The Progress, Problems and Forsight of Scholarship of Teaching Research in China Since 2000

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Abstract

Since 2000, Chinese researchers have introduced American ideology of scholarship of teaching (SoT), and conduct localizationas analysis on its definition, connotation and assessing standards, and initially form SoT theoretical framework based on Chinese reality. Researchers have carried out empirical investigations for Chinese SoT levels in universities, and discussed on overall design of Chinese university SoT system from such aspects as SoT cultivating system, value acceptance system, teaching administrative and quality guarantee system based on SoT, teachers' specialty development system in the view of SoT, and SoT communicating and sharing system. Although SoT research has greatly developed in China, there still exist the following problems: just advocating foreign theories without taking consideration of Chinese context; taking old route in research path; more theoretical imagination but less investigation, many difficulties to implementation recommendation. It will be a tendency for future research to further clarify SoT theoretical foundation, explore the practice from the bottom up and probe into new epistemology and research paradigm applied to SoT.

INTRODUCTION

In 1990, aiming at such issues as neglect of undergraduate education, the scholarship system of "highlight of research and belittling of teaching", and teacher's evaluation machanism of "publish or perish" in American research universities and in order to improve the quality of university teaching, Ernest Leroy Boyer first explicitly put forward the concept of "scholarship of teaching" (SoT) in *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professsoriate*. Since 2000, Chinese researchers have begun to translate and introduce research results of foreign SoT, analyze connotation of it, introspect status quo of internal SoT and explore construction route of SoT system, and have achieved a lot in these aspects. Taking "SoT" as subject, the author searched for China Academic Journals Full-text Database and China Doctoral and Masters' Dissertations Full-text Database, and discovered that there are 210 articles (including masters and doctoral dissertations) about SoT till July 22, 2014. For 36 important articles, the author adopts content analysis method, comprehensively master research status quo of SoT, expose existing problems in research, conduct deep introspection and expect future research direction and tendency on the basis of reflection and learning from others.

1. PROGRESS OF SOT RESEARCH

1.1 "Copinism": Medium Period of Chinese SoT

1.1.1 Introducing Thoughts of SoT Leading Representatives

Boyer being the first man advocating SoT, to do research in and introduce his thoughts is one of interests for Chinese researchers. One researcher has translated Boyer's *Selected Speeches*, and presented Boyer's proposals in university quality, SoT, academic community and academic mission, which are the milestone for Chinese research in SoT thought (Boyer, 2002). Meanwhile, it was beneficial for us to understand the source of SoT thought for some researchers took the concepts of John Dewey's "reflective thinking" and Donald A. Schon's "reflective practitioner" as the beginning interpretation of SoT thought (Wang, 2010). After that, researchers began to review historical background of SoT, comprehensively interpret Boyer's SoT thought, and analyze academic features of research basis, creativity and communicability of teaching proposed by Boyer. Some researchers discussed Boyer's assessing principles for SoT, i.e., "quality of scholars, standard of scholarship task, test of scholarship and reliability of procedures" (Qi, 2005; Fang, 2007; Zan, 2008; Wei, 2009; Li, 2010; Song, 2010). And some researchers pointed out the significance and limit of Boyer's SoT thought, the former of which is that the concept of teaching as scholarship not only expands connotation and denotation of scholarship, but also provides a brand-new angle for specialization of university teachers, and the latter of which is that Boyer's concern for teachers' teaching indicates this is a kind of scholarship under teaching-centered paradigm (Song, 2010).

Except for focus on Boyer's thought, some researchers introduced R. Rice's three elements in SoT—synoptic capacity, pedagogical content knowledge and what we know about learning, Cambridge B. L's suggestion for improving teaching and scholarship research based on Glasnost, Keith Trigwell's substance about how teaching promotes learning, and C. Kreber's SoT model and 3×3 matrix evaluation system (Song, 2011).

Some researchers have fully reviewed Lee S. Shulman's view of university SoT, introduced his "scholarship teaching and learning", interpreted his view of getting teaching into common property of teachers through three principles of "making public, facing comments and reflecting on the results", distinguished his three concepts of "SoT", "good teaching" and "scholarly teaching", and discussed his suggestion about how to conduct SoT movement in practice (Wang, 2006; Jing, 2009).

Aforementioned researches introduce Boyer's and Shulman's views on SoT and help to form frame-based cognition, which provides foundation for Chinese researchers to master connotation of SoT and discuss some issues in Chinese higher education from the the angle of SoT.

1.1.2 Systematically Expounding American University SoT Movement

Some researchers, from such aspects as the background of university SoT arising in America, development of university SoT movement, innovation of universities and teachers for responding to new idea and international influences of university SoT, systematically expound American university SoT movement, and argue that American university SoT movement makes teaching of university teachers obtain more rational and creative understanding in theory and practice and "practical wisdom" of them achieve desirable acknowledgement and support. University SoT movement has possibility in sustainable development as a kind of new university teaching culture intending to change the neglect of "teaching culture". University of Wisconsin-Madison and Indiana University Bloomington have specific measures for reference in promoting SoT (Wang, 2006, 2008, 2010; Huang, 2011).

Wang (2010) summarizes development progress of American SoT, exposes SoT comes into a period of teaching community after the periods of Boyer and Shulman, in which SoT is continually being extended in depth and width, obtains new advance — SoT extending to scholarship of teaching and learning, and leads to a kind of explorative, public and communicative SoT.

These researches, in combination with cases, conduct systematic explanation on the deployment of American SoT, which provide examples of effective operation of SoT in American universities, make aware of the cultural tendency that university teachers change their focus on their own profession to learners' learning (Wang, 2006), and promote Chinese university teachers and administrators to think how to change their roles to prepare for this change.

1.1.3 Discussing the Mechanism of Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching to Promote SoT

Some researches sum up the functions and internal mechanism of Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in carrying out the transformation of SoT from the theory to the practice, and point out the main cause for CFAT to promote American higher education since its establishment is reasonably making use of and timely dealing with the relationship between various plans and education research, paying close attention to holistic problems in the practice of higher education development, and driving American higher educational circle to widely discuss quality problems of American higher education around the connotation of academic work of university teachers through concern and exploration of undergraduate education and academic

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work connotation of university teacher (Li & Xu, 2007; Li, 2008). One researcher suggests that CFAT promotes university SoT through programs, cooperate with other organizations (e.g., American Association for Higher Education), take the leading role in American university SoT movement, make SoT become the most important educational reformation in the last 20 years and prove that intermediary institutions have influences on contemporary educational development (Wang, 2008).

Aforesaid summary exposes the function of Carnegie in improving teaching quality of higher education, but certain mechanism and corresponding cultural environment are needed for working. Therefore it requires us to study in how to ensure Chinese non-governmental institutions' assurance for teaching quality of universities.

In sum, Chinese researchers devoted to reviewing SoT thoughts and development of American SoT in early days to make people be conscious of historical background, source of concept, core idea, practical strategies, pushing institutions, achievements, etc. of SoT, which contributes to the spread of SoT in China, and provides framework guide for subsequent researchers to locally discuss connotation, content, strategy, practice, etc..

1.2 Montage and Reform: Local Sprout of Chinses SoT

Since the introduction of SoT, Chinese researchers have been exploring in localized theories and initially formed theoretical framework for research with the introduction of western SoT in the following aspects:

(a) The concept is gradually clear. Yu Xindeng is the first one to put forward "SoT" in China, but the concept is totally different from Boyer's view of "SoT", which believes that SoT levels of university teachers mainly reflect in understanding educational guidelines and polices and mastering pedagogy and pedagogical theories (Yu & Yu, 2000). Geng Bingbing is the first researcher to analyze definitions of SoT based on Boyer's SoT, and she describes SoT is that university teachers demonstrate their knowledge, abilities and qualities through educational research, cooperation and communication, and reflective teaching when conducting teaching in their own field (Geng, 2002). Yin (2008), Yuan (2008), Wang (2008), Shi (2008), Li (2010) and Song (2011) define SoT in view of respective dimension, and Han (2013) and Liu (2013) sum up various definitions and suggest that they have the essence in common—SoT is both academic activity and teaching level, that is to say, a kind of practical wisdom produced by teachers in doing systematic research in practical problems of teaching (Han, 2013). (b) The connotation is gradually perfected. Qi Shanshan considers that SoT includes three constituents of knowledge, ability and quality (Qi & Yao, 2004). Yao limin states that SoT of university teachers specifically manifests in extensive understanding of teaching, comprehensive knowledge thereof, excellent teaching ability and outstanding

teaching results (Yao, 2010). Jiang Xifeng etc. write that SoT has deep implication in various aspects such as teaching features, teachers' roles, teacher training, teaching management, teaching organization, construction of teaching quality and teaching research (Jiang & Peng, 2011).

(c) Assessing standard has basically taken shape. The formation of assessing standard is a major sign for the theorization of SoT, so four theoretical problems about SoT assessment as "Why assess, assess what, who assess and how to assess" are discussed and it suggests that quality assessment must be combined with quantity assessment and one assessing method of "SoT portfolio" should be attached importance to (Zhang, 2011). One researcher elaborates a "9-constituent" SoT model, designs evaluating index for SoT levels based on it, establishes corresponding SoT assessing system and points out effective ways to improve SoT levels (Zhou, Huang, & Ma, 2011). Some researchers put forwards eight dimensions, each of which can divide into four rating levels of quality evaluating model and quantity index system Song, 2013). By presenting four dimensions of assessing theory for SoT research—knowledge, research, communication and autonomy, Song Yan put it into practice and found that SoT levels of Chinese university teachers are on the low side (Wang, 2012).

Clear statement of SoT, perfection of its connotation and formation of its assessing standards indicate the initial formation of theoretical framework of SoT and provide theoretical basis for practical application of SoT, while there still exist some obvious problems, for example, no consistent view of field is defined whether in the interpretation of the concept, mastery of connotation or the design of assessing standards. The exploration in theories of SoT and deep study in higher reliability theoretical system thereof is still highlights of research.

1.3 Perspective of Status Quo: Localized Development of Chinese SoT

The concern about status quo of SoT of Chinese university teachers is conducted by positive investigation.

1.3.1 Case investigation of Status Quo of SoT of Universities

Some researchers have investigated status quo of SoT of teachers in local universities (Hunan, Henan and Shandong province) and generally found that the levels of SoT is not very high in those local universities (Yin, 2008; Li, 2010; Song, 2013).

Wei Ge has investigated status quo of SoT of teachers in Peking university, and discovers that SoT levels thereof is generally better than others, but imperfection of administrative system becomes the main cause for restricting the development of SoT of teachers, within which disciplines and specialities of teachers lead to obvious discrepancies of their SoT, SoT, therefore, may turn into a new platform for breaking disciplinary barriers

and advancing cross-disciplinary communication (Wei, 2014).

1.3.2 Comprehensive Investigation in SoT in Different Types of Universities

Some researchers have investigated types, features and satisfactory degrees of SoT (teaching, research, service and administrative affairs), and found university teachers conduct academic work mainly around teaching and researching, which is gradually transferring to stress on researching in traditional ideas along with the improvement of their seniorities, and thus have effective decision-making power in scholastic system. Based on these investigations, the researchers suggest that views of SoT of university teachers should be changed and their scholastic power should be extended (Lu et al., 2010).

Meanwhile, some researchers have investigated 19 different types of universities in China (including research universities, research-teaching universities, teaching and research universities and teaching universities, and discovered that Chinese universities haven't established ideology and view of SoT, lack corresponding system for support and are confronted with various systematic barriers. Current SoT establishing environment forms the external obstacle for SoT, and traditional scholastic views and culture contribute to the internal systematic obstacles thereof (Song, 2011).

One investigation is cast on the status quo of SoT of teachers in 40 different types of universities and the analysis about teaching attitudes, teaching devotion, teaching preparation, classroom teaching acts, teaching security system, etc. of teachers with different professional titles, genders and educational backgrounds has been conducted. As a result, the devotion of Chinese university teachers presents the role characteristics consistent with the type of the university, teaching attitudes also show typical discrepancies among universities, and current teacher training and operation effects of teaching-support system should be improved (Shi, Xu, & Li, 2011).

Above-mentioned investigations exhibit contour-like status quo of Chinese university SoT, within which it can be found that the highlight of university SoT includes two elements — teachers and system. SoT levels of teachers are different along with different types of universities, which mean that levels, views and devotion degrees of teachers contribute to the determinative factor for improving their SoT levels. In the latter element, external security system supporting SoT is the external element for constraining SoT of teachers. Revealment of status quo can help theorists and policy makers definitely understand research directions and pertinence of policies, but unfortunately, it cannot ensure the scientificalness of research just for its research tools designed upon failure of thoroughly mastering theoretical basis and core ideas of SoT. Research results, in consequence, are unable to be integrated to make use of their combined effects.

Therefore, it is a key point to develop research tools based on SoT theories to pay attention to the status quo of Chinese SoT.

1.3.3 Construction of Theories: Holistic Design of Chinese SoT

Institutionalization of SoT has revealed its importance for international SoT movement's development from presenting of SoT concept and extension of its connotation since 1990s to conducting large activities as practice, evaluation and introspection of SoT, and Issurance of relevant journals, monographs and academic conferences (Hou, 2010). When analyzing the progress of SoT institutionalization , Chinese researchers discover that currently Chinese SoT has been widely covered in appraisal of academic posts and promotional system, academic award system and academic resource distribution system, and is difficult to reverse because of such reasons as drift of university functions, deficiency of teaching-ability improvement system of university teachers and dwarf of teaching research by speciality research. Then they suggest that it is the only road to impel "uncover" of SoT to the state of "no cover" from system design level by constructing Chinese So T system, comprehensively designing and constructing SoT cultivating system, value acceptance system, teaching administrative system, teachers' speciality development system, and SoT communicating and sharing system (Chen & Yi, 2010).

1.3.3.1 SoT Cultivating System

Some researchers state that it is necessary to train university teachers from the angle of SoT, stress on the value of SoT in postgraduate educational system, conduct teaching training and practice supervising and assessing mechanism, ensure teaching abilities of the postgraduates through strict procedures and standards and truly improve teaching qualities of the postgraduates (Cheni, 2010; Yang, 2014).

Zheng and Yao (2007) point out that cultivation of SoT system should take SoT research as a method to improve teachers' SoT. Chen (2010) notes that "cultivating in teaching practice and sublimiting in teaching research is the root of SoT cultivating system. And Feng Jun has conducted holistically analysis and states that the cultivation based on SoT of universities can be embarked on the following aspects: action research of teaching practice is the growing point of university SoT, grass-root teaching and research organization should be the platform thereof, growing environment thereof can be cultivated, teaching-centered consciousness should be established, development pattern thereof should be explored and set up, and the functions of academic bodies and organizations should be exerted (Feng, 2010).

1.3.3.2 Value Acceptance System of SoT

Establishing value acceptance system of SoT is the only way to make SoT gets rid of marginalization of SoT in

academic assessing system. Researchers separately study three aspects as post appraisal system, incentive system and evaluation system of teachers. Chen (2010) suggests that appraisal system of academic posts should be classified and constructed, and post appraisal mechanism of "teaching-type professors" should be established. Meanwhile, Fang Xueli points out that it is necessary to reconstruct teaching assessing index system in post appraisal and appointment system of university teachers in order to make teaching obtain overall and reasonable acknowledgement, realize equivalent evaluation of teaching and research and promote balanced development thereof (Fang, 2010). Yang Chao suggests that SoT incentive system should be established to change the acts and systematic design of "stressing on award on scholarship of speciality and belittlement on award on SoT", value of SoT achievement of teachers should be represented (Yang, 2014), academic evaluation and teacher appraisal system should be reformed and form a teaching quality assessing system directed by SoT.

1.3.3.3 Teaching Administrative and Quality Guarantee System Based on SoT

One researcher analyzed current teaching administrative system of Chinese universities from the angle of SoT and discovered various flaws, including lack of academic ideas by administrators, deficiency of consciousness of teaching quality, imperfection of constraint mechanism and absence of effective assessing system. Thus it is suggested that SoT ideas can be integrated with teaching administrative system to form effective teaching quality assessing system and systematic teaching administrative system (Liu & Shi, 2008), establish sound teaching quality supervision, guarantee and constraint mechanisms, reconstruct teaching assessing system from the aspects of assessing objectives, contents, standard, patterns and subjects (Wang, 2012), design the contents of university teaching assessing system based on SoT (Song, 2010), form multiple- assessing system of teaching in accordance with different types of teaching, and with reference to six assessing stands of scholarship work stated by Glassick, etc. and 3×3 matrix pattern pointed out by Kreber based on teaching reflection, establish procuring, dynamic and normal monitoring system of basic data of teaching, conduct comprehensive evaluation of teaching attitudes, abilities and effects of teachers, and set up release system for teaching basic data and teachers' assessing results (Bu et al., 2012).

Besides, Zhang (2010), Xiang (2011), Ai (2014), Chen (2010), Sun (2012), etc. believe that we must change ideas, respect SoT, foster autonomous culture concept of SoT quality (Xiang, 2011), form scholarly teaching groups via stipulation of regulations and establishment of systems, and endowment of power and increase of capabilities, cultivate SoT community of teachers and students, strengthen cultural management of SoT and promote SoT quality cultural development (Sun, 2012).

1.3.3.4 Teachers' Speciality Development System in the View of SoT

Some researchers consider that the views of SoT provide realized logical path for teachers' speciality development (Wang, 2012; Zhang, 2013). Huang Peisen has established realistic logic for specialization of new faculties as follows: the core is concerned of teaching professional development, the root is solving practical problems in teaching and the guarantee is perfecting policies and SoT assessing system (Huang, 2014).

Some researchers have designed the route of university teachers to become SoT teachers in the following ways: universities, university teachers and administrators should realize and attach importance to university SoT and create learning community. Universities must conduct pre-service and in-service teaching training; university teachers should learn how to teach, conduct teaching practice and reflect on teaching (Yao et al., 2006); university administrators must draw up a kind of system for SoT assessing and incentive to guide teachers to focus on SoT, promote speciality development of teachers and construct a learning system of life-long teaching for teachers (Han, 2009). Otherwise, we should build up a learning community for teachers between teachers and teachers between students, improve teachers' development, and realize unified integration of the roles of educators, researchers and learners (Chang, 2011).

1.3.3.5 SoT Communicating and Sharing System

American scholar Shulman and Hutchins describe three properties of SoT activity—openness of findings, acceptance of critique, and communicating and sharing with peers. Some researchers point out that Chinese SoT communicating and sharing system can be constructed in accordance with aforesaid standards. First of all, we should build up nationwide professional SoT organizations and institutions, set SoT organizations from the country to local level and even to the level of universities for exerting different functions, sponsor and propagate SoT and realize communication and share of SoT. Secondly, we can build up SoT findings sharing platform including SoT works, SoT professional periodicals and SoT websites to bring SoT achievement of university teachers into open, and make experiences shared and commented by peers. At last, we could establish reasonable evaluation supervising mechanism and sharing and incentive mechanism to make comments of peer's objective, representative and accurate, and simultaneously promotes cohesiveness of sharers (Yang, 2014).

To conclude, Chinese researchers have actively discussed systematic design of Chinese University SoT and gradually form the contour of the system, which represents researchers' eagerness for SoT practical value and points out a direction for development of

Chinese SoT. However, being short of the support of a solid theoretical foundation and empirical investigation data, and test of practice, where is the scientificalness of this kind of design framework of SoT system? Is the realization in China possible? It needs further research to explore in these aspects.

2. PROBLEMS IN SOT RESEARCH

Over the past 15 years, SoT has developed greatly in China, but there still exist the following problems.

2.1 Advocating Foreign Theories in Research Orientation

Emerging in America, SoT has its particular historical background and source of theories. SoT in America is a kind of movement, which has corresponding cultural environment and systematic guarantee, and even is supported by theoretical foundation applied with its national conditions. It deserves credit for Chinese researchers have introduced western SoT thoughts and locally constructed theoretical framework of Chinese SoT. But in other aspects, lacking of deep analysis into Chinese social status quo, cultural views and educational system, blind "graft" makes the research advocate foreign theories but do not digest them, which therefore cause the limitation of theoretical foundation. Currently Chinese SoT theories are based on Boyer's conception framework and Shulman's evaluation standard of SoT properties. The rigor and scientificalness of Boyer's SoT ideological system are questioned in western educational circles. In addition, Chinese researchers are short of profound comprehension of Boyer's thoughts, which brings Chinses SoT research and practice into fuzziness. Although Shulman's evaluation standard of SoT properties is simple and feasible, there are still various problems existed to be cleared for how to make such judging standard of SoT properties become a kind of theoretical foundation to guide practice.

2.2 Taking Old Route in Research Path

The present and practice of SoT idea not only expect the overall acknowledgement of teachers' work to break out traditional binary opposition of "teaching and researching", but also hope teachers particularly focus on their own teaching practice, study how to teach based on the principle of "in the teaching practice, through practice and for practice", improve teaching abilities and then obtain the objective of improving teaching quality. From the aforesaid statements, this kind of idea and thoughts to improve teaching quality of university teachers is definitely different from the guarantee of teaching quality from an external source in the past, but tries to realize improvement of teaching quality from teaching practice. Thus at present, in Western universities, reflective teaching practice becomes the hotspot. Chinese researchers, however, seem to walk on the external guarantee road in the name of SoT.

2.3 Flooding Theoretical Imagination in Research Paradigm

Chinese current SoT research paradigm pays more attention to theoretical visions, but belittles practical exploration and empirical investigation. It suffers of doubts about feasibility just because the solutions and suggestions based on these visions are lacking empirical data and test of practical experiments. The scientificalness of investigation findings and the application of practice in a few of empirical investigations still need to be proved for they who have no solid theoretical basis.

2.4 Sluggishly Implementing Research Findings

Researchers exert greatly in SoT development, and suggest establishing a guarantee system for SoT, but in practice there exist many obstacles.

(a) The block of traditional views of scholarship and education. Traditional views of scholarship such as "scholarship are equal to research" and "university teachers must study profound knowledge" are firmly entrenched. Traditional views of teaching as "the teacher is the one who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge and resolve doubts" but not academic research have become the mainstream. For these reasons, the thoughts of SoT cannot stand against such traditional views in a short term and for the new dominant value.

(b) The hinder of traditional scholastic system. Chinese traditional scholastic system takes research and discovery as the main paradigm, which soundly and authoritatively dominates the whole educational circle and becomes the main form. Therefore it must be a long repeating and integrating process for SoT to break out the barrier of such traditional system, obtain corresponding position in the system and safeguard the representation of its value.

(c) SoT research findings are short of funding support for advancing practice. The subjects of Chinese SoT research are theorists in universities, but not the administrators who are in charge of funds or have policy-making power. China cannot continually provide fund support for researchers because of deficiency in intermediary institutions such as many foundations for long support of educational cause in America. Abovementioned elements lead Chinese SoT research to lack of practice and sluggish advance. It is yet to take shape for constructing SoT development modal based on practice and promoting integrating and sharing channels of SoT findings.

3. FORSIGHT OF SOT RESEARCH

Although currently there exist a lot of theoretical corners for SoT research and challenges for exploring

practical paths, the value of study itself still reflects great significance for social and educational development. As a result, further clarification of theoretical foundations of SoT, practical exploration from the bottom up, empirical research and transformation of research paradigm will be the focus of future research.

Firstly, research in SoT theoretical foundations should pay more attention to mastering the practicality of teaching and intrinsic property of scholarship. On one hand, we should conduct research from multi-angle views in elements influencing SoT development to improve systematisms and comprehensiveness of the research. SoT, in the other hand, is a kind of exotica, so it deserves continual research and deliberation in how to conduct reconceptualization of the concept based on local standpoint, and how to further clarify the relationship between internal mechanism of SoT and all elements.

Secondly, practical research of SoT from the bottom up will be an inevitable choice for SoT to descend from the high-end altar and step on the ground. SoT exploration, in combination with specific teaching practice, is the embodiment of practicality of SoT, and also the necessity of theoretical sublimate of SoT. The 2^{1st} century is an age of responsibility and service, thus any educational reform and development must take charge of learning quality and development of students. It will be one of tendencies for Chinese future SoT to transform research paradigm, conduct empirical investigation and research in students' learning experiences in order to grasp learning interests and status of students, and carry out teaching practical exploration with regard to "learning" by means of learning determining teaching.

The third point is that future research and development of SoT require a new epistemology and cannot be bound by existing epistemology and research paradigm just because confronted with new time and space environment and demand, traditional scholarship ideas and research paradigm obviously cannot apply to social development and educational requirement, and constrain the development of SoT and its practical advance (Schon, 1995).

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