

# Chapter 15

## Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: A Tool for Gaining Cultural Insights Into New Teaching Contexts – Perspectives From China

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter explores the journey of a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) practitioner grounded in over 11 years of teaching across two Asian countries. The author discusses how SoTL has become integral to the author's personal and professional identity. Through two key SoTL inquiries—“What Determines Chinese Students’ Seat Selection: A SoTL Inquiry in Collaboration with Students’ and ‘Exploring Undergraduate Classroom Interest in the Chinese Context: Origins and Manifestations.’, the chapter demonstrates how SoTL can enhance understanding of cultural differences in foreign teaching settings. These projects highlight the significance of reflection, student collaboration, and context in shaping SoTL practices. The chapter also analyzes the current state of SoTL in educational psychology, offering insights into its application across different cultural contexts. Finally, it provides recommendations for higher education institutions and policymakers on supporting SoTL’s growth through institutional frameworks and professional development strategies.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is grounded in my experiences as an instructor with a background in educational psychology and over 12 years of teaching across four Asian countries. The first section describes my positionality and value of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) to me. I identify as a SoTL practitioner, valuing it as a tool to enhance student learning and personal and professional development. SoTL holds more spiritual than technical value for me—it has acted as the conscience of my students’ learning and my own teaching practices. Through SoTL, I have learned to be a more mindful educator

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who is deeply aware of the nuances of teaching and learning. This awareness has allowed me to shape my students' experiences through meaningful reflection and thoughtful pedagogy.

In this chapter, I describe my SoTL journey, outlining how I was introduced to SoTL, the challenges and opportunities I encountered, and how I have embraced it as part of my identity. To illustrate this, I expand on two specific SoTL projects titled *What Determines Chinese Students' Seat Selection: A SoTL Inquiry in Collaboration with Students* and *Exploring Undergraduate Classroom Interest in the Chinese Context: Origins and Manifestations*. These two projects are grounded in my personal, social, cultural, and institutional contexts. They were accomplished in collaboration with students, significantly deepening my understanding of the foreign teaching and learning conditions I faced as a newcomer. It guided me through the cultural aspects of teaching and learning while also enabling me to analyze the elements influencing SoTL practices critically. Throughout my discussion, I explore the role of reflection in my teaching practice and how I regularly use it to confront challenges, discover strengths, and find opportunities within my teaching context. The chapter also highlights how my continuous engagement with SoTL has shaped my personal and professional growth.

In the final section, I reflect on how SoTL is valued within the field of educational psychology and how teaching and learning institutions, both informally and through policies at university, regional, provincial, and national levels, encourage practitioners to engage in SoTL. I conclude with recommendations for higher education policy and institutional strategies to support the growth of SoTL.

## **MY POSITIONALITY AND ITS IMPACT ON SOTL**

This book chapter is grounded in my position as an instructor who has graduated in educational psychology and has been practicing teaching and learning in higher education for more than 12 years across two Asian countries. I identify myself as a SoTL practitioner who values this practice for enhancing student learning and personal development. My approach has guided both my students' learning and my own teaching practices, acting as a moral compass throughout our educational journey. It has taught me to be a mindful teacher who is aware of the nuances of teaching and learning. This awareness has helped me shape my students' learning experiences through reflection and meaningful pedagogy.

Beginning my career as a K-12 school teacher and later obtaining a doctoral degree in educational psychology has always led me to value pedagogy, learning, and their profound impact on students. Being a doctoral student during my mid-career and experiencing the power of pedagogy, student-teacher relationships, and learning dynamics further reinforced my conviction in teaching and learning.

In my 25-year teaching career, I have had the opportunity to teach at the K-12 level in India and Thailand. Later, I taught at the tertiary level at a public university in Malaysia for seven years. I have taught undergraduate and postgraduate psychology courses at a Sino-American university in China for the past four years. My educational qualifications and professional experience have consistently reminded me of the transformative potential of education.

My role as a teacher and educational psychologist has deepened my understanding that learning and teaching form a complex web of interactions. This web involves the bidirectional interplay of affective, cognitive, conative, and behavioral dimensions among all participants—teachers, students, and peers—alongside the physical aspects of the learning environment, such as classrooms, infrastructure, policies, context, and curriculum. To thrive in this intricate setting, both as a learner and a teacher, one

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