



## Editorial: Defining Scholarship within College-based Higher Education

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The issue of scholarship within College-based Higher Education (CBHE) is a source of major discussion across the sector. In part, this debate is being driven by the aspirations of some providers to secure or maintain Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP) or Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP). The accompanying shift in status from institutions relying on the support of validating university partners to those which award degrees in their own right raises a number of questions about the concept of 'Henes' within the CBHE sector. A strong profile of research and scholarly activity is, therefore, a critical requirement for institutions seeking to gain FDAP or TDAP status. The vocational nature of most CBHE provision, along with limited access to many forms of research funding, demands an approach to research which is distinct from the majority of universities.

The diverse nature of the CBHE sector ensures a multiplicity of approaches to embedding and promoting research and scholarly activity. In recent years, many providers have embraced Boyer's model of scholarship as a means of embracing and recognising the various forms of research undertaken by staff within vocational disciplines. This special issue highlights recent work on the development and evaluation of scholarship within CBHE. Whilst these papers concentrate mostly on CBHE provision in the UK, their findings should be of interest to vocational educators on an international scale.

Understanding the complexity of diverse approaches to scholarship within CBHE requires a broad perspective. At the behest of the Higher Education Academy, the Mixed Economy Group explored the nature and extent of scholarly activity conducted within colleges. Using a mixture of interviews and institutional questionnaires, the study demonstrates an increasing alignment between the shared understanding of scholarly activity within institutions and the model advocated by Boyer.

A number of CBHE providers emphasise the importance of Boyer's model for encouraging pedagogic research and reflective practice. Indeed, the teaching qualifications which CBHE staff are generally expected to possess make this a vibrant area for development across the sector. Galley and Savage present a case study outlining how one CBHE provider has sought to embed Boyer's model. The multidisciplinary environment of most CBHE providers requires careful navigation between institutional demands and the requirements of individual vocational subjects linked to industry practice. Galley and Savage highlight the potential multiplicity of meanings associated with common terms used in teaching and learning and identify possible consequences for graduate employability.

Performing Arts have traditionally maintained a strong foothold in CBHE curricula. Creative practice demands an approach to research and scholarship which reflects the nature of the discipline. Rogerson discusses an innovative attempt to locate the concept of 'Practice as Research' within the assessment process for Foundation Degree students. Although 'Practice as Research' is commonly used as a methodology in postgraduate studies, it also has broader applicability. In particular, this case study explores how choreographic practice can be viewed as an authentic research process which has the potential to revitalise undergraduate curricula in dance-related disciplines.

One approach taken by CBHE providers to develop their HE teaching staff is to encourage individuals to pursue doctoral research. The identities and experiences of CBHE staff as doctoral candidates, therefore, represent a distinct demographic worthy of study in its own right. Davis presents the initial findings of a small-scale pilot project exploring the experiences of four CBHE practitioners engaged in doctoral study. She notes the importance of meaningful organisational support for staff engaging in this form of research activity.

The potential for lecturers in vocational disciplines to learn from international colleagues is often overlooked. Yet there is clearly much to be gained from international collaborations through the sharing of good practice and appreciation of alternative perspectives. Stevenson and Cornelius outline current work in progress on a collaborative initiative involving vocational teacher education programmes in Finland and Scotland. Although at an early stage in development, this project has significant potential to situate vocational educators within a global context.

Our opinion piece summarises the findings of a recent QAA report into the nature of the HE ethos within CBHE. Lea identifies significant progress and growing confidence within the sector in developing a shared understanding of the meaning of scholarship. Whilst emphasising its distinctiveness compared to research and scholarly activity in the university sector, Lea nevertheless notes that the use and implementation of Boyer's model within CBHE may have broader implications for a range of HE providers.

These papers should encourage further discussion and debate on the nature of scholarship across the CBHE sector. Comments from readers would be gratefully received.

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