

Chapter 4

Making SoTL Stick: Using a Community–Based Approach to Engage Faculty in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors share their reflections on the practice of using a community-based approach to doing SoTL research. They examine two professional development programs at their respective institutions—York University and Humber College in Ontario, Canada—that support faculty members’ engagement in SoTL research. EduCATE and the Teaching Innovation Fund are two variations of SoTL programs in which participants come together to engage in and support each other through the process of doing SoTL research and are organized around participants’ individual goals rather than a predetermined set of outcomes. The authors provide a fulsome narrative and reflective account of the EduCATE and Teaching Innovation Fund programs with a particular focus on each program’s development and relative success. Throughout, the impact of SoTL as a form of professional development is emphasized.

INTRODUCTION

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Making SoTL Stick

Now that educational development grounds itself in practice-based scholarship (Geertsema, 2016; Gibbs, 2013), much of this work is about generating knowledge that informs teaching and learning practices and about supporting faculty as they adopt more evidence-based, learning-centred approaches to their teaching. Because “academic teachers are better teachers if they pay close attention to their students’ learning and reflect about and design teaching with the students’ learning in focus” (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009, p. 547), the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) has gained momentum in higher education. SoTL works double duty: it is a systematic, iterative, and reflective approach to teaching that ultimately contributes to improving student learning and provides an exciting path to explore new scholarly horizons that can lead to external recognition and career advancement. Hence, meaningfully supporting the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is both tremendously important and daunting.

In their practice, educational developers deploy a wide range of strategies to support SoTL, from one-off workshops to informal small-group discussions and peer-based learning. When immediately relevant and practical, these strategies yield positive outcomes in overall participant satisfaction and self-reported changes in understanding, and, to various degrees, in attitudes and future intentions (Steinert et al., 2006). The question often becomes one of balance: how can educational developers offer context-rich and ambitious programs (Bamber, 2008) without overextending themselves, or creating “unrealistic demands on faculty already immersed in their discipline, already short on time” (Geertsema, 2016, p. 127)? It is the authors’ belief that a sustainable way forward exists in adopting a peer-based approach to supporting and doing SoTL research.

In this chapter, reflections are offered of and on the practice of using a peer-based approach to doing SoTL research. In their respective institutions, the authors strive to engage faculty continuously with their own questions and interests (not predesigned workshops/events) and believe that using a peer-based approach can help them to achieve this. The authors examine two professional development programs that support faculty members’ engagement in SoTL research, which they spearheaded at their respective institutions, York University and Humber College, both located in South-Western Ontario, Canada. These initiatives include the Education, Curriculum And Teaching Excellence Course, heretofore referred to as EduCATE, a one-year program for faculty to explore any aspect of teaching and learning by engaging in action research at York University, and the Teaching Innovation Fund, a developmental support framework for faculty to develop, conduct, and disseminate SoTL research at Humber College. These two variations of “SoTL courses”, in which faculty, professional staff, and graduate students come together to engage in and support the process of SoTL research, are organized around participants’ individual goals rather than a predetermined set of outcomes. Provided is a fulsome narrative and reflective account of the EduCATE and Teaching Innovation Fund programs with a particular focus on each program’s development and relative success. Throughout, the impact of SoTL as a form of professional development is emphasized.

As in Hum, Amundsen, and Emmioglu (2015), each of these courses has been developed using an intentional, scholarly approach, with direct consideration to the goals of the programs as well as the populations that they serve. The authors aim herein to 1) describe the broader context within which the courses exist, and the processes that evolved in the program development stage, 2) detail the structure of each of the programs and their accompanying metrics of success, and 3) identify the challenges that remain with respect to maximizing the impact of these forms of SoTL support, in terms of longer-term, sustained opportunities for professional development.

SoTL AS A FORM OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While many attribute the conception of SoTL to Boyer's (1990) seminal work, conversations around the definition and meaning of SoTL grew exponentially in the decade that followed (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999). Many of these early conceptions situated SoTL within the conventional bastions of academia, stipulating that SoTL should be subject to traditional forms of peer review and disseminated in scholarly formats, including international journals and conferences (Buffalo State College, 2003; Carroll, 2004, as cited in McKinney, 2007; Kern, Mettetal, Dixson, & Morgan, 2015; Richlin, 2001; Secret, Leisey, Lanning, Polich, & Schaub, 2011; Shulman, 2000; Ashwin & Trigwell, 2004). These definitions appeal to the aspirational notion that SoTL improves our generalized professional understanding of student learning and situate SoTL as a form of educational research, traditionally conceived (Geertsema, 2016).

SoTL undertaken as educational research mandates scholarly publications in peer-reviewed journals as its main outcome (Trigwell, 2013). It demands "distinctive protocols, methods, conventions, and literatures [that] will have damaging consequences for academic development in that it cannot but create unrealistic demands on faculty already immersed in their discipline, already short of time" (Geertsema, 2016, p.127). To counterbalance this perspective, Geertsema (2016) has advocated for a re-oriented conception of SoTL as a developmental enterprise, with emphasis at the individual and local community level (2016). Indeed, as definitions of SoTL have evolved, it is now recognized that SoTL can be shared in ways that are "appropriately public" (Felten, 2013). In particular, Felten observed that SoTL is often "iterative and highly contextual" (p. 123), and as such might not be properly situated in traditional academic journals, explicitly stating that SoTL "should not rely exclusively on the typical method of judging scholarly quality, publication in top-tier peer-reviewed journals" (p. 122). Instead, he - along with others (Huber, 2009) - emphasizes the impact that both engaging in and sharing SoTL has among more local, informal networks. Recently, Booth and Woollacott (2018) also recognized that "SoTL embodies a range of aims, activities and contexts and any particular piece of SoTL work occupies only part of the terrain and may transcend whatever boundary is drawn" (p. 538). It seems clear that context is central to much of the existing SoTL landscape; although it is grounded in theory and literature, it is enacted in individual classrooms, and institutional and cultural contexts. To this end, many have recognized the value of alternative and more local forms of dissemination (Cambridge, 2000; Edgerton et al., 1991; Kreber, 2001; Weston & McAlpine, 2001), a theme that is returned to later in the discussion.

Part of the role of the educational developer is to help others do research into their teaching and learning. The convergence between academic development and SoTL should not be surprising "...for although their histories differ, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and faculty development have long shared at least one common purpose - transforming teaching and learning for the better" (Hutchings, Huber, & Ciccone 2011, n.p.). Indeed, the primary role of educational developers is to support faculty in improving student learning. At the institutions highlighted within this chapter, the authors have adopted the view that SoTL is a productive way to engage in a systematic process of decision making and reflection about teaching, an approach widely agreed upon in the literature (Bass, 1999; Hutchings, 2000; Potter & Kustra, 2011). However, the SoTL initiatives described herein have been intentionally designed and delivered with care, noting the realistic limitations of the participants that they serve; in particular, the developers have been cognisant of the fact that promoting SoTL comes with the risk of overextending faculty members - especially those for whom teaching is their primary or only responsibility: college professors; university teaching stream faculty; and those who teach on a contractual basis, among others (Vander Kloet et al., 2017). In these instances, research is not a formal part of their professional role.

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Table 1. Ashwin & Trigwell's (2004) Levels of investigation

Level	Purpose of Investigation	Evidence Gatherings Methods and Conclusions Will Be	Investigation Results in
1	To inform oneself	Verified by self	Personal knowledge
2	To inform a group within a shared context	Verified by those within the same context	Local knowledge
3	To inform a wider audience	Verified by those outside of that context	Public knowledge

With this in mind, Geertsema (2016) aptly points out, “academic development units should think carefully about the most effective ways to encourage SoTL as a means of changing institutional culture to strengthen teaching and learning” (p. 130). SoTL can generally serve two purposes: it is either a means of development or a form of research. While both involve rigorous investigations into teaching practices and seek evidence in student learning, they “are associated with different standards of evidence and ways of collecting that evidence, and they will have a different range of implications” (Ashwin & Trigwell, 2004, p. 118). For example, when SoTL is framed as a means of development, it is aimed at enhancing student learning through scholarly investigations performed by the instructor in their own classroom. As “academic practice on the ground” (Geerstema, 2016, p. 127), it is appropriate to focus on SoTL inquiry on the immediate context to serve the needs and aspirations of the practitioner and their students.

In the context of SoTL as professional development, it is helpful to examine how the authors of this chapter frame its primary purposes. Borrowed are ideas presented by Ashwin and Trigwell (2004), whose pleas for adopting a scholarly approach to educational development find a parallel to Boyer’s Scholarship of Teaching. As seen in Table 1, Ashwin and Trigwell (2004) have described three “Levels of investigation”, illustrating the relations between the purpose, process, and outcomes of each level (Ashwin & Trigwell, 2004, p. 122). They draw useful distinctions between the three qualitatively different levels of investigation, based on the kind of knowledge or resources “that academics draw upon in learning about their teaching” (p. 122).

At the most informal level, SoTL serves to enhance personal knowledge and inform individual practice, which is primarily informed by the relevant literature, the academic’s experience, and evidence verified by self. When an investigation serves to inform a group within a limited context, it produces local knowledge authenticated by members of that shared context. Lastly, SoTL may serve a broader audience and result in public knowledge verified by outsiders; Ashwin and Trigwell (2004) argue that the wider the audience (e.g., peer-reviewed journal readers), the less relevant it is to the local context, but the more status it gains as a legitimate body of knowledge.

In both courses explored in this chapter, the role of context is significant not only given the widely different institutions but, within each, the diverse range of experiences and expertise among the professoriate (Maheux-Pelletier, Marsh, & Frake-Mistak, 2019). The contexts surrounding these faculty members influence their approach to teaching and learning irrespective of their own beliefs about teaching: as “knowledgeable agents, [academic teachers] are also placed in a dialectical relation with the surrounding world” (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009, p. 548). Yet, as they immerse themselves in the peer-based context through which they engage with SoTL, they start having “sincere conversations about teaching with a few specific colleagues” (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009, p. 554). By aiming to provide a space where it is welcome and safe to have reflective conversations about teaching and learning, the aim is not only to help co-construct a microculture (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2015) that places high value in their students’

learning, but also a means to develop significant networks where private conversations form the basis of their learning (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009).

As will be evidenced in this chapter, the impact of the initiatives described here has been greatest at the micro level (Ashwin & Trigwell's Level One): the outcome is often most obvious in the realm of personal and professional development - as teachers and/or researchers. Many of the projects being supported are as much about personal goals/understanding as they are about advancing the knowledge of the field in general; the process is often as valuable as the product. As well, the authors see their work aligning with Ashwin and Trigwell's (2004) Level Two "to inform a group within a shared context" (p.122). Sharing SoTL research at the local/community level further aligns with Simmons' (2009) work, that this particular context is operating within the "meso" level. Indeed, the strategies used to support SoTL have emphasized the local, community level, both in supporting research in action and disseminating this work primarily among colleagues.

Hence, it is our contention that the most impact occurs within Levels One and Two of Ashwin and Trigwell's (2004) framework. The authors perceive this framework as legitimizing experience as an appropriate form of evidence. Furthermore, taking a peer-to-peer approach to course design has further assisted course participants in their SoTL research and dissemination. Measuring impact beyond the institution, or Level 3, is outside the scope of the initiatives described in this chapter, but as evidenced through the courses' evaluation procedures, some participants have disseminated their work to wider, more public audiences.

In this context, the work of educational developers may be understood as that of a broker. Wenger (2000), cited by Geertsema (2016), states that academic developers can connect diverse communities "... in the institution so that the scholarly project on teaching and learning becomes useful to others" (p. 130). Of critical importance to this process is the making public of the product of SoTL inquiry, thus resulting in the sharing of work on a local level (Level Two of Ashwin & Trigwell's framework). Geertsema suggests that "making public locally provides solutions to issues other colleagues may experience in their teaching" (p. 130). We turn to the community that is both fostered and the instrument through which professional development happens in the next section.

PEER-TO-PEER FOCUSED SOTL SUPPORT

Taking a peer-based approach to educational development, and to SoTL initiatives in particular, is not unique. There is widespread literature that advocates for this kind of practice (Babmer 2008; Cambridge 2004, 2001; Geertsema, 2013; Gibbs, 2013). The courses described in this chapter offer a formal way for faculty across the respective institutions to engage in SoTL research and serve as a lever to improve teaching and student learning (Geertsema, 2013). It may be, over time, a means to changing teaching and learning culture across the institution, if not across the sector. While the leads of EduCATE and the Teaching Innovation Fund share this optimism, they understand that community building at the local level is the cornerstone of a strong and growing SoTL culture.

Because professional development initiatives are often offered in group settings, participants tend to represent different disciplines, faculties, and departments, providing wide scope to new ways of thinking and approaches to teaching. Of particular note, providing space for a cross-section of faculty to come together further allows for a breaking down of institutional and programmatic silos. By engaging in "sincere conversations" (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009, p. 554) beyond their immediate surroundings,

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they may indeed be contributing ever so slightly but significantly to possible shifts in localized or siloed teaching and learning cultures. Consistent with the approach taken by the academic developers in the design of their courses, Roxå and Mårtensson (2009) advocate that most educators are likely to rely on a small group of individuals, or significant networks, where conversations provide opportunities for conceptual development on learning and reflection. Sorcinelli (2002) includes “encourage collegiality and community” as one of ten principles of good practice in creating and sustaining teaching and learning centres. This work cites studies stating that faculty need each other’s support and report a desire to work with other faculty within and outside their discipline. Although a number of themes are identified in the literature with respect to supporting SoTL, (e.g., value placed on SoTL by faculties, departments, and the institution; through tenure and promotion; and the use of awards), Cambridge (2004, 2001) identifies benefits of working in groups with colleagues.

This was validated in the author’s local context in a recent study by Kim et al. (Under Review), who investigated faculty experiences and challenges faced when engaging in SoTL research. Within the article, faculty are commonly cited as stating that working with colleagues and building a community were significant in the process of completing their projects. Specifically, they refer to the supportive environment created amongst their peers, peer-to-peer support, encouragement, and a shared understanding of the significance of SoTL research. Similarly, Albers (2008), who explores the role of communities in SoTL and how institutions can further work to support SoTL, advises that conversations within small networks may be more impactful when they are informed by and contribute to scholarship - features which are a purposeful design of EduCATE and the Teaching Innovation Fund.

This approach emerged from a recognition that those engaging within the courses bring diverse ways of knowing and understanding and different approaches to learning and teaching, and that this diversity has the mass potential to enrich the collective experiences when engaged with SoTL. Furthermore, the approach values participant experiences as it shifts from an expert model to one that encourages the co-construction of knowledge through ongoing dialogue, in that the course lead (educational developers) do not direct and inform.

The idea that SoTL, as a form of scholarship, might have equal or even greater impact at the “local” or “meso” level, makes it somewhat unique among scholarly disciplines. It is to this idea that we return as we describe the two initiatives introduced in this chapter, two examples of SoTL as a form of professional development at the individual and community levels.

SITUATING SOTL SUPPORT AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the sections that follow, scope and breadth is given to each of the SoTL support initiatives - EduCATE at York University and the Teaching Innovation Fund at Humber College. For each course, an institutional context is provided, and the process involved in developing the programs, goals, outcome measures, and ongoing challenges are detailed. Although there are similarities in approaches to course delivery and facilitation, the authors interrogate both the similarities and differences in the features of the courses and sustainability of the initiatives across our campuses. Connectedly, the role of the educational developer in promoting and supporting SoTL throughout these courses/programs is described.

Institutional Context at York University - EduCATE

York University, located just outside of Toronto, Ontario, is the second largest university in Ontario and third largest in Canada. It is diverse both in terms of its interdisciplinarity (with 11 faculties) and its student body of 55,000 undergraduate and graduate students, 8,500 of whom are international students representing over 178 countries worldwide (about.yorku.ca). York University employs approximately 1600 full-time faculty (OIPA, 2019a). Of significance to the context of this chapter, York has adopted a tenurable teaching stream characterized by an increased teaching load with no research expectations. Teaching stream roles are parallel to conventional tenure stream roles with a heavy research-orientation, resulting in a diverse professoriate with divergent agendas, and very few in either capacity prioritize SoTL as a form of academic practice. In addition to full-time faculty are the 1800 contract faculty and teaching assistants (OIPA, 2019b) employed at York University. While graduate students are most often employed as teaching assistants, those employed contractually largely hold doctoral degrees and are seeking active employment within a professoriate. In an effort to demonstrate their academic inclinations, it is common for these individuals to conduct research over and above their heavy teaching load, although it is not considered part of their job tasks (Vander Kloet et al., 2017).

Bearing in mind the diverse professoriate and the diverging agendas of our full-time faculty (teaching and research stream) and contract faculty at York University, it was important to recognize within the teaching and learning centre that SoTL support across our institution was imperative. Having previously offered no formal support, a course known as EduCATE was developed as a small step towards building an institutional framework for SoTL research. Moreover, our aim was to begin connecting individuals who were already engaging and those who wished to engage in SoTL inquiry to build a community of SoTL scholars. While workshops about SoTL were offered as a generic introduction to its methods and ethics, ultimately, it was decided that a more sustainable and meaningful support framework was needed for those who wished to explore an area of their teaching using a form of action research.

Description of the Program

The first iteration of the Education, Curriculum, And, Teaching Excellence course, fondly called EduCATE, was launched in 2015-2016. It is a one-year program for faculty to explore any aspect of teaching and learning by engaging in action research and contributing to SoTL literature. The course is informed by Peter Felten's (2013) five principles of doing SoTL research and Pat Hutchings' (2000) taxonomy of SoTL questions. These perspectives facilitate the process for course participants as they design their own SoTL projects and begin to methodically explore questions they may not have necessarily formulated explicitly before enrolling in the course.

EduCATE is structured in such a way that participants meet on select dates as a cohort where SoTL as a field of inquiry is broadly explored and ethical practices in conducting SoTL research are considered. Time is spent with course participants reviewing the institutional policies of the research ethics board and the human participant research committee in an effort to provide support on all aspects of their research process and levels of experience in doing research.

In addition to this formal learning, course participants come together monthly as a small group comprised of peers from across campus in varying disciplines and with diverse experiences and interests, as shown in Figure 2, a schematic of the EduCATE course. Through this process they begin forging a community of SoTL practice as they engage in the small group sessions known as Action Learning

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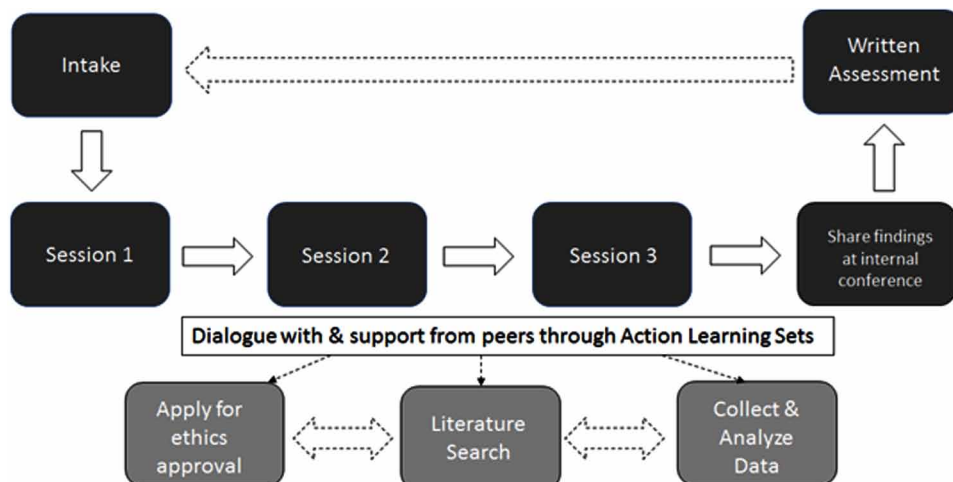
Sets (McGill & Brockbank, 2004). Action Learning Sets are small structured groups where participants come together to discuss an area of common interest. During each session, EduCATE participants take turns discussing questions, challenges, or problems related to their SoTL research project with their groups to collectively develop solutions or areas of further inquiry in a supportive environment. Each Action Learning Set concludes with participants committing to a deliverable for the next session. This commitment to action will be the starting point for dialogue in the next set. An Action Learning Set is usually supported by a facilitator, but over time may become self-facilitating.

The course has two formal assessments for participants to have successfully completed the EduCATE course. The first is to present their research at the institution's annual teaching and learning conference, known as Teaching in Focus. Each participant will present in

Pecha Kucha style—this presentation format requires speakers to be concise and focus on the most important aspects of their work as they must complete their presentation in a predetermined number of slides and brief time allocation for each. This presentation gives course participants the opportunity to share their work with the wider York Community as well as to further invite others into dialogue about teaching and learning and about SoTL research. This is consistent with Peter Felten's (2013) last principle of sharing one's SoTL research publicly.

The final assessment in the course is a written piece. Course participants have a choice between two written assessments. The first is a reflective piece that will detail an overview of their work in the course, and what they have learned through this experience and by connecting with their peers through this intensive process. The second option is a more formal piece for those whose research is nearing completion. The objective here is to continue in the provision of support as participants selecting this option will write their research in the format of a journal article. In doing so, participants are provided with a zero-risk submission to the educational developer. They will receive feedback on the paper and have an opportunity to revise before submission for publication.

Figure 1. Schematic of the EduCATE Course Process



Evaluation of the Program

Upon completion of the EduCATE course, participants are required to complete an online evaluation which includes questions about their perceived benefits and challenges; changes they are considering making to their courses and/or teaching as a result of their engagement in the course; and how in-class activities and their research contributed to their approaches to course design, assessment, active learning, and talking about teaching with their colleagues. The course lead, an educational developer, also tracks the number of hours spent with course participants beyond core sessions and Action Learning Sets, completed projects, and where possible, proposals to conferences and journal submissions beyond the scope of EduCATE.

Since the first iteration of EduCATE in 2015, 32 participants including research and teaching stream professors (tenured and tenure-stream), contract faculty, librarians, professional staff, post-doctoral fellows, and graduate students completed the course (the impact of a long labour disruption accounts for a lower than expected completion rate). The 2019-2020 cohort includes an additional eleven participants. Of note, two faculty have opted to repeat the course as they were seeking additional support for new SoTL projects. Participants in the course have a range of research experience prior to entry, some with no research experience in their professional careers, and a large majority with little conceptual understanding of SoTL. What prompts them to enroll, however, is that they have a question pertaining to their teaching and are seeking additional support to be able to answer it. To date, the course has supported its participants in presenting at the internal teaching and learning conference, presentating at national and international conferences, designing a Teaching Assistant development program, providing educational resources, informing a needs analysis for a programmatic review, and publishing their work in academic journals.

Of significance in 2018, York University's Academic Innovation Fund (AIF) launched a funding stream for SoTL research. The purpose of the AIF is to provide seed grants that will support faculty in a range of projects promoting teaching and learning and the student experience. Recipients of the AIF (SoTL stream) are now required to participate in the EduCATE course. This decision was made by the Office of the Vice-President, Teaching and Learning in order to ensure that successful proposals received targeted support, thus instituting EduCATE as part of a formal strategic initiative to support SoTL at York University.

In a study with EduCATE participants, Kim et al. (Under Review) found widespread acknowledgment that the peer-based approach to the course was instrumental in overcoming the challenges of doing SoTL research, particularly because they felt accountable not only to themselves but to their immediate community. This speaks to levels one and two of Ashwin and Trigwell's (2004) framework. While impact at the third level is neither the aim nor an obvious outcome of EduCATE, the first cohort of the course benefited from a small fund for conference travel that enabled a few participants to present at a national teaching and learning conference that took place within drivable distance that year. Looking forward, the AIF combined with EduCATE should yield greater impact at the third level of investigation, hence generating public knowledge without minimizing contributions to personal and local growth.

Next Steps and Remaining Challenges

What remains a challenge is lack of participants' knowledge of SoTL research prior to commencing their own research. Consequently, the course has been revised significantly for the upcoming iteration to try to

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fill in some of these gaps. One such attempt is to meet with individuals prior to the first large group session to discuss their proposal, research questions, and their definition of SoTL. Scholarly articles have been circulated in advance in an effort to create common ground and common language about SoTL as a field of inquiry as well as to encourage participants to become more familiar with SoTL scholarly literature.

Another challenge is in providing support beyond the EduCATE course. Aside from participants having to repeat the course in its entirety, Action Learning Sets are now being offered as a stand-alone initiative without mandatory attendance at the large group sessions for those who have participated in EduCATE since 2015. Because they are structured as Action Learning Sets, a familiar and successful structure for past participants, there is optimism that co-mentoring relationships will thrive and sustain themselves.

Institutional Context at Humber College - Teaching Innovation Fund

Humber College, located in Toronto, Ontario, is one of the largest polytechnic institutes in Canada, with approximately 28,000 full- and part-time students. The college is characterized by the range of credentials offered, with approximately 180 programs including apprenticeships, two- and three- year diplomas, four-year undergraduate degrees, and post-graduate certificates. Accompanying this variety is the range of research experience that the faculty at the college have. Some are doctorally-prepared, while others have never conducted research professionally. The focus of the college is on teaching excellence; research (of any nature) is not mandated, although it is encouraged. Faculty typically teach the equivalent of about five courses per semester. Thus, the educational development unit serves a population of educators who have a heavy teaching load, have varied research experience, and have no formal requirement for research.

Given this context, the SoTL support framework was built around a developmental fund, adapted from Hum et al. (2015). Although competitive funds, in which a selection of “successful” SoTL proposals are granted funding, routinely serve as the foundation for SoTL support frameworks, they are not necessarily effective or even appropriate at all types of institutions. Given their very nature, they are exclusionary to some, and therefore may serve as a barrier to engagement with SoTL. Recognizing this, Hum et al. (2015) took a different approach, and developed a fund that was “formative” in nature. In their framework, applicants work with colleagues and SoTL facilitators to develop a proposal until it is finalized to a satisfactory level; all proposals that reach this point are given funding. A similar structure was adopted with the Teaching Innovation Fund at Humber.

The Teaching Innovation Fund is formative, rather than competitive, and aims to build capacity—both in terms of research and in terms of scholarly teaching—among its participants, regardless of the amount of research experience they have had. It is deployed within a peer-based context, with proposal development and project deployment situated within an ongoing conversation among each cohort of fund-recipients and the SoTL facilitators. By embedding a SoTL fund within a community, the goal is to provide participants with social accountability and support across all phases of the project. It also allows for a safe space for faculty to engage in peer review of scholarly work, which is a new process for many. Indeed, the framework is fundamentally developmental; every project is as much about a faculty member’s own professional development as it is about contributing to our knowledge of student learning (Felten, 2013). The educational developers who designed and facilitate the course aspire to strike a balance between building confidence and research capacity and ensuring that each SoTL project has an appropriate level of rigour. In this way, the goal of the fund is not only to increase the amount of SoTL

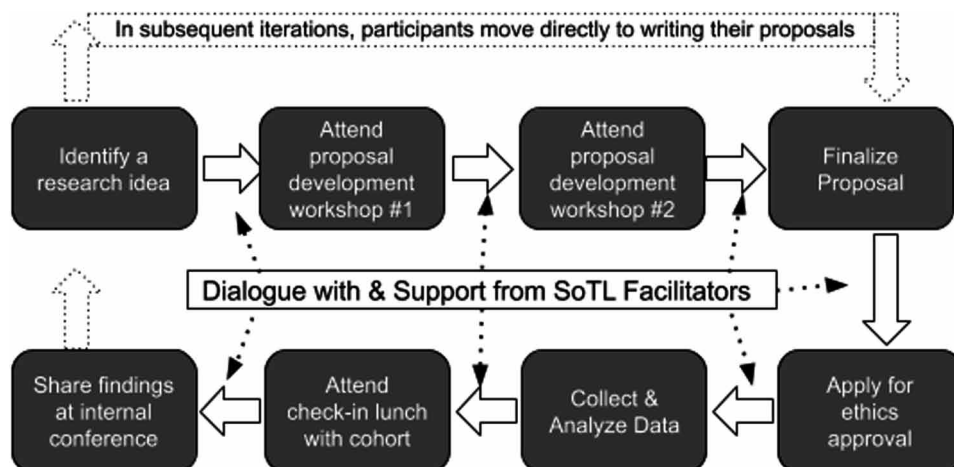
engagement at the institution, but to build an accompanying community of SoTL practitioners. The particular features of the process are outlined in more detail, below.

Description of the Program

Application to the fund requires only an articulation of an idea or area of inquiry; this might consist of a few written sentences. Faculty attend two proposal development workshops, during which SoTL facilitators share instruction around SoTL methodology, and participants engage in dialogue and peer review of one another’s ideas, as they further develop and articulate a research question and accompanying research plan. The dialogue continues between participants and the SoTL facilitators between and following the workshops, as they go through several iterations of revision and conversation to finalize their research proposals. Once finalized, all proposals are granted funding (currently \$1400 per investigator; investigators may team up with one or two others, to pool their funding up to \$4200).

During the data collection phase of their projects, the SoTL facilitation team continues to support participants, including activities such as helping with the ethics review process, and developing, building, and deploying research instruments (e.g., surveys, focus groups). Cohorts of fund-recipients also regroup approximately twice per year for informal lunches to chat about their progress and maintain a Community of Practice. The final deliverable for the fund consists of a presentation (either a poster or a workshop) at the institution’s annual teaching and learning conference. In this way, participants spread institutionally-relevant SoTL findings broadly among their colleagues. Following project completion, all cohorts are invited to participate in other SoTL initiatives, such as sharing their research at lunch and learn sessions, taking part in writing retreats to publish their findings, and, of course, reapplying for further funding to continue their scholarly pursuits. Should fund-recipients choose to engage further with subsequent projects, they are not required to attend the proposal development workshops but continue to participate in the other peer-to-peer aspects, including the check-in lunches and institutional conference presentations. See Figure 2 below for a schematic of the Teaching Innovation Fund course.

Figure 2. Schematic of the Teaching Innovation Fund process



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To evaluate the extent to which the Teaching Innovation Fund is fulfilling its goals of professional development (as teachers and researchers) and community-building, course leads routinely examine a number of sources of evidence. With respect to professional development, the number of applications, proposals that are successfully developed and submitted, and completed projects are tracked. Additionally, the number of hours of training, consultation, and additional support that are provided by the SoTL facilitation team are recorded. Upon completion of projects, an in-depth survey to fund-recipients is administered, which includes questions about the impact of the experience, the level of support, the role of the community, and barriers to success.

Since its inception in 2015, the Teaching Innovation Fund has supported fifty-one completed projects, with an additional fifteen currently under development. Twenty-one faculty have engaged with the fund multiple times. Through the proposal development workshops, 144 faculty have received formal training in SoTL methodology and ethics, in addition to approximately 450 one-on-one consultations with the SoTL facilitation team. Of the fund-recipients who responded to the survey ($n = 63$), more than one-third (36.5%) had never conducted research of any kind in their professional careers. Based on the survey data, the vast majority of faculty (between 80-90%, depending on the item) reported increased confidence as researchers and as teachers, respectively, and felt that their engagement with SoTL had led to an improvement in their teaching approach. Almost all survey respondents (96.3%) felt that they had received adequate support from the SoTL facilitation team throughout the process.

With respect to the second goal of developing a community of SoTL practitioners, course leads have found similar although somewhat weaker evidence of success. 86.9% of participants met faculty they might otherwise not have met through the fund, and 70.0% felt a sense of community with the other faculty engaged in the Teaching Innovation Fund. 81.7% enjoyed meeting other faculty through the fund, but only 58.5% enjoyed updating others about their project at the check-in lunches. With respect to local dissemination, Teaching Innovation Fund projects have led to 16 “lunch and learn” sessions at the institution and 40 presentations at Humber’s institutional teaching and learning conference since 2015. However, survey respondents did not as frequently perceive an impact within their own departments; 74.5% felt that their involvement in SoTL was visible to their program/school colleagues, and 31.7% of participants believed that others in their department had changed their teaching in some way as a result of their SoTL project.

Although the focus of the fund is at the individual and local level, a selection of projects has reached Ashwin and Trigwell’s third level of investigation (2004). In particular, three projects have resulted in publications in scholarly journals, and 38 presentations have been given at national and international teaching and learning conferences. Thus, while the majority of the impact has occurred at the micro and meso levels, there has been some impact beyond the institution, into the broader SoTL community.

Taken together, these metrics suggest that the fund is making progress toward both goals in its mandate. Nonetheless, the process of evaluation and reflection is ongoing. Ongoing challenges are discussed below.

Next Steps and Remaining Challenges

One issue that the authors encountered speaks to the hazard of placing unrealistic demands on faculty who are already limited in time (Ashwin and Trigwell, 2004). In the first few cohorts of the fund, it became clear that flexibility would need to become a feature of the process. Unavoidable features of the academic semester, such as exams and work placements, meant that progress on SoTL proposals and/or projects could not always proceed along the anticipated timelines. As a practice, timelines (and

expectations therein) have become more fluid; faculty may begin with one cohort of colleagues, then have to put their project on hiatus for a period of time, only to return and rejoin with a different cohort. This flexibility aligns with the fund's emphasis on professional development and process, as opposed to "SoTL as research" and scholarly products.

Similar to our colleagues at York, a second and ongoing challenge is to find ways of fostering mentorship within our SoTL community. Although past fund-recipients take part in some of the community activities in subsequent projects (e.g., check-in lunches, institutional conference presentations), they are not enmeshed within the community in the same way. This may be attributed to the fact that the SoTL support framework has fixed beginning and end points that unintentionally also serve as "exit" points from the community. In the coming year, course leads are exploring ways to entrench mentors in the proposal development process, through increased peer review and conversation. We envision adding more extensive peer review to the proposal development sessions, with both new and seasoned SoTL scholars, allowing participants to critically appraise their peers' research plans. Furthermore, consideration of more formal mentoring partnerships, with regular check-ins and support between new fund-recipients and those with previous experience will be given.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The two SoTL courses discussed in this chapter share a great deal in common despite their differing contexts. Both take a developmental approach in the provision of support to faculty engaging in them. In each course, support is provided throughout the entire research process, through the design and deployment of measurement tools, research methodologies, the research ethics process, and data analysis. Furthermore, although the area of SoTL inquiry is driven by individual faculty members, ideas are co-developed over time with a community of peers who are also participating in the course (Action Learning Sets in EduCATE and the proposal development workshops in the Teaching Innovation Fund). A major endeavour shared by both initiatives is the minimization of barriers to participants, in an effort to broaden the accessibility of engagement with SoTL as a field of inquiry; all faculty are eligible to take part, regardless of their previous experience with research and scholarship.

Connectedly, because of the developmental approaches of these courses, an additional distinguishing feature is the prolonged nature of the support. In contrast to "just-in-time" training sessions, workshops, and individual consultations that often characterize the work of educational developers (Gibbs, 2013), each of these programs recognized the need for and potential impact of continued support to foster sustainable action (Bamber, 2008; Gibbs, 2013). In both courses, the metrics shared suggest that each initiative is meaningfully contributing to professional development at the micro level, supporting individual participants' teaching and learning practices, and aligning with Level One of Ashwin and Trigwell's (2004) Levels of Investigation.

In addition, these programs share the purpose of providing a protected time and space for faculty to engage in SoTL projects and initiatives with a cohort of peers. At the core of the courses, a peer-to-peer approach has been adopted whereby participant experiences are not only enriched through increased social contributions and accountability, but also by the knowledge shared amongst the group through diversity of thought, perspectives, and experiences. The authors suggest that intentionally focusing on community-building strengthens the outcomes and overall success for the participants, the credibility of the associated teaching and learning centres, and the contributions to scholarship. And while the

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community of course participants is a critical component of the courses themselves, the larger, local community is also the focus of dissemination. In particular, the final deliverable for both courses is a presentation at the institutions' respective teaching and learning conferences, thus making public the SoTL investigations within the local contexts (Felten, 2013). In this way, both courses inform and enrich not only the community of faculty that are directly enrolled, but also the larger institutional teaching and learning community, aligning with Level Two of Ashwin and Trigwell's (2004) framework.

In some cases, although it is not a focus of either course, individuals have also extended into Ashwin and Trigwell's (2004) third Level of Investigation, with presentations at national and international conferences, and occasional publication in scholarly journals. Because this is not a required outcome of the courses (although it is welcomed), as reflected in the frameworks presented above, the authors view this extension as significant.

Given the two distinct institutional designations, these initiatives have different starting points. EduCATE is a program that aligns with research intensification efforts put forth at York University, while Humber College has traditionally focused on applied research opportunities for students, with faculty dedicated entirely to teaching and learning. Despite this obvious difference, the authors speculate that the initiatives—while developed independently—have converged in mission and structure because they serve similar populations of non-traditional academics. In particular, both York and Humber have diverse professoriates, with divergent teaching and research agendas, and as a result, both the SoTL courses serve academics who may not have prioritized or engaged in scholarly pursuits.

A final point of similarity is that the relative success of each of these initiatives has led the educational development teams at each institution to re-examine other programming within their respective departments to identify further opportunities for prolonged, peer-to-peer initiatives. At York for example, the peer-based approach applied in EduCATE has been adapted to other initiatives offered through the teaching and learning centre. Active Learning Sets are used widely as they enable those involved to bring and apply their own lived experiences to the context. Course leads see evidence of this working as participants return to engage with the centre at many levels.

Similarly, this trend can be seen in the writing-support programs at Humber, such as the Scholarly Writing Boot Camps and on-campus "Writers' Collective" writing club, both of which bring together groups of faculty, on an ongoing basis, to support scholarly writing and dissemination (Maheux-Pelletier et al., 2019). This move from the support of the individual to the support of communities, and from small, one-time offerings to longer-term, integrated initiatives aligns with observations found elsewhere in the educational development landscape (Gibbs, 2013).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING

Having developed two distinct but similar processes of peer-based program development, there are several recommendations that we would apply to future initiatives. These are described in the following bulleted points:

- Start small and strong: A structure needs to be in place first even when awareness about SoTL is scarce. Once there is a solid program, faculty will start coming, with incremental impact taking place over time.

- Provide incentives and recognition: The Teaching Innovation Fund at Humber College began with a funding mechanism whereas EduCATE is tied to a credential. Moreover, faculty at Humber are incentivized further after the fact through conference sponsorship for those who have been good “ambassadors” of the fund by sharing extensively at the local level.
- Be flexible in the design and delivery of the program: Both EduCATE and the Teaching Innovation Fund have relaxed the rules and timelines for faculty. At Humber, some participants begin with one cohort, but for any number of reasons must temporarily put their project on hold and are able to rejoin with a different cohort at a later point. In EduCATE, participants schedule the date and time of their Action Learning Sets when it is mutually convenient to the small group as opposed to a mandated time designated by the course facilitator.
- Prioritize informal learning and support through peers: Common to both structures is the peer-review component. This an ongoing learning process through which one learns about SoTL by doing SoTL is embedded within a peer-to-peer context.
- Embrace varying definitions of success that make sense to the participants: Ultimately, the authors have embraced varying definitions of success based on the groups they work with, recognizing that for some, the goal will be a scholarly contribution to the literature, whereas for others, this work will serve to develop their own personal professional practice. The authors believe that a learner-centred process where the measure of success is not predetermined is what has led to deep and long-standing participant engagement.

CONCLUSION

As a preliminary analysis, the authors observe varying definitions of success in the SoTL courses described in this chapter. While for one participant, learning how to do SoTL research and forming a simple research design may be a meaningful milestone, for another with a great deal of knowledge and experience with research methodologies and analysis, the completion of a SoTL project may result in publication. Using a peer-based approach allows for both outcomes and multiple notions of success - in any instance, transformation is possible. The authors believe that taking a peer-to-peer approach provides strength and foundation and allows participants to be engaged and successful in their SoTL experience. This structured approach provides numerous benefits to course participants learning to do SoTL, to the greater institutional community where SoTL is used as a tool to build/extend teaching and learning capacity, as well as in the contribution to scholarship.

In a context where the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is relatively new to most academic environments, the authors conclude by suggesting that prolonged, developmental programs allow for participant-defined success, and the authors see this as a strength of the programs. From an educational development perspective, the success of these initiatives is brought about by a peer-based approach to SoTL, which has offered our communities a practical and sustainable model for engaging faculty members from any “walk of academic life” and at any stage of their academic career. In this process, competent facilitation is a necessary skill that educational developers are uniquely positioned to provide to both forge community and support a research process that feels uncomfortable to most of the participants, regardless of their level of competence with disciplinary research. Despite this tension, and despite the many demands on a faculty member’s time, the authors notice continued engagement and growth stemming from the programs described in this chapter. This gives the authors reason to think that the com-

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munities fostered are the glue that make participants stick to their SoTL commitment. The SoTL culture thus created lays the foundation for a renewed teaching and learning institutional culture, one that places high value on the student experience, not only in discourse but also, and more importantly, in practice.

At both institutions, this revelation has transformed how the authors, course leads, and educational developers approach their work. More peer-based learning opportunities are offered that expand over time. Not only are they better attended than traditional workshops with punctual commitment, they foster one's critical engagement with teaching and learning that a one-off workshop cannot. Hence, it appears that despite being over-extended, faculty will invest themselves when there are genuine opportunities for personal growth leading to a greater sense of belonging.

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