

**SoTL Leadership in Asia**  
**Infusing a SoTL Culture in Institutions of Higher Learning**

***Teikyo University Conference 2021***

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# Myself, my roles, my location/context

## National University of Singapore

- 2008 – 2012: Director of Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning (CDTL)
- 2012 – 2020: Associate Provost (Undergraduate Education)

## International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL)

- 2012: TLI Advisory Board
- 2015: Keynote at ISSOTL-Melbourne
- 2018 – 2020: Vice President (Asia Pacific)
- 2020 - 2022: Presidential Team, ISSOTL

- “*On the Margins* of SoTL Discourse: An **Asian** Perspective”

(with Peter Looker, Teaching and Learning Inquiry, 2013, TLI 1:1)

- “Leading change *from different shores*: The challenges of contextualizing the scholarship of teaching and learning”

(with Katarina Mårtensson and Brenda Leibowitz, TLI, 2020, TLI 8:1)

# Aims of this talk

- Sharing **experiences** of **SoTL champions** from three locations in Asia – **Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore**
- **Strategies** deployed
- **Challenges** confronted
  
- Sharing **2 key perspectives**:
  - (1) **Opportunities** available for changing mindset about teaching and learning  
(championing SoTL amidst challenges)
  - (2) **Context matters**  
(access to global SoTL networks - our own Asian location must be kept in view)

# The Teikyo experience with teaching, student learning and SoTL?

- My first question to Teikyo colleagues is –

(1) how much time do you spend on teaching each week? More than 50% of your time, less?

For my next few questions, you need to just answer yes or no –

(2) You pay attention to HOW you TEACH?

(3) You pay attention to WHETHER your students are LEARNING?

(4) You adjust your teaching to improve your students' learning?

(5) Have you heard about SoTL?

## Randy Bass (1998-1999): teaching as a problem

“In scholarship and research, having a “problem” is at the heart of the investigative process ...

- But in one’s teaching, a “problem” is something you don’t want to have, and if you have one, you probably want to fix it.
- Asking a colleague about a *problem* in his or her research is an invitation;
- asking about a *problem* in one’s teaching would probably seem like an accusation.

Changing the status of the problem in teaching from terminal remediation to ongoing investigation is precisely what the movement for a scholarship of teaching is all about” (p.1).

## Hutchings, Huber & Ciccone (2011)

“The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) encompasses a broad set of practices that engage teachers in looking closely and critically at student learning for the purpose of improving their own courses and programs.

It is perhaps best understood as an approach that marries scholarly inquiry to any of the intellectual tasks that comprise the work of teaching.”

*(Hutchings, Huber, and Ciccone, 2011, p.6?, The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Reconsidered)*

# Nancy Chick

## SoTL Primer

### *SoTL is....*

- [investigating to] improve student learning and the teaching approaches & practices that affect student learning in higher education
  - informed by relevant research on teaching and learning
    - [draws] from [our] disciplinary expertise
      - [gathers & analyze] relevant evidence from the learners in their own specific contexts
        - shared broadly to contribute to knowledge & practices in teaching and learning

**Peter Felten (2013)**

**“Principles of Good Practice in SoTL”**

**“honoring the diversity of SoTL in its many forms across the globe”**

**5 principles for assessing SoTL work:**

- (1) inquiry into student learning
- (2) grounded in context
- (3) methodologically sound
- (4) conducted in partnership with students
- (5) appropriately public.

“these principles articulate a vision of a scholarship that enhances, perhaps even transforms, teaching and learning in higher education.” (Felten, 2013, TLI, 1:1)



## Erik Blair (2014)

### “the localization of ideas”

- “instead of looking for grand ideas that can be applied without scrutiny there is a need for the **localization of ideas**” (Blair, 2014, p.335).
- “academic development through SoTL is grounded in the **consideration of the geographic context and the particular needs, desires, and ambitions** of those who live within such a context”. (pp.337-338)

**“*On the Margins* of SoTL Discourse: An **Asian** Perspective”**  
(with Peter Looker, Teaching and Learning Inquiry, 2013, TLI 1:1)

“Our Asian context means that we deal with a student and teacher context that is complex in many ways, in the assumptions they hold about student-teacher dynamics, the purpose of education, the preferred style of classroom practice, the challenges they face, the larger economy (social, cultural, and political) in which they are located, and so forth. All of these differences in details of everyday living in our world and the disjuncts experienced on the teaching/learning front are the consequence of geography (our embeddedness in a particular kind of economy, our distance from the established or dominant centres of discourse), which influences our methods and the questions we need to ask. These in turn shape our ideology and define the gaps between dominant SoTL ideology and ours.”

# **“Leading Change from Different Shores: The Challenges of Contextualizing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning”**

**Chng Huang Hoon, Brenda Leibowitz and Katarina Martensson (2020, TLI, 8.1.3)**

3 individual journeys through the scholarship of leading in three different contexts, **Asia, Europe, and Africa.**

We argue: the **need to make explicit the diversity of practices of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)**, with each practice inextricably tied to specific geographical, sociocultural, and political contexts.

## Chng, Leibowitz & Mårtensson (2020)

- The **different voices** within our institutions and regions ... are all key drivers in **defining our SoTL work.**
- SoTL networks created a fair distance removed from established SoTL networks in the Anglo-speaking world ... and in defining such relationships, we strive to [understand] ... **what it means to “do SoTL” from our own shores.**
- Our hope is that [our] narratives can inform and influence other shores where SoTL may be in similar need of being **contextually framed and translated”.** (p.37)

# So, what teaching and learning issues do we investigate?

## Sampling recent TLI works

### Perennial issues

- **Student perception** about online ungraded course
- **Game-based learning**
- **Integrating learning** among introductory Computing students
- Students' emotional response to assessment **feedback**
- **Mentoring** approaches

### Current issues

- Doing SoTL under **pandemic stress**
- **Asynchronous online** discussion forum
- **It's ok to fall/fail**
- **Strategies for student success**
- **Teaching race/racial justice**

# Sampling recent SoTL in the South works

- **Re-examining curriculum, materials, assessment**
- Social media influence on teaching and learning
- E-learning challenges for nurses in Afghanistan
- Students' experiences and perception of online collaboration in Kenya
- Valuing agency in South Africa film school
- Work/study programme in Uganda
- **Rurality influences in Zambia**
- Blended mental health curriculum in Pakistan
- Flipped classroom teaching in Singapore

# Sampling recent AJSoTL works

- Motivating student learning using group games in Pharmacy
- Context-based teaching of Stats literacy
- Authentic learning in Applied Physics
- Instructor shortcomings in PBL
- Going beyond powerpoint
- Online course design
- **Communities of practice**
- **Redesigning a PhD course viz interdisciplinarity**

# Champions in Asia: Hong Kong

## HKU and CUHK Perspectives

- HKU Teaching **awards** (includes reflective teaching criteria)
- HKU **University teaching events** (e.g. Teaching Festival, Teaching and Learning conferences, technology and assessment conference foci)
- Teaching Development **Grant**, 3x a year, with SoTL specified as an output
  
- CUHK annual **teaching and learning expo** for faculty members to share their teaching innovations and enhancements
- CUHK Teaching Development **Grant** (TDG) once every three years (expected project outcomes dissemination but no mention of SoTL)
- CUHK University Education **Award** and Vice-Chancellor's Exemplary Teaching Award; and Faculty teaching excellence award.



# Champions in Asia: Malaysia

## UNIMAS Perspective

- Strategies: **grants** provision (e.g. UNIMAS SoTL grants)
- **Engagement platforms** (e.g. SoTL Bulletin)
- More public, university level **events**: UNIMAS SoTL Symposium

**“SoTL enculturation guided by Kotter’s model of change” by Chen Chwen Jen, 2021, IJAD (see next two slides for details)**

# **Chen on 8 steps to enculturation of SoTL in UNIMAS**

**(1) obtaining buy-in for SoTL from all relevant stakeholders**

**(2) The university's top management empowered the Centre**

- university-level and faculty-level committees to strategize academics' SoTL involvement
- a SoTL expert panel to review and assist in producing quality SoTL projects

**(3) University's vision included the advancement and innovation in teaching and learning to nurture 'future-ready' graduates**

**(4) The Vice Chancellor official announcement of the vision during his annual address**

- Centre further employed various other means to broadcast this vision

## **Chen (2021), continued**

**(5) The university provided funding for academics, to support SoTL work as a direct way to encourage involvement**

**(6) SoTL work and results made visible as a means to sustain collaboration through sharing sessions for SoTL pioneers to share the outcomes of their work**

**(7) A mass involvement strategy implemented through the university centralized grants**

(Unlike Step 5, this funding is for groups of academics who serve as coordinators of identified undergraduate academic programs)

**(8) The university recognized academics' SoTL involvement in their yearly performance appraisals as well as in academic promotions**

# Champions in Asia: Singapore

## NUS Perspective

- Strategies: **grants** provision (e.g. Teaching Enhancement Grants, Educator Development Funds, Learning Communities Fund from CDTL/PVO).
- **Engagement platforms** (e.g. e-resource site - Teaching Connections to highlight and share colleagues' work)
- Our own **journal** platform to allow colleagues to share at a slightly higher level (**AJSoTL**)
- More public, university level **events**: NUS's Teaching Day and Annual CDTL Conference; SoTL-Asia Symposia (2017, 2019)
- **Other effort**: Conversations and reports on experiences of engaging students as partners (**SoTL-Asia, SoTL-NUS distribution list**)
- **Educator Track Policy** that enshrines SoTL criteria for promotion

# Common Challenges

- **research intensive culture** – education as a second cousin
  - **impact** defined/rewarded through disciplinary publications
  - **Culture/mindset**: ‘opinions’ about teaching; resistance to change
  - **Student feedback** as indicators of good teaching;
  - **Misconceptions**
    - (1) SoTL is viewed as only meant for some people in the social sciences and and is educational research
    - (2) Lack of confidence on how to do SoTL among faculties
- (Doing SoTL is difficult because it is different from disciplinary research

# Opportunities for SoTL work

- institutional champions/leadership
- funding availability
- Career advancement as incentives – rewriting criteria (e.g. Educator Track. Grants/funding)
- pandemic situation that boosted visibility and need for T&L Centres – more paying explicit attention to learning outcomes and teaching interventions
- Pressure of external stakeholders on student engagement and quality education

## Two key perspectives:

First, amidst the difficulties encountered in culture building and change management, **there ARE nevertheless many opportunities** that presented themselves along this path of shifting institutional and colleagues' mindsets;

and

Second, even while we access the rich resources and global network conversations about SoTL, **the consideration of positionality from our own Asian location is important**

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**Thank You for your kind invitation and attention!**