while simultaneously calling for improved service and productivity (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Harvey, 2005).

At the level of implementation, Pals (2006) pointed out that accountability practices are highly dependent upon transparent and effective communication and hence cannot guarantee responsible governance and management, particularly in highly decentralized networks wherein comprehensive and coordinated reporting are made more difficult. Welch (1998) further observed that, in practice, the more comprehensive forms of accountability that should concern quality and the purpose, or “ends,” of work are very often “reduced to economic terms” (p. 158). The problem is compounded by the fact that finances and other quantifiable measures lend themselves more easily to reporting and, thus, become the most widely understood and accepted means of providing “accountability.”

Newman et al. (2004) and Leveille (2005) defined many of the changes in higher education as a dynamic restructuring of the relationship between autonomy and accountability, with many HEIs willingly succumbing to more-stringent accountability practices at the behest of government in exchange for greater autonomy. Critics of these strategic negotiations in both K-12 and higher education have pointed to the narrowing and homogenizing effects of standardized measures of accountability, such as universal standardized testing and reporting of graduation rates (Mayo, 2005; Shavelson & Huang, 2003). Such measures, it is argued, neither capture the diversity of learning that occurs nor the value that we should place on such diversity.

GOVERNMENTALITY IN EDUCATION

Foucault’s theory of governmentality describes the ways in which the state and its citizenry relate through systems or “flows” of power. The state does not always exercise coercive power, nor do state and citizenry always come to fully rational agreement with respect to governance, as proposed in a social contract theory of governance. What Foucault argues instead is that much of governance operates through discourses, institutions, and practices that construct “truth” such that citizens conduct themselves in a manner that serves the needs and interests of the state. This “truth” determines how it is possible to think and act and, conversely, what is unthinkable, impossible, inactionable, or deviant (Edwards, 2008; McHoul & Grace, 1997).

The concept of governmentality provides a way to understand the links between broader macro-discourses, such as lifelong learning, accountability, and new public management, and the specific ways that people come to conduct themselves, within the constraints of these discourses, as self-promoting economic entrepreneurs who become “entrepreneurial actors across all dimensions of their lives” (Brown, cited in Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 248; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Olssen, 2006; Simons & Masschelein, 2008). Under a regime of neo-liberalism, this constructed “subject,” the self-as-entrepreneur, legitimizes a declining role for government and business in social welfare (Olssen, 2006) and justifies the privatization of social needs and social problems.

Foucault’s governmentality is partially inculcated through “biopower,” or the disciplining of bodies through institutionalized norms and practices (Edwards,

2008; Marshall, 1996; McHoul & Grace, 1997). In later years, Foucault turned from governmentality in institutional and micro settings to consider, more broadly, technologies employed by the state to create compliant and self-regulating citizens (Marshall, 1996). These state-executed “technologies of power” are both “individualizing and totalizing” (Olssen, 2006, p. 215) in that they “discipline society by disciplining each of its inhabitants” (Lambeir, 2006, p. 352).

Part of this broader project, as recounted by Olssen (2006), was Foucault’s genealogy, or historical account, of state rationalisms, which both shape governance and lend legitimacy to the state’s authority. Olssen then turned to Foucault’s theorizing of neo-liberalism to describe how lifelong learning acts as a technology of governmentality; in doing so, Olssen drew partially on earlier efforts by Marshall (1996) to articulate a specific technology that Marshall described as “busno-power,” a variation of Foucault’s theory of biopower. Like biopower, busno-power – the exercise of social control by infusing business values into the social world – is exercised not through overt domination but through a system of normalizing discourses that cause individuals (or subjects) to constitute their identity in a certain way. For Marshall, the distinction lay in that biopower is exercised through the body, whereas busno-power works on the mind, through educational practices that condition individuals to perceive themselves as an “autonomous chooser,” for whom “continuous consumer style choices” are ubiquitous and naturalized (Marshall, 1996, Autonomous Chooser section, ¶1).

This notion of choice, and the underlying question of the extent to which individuals are actually autonomous and therefore “free” to choose, has been problematized by Marshall and by other critics of neo-liberalism (Harvey, 2005; Lambeir, 2006; Liesner, 2006; Nicoll & Fejes, 2008; Olssen, 2002, 2006). In essence, individuals only “think” that they are free. For Marshall (1996), the conflation of state, social world, and economics under neo-liberalism meant that freedom, in its classical liberal sense of individuals choosing according to their own independent reasoning, has been eroded. Busnocratic rationalism, Marshall claimed, is infused with a clear value system that subtly constrains the choices individuals make and the way(s) in which they constitute their identities: “Central to busnocratic rationality are these emphases: the concept and stances taken in promoting skills as opposed to knowledge; information and information retrieval as opposed to knowledge and understanding; and the view that it is the consumers (especially industry), as opposed to the providers, that define and determine quality in education” (Busnocratic Rationality section, ¶8). Busnocratic rationality is thus cultivated in educative practices that condition individuals to regard all activity related to work and learning as entrepreneurial and consumptive (Lambeir, 2006; Marshall, 1996; Olssen, 2006). Moreover, Davies and Bansel (2007) argued that schools and universities have been actively reconstituted under neo-liberalism to serve these ends.

SoTL AS A TECHNOLOGY OF BUSNOCRATIC POWER

Drawing on this Foucauldian critique of neo-liberalism, the scholarship of teaching and learning “movement” may be analyzed as a discourse, employing technologies of power that shape both teachers and learners in ways that further a neo-liberal agenda for education. Marshall’s notion of *busnocratic* power as a form of governmentality is something he argues is exercised directly through educative practices. Thus while the construct of busnocratic power is not without some theoretical difficulties², it does provide a provocative foundation for considering the ways in which SoTL, as a clearly articulated educational practice, might constrain both teachers and learners to choose and evaluate their actions primarily on the basis of their economic value, and thus come to regard themselves as “entrepreneurs” of their own work and learning.

Assessment

As discussed earlier, accountability is an essential discourse within neo-liberal governance. In keeping with this discourse, SoTL is inseparable from the assessment practices used not just for learning but also to further widespread calls for greater accountability in higher education (Brint, 2008; Leveille, 2005). These assessment practices often factor centrally in SoTL to create a form of surveillance that, it may be argued, conditions both teachers and learners to govern themselves as entrepreneurial subjects (Liesner, 2006). SoTL promotes assessment as a virtue – it is the mark of “good,” responsible instructors or learners who want to ensure that their actions are producing the desired learning outcomes. In essence, assessment for learning and assessment for individual and institutional accountability are collapsed into one analytical category, such that only learning that is somehow quantifiable and of performative use value is legitimized as learning. In other words, only those forms of student learning that fulfill mandated outcomes (often engineered, directly or indirectly, by state and industry interests³) are labelled successful “learning.” Other forms of learning that fall outside of mandates may be cast off as ineffective, unproductive, or without value.

Even where assessment practices are formative and hence not linked to institutional accountability mandates, teachers and students learn, through formative evaluation practices, strategies for self-surveillance and self-assessment. Such practices, functioning as busnocratic technologies, encourage the objectification and rationalization of the educational experience – in effect, carving this experience into discrete units for transfer and consumption in the workplace or other venues. Just as learners are encouraged to assess and identify their own learning needs, instructors, through calls for reflective practice, learn to make pedagogical choices that further the commodification of learning outcomes, and to hold themselves accountable for the success or failure of their pedagogy in terms of student learning outcomes.

Serving Students

A key virtue, or “selling feature,” of improved teaching is its supposed focus on the needs and experiences of students and its placement of teachers in the position of “service.” SoTL has emerged at least in part, then, as a response to criticisms that teaching in higher education has been pedagogically unsound and/or unresponsive to students’ learning needs (Brint, 2008; Cutler, 2006). SoTL also takes on a certain degree of righteousness when it is held up as the reform mechanism through which HEIs are at long last held accountable to the students they serve (see Newman et al., 2004).

However, again, SoTL demonstrates the conceptual slippage that reduces education and the educative relationship to performativity (Lambeir, 2006). Teaching, like other professions, has long evoked the notion of “service” as a form of calling – a moral imperative to care for clients, patients, or students who are presumably vulnerable given their lack of status and knowledge relative to the professional (Fitzmaurice, 2008; Reinders, 2008). While this ideal most certainly falls short in practice at times, it remains foundational to professional ethics that this imbalance of power is voluntarily recognized, and is not exploited to serve one’s own or outside interests.

This notion of service, however, is far removed from “service” as it is employed in neo-liberal discourses. In education, students are “customers,” a term that rankles neo-liberalism’s critics precisely because it reduces the relationship between student and teacher to that of a business contract whereby money, in the form of tuition, is exchanged for an educational “product,” in the form of a course credit or grade. SoTL employs busnocratic rationality when it conflates the ideally voluntary professional ethic of care and its relational aspects with market-driven contracts for teaching “services.” Students (and often their parents) are conditioned by this rationality to demand “value for their money” (see Brint, 2008; Newman et al., 2004; Scarlett, 2004), and higher education teachers are encouraged, through SoTL’s emphasis on effective pedagogies, to place the highest value on the most technical dimensions of their work: the successful “delivery” of an educational “product.” In this manner, both parties may come to regard service more as a contractual obligation and less as central to a morally grounded professional relationship.

An Imperative to Learn

A key rationale for expanding SoTL is that lifelong learning is a universal imperative. Lambeir (2006), however, provocatively questioned whether this is actually the case – if lifelong learning is “the kind of life we want to live for a lifetime ... [and] whether everything we undertake, experience, or encounter ... needs to be labelled as learning” (p. 351). He wryly observes, “it seems problematic to be content with what one has realised (or not) at a particular moment in one’s life” (p. 351). Indeed, Simons and Masschelein (2008) wondered whether we can be freed *from* learning, “that is, from the experience of learning as a

fundamental force that is necessary for our freedom and for collective well-being” (p. 57). These authors’ observations are rare challenges to the seemingly self-evident necessity and virtue of learning. They point to the fundamental paradox of lifelong learning as a regime: that learning, which in both its classical liberal sense and its more pragmatic vocational conceptualizations is believed to free people to pursue better, more meaningful lives, becomes the sole measure *of* a meaningful life.

It might also be asked whether the urgency to “consume” learning – and never be satiated by it – echoes and reinforces the construction of the self as a consumer in the broader sense. Kreber (2005) linked the scholarship of teaching to the pursuit of lifelong learning and the educational goals that support it, including “self management ..., personal autonomy ..., and social responsibility” (p. 392). Because SoTL deliberately cultivates the attitudes and dispositions required to be a “lifelong learner,” it may be described as a technology of busnocratic power in which consumption-minded “autonomous choice” is perceived as a natural and inevitable approach to learning (Marshall, 1996); students as “autonomous choosers” thus regard their work and learning path as a series of investment decisions (Coffield, 1999; Simons & Masschelein, 2008). In effect, education is an intermediate good, to be used toward the eventual production of the “self” as a labour-market entrepreneur.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

In this article, I have proposed that the scholarship of teaching and learning has as its primary end the production of neo-liberal subjects who manage their learning to shape an identity and manage the risks of work and learning under a global neo-liberal regime. Marshall’s (1996) conception of busnocratic rationalism furthers the idea that educative practices serve to entrench individualistic and consumptive choices as natural to the human condition.

These observations, in and of themselves, are not terribly provocative until juxtaposed with the largely unexamined normative assumptions that guide SoTL. For, the scholarship of teaching and learning is not merely technically prescriptive, but morally so as well. Newman, Couturier and Scurry (2004), for example, argue that the advancement of effective teaching practices is a moral imperative for HEIs. Failure to induce learning is a moral failure of the institution, the instructor, and the student him or herself (Lambeir, 2005; Liesner, 2006), and this failure is eventually manifested economically, in the labour market (Liesner, 2006). Incorporating Marshall’s busnocratic power to constitute subjects who willingly “learn to earn,” the failure to learn is not only immoral; it is unnatural.

In short, the normative stance of SoTL as a discipline is problematic in that it prescribes learning as universally desirable, without considering the social, economic, and political contexts within which learning takes place. Much comes back to Kreber’s (2005) censure of SoTL for failing to systematically examine

not only the ends to which learning should be undertaken but also whose interests are, and should be, served by it. Because this sort of meta-critique is not occurring, it is all too easy for SoTL to succumb to the busnocratic rationality identified by Marshall (1996) – by equating good teaching with commodifiable outcomes, such as technical competence in pedagogy or high student grades.

Foucault's analytical tools can be usefully applied to heed Hanson's (2005) call for SoTL to more fully engage the "sociological imagination" by contextualizing the study of pedagogy, assessment, and instructional technologies within a broader framework of the "social, cultural, political and economic" milieus of post-secondary education (p. 414). Foucault has been productively used to "denaturalize" or deconstruct the orthodoxies of lifelong learning,⁴ an appealing approach, I believe, because it can be used to situate lifelong learning (or any other object of inquiry) historically but not deterministically.

Similar treatments of SoTL may provide needed critical insights without foreclosing on or dictating possibilities for change. It is quite true that critical perspectives on lifelong learning tend to pessimism and, in some cases, a kind of fatalism. But, this is precisely where a scholarship of teaching and learning can bring its strengths of open inquiry, praxis, and very often passionate commitment to bear on more expansive and imaginative discourses for "lifelong learning." ❁

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Laura A. Servage
Department of Educational Policy Studies
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5
lservage@ualberta.ca

Laura Servage is a doctoral student in Adult Education in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta. Her master's degree focused on professional development in K-12 education, and she retains an active interest in the pedagogies of ongoing professional development. Her current research interests include disparities in work and learning and lifelong learning, while her dissertation work is on the formal education choices of adults in the context of Canada's rapidly evolving post-secondary education system.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ For a recent review of the impact of Gibbons et al.'s Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledges and related concepts, see Hessels and van Lente (2008).
- ² Marshall doesn't appear to find it necessary to distinguish the processes or "workings" of busnocratic rationality from its normative dimensions. Thus, as a theoretical construct, "busnocratic power" is only useful to the extent that it sees busnocratic values in place prior to critique. In this sense, the concept is reifying. To hold its own as a technology that is analytically distinct from those already identified by Foucault, busno-power must be able to transcend its immediate historical context (i.e., neo-liberalism) and to offer broader critiques. Olssen (2006) stated that Foucault's earlier work was critiqued for its historicized, micro-social focus and emphasis on subjectivity, rendering it of limited value for broader analyses. I think Marshall's work could be subject to a similar critique.
- ³ For some interesting accounts of reform in higher education that support this claim, see Kohl and LaPidus (2000); Laidler (2002); and Newman et al. (2004). All of these works reflect to some extent a belief that HEIs should be prepared to work more closely with government and industry and that the missions and governance of HEIs should reflect a willingness to further these partnerships.
- ⁴ See Fejes and Nicolls (2008).