

Chapter 7

Advancing Scholarship/scholarship in geography classrooms

Lex Chalmers

Introduction

The Scholarship examination is a longstanding feature of secondary school assessment. Scholarship is available to our “brightest and best” students in geography, and it is designed to recognise excellence and thereby enhance access to the tertiary education system. It is surprising, therefore, that geography Scholarship in New Zealand secondary schools has received little attention. Perhaps this is because Scholarship is a must-have feature of an education system shaped by meritocracy: it is hard to imagine a secondary education system that did not encourage students to think, act and perform independently at the highest level. Yet Scholarship is largely hidden; it has a publically available assessment specification and achievement standard, but it affects only a small proportion of the student population and teacher involvement in preparation for Scholarship is often modest, especially if low numbers cannot sustain a regular timetable slot. I will argue that while the intent of Scholarship is positive, the mechanism is crude: some very good students don’t enter Scholarship geography, some of the best don’t do themselves justice on the day, and not all forms of scholarship are revealed.

The first substantive section of this chapter looks at the use of the word ‘Scholarship’ (capitalised) to describe the outcome of an assessment process in secondary schools. This section is followed by a commentary on ‘scholarship’ (lower case) as a broader description of learning, teaching, research and intellectual developments in a discipline. The initial focus is thus on geography Scholarship as a prescription in the secondary sector, the second on scholarship as a career aspiration of those engaged in geography in the tertiary sector: two different uses of the word underpinning a commitment to lifelong education. While there are clear connections between school geography Scholarship and the development of tertiary scholarship in geography, retaining them as discrete, item-bound entities is artificial. In the

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concluding sections of the chapter I argue that the opportunities provided by the particular nature of the Scholarship experience at Year 13 can build into intellectual futures that include broader definitions of scholarship. Central to this argument is recognition of the scholarly functions of secondary teachers of geography.

Geography Scholarship

The award of Scholarships in the compulsory education systems of most countries is synonymous with the merit-based awards made to those completing secondary education. The Scholarship is a monetary award generally supported by the state. The availability of Scholarships to enable the brightest and the best secondary students to have access to tertiary education were first awarded in New Zealand in 1879. One of the earliest references to examinations in New Zealand school geography, based upon which Scholarships could be awarded, is found in the 1885 Matriculation geography examination for the University of New Zealand (New Zealand Electronic Test Collection, 2014). Six of the ten questions asked required a knowledge of Europe, one of Africa, and three of New Zealand. The Matriculation examination is a remarkable document that serves as a reminder of our colonial past, and the richness of our epistemic and pedagogic development in the intervening years.

The 1944 Thomas Report ushered in the University Entrance Examinations (Year 12), and Bursaries Examinations (Year 13). These changes were considered necessary in response to roll growth in senior secondary schools, while helping universities and employers better discriminate between achievement levels. The University Entrance exam had a substantial skills section, questions on the British Isles, and a ‘continental’ question (South America, Africa, the Soviet Union). Bursary scholars were required to use ‘models’ in geography, and write on the human and physical geography of New Zealand and Western Europe or Monsoon Asia. In short, there was considerable focus on local content, and on depth of geographical knowledge and skills. New examination prescriptions for University Entrance, Bursary and Scholarship were approved in 1984. These changes took place alongside the National Geography Curriculum Committee’s development of a national *Syllabus for Schools: Geography Forms 5–7* (Ministry of Education, 1990), which had a strong substantive focus on patterns and processes as well as testing geographic skills. It is against this backdrop of curriculum and assessment development that more recent developments in geography Scholarship need to be seen.

In 2004, after more than a decade of review and consultation, the new NCEA qualification signalled a change in a 60-year-old curriculum and assessment model.ⁱ The portents of change first appeared in the 1989 Education Act, which replaced the University Entrance Board with NZQA. The 1989 Education Act was one of the outcomes of a rapid period of restructuring in New Zealand education that sought to address inefficiencies in the Department of Education by reshaping school administration through self-managing boards of trustees. The *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms established the Educational Review Office, NZQA and the Ministry of Education by late 1989. It was not surprising to find that the changes were challenged on practical and ideological grounds. For example, Irwin's (1994) critique of the nature of secondary education change pointed to the need for stronger vocational drivers, less government control, and a Scholarship programme controlled by private interests managed by the New Zealand Education and Scholarship Trust.

The assessment reform debate during 2004/05 was intense, with the Scholarship exams frequently at the centre of media controversy. The NZQA systems and Scholarship papers were lambasted, leading to the resignation of NZQA's CEO after an investigation into the highly variable pass rates in the 2004 Scholarship exams. Some schools sought parallel or alternative systems for senior school assessment: the Diploma of the International Baccalaureate offered one option, while some schools began offering Cambridge A-Level model qualifications in efforts to position themselves as catering for the needs of gifted and talented students.ⁱⁱ In response to the controversy the Government acted quickly. For 2005, NZQA Scholarship pass rates were set at the top 3 percent of the Level 3 cohort in each subject and the Scholarship project was a negotiated government priority for development. From 2005 onwards Scholarship has had a more settled period of development (NZQA, 2006).

Scholarship study in geography has no curriculum, but it requires candidates to use the resources provided to answer questions on broad, issue-based themes (see Table 7.1) using a small range of assessment stems. Those familiar with assessment taxonomies derived from the work of Benjamin Bloom et al. (1956) will recognise the progression of question stems, from the simple 'discuss' (used nine times in 12 years of geography Scholarship), through to the more demanding 'critically evaluate' (12 times). The 2014 paper (available online on 21 November, just days after it had been completed by candidates) provides an example. The first question stem asked the student to *critically analyse* the changing roles and function of cities; the second required *discussion* of perspectives on the idea that urbanisation is almost inevitable, *but* that it "came at a price"; and the third required candidates to *discuss and justify* their views

on the future of the city. These stems are consistent with Bloom’s higher-order skills in the cognitive domain: they underpin both Scholarship and scholarship.

Table 7.1 summarises the interest and participation in Scholarship and shows the wide range of issue-based themes explored in the examination since 2004. The NCEA Level 3 cohort sitting geography has grown, and the percentage of candidates achieving Scholarship or Outstanding Scholarship has been well aligned with the target 3 percent of the cohort specified by NZQA in 2005.

Table 7.1: Geography Scholarship summary statistics

Year	Theme	Level 3 cohort no.	Scholarship candidates as a % of cohort	Scholarship no.	Outstanding scholarship no.
2004	Energy production	n.a.	n.a.	111	3
2005	Flooding issues	5,782	2.7	138	25
2006	Resources Easter Island / Arctic	5,961	3.0	151	29
2007	Desertification	5,911	3.2	191	22
2008	Deforestation and land	5,920	3.0	179	17
2009	Global food crisis	5,925	2.8	153	12
2010	Pollution	6,312	3.1	172	22
2011	Water	6,546	3.1	184	20
2012	Millennium development	6,939	2.8	174	21
2013	Mining of metallic minerals	7,258	3.0	169	25
2014	Urban settlement	6,885	3.0	182	23

Source: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications_standards/awards/scholarship/scholarship-results/

Until recently, students have not known the theme that will form the basis for the Scholarship exam. However, for the first time, the 2014 geography Scholarship guidelines provided guidance about the theme of the paper ahead of the examination: the assessment specifications stated that “in 2014, the examination questions and resource booklet will focus on urbanisation, urban settlements, and urban growth”. For 2015, the equivalent statement is “the examination questions and resource booklet will focus on agriculture”. These statements are part of the clear online documentation provided by NZQA.

In keeping with NZQA’s aim to make senior secondary assessment as transparent as possible, there were seven further documents supporting teachers:

- a performance standard, which mimicked the NCEA Levels 1 to 3 achievement standard
- the assessment guidelines, which explained the format of the examination and advised students about what could be expected
- the examination paper, which was made available soon after the examination

and, after the examination had been assessed:

- an assessment schedule explained the marking system
- the examiners summarised student performance
- the resources available in the examination were supplied (subject to copyright)
- the paper of the top scholar was reproduced.

The stated aim on the NZQA Scholarship website (2014) was to communicate the transparency of the process to teachers.

As Table 7.1 also shows, the number of candidates submitting to NCEA Level 3 assessment in geography has grown in numbers over the last 11 years, and there were 205 Scholarships awarded in geography early in 2015. Those awarded Scholarship will generally have content knowledge and skills developed from external and internal assessments in Level 3, but they will have also proven their ability to take new material, to create new knowledge and to integrate their findings into their wider understanding of the discipline.

Because there is a performance standard and assessment specification but no formal curriculum, Scholarship candidates (often numbering three to five per school) prepare for the examination in different ways. In a sense, this independence provides good preparation for study and life at tertiary level, but some collective activities have effectively supported candidates in some areas. For example, at least two branches of the New Zealand Geographical Society (NZGS) run useful workshops on Scholarship. In 2014 Waikato University ran workshops at two venues and attracted 69 participants from 11 schools. The focus was mainly on understanding the documentation, working with the resources provided in the planning stages, responding appropriately to question stems, writing effectively, and using graphics. One workshopped outcome is reproduced below. The text was written by a group in response to the “writing effectively” challenge to produce a good opening paragraph for question 1 in the 2011 paper.

CAUSES OF THE WATER SCARCITY CRISIS (8 marks)

“Enough is not enough,” John Grimond, *The Economist* (20 May 2010)

“The apparent paradox in Grimond’s quote reveals an important factor in water scarcity. In places where there is more than enough water for human habitation, water shortages arise because of the *allocation of use*. Well-watered golf courses in Thailand restrict the supply and quality of water available to local people just as much as allocations of water for agricultural users in Waikato may limit the amount available for urban communities. My essay ...”

Yet despite there being a healthy number of candidates striving for a Scholarship in geography, all is not well. When the 2014 cohort of candidates at an NZGS preparation workshop were asked about their intentions to study geography at university, less than one-third identified geography as a core part of their programme. Management was seen as an attractive option, science was a well-rationalised choice by some, but geography was targeted by only a few workshop participants.

Geography scholarship: discovery integration, application and teaching in our subject

I now turn to look at how being awarded an NCEA Scholarship can lead to scholarship beyond the secondary sector, recognising (as stated in the opening paragraph of this chapter) that the ability to think, act and perform independently at the highest level is equally a measure of Scholarship and scholarship. Secondary students graduating to tertiary systems are encouraged to extend their expertise as independent thinkers, discover new content and master primary research skills in undergraduate degrees. However, they are considered by the Tertiary Education Council as new/emerging *scholars* only at master’s and doctoral level, with responsibility for teaching at least 20 percent of a university-level paper. It is worth noting that virtually all secondary geography teachers have university degrees and all will have both professional and/or applied qualifications in pedagogy. The specifications for the award of a doctorate (the benchmark of research scholarship in the tertiary system) at university typically require a thesis to show methods of research and scholarship; evidence intellectual independence; present arguments, findings and conclusions; and make a substantial contribution to knowledge in a particular field (University of Waikato, 2014).

In line with the reporting of student achievement data in secondary education, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) reports on scholarship in the tertiary sector through the crude national mechanism of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) assessment. It is

worth noting that the TEC was created under the same legislation (the 1989 Education Act) that established NZQA, it took more than a decade to establish the PBRF system (2003), and the early assessments were subject to criticism in tertiary education (Cupples & Pawson, 2012).

Geographers in tertiary education most often report through the Social Sciences and Other Cultural-Social Sciences panel in the PBRF system, one of 12 panels established by the TEC. The criteria this panel established (Tertiary Education Commission, 2012a) for the evidence geographers present for assessment indicate that research outputs (scholarship) should:

- be original, representing an intellectual advance or a significant contribution to knowledge
- exhibit intellectual and methodological rigour and coherence
- demonstrate intellectual and/or disciplinary impact, and/or demonstrate impact in the wider community.

To achieve excellence in the PBRF evaluation (outstanding Scholarship equivalence), the research work must address themes of primarily local, regional or national focus, and be of world-class standard and of the highest quality in theoretical approach and sophistication, using original evidence or materials in arguments and/or creative presentations (Tertiary Education Commission, 2012b, p. 9).

Many sector commentators note the difference between tertiary scholarship and research performance assessed by the PBRF, along with the politicised and otherwise problematic nature of the PBRF assessment (Middleton, 2009; Cupples & Pawson, 2012). The parallels with Scholarship are striking. In short

The intent of PBRF [read ‘Scholarship’] is positive, but the mechanism is crude; some very good academics [students] don’t enter PBRF [Scholarship geography], some of the best don’t do themselves justice in their Evidence Portfolios [on the day], and not all forms of scholarship are revealed.

These parallels encourage us to set aside assessment practices and explore how we describe scholarship as a lifelong education project for learners in the secondary system and teachers of geography everywhere. We can adapt the widely cited work of Ernest Boyer (1990) for these purposes.

In a call to expand traditional notions of scholarship, Boyer (1990, p. 17) nominates *discovery*—the act of creating new knowledge—as a key component of active scholarship, but complements this with the need to *integrate* this knowledge (Boyer, 1990, p. 19) on the basis of much wider inter- and multi-disciplinary understanding. Discovering new geographic knowledge and integrating geographic knowledge are almost daily goals of classroom geography, and are just as important in other learning contexts.

Boyer's third aspect of scholarship is the *application* of knowledge, with the suggestion that scholarship should serve some 'real' purpose. Applying geographical concepts is part of the *Geography Skills and Concepts* statements (Ministry of Education, 2014). The wider point about applying geographical knowledge is of particular interest in the current ideological climate in New Zealand ("Joyce unfair to force change on universities", 2014).ⁱⁱⁱ The extent to which scholarship is applied varies in geography from functional demographic analysis that underpins state policy formation (Hawke et al., 2014), to critical analysis of performance in the agricultural sector of this country (University of Canterbury, 2015).

The final aspect of scholarship (Boyer, 1990, p. 23) is the scholarship of *teaching*. In the secondary sector this form of scholarship is exercised more by qualified geography teachers than by students. Trained teachers are degree certified and often deeply inculcated with pedagogic skills; the question is whether this scholarship is recognised by geography students, by teachers themselves, or by the institutions in which they teach. It is worth pointing out that the scholarship of teaching is just as problematic in tertiary institutions: a new appointment in geography in the tertiary sector generally has an allocation of at least 40 percent of committed work time to *teaching*, but advancement is weighted towards research "productivity". On the upside, most tertiary institutions have developed qualifications in pedagogy that match the qualifications most teachers of geography already have.

Boyer (1990) wrote about scholarship in the United States in an era before state management practices began to have an impact on education. In the same era, the 1989 Education Act emerged as fundamental to our understanding of scholarship in New Zealand. The Act requires that the (tertiary) education system "contributes to the development of cultural and intellectual life in New Zealand" (Part 13, section 159) and that universities have "a role as critics and conscience of society" (Part 14, section 162[a]). The "critically evaluate" phrase in the Scholarship examination (noted above) is demonstrably part of the secondary programme, just as developing critical capacities is part role of the role of teachers of geography.

There is good evidence that geographers in the tertiary sector have contributed significantly to research-based scholarship in the last 50 years. The work in economics by Harvey Franklin (1978), on Treaty issues by Evelyn Stokes (1987), on tourism by Steve Britton (1991), the contribution on gender by Robyn Longhurst (2001), on migration by Richard Bedford (2011), and Eric Pawson and Tom Brooking's (2002) work on environmental histories exemplify this work. However, the counter-case can also be argued: university staff produce many research outputs but comparatively few have the high impact factors associated with critical international acclaim. Horrocks (2007) draws attention to the threats to scholarship in tertiary institutions:

There is considerable tension in the running of tertiary institutions. Many ... staff publications are routine in character, forms of intellectual busy work. ... There is considerable tension between the critic and conscience role of the universities and their need to keep governments happy and to fill the large holes in their budgets by extracting money from corporations and wealthy patrons. (pp. 54 & 61)

With reference to scholarship in New Zealand, the role of public intellectuals provides an important complement to the developing scholarship we find in our education system (Simmons, 2007). These concerns are just as relevant to the scholarship of geographical education as they are anywhere else, and this NZCER volume provides a good opportunity to make this point. Concerns about tertiary institutions relate to the extent to which the modern corporatised university can be the critic and conscience of society, but an equivalent range of concerns can be attached to all forms and sites of education. Simmons's (2007) *Speaking Truth to Power: Public Intellectuals Rethink New Zealand* offers an excellent platform to review public intellectuals' commentaries on the education sector. Three of the ten public intellectuals he interviews made/make extensive and critical public contributions to issues of power in the public sector.

Advancing scholarship in school geography

In an age of tall-poppy syndrome and anti-intellectualism (Tapper, 2014), a scholarly outlook may be considered unappealing by more school students than should be the case. This is of little surprise, as indicated by the seven demeaning characteristics Horrocks (2007) identified that adults routinely ascribe to the intellectual or scholar in New Zealand. Horrocks argues that there is virtually no appreciation that the intellectual or scholar engages in hard thinking, works

comfortably with ideas (having developed skills in conceptual, strategic and lateral thinking), keeps an open mind questioning his or her own assumptions, and is dedicated to something larger than ego or career (truth, art, science).^{iv} Scholarship is a personal attribute, and the pathways to it are highly individual, but for it to remain hidden is clearly not a healthy indicator of an education system.

The central question is: ‘Can we get general agreement on a definition derived from the work of Boyer?’ My view is that this is not in fact difficult. The significance of research-based *discovery* is easily asserted with reference to practice in geography at every level, and the *integration* of new knowledge is similarly demonstrable. I have argued that *teaching* is core scholarship in secondary education, but not such a clear priority in the tertiary system. The *application* of scholarship is more difficult to sustain beyond physical and applied geography, but if we include critic and conscience of society as an application of discovery, we have a definition that we can work with. With reference to secondary education, the Scholarship and scholarship frameworks already exist. The annual publication of the examination paper of the country’s best scholar in geography indicates that our best students are capable of thinking, acting and performing independently at the highest level.

In order to advance scholarship by sowing the seeds of broader definitions during the Scholarship process, I offer the following four recommendations.

1. We should *re-label those with qualifications in geography and pedagogy as scholars*, recognising the role of teaching in scholarship. An important step here is to acclaim the scholarship of our best secondary teachers widely. Professional teachers have been demeaned by George Bernard Shaw’s (1903) comment that “He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches”. The century that followed reversed this canard by developing the scholarship of pedagogy along with systems of accreditation and performance, such that almost all learners in secondary and tertiary education have access to high-quality geography teaching.

Strategy: for 60 years the NZGS has made annual awards recognising national and international scholarship in research, in teaching and in service. One secondary teacher (Chris Davidson) has been awarded Distinguished Geographer status, and one (Suzanne Smith) has become a Life Fellow. While eight teachers have won Distinguished Service awards since 2010, none have been named for Excellence in Teaching. Nominations are called for, and NZGS Fellowships are an option.

2. We should re-educate all geographers about the *history and purpose of Scholarship* and articulate its societal benefits. With reference to Scholarship, we need to understand the history, appreciate recent attempts to include critical thinking in geography, and promote Scholarship as a pathway to scholarship.

Strategy: the NZBOGT should promote the high-quality NZQA website, and place Scholarship on the agenda for cluster group meetings nationally. Conferences such as SocCon and the NZGS conference should call for workshops that promote the lifetime benefits of scholarship.

3. We should *develop support for Scholarship candidates in geography* in any and all schools in the country. Year 13 is incredibly busy, and students become increasingly aware of the impending transition to the workplace, further education or a gap-year experience. Teachers are sometimes faced with more than one assessment system and need to give priority to those completing the Level 3 qualification.

Strategy: develop a cluster group approach to Scholarship support at the sub-regional level, using social media. For example, establish Facebook communities supported by NZGS-funded branches.

4. We should *remove the impression that Scholarship is a terminal secondary qualification* that is largely irrelevant beyond school. Goudie (1993) described a “great divide” as schools and universities de-linked in the 1990s.

Strategy: siloes are temporal, and scholarship is a life-long learning process, which should be recognised by supporting sabbaticals in schools and teaching fellowships in geography *and* education.

Conclusion

I argued at the beginning of this chapter that Scholarship is not often the subject of research or debate in our national education system. Scholarship is an almost obligatory component of a mature secondary education system: it is state funded, with benefits restricted to those that can be enjoyed within our national borders. There is no curriculum, few resources are available to support Scholarship, and teachers’ workloads are very high, so it is easy to see how schools sometimes place their priorities elsewhere and teachers see it as an extra load.

On the upside, the Scholarship examination has been well developed for over a decade, with the structure of the paper and the nature of the questions delivering good opportunities for those who can think, act and perform independently at the highest level to achieve well. In addition, NZQA delivers good-quality documentation, and the second-tier teaching and learning resources provided by the Ministry of Education are now also well developed.

The more important function of the chapter, however, was to argue that Scholarship is only the beginning of scholarship. In various places in the chapter I have contended that processes of Scholarship (such as critically analyse and critically evaluate) translate seamlessly to the requirement of universities to act as the critic and conscience of society. I also expressed the view that teachers' pedagogic practice lies clearly within the boundaries of scholarship, and there is an opportunity to reclaim this space. The strategies I outline are accessible to all.

My final comment presents the greatest challenge in the current age. *Speaking Truth to Power* requires us to be forthright in our defence of scholarship within the state education system. This is sometimes an uncomfortable responsibility, but I argue it is one we must accept.

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