Introducing Scholarship: The long read

Author: Prof Hannah Cobb, Academic Lead for Academic Development
Hannah.Cobb@Manchester.ac.uk

Introduction

The notion of scholarship in academia has been around for over thirty years, having first been proposed by Boyer in 1990. However, as HE has disaggregated since its inception, there has been a growing sense of confusion over what scholarship really is. Fortunately, and particularly stimulated by a greater number of academics globally on education focused contracts, this debate is beginning to reach a point of clarity and there are now very helpful frameworks for understanding what scholarship of teaching and learning is and can be. At the University of Manchester we define scholarship as:

"evidence based systematic practice that positively impacts student outcomes or experience and is disseminated for critical review and, where appropriate adoption by others. Scholarship can include the scholarship of teaching and learning, or discipline based educational or pedagogic research, as well as the development, application and synthesis of disciplinary knowledge to inform teaching (e.g. research-informed teaching)."

Our short read provides a brief explanation of what things may fall under this definition. In this longer read we will set out the varying understandings of scholarship, particularly as they pertain to teaching and learning, explore how and why debate around the term have arisen, and contextualise how our UoM definition fits within these debates.

The inception of scholarship

From as early as the 1970s academics have been arguing for an integrated view of scholarship with wider academic practice (Vygotsky 1978), but dedicated work on scholarship is predominantly recognised as beginning in 1990 with Ernest Boyer's seminal report *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Boyer's work explored the American Higher Education sector specifically, but the motivation for his report, laid out in the preface to the volume, mirrors concerns we have been wrestling with for some time in the UK HE sector too. In particular, Boyer highlights the prioritising of research, and reward for research, over teaching, and reward for teaching, and argues that the HE sector needs "to break out of the tired old teaching versus research debate and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar. It's time to recognize the full range of faculty talent and the great diversity of functions higher education must perform" (Boyer 1990, xii). To do so Boyer advocated for 'a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar – a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice and through teaching' (Boyer 1990, 24). He presented each of these areas in a fourfold model of scholarship (Fig 1) comprising scholarship of discovery, scholarship of integration, scholarship of application and scholarship of teaching. Colleagues in SEED have summarised each of Boyer's types of scholarship and suggested corresponding activities (Table 1).
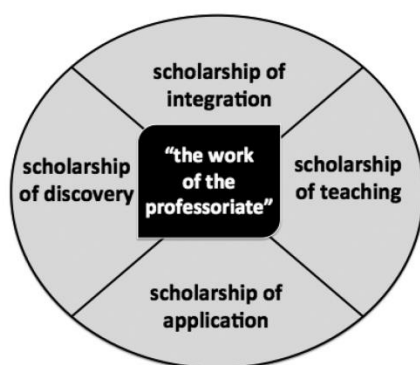
Fig 1: Summary of Boyer's types of scholarship (from Hulme 2022, 109)

Form of scholarship	Purpose	Illustrative examples
Scholarship of Discovery	Create new knowledge through research and inquiry to support or enhance teaching and learning.	• Engaging in research or practitioner inquiry • Presenting results of research and inquiry in academic or societal fora. This could be seen within training events, peer-reviewed articles or conferences • Developing guidance/ knowledge of pedagogy/andragogy for Higher Education • Creating infrastructure for future studies • Sabbaticals for scholarship
Scholarship of Integration	Develop, use and integrate knowledge across disciplines and fields.	• Preparing a comprehensive literature review aligned to the education of a specific discipline/field of study • Writing, or contributing to, a textbook to enable application of discipline knowledge and research into teaching contexts. • Collaborating interdisciplinarily with colleagues to design and deliver a core/mandatory programme or unit of study.
Scholarship of Application/ Engagement	Aid society and professions in addressing problems.	• Subscribing to an education learned society or professional association • Working on local, national and international education projects • Education knowledge exchange activities (external examination. For example) • Impacting upon education government policy and/or education businesses • High-impact partnerships for HEI • Professional roles in organisations or charities external to the University • Nurturing successful student employability • Research and publication-writing mentorship/support

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* * "and learning" was added by Hutchings and Shulman 1998	Study teaching models and practices to achieve optimal learning. Quality-assure pedagogical processes and practices.	• Attending a conference for HE professional development • Advancing existing pedagogy/andragogy through sharing research from the classroom • Developing and testing instructional materials • Mentoring graduate students • Designing and implementing a programme-level assessment system

Table 1: Summary of Boyer's four types of scholarship (Courtney and Firth 2022).

Fig 1 and Table 1 are helpful to understand the different categories Boyer defined, but an important dimension of his argument that is often lost when they are summarised is his emphasis that each should be integrated, and that we acquire knowledge through their dynamic interaction – together they are framed as more than the sum of their parts (Boyer 1990, 25). This integrated perspective, however clear in Boyer's original work, has led to a considerable degree of confusion in practice because this is ultimately not how higher education has come to operate in the twenty first century. As research and teaching have become increasingly disaggregated, so the ability to achieve Boyer's integrated model of scholarship has been not only undermined, but it has also led to confusion as to how it can be applied (Boshier 2009; Smith and Walker 2021).

Understanding Scholarship as it relates to T&L in an increasingly disaggregated HE landscape: SoTL vs Scholarly Teaching

To refine understandings of scholarship in an increasingly disaggregated HE landscape, subsequent scholars have set about refining definitions specifically of the scholarship of teaching in a manner that articulates with the lived experience of being an HE practitioner on the ground. Hutchings and Shulman (1999) and Shulman (1998, 2000) were some of the first (and most influential) to do this, adding 'learning' to Boyer's initial category of scholarship of teaching and coining the now ubiquitous term 'Scholarship of Teaching and Learning' (henceforth SoTL) (Smith and Walker 2021, 112).

Hutchings and Shulman separated SoTL from scholarly teaching, noting that the latter was teaching informed by the latest ideas in the field and ideas about teaching the field (Hutchings and Shulman 1999). Meanwhile, they define SoTL as the analysis of teaching and learning which "…has three characteristics: (1) it's not private, but public, (2) it's not only available but critically reviewed by peers, and (3) it can be built upon by others. It's generative. It can be exchanged" (Shulman 2000, 9). Thus SoTL is not only "public, open to critique and evaluation, in a form others can build on and including question-asking, inquiry and investigation" (Smith and Walker 2021, 12), it is also distinguished from scholarly teaching because SoTL integrates practice with inquiry to generate new knowledge (Boshier 2009, 4). This extended quote from Hutchings and Shulman (1999) provides further helpful context for understanding SoTL and its purposes and benefits:

"A scholarship of teaching is not synonymous with excellent teaching. It requires a kind of "going meta," in which [teachers] frame and systematically investigate questions related to student learning - the conditions under which it occurs, what it looks like, how to deepen it, and so forth - and do so

with an eye not only to improving their own classroom but to advancing practice beyond it." (Hutchings and Shulman 1999, 13).

As a result, whilst SoTL is not synonymous with excellent teaching, none the less

 "… the scholarship of teaching is a condition … for excellent teaching. It is the mechanism through which the profession of teaching itself advances, through which teaching can be something other than a seat-of-the-pants operation, with each of us out there making it up as we go. As such, the scholarship of teaching has the potential to serve all teachers - and students" (Hutchings and Shulman 1999, 14).

Developing definitions of SoTL

Since the work of Boyer and then Hutchings and Shulman, now nearly 25 years ago, SoTL has blossomed into a growing academic field in its own right. Learned societies to share good practice and cutting edge SoTL have formed, from the International Society of SoTL (ISSoTL), to the regionally specific Euro-SoTL, SoTL in the South, LatinSoTL, SoTL Canada, and SoTL Asia. All hold conferences and many have associated publications. There are also three journals dedicated to SoTL; the *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning* (IJ-SoTL), the *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (JoSoTL) and *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*. Moreover, many of the broader journals dedicated to teaching and learning and higher education research also publish articles on SoTL – see the bibliography of this essay to get a sense of these.

As the field has developed, Kern et al. have created the Dimensions of Activities Related to Teaching (DART) model (Fig 2) to further assist in defining SoTL. The DART model demonstrates how SoTL activities are underpinned by principles of being both public facing and systematic. Whilst this is a helpful way of framing scholarship the examples given in the model cannot be taken simply as "fixed" in the quadrants that they are pictured, and many of the activities that do not fall into the SoTL quadrant in Fig 2 can become SoTL if subject to the defining parameters of being systematic and public. For example, curriculum design is classed in the DART model under the "practice of teaching" quadrant. However, if the processes of curriculum design are informed by a systematic review of existing practice and literature, and then themselves are systematically evaluated during and after delivery, and the findings of the evaluation disseminated, this would become SoTL. Likewise, more informal forms of public dissemination, such as a blog on teaching, may present the systematic evaluation and analysis of their subject and thus can also be defined as SoTL.
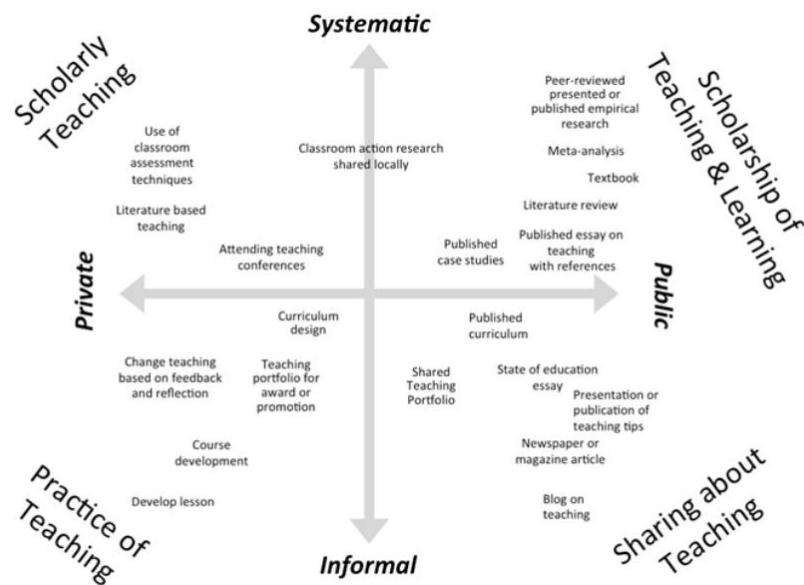
Fig 2. Kern et al.'s Dimensions of Activities Related to Teaching (DART) model (Kern et al. 2015, 5)

SoTL 1.0 vs SoTL 2.0?

The proliferation of SoTL in the decades since Boyer's work have undoubtedly broadened how it can be understood beyond the original parameters of public facing, systematic and peer reviewed analysis. Ashwin and Trigwell (2004) for example, highlight that SoTL must also be regarded as an essential element of professional development, whilst an AdvanceHE study of SoTL by Fanghanel et al. (2016) noted that:

"quality and enhancement of learning, excellence and recognition, pedagogic research and solving work-related problems [are all classed, by some, as SoTL yet] not all of which meet any criteria of being public, peer reviewed and critiqued. Aside from a focus on teaching and learning much of what is represented as being in the scope of SoTL is unpublished, not available to critical evaluation, not disseminated beyond its original context and unconnected with any previous literature and scholarship" (Canning and Masika 2020, 1084).

For this reason SoTL has been regarded as a "big tent" (Chick 2014) or an "umbrella concept" (Levander, Forsberg, and Elmgren 2019), uniting multiple approaches across a spectrum or continuum ranging from individual, non-disseminated reflective practice around teaching and learning through to evidence based, systematic REFable pedagogic research (Canning and Masika 2020). Canning and Masika argue that this broad view of SoTL "is at best confusing and at worst devaluing the serious pursuit of research into higher education learning and teaching" (Canning and Masika 2020) and instead they propose that two types of SoTL exist (Table 2). Framed like this, SoTL 1.0 reflects a "purist" stance to SoTL, closest to Boyer, Hutchings and Shulman and the SoTL quadrant in the DART model, whereas SoTL 2.0 is reflective of the neoliberal, managerially driven, worst of HE (Boshier 2009, Canning and Masika 2020).

	SoTL 1.0	SoTL 2.0
Central concerns	A concern for better understandings of teaching and learning	A concern for being and valuing learning and teaching

	Disseminated and peer reviewed outside an institution.	An institutional / internal focus.
Arena		
Definition	Clearly defined and delineated	Inclusive of all that relates to teaching and learning.
Philosophy	Philosophically inclusive	Philosophically untheorised.
Dissemination	Externally focused and disseminated.	Internally focused and sometimes disseminated.
Leadership	Research-led	Management-led
Innovation	Innovates and contributes original knowledge.	May innovate, but does not disseminate.
Foundation	Builds on previous scholarship	Builds on the needs of the institution or individuals.

Table 2 – Canning and Masika's definition of SoTL 1.0 and SoTL 2.0 (Canning and Masika 2020, 1092)

Reframing the diversity of SoTL for the 2020s

In the UK nationally agreed HERA role profiles have existed since 2005 which highlight that teaching focused colleagues should undertake scholarship (REF). As numbers of teaching focused academics have grown substantially in the UK over the last decade (HESA data shows they comprise 36% of UK academics in 22/23 – increased from 26% in 2015/16 (HESA 2024)), so there has never been a more pressing need to have both a clear sectoral understanding of SoTL, and a sectoral stance which values this work. Many have highlighted how the lack of clarity around scholarship has ultimately *de*valued how it is seen, holding teaching focused colleagues back from promotion and institutions back from committing time and resource to scholarship (e.g. Smith and Walker 2021, 2024 and studies summarised therein), whilst feeding the continued prioritisation of research over teaching and the scholarship of teaching (there is a considerable body of literature around the nexus of research and scholarship summarised in Godbold et al. 2024, 95-96). As a result Canning and Masika (2020) have argued that we should drop the term SoTL altogether; "Those of us who research teaching and learning in higher education need to affirm confidence in the theoretical foundations and methodological rigour of our work and not 'open up' to all sorts of others agendas in the name of inclusivity. After 30 years SoTL needs to be thrown on the ash heap of educational history" (Canning and Masika 2020, 1095). Yet, as our own institution exemplifies, most teaching focused colleagues are not contracted or resourced to undertake research. Indeed, at Manchester our own Institute of Education is the place where T&R academics who undertake HE research are based. Meanwhile T&S colleagues across the university are contracted to, and thus resourced and encouraged to undertake the scholarship of teaching and learning. As our short read indicates, our institutional view is clear that this follows a relatively purist, SoTL 1.0 view. Moreover studies have shown how transformative the presence of teaching focused academics and good SoTL can be for teaching quality and student experience (Smith and Walker 2024; Simmons et al., 2021; Tierney et al., 2020). If we choose not to follow arguments like Canning and Masika's and retain SoTL, what does and can SoTL look like in the 2020s? How can we ensure that it is rigorous, systematic, peer reviewed and generative and still celebrate the diversity of it, *and* embed it in our fragmented HE landscapes?

Approaches in recent years have acknowledged that such debates around defining SoTL arise not because there is a problem with how we understand SoTL, but because SoTL is always contextual and

thus the variety of ways it occurs and is conceptualised in different subject areas and around different types of teaching requires a nuanced stance (Hulme 2022; Kern et al 2015; Godbold et al. 2024; ISSOTL 2024; Fung 2017). Recent discourse frames this variation "not as a problem to be solved, but rather a source of possibility" (Godbold et al 2024, 92). For the International Society for SoTL (ISSoTL) a "strength of SoTL is that its practitioners ask many different types of questions, drawing from many scholarly traditions, to build toward a more comprehensive understanding of how teaching and learning happen in a range of contexts" (ISSOTL 2024). Indeed Fung (2017) and Fung and Gordon (2016) have developed the notion of strength-based scholarship which echoes this broad, contextually driven stance;

"Respecting the diversity of contexts and roles in which educators work, we argue that there should be flexibility regarding the kinds of scholarship undertaken – whether in a home subject discipline, in a professional field, focusing on their own teaching practice or in any other scholarly field of importance to them and their institution" (Fung 2017, 106)

Godbold et al (2024, 100) echo this, drawing upon supercomplexity theory to argue that we need to move away from the assertion that we can ever achieve a shared understanding of SoTL. Instead they advocate for a contextual and nuanced approach to SoTL informed by an ethic of care (Ibid.).

Conclusion: The grand challenges for SoTL?

By taking a more nuanced, contextual stance on scholarship, debate about SoTL in the 2020s has been able to move beyond narrow focus on definition and instead up the discussion to question what the aims and challenges of our SoTL should be, whatever form it takes. ISSOTL have recently set out five Grand Challenges for SoTL which they identify as:

1. how to develop critical and creative thinkers: Critical and creative thinkers recognize and use reliable, relevant information and synthesize ideas in new ways to better understand and imagine ways to address complex phenomena and problems.

2. how to encourage students to be engaged in learning: Engaged learners are motivated to value how, why, and what they learn and to continue evolving as learners.

3. the complex processes of learning: Learning is a holistic experience involving cognitive, affective, social, and cultural processes and influences, and is facilitated by understanding existing scholarship on learning and the individual experiences of learners.

4. how identities affect both teaching and learning: People bring who they are and what they've experienced into educational contexts, informing both their own and others' perceptions and experiences.

5. the practice, use, and growth of SoTL: SoTL practitioners explore, share, and translate the knowledge generated by its diverse research approaches in order to improve teaching, learning, and higher education more broadly.

These are undoubtedly not the only challenges for SoTL, and so we draw this long read to a close with a question; do these grand challenges articulate with your own scholarship, or do you see more challenges for SoTL? How, for example, can SoTL connect with questions of sustainability, and the UN's sustainable development goals? How can we decolonise SoTL or embed socially just pedagogies? These are just a few thoughts – we know you likely have more. Ultimately SoTL in the

2020s is a broader, more mature field than ever before, and we are excited to see the possibilities it offers for colleagues and for our students at the University of Manchester….

References cited

Anderson, L., and Mallanaphy, C. (2020). *Education-focused career tracks in UK business and management schools: Current practice and recommendations for progress*. London: British Academy of Management. https://www.bam.ac.uk/asset/FB54AFB3-4410-43FB-A9DAC2611F91D1DE/

Bessant, S., E., F. & Robinson, Z., P. (2019) Rating and rewarding higher education for sustainable development research within the marketised higher education context: experiences from English universities, *Environmental Education Research*, 25:4, 548-565, DOI: 10.1080/13504622.2018.1542488

Boshier, R. (2009) "Why is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Such a Hard Sell?" *Higher Education Research & Development* 28 (1): 1–15. doi:10.1080/07294360802444321.

Boyer, E. (1990) Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate. Princeton, New Jersey: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Canning, J. and Masika, R., 2022. The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL): the thorn in the flesh of educational research. *Studies in Higher Education*, *47*(6), pp.1084-1096.

Courtney, S. and Firth, M. (2022) *Supporting scholarship in the School of Environment, Education & Development*. Unpublished policy document. Manchester: University of Manchester.

Fanghanel, J., J. Pritchard, J. Potter, and G. Wisker. 2016. *Defining and Supporting the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL): A Sector-Wide Study*, 43. York: Advance HE. https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/defining-and-supporting-scholarship-teaching-and-learning-sotl-sector-wide-study

Felten, P. (2013). Principles of good practice in SoTL. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 1(1), 121-125. doi: 10.2979/teachlearninqu.1.1.121

Fung, D. (2017) Strength-based scholarship and good education: The scholarship circle, Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 54:2, 101-110, DOI: 10.1080/14703297.2016.1257951 HESA https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/16-01-2024/sb267-higher-education-staff-statistics

Fung, D., & Gordon, C. (2016). *Rewarding educators and education leaders in research-intensive universities*. York: Higher Education Academy. Retrieved from https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/rewarding_educators_and_education_leaders.pdf

Godbold, N., Matthews, K., E., E. & Gannaway, D. (2024) Theorising new possibilities for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and teaching-focused academics, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 43:1, 92-103, DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2023.2218809

Hulme, J.A. (2022) Supporting and developing teaching-focused individuals to professorial level – career progression across boundaries. In McIntosh and McNutt (eds) *The impact of the integrated practitioner in higher education: Studies in the third space*. Oxford: Routledge, pp. 107-114.

Hutchings, P., and L. S. Shulman. 1999. "The Scholarship of Teaching: New Elaborations, New Developments." *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 31 (5): 10–15. doi:10.1080/00091389909604218.

Kern, B., G. Mettetal, M. Dixson, and R. K. Morgan. 2015. "The Role of SoTL in the Academy: Upon the 25th Anniversary of Boyer's Scholarship Reconsidered." *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1–14. doi:10.14434/josotl.v15i3.13623.

Shulman, L. S. 2000. *Fostering a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*. Athens, Georgia: Institute of Higher Education, The University of Georgia. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED442420.

Simmons, N., Eady, M. J., Scharff, L., & Gregory, D. (2021). SoTL in the margins: Teaching-focused role case studies. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 9(1), 61–78. doi:10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.6..

Smith, D., & Walker, D. (2022) Scholarship and academic capitals: the boundaried nature of education-focused career tracks, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 29:1, 111-125, DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2021.1965570

Smith, D., & Walker, D. (2024) Scholarship and teaching-focused roles: An exploratory study of academics' experiences and perceptions of support, *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 61:1, 193-204, DOI: 10.1080/14703297.2022.2132981

Tierney, A. M., Aidulis, D., Park, J., & Clark, K. (2020). Supporting SoTL development through communities of practice. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 8(2), 32–52. https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.8.2.4

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press.