

The Journey to SoTL: Institutionally Supporting a Transition to Scholars of Teaching and Learning

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The concept of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is now being increasingly used as a tool to evidence excellence in teaching (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999; Kreber, 2002), support for academic promotion (Hutchings et al, 2011) and professional recognition within UK Higher Education (UKPSF, 2011). However, SoTL is not yet fully embedded in the typical academic role in the UK. In an environment where research is often 'king' the recent survey by Pritchard & McGowan (2016) demonstrates that even with growing recognition for teaching in universities, SoTL is often seen as the poorer sibling of REF-able research, and poorly understood (Gunn et al, 2014). Despite this, the value, impact and esteem associated with SoTL is growing with suggestions that SoTL should become better defined and 'REF-able', and that universities should act to better support and incentivise the practice of SoTL and its growth in institutions (Fanghanel et al, 2016). So how can SoTL capacity be grown within a research-intensive university in the UK and to what extent can a shared understanding of SoTL, along with a sustained engagement in SoTL be successfully cultivated? This study explores these issues by examining the perceptions of academic staff related to SoTL whilst studying a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, a professional development programme related to teaching and learning in higher education, and determining the impact of learning related to SoTL on sustained engagement in the activity.

INTRODUCTION

Does teaching and learning have to have "scholarship"?
Can't it just be knowledge of teaching and learning?

Since Boyer's work on redefining scholarship (Boyer, 1990), the concept of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) has grown and evolved as the higher education sector has also developed. Amidst the extant and perhaps growing rift between the endeavours of teaching and research in academic careers (Locke, 2012), SoTL is becoming an increasingly important tool in restoring parity between these two apparently divergent academic activities. SoTL, and scholarship more generally, are now being increasingly used as a tool to evidence excellence in teaching (Hutchings and Shulman, 1999; Kreber, 2002) and support for academic promotion (Hutchings et al, 2011) and professional recognition within UK higher education (e.g. UKPSF (2011) A5,V3).

However, SoTL is not yet fully embedded nor understood in the typical academic role in the UK (as the contentious quotation above, drawn from data in this study, highlights). The 'typical' academic role perhaps no longer exists with many institutions now operating parallel tracks for research focused and teaching focused academics. This has significant impact on the identity of the academic (Nyamapfene, 2014): are they a researcher or a teacher? In a higher education environment where research is often 'king' the recent survey by Pritchard and McGowan (2016) demonstrates that even still, with growing recognition for teaching in universities, SoTL is often seen as the poorer sibling of REF-able research. Despite this, the value, impact and esteem associated with SoTL is growing in the UK, and there are increasing sector-wide and institutional attempts to create parity between research-based academic careers and those with a greater focus on teaching and scholarship. Advance HE, a UK based organisation that promotes excellence in teaching and learning in higher education, recently reported that SoTL should, in the future, be 'REF-able', as well as better defined alongside enhanced support

and incentivisation for its development (Fanghanel et al, 2016). The scope and nature of that support, however, is not so well defined.

LOCAL CONTEXT

The present study takes place within the context of a large, research intensive university and member of the prestigious 'Russell Group' in the UK. At the host institution a typical 'fragmented' model of academic career track exists (Locke, 2012) whereby 'research only', 'research and teaching' and 'learning, teaching and scholarship' roles exists in the academic job family. Further fragmentation exists due to the organisational structure, whereby subject areas are grouped in Schools and cognate schools are grouped into Colleges. Colleges, in many ways, operate independently and due to differing academic cultures, often operate differently and without a common understanding of certain practices (Trowler, 2001).

Typically, in the UK HE sector, early career academics undergo a period of training and development in their new academic role, including a focus on teacher training (Dearing, 1997) and many UK higher education institutes now offer a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) that new academic staff are often required to complete as part of their initial training and development. A PGCAP has existed at the host institution in one form or another for almost two decades and primarily serves as 'teacher training' for new academic staff, with participants becoming qualified teachers (a step towards 'expertise' according to Kreber (2002)) on successful completion of the programme. The PGCAP qualification has also, since 2006, been aligned with the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning (UKPSF, 2011) ensuring that not only does successful completion of the PGCAP result in a qualification, but also nationally (and increasingly, internationally) recognised professional recognition.

As is often the case in UK Higher Education, completion of the PGCAP and professional recognition against the UKPSF is typically associated with academic promotions criteria as well

as academic probationary criteria, ensuring that proficiency in teaching is considered in all cases of academic career progression (e.g. Fanghanel *et al*, 2016). The PGCAP programme acts as support to develop as a teacher, through tuition, reflection, and engagement with a budding network of early career peers in a community of practice.

At the host institution, between 2014 and 2018, staff on the 'research and teaching' (R&T) and 'research only' (R) job tracks were required to successfully complete only 40 credits of the 60 credit PGCAP programme as part of their initial professional development as an academic, but they had the option of completing more. By comparison, staff on the 'learning, teaching and scholarship' (LTS) track were required to complete all 60 credits of PGCAP including a particular course focusing on SoTL. Consequently, at that time LTS staff were more incentivised to gain the PGCAP qualification compared to staff on other job tracks. The model of incentivisation was changed in 2018 where it is now a requirement for all academic staff at the host institution to gain the PGCAP qualification, with 'learning, teaching and scholarship' tracks retaining a requirement to complete a course focusing on SoTL.

THE SOTL COURSE: A FIRST STEP

In 2014 a new 10 credit course was introduced to the PGCAP programme called 'Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning' primarily aimed at 'learning, teaching and scholarship' staff. This SoTL course was developed to support and develop understanding of scholarship, SoTL and to encourage engagement with SoTL through tuition and collaboration – something that is heavily reflected within the promotions criteria for LTS staff. The course introduces participants to different conceptions of scholarly work in higher education with a particular focus on SoTL. Students then identify an area of practice suitable for a SoTL enquiry and critically evaluate literature related to that area whilst also designing an ethically sound SoTL proposal. The course is assessed through the preparation and submission of a 2000 word SoTL proposal. Crucially, the course did not require any proposed project to be conducted: the course supported and facilitated the planning, but not the implementation of SoTL.

Between 2014 and 2018 nearly 100 early career academic staff completed the SoTL course, with most (but not all) being required to as LTS staff. Critically, a small but significant proportion of R&T and R staff selected the course. As an unintended consequence of certain staff selecting a non-mandatory course, the vast majority of early career academic staff ultimately gained a PGCAP (over 90%), despite the majority being contractually required only to complete only 40 credits of the programme.

The SoTL course has always received positive feedback but one area of repeated feedback was that students requested additional support in the implementation of their proposed SoTL project through a combination of further instruction on project implementation, but also through the development of learning communities focused on SoTL implementation. Our SoTL students were pleased with the instructional support they received in developing an understanding of SoTL and in developing a project proposal, but felt abandoned once the SoTL course was completed. As time went by, and as student numbers grew, this feedback became more and more common; and, on reflection, more and more accurate. It seemed we had succeeded in developing understanding of SoTL across early career staff in

the university, but had not succeeded in encouraging sustained engagement as scholars of teaching and learning.

SOTL AND A NEW DEVELOPMENT

Consequently, in 2018 we developed a second SoTL course: 'SoTL II: undertaking a practice enquiry'. This new course now runs consecutively to the (now modified) original SoTL course, renamed 'SoTL I: planning a practice enquiry'. SoTL II was developed entirely as a result of student feedback and to attempt to support continued engagement in SoTL beyond PGCAP completion. The new course aims to give students the opportunity to practically engage with SoTL by undertaking a small-scale SoTL enquiry in a supported environment, with access to academic developers, further instruction, and feedback on developing SoTL project ideas and through collaboration with a network of academic peers engaged in the same activities. The pair of courses ran for the first time in 2018-19.

An Intriguing Coincidence?

Traditionally, academic staff at the host institution have struggled to evidence scholarship effectively, resulting in a difficulty in evidencing the necessary academic promotions criteria around scholarship – a problem recognised by many Heads of Educational Development (Fanghanel *et al*, 2016). In part, the original SoTL course (and the subsequent development of SoTL II) is a strategic attempt to support individuals through tuition and engagement with a community of practice (micro level) in planning, undertaking and, ultimately, evidencing scholarship with both the promotion criteria and improved institutional engagement in SoTL (meso-level) in mind (Fanghanel *et al*, 2016).

Perhaps related to the challenge in evidencing scholarship, academic year 2017-18 involved the largest intake by far for the original SoTL course at the host institution. Seemingly unrelated to this, informal feedback from institutional colleagues such as the Director of Human Resources *and* the Academic Promotions team was that the scholarship sections of promotions applications appeared stronger than ever. Given that the original SoTL course was introduced in 2014 for newly appointed academic staff, and 3 years later (matching the timescales that newly appointed staff typically apply for their first academic promotion at the host institution) scholarship criteria were evidenced more strongly in promotions applications, it seemed that there was potential association between the introduction of SoTL as part of PGCAP and an improved overall submission to the scholarship promotions criteria. Was this strategically designed instructional support for SoTL having the intended impact?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This informal feedback, together with the need to understand the impact of our intervention, inspired this study which seeks to answer the following questions:

1. **What impact does PGCAP and, in particular, SoTL I and SoTL II, have on our students' perceptions of scholarship?**
2. **Does SoTL I develop an effective understanding of scholarship and SoTL, enabling students to develop promotions applications that they, themselves, have, confidence in?**

3. To what extent does engagement with SoTL I, and subsequently SoTL II, promote sustained engagement in SoTL?

By answering these research questions evidence of the impact of the instructional and community support provided through these SoTL courses on the understanding and perceptions of scholarship and SoTL on our students – primarily academic members of staff at the host institution – can be explored. Moreover, the institutional (meso-level) support for ‘scholarship’ provided by these SoTL courses can be evaluated in terms of meeting their objectives and can provide further strategic insight into valuable forms of support for LTS staff across not only this institution, but also potentially other institutions with similar ‘LTS’ type job tracks (the macro level discussed in Fanghanel (2015)).

METHODOLOGY

In order to address the research questions this study adopted a survey approach to collect data. A short questionnaire was developed to gather data on participants’ job track, experience and subject background, alongside questions that interrogated participants’ understanding of scholarship, SoTL and outputs of scholarship and SoTL. The survey was administered to a large body of academic staff ($n = 287$) at the host institution who had recently engaged with PGCAP (i.e. had completed since 2014).

Conceptual Framework

As part of the survey participants were asked to expand on their understanding of scholarship and SoTL, as well as provide examples of both. In order to analyse respondents’ understanding of scholarship and of SoTL it is necessary to apply recognised frameworks and consider these when exploring qualitative responses. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the UK’s system for assessing the quality of research in UK Higher Education Institutions. It is a rigorous review process that institutions take extremely seriously as its outcomes affect funding allocations and reputation. Although assessing research, the REF process is required to define research (and thus scholarship) to ensure sector-wide understanding of its scope. Accordingly, the accuracy of participant understanding of scholarship can be assessed by analysing the descriptions of scholarship against the REF criteria for scholarship (REF, 2014):

Scholarship for the REF is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases.

In order to analyse participant understanding of scholarship of teaching and learning, two existing frameworks were combined to create a full ‘taxonomy of teaching’ (see Figures 1a and 1b). Kreber (2002) outlines key distinctions between excellent teachers, expert teachers and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Her framework outlines the scholarship of teaching and learning as distinct from but a combination of excellence and expertise in teaching. Excellence is based primarily on (metrics of) performance and can be derived from experience alone. Expertise, on the other hand, is a combination of declarative knowledge (how much is known about teaching and pedagogy), procedural knowledge of teaching methods, and implicit knowledge through experience.

However, Kreber’s work doesn’t differentiate between teacher’s who take a scholarly approach and those who create, develop and maintain the intellectual infrastructure around teaching in higher education. A more comprehensive model, outlined in Figure 1a, does distinguish between scholarly teachers and those who are more public with their scholarship. The notion of compartmentalising scholarly teaching (i.e. teachers who take a scholarly approach to their practice) from teachers engaged in the scholarship of teaching and learning (i.e. those who take a scholarly approach but also study and disseminate their findings of that approach) provides a more useful framework for the analysis of understanding scholarship and SoTL. This is partly in agreement with the conclusions of Kreber (2002) who notes ‘the scholarship of teaching is not for everyone’. Accordingly, the frameworks of Kreber (2002) and Kern et al (2015) have, for this study, been reimagined to unpack participant’s descriptions of aspects of teaching and scholarship practice (Figure 1b).

The key distinctions between Kern’s model and the ‘levels’ of teaching presented in Figure 1b are that the act of teaching (alone) is included as a separate category. ‘Teaching’ is purely a practitioner practicing, but excellent teaching has metrics (e.g. awards, feedback, surveys, etc.). An expert teacher has some form of recognition or qualification (e.g. a PGCAP or UKPSF recognition). A scholar of teaching is a practitioner that demonstrably takes a scholarly approach, e.g. as outlined in Kern’s model, and a teacher who is engaged in SoTL is not just a consumer of scholarship, but rather a producer of it, and that scholarship combines the scholarships of discovery, integration and application outlined in Boyer (1990).

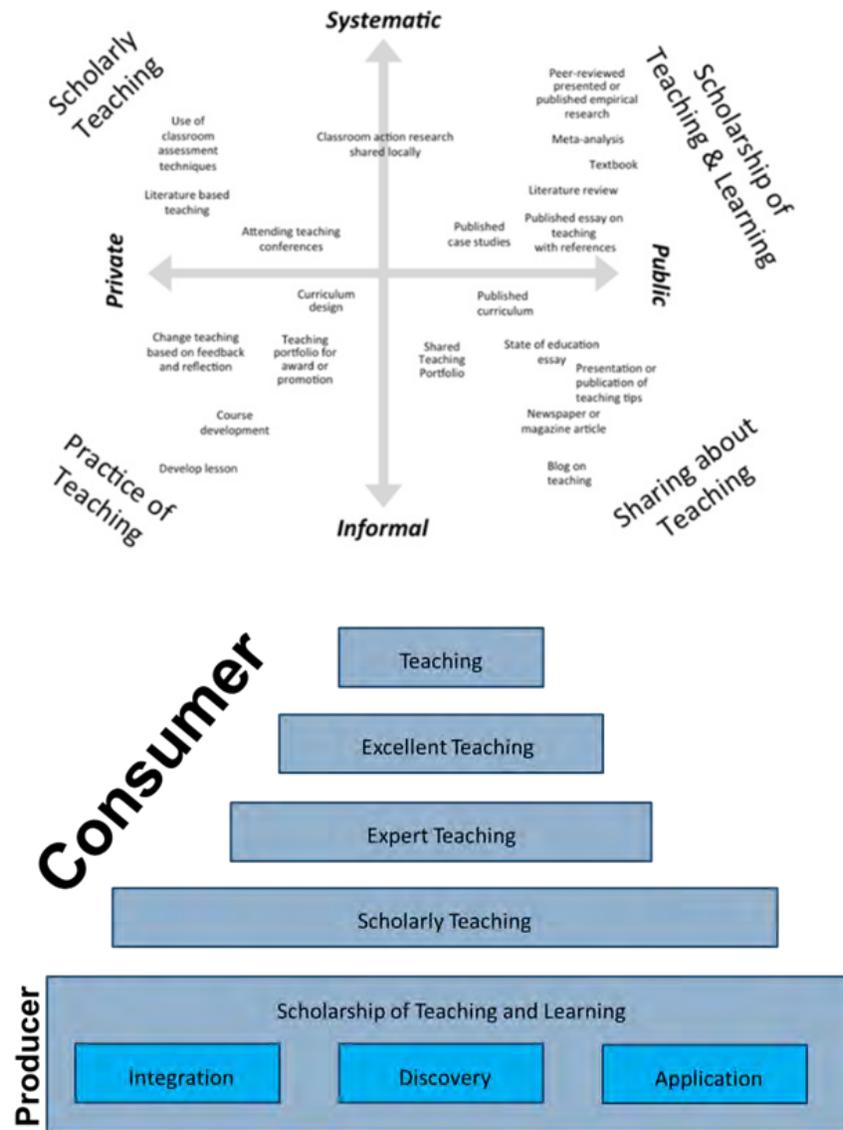
RESULTS

The sample of 287 were stratified into 3 groups dependent on which courses participants had chosen to take as part of their PGCAP. Group 1 consisted of 193 academics who had no formal, explicit course on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Group 2 consisted of 81 academics who had completed one course that serves as an introduction to planning a SoTL enquiry. The remaining 13 academics had completed two courses focused on SoTL as part of their PGCAP; one on planning an enquiry and a second where they were supported to undertake the enquiry. In total 31 responses were received, with 16, 11 and 4 survey responses from each group, respectively.

Experience as an Academic

Respondents from Group 1 ($n = 16$) had spent a mean 3.1 years in their current or similar role (standard deviation 1.7 years) and had spent a mean of 6.9 years working in higher education (standard deviation of 5.1 years). The mean experience of teaching in higher education was 5.7 years, with a standard deviation (SD) of 4.8 years. Importantly, members of this group were exclusively *not* in teaching focused roles in the University, but rather were typically on ‘research and teaching’ contracts.

Respondents from Group 2 ($n = 11$) had spent a mean of 4.3 years in their current role (SD = 1.3 years). They have a mean of 6.7 years working in HE (SD = 3.2 years) and a mean of 6.6 years *teaching* in HE (with SD = 4.0). This group contained respondents who were required to complete one SoTL course as part of their teaching focused role, but also others who elected to complete one SoTL course. This slight bias towards teaching



Figures 1a (left) and 1b (right). The Taxonomy of Teaching: a framework for SoTL, adapted from Kern et al (2015) and Kreber (2002).

focused academics is reflected in the slightly inflated experience of teaching (though not significant).

There were only 4 respondents in Group 3 who had taken both SoTL courses, partly because only one cohort of 13 students had completed the second of the SoTL courses. Nonetheless, this group had spent a mean of 4.1 years in their current role, with 10.5 years' experience of working in HE and 9.3 years' experience of teaching in HE. SD is not reported as it is not meaningful for such a small group.

By considering respondents from Groups 2 and 3 as 'having undertaken some SoTL training' then it becomes possible, and reasonable, to group together responses. On comparing the mean experience of Group 1 versus Group 2+3 using a two-sample t-test it is apparent that respondents in Group 1 are less experienced in their current role (mean 3.1 years) compared to Group 2+3 (mean 4.2 years, $p = 0.04$, $n = 15$) and although differences in the mean overall experience in HE and in experience of teaching across the groups are present, these differences are not significant.

Perceptions of Scholarship and SoTL

In order to gauge participants' understanding of SoTL, several survey items were applied. Participants were asked to define the terms 'scholarship' as well as provide some examples of scholarship, and then were asked to define the term 'scholarship of teaching and learning' along with provision of examples. One aim here was to determine any distinction between the applications of terms such as 'scholarship' and that of 'SoTL' within the surveyed groups. Responses were analysed using the REF (2014) definition of scholarship and using the taxonomy of teaching outlined in Figure 1b.

The majority of responses from Group 1 described SoTL inaccurately. Mostly the responses referred to something akin to 'expert' teaching or, in the majority, 'scholarly teaching'. Only three responses from this group described SoTL in terms of creation of knowledge related to teaching and learning to enhance student learning; the vast majority of responses inaccurately described SoTL as an act of consuming knowledge. For example, one respondent described SoTL as "keeping up with evolution in HE teach-

ing practices, incorporate tech, inclusiveness in teaching, etc.”. This response more accurately describes a scholarly approach to teaching according to both Figure 1a and 1b.

Similarly, the majority of descriptions of scholarship actually related to the act of teaching, highlighting a clear misunderstanding of what scholarship and SoTL are in relation to one another. On the whole, respondents either described ‘scholarship’ in terms of REF-able research (e.g. “novel research and synthesis of existing research to improve knowledge of an area”) or they described scholarship as relating to teaching and learning (e.g. “the knowledge about processes of teaching and learning”).

Group 2, on the other hand, provided different insights. Respondents almost entirely described SoTL as the act of producing and sharing new understanding in relation to teaching and enhancing learning. For example:

It is a very hard term to pin down. A pattern of research, experimenting and implementation in order to create a better teaching and learning environment to create the best chances for students to become competent in their chosen field of study.

However, when it comes to describing scholarship Group 2 also tended to describe SoTL itself. Common responses included statements like “scholarship is research about learning and teaching or evaluating learning and teaching practice”.

Whilst Group 2 have had training on SoTL that appears to have a positive impact on the understanding of SoTL, the same group now conflate scholarship and SoTL thus demonstrating a misunderstanding of the broader term, a position critiqued by Geertsema (2016) when they discuss the conflation of Boyer’s realms of SoTL and discovery.

Interestingly, when paired with respondents’ own confidence in their understanding scholarship, both groups self-reported as ‘slightly confident’ in their understanding of scholarship (on a 4 point Likert scale: not at all confident, slightly confident, confident, extremely confident). However, on self-reporting their confidence in relation to their understanding of SoTL, Group 2 was more confident than group 1 on the whole (with a mode response of ‘confident’ compared to ‘slightly confident’).

Finally, Group 3 were also surveyed on the same items. They demonstrated a ‘confident’ understanding of SoTL aligned with ‘producer’ of knowledge to enhance teaching and learning but, interestingly, unanimously used the word ‘research’ in their definition. For example SoTL is “research investigating teaching practices and student learning within higher education”. On defining scholarship the group was less confident with most responses describing SoTL but one insightful response more accurately describing scholarship as “expertise and investigation that supports or underpins my teaching - whether that be disciplinary or pedagogical expertise”.

SCHOLARSHIP, SOTL AND ACADEMIC CAREER PROGRESSION

Within the host university the promotions criteria are distinct for staff with a teaching focused role compared to a research and teaching role. Specifically ‘scholarship, knowledge exchange and impact’ is a requirement for academic career development in a teaching role, whereas in a research role it is ‘outputs’, ‘award generation’ and ‘supervision’ that are recognised within the equivalent ‘research and scholarship’ criteria. However, scholarship has

often been cited as ‘poorly understood’ (Gunn et al, 2014) not only at the institution under enquiry, but at HEIs across the sector.

Within this study, participants from Group 1, with their already inaccurate understanding of SoTL, frequently cited ‘scholarship’ as ‘research’ and that it is research that is rewarded in promotions and academic development. Outputs, grant income and quantity of output (over quality) were all cited as crucial factors in academic development. Similarly, several respondents indicated that they had ‘no idea’ as to the importance of scholarship on academic development, with one respondent noting that ‘very few people actually consult this domain’ since it ‘doesn’t seem to make much of a difference for promotions’.

Respondents from Group 2 were similarly unsure or misinformed. Several respondents were ‘not sure’ about the impact and importance of scholarship on academic progression, however two intriguing views were promoted: that it is the act of researching teaching and learning that is more valued than the impact of SoTL on student learning and practice. This finding flies in the face of the definition of SoTL (to enhance student learning) and highlights a perception that applied SoTL that produces real change in practice and enhances student learning is perhaps less valued in a research intensive HEI than more theoretical study into teaching and learning (c.f. Tierney (2019) for a similar argument badging SoTL as ‘PedR’ to facilitate REF inclusion and increased academic status).

The few responses from participants in Group 3 were equally intriguing. This group was aware that scholarship is important, particularly for teaching focused staff and academic progression, but also highlighted that the impact was positive *only* if findings were disseminated (i.e. there was no impact of personal scholarship, or ‘scholarly teaching’ as defined by the framework in Figure 1b).

PROMOTING ENGAGEMENT IN SOTL

In terms of respondents engaged in SoTL, 69% of Group 1 claimed to be engaged in scholarship of teaching and learning, but in reality the majority of these responses cited examples of ‘scholarly’ teaching or gaining expertise in teaching or, in one instance simply the broader practice of teaching (“I am currently designing two courses”). On analysing the responses through the taxonomy of teaching presented in Figure 1b it became apparent that around 19% of respondents were actually engaged in some form of SoTL.

Within Group 2 63% of respondents claimed to be engaged with SoTL with around 45% actually engaged with recognisable SoTL according to the frameworks shown in Figures 1a and 1b. This reflects both Group 2 members’ increased confidence in their understanding of SoTL *and* their increased engagement. Within Group 3 100% of respondents claimed to be involved in SoTL (and 100% are since the assessment for the SoTL II course that created Group 3 involved implementing a SoTL project) however, none of the respondents correctly identified a SoTL project that they were actually involved in. Instead, they simply stated they were involved. This odd finding perhaps suggests that the act of implementing SoTL (Group 3 are defined by their enrolment in a course entitled ‘implementing a SoTL enquiry’) is perhaps more disruptive to understanding than the act of planning SoTL is (Group 2 is defined by enrolment in only a ‘planning a SoTL enquiry’ course).

DISCUSSION

The results presented above make for interesting reading. In particular, the courses studied here clearly demonstrate an impact on the academic perception of SoTL: studying a course about Scholarship of Teaching and Learning facilitates a better understanding of what SoTL actually constitutes. This longitudinal study builds extensively on the findings of Reano et al (2019) who noted improved short-term perception of SoTL after a 2 hour workshop. However, the approach to develop academic's understanding of SoTL discussed here does not necessarily result in a *confident practitioner* despite the intervention being significantly longer term compared to a 2 hour workshop.

On the contrary, academics who do not study courses related to SoTL do not, generally, develop an accurate understanding of SoTL. As Geertsema (2016) suggested, academic development to foster SoTL is something to be carefully considered, especially as a common misconception of SoTL is that of 'scholarly teaching' as opposed to a scholarship that is public, open to critique, appropriately peer reviewed and built upon a scholarly approach (e.g. Felton et al, 2007). An understanding of SoTL is not something that necessarily develops through experience alone. For example, Figure 1a highlights the continuum from scholarly teaching to SoTL through 'activities related to teaching'; something that Figure 1b builds upon by including the simplified act of 'turning up and teaching'. The present study highlights the need to support academics to journey along the continuum from scholarly to SoTL practitioner. With almost 50% of respondents in Group 2 being engaged in SoTL this highlights that a course that requires participants to systematically plan their dissemination of innovative teaching solutions will support engagement and understanding of SoTL. This also builds on Tierney's (2019) criticism that post-PGCert SoTL support is patchy, but necessary. However, much as Hatton and Smith's (1995) framework for critical reflection is useful as a guide for different levels of reflection on action, the model in Figure 1a alone is not wholly sufficient to facilitate a true transformation of an academic into a scholar of teaching and learning: examples and a drive to implement the dissemination engage a greater proportion.

THE NATURE OF SOTL SUPPORT

The results and discussions in this paper demonstrate the value in purposefully exploring SoTL and scholarship as part of early career academic development, so it is relevant to disseminate further about the nature of that instructional and community support. Reano et al (2019) noted an impact of a 2 hour workshop on perceptions of SoTL – our SoTL courses are considerably more involved. There are around 10 hours of instructional support in SoTL I, with a similar amount of instruction in SoTLII. Each course takes places across a 10 week semester (with tuition split into 3 – 5 weeks) and each course is notionally equivalent to 100 hours of learning – this equates to 10 'credits' of learning within a UK HEI. Despite requiring considerably more learning (10 hours of instruction and 90 hours of independent study), the understanding of SoTL is still not perfect! Consequently, direct instruction is not sufficient to fully develop understanding of SoTL and to promote sustained engagement with it. Time, and a lot of time, is required to fully support and promote engagement in SoTL.

However, that time should not be equated to simply 'time on a course' or 'experience' – but rather learning through experience.

All our PGCAP courses require an element of critical reflection on practice and learning from experience to be demonstrated. Our SoTL courses require students to apply SoTL approaches to their own practice. These courses are not theoretical, they are practice based. Our students plan enquiry into their own practice (SoTL I) and implement that enquiry (SoTL II). Moreover they do so collaboratively – they are required to critically reflect with their peers and teachers. Peer support and peer review are a key element in these courses. Discussion and peer review of developing SoTL proposals are regularly required in both courses. Students develop an initial idea, discuss this with peers, with tutors, refine it, develop it, gain formal feedback and then further develop it for assessment. The courses incorporate active, collaborative learning and, as such, a well-functioning community of practice develops. So when asked 'how do these courses develop SoTL in an institution' the response is 'through sustained collaboration with peer-colleagues who have a shared learning goal, supported by significant instruction over a long period of time'. A brief overview of our course designs is shared in Appendix I in this regard.

LIMITATIONS

A major limitation in this study is the low response rate (31 from 287), meaning that no generalisation is possible from this work. However, generalisation was never a goal of this work as it is a study related to a particular context: SoTL within one institution and the impact of SoTL training within that institution. In that respect, the major limitation is time – the longitudinal impact of SoTL II cannot be determined within the scope of this study, unlike the longitudinal impact of no SoTL training and completion of SoTL I. Accordingly, the results related to research questions 3 and 4 (about sustained engagement in SoTL) are weaker and will require a follow up study. The sample size and lack of longitudinal data for SoTL II completers does not impact heavily on research questions 1 and 2: in both instances training related to SoTL improves the understanding of SoTL amongst participants, and encourages confidence and engagement in the discipline.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that effective support both within, and beyond PGCAP level for the development of SoTL amongst academics can be effective. When training and support requires a practical commitment to SoTL (e.g. through development of feasible proposals) then it can foster enhanced engagement in SoTL, but challenges still remain. Not all academics understand SoTL as distinct from scholarly teaching, or, indeed, from 'scholarship' as defined by REF. Similarly, not all academics, regardless of experience, can accurately identify SoTL outputs nor the importance of SoTL in academic career progression or academic esteem. This places the SoTL 'ball' firmly in the court of university senior management and strategy/policymakers. A stronger narrative of the role of SoTL in the academy and the institution is required and, if culture around SoTL is to change and grow then perhaps a transformational approach to building SoTL culture is required. We need a strong narrative and control systems that accurately depict SoTL as distinct from other scholarships (much like Boyer envisioned in 1990) that enable academics to view themselves as valued SoTLers, as well as scholars of discovery, application and integration.

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APPENDIX 1: AN OVERVIEW OF COURSE DESIGNS

SoTL I Aims and Learning Outcomes

This course aims to introduce you to different conceptions of scholarly work in Higher Education with particular focus on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). It will provide you with opportunities to consider how SoTL links with your own academic practice and will support you to design the implementation and dissemination of your own SoTL project.

By the end of this course you should be able to:

1. Use literature to identify an area of your practice suitable for a SoTL enquiry; and
2. Apply appropriate and ethical methods to the design of a SoTL enquiry.

SoTL I Course Overview

Unit 1: 'What is SoTL'

Unit 2: 'How do I do SoTL'

Unit 3: 'Ethics and dissemination'

Each unit involves around 3 hours of instruction, with additional collaborative tasks such as crowd-sourcing enquiry methods, collaboratively defining scholarly teaching versus a teacher engaged in SoTL, and exploring ethical dilemmas. Students also prepare draft proposals in several stages for peer and tutor feedback using a reduced Glassick's Framework of clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods and effective dissemination.

SoTL II Aims and Learning Outcomes

This course aims to give you the opportunity to practically engage with the Scholarship of teaching and Learning and undertake a small-scale enquiry of your own teaching and learning practice, and to disseminate and discuss your findings with your peers.

By the end of this course you should be able to:

1. Critically reflect on implementation of a SoTL enquiry of your practice using an appropriate methodology; and
2. Communicate the outcomes and potential impact of your SoTL enquiry on learning and teaching practice.

SoTL II Course Overview

This course is built around some key milestones that, in effect, make up the taught 'units'.

Milestone 1: finalise your enquiry question

Milestone 2: choose appropriate data collection methods

Milestone 3: choose appropriate data analysis methods

Milestone 4: analyse your data

Milestone 5: disseminate your findings

Each milestone involves around 2 hours of taught instruction with additional collaborative tasks that enable students to write up their milestone outcomes in a workbook. Students submit their workbook (a working document that highlights the 'living' progress of their SoTL enquiry) and ultimately produce a short poster presentation as their final assessments.