ABSTRACT

        Academic institutions are caught in a position of needing
continued commitment to assessment and yet dealing with strong faculty
sentiment on the subject. This paper proposes that faculty assessment
activity be re-conceptualized according to Ernest Boyer's (1990) "scholarship
of teaching"--as a scholarly process whose products make a contribution to
the broader conversation about teaching and learning in higher education. In
making a case for this rightful elevation of assessment activity by members
of the academy, the paper first shows that assessment is not "service," but
scholarship. Second, in applying recognized qualities of scholarship, the
paper discusses assessment as a legitimate form of research that meets both
the definition and spirit of the term. Third, it considers that the fact that
much assessment activity is "praxis" (practice, as distinguished from theory)
extends its value--and, hence, its value as scholarship--to both scholarly
and non-scholarly audiences. Finally, the paper finds that assessment
involves a great deal of invention, creativity, development, rigor, and
reflection, which moves the activity into the realm of creative and scholarly
endeavor and beyond "mere" service. Contains a figure and 31 references.
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Assessment as a Scholarship of Teaching

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association
(86th, Seattle, WA, November 9-12, 2000)

Assessment as a Scholarship of Teaching

In 1973, when Alverno College set out to improve student learning and faculty teaching by articulating and making public demonstrated abilities, the term *assessment* was a little-used term in higher education (Loacker & Mentkowski, 1993). Some considered the new movement a passing fad that they hoped would fade into oblivion, but as we enter the new millennium, assessment still holds the interest and favor of state legislators and academic administrators. According to the 1993 <u>Campus Trends</u>, 97% of colleges or universities reported that they had or were planning assessment programs (El-Khawas, 1993). Conferences and consultants focus on assessment virtues and strategies, funds are earmarked for assessment initiatives, professional education associations support assessment activity, and numerous states mandate assessment activity and dissemination of results. Assessment is here to stay.

Do those who are closest to assessment of student learning in higher education--the faculty, themselves--share in this enthusiasm for assessment activity? Banta (1993) recognizes that for members of the academy, investment of their time and energy is intellectually justified only if it is for purposes of curricula improvement and instruction, not just for demonstrating accountability. While some faculty see assessment as a good idea for themselves and their students, others embrace a 1980's mentality when "some faculty deprecated the assessment process as unnecessary and time-consuming, an inappropriate expectation of overburdened instructors and academic departments" (Morreale & Backlund, 1999, p. 22). Higgerson (1993) went so far as to compare faculty resistance to assessment to Kubler-Ross' (1969) five stages of grieving death--denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance.

Faculty perceive it as a waste of time and resources to structure assessment initiatives solely to benefit an external mandate; since assessment work is complicated and time-consuming, it should have recognized campus value and be seen as a campus priority. Yet, administrations send mixed signals when their faculty is asked (or expected) to carry out major responsibility for assessment. Their efforts are rarely recognized as part of workload, and they

are not rewarded during merit pay or promotion and tenure decisions for dedication to assessment. The administration, according to Higgerson, cannot expect faculty buy-in to assessment when the task "is categorized as 'service' and evaluated as being comparable to membership on a department committee" (1993, p. 3).

Academic institutions are caught in a position of needing continued commitment to assessment and yet dealing with strong faculty sentiment on the subject. What we propose is that assessment activity be re-conceptualized according to Ernest Boyer's (1990) *scholarship of teaching*--as a scholarly process whose products make a contribution to the broader conversation about teaching and learning in higher education. In making a case for this rightful elevation of assessment activity by members of the academy, we will first show that assessment is not "service," but scholarship. Second, in applying recognized qualities of scholarship, we will discuss assessment as a legitimate form of research that meets both the definition and spirit of the term. Third, the fact that much assessment activity is *praxis* (practice, as distinguished from theory) extends its value--and, hence, its value as scholarship--to both scholarly and non-scholarly audiences. Finally, assessment involves a great deal of invention, creativity, development, rigor, and reflection, which moves the activity into the realm of creative and scholarly endeavor and beyond "mere" service.

Assessment is Not Service

Faculty evaluation often rests on a number of specified criteria, some deemed more important than others. Three of the most common evaluation criteria are scholarship, teaching, and service, whose boundaries are sometimes blurred and hard to separate. Take, for example, the production of an instructor's manual for a basic course textbook. At some institutions, the activity would be considered scholarship, while at others a case might be made that it is aligned more with teaching. In a stretch of imagination, if a faculty member agreed to such a project to improve upon the sorts of test questions or activities for a commonly-taught course at his or her own university, one could argue that the production of this instructor's manual is department service.

The point we wish to make is that assessment activity, like other faculty endeavors, does not automatically belong within the category of "service," but may instead fit, at a minimum, more at the intersection between teaching and scholarship. In many cases, as Watt et al. (1993) contend, faculty effort on behalf of assessment should be recognized as scholarship.

Just as teachers are rewarded when they think creatively, acquire grants, and

publish results, so research in assessment should be documented and given weight equal

to that accorded other forms of scholarship. When universities do that, they will have

moved one giant step toward linking teaching and research, and assessment will become

just as much a part of university culture and faculty expectations as journal articles,

grants, and books now are. (p. 120)

How do we define *service,* and why does higher education assessment <u>not</u> fit this category? In consulting Webster's New Twentieth Century Unabridged Dictionary, there are three definitions that seem related to service as it is used in faculty evaluation. Definition one describes service as "helpful, beneficial, or friendly action or conduct; [an] act giving assistance or advantage to another." This definition would appear congruent with types of community service a faculty member might claim like working with the Boy Scouts, the local school district, or one's church. A second definition of service cites "work done for a master or superior." If a chairperson or dean appoints a faculty member to a self-study committee for an upcoming external review, this action would fit this definition. A third definition identifies service as "work done or duty performed for another or others." Although other request (or mandate) most institutional assessment, a successful assessment program goes beyond this "service." An important element that moves assessment beyond service for another is faculty determination.

In approaching assessment as research, Indiana University suggests that whether in a course, program, or discipline, "<u>faculty</u> [emphasis added] are the ones who should decide the questions to be asked, the methods for data collection, and the interpretative basis for the

collected results" (Wolf, 1993, p. 5). Drawing upon the literature of accreditation associations, professional organizations, and academic campuses, Morreale and Backlund stress that a successful assessment program "is marked by faculty ownership, responsibility, and involvement" (1999, p. 23). Those very terms seem incongruous with the first-listed and harsher definition of service in Webster's: "the occupation or condition of a servant." When it comes to doing work in assessment, faculty should not be seen as servants of the institution. As Arnett and Arneson so eloquently state, "We must reject the view of philosopher kings, capable of moving ideas into action without the benefit of the practical insight of others" (1997, p. 87). Assessment is "mere" service only to the extent that faculty are viewed as pawns, set apart from the public dialogue about assessment.

Assessment as a Scholarship of Teaching

To make the case that assessment of teaching is a scholarship of teaching, we will first identify recognized qualities of scholarship and then discuss how assessment exhibits those qualities. We use two sources to identify recognized qualities of scholarship--Glassick, et al.'s Scholarship Assessed (1997) and Frey et al.'s Investigating Communication (1991). The former presents a broadly conceived discussion of scholarship based on Boyer's Scholarship Reconsidered (1990), while the latter is a more traditional discussion of scholarship as research. We will organize our discussion of scholarship using the six qualities of scholarship in Glassick et al. (See Figure 1.)

Insert Fig. 1

All scholarship must have clear goals, which may be framed as questions. Assessment may investigate educational objectives. It recognizes that there is "a legitimate expectation that we are committed to achieving our stated educational aims, anxious to improve our collective efforts to do so, and ready and willing to give account of our efforts and results" (Holyer, 1998, p. 42). Research questions explored in assessment are motivated by the practice of teaching and

tend to be problem-oriented, discipline specific, and often resist traditional theoretical answers, which Schon describes as the "manageable high ground" of investigation. Rather, questions explored in assessment often are localized, arising out of situated teaching practices where "problems are messy and confusing and incapable of technical solution" (1995, p. 27).

The second quality of scholarship is that the scholar must have adequate preparation and grasp of the relevant scholarly literature to investigate and answer the questions asked. For assessment this is not simply a question of familiarity with assessment literature and research methods, but even more so, a question of the scholar's familiarity with the subject matter taught and experience with teaching practices. "Naive assumptions about generic abilities that generalize across content or disciplinary areas have led to approaches that purport to be content free" (Schilling & Schilling, 1998, p. 31). Rather, assessment of teaching is based upon a reflective understanding of actual teaching practices of a discipline (Schon, 1995). We must ask "How familiar is the assessment researcher with the messy and sometimes confusing problems of teaching practices of a specific discipline?" For us this means understanding of the multi-faceted discipline of speech communication. The range of speech communication theories and teaching practices is fairly broad--from public speaking and rhetoric to interpersonal, intercultural, media studies, organizational, and performance studies. The diversity of our field necessitates that those conducting assessment research be familiar with the theory and teaching practices of the facet of the discipline being assessed. The researchers most familiar with these parameters and constraints are the faculty scholars themselves, not external agencies or administrators wishing to impose ready-made tests and measures.

This leads to the third quality of scholarship, that the scholar should employ appropriate methods, sometimes using methodology in creative ways. In assessment a scholar creatively employs methods to assess teaching in localized learning communities. One of the potential downfalls of assessment can occur when methods of assessment, for whatever reason, are reduced to a select few measures that too often are quantitative. This creates pressure for the homogenization of teaching practices. Situated practices, which respond to the special qualities

of different learning communities or arise from the special strengths of gifted teachers, are ignored for teaching practices that "pass the test" of a specific assessment tool. Assessment researchers need to employ their knowledge of the disciplinary teaching practices and research methods to creatively study situated teaching practices (Cambridge, 1997; Schilling & Schilling, 1998).

The fourth quality of scholarship is that it produces significant results, and for more social scientific scholarship that it produces results capable of replication. If study of situated teaching practices produces results whose significance is more local than generalizable, how can this research be considered as significant? Can we be confident that assessment is significant scholarship? Naturalistic research criteria can be helpful in answering this question, for both naturalistic and assessment research study more contextualized and particular phenomena. In naturalistic research (Erlandson, et al., p. 28-35) confidence in scholarship depends upon whether research meets four criteria. First, "do the results ring true" for teachers and even learners in a particular learning community? This question concerns the quality of the results in presenting an accurate or true portrayal of situated teaching and learning. Research strategies, such as persistent observation, triangulation of methods, peer de-briefings or checking results with teachers and learners studied help assure that assessment findings are accurate and true portrayals. Second, could the results be applied to other contexts, not simply as a generalization of results but as a creative application? In assessment Schon (1998) refers to this as a "reflective transfer" in which other practitioners, who recognize similarity to their situated and local teaching practices, could incorporate the findings of the assessment into their own teaching. Third, is the research dependable, in that the methods have the capacity to track changes that occur naturally in teaching and learning communities? Fourth, could the data on which the findings are based be confirmed by tracking them to their sources? Both dependability and

confirmation depend on the possibility of an "audit trail" (p. 34-35) that can external reviewer could use to determine if the conclusions are supported by the process of assessment. As scholarship, assessment can provide an insightful explanation of situated teaching practices within particular learning communities. Insofar as teaching practices reproduce themselves in comparable learning communities and within disciplines, assessment of teaching and learning aspires to the reflective transfer of findings and sometimes the replication of results. The goal of assessment is to use significant results to help teachers better understand disciplinary and situated teaching practices, sometimes change them, and occasionally transform them. The significance of assessment scholarship is not to punish teachers, but aid them in their critical reflection about their teaching.

The fifth quality of scholarship is effective presentation to the public. Arguably, scholarship must be shared or publicly documented in order for it to be recognized as scholarship. We conceive of the public nature of scholarship as a conversation, in fact several different, concurrent conversations. We posit three different types of conversations for assessment scholarship--an *academic conversation* with peers, a *scholastic conversation* with learners, and an *accountability conversation* with outside systems.

Peers are knowledgeable and critical practitioners familiar with the disciplinary standards of teaching practices, theory and methodology (Holyer, 1998; Hutchings, 1999; Schulman, 1998), and it is within this venue that assessment as scholarship becomes legitimated, documented, and shared with the community of assessment scholars. This audience of academicians recognizes that standards for assessment vary not only by discipline (engineering, visual arts, speech communication), but also by type of institution (public university, small liberal arts college), characteristics of the student body (traditional/non-traditional, at-risk students, native speakers of English/non-native speakers of English), presence or absence of state

mandates for assessment, or other intervening factors. Although assessment of situated teaching practices may limit traditional generalization of results, it is important that assessment researchers participate in scholarly conversations with peers at state, regional and national scholarly conferences and workshops. These *academic conversations* encourage a different dimension of critical reflection, Schon's (1995) concept of reflective transfer mentioned above-- the comparison, contrast or "carrying over" of assessed teaching practices to new situations where they may be applied, studied and, perhaps, reinvented by other scholars.

While academic peers may be most appreciative and accepting of assessment as true scholarship, learners participate in a different and more pragmatic conversation about assessment: *scholastic conversation*. As key stakeholders in the educational enterprise, we have a vested interest in communicating to students the results of assessment. In fact, models of assessment frequently mandate a feedback component, claiming that bringing results back to the student completes the assessment loop. Whenever possible, students who participate in assessment projects should have the opportunity to gain something from their participation, whether it is receiving individual results of a diagnostic evaluation or general conclusions of the assessment project. This can give our students the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned, or did not learn, from a different vantage point than a letter grade. Learners are stakeholders in the assessment inquiry and need to be included, where possible, in appropriate conversations about assessment.

Finally, society participates in yet other conversations about assessment scholarship, often conversations couched in terms of responsibility. These are multiple *accountability conversations*, comprised of the many different communities from which our students come and to which they return after our classes are finished. Communities have differing concerns about the learners they send to our college campuses. They are often impatient in wanting demonstrated shorthand proof of student achievement. These are conversations of which we must be wary, yet conversations not to avoid. Two notes of caution are offered here. First, these public conversations are not faculty evaluation. By focusing on the teacher, faculty

evaluation downplays the learner in the learning community. Teacher evaluation is different from assessment. Second, some members of the public approach assessment from an under-informed perspective, unaware of the variety of assessment methods or teaching practices. Naive assumptions about teaching across disciplines and contexts (Schilling & Schilling, 1998, p. 31) can create a public pressure to homogenize teaching, for example encouraging everyone to use PowerPoint to increase student interest in class presentations. Mono-dimensional approaches to assessment of situated teaching practices tend to deny differences and encourage sameness across different disciplines and learning communities. Paper-and-pencil tests, quantitative measures, and standardized approaches may capture the fancy of the accountability hounds who are most impressed by statistics. In contrast, an assessment scholar is one whose knowledge exists at an intersection between the content of a discipline and its teaching practices and knowledge of assessment methods. It is important that such scholars participate in public *accountability conversations* about assessment with a goal of educating the uneducated; otherwise, faculty risk becoming pawns in important public conversations about teaching and assessment of student learning.

The final quality of scholarship is reflective critique. The scholar asks, "How can I improve upon my scholarship?" What is intriguing about assessment as a scholarship of teaching is that it is a systematic process of reflection about teaching. A scholar reflects on the process of reflecting on situated teaching practices. In short, the scholar asks "Did my assessment help me better understand these situated teaching practices?" The goal is to systematically study situated teaching practices to better foster learning. Ultimately, assessment encourages us to improve or augment our teaching practices, sometimes change them, and upon occasion transform them.

Teaching and Assessment as Disciplinary Praxis

Aristotle's work distinguishes between *praxis*, or practice, as reflectively informed human conduct worthy for its own sake, and theory (dialectic or science for Aristotle) as contemplative thinking, focusing on abstract knowledge (Audi, 1995, and Outhwaite & Bottomore, 1993). To

consider practice atheoretical or "mere technique," however, is a mistake, for reflectively informed practice requires specialized knowledge-- practical or prudential wisdom.

> It [practice] involves reflection on ends (purposes, value, *telos*) as well as means. It is limited by the irreducibly particular, contingence nature of practical situations. It can, however, be theoretical insofar it incorporates concepts and principles relevant to a broad range of situations. In this alternative model, then, a practical discipline does build theory but of a kind essentially different from scientific theory. Practical theory is adapted to the requirements of practical reflection whereas scientific theory is adapted to the requirements of scientific explanation. Those requirements are not the same. (Craig, 1995, pp. 150-151)

Teaching is a situated practice, a praxis that requires knowledge of the content and teaching practices of a discipline. Assessment is the scholarly study of teaching as praxis and is, itself, a form of *praxis*.

Scholars influenced by critical and other post-modern theories have expanded upon Aristotle's distinction between theory and practice, elucidating the constitutive nature of praxis (See Audi, 1995, Conquergood, 1995, McKerrow, 1989, Outhwaite & Bottomore, 1993, Rosenau, 1992, and Wood & Cox, 1993). Conquergood's conception of praxis by an "engaged intellectual" (p. 85) is useful for understanding both teaching and assessment as *praxis*. An engaged intellectual experiences two sets of disciplinary tension--rigor/relevance and discipline/solidarity. Tensions between rigor and relevance represent disciplinary pressures for closure or containment of a discipline to attain professional integrity, in contrast to the pressures for openness and connectedness beyond prescribed disciplinary boundaries to attain social responsibility. The tensions between discipline and solidarity typify disciplinary pressures between more private introspection and more public involvement and action. Conquergood (1995) argues that a more fully engaged intellectual exhibits all four dimensions of *praxis* and is

analytically rigorous, participatory, critically reflective and politically engaged. While his original conception would relegate teaching and assessment to the institutionalization of analytical rigor in professional practices (p. 87), we contend that both teaching and assessment can be conceived as *praxis* of a fully engaged intellectual.

Teaching is a significant act of outreach to students, many of whom will not remain within the institutional confines of a discipline. This is particularly true for undergraduates in their general education courses. For non-graduate education, teaching is a significant intellectual practice of responsibly engaging students with the content of a discipline in a relevant manner. What theoretical concepts, methods, and skills are important for students to understand the nature and ethical practice of communication? What vision, or perhaps social mission, of responsible communication do we as teachers advocate that our students enact in their personal, professional and public lives? The vast majority of students at the university will take only one communication course and comprise our largest, and in one sense most significant group of learners. Teaching these students is a significant act of outreach for our discipline. The engaged intellectual of speech communication asks, for example, "How can our teaching practices responsibly engage our students to practice mindful instead of mindless communication?" "Of what do we teach them to be mindful?" While these theoretical questions of praxis may inform our teaching, assessment is the scholarly study of what students indeed learn, in order for the engaged intellectual to critically reflect on teaching.

Finally, both teaching and assessment as *praxis* of engaged intellectuals is politically important, provided we recognize the situated nature of teaching practice. Qualities of an institution (public or private) and of students (traditional/non-traditional, class, differential ability, at-risk, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, native/non-native speakers of English, and the like) have social and political implications for our teaching and what our students learn. We need to consider even classroom configuration (small/large section, use of teaching assistants, computer mediated instruction) as a quality of instruction that is influenced by factors beyond the control of the individual faculty member. What we teach and how we teach are influenced by

such factors as the economics of the institution and the community at-large, admissions standards, university or legislative initiatives, and whether or not the course is part of the institution's core curriculum. Carefully designed assessment studies of particular learning communities, conducted by scholars cognizant of factors such as these, could provide a scholarly justification for intervention in or advocacy of specific teaching practices.

In sum, teaching is a *praxis* of outreach by an engaged intellectual to students who may be at first uninterested or unfamiliar with a discipline, particularly at the undergraduate level. Assessment can be the scholarly and rigorous study of situated teaching practices of an engaged intellectual in order to critically reflect on the quality and impact of those practices on student learning.

<u>Assessment as creative activity</u>

There are some disciplines in which faculty evaluation includes both scholarly and creative activity. The argument for including both in faculty evaluation contends that creative work is comparable to traditional scholarship in terms of invention, creation, development, rigor, reflection, and appreciation by one's publics. The production of a show of ceramics, a musical composition, and a theatrical performance are endeavors recognized in higher education as creative achievement. Thoughtful work in assessment should likewise be classified under the purview of creative activity.

It may seem odd to consider assessment activity as creative, especially since Holyer (1998, p. 40) says that "assessment . . . possesses all the appeal and efficiency of committee work, in particular the kind visited upon us by administrators." Beginning evaluators sometimes assume assessment is simple and uncreative "with easily defined objectives, quick access to reasonably priced instruments, a department full of faculty to do the assessing, and a captive population of . . . students" (Johnson et. al., 1993). Yet, it is more complicated than this, and it is this complexity that brings work in assessment to the arena of creative endeavor.

The weaver, poet, composer, and sculptor all have license to offer their products as

evidence of professional achievement. In each domain conceptualization, innovation, design, effective use of materials, and revelation contribute to the evolution of the creative output. The same occurs in assessment.

Conceptualization. Moving beyond the familiarity of one's classroom, assessment means needing to work together with peers, to set goals and standards for instruction, to design measures to evaluate student learning, and to interpret results and implement changes--in effect, to conceptualize an assessment plan. Goal setting can be a very creative activity as faculty look beyond the familiar and what has always been done to re-conceptualizing courses or reframing instruction in terms of achieving desired student learning outcomes.

Innovation. Sometimes one must be creative in getting needed information. Assessment depends on the availability and quality of institutional data and the availability of students and others for observations, surveys, and interviews (Sims, 1992). There are times when that information is not readily available, or is in a form that is difficult to use. Inquiry based on astute observation requires creative thought. And, those doing assessment must sometimes be creative in securing faculty, student, institutional, and outside evaluator buy-in to offering classes for assessment purposes. While one can find other non-scholarship "carrots" to motivate buy-in (e.g., changing university reward structures), helping reluctant peers to connect assessment with scholarship stimulates innovation for oneself and others.

Design. Many ideas for assessment look good in theory, but when implemented, they are more cumbersome. What works in one discipline doesn't necessarily work for another. The discipline of speech communication has available a vast array of assessment approaches because of the diversity of the field. This smorgasbord of assessment opportunity brings creativity into play, and faculty doing assessment need to design and combine approaches that are less intrusive, more user-friendly, and at the same time valid.

Effective use of materials. Assessment, as has been demonstrated, can also be creative in terms of deciding upon methods to use. Instruments may be prohibitively expensive and not suitable to the goals of the program, or they may require special adaptations to course

configurations, localized teaching practices, and different student populations. Graham et al. (1997), in citing internship assessment strategies, note that program participants need to use **creativity and expertise** when developing assessment measurement methods. Although there have been critiques offered of locally designed instruments (Marchese, 1998), those that are carefully constructed to meet the needs of a department or an institution (perhaps incorporating a university's mission statement or general education goals), are oftentimes more useful. These assessments avoid the problem of homogenization, i.e., treating all courses as the same, and allow what a department does well to come to the forefront.

Revelation. Assessment is a process of discovery. And, like chaos theory, it is a process of finding order and pattern out of the seemingly random and unpredictable. This is not a process that comes easily. In the bestseller Chaos: Making a New Science, James Gleick (1987) chronicles scientists and their frustrations, conflicts, and moments of revelation. Just as chaos theory gave physicists a new way of viewing matter, creative achievement gives us a new lens for appreciating assessment. Assessment, like any creative endeavor, is messy activity, and sometimes, as Johnson et al. (1993) note, Murphy's Law prevails. Whatever can go wrong in assessment, will go wrong. Timelines, costs, opposition are all possibly snafus. Some of the creative problem solving must address problems such as:

> ...departments [that] do not agree with external standards . . . academic reward
>
> structure [that does] not adequately recognize assessment efforts . . . [student] passive
>
> resistance . . . sophisticated commercial tests and survey[s] [which] are not nearly as
>
> impressive when the data are invalidated by inconsistent student efforts . . . traditions
>
> opposed to specifying program objectives or quantifying outcomes . . . concerns
>
> regarding how administrators and 'outsiders' will use major assessment results . . . .
>
> (Johnson et. al., 1993, pp. 152-3).

As the authors conclude, "considerable effort in planning, **creative and critical thinking**

[emphasis added], consensus building, cooperation, and problem solving are going to be required for any successful [assessment] effort" (p. 153).

Conclusion

The scholarship of teaching begins with what a teacher knows, and then transforms and extends that knowledge through systematic study and critical reflection. In distinguishing this knowledge from the prevailing epistemology inherent in research institutions, Schon (1995) contends that educational institutions have epistemologies of what is legitimate knowledge, and that this academic knowledge is built into institutional structures and practices. Knowledge in a particular curriculum, the chunking and ordering of time and space to present that knowledge to students, the situated practices of the institution, all comprise the institutional epistemology. Assessment offers a different epistemology in its focus on situated teaching practices and student learning.

Assessment activity tends to be viewed by those who evaluate faculty professional activity more as service than creativity and scholarship, no doubt because assessment deals with the real versus the theoretical. Schon (1995) proposes that with any institutional epistemology there is a dilemma of rigor versus relevance. In his article, he presents a striking metaphor of two venues of professional practice: the high ground and the swamp.

> On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the use of
> research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowlands, problems are messy and
> confusing and incapable of technical solution. The irony of this situation is that the
> problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or to society
> at large, however great their technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the
> problems of greatest human concern. The practitioner is confronted with a choice. Shall
> he remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems
> according to his standards of rigor, or shall he descend to the swamp of important
> problems where he cannot be rigorous in any way he knows how to describe? (p. 27)

Those who dedicate professional energies toward the activity of assessment value the swampy lowland, sometimes immersing themselves in trial and error, experience, intuition, uncertainty, complexity, uniqueness, and conflict. While this deviates from the technical rationality of the scholarship of discovery (Boyer, 1990), it is a quest for knowledge that has the potential to affect all students, faculty, and educational institutions. As Banta (1993) concludes in her book, <u>Making a Difference: Outcomes of a Decade of Assessment in Higher Education</u>:

> [Assessment] could well become a subject of <u>scholarship</u> [emphasis added] in every academic discipline and a topic for study and development by every professional association that counts college and university staff among its members. In the first decade of its history in the service of accountability and improvement in higher education, assessment has scarcely begun to attain its full potential. If it should realize that potential, one might argue at some point in the twenty-first century that assessment has made a greater difference for students than any other single influence in the history of higher education (p. 375).

Unquestionably, professional activity of this importance should be granted appropriate stature in institutional structures. Far from being "mere" service, assessment--a creative, and systematic study of situated teaching practices, which utilizes particular forms of research and knowledge--belongs in the scholarship of teaching.

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Figure 1: Qualities of Scholarship

Glassick, et al., Scholarship Assessed	Frey, et al., Investigating Communication
Clear Goals	Question Oriented
Adequate Preparation	Cumulative & Self-correcting/Cyclical
Appropriate Methods	Methodological/Creative
Significant Results	Replicable
Effective Presentation	Public
Reflective Critique	Self-critical

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