

# Chapter 1

## Mentoring SoTL: From Malaysia to Oman

**Raja Maznah Raja Hussain**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4201-3275>

*Sultan Qaboos University, Oman*

**Samira Al Araimi**

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5043-7177>

*Al Buraimi University College, Oman*

### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the authors' journey as Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) advocates and practitioners in Malaysia and Oman. The efforts to introduce and promote SoTL to higher education institutions in Malaysia started in the year 2009 when the mandate came from the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) to ensure quality teaching with evidence. SoTL was one of the 25 Training of Trainers modules developed by the Leadership Training Academy in Higher Education (AKEPT) to enable systematic professional development of academics who will conduct scholarly teaching and research on their academic practice to be shared with others. This chapter will also share the experiences of the first author in growing SoTL in Malaysia and Oman, as well as mentor the second author from Oman in conducting SoTL work at her university. The second author's testimony of how she embraced SoTL and has since become a champion of the SoTL movement at her current institution is evidence that sowing SoTL seeds can be a very satisfying life-long learning journey.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) has emerged as a powerful approach to enhancing educational practices. SoTL is a dynamic and collaborative movement that fosters reflective, evidence-based inquiry into educational practices. In this chapter, we reflect on our shared journey as SoTL advocates, spanning two distinct yet interconnected educational landscapes: Malaysia and Oman. As authors, we have both encountered opportunities, rewards and challenges of introducing and nurturing

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-3727-1.ch001

SoTL in these environments, each at different stages of SoTL development, committed to fostering a culture of pedagogical excellence.

I, the first author, am a Professor of Instructional Technology with 42 years of teaching experience in higher education. I have spent 33 years of my academic life in Malaysia and am now currently attached to Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Oman. The second author has been teaching at AlBuraimi University College (BUC), Oman, for the last 10 years. We crossed paths four years ago when she joined the Masters' program at SQU and I was fortunate to be her thesis supervisor. I believe that my students have the potential to excel in their academic life, with my support, I am sure they will succeed. I always make sure that when I design my courses, my students will have the best learning experiences that allow them opportunities to become independent and self-regulated learners. As an instructional designer, it is a habit for me to check if my students are learning as we progress through the semester. SoTL has helped me to ask the question – Is my teaching helping my students to learn?

I, the second author, believe that teaching is a collaborative process in which both educators and learners participate in. My experience with SoTL has emphasized this idea where my students and I worked together to solve problems, come up with solutions and share our learning experiences with others. SoTL has allowed us to reform the curriculum and reconstruct part of it. The students enjoyed learning because they could feel the impact and value of their role in the process. Hence, SoTL has redirected my teaching philosophy to work on engaging my students in the learning process as instructional designers of their own learning experiences. I believe in SoTL projects because they facilitate the modification of learning contents in a way that spotlights learners' various needs, illuminate their talents, support their strengths, and help them to overcome their weaknesses. Thus, learning through SoTL projects is authentic. As in real life, it enables learners to learn through trying, learning from their mistakes, exploring their options, reflecting, and collaborating with others and seeking their support. In sum, as an educator, I believe that being part of SoTL is what leads the process of teaching and learning to achieve its aim of preparing students to ace not only their academic life, but also their life beyond the campus walls.

In Malaysia, SoTL has been an established practice for more than a decade and is still evolving. For SoTL to become a natural part of teaching, embraced and rewarded by educators at all levels, institutional support is crucial. Recent efforts by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), including revisiting and upscaling SoTL training modules through AKEPT (Leadership Training Academy in Higher Education), aim to further professionalize SoTL practices and create a network of master trainers. These trainers will be instrumental in mentoring others and embedding SoTL across Malaysian higher education institutions.

Oman, in contrast, represents a more recent yet promising frontier for SoTL. Although still in its formative stages, the potential for SoTL to grow and thrive in Omani higher education is evident. Through the mentorship of the second author—a young instructor in Oman—we have shown how SoTL can be supported, nurtured, and successfully integrated into the teaching practices of new educators. Her journey illustrates that with the right guidance and institutional backing, SoTL can take root and bloom in even relatively new contexts.

This chapter highlights the collaborative spirit of SoTL and the ripple effect that mentorship can have in creating sustainable, scholarly teaching communities. As we reflect on our advocacy work, we explore how SoTL has enriched our professional lives and opened new avenues for growth—both for us and for the communities we serve. In the pages that follow, we hope to offer insights into the profound potential of SoTL to transform education, inspire innovation, and create lasting, meaningful learning experiences.

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