

SoTL Scholar: Dilnoza Khasilova, Ph.D.
Date: 15 May 2024
Topics of interest: SoTL, global learning, international education, assessment
Themes/Keywords: *SoTL, context, evidence-based teaching, global learning, assessment, higher education, teaching and learning in international ed*

Reflection:

Bridging Worlds: Turning SoTL Principles into Global Learning

More than ever, now there is a demand to an increasing collaborative scholarly work to advance global learning and instruction in international education. There is a need to examine and explore way of learning in diverse contexts globally. For example, we see the need in designing innovative study abroad programs, partnerships, and international exchanges that focus on exploration of learning environments, inquiry into learning, and intentional and self-reflected learning that have been informed by theory and research findings. Such evidence-based approach to teaching and learning is vital because it focuses on enhancing what We are learning and what We are not learning and what We are teaching and what We are not teaching globally.

As someone deeply involved both personally and professionally in examining way of learning and teaching globally and international scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) field, and engaged in professional organizations such as *NAFSA* and Region II *NAFSA's* Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship Knowledge Community as a liaison for Region II and *International Society for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, I find it imperative to identify the state of current knowledge, pedagogical practices, and research to employ skills and bring supportive practices to advance the field through effective teaching and learning strategies. As such the goal of this **blog** is to shed light on the key aspects of SoTL framework that can support the global learning and global competencies identified by *NAFSA* and other professional international organizations.

What is SoTL?

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) SoTL is a growing field in post-secondary education that uses systematic and ongoing methodological inquiry into teaching (behaviors/practices, attitudes, and values) to enhance student learning (McKinney, 2007; Felten, 2023; Potter & Kustra, 2011). SoTL framework seeks to create a dynamic and collaborative environment that encourages practicing iterative and evidence-based teaching and learning approaches. The goal is to develop a more accurate understanding of student learning, resulting in documented practices that are publicly shared and can be used by appropriate higher education communities (Hutchings and Shulman 1999).

Grand Principles of SoTL

Since 2018, members of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) have been collaborating globally to identify five Grand Challenges for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). This initiative, culminating in 2023, involved extensive worldwide input and feedback (Hutchings, 2000).

My inquiry into SoTL's role in international education aligns most closely with #5 of the five grand principles of SoTL.

Related Grand Principle #5 *“SoTL practitioners study postsecondary teaching and learning to better understand and improve the practice, use, and growth of SoTL. SoTL practitioners explore, share, and translate the knowledge generated by its diverse research approaches to improve teaching, learning, and higher education more broadly.”*

In light of the above challenge, institutions must innovate to enhance learning for both educators and students. This involves creating opportunities to understand the learning process itself and implementing effective teaching methods and learning strategies that foster deep and lifelong learning. Educators need to develop flexible approaches that can reach a diverse student population, taking into account individual differences, including neurodiversity, varied cultural backgrounds, and different educational contexts (Scharff, Capocchiano, Chick, Eady, Friberg, Gregory, Loy, & Maurer, 2023). By focusing on these areas, educational institutions can create more inclusive, effective, and adaptable learning environments that prepare individuals for the complexities of modern education and beyond.

What is SoTL's impact on International Education?

In today's globalized and interconnected world, communicating effectively across different cultures and across borders, and having a global perspective is more than ever important. NAFSA's professional competencies in the field of international education align closely with the importance of such global competencies in education. The integration of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) can play a significant role in addressing and enhancing these competencies.

Discussing the value of SoTL work, scholars note that SoTL can serve many functions for individual educators/faculty/academic professionals, courses, programs, institutions, higher education systems broadly both locally and globally. SoTL can bridge international boundaries and foster international partnerships through SoTL collaborations.

Take study abroad and international exchange programs, for instance; NAFSA emphasizes the need for professionals to demonstrate cultural sensitivity and adaptability. SoTL, when applied to education, ensures that students develop global and intercultural competencies to promote a deeper

understanding of diverse perspectives and effective cross-cultural communication, through scholarly engagement in learning such competencies.

In the pursuit of global competencies, it is noteworthy to draw attention to Dr. Darla Deardorff's (2006, 2011) extensive work in the assessment of global learning. Her publications (Deardorff, 2009) and books provide insights into how educators can guide their students to achieve significant milestones, not only within traditional classroom settings but also in the evolving landscape of hybrid and remote learning environments. Her work provides a practical framework for educators to understand the diverse modalities of student learning, offering strategies to bridge the gap between physical and virtual classrooms.

As we navigate the challenges posed by the post-pandemic era, where education has witnessed a paradigm shift towards hybrid models, understanding global learning processes becomes increasingly crucial. The integration of SoTL becomes particularly relevant in this context, as it allows educators to assess and enhance global learning outcomes by addressing the conception of learning in diverse educational settings (Manarin, Adams, Fendler, Marsh, Pohl, Porath, & Thomas, 2021).

Here are key reasons why SoTL can serve as an innovative cornerstone in shaping the landscape of global learning:

- SoTL comes into play by crafting lessons that center around these global competencies. This means students not only gain knowledge about various cultures but also enhance their abilities to communicate and collaborate effectively with people from diverse corners of the world. Those lessons could be built in partnership with students using SoTL methodology.
- The integration of SoTL into the framework of global learning serves as a vital conduit for educators and researchers worldwide to engage in a collaborative dialogue on the intricacies of pedagogy and learning within diverse cultural contexts. At its core, SoTL provides a shared platform where the universal concepts of learning and teaching become a unifying force, transcending geographical boundaries.
- Through the SoTL framework, educators, practitioners, and researchers are afforded the opportunity to exchange distinctive methodologies and cultivate partnerships rooted in the fundamental essence of learning and teaching. This exchange extends beyond traditional research paradigms, fostering an environment where diverse cultural perspectives shape the discourse on how teaching occurs in varied settings and how learning manifests within these diverse cultural contexts.

- In essence, SoTL becomes the bridge between global partners, offering a structured framework within which the dynamics of learning and teaching can be systematically explored. This not only facilitates scholarly collaboration but also nurtures innovation in pedagogical approaches, as educators draw inspiration from the diverse practices embedded in different cultural landscapes. This SoTL questions could also be incorporated into research study the partners are doing with their global colleagues. At times, it is not easy to fully engage in global partnerships because of the differences in curriculum, assessment, and contexts. SoTL can be the first step into building such a robust, sustainable, and supportive curricular experience to student learning through global partnerships.
- An inherent strength of SoTL lies in its capacity to integrate assessment into the scholarly framework. As educators and learners delve into the intricacies of global learning, intercultural understanding, and global competencies, the outcomes of this assessment evolve into a form of scholarship. This scholarly lens transforms the evaluation of learning and teaching into a dynamic process, one that can be directly applied in exchange programs or study abroad initiatives. For example, in the realm of study abroad experiences, for instance, students become active participants in assessing their own global learning journey. SoTL provides a structured means for them to evaluate their intercultural and global competencies. This transformative collaboration between educators and learners, facilitated by SoTL, not only deepens the understanding of global learning but also empowers learners to design and shape their own cultural contexts.

Student Learning Abroad: What our students are learning and what they're not by Michael Vande Berg, R. Michael Paige, Kris Hemming Lou is a great example, on how faculty members can consider building their study abroad portfolio, curricula, and creative diverse faculty-led classes using SoTL.

The following are the outcomes through the SoTL engagement:

- **Sharing International Practices:**

SoTL encourages the dissemination of evidence-based teaching practices. In the realm of International Education, this means identifying and validating approaches that effectively foster intercultural competence, language acquisition, and global perspectives. By sharing best practices through scholarly inquiry such as research publication, blogs, podcasts, conference presentations, professional communities, educators can contribute to a collective knowledge base that benefits the entire international education community.

- **Cultivating Global Citizens:**

SoTL, when applied to international education, goes beyond traditional academic outcomes such as language fluency and ability to navigate conflicts in complex diverse teams, and cultures. The

framework embraces not only the practical and traditional teaching and learning, but also the ethical responsibility for teachers to facilitate learning gaps. It nurtures the development of global citizens— individuals who are not only knowledgeable in their academic disciplines but also possess the skills and attitudes necessary to navigate an interconnected world. Engagement in SoTL can contribute to the holistic education of students, preparing them to thrive in diverse cultural and global contexts.

- **Adapting Educational Resources and Technologies**

As technology continues to reshape education, SoTL can provide a structured approach to understanding the impact of technological innovations on teaching and learning. In the international education context, this involves exploring how virtual exchange programs, internships, COIL collaborations, and digital resources can enhance cross-cultural understanding. SoTL empowers educators to adapt and leverage emerging technologies to facilitate global learning experiences.

In conclusion, SoTL transforms the learning landscape by facilitating a collaborative exploration of diverse teaching methodologies and cultural nuances. Through this collaborative process, learners become architects of their own understanding of cultural contexts, and educators engage in a shared scholarly journey that transcends borders, fostering a truly global perspective on teaching and learning.

The impact of SoTL on International Education is far-reaching and diverse, spanning pedagogical innovation, inclusivity, knowledge sharing, technological adaptation, and the cultivation of globally minded citizens. As the field continues to evolve, the SoTL framework can serve as an important resource for ongoing collaboration and innovation in international education field. The integration of SoTL principles into teaching practices signifies a dedicated commitment to molding a generation that not only excels academically but is also equipped with the essential skills and mindset for success in our interconnected world.

Reference:

Deardorff, D.K. (2006). Identification and assessment of Intercultural Competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10(3), 241–266. Retrieved August 13, 2024,

from: <http://jsi.sagepub.com/content/10/3/241.full.pdf+html>

Deardorff, D. K. (2009). Preface. In D. K. Deardorff (Ed.). *The Sage handbook of intercultural competence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Deardorff, D.K. (2011). Assessing Intercultural Competence. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 149. Retrieved August 13,

from: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ir.381/pdf>

- Felten, P., & Geersema, J. (2023). Recovering the Heart of SoTL: Inquiring into Teaching and Learning 'As If the World Mattered. *Innovative Higher Education* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-023-09675-4>
- Hutchings, P., & Shulman, L. S. (1999). The Scholarship of Teaching: New Elaborations, New Developments. *Change* 31 (5): 10-15.
- Hutchings, P. ed. (2000). *Opening Lines: Approaches to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*. Menlo Park, CA: Carnegie Publications.
- International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. (n.d.). *ISSOTL Blog*. <https://issotl.com/issotl-blog/>
- Manarin, K., Adams, C., Fendler, R., Marsh, H., Pohl, E., Porath, S., & Thomas, A. (2021). Examining the Focus of SoTL Literature—Teaching and Learning? *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 349-64. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.23>.
- McKinney, K. (2007). Enhancing Learning through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: The Challenges and Joys of Juggling. *Centers for Teaching Excellence - Book Library*. 147. <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/ct2-library/147>
- Potter, M., K., & Kustra, E. D.H. (2011). The Relationship between Scholarly Teaching and SoTL: Models, Distinctions, and Clarifications. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*: 5(1): 23. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2011.050123>
- Scharff, L., Capocchiano, H., Chick, N., Eady, M., Friberg, J., Gregory, D., Loy, K., & Maurer, T. (November 2023). Grand Challenges for SoTL #5. *International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, <https://issotl.com/grand-challenges-for-sotl/gc-sotl-5/>