

The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Volume 10 | Issue 2

Article 3

Summer 8-31-2019

Navigating the Lows to Gain New Heights: Constraints to SoTL Engagement

Andrea S. Webb

University of British Columbia, andrea.webb@ubc.ca

Follow this and additional works at: <https://www.cjsotl-rcacea.ca>
<https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2019.2.8173>

Recommended Citation

Webb, A. S. (2019). Navigating the lows to gain new heights: Constraints to SoTL engagement. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2019.2.8173>

Navigating the Lows to Gain New Heights: Constraints to SoTL Engagement

Abstract

Novice Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) leaders making the transition from scholarly teaching to SoTL to SoTL Leadership face many challenges within higher education. Not only does traditional academic culture confine most academics to disciplinary silos, but promotion and tenure requirements encourage faculty members to conduct SoTL work “off the side of their desk,” if at all (Boyer, 1990; Dobbins, 2008; Webb, Wong, & Hubball, 2013). This paper shares some of the findings from a recent study that investigated what constrained educational leaders’ understanding of SoTL while enrolled in a SoTL Leadership program at a Canadian research-intensive university. The paper will also explore implications for the support and enrichment of educational leadership.

Les leaders novices en Avancement des connaissances en enseignement et en apprentissage (ACEA) qui font la transition et passent de l’enseignement intellectuel à l’ACEA puis au leadership en ACEA font face à de nombreux défis dans l’enseignement supérieur. Non seulement la culture universitaire traditionnelle confine la plupart des professeurs dans des cloisonnements disciplinaires, mais les exigences de la promotion et de la permanence encouragent les professeurs à mener du travail d’ACEA « sur le coin de leur bureau », si même ils le font (Boyer, 1990; Dobbins, 2008; Webb, Wong & Hubball, 2013). Cet article partage certains des résultats obtenus suite à une étude récente qui a enquêté sur ce qui limite la compréhension des questions touchant l’ACEA des leaders en éducation alors qu’ils sont inscrits dans un programme de leadership en ACEA dans une université canadienne centrée sur la recherche. L’article va également explorer les implications du soutien et de l’enrichissement du leadership éducationnel.

Keywords

SoTL, leadership, constraints, higher education, faculty development; ACEA, leadership, contraintes, enseignement supérieur, formation professorale

Cover Page Footnote

The author wishes to acknowledge the participants at ISSoTL 2017 who offered support and valuable feedback for this paper.

The demands of a research-intensive university (RIU), with a traditional workload structure of 40% research, 40% teaching, 20% service, places the institutional needs in disciplinary scholarship and service over teaching and learning scholarship. Often, when studying for a career in academia, most graduate students are trained in the methodologies and discourses of their discipline. Additionally, there may not be formalized support for faculty members as they attempt to fulfill their teaching responsibilities. As such, there is an inherent mismatch between the responsibilities that most faculty members undertake on a daily basis and the training that they received as they earned their highest degree (Shulman, 2000). However, in the current milieu, RIUs are increasingly under scrutiny to provide exceptional teaching and learning policies and programs in order to demonstrate commitments to student learning, satisfy external accreditations, and move up in global rankings.

Canadian RIUs recognize the need for visioning that demonstrates the increased importance of strategically supported, institution-level educational leadership and scholarship pertaining to that leadership, especially as these educational leaders are required to make high stakes, research-informed and evidence-based decisions around pedagogical, curricular, and policy initiatives and/or changes at RIUs across Canada and around the world. Unfortunately, administrators and faculty development professionals have struggled with how to encourage and prepare academic staff to do this type of scholarly work (Richlin & Cox, 2004; Webb, Wong, & Hubball, 2013). Many institutions lack internal and strategic Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and SoTL Leadership expertise and struggle with incentives to build capacity (Bortolini, 2018).

Interviews with educational leaders at Canadian RIUs revealed constraints to their involvement with SoTL and SoTL Leadership. These constraints included both intellectual content and institutional structures and policies. This research explores and analyzes these constraints in order to empirically inform the curriculum and pedagogy of SoTL and SoTL Leadership programs. The findings suggest means for enriching SoTL support and building capacity for SoTL Leadership initiatives within the Canadian RIU context.

SoTL and the RIU Context

Within the RIU context, there is a differentiation between scholarly approaches to teaching and learning, SoTL, and SoTL Leadership (Hubball, Clarke, Webb, & Johnson, 2015; Potter & Kustra, 2011). Figure 1 visualizes these differences within the higher education RIU context; not as a hierarchy, but as a division of priorities.

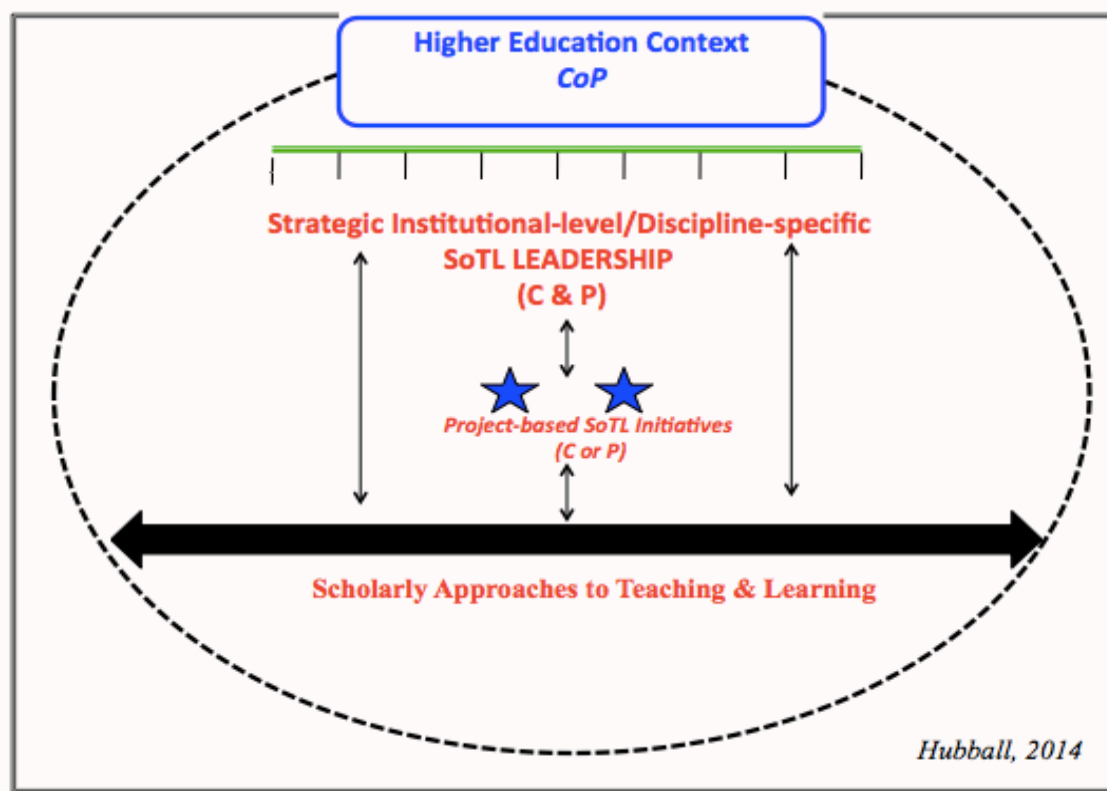


Figure 1. Strategic SoTL Leadership within the Higher Education Context. Reprinted from Hubball (2014) with permission.

Individual scholarly approaches to teaching and learning encourages all educators to reflect on their pedagogical and curricular practice, identify questions and challenges, engage in inquiries, and seek out resources to inform and enhance their practice. Consistent with the ethos of research intensive universities, where all faculty are expected to draw upon best practices and reflective practice, scholarly approaches to teaching and learning include carefully planned and continuously examined curriculum and pedagogy, which relate directly to the subject taught or the curriculum under construction (Boyer, 1990).

SoTL integrates research, teaching, and learning within peer reviewed higher education contexts (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997; Hutchings, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011). With institutional supports (such as resources and/or a centre for teaching and learning), SoTL turns individual inquiry into literature-informed, rigorous scholarship (O'Brien, 2008). These projects are often undertaken by individuals within local contexts (Haigh, 2012) and support personal pedagogical or curricular interests. SoTL plays a key role in instructional support; providing an empirical, evidence-based justification for pedagogical and curricular changes.

SoTL Leadership supports the strategic needs of the institution. Through capacity building for institution-level educational leaders, SoTL Leadership drives research-informed, evidence-based curricular and pedagogical leadership with particular attention to educational innovation, research design, and dissemination (Hubball et al., 2015). SoTL Leadership is often conducted by a small, specially trained group of educational leaders, hired to strategic positions, working on specifically supported intuitional initiatives. SoTL Leadership also supports the development and

evaluation of curricular and pedagogical changes, addresses key issues of strategic alignment, and supports the integration of educational leadership practice and scholarship for educational leaders. Situated within complex institutional and cultural contexts, SoTL Leadership provides a scholarly foundation for systemic approaches to enhance the impact and quality of teaching and learning.

As demonstrated in Figure 1, SoTL Leadership is different from scholarly teaching or an independent, one-off SoTL project. SoTL Leadership builds upon the skills and processes of SoTL and the scholarship of educational practice through the integration of educational leadership and scholarship in higher education (Hubball et al., 2015). Many research focused faculty members may be interested in conducting SoTL research, but they may not be in positions that require them to make strategic institution level or discipline specific decisions. With the rise in teaching focused faculty positions, those faculty members are often tasked with this kind of work and are conducting SoTL Leadership initiatives. Institution-level or faculty-level educational leaders from diverse university contexts engage on strategic goals and initiatives to enhance teaching and learning across the institution. These positions are often supported through governance changes and funded at the institutional level. Key institutional support of SoTL Leadership programming seeks to align promotion, tenure, and merit criteria and differentiated work load allocations, for example.

Strategic, Institutionally Supported SoTL and SoTL Leadership

While the field of SoTL has coalesced around a set of key principles (Chick, 2014; Felten, 2013; Huber & Hutchings, 2005, 2006; Hutchings et al., 2011), the incorporation of SoTL Leadership in research-intensive universities has been varied as SoTL practice is often shaped by disciplinary and local institutional contexts. A number of studies have identified major barriers to developing scholarship on teaching and learning in higher education. The perceived low status of teaching within the academy, lack of reward for exceptional teaching (Young, 2006), lack of legitimacy (Wuetherick, Yu, & Greer, 2016), and lack of integration of research and teaching (Dobbins, 2008) are seen as hindering new developments to enhance teaching and learning (Hockings, 2005).

Poole (2010) suggested that the SoTL movement has made a number of important in roads in Canadian universities, but the institutional value of SoTL must be promoted and demonstrated. In the Canadian context, there are still many institutional barriers to change (Hubball & Pearson, 2010; Webb, 2015) including entrenched systems of credit hours, scheduling, methods of teaching and assessment, departmental or disciplinary silos, administration systems, and reward systems that value disciplinary research over pedagogical or curricular leadership.

Centres for teaching and learning can be instrumental in coordinating and facilitating this work with recognized institutional experts in educational scholarship and research methodology in higher education. SoTL advocacy, generally based in teaching and learning centres, typically provides support for individual inquiries. These localized SoTL programs generally include access to resources, knowledgeable professionals, and communities of practice, which increase the knowledge of research on teaching and learning in higher education. The programs are structured to support individuals or small groups as they develop inquiry projects and mobilize the teaching commons by connecting individuals, with similar interests, from across the campus. While the support from centre staff enable the start up, and these teaching and learning projects will provide educational benefit to students, they are often ad hoc with little strategic, institutional capacity building inherent in these programs (Hubball, Lamberson, & Kindler, 2012).

A faculty or departmental SoTL community of practice helps bring SoTL projects to fruition by bringing together old timers and newcomers; it offers modeling of SoTL practice, supports the facilitation of SoTL research, and enables SoTL networking. This community helps to address key methodological, epistemological, and ethical challenges within disciplinary contexts. However, many faculties or departments lack internal SoTL expertise and available time to effectively develop SoTL communities and evaluate curriculum and pedagogical practices (Hubball et al., 2012). Unfortunately, there is limited ongoing faculty engagement – with members coming and going as their interests or schedules permit (removed for peer review).

And, while a personal obligation to teaching and to students is identified as the primary motivation for improving teaching and learning culture, this commitment may mean shifting priorities, as SoTL research is not always recognized as equivalent to traditional disciplinary scholarship in Canadian universities and beyond (Poole & Iqbal, 2011). Compounding the lack of recognition of educational leadership is the isolated nature of classroom investigations. Many scholarly teaching projects are often undertaken to address a personal or situationally specific issue (Haigh, 2012) and are therefore not seen as applicable outside of the specific locale. Even well supported initiatives do not resolve the tension between disciplinary and institutional values.

Minimal to no attention is given to SoTL Leadership in many of the institutional initiatives or programs for faculty members (Webb, 2015). These educational leaders are recognized for their leadership and disciplinary expertise, yet are missing the theoretical grounding in leadership for the scholarship of teaching, learning, and curriculum practice in higher education (Hubball et al., 2012). In the current context of increasing scrutiny of curricular practices and curriculum analytics, specifically designed programs to develop SoTL Leadership could offer strategically aligned, rigorous research on teaching and learning in higher education at an institutional level. This study addresses the gap in the literature on professional development for educational leaders.

Research Context

This research study explored the lived experience of educational leaders in a research-intensive context as they engage in learning about SoTL and SoTL Leadership in the Canadian RIU Faculty SoTL Leadership Program in order to make recommendations about future professional development programs. Using data generated from the perspectives of educational leaders as they engage in learning SoTL, this work is a contribution to the approaches for educational leadership programs in research-intensive contexts. The SoTL Leadership Program is a learning-centered program for institution-level/faculty-level educational leaders. Begun in 1998, this annual program has evolved from an initial focus on SoTL to its current focus on SoTL Leadership. The participants, selected and nominated by their dean, are often already engaged in leadership initiatives that will strategically impact the quality of teaching, learning, and/or curriculum practices. The multidisciplinary cohort creates an environment in which participants are exposed to diverse disciplinary backgrounds and engage in SoTL Leadership inquiry through a portfolio-based program of study of their own educational leadership practices, ongoing critical reflection of the SoTL literature, and the development of a SoTL leadership project. The eight-month program covers a range of educational leadership theories and concepts within SoTL (including SoTL research design and methodologies), with the expressed aim of helping participants to think critically about the SoTL literature and its implications for educational practice. Each participant is responsible for the creation of a portfolio that includes: an educational leadership dossier, four syntheses of the thematic readings, peer review of teaching documents,

and a SoTL Leadership project proposal as a capstone. The SoTL Leadership Program is locally situated within the university context and supports educational leaders as they move from personally relevant, individual-level SoTL practice to SoTL institution-level SoTL leadership inquiry in multinational contexts.

Methodology and Methods

Research Design

The purpose of the study was not to solve problems in learning SoTL and SoTL Leadership, but to come to a better understanding of the intellectual and institutional barriers that faculty members faced when they were learning SoTL and SoTL Leadership. For this study, van Manen's (1997) six step interpretive phenomenology research process was adopted as the primary methodology to explore the constraints to understanding and doing SoTL. This type of design enables researchers to engage in an iterative process of observing and describing participants' experiences learning SoTL.

Participant Recruitment

This research was approved by UBC's Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Two groups of participants were recruited—members of the incoming cohort and past graduates of the SoTL Leadership Program—in order to develop a heterogeneous sample of individuals with a common experience. Generally, initial sampling criteria sought to include participants from a range of previous cohorts and faculty affiliations. This would represent the diversity and complexity of UBC's SoTL Leadership Program participants, as well as a sample that could offer unique, in-depth understanding of participants' experiences. As a result, sample size was considered less important than the richness of the data collected (Creswell, 2013).

Cohort. Of the eight faculties represented within the cohort, participants were members of six different faculties. Participant affiliations by faculty are presented in Table 1. Eleven of twenty-three cohort members agreed to be part of the study at the beginning of the program, with two participants asking to join the study while it was in progress. Two participants withdrew from the program, did not complete a portfolio, and were not available for interviews, although they allowed their earlier data to remain in the study.

Table 1
Participation Information for the UBC SoTL Leadership Program¹

Faculty	# of Program Graduates	% of Graduates of the Program by Faculty	Representation in the Study Cohort	% of the Cohort by Faculty	# of Consenting Participants
Applied Science	38	15.7	3	13	2
Arts	26	10.7	1	4.3	0
Commerce	14	5.7	-	-	-
Dentistry	21	8.7	-	-	-
Education	37	15.3	2	8.6	1
Forestry	9	3.7	1	4.3	1
Graduate Studies (GPS)	4	1.7	-	-	-
Land & Food Systems (LFS)	3	1.2	1	4.3	1
Law	5	2.1	-	-	-
Medicine	51	21.1	10	43.5	5
Pharmaceutical Sciences (Pharm)	20	8.3	2	8.6	0
Science	14	5.8	3	13	3

¹ Data was current at the time of the study.

Data collected consisted of participant observation of the eight institutional SoTL Leadership Program classroom sessions, two one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each participant, portfolio documents, and researcher journal entries. The troublesome SoTL knowledge was evidenced in the questions, concerns, and topics of discussion in the classroom sessions and in the interviews. Two interviews were conducted with each participant in order to explore their evolving understanding of SoTL. The portfolio documents provided personal context for participants' goals and objectives, as well as highlighting their values, epistemologies, and ontologies.

Past graduates. Past graduates² of the program were contacted by email and invited to complete an online questionnaire. Thirty participants completed the online questionnaire, and 20 agreed to take part in follow up interviews. There were two additional interviews conducted with past graduates who did not complete the questionnaire but were interested in taking part in the research study. Table 2 highlights the diversity of the questionnaire respondents by Faculty affiliation.

Table 2
Past Graduates of the UBC SoTL Leadership Program by Faculty

Faculty	Number of Participants
Applied Sciences	3
Arts	4
Commerce	1
Dentistry	2
Education	8
Forestry	0
Graduate Studies (GPS)	0
Land and Food Systems (LFS)	0
Law	0
Medicine	8
Pharmaceutical Sciences	1
Science	3
Total	30

Data collected consisted of a questionnaire and one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire focused on topics or themes that were troublesome and strategies for overcoming these challenges (Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2009; Kiley & Wisker, 2009). This helped to identify the

² For the purposes of this study, the 242 faculty members and staff who graduated in the first 15 years of the program were contacted. However, there were a number of issues with recruitment including contacting retired faculty and faculty who had left the institution.

key concepts in SoTL and served as an organizing framework for the semi-structured interviews. Seventeen interviews were conducted with past graduates of the UBC SoTL Leadership Program. The procedures and format of the interviews was similar to those conducted with the cohort members.

Analysis

In this study, thematic analysis offered an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing the qualitative data (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clark, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Interacting with the data involved thematic coding through the iterative and cyclical nature of the van Manen's (1997) interpretive phenomenological inquiry; holistic, selective, and detailed analysis.

- First, the classroom observation data were reviewed holistically for the key themes and were summarized with key words and phrases. Meaningful and relevant exchanges were identified for detailed analysis. The questionnaire responses were analyzed in a similar manner. The analysis of the questionnaire and classroom observations were investigated during the interview process.
- Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The interview recordings were listened to all the way through, and notes were made consistent with the wholistic approach. Then, the recordings were listened to again, and following along with a hard copy of the transcript, key units of meaning and significant statements were highlighted for detailed analysis. A list of significant statements and quotations from each participant was compiled.
- Next, key words, significant statements, and experiences across participants were grouped. These groupings were given titles and a description of each theme was developed, although the descriptions continued to evolve following additional interviews. Portfolio document analysis procedures were informed by the same wholistic approach, with a detailed reading of particularly salient experiences.
- Finally, the summaries were reviewed again to ensure that all relevant experiences had been included in the description of a theme.

Specific strategies and processes were incorporated into the research design to establish trustworthiness as a measure of the study's quality and the overall credibility and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout data collection, developing themes were shared with participants, with exclamations of, "I hadn't thought of it that way, but yes." In order to triangulate for validity, expert checks were periodically included and preliminary findings were presented for peer review.

Results

The research participants identified six key constraints to SoTL and SoTL Leadership in RIU contexts. The constraints have been clustered into three themes: joining the SoTL community, studentness, and imposter syndrome.

Joining the SoTL Community

The theme of membership in SoTL was the most prominent theme, and it captured several of the constraints related to being part of a field of study.

Shared definitions. The difference between scholarly teaching, SoTL, and SoTL Leadership was identified as a stumbling block (Hubball et al., 2015; Kanuka, 2011; McKinney, 2002; Svinicki, 2012). While the definition of rigorous scholarship was understood within participants' disciplinary fields, the appreciation of rigor within SoTL research took some time, especially for those more familiar with quantitative research paradigms. One participant noted, "we don't use that word, but we know that that's what we are doing."

Initially introduced by program instructors, SoTL was defined as literature-informed, theoretically grounded, and methodologically rigorous research in higher education contexts. The initial identification of scholarly teaching sent out the initial tremors that shook some participants, "It's a big step to begin thinking about scholarly teaching, especially when you've been doing teaching for so many years without thinking about that. And fundamentally, it requires changing your ideas about how people learn and what is knowledge". This was compounded when participants wrestled with their developing understandings of the difference between being a scholarly teacher and conducting SoTL or leading SoTL research.

In a very astute comment, one participant suggested that there is a tension between two aspects in learning SoTL, "one being practical, pragmatic, concrete strategies, or applying teaching and learning concepts to your teaching practice versus start thinking differently about your teaching practice and start thinking about translating your teaching practice into educational research." This reconceptualization of scholarship marks a paradigm shift for many novice SoTL scholars and leaders.

Shared language. The discourse and conventions of SoTL experts and educational scholars was frequently identified as a barrier to understanding the field of SoTL. Issues such as the language and discourse of SoTL and recognition of teaching as a public, researchable act were highlighted as foundations for developing an understanding of SoTL scholarship. The language of SoTL became a barrier, until participants could make sense of the connotative, contextual meaning of the discourse. Participants noted that they learned to "speak SoTL" and translate for their disciplinary colleagues. They go on to say,

One of the challenges is for me to learn that new language and then when I'm talking to colleagues – who are researchers – trying to translate the new language that I've learned into almost lay terms. So there's very definitely a language and communications barrier, and it's all about the jargon of an expert.

This constraint is connected to conceptions of research; participants highlighted the differentiation of "method versus methodology" as a challenging topic or theme. As part of educational research within various disciplines, SoTL research traditions are diverse. The "messiness" of these new research methodologies and methods creates significant challenges for novice SoTL scholars. Like the beginning of work in any new field, ways of thinking and practicing act as significant barriers. The discourse of SoTL and knowledge of epistemologies and ontologies of SoTL research were identified by participants as challenging. The entrance into a new field requires knowledge of a new language, literature, theories, and research paradigms. Almost all of the cohort participants found the language and design of qualitative research to be a

challenge. Articulating cohesive research design (aligning research questions, methodologies, and data collection methods), finding the relevant literature, and the ethics of classroom research produced profound barriers to learning, as they represent not only cognitive but requisite ontological shifts. Focusing less on discipline and more on teaching and learning is a thought-provoking proposition for these discipline experts. While it was important that participants drew upon their disciplinary strengths and personal knowledge, it was important to acknowledge that SoTL research is conducted and disseminated within an educational context (Hutchings, 2007).

Shared culture. Ingrained disciplinary cultures (Bunnell & Bernstein, 2012) slowed participants' enculturation into SoTL and left some participants unable or unwilling to let go of specific disciplinary ways of thinking or to connect their SoTL practice with their professional responsibilities. While participants were able to connect with the educational literature of their field as a jumping off point to engage in SoTL, that same disciplinary literature and culture also constrained participants as they struggled to move beyond discipline based educational research.

At the same time, a lack of professional incentives (often related to tenure and promotion criteria) discouraged participants from ongoing engagement with SoTL or SoTL Leadership. Participants suggested that they would like to be able to do more SoTL research but felt constrained by their responsibilities to research or the expectations of promotion and tenure within their department or faculty.

This research exposes the impact of ingrained, disciplinary culture despite policy changes at the institutional level. Participants noted that the achievement of tenure freed them to pursue teaching and learning interests; however this should not be necessary since university policy on promotion, tenure, and merit recognizes SoTL research as equivalent with disciplinary research. To the participants of this study, the link between their disciplinary practice and their SoTL practice was not established. There may be recognition on paper but not in the unwritten culture of their home departments and faculties.

Some disciplinary cultures are resistant; therefore, there is no incentive to engage in scholarly teaching, let alone SoTL. It is not surprising that participants continued their interest in research in teaching and learning, but cannot find the time to do it. Compounding the barrier of time is the issue of professional responsibility. Participants noted that they are hired to do a particular job and that SoTL research can be an addition or side project, but it could not be their entire job. Therefore, there is a tension between their responsibility to the discipline and personal responsibility to scholarly curiosity and the students they teach.

“Studentness”

The willingness to engage in a challenging learning experience can be extremely intimidating and potentially time consuming. In order to navigate the complexities of a new field, adopting a mindset of curiosity and “studentness” (Cousin, 2012) was necessary. By taking on the mantle of studenthood, an educational leader places themself on the novice to expert continuum and sets the expectations of growth rather than expertise. They accept an implied apprenticeship of enculturation into new or changing knowledge.

Wanting to engage. Changing conceptions of research requires willing engagement by educational leaders in RIU contexts. One participant exclaimed, “I want to be a teacher who wants to investigate their practice, who wants to work with students, and not get caught down in all this other stuff,” but the pressures of tenure and promotion meant that they felt unable to allot the time to their SoTL. Unfortunately, when some faculty are assigned teaching and learning

responsibilities they may become frustrated, lose confidence, and quit. Land, Cousin, Meyer, and Davies (2005) suggest that curricular design needs to investigate the sources of epistemological barriers and free up the blocked places by redesigning course sequences and activities.

Trying something new. Based on the multidisciplinary context of SoTL research, many novice practitioners are anxious about wading into an unfamiliar field where they are not confident. Finding discipline specific and useful additional resources presented two challenges: one, wading through the resources that are available to find personally relevant literature and two, moving outside the suggested resources. One participant noted that they were familiar with the fundamentals of a literature search within their discipline (using, for example, PubMed), but finding SoTL literature, discipline specific teaching literature, or educational research was unfamiliar. They were “floundering.” Ultimately, the participant scheduled an appointment with an education librarian to seek expert assistance. Another cohort member, a former international student, suggested that her familiarity with being a “fish out of water” made it easier to go through the tough adjustment that was part of both her disciplinary and SoTL training. She was used to not understanding the language and cultural references.

Additionally, understanding personal values and beliefs about teaching and learning encouraged participants to articulate a teaching philosophy and an understanding of how learning happens within their context. Two participants expressed an interest in wanting to dig deeper into their teaching, “pushing beyond what I know”, and into an “awkward place,” with one past graduate directly relating comfort and apathy. Tracing these threads was articulated as foundational to the development of a SoTL scholar mindset.

Imposter Syndrome

It is possible to spend very little time exploring teaching and learning before being required to teach courses in higher education. As a result, a lack of confidence inhibited many participants from seeing themselves as educational leaders with a contribution to make. Participants drew on their past experience as learners in higher education as they traveled from scholarly teaching towards SoTL, but felt unprepared to be labeled as educational leaders; they frequently lacked confidence in their SoTL knowledge. The concept of subject matter expertise (or perceived lack of expertise) presented a challenge as participants contemplated combining their roles as discipline experts and SoTL leaders. The comments of one participant, a medical educator, demonstrated how the researcher and the practitioner are seen as separate: “my real thing is that I am a clinician.” As a clinician, they were comfortable with “uncertainty and incomplete evidence” in diagnosis, but they sought certainty when designing and conducting SoTL research. Not having a strong self-concept as a SoTL scholar confounded their confidence in doing SoTL. Their challenge lay in recognizing that they have a contribution to make and then implementing that into practice. As one respondent aptly noted, “I don’t think the topics or themes were challenging in themselves. For me, it was the implementation of the lessons that I learned into my teaching practice” that led to confidence.

Implications for SoTL and SoTL Leadership Programs

This study articulates three specific recommendations in order to build faculty development initiatives that mitigate the constraints and support the development of SoTL and SoTL Leadership capacity:

- (a) Institutional implications for SoTL and SoTL Leadership,
- (b) Strategic approaches to faculty development programs in SoTL and SoTL Leadership, and
- (c) Specific support for SoTL and SoTL Leadership research.

Institutional Implications for SoTL

It is important to foster institutional cultures that predispose, enable, and reinforce educational leaders to actively engage in SoTL and SoTL Leadership. This includes recognizing and validating SoTL and SoTL Leadership with institutional infrastructure to support and sustain SoTL work. Valuing SoTL scholarship as equal to disciplinary scholarship means that this cannot be done as off the side of the desk work. It is a barrier to have this work as additional to professional responsibilities; therefore differentiated workloads, strategic initiatives, and institutional resources are exceptionally valuable to supporting SoTL and SoTL Leadership.

Institutionally supported SoTL and SoTL Leadership research may be across disciplines or using teams. It is important that SoTL leaders are able to gather expertise from multiple sources in order to support their confidence in the research. Judicious borrowing from different disciplines and traditions may facilitate the creation of a cross disciplinary research team (Hubball & Clarke, 2010). This is especially important for educational leaders who come from unsupportive institutional cultures, as they will need to find a community of scholars outside of their department, faculty, or even institution (Poole, Iqbal, & Verwoord, 2019).

Strategic Approaches to Faculty Development Programs in SoTL Leadership

Strategic approaches to faculty development in SoTL leadership may be formal and informal. Formally, a professional development program for educational leaders will develop increased capacity for leading SoTL research through guidance into the language and culture of a new field. A specifically designed program with a multidisciplinary cohort can explicitly introduce SoTL conventions, research methodologies, and methods (Kanuka, 2011; Svinicki, 2012). For example, the Canadian RIU SoTL Leadership Program in this study spends significant time (including one 2.5-hour classroom session) introducing the field of SoTL and acclimatizing participants to the literature and conventions that they will need to use throughout their portfolio assignments. Subsequent formative feedback on the portfolio includes one-on-one conversations about SoTL literature, research questions, and methodological choices.

Informal SoTL Leadership initiatives may include time to develop and sustain communities of practice in order to support permeable institutional cultures (Danielson, 2012). For example, following the completion of each cohort of the UBC SoTL Leadership Program, some of the cohort members continue to meet and support each other in their educational leadership (O'Brien, 2008). It is helpful to develop a cohesive community of practice amongst a research team, and then across the institution. Educational leaders can make connections across campus as well as down the hall.

Specific Support for SoTL Research

It is often taken for granted that participants are excellent researchers; even so, they are not always familiar or comfortable with SoTL research. As instructional teams, we often assume that the participants, all successful scholars in their own fields, would be as skillful in their research in

SoTL. But this assumption misses the key and fundamental issue that they are engaging in scholarship in a new field, which may or may not connect with the field/discipline of their training (Simmons et al., 2013). Educational leaders need to be guided through the language and culture of a new field. Strategies to specifically support SoTL research could include connecting novice educational leaders with SoTL Leadership mentors, engaging a librarian to assist participants with their literature reviews, or having educational experts modeling the different methods that could be used to approach a research question through different methodologies (Chick, 2018). As well, a workshop on epistemologies, ontologies, methodologies, and methods could be developed in order to align ontologies, epistemologies, and SoTL research questions (Chick, 2104). Additionally, continued theorizing of the nature of an educational leader (Fields, Kenny, & Mueller, 2019) can help to characterize SoTL Leadership.

Conclusion

The factors that constrain educational leaders ability to navigate SoTL offers a complex picture of their experience in a Canadian RIU. While SoTL research is rigorous, well supported, and adds credence to educational endeavours in higher education, there is a need to build capacity amongst faculty members in order to develop and initiate impactful SoTL projects (Simmons, 2016). Yet, the constraints to navigating SoTL hinder sustained engagement by faculty and staff in RIU contexts. Identifying and understanding these constraints is of particular importance to instructional teams facilitating professional development programs in the scholarship of teaching and learning. The increasing investigation of threshold concepts within curricula for SoTL and SoTL Leadership programs (Webb, 2015; Tierney, 2016) could help instructional teams consider how novice SoTL leaders can be brought into the “big tent” (Huber & Hutchings, 2005, p. 4). Understanding and addressing the intellectual and institutional challenges identified by educational leaders at a research-intensive university can support the SoTL Leadership work of faculty members in many RIU teaching and learning contexts.

References

- Bortolini, K. (2018, November 29). SoTL: The party that no one really wants to go to. *University Affairs*. Retrieved from <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/opinion/in-my-opinion/sotl-the-party-that-no-one-really-wants-to-go-to/>
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Boyer, E. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bunnell, S. L., & Bernstein, D. J. (2012). Overcoming some threshold concepts in scholarly teaching. *Journal of Faculty Development*, 23(3), 14-18.
- Chick, N. L. (2014). ‘Methodologically sound’ under the ‘big tent’: An ongoing conversation. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 8(2). Article 1. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/ij-sotl/vol8/iss2/>
- Chick, N. L. (Ed.). (2018). *SoTL in action: Illuminating critical moments of practice*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus.

- Cousin, G. (2012, June). *Threshold concepts as an analytical tool for researching higher education*. Paper presented at the NAIRTL Conference, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Danielson, M. A. (2012). SoTL as a generative heuristic methodology for building learning communities. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 6(2). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/ij-sotl/vol6/iss2/4/>
- Dobbins, K. (2008). Enhancing the scholarship of teaching and learning: A study of factors identified as promoting and hindering the scholarly activities of academics in one faculty. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 2(2). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/ij-sotl/vol2/iss2/17/>
- Felten, P. (2013). Principles of good practice in SoTL. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry: The ISSoTL Journal*, 1(1), 121-125. Retrieved from <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/TLI/article/view/57376/43149>
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80-92.
- Fields, J., Kenny, N. A., & Mueller, R. A. (2019). Conceptualizing educational leadership in an academic development program. *International Journal for Academic Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2019.1570211>
- Glassick, C. E., Huber, M. T., & Maeroff, G. I. (1997). *Scholarship assessed: Evaluation of the professoriate*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Haigh, N. J. (2012). Sustaining and spreading the positive outcomes of SoTL projects: Issues, insights, and strategies. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 17(1), 19-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144x.2011.586462>
- Hockings, C. (2005). Removing barriers? A study of the conditions affecting teaching innovation. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 10(3), 313-326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510500122149>
- Hubball, H. T. (2014, June). *Developing institutional leadership for the scholarship of curriculum and pedagogical practice within and across the disciplines*. Paper presented at the International Conference for Educational Development, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Hubball, H. T., & Clarke, A. (2010). Diverse methodological approaches and considerations for SoTL in higher education. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1(1). Retrieved from http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cjsotl_rcacea/vol1/iss1/
- Hubball, H. T., Clarke, A. C., Webb, A. S., & Johnson, B. (2015). Developing institutional leadership for the scholarship of teaching and learning: Lessons learned with senior educational leaders in multi-national research-intensive university contexts. *International Journal of University Teaching and Faculty Development*, 4(4). Retrieved from https://www.novapublishers.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=53411
- Hubball, H. T., Lamberson, M., & Kindler, A. (2012). Strategic restructuring of a centre for teaching and learning in a research-intensive university: Institutional engagement in scholarly approaches to curriculum renewal and pedagogical practices. *International Journal for University Teaching and Faculty Development*, 3(2), 95-110. Retrieved from https://www.novapublishers.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=40158

- Hubball, H. T., & Pearson, M. (2010). Grappling with the complexity of undergraduate degree program reform: Critical barriers and emergent strategies. *Transformative Dialogues*, 3(3). Retrieved from <http://www.kpu.ca/td/past-issues/3-3>
- Huber, M. T., & Hutchings, P. (2005). *The advancement of learning: Building the teaching commons*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Huber, M. T., & Hutchings, P. (2006). Building the teaching commons. *Change: The magazine of higher learning*, 38(3), 24-31. <https://doi.org/10.3200/CHNG.38.3.24-31>
- Hutchings, P. (2007). Theory: The elephant in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning room, *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1(1), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsotl.2007.010102>
- Hutchings, P., Huber, M. T., & Ciccone, A. (2011). *The scholarship of teaching and learning reconsidered: Institutional integration and impact*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kandlbinder, P., & Peseta, T. (2009). Key concepts in postgraduate certificates in higher education teaching and learning in Australasia and the United Kingdom. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 14(1), 19-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13601440802659247>
- Kanuka, H. (2011). Keeping the scholarship in the scholarship of teaching and learning. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 5(1), Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsotl.2011.050103>
- Kiley, M., & Wisker, G. (2009). Threshold concepts in research education and evidence of threshold crossing. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 28(4), 431-441. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360903067930>
- Land, R., Cousin, G., Meyer, J. H. F., & Davies, P. (2005). Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge (3): Implications for course design and evaluation. In C. Rust (Ed.), *Improving student learning—Equality and diversity. Proceedings of the 12th improving student learning conference* (pp. 53-64). Oxford, UK: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.
- Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(85\)90062-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(85)90062-8)
- McKinney, K. (2002). *The scholarship of teaching and learning: Current challenges and future visions*. Remarks presented at the ceremony to install the Cross Chair in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University. Retrieved from <http://sotl.illinoisstate.edu/crossChair/sotlFuture.shtml>.
- O'Brien, M. (2008). Navigating the SoTL landscape: A compass, map and some tools for getting started. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 2(2), Article 15. <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsotl.2008.020215>
- Poole, G. (2010, March 2). The promises and potential of the scholarship of teaching and learning: Moving slowly along a fascinating path. *Academic Matters*. Retrieved from <http://www.academicmatters.ca/2010/03/the-promises-and-potential-of-the-scholarship-of-teaching-and-learning-moving-slowly-along-a-fascinating-path/>
- Poole, G., & Iqbal, I. (2011). An exploration of the scholarly foundations of educational development. In J. C. Smart & M. B. Paulsen (Eds.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* 26 (pp. 317-354). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0702-3_8
- Poole, G., Iqbal, I., & Verwoord, R. (2019). Small significant networks as birds of a feather. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 24(1), 61-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2018.1492924>

- Potter, M., & Kustra, E. (2011). The relationship between scholarly teaching and SoTL: Models, distinctions, and clarifications. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 5(1), Article 23. <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2011.050123>
- Richlin, L., & Cox, M. D. (2004). Developing scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning through faculty development communities. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 97, 127-135. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.139>
- Shulman, L. S. (2000). Inventing the future. In P. Hutchings (Ed.), *Opening lines: Approaches to the scholarship of teaching and learning* (pp. 95-105). Available at <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/elibrary/inventing-future-opening-lines-approaches-scholarship-teaching-and-learning>
- Simmons, N. (Ed.). (2016). The scholarship of teaching and learning in Canada: Institutional impact. *New Directions in Teaching and Learning*, 146. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.20192>
- Simmons, N., Abrahamson, E., Deschler, J. X., Kensington-Miller, B., Manarin, K. Morón-García, S., Oliver, C., & Renc-Roe, J. (2013). Conflicts and configurations in a liminal space: SoTL scholars' identity development. *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, 1(2), 9-21. Available at <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/TLI/article/view/57382/43155>
- Svinicki, M. D. (2012). "Who is entitled to do SoTL?" *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 6(2), Article 2. Available at <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/ij-sotl/vol6/iss2/2/>
- Tierney, A. M. (2016). "More than just a teaching fellow": *The impact of REF and implications of TEF on life science teaching-focused academics in UK HEIs* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). University of Durham, Durham, U.K. Available at <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/11826/>
- van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London, ON: Althouse Press.
- Wuetherick, B., Yu, S., & Greer, J. (2016). Exploring the SoTL landscape at the University of Saskatchewan. In N. Simmons (Ed.), *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Canada: Institutional impact. New directions in teaching and learning, No. 146* (pp. 63-70). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.20188>
- Young, P. (2006). Out of balance: Lecturer's perceptions of differential status and rewards in relation to teaching and research. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11(2), 191-202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510500527727>
- Webb, A. S. (2015). Threshold Concepts in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: A phenomenological study of educational leaders in a Canadian Research Intensive University Context (PhD dissertation). University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., Canada. Available at <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0167152>
- Webb, A. S., Wong, T., & Hubball, H. T. (2013). Professional development for adjunct teaching faculty in a research-intensive university: Engagement in scholarly approaches to teaching and learning. *International Journal for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 25(2), 231-238.