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Scholarship of Teaching & Learning: Who, what, when, where, why, and how?

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• Diana Sturges: Why do SoTL?

• Hsiu-Lien Lu: How do I use SoTL projects to answer my educational questions and get involved in service?
What is SoTL? and How do you get started?

Nancy McBride Arrington, PhD
What is SoTL?

• Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

• SoTL - “. . . a set of habits and dispositions for meeting the challenges that we face as learners and citizens” (Huber and Hutchings, 2005, pp. 1-2).

• “Perhaps the most commonly shared [definitions of SoTL] are notions of SoTL as involving some form of reflection on teaching and learning, and that this reflection or some product of the reflection is shared with peers” (McKinney, 2007, p. 8).
What is SoTL?

• “The scholarship of teaching and learning goes beyond scholarly teaching [see p. 9] and involves systematic study of teaching and/or learning and the public sharing and review of such work through presentations, publications or performances” (McKinney, 2007, p. 10).

• “SoTL is a mindset, an attitude, a world view, that yes, in its time yields products, - products that can be judged against numerous criteria being proliferated for evaluating it” (Gilpin, 2009).
Teaching Commons/Commons

The teaching commons or commons is a term often associated with SoTL

• **Teaching Commons** - a conceptual space for exchange and community among faculty, students, administrators, and all others committed to learning as an essential activity of life in contemporary democratic society
More Thoughts on SOTL

• SoTL
  • is rooted in inquiry and engagement
  • reconceptualizes teaching as an ongoing and scholarly process as opposed to isolated activities
  • involves processes such as questioning, designing, investigating, and analyzing that are commonly called research
  • is a growing global, yet often localized, movement

  (Bass, 1999; Bender & Gray, 1999; Huber & Morreale, 2002)
Characteristics of SOTL

• SoTL distinguished from other endeavors by 4 main characteristics:
  • It treats teaching “as a form of inquiry into student learning” (Huber and Morreale, 2002, p. 9).
  • It views teaching as public and community oriented, not as private practice (Huber and Hutchings, 2005).
  • In order to qualify as scholarship the work should be subject to review and evaluation (Bass, 1999).
  • It should be accessible to others in one’s field (Bass, 1999).
Emergence of SoTL

• Scholarship Reconsidered (Boyer, 1990)-a broader, more holistic vision of scholarship

• Scholarship Assessed (Glassick et al., 1997)-what SoTL shares with other scholarships

• Also drew from literature on teacher knowledge and character of learning (Some prior to Boyer and some after)

• The assessment movement helped to focus attention on student learning

• 1990s also witnessed growth of teaching and learning centers that support faculty in multiple ways
Getting Started

The Question

• SoTL projects do not always begin with a question. Instead they often begin with a problem stated in question form:
  • *What can about I do about . . . class attendance, getting students to read or think more critically?* or perhaps, *My current strategy for . . . grouping, teaching writing skills or using case studies . . . doesn’t appear to be as effective as it used to be. What’s the source of the problem?*

• One way to answer these teaching and learning problems, and sometimes program and departmental ones, is to conduct a SoTL project
Getting Started (Cont.)

**Consider the context.** Think about the course or program characteristics: *What groups will be studied? All students or courses, or a subset? One group or multiple constituencies? What is the level of the learners? What are the current objectives and teaching strategies or program policies? What methods are now in place to measure effectiveness or outcomes? Will the “investigator” be the instructor or someone else? etc.*

**Articulate your goal** by answering this simple question: *What do I want to improve or change in my course or program?*
GETTING STARTED (Cont.)

• Literature Review
  • What is known? How does this fit in?

• Ethics Considerations
  • IRB

• Challenges, impediments
  • Identify and look for solutions

• Assessment Methods
  • How to measure change
  • Data sources
  • Timeline
“...the best instructors in all fields are those who read what others are doing, evaluate their own successes, and refine their teaching through careful consideration of the evidence before them”

(Bernstein, 2010, p.1).
Trent W. Maurer

Theoretical & Social Contextualization in SoTL
Lorraine Gilpin (2014) in *IJ-SoTL*:

- “The *purpose* of research and theory is to explain and inform practice with an agenda to improve practice. Ultimately, SoTL involves informing practice with theory and generating theoretical insights from practice.” (p. 1, italics added)

- “SoTL’s existence rests on individual and collective desire, and subsequent engagement, of faculty to improve student learning and the contexts in which teaching and learning occur.” (p. 5, italics added)

- SoTL work needs to be grounded in appropriate theory, and mindful of/applicable to the broader and the specific social contexts of teaching and learning, but how?
Pat Hutchings (2007) in *IJ-SoTL*:

- Theory is too often neglected in SoTL research
- “theory matters in the scholarship of teaching and learning because it is essential to a meaning-making, knowledge-building *process.*” (p. 3, italics added)
- There is existing “theoretical work about learning and how it occurs—-theories about the development of expertise, learning styles, deep and surface learning, stages of intellectual development, the improvement of teaching” (p. 2)
Pat Hutchings (2007) in *IJ-SoTL*, cont’d.:

- “discipline-based theories may also play an important role” (p. 2)
- “theory” can take multiple forms (e.g., models or metaphors) and connects to practice in different ways (e.g., deductively vs. inductively)
- “theory may emerge in the processes of teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning, rather than serving as its starting point—and that the theory most at issue is that which informs ongoing practice. In such work, theory is not an end in itself, but a condition for doing better what we most care about as educators.” (p. 3)
Lorraine Gilpin (2009), *MountainRise*:

- As an example of an “inductive” model of theory:
  - SoTL is reflective, reflexive, and recursive
    - Reflective: requires consideration and contemplation
    - Reflexive: directed back on itself with ethical and moral imperatives
    - Recursive: comes full circle, ready to “re-currere”

• In *IJ-SoTL* and *TLI*

• SoTL should focus on student *learning* over the teaching part of SoTL, consistent with early focus at Carnegie (CASTL)

• Push to see students as both primary *consumers* of SoTL research and as collaborators/co-constructors of knowledge
Sioux McKenna (2013), *IJ-SoTL*:

• Critique of student-centered approaches to SoTL:
  o “student-centered approaches rarely consider the actual knowledge being taught and learnt. There is little consideration of how disciplinary knowledge is constructed and what norms and values underpin those constructions.” (p. 1)
Sioux McKenna (2013), *IJ-SoTL*, cont’d:


- Others have made the call in terms of a need for “learning-centered approaches” (O’Brien, Millis, & Cohen, 2009).

- “We need to show students how knowledge is produced within the discipline in ways that are interesting and accessible so that they too can produce such knowledge, and so that they can critique and develop the disciplinary knowledge production processes further.” (p. 2)
Sioux McKenna (2013), *IJ-SoTL*, cont’d:

- Student-centered approaches typically see student success or failure as a result of characteristics inherent to the student, as an individual, rather than a member of a larger social group with little acknowledgement of the socially constructed nature of universities and the practices within them that may contribute to student success or failure.
Heather Kanuka (2011), *IJ-SoTL*:

• “More problematic is that the choices we make about using theoretical frameworks are often made based on socialization resulting in an unfounded allegiance to a theoretical approach rather than an informed decision about what theoretical framework is most effective at explaining the research problem under investigation. Selecting a poor and/or inappropriate theory will not provide a significant contribution to improve teaching and learning in higher education.” (p. 5)
Why do SoTL? – Diana Sturges

• The inaugural issue of Teaching & Learning Inquiry, the journal of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL), features several essays that articulate the need for and value of SoTL.

• This presentation includes a synthesis of some of these essays, as well as other sources

- Boyer (1990) redefined how we look at research, teaching and learning
  - Discovery, application, integration and teaching
- Boyer (1990:15) gave us a perspective on the false dichotomy between teaching and research

- Managed research tends to clearly dissociate research activities from teaching activities and promote de-contextualized and dis-intellectualised views of teaching, SoTL fully embraces the complexity of educational practice (Fanghanel, 2013, p. 60)

You are all experts in your field, but also you are teachers: we all endure in teaching. And we have to do research anyways. (GSU New Faculty Orientation, August 2014)
2. Foster student learning - Trigwell, 2013

• It is a valid and achievable purpose of SoTL
• The teachers who adopt scholarly, inquiring, reflective, peer reviewing, student-centered approaches to teaching are likely to be achieving the purpose of improving student learning.

Previous studies have shown that certain approaches to teaching lead to deeper learning than other approaches (p. 98). These more effective approaches are highly utilized by those who practice SoTL (p. 99-100). Therefore, practitioners of SoTL are more likely to foster students’ deep learning (pp. 100-101).
3. Brings real benefits to other students and faculty

• Scholarly teachers are those who consult the literature, select and apply appropriate information to guide the teaching-learning experience, conduct systematic observations, analyze the outcomes, and obtain peer evaluation of their classroom performance (Richlin, 2001).

• “Scholarly teaching is what every one of us should be engaged in every day in....... all the roles we play pedagogically............ But it is only when we step back and reflect systematically on the teaching we have done, in a form that can be publicly reviewed and built upon by our peers, that we have moved from scholarly teaching to the scholarship of teaching.” (Shulman, 2004, p. 166).
4. SoTL-Active faculty are assets to institutions - Bernstein, 2013

- “generate visible analyses of student learning taking place in their institutions”
- “provide excellent models of practice for local colleagues”
- “generate high-quality evidence for internal and external assessment”
- “offer accessible examples of quality education to prospective students” (p. 35).
5. Model of faculty development – Fanghanel, 2013

• As a methodology for professional development, SoTL provides a space for dialogic critique of singular investigations into practice that contribute to advancing individual and collective knowledge of the field of higher education.

• In a context where approaches to practice have become driven by competitiveness and international rankings that rely on objectivist understandings of practice for their judgments, SoTL presents an alternative, rich model of practice. (p. 59)
6. Energizes faculty to view research through a new lens

- GSU New Faculty Orientation, SoTL at Georgia Southern (Sturges & Gilpin, 2014)
  - **What was most beneficial?**
    - The idea of integrating teaching and research
    - I am glad to hear about SoTL—and excited to learn more
    - Positive attitude towards teaching and learning scholarship
    - The absolute necessity of reflecting on my teaching
    - Getting to know SoTL

- SoTL Commons Conference annually in March
7. Increase faculty credentials for major awards

- A form of distinction that allows certain faculty members to rise in the hierarchy of scholars (Bernstein, 2013, p. 35)

- The University System of Georgia awards annually 1 - 2 SoTL Awards

- GSU offers the SoTL Fellowship annually (sponsored by CT2)
- GSU offers the SoTL award annually (sponsored by CT2)
IJSoTL – International Journal for SoTL

- Sturges, Diana (2013) "To SoTL or Not to SoTL?," International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Vol. 7, No. 2
- Do I know what SoTL is?
- Is SoTL for me?
- What am I trying to improve?
- Should I go for it?
- Should I share my findings?
- I published; Now what?
Hsiu-Lien Lu

• How do I use SoTL projects to answer my educational questions and get involved in service?
Research projects helped resolve problems and answer questions and get involved in service

- Pre-class online quizzing
- Group work in online settings
- International student teaching in Taiwan
- Peer coaching with pre-service teachers
- Pre-service teachers impact on student learning
- The effects of faculty pedagogy training

Some are more productive than others in terms of generating scholarship and service. But all are helpful professionally and personally. Because of time constraints, I will pick only three projects and discuss a little on them.
Pre-class online quizzing (Lu, 2009)

- **Question**: how to involve students in active learning in an introductory level class?
- **Method**: Pre-class online quizzing, students in class
- **Results**: students feel prepared to class activities, like that fact they get earning better grades via this approach, positive overall with this approach
- **Affecting practice**: allowing me to engage students in active learning, participating in discussions and hands-on activities utilizing information read in the assigned readings.
- **Scholarship**: presented in multiple local and international conferences.
- **Service**: institute level: participating in multiple local faculty groups taking up the role as leader; professional level: reviewer and conference session chair
International student teaching in Taiwan (Lu & Soares, 2012, 2014)

• **Question:** what effect will international student teaching bring about to student teachers?

• **Method:** four student teachers, elementary and middle schools in Taiwan

• **Results:**
  - Professional cognitive level – able to experience different cultures personally and compare education in two countries and how students learn;
  - affective level – more understanding and empathetic of students from diverse backgrounds because of the experience of being a minority personally.
  - Personal level: get to travel internationally

• **Scholarship:** two peer reviewed articles published in national and international journals and several presentations at the local, regional and international level.

• **Service:** college and university level: global education committee
Pre-service teachers impact on student learning (Arrington & Lu, in press)

• Due to NCATE program assessment, our college was concerned about how to obtain knowledge regarding the effects of student teaching on student learning.

• **Method**: authentic data obtained from preservice teachers who conducted a unit instruction to their students. They collected student learning outcome to report to the course instruction to indicate their field efforts. We elicited the data from voluntary preservice teachers.
Pre-service teachers impact on student learning – cont’d.

• Results:
  • significant impact was found in the learning outcomes of the p-5 students taught by the three-tiered preservice teachers.
  • No difference in student outcomes was found with regard to the grade level, SEC background of the p-5 students.
  • No difference was found in the subjects taught and in the students taught by the three-tiered preservice teachers.
Pre-service teachers impact on student learning – cont’d.

• Implications:
  • proportionate supervision based on pre-service teachers’ experiences and abilities,
  • differentiated and incremental assignments for tiers of pre-service teachers,
  • co-teaching opportunities for pre-service teachers based on their former experience in the field
Pre-service teachers impact on student learning – cont’d.

• **Scholarship:** accepted in peer-reviewed article and one prepared to find a journal to submit; presented in multiple conferences.

• **Service:** helped provide information to the programs and college when conducting program assessment.
References


