

# ISSOTL 2015 Melbourne

*Leading Learning and the Scholarship of Change  
from the SoTL Margin:  
SoTL Capacity Building from an Asian Location*



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# Challenges to SoTL capacity building

- Absence of **systematic induction** into a scholarly approach to teaching
- **Lack of a culture** that views teaching as a scholarly activity
- Lack of **formal institutional recognition** for SoTL activities

# Having a problem with teaching?

a “telling measure of how differently teaching is regarded from traditional scholarship or research within the academy is what a difference it makes to have a ‘problem’ in one versus the other”.

Randy Bass, 1999, “The Scholarship of Teaching: What’s the Problem?”

# Building institutional SoTL culture

- to provide leadership to bring about an institutional shift →
  - a) For **individual practice to be increasingly SoTL-informed** (the development of personal knowledge)
  - b) For individuals to share this knowledge with the immediate/**local community** (the dissemination of knowledge from the personal to the local)
  - c) For individuals to conduct scholarly investigations and make public the acquired SoTL knowledge to **a wider, global audience**

(see Ashwin and Trigwell 2004, p.122 for the 3 levels of investigation)

## 2 important notes

### First note

**“what’s needed .. is a culture and infrastructure that will allow [SoTL] work to flourish”.**

Pat Hutchings and Lee Shulman, 1999, “The Scholarship of Teaching”

Second note

**“what SoTL can do rather than what SoTL can mean” ... “that SoTL ... offers a space for critique and endorsement of practice, and for collaboration, which is more powerful to enhance practice than the competitive model that underpins research and teaching activities in higher education presently”.**

“SoTL is **a *democratic form of inquiry*** as it enables multiple voices (...) to be heard in the public space; it is also **a *dialogic mode of inquiry*** because of the dissemination strategies it uses, which are based on discussions and dialogue, where **‘going public’ means more than just publishing in academic journals”**

Joelle Fanghanel, 2013, italics in original; cf. Ashwin and Trigwell’s Level 2.

# Why SoTL?

- to engender a **conceptual change** in our approach to teaching and a direct focus on improving student learning
- to serve as a **developmental tool** and “a space for critique and endorsement of practice, and for collaboration” (Joelle Fanghanel).
- to integrate scholarship into teaching practices in NUS; to **equip excellent educators** to document and disseminate their SoTL work.
- to **frame and ask specific questions** and conduct studies about student learning, and in the process to evaluate our initiatives and practices at all levels of institutions.

# Leading learning and institutional change

- Fact-finding to strategic plan:
  - a) Institutional history and trajectory
  - b) Institutional culture, resources and constraints (cf. opposing forces)
  - c) Multiple data points to inform a strategic plan that allows SoTL to have a place on our landscape

# NUS SoTL Activities (January - October 2015)

- Easing anxiety of venturing into a new scholarly domain
- Learning SoTL together
- Creating a community of peers
- Acquiring a common language to reflect about our teaching and our students' learning in a more scholarly way
- Establishing a SoTL Circle
- Engaging external consultants
- Creating an Asian SoTL network
- Developing AJSoTL as a developmental platform that promotes Asian SoTL practices and perspectives
- Encouraging colleagues to 'go public' through collaboration and mentorship

## Key goals guiding our SoTL activities

- Build capacity by first educating ourselves
- Maintain momentum by keeping the SoTL conversations going
- Devise multiple resource points to build SoTL community.



**“Ultimately, investigative work into teaching and learning will not be an intriguing aside, or add-on, but an essential facet of good teaching – built into the expected repertoire of scholarly practice”.**

(Lee Shulman, 2000)

## **Change Management: Some Preliminary Baseline Data**

- 3 recipients of the University's Outstanding Educator Award
- 5 are currently associated with the NUS Teaching Academy where 3 had held or currently holds the Chair position
- 5 have been involved in the UBC SoTL Leadership course
- 7 hold significant leadership positions

**Questions: How has consciousness raising in SoTL changed them? Is there institutional support and recognition for T&L/SoTL?**

# Positives

- a) **increased excitement and expectation about teaching and learning;**
- b) **heightened interest** in reading the literature
- c) involvement was **visible to colleagues and has had a positive influence.**
  
- d) a **fairly healthy and encouraging/supportive T&L-SoTL culture**
- e) the institution has recently reexamined its approach and policies relating to rewarding T&L-SoTL activities.
- f) that **institutional structures** have been put in place to support this culture.

## Negatives and a Projection

- T&L-SoTL work constitutes **an additional workload and is an obstacle to greater faculty involvement** in T&L-SoTL.
- Most felt that there is **inadequate or no release time** for T&L-SoTL work.
- 2 out of 8 think that T&L-SoTL work will within a **5-10 year span** be an expectation of faculty at various points in their careers and institutionalized through policies.
- 4 think it will take between **10-20 years**.
- 2 think it will **'never'** happen.

# Leading Learning and Change from the Margins of SoTL Discourse

- What works?
- Location, context, identity
- Identity = the physical + the sociocultural + the ideological – formed from the Lebenswelt or life world
- What works *where* (location and context), *for whom* (identity), *under what conditions*?

# Dilemma, Tensions, Ideologies and Difference

One's relationship with and towards the centre of SoTL discourse and network – mutual acceptance, careful and selective appropriation, resistance, assertion of autonomy and identity.

“understanding teaching and learning is not limited to an analysis of what happens in the interactions of teacher, syllabus, and students. **Teaching and learning are not ‘culture fair’**” (Peter Looker, 2011).



**“What constitutes good teaching** (or what is valued as good teaching) **and what constitutes quality learning** (or what is valued as good learning), **are not the same from one context** (one part of the world) **to another”**.

Peter Looker, 2011

## From the margins

- Find our own way to ask the questions we need to ask
- Derive the answers that might work for us
- Define our own discourse
- Perform our own SoTL work
- Devise our own methods
- Take heed of lessons in established centres

## In conclusion...

“For an activity to be designated as scholarship, it should manifest at least three key characteristics: It should be **public, susceptible to critical review and evaluation, and accessible for exchange and use** by other members of one’s scholarly community” (Lee Shulman).

# Integrating SoTL in institutions

- “Support a wide range of opportunities to cultivate the skills and habits of inquiry into teaching and learning”.
- “Work purposefully to bring faculty roles and rewards into alignment with a view of teaching as scholarly work”.
- “Develop a plan and time line for integrating the scholarship of teaching and learning into campus culture, and monitor progress”.
- “Recognize that institutionalization is a long-term process”.

Hutchings, Huber, and Ciccone,  
2011

Thank You!

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