

## The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Overview

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### Abstract

*The scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) is one of four traditionally defined domains of research. Academics have three fundamental responsibilities: teaching, scholarship, and community engagement. They are expected to maintain competence in all three areas within the scope of their individual allocation of effort toward each responsibility. Although policies related to academic promotion vary across institutions, there is a general expectation that academics grow in their expertise and excel in at least one of these areas. In the area of scholarship, academics are required to stay abreast of emerging knowledge in their area of research so that they can advance the field through well-informed inquiry and disseminated work. This most often applies to more discipline-specific research, and, in many institutions, less emphasis may be placed on academic members keeping current in the area of teaching and learning. Teachers engaging in SoTL should bring the same level of rigor to their teaching and the study of their teaching that they bring to their scholarly research (Boshier, 2009). Publishable SoTL works focus on 'contributing to new understanding, new strategies, and new practices in teaching and contribute to our understanding of how learners learn and how teachers must use that understanding to teach. Documentary research approach, which consists of reviewing, analysing, and examining information, recorded media and texts was adopted for the study.*

**Keywords:** *scholarship of teaching and learning, research, scholarly teaching, academics*

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### Background

A decade after Boyer's introduction of the scholarship of teaching, Shulman refined the definition of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) to include the critical elements of public availability, susceptibility to peer review, and dissemination to the broader professional community. The SOTL contributes to the advancement of academic pharmacy, informing teaching and learning strategies, outcomes assessment, administrative practices and other educational practices. However, for many faculty members, the SOTL represents an interesting but separate and limited line of scholarship that should not replace their primary research, which often resides within their scientific discipline or some other area of work more traditionally valued by the institution (Bernstein, 2013). For example, an assistant professor may be hired in a department of social and administrative sciences (SAS) to fulfill the three academic missions after completing a graduate degree in this field. As this faculty member gains knowledge of and experience in teaching, an SOTL project may naturally develop and result in publication of a peer-reviewed manuscript. Nevertheless, this successful pursuit of the SOTL may be seen as a distraction from work within their specific discipline (ie, SAS), in part because of the vastly different skill sets needed for the two types of research (Bernstein & Bass, 2005). Further, pursuing the SOTL means choosing not to spend time on other responsibilities because of the limited time and effort available. Department chairs may be reluctant to allocate faculty time and effort to the SOTL, even if it represents an area of interest and success, since doing so would ultimately detract from other work that may be more highly valued, either formally or informally, by the school or college. For the faculty member, the result is that the SOTL is either abandoned altogether or relegated to an add-on or side responsibility (Burns, Merchant and Appelt, 2013). In this example, the interest in the SOTL is pushed to the side of the desk in order for the faculty member to pursue SAS-focused research that is more valued by the institution.

Lee Shulman describes SoTL as an outcome of the "pedagogical imperative... to inquire into the consequences of one's work with students... an obligation that devolves on individual faculty members, on programs, on institutions, and even on disciplinary communities" (2002, p. vii). He continues, SOTL necessarily builds on many past traditions in higher education, including classroom and program assessment, action research (Draeger, 2013). The reflective practice movement, peer review of teaching, traditional educational research, and faculty development efforts to enhance teaching and learning. As such, SOTL encompasses aspects of professional development or faculty development, such as how teachers can not only improve their expertise in their fields, but also develop their pedagogical expertise, i.e., how to better teach novice students in the field or enable their learning. It also encompasses the study and implementation of more modern teaching methods, such as active learning, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and others (Draeger, 2013). SOTL scholars come from various backgrounds, such as those in educational psychology and other education related fields, as well as specialists in various disciplines who are interested in improving teaching and learning

in their respective fields. Some scholars are educational researchers or consultants affiliated with teaching and learning centers at universities.

Inquiry methods in SOTL include reflection and analysis, interviews and focus groups, questionnaires and surveys, content analysis of text, secondary analysis of existing data, quasi-experiments (comparison of two sections of the same course), observational research, and case studies, among others (Felten, 2007). As with all scholarly study, evidence depends not only upon the methods chosen but the relevant disciplinary standards. Dissemination for impact among scholarly teachers may be local within the academic department, college or university, or may be in published, peer-reviewed form (Draeger, 2013). A few journals exclusively publish SOTL outputs, and numerous disciplinary publications disseminate such inquiry outputs.

Educational development traditionally has been a practice-based field. We propose that as a profession we adopt the methods of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), so often shared with our clients, in order to look through a scholarly lens at the outcomes of our own practice (Felten, 2007). Using SoTL approaches in our work would deepen the research literature in our field and improve the effectiveness of decisions we make about where to spend limited time and resources. In this chapter, we explore what it might mean for individual developers, and for our professional community, to apply SoTL methods to our practice (Felten, 2007).

Educational development (ED) is a profession dedicated to helping colleges and universities function effectively as teaching and learning communities. This field includes all the areas for which we often name it: faculty development; TA development; instructional, academic, and organizational development (Draeger, 2013). We have chosen the descriptor educational development rather than any of these other, perhaps more familiar names for the field, because we believe it is the broadest, most inclusive of the available terms. ED professionals work in a range of contexts, from teaching support units to professional development committees (Felten, 2007). Choosing to name the whole after a part is alienating to those who work in other ways. Although the term educational development is much more common in the UK, Canada, and Australia than the US, we hope it will be adopted more widely as a move to include all of our colleagues within our community.

As a part of this work, especially our work with individual faculty members, many educational developers have recently advocated for and supported a wide range of practices that fall under the rubric of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) (McKinney, 2004; Schroeder, 2005). Indeed, many teaching centers see SoTL as a central part of their philosophy and offerings. This is so common that in seeking to identify where SoTL is supported within colleges and universities, Huber and Hutchings (2005) identify teaching centers as a “place for good work” (p. 84). Despite this growing engagement with SoTL, however, developers have not done much to use this model to study our own work as developers. In this chapter, we explore what it might mean to do this kind of work. What might it involve and why should we consider doing it? What challenges and opportunities are inherent in pursuing SoTL in ED? In what ways might SoTL in ED draw on, and adapt, frameworks already established through SoTL itself? In addition, what possible future directions emerge through all of these considerations? (Draeger, 2013).

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) refers to evaluation of student learning that is shared, critically reviewed, and published or presented. It is the systematic study (question-asking, inquiry, and investigation (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999) of the teaching and learning of our own students, made public, with the primary purpose of improving teaching and learning. It is student-focused with investigations looking at how students learn and how their learning is influenced by teaching (strategies, practices, interventions, designs, etc.). Questions must look at the conditions under which student learning occurs, what student learning looks like, how to deepen student learning, etc. (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999).

### **Principles of good practice in SOLT**

Felten (2013) offers five principles of good practice in SoTL, suggesting that SoTL is “inquiry focused on student learning... grounded in both scholarly and local context... methodologically sound... conducted in partnership with students... [and] involves ‘going public’” (pp. 122-123). Cross and Mimi Steadman’s (1996) characteristics of classroom research for SoTL echo these principles and add that the inquiry is teacher-directed, valuing teachers’ abilities to conduct “useful and valid research on classroom learning”; relevant to teachers’ classroom experiences; and ongoing, since SoTL outcomes often lead to new pedagogical experiments, which merit further inquiry (pp. 2-4).

Discussing the value of SoTL work, McKinney notes “SoTL can serve many positive functions for individuals, courses, programs, institutions, and higher education more broadly” (2007, p. 23). SoTL can help faculty (and future faculty) become more reflective and scholarly teachers. It can demonstrate faculty commitment to teaching. It also can extend faculty research programs. Most significantly, though, SoTL enables faculty to learn more about student learning in their classrooms and other educational contexts.

The scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL or SoTL) is often defined as systematic inquiry into student learning which advances the practice of teaching in higher education by making inquiry findings public (Draeger, 2013). Building on this definition, Peter Felten (2013) identified 5 principles for good practice in

SOTL(Draeger, 2013)inquiry focused on student learning, grounded in context, methodologically sound, conducted in partnership with students, appropriately public.

#### *Signature pedagogies*

Signature pedagogies are ways of learning in specific disciplines ((Hutchings & Shulman, 1999). Examples of signature pedagogies include medical residents making rounds in hospitals or pre-service teachers doing a classroom-based practicum as part of their teacher training. The notion of signature pedagogies has expanded in recent years, as scholars have examined their use in e-learning, for example. Some scholars contend that SoTL itself is a signature pedagogy of higher education.

#### *Framework*

It has been suggested that the role of SoTL is evolving, but there remains a need to demonstrate the impact of efforts to promote the impact of SoTL within higher education (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999). The 4M framework is used in SoTL to understand complex problems relating to teaching and learning. The framework grew out of systems theory and has been adapted for used in educational settings. The framework includes four levels through which complex problems can be studied: micro (individual), meso (departmental), macro (institutional), and mega (Draeger, 2013). Changes at the meso-level and beyond can have the most impact over time. The framework has been proposed as a means to engage in strategic planning and institutional reporting of SoTL activities.

#### *Professional societies*

The International Society for Exploring Teaching and Learning (ISETL) has as its purpose "to encourage the study of instruction and principles of learning in order to implement practical, effective methods of teaching and learning; promote the application, development, and evaluation of such methods; and foster the scholarship of teaching and learning among practicing post-secondary educators. They hold a yearly conference in varying locations. Their 50th annual conference was to be held in Charlotte, NC in 2019(Ellis, 2018).

The International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (ISSOTL) was founded in 2004 by a committee of 67 scholars from several countries and serves faculty members, staff, and students who care about teaching and learning as serious intellectual work (Ellis, 2018). ISSOTL has held annual conferences since 2004, attended by scholars from about a dozen nations. The conferences sites include Bloomington, Indiana USA (2004); Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada (2005); Washington, DC, USA (2006); Sydney, Australia (2007); Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (2008); Bloomington, Indiana, USA (2009); Liverpool, UK (2010); Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA (2011); Hamilton, Ontario, Canada (2012); Raleigh, North Carolina, USA (2013); Quebec City, Quebec, Canada (2014).

There are also stand-alone conferences that have a long-standing commitment to SOTL. The Lilly Conferences are a series of conferences that occur multiple times a year and provide "opportunities for the presentation of the scholarship of teaching and learning (Ellis, 2018). Additionally, The SoTL Commons Conference is an international conference that has been held since 2007 at the Georgia Southern University Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE).

#### **SoTL in ED: What and Why?**

Educational development has been a growing field for the last 50 years or so. However, for most of that time it has been a practice-based discipline with little in the way of systematic study of its range, its activities, or especially its outcomes (Felten, 2007). This is not to say that our practice is uninformed by research; in fact, one could make the claim that ED professionals are among the prime scholars of university pedagogies and certainly are major consumers and disseminators of educational research in higher education. But, such engagement with educational research is parallel to what Richlin (1993) and Shulman (2000) call "scholarly teaching" as differentiated from the "scholarship of teaching." In their terms, scholarly teaching takes into account the work of others in deciding how to teach, whereas scholarship of teaching engages in structured inquiry into the outcomes of one's teaching practice. In similar fashion, many educational developers already perform "scholarly development" by basing their practice on the scholarly literature, but far fewer engage in a scholarship of teaching and learning in development by gathering data on the outcomes of their own work. We believe that our profession would be significantly enhanced if more of us began to apply SoTL methods to our professional practice—conducting systematic and public inquiry about the learning that emerges from practice (Felten, 2007).

To be more specific, what we know now about the work of educational development comes mainly from a few studies that survey the field, a great deal of local program assessment, and a strong tradition of sharing best practices. Broad studies over time (Centra, 1976; Chism & Szabo, 1996; Eble&McEachie, 1985; Erickson, 1986; Hellyer&Boschmann, 1993) have offered important ways to outline the evolution and scope of educational development as an emerging field. Most recently, in *Creating the Future of Faculty Development*, Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, and Beach (2006) offer a review of current goals and practices, based on several earlier works and a survey of practitioners. As with previous surveys of the field, Sorcinelli et al. focus on the big picture, the range of practice at many institutions (Felten, 2007).

At the other end of the spectrum from these broad studies of the profession is program assessment. Most teaching support units regularly collect and analyze data in order to assess their usefulness to their

constituencies. However, this analysis is not usually shared beyond the administrative hierarchy of that program (Felten, 2007). As educational developers, we also have a long and valuable tradition of sharing programs and ideas for practice. The POD publication *To Improve the Academy*, for example, offers many descriptive pieces on best practices, and the annual POD conference provides a rich array of practice-based sessions.

These kinds of study—broad surveys of the field, individual program review and assessment, and best practices—are important and useful. They help us understand and describe our work at both the global and local levels (Draeger, 2013). But something is missing: systematic, evidence-based study and publication by practitioners of the outcomes of their practice. This is the same gap that SoTL fills in classroom teaching—the gap between individual practice and higher education research, between anecdotal sharing of best practices and publication of evidence-based scholarship, between individual evaluation of teaching effectiveness and a collective understanding and analysis of learning outcomes (Draeger, 2013). We propose that we adopt the methods of SoTL, which we so often share with our clients, and look through that scholarly lens at our own practice. Shulman (2000) outlines for doing SoTL overall:) professionalism—recognizing “the inherent obligations and opportunities associated with becoming a professional scholar/educator” (p. 49); pragmatism—assuring “that one’s work as an educator is constantly improving and meeting its objectives and its responsibilities to students” (p. 49); policy—providing “the capacity to respond to the legitimate questions” (p. 49) of outside constituents about the quality and value of the work being done (Felten, 2007).

All three of Shulman’s reasons align with the broader goals of the educational development community. In fact, defining the professionalism of ED is the second of the four core goals of the current POD Network Strategic Plan (2005): “to define what professionalization means in the context of POD.” In adopting this goal, POD’s governing committee identified the same need to recognize and fulfill the “obligations and opportunities associated with becoming a professional” that Shulman identified. Most of the objectives and strategies listed in the plan to meet this goal would be advanced by creating a rich body of scholarship analyzing the learning outcomes of our practice (Draeger, 2013). Such work would serve the pragmatic function of informing our decisions about where best to spend our limited time and resources to achieve our professional mission of helping our colleges and universities function effectively as teaching and learning communities. Finally, Shulman’s definition of policy describes a central need of the field of ED: to explain and justify our work as a scholarly area deserving respect in an academic world where such prestige is generally granted to disciplinary (Felten, 2007).

Finally, the institution’s external reputation can be bolstered by the SOTL. A key aim of the SOTL is to enhance student learning, which focuses efforts on the institution’s primary external audience: its current and prospective students.<sup>1,5,13</sup> Just as in any other discipline, as the influence of a faculty member’s work grows, the faculty member’s reputation also grows (Draeger, 2013). This begins with faculty recognition through the dissemination of their SOTL through presentations and publications, and may even lead to awards for excellence in teaching and learning. As a faculty member’s reputation grows through more visible dissemination of their research, their contributions are sought even more frequently, resulting in national recognition as an expert in the field. When SOTL-engaged faculty members gain regional or national prominence through the dissemination of their work, the institution can benefit greatly from publicizing these efforts to elevate and advance student learning by their own faculty members. It paints a picture of a vibrant educational community (Draeger, 2013).

Faculty members who are engaged in the SOTL can also more broadly impact the institution by carefully aligning their research with institutional priorities (Draeger, 2013). This might include initiatives related to the institution’s strategic plan, accreditation requirements, or key survey metrics (eg, student or alumni surveys from the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy [AACCP]). For example, an academic medical center may emphasize interprofessional education in its strategic plan. Faculty members with interest in the SOTL may intentionally seek ways to impact the knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward interprofessional education through their research. Some challenges to the SOTL might be lessened by this approach because of the collective interest and development of support processes, and it might also provide the potential for intramural funding to carry out the work. Faculty members engaged in the SOTL must make the effort to learn about the institution’s priorities and look for ways their work can align with these needs. Even in these cases, however, administrators and faculty members leading these institutional priorities must have a keen understanding of SOTL in general and of its practice within the university in order to effectively advocate for its support and inclusion in these discussions.

Further, a productive and robust SOTL program provides the institution with several advantages. In addition to the benefits of the SOTL-engaged faculty members’ own development, they also contribute to the greater teaching and learning community by advancing the quality of instruction outside their circle of SOTL scholars (Bernstein, 2013). Because these scholars seek awareness and knowledge of emerging data in teaching and learning, they can serve as excellent resources to others across the spectrum of teaching: those interested in enhancing student learning through better teaching, those seeking to adopt sound instructional practices from the literature (scholarly teaching), and those pursuing scholarly work related to their teaching (SOTL). In this sense,

the SOTL serves as a mechanism by which to enhance the quality of the institution's educational processes (Draeger, 2013).

### **Challenges, Risks and opportunities of Engaging in SOTL in Educational development**

Several factors may directly or indirectly impact institutional culture related to the SOTL. First, the SOTL may be viewed as having low yield when measured by traditional scholarly metrics (eg, number of citations, journal impact factor). Traditionally, SOTL publications are less frequently cited than other types of scholarship, and their impact may be more difficult to track with citation metrics (Bernstein, 2013). Other ways to measure the impact, such as describing the influence on curricular design or teaching practices at the faculty member's home institution or another institution, may be better markers of the importance of the work. Second, successful SOTL is disseminated through presentation and publication; however, fewer outlets exist for dissemination of SOTL. Only a few peer-reviewed journals focus content solely on pharmacy education, with the *Journal and Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning* being most broadly recognized. Because of the small number of journals and the limited number of articles published per issue in these journals, it may be difficult for well-designed SOTL projects to be disseminated simply because of the competition for publication within these journals.

Challenges associated with the conduct of the SOTL may further dampen institutional enthusiasm and support. All scholarship, including the SOTL, requires faculty time and effort to execute. However, in the authors' experience, little extramural grant funding is directed toward the SOTL compared to other types of research, and when available, the funding amount is often relatively small and rarely supports faculty effort (Draeger, 2013). This lack of salary support can further push SOTL projects to the side of the faculty member's desk. Challenges in the design of SOTL projects may also dissuade faculty from pursuing it without adequate institutional support. Many faculty members, even those with formal research training, need development to effectively design and accomplish SOTL. One faculty member described this new skill development by referring to himself as a "two-sport athlete," noting that his passion for and skills in the SOTL were vastly unlike those for his previous research.<sup>4</sup> Many SOTL projects take considerable time to complete, especially if multiple student cohorts are needed to study the effects of curricular changes (Draeger, 2013). Comparator groups are difficult to identify, and multicenter investigations are difficult due to substantial inter-institutional differences in curricula. Additionally, faculty members may not know how to effectively design SOTL projects with the safeguards needed to protect students as a vulnerable study population. Institutional support through faculty effort allocation, faculty development programs, and collective expertise would alleviate many of these challenges, but this support simply may not be available for faculty members to utilize.

Faculty members engaged in the SOTL may also face risks related to their career advancement. Smesny and colleagues identified several barriers that detailed why faculty members are conflicted by their interest in the SOTL, including lack of support, funding, and reward/recognition, and the concern that faculty members pursuing the SOTL are viewed as "second class citizens (McKinney, 2007). To sustain their work in the mission areas of scholarship, teaching, and service, faculty members must sense there is institutional value in their work. To ensure both faculty and institutional success, institutions must implement policies and actions that support faculty effort in all types of scholarship (McKinney, 2007). Reward through performance evaluations, promotion and/or tenure, and financial incentives provide faculty members with evidence of the value of their scholarship in the eyes of their institution. Gubbins suggested that institutional values and pride are ultimately reflected in the institution's promotion and tenure policies. When requirements for scholarship, types of research recognized, and expected deliverables are outlined in promotion and tenure policy and guidance documents, it sends strong signals to faculty members regarding the value attributed to this area. If faculty members do not see the SOTL clearly expressed in the institutional culture and system of values represented in the promotion and tenure policy and guidance documents, they may question its value. They may also abandon the pursuit of SOTL for the sake of career advancement, substituting alternative scholarship perceived to be more valued by the institution. Any resulting pedagogical advances will not be realized, and educational innovation may be diminished. Ultimately, this has a negative effect on the faculty member, their institution, and the Academy as a whole.

#### *Inquiry*

Most educational developers, as well as our constituents, can quickly think of big questions we have about work in our field: Do the clients we work with become better teachers? Do their students learn more? Such ungainly questions can stymie research, particularly for busy people who have little time for research in the first place (Felten, 2013). This difficulty is not unique to ED (Draeger, 2013). Many SoTL practitioners struggle to move from interesting but overly broad questions to more manageable but still significant lines of inquiry.

To help faculty new to SoTL focus on questions that are both answerable and evidence based, Georgetown University's Crossroads Online Institute (hosted by the Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship) uses a case study linked to a simple but powerful visual (Felten, 2013). The case explains how Curtis Bennett, a Carnegie scholar, narrowed his inquiry from vague questions about how students think mathematically to more discrete and evidence-based subquestions about the processes students take to learn, and the ways class activities promote mathematical thinking. Bennett found that his subquestions not only were more "doable" as

research projects, but also that the results from these focused inquiries provided considerable insight into his larger concerns about mathematical thinking. This hierarchy breaks down a general question into component parts, which are further subdivided until specific questions can be tied directly to evidence of learning. The number of layers involved will depend on the nature of the questions and evidence; however, this process typically helps new SoTL practitioners move from broad but ill-defined “what works?” questions to more answerable “what is?” lines of inquiry (Felten, 2013).

What might SoTL in educational development look like in practice? If we follow this path, we might, for example, use SoTL approaches to explore the learning that results (or fails to result) from the Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID) (Draeger, 2013). Many educational developers use variations on the SGID, a focus group process that gathers student feedback for faculty during a course. Although the SGID is a common tool, relatively little has been written about how it shapes faculty teaching or student learning; instead, articles have tended to offer a guide or step-by-step process approach for educational developers using this technique (Black, 1998; Diamond, 2002; Millis, 2004; Snooks, Neely, & Williamson 2004).

An added challenge for the SoTL of ED is that, while SoTL seems to assume, some level of continuous contact with students, that longitude may be difficult to achieve for educational developers. Someone may come to just one workshop or do just one consultation over the course of several years (Draeger, 2013). How would we track and study learning in that much more limited context? For example, how many consultations would we need to do with the same person or even same set or genre of people (e.g., tenure-track faculty in the humanities) to draw any meaningful conclusions? Cohorts or working groups might offer a more robust opportunity for study—we could see how they change over the course of the cohort and then at a later point. But the wide variations in number of people and consistency of contact could pose an obstacle to drawing many solid conclusions (Felten, 2013).

With this challenge also comes an opportunity, however. In the SoTL of ED, the “students” whose learning we would study are reflective professionals who have a vested interest in the outcomes of the work and are able to provide analysis as well as data (Draeger, 2013). The SoTL of ED may require transforming the role of the “subject” into someone who collaborates in the larger inquiry. In other words, some of the instructors with whom we work may want to be active co-investigators in projects where we study the ED intervention while they, in turn, investigate the learning outcomes for their students. Even if this parallel model is not used, the professional judgment and reflection of college and university faculty provides us with a very rich source of data. Huber and Hutchings (2005) consider how graduate students can contribute to and be developed by participation in traditional SoTL research; in a similar vein, we contend that partnering with clients (graduate student or faculty) in our SoTL in ED inquiries likely will enhance both the research outcomes and the professional development of all involved.

Ethical considerations for SoTL in ED go further, however. Because this kind of research is rooted in practice, it needs to address not just research ethics, but professional ethics as well. For educational developers, the POD Ethical Guidelines (which are reproduced in this volume) outline these ethics (Draeger, 2013). A challenge of SoTL in ED is to conduct research and share the results publicly while still adhering to principles of practice in those guidelines, such as “maintain appropriate boundaries in the relationship, avoid exploiting the relationship in any way, and be clear with themselves and their clients about their specific role” and “protect all privileged information, obtaining informed consent from clients before using or referring publicly to client cases in such a way that the client could be identified” (Professional and Organizational Development Network, 2002).

This challenge is similar to that faced by any instructor conducting SoTL. Just as a faculty member conducting SoTL plays a dual role as both teacher and researcher, an educational developer plays a dual role in conducting SoTL in ED, which complicates the ethical questions involved. For example, standard practice for human subjects research requires consent from the subjects (Felten, 2013). But in the client/consultant relationship, what would this consent look like? When would we ask for it? How would it affect both our research and our practice if we ask for consent when we first meet a client, before providing any services at all? What impact would asking for consent part way through an ongoing consultative relationship have? And how can we guarantee that a client feels free to say no? (Draeger, 2013). We may not like to think that there are power dynamics in our relationships with our clients, but there are, so we must consider how power and perceptions of power might affect the granting of consent.

In addition to protecting the client, we must also think about how we can ensure that our research does not impair our practice. Our work with clients depends on establishing trust. Will using them as research subjects affect that trust? Will it make us less able to provide service? (Felten, 2013). That is, might the SoTL research process not only consume our precious time but also sap our ability to adapt to client needs? To be effective in consultations, for instance, consultants need to be flexible, interactive, and improvisational. How might we codify, structure, track, and evaluate those kinds of qualities? Put another way, how might we rigorously study and understand those kinds of interactions (and the learning that ensues from them) without draining or overlooking their core vitality? (Draeger, 2013).

In *Ethics of Inquiry: Issues in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, Hutchings (2002) uses case studies to explore questions like these as they pertain to traditional SoTL. She reassures us that “there’s no single right way to resolve the ethical dilemmas that arise when investigating classroom practice; indeed, the most important resource may be awareness and reflection” (p. 4). Likewise, there are no simple answers to these questions for SoTL in ED. We can borrow models and strategies from related disciplines, but awareness, reflection, and discussion with our peers is essential. Just as it was suggested earlier that collaboration with peers is one way to broaden the scope of SoTL in ED projects, ongoing discussion of the ethical issues involved also can help us create and refine community standards of practice.

### **Looking to the Future**

Educational developers can and should advance our practice and extend our scholarship by applying SoTL to our own work. By doing so, we will be doing as Shulman (2000) suggests—recognizing and fulfilling the “inherent obligations and opportunities associated with becoming a professional” (p. 49) in our discipline. ED is a part of the larger field of higher education, where professions and professionalism are regularly defined and judged by scholarly standards. We believe that SoTL in ED, in turn, will build our “capacity to respond to . . . legitimate questions” (Shulman, 2000, p. 49) about the quality and value of our work, highlighting it as a scholarly area deserving respect in academe. Such work can do more than address anxieties about prestige. Expanding the research literature on ED practices can improve greatly the effectiveness of decisions about where to spend limited time and resources. This should improve our ability to achieve our professional mission of helping our colleges and universities to function effectively as teaching and learning communities.

Of course, our exploration leads to more questions than we can answer here. If and as the profession of educational development does adopt the SoTL model (Draeger, 2013), we also will need to address the following issues (and many others):

What are the intersections between the core components of our practice and our institutional contexts? Sorcinelli et al.’s (2006) survey identifies these core components: individual consultations, orientations, workshops and programs, grants and awards, resources and publications, special services. Do all components of practice work equally well in all institutional contexts? Which best practices transcend institutional type, and which ones need to be honed more finely?

*How will SoTL in ED be supported and rewarded?*

Many questions about rewards and incentives have emerged for faculty doing SoTL (Huber, 2004). How might similar issues apply to educational developers? What is the appropriate trade-off for ED professionals between doing our practice and researching our practice? Are those two in opposition, or should they be integrated? How does SoTL in ED align with our reward structures—within our field, at our local institutions, and in our own personal development as professionals? Do we, like traditional SoTL, need to be advocating for new or revised systems to evaluate and recognize our scholarly work?

Should SoTL in ED be built on a collaborative foundation? Randy Bass recently raised important questions about the value of individual SoTL research (Bernstein & Bass, 2005). Although welcoming all levels of SoTL practice, Bass calls for “an entirely different developmental model” (p. 42) that involves groups inquiring jointly into common questions. This, Bass contends, might permit SoTL to answer essential questions that are difficult to address through individual research alone. Educational development has a strong professional history of cooperation and sharing. How might we leverage this tradition to create a new model of SoTL research that will produce knowledge capable of transforming both our individual practice and our profession?

These questions are beyond the scope of this chapter; indeed, they are beyond the ability of any member of our profession to answer alone. However, ED has a long tradition of sharing effort and working in community. As we go forward, we are confident that with awareness, reflection, and discussion in community, these questions—and the many others we have not yet identified—can be explored to the benefit of all. (Felten, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

SoTL is the scholarly approach to developing teaching practice, enhancing curricula and improving student learning. It includes critically reflecting on your teaching practice in order to develop and improve it, drawing on evidence from literature and the teaching and learning experiences. It is also about communicating and disseminating ideas and research in order to develop and impact teaching practice more widely.

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