

Chapter 16

Unveiling the SoTL Practitioner: Positionality, Philosophy, and Project Reflections in Malaysian Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents our insights as practitioners of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) within the Malaysian higher education system, with the goal of deepening the understanding of this field. Our narrative is organized into four distinct sections, each offering a unique perspective on our SoTL experiences. The initial section of this chapter is dedicated to discussing the various challenges and opportunities we have encountered while implementing SoTL projects at a Malaysian university. In the second section, we outline the strategies and approaches we have developed to enhance the teaching and learning experience. The third section of this chapter reflects on the significant impact SoTL has had on our professional development and career progression within the Malaysian higher education landscape. The final section of this chapter highlights the essential role that SoTL plays in cultivating a culture of academic excellence and innovation in Malaysian universities.

INTRODUCTION

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is an approach to education that emphasizes the integration of teaching, research, and reflection, with the goal of improving the quality of instruction and enhancing student learning. It is a framework that encourages educators to view their teaching practices as a subject of scholarly inquiry and to engage in ongoing reflective study and evaluation of their teaching

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methods, course designs, and student learning outcomes. (Gansemer-Topf et al., 2024). It is based on the belief that teaching is a scholarly activity that requires reflection, experimentation, and evaluation.

SoTL goes beyond traditional teaching methods and focuses on the effectiveness of various teaching strategies, the development of critical thinking skills, and the improvement of student learning outcomes. It encourages faculty members to incorporate research findings into their teaching and to engage in continuous improvement of their teaching practices. The evaluation of student learning in SoTL is not just a matter of assessing what students have learned, but also of understanding how they have learned and what factors have influenced their learning process. This involves collecting and analyzing data on student learning, such as assessments, surveys, and observations, and using this data to inform teaching decisions. Sharing, critically reviewing, and publishing or presenting the findings of SoTL research are important aspects of the SoTL process. This allows for peer review and feedback, which can help improve the quality of the research and its practical application. It also promotes a culture of scholarly inquiry and continuous improvement in teaching, as well as facilitating the sharing of best practices among faculty members.

Overall, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is a comprehensive approach to teaching that emphasizes the importance of research, reflection, and continuous improvement in order to enhance student learning outcomes.

SoTL recognizes that teaching is not just a transmission of knowledge but an iterative process that requires a deep understanding of the discipline, the learners, and the learning environment. It promotes the sharing of teaching practices, the exploration of new teaching methodologies, and the dissemination of research findings to the broader academic community, ultimately contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field of education (Canning & Masika, 2022).

This chapter aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) by providing a nuanced understanding of the practitioner's perspective within the context of Malaysian higher education. The chapter is structured into four main sections, each exploring different dimensions of the SoTL practitioner's experience.

WHO ARE WE AS A SOTL PRACTITIONER?

As a SoTL (Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) practitioner, we are deeply committed to enhancing the teaching and learning experience in the language studies field. We are currently based at the Academy of Language Studies in Terengganu, Malaysia, where we have been engaged in teaching and researching for the past several years. Our academic journey in the field of SoTL has been both challenging and rewarding, and it has shaped identity as a language educator. We are a dedicated team of educators at the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Terengganu, who have united under the banner of SoTL to advance the field of language education through collaborative research and innovative teaching practices. In our collective journey, 'we' refers to a diverse group of scholars and practitioners, each holding various designations and expertise, working in synergy to enhance the language learning experience within our local educational context. As a SoTL practitioner at the Academy of Language Studies in UiTM Terengganu, our commitment to enhancing language education is reflected in the following local examples (refer Table 1).

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