

# Chapter 6

## Fostering Transformative Pedagogy From Singapore to Qatar: A Chronicle of Student–Faculty Collaboration in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter explores the author's journey as a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) practitioner through the lens of a transformative Student-Faculty symposium held at a Singaporean university in 2018. The narrative weaves three key themes: the importance of informal learning contexts alongside formal education, the value of reflective practice in teaching, and the role of culturally responsive pedagogy in Asian classrooms. Drawing from their experiences teaching across Asia—from Singapore to Qatar—the author describes how a Students as Partners (SaP) project addressed educational challenges by redesigning a writing course for humanities students. The project revealed the interplay between cultural hierarchies in Asian education and generational differences between faculty and students. While the symposium's immediate impact on curriculum was modest, it demonstrated the value of creating spaces beyond traditional classroom dynamics where students and faculty could engage authentically. The chapter concludes by examining current challenges in Qatar, particularly around integrating artificial intelligence in education and developing a SoTL research culture, suggesting that SaP approaches offer valuable frameworks for addressing these emerging pedagogical challenges in culturally sensitive ways.*

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## INTRODUCTION

This article explores the impact of a Student-Faculty symposium at a Singaporean University in 2018 as transformative change in my teaching practice. This symposium, initiated by my colleague Kristina Marie Tom and supported by myself, Christopher Hill, and Steven Adam, was pivotal for all three of us as Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) practitioners. It was a collaborative effort involving students, several college faculty members, and our research assistants. In this chapter, I link the symposium experience with the challenges I am facing at my current university in Qatar. While this chapter primarily reflects on my journey as a SoTL practitioner, I want to acknowledge Kristina and Steven's pivotal role in the symposium and my subsequent teaching career. Both authors reviewed this narrative and gave feedback on the sections concerning the symposium and the outcomes of our research.

### Becoming a SoTL Practitioner

Teaching happened to me by accident. While completing my master's in communication studies in New Zealand, I was asked to teach undergraduates an introductory communication studies course. Despite not studying communication studies before starting my MA—my undergraduate degree was in philosophy—I was thrust into the role without formal training. I did not know the learning outcome or how to plan a lesson. I walked into the room and found 20 students waiting for me. At the time, I was only 25, and most of the students were just a few years younger. Unsure of what to do, I tried to recall what my undergraduate teachers had done and improvised the lesson as I went along. I asked each student to introduce themselves and share their expectations, fears, and worries about the course. We collaborated on a list of items. In those early years of teaching, I struggled with key aspects of teaching. I tended to regurgitate what the lecturer had outlined, not realizing that creative practice was essential for helping students engage and understand the material. My focus on delivering content without adapting to student needs led to disengagement and missed learning opportunities. However, that moment of collaboration with my students in that first lesson was crucial for me. It helped shape my later approach to SoTL, reinforcing the importance of active student participation and collaborative teaching methods.

After this initial teaching experience, I attempted to escape academia, but like a tractor beam, teaching kept pulling me back. After finishing my master's in communication studies, I left New Zealand. While most of my friends headed to the UK or Europe for an overseas experience, I took a different path to Asia and never looked back. Almost 20 years after leaving New Zealand, I have been privileged to teach at universities in Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, and Qatar. I hold a senior academic position in Qatar, overseeing a large faculty team and numerous courses each semester. This environment presents unique challenges and opportunities, particularly in integrating humanities and social science-based pedagogical practices within a STEM-focused curriculum. We spend much time thinking about SoTL strategies for engaging the changing generation of students. Key challenges I face revolve around my students' multilingual and multicultural backgrounds and adapting to the evolving learning habits of today's young people.

Young people in Qatar are generally multi-lingual speakers. Among the native Arabic speakers are local Qatari students and many other expatriate students from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region and Africa. In addition to native Arabic speakers, many expatriate students from South Asia and the Philippines speak various languages, such as Tamil, Hindi, Tagalog, and other dialects, along with English. This creates a highly multicultural and multilingual environment. As a SoTL practitioner, it is

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