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International Collaborative Writing Group 2023 Special Section

Exploring SoTL Leadership: Contextualizing the Theoretical in the Lived Experience

ABSTRACT

Despite the expansion of teaching-focused roles in higher education (HE), the expectations for engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) are often ill-defined within individual career pathways, across institutions, and across the global HE sectors. As such, our understanding of effective ways to intentionally grow SoTL capacity and the need for the support of SoTL practice across micro, meso, macro, and mega levels is limited. Consequently, the work of SoTL leaders guiding these efforts also remains somewhat ambiguous. The current image of SoTL leadership within the literature is one of isolated approaches to capacity building, often failing to support individuals who take on the role of nurturing and supporting SoTL development. Inspired by the fifth SoTL Grand Challenge ("to better understand and improve the practice, use, and growth of SoTL") and the theme of the 2023 ISSOTL Conference (Context Matters), this paper initiates a multi-pronged research project aimed at developing a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of SoTL leadership. Here, the eight authors begin by reflecting on our unique and individual career trajectories into SoTL leadership in order to establish and apply a framework for exploring the ways in which SoTL leaders enact their leadership practice.

KEYWORDS

higher education leadership, 4M framework, academic collaboration

INTRODUCTION

Since Boyer's seminal 1990 work, *Scholarship Reconsidered,* the field of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) has evolved into a "transformative" practice that has become a focal point for academic professional development in many countries (Patfield, Gore, Prieto, Fray, and Sincock 2022, 3). Individual faculty members and academic development staff often take on this work (Myatt, Gannaway, Chia, Fraser, and McDonald, 2017; Patfield et al. 2022; Pritchard and McGowan 2016), and in this way, SoTL helps faculty to develop learning and teaching vocabulary, to understand core pedagogical concepts, and to engage in evidence-informed practice. SoTL has grown as a grass-

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roots movement (Simmons and Taylor 2019) but with potential to positively impact teaching quality and the student experience, from the individual level through to the institutional level, and even more broadly (Bernstein 2013; Patfield et al. 2022).

Historically, SoTL has not received the recognition it deserves, with its scope and content often misunderstood. Doubts about its quality, rigor, and the difficulty of evidencing its impact are persistent issues (Boshier 2009; Boyer 1990; Canning and Masika 2022; Marquis 2015; Norton 2014; Simmons et al. 2019; Webb and Tierney 2019). With respect to quality and rigor, Canning and Masika (2022) assert that "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" (2). Moreover, the progress and involvement in SoTL leadership are obstructed by both personal and institutional hurdles, with the latter frequently inhibiting individual participation. These obstacles not only stifle SoTL's growth and development but also curb the potential for progress and innovation in teaching and learning methodologies. As such, overcoming these challenges is vital for SoTL's evolution and its acknowledgment as a crucial academic field.

In November 2022, the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning's (ISSOTL) issued a call for facilitators for the 2023–24 International Collaborative Writing Groups (ICWGs), with a distinct focus on the leadership of SoTL. The authors of this paper responded, each because of their own role in leading and supporting SoTL activities in their own context. As authors, we bring a rich tapestry of experiences from our respective spaces, which span across various disciplines, institutions, and geographical locations. This diversity shapes our perspectives and enriches our collective understanding of the academic landscape.

Simmons et al. (2019) work, "Leadership for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Understanding Bridges and Gaps in Practice," guided our initial conversations as members of this ICWG. As a group of authors and SoTL leaders, we are collectively invested in understanding effective SoTL leadership in order to maximize the potential benefits that SoTL might bring to university learning and teaching across a range of contexts. We adopted a collaborative, reflective, conversational approach to exploring our experiences over a series of both online and in-person meetings between April 2023 and May 2024. This approach invited us to delve into our own experiences and narratives, fostering a rich and multi-dimensional understanding of our work. Each member of our ICWG contributed their personal narratives and insights, weaving valuable threads into the tapestry of our collective understanding of SoTL leadership. As we have shared our individual stories and experiences, we discovered shared patterns and distinctions. Through this collective sensemaking, we aim to unravel the deeper significance of these narratives within the broader sociocultural context of SoTL leadership.

In this paper, we explore the theoretical and practical dimensions of SoTL leadership through a collaborative, reflective inquiry grounded in our own lived experiences. Drawing on a loosely autoethnographic approach, we examine how our identities, contexts, and leadership practices intersect with and are informed by existing frameworks. Our work is particularly influenced by Simmons et al.'s (2019) assertion that "SoTL will be best supported when leaders in diverse roles develop capacity, provide resources, create community, and build culture through engagement, connection, collaboration, and advocacy at all levels in our institutions" (123). We begin by noting aspects of our identities and contexts that impact how we, as a group of collaborative writers and SoTL leaders, interpret and enact our leadership practices (Table 1). We then explore key challenges to SoTL engagement, as reported in the literature, before turning to how our own experiences illuminate the development of our SoTL leadership. By sharing our personal narratives, we aim to

offer a nuanced and practice-informed understanding of SoTL leadership—one that bridges theory and lived experience, as well as supports the development of leadership across institutional levels.

All eight authors identify as female and Caucasian, with English as their first language. Every author has been, and is currently, involved in curriculum design and review, and is active in committees and organizations at local, national, and international levels focused on aspects of SoTL. A desire to incorporate diversity related to geography, role, and interest influenced the selection of members to this specific ICWG. We have noted the aspects of general characteristics so that we do not conflate our variations in some respects (e.g., age and nationality) with overall claims of diversity (since we are all white, female, and speak English as a first language, for example).

Table 1. Dimensions of professional identity across the author team

Author	Characteristics related to enactment of SoTL Leadership (Geography, Institutional Type, Career Timing, Roles)
Author 1	Canada, public research-intensive university, mature career, director/assistant professor
Author 2	United Kingdom, private specialist university, mid-career, reader/associate professor
Author 3	United Kingdom, public dual-intensive university (teaching and learning), mature career, reader/associate professor
Author 4	Canada, public polytechnic, early career, faculty/instructor
Author 5	Australia, public university, mature career, director
Author 6	Australia, public research-intensive university, mature career, associate dean
Author 7	United States, public research-intensive university, mid-career, director
Author 8	Canada, public polytechnic, mature career, dean

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Without an existing SoTL Leadership framework that accommodates the dynamic nature of academic work and the boundary-spanning nature of our roles, we situate our lived experiences as SoTL leaders within two key frameworks: Dimensions of SoTL Leadership (Simmons et al. 2019) and the 4M Framework (Friberg 2016; Simmons 2016). While the Dimensions of SoTL Leadership focuses on actions, the 4M framework focuses on location. These two lenses capture the complex nature of academic work and the diverse ways in which SoTL leadership manifests as a situated practice.

Dimensions of SoTL leadership

Simmons and Taylor (2019) provide a comprehensive understanding of how individuals in a range of roles—faculty, educational developers, administrators, and students—can all contribute to the promotion, sustenance, and leadership of SoTL, while acknowledging the role of institutional culture in shaping the enactment of leadership. Through a grounded theory approach, Simmons and Taylor introduced the Dimensions of SoTL Leadership. Drawing on existing literature they claim leaders, both formal and informal, act to enable SoTL in the four dimensions of: engagement,

connection, collaboration, and advocacy. These dimensions represent the various ways in which SoTL leaders can facilitate leadership across and beyond their institutions in order to create critical social networks for SoTL work and contribute to institutional cultures that support and value that work. The authors note that these dimensions are not mutually exclusive and often overlap; SoTL leaders may engage in activities across multiple dimensions, and effective SoTL leadership involves all four dimensions in some capacity. Simmons and Taylor highlight how diverse leadership roles that cross multiple levels in their institutions bridge the gaps between the work of individual scholars and the cultures of their academic communities.

In reflecting on the dimensions of SoTL leadership, we also recognize the value of incorporating relational pedagogy as a complementary lens. Relational pedagogy emphasizes the importance of human relationships in teaching and learning, and this perspective offers insight into how interpersonal connections cultivate SoTL leadership (Su and Wood 2023). The mentorship, trust-building, and reciprocal learning that occur between established SoTL leaders and early-career or junior academics are not only acts of collaboration and connection, but also foundational to the development of a sustainable SoTL leadership community. These relational dynamics help foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose, which are essential for nurturing leadership capacity and embedding SoTL values within institutional cultures.

Table 2. Dimensions of SoTL leadership

Dimensions	Leadership characteristics
Engagement	• Energize processes at individual, social network, and system levels with resources, encouragement, and recognition
Connection	• Identify and enable clusters of strong local discipline teaching and learning practice and scholarship • Actively connect clusters through shared interests; intentionally enhance and sustain connections between groups
Collaboration	• Foster collaboration to share and build practice, leadership, and knowledge
Advocacy	• Advocate for the SoTL to be valued and supported, and recognized and create a common vision • Integrate what is learned through these processes in institutional practices and policies

Source: Nicola Simmons and Lynn Taylor, "Leadership for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Understanding Bridge and Gaps in Practice."

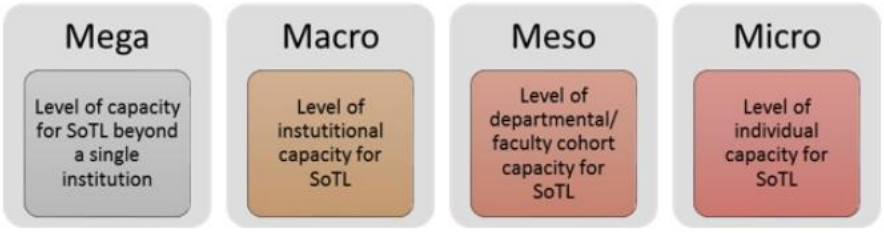
We utilized the Dimensions of SoTL Leadership (Table 2) as a guiding framework for our initial discussions. This framework aids us in identifying our positions as SoTL leaders within our specific contexts, thereby providing a nuanced understanding of our roles in the broader academic landscape. We were also intrigued by the questions Simmons et al. (2019) posed at the end of their article, which they derived from the results of their study. Specifically, we chose to focus on "how can we grow a

SoTL leadership network across all levels of our institution? If this is perchance a development stage, how do we 'grow up' and out?" (13). This question guided our thinking and reflective, collaborative conversations as we sought to better understand our own practice in order to identify potential routes to growing and developing SoTL leadership more broadly.

4M Framework

The 4M Framework (Friberg 2016; Simmons 2016) acknowledges that academic work is not an isolated endeavor, but deeply embedded within and influenced by multiple interconnected systems. These systems range from the immediate microsystem of individual practice (classroom) to the broader macrosystem of the wider sector (see Figure 1). The 4M Framework provides a context in which we consider the four dimensions of SoTL leadership (i.e., engagement, connection, collaboration, and advocacy).

Figure 1. 4M Framework



Source: From Jennifer Friberg, "Might the 4M Framework Support SoTL Advocacy."

The four levels of the 4M Framework are:

- **Micro level**: This applies to individual learning contexts. In terms of SoTL leadership, this could involve individual faculty members conducting and implementing SoTL practices in their teaching.
- **Meso level**: This level occurs at the department and program level and can involve promoting and coordinating SoTL within respective departments, programs, or curriculum.
- **Macro level**: As this level pertains to institutional issues, challenges, and questions, SoTL leadership can include advocating for resources and recognition for SoTL work at the institutional level.
- **Mega level:** Typically, this extends beyond the institution to include the broader academic community and discipline. Leadership at the mega level can include working in national and international spaces to engage in SoTL initiatives.

THE SECTOR CONTEXT FOR SoTL LEADERSHIP

Through our exploration of our various SoTL leadership practices, we hope to offer some response to ISSOTL's Grand Challenge #5 which identifies the complexities that impact the practice, use, and growth of SoTL (International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning n.d.). ISSOTL frames several guiding questions for addressing Grand Challenge #5:

- What does the existing scholarship tell us about the practice, use, and/or growth of SoTL?
- What does the practice, use, and/or growth of SoTL look like in your specific context(s)?
- How are the practice, use, and growth of SoTL informed by context (e.g., disciplinary, geopolitical, cultural, institutional)? How are they different for different practitioners?

- How can educators translate highly contextualized SoTL studies into use in another specific context?
- What can be done to change the model of higher education to support the practice, use, and growth of SoTL?
- What models beyond Boyer would effectively integrate SoTL into higher education's systems of reward and recognition?

(International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning n.d.)

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to answer all these questions, we can explore potential responses. However, we begin by considering barriers to SoTL leadership, as identified in the limited literature that is specifically about SoTL and its leadership and the wider literature about teaching and leadership in higher education. A central function of SoTL leadership is building capacity for scholarly teaching within institutional environments that often present both individual and systemic barriers. These barriers are deeply intertwined, and SoTL leaders must navigate them strategically in order to foster engagement, recognition, and sustainability of SoTL practices.

Individual barriers

At the individual level, HE institutions often hire and reward faculty members for their disciplinary expertise, while they provide more limited time, support, or incentive for SoTL engagement (Franks and Payakachat 2020). Instructors in colleges and polytechnics may face additional constraints, such as minimal research expectations or lack of institutional support for scholarship. Even when interest exists, identity tensions can arise when educational theory diverges from disciplinary norms, making it difficult for academics to see themselves as SoTL scholars (Roxå, Olsson, and Mårtensson 2008). SoTL leaders themselves may come from non-education backgrounds and struggle to claim leadership roles in this space (Miller-Young et al. 2017). Feelings of isolation—particularly in departments where SoTL is not widely practiced—further compound these challenges (Simmons 2019).

Workload is another significant barrier. SoTL is often perceived as an "add-on" that falls outside formal workload models, making it difficult for faculty to justify the time spent on SoTL activities (Simmons 2019). The lack of dedicated funding or grant opportunities for SoTL further limits the ability of scholars and leaders to engage meaningfully in this work (Malfroy and Willis 2018). These constraints not only affect individual participation but also limit the broader institutional impact of SoTL initiatives.

Institutional barriers

Institutional structures and expectations often present significant barriers to SoTL engagement and leadership. Faculty who engage in SoTL are frequently undervalued in systems that prioritize disciplinary research and that often overlook SoTL contributions in decisions related to prestige, pay, and promotion (Marcketti and Freeman 2016). Although there are growing international calls for evidence-based pedagogies (Boyer Commission 2022) and some universities are revising promotion frameworks to better recognize teaching excellence (Papadopoulos 2017; Rawn and Fox 2018), expectations for SoTL remain ill-defined at many institutions (Cashmore and Ramsden 2009; Ragoonaden 2015).This lack of clarity contributes to a broader issue: the professionalization of teaching is still uneven across the sector. Indicators of esteem, leadership pathways, and impact measures for teaching-focused academics remain less transparent than for those in research-intensive roles (Bennett, Roberts, Ananthram, and Broughton. 2018; Pritchard and McGowan 2016). As

a result, SoTL leaders often operate in environments where their work is undervalued or misunderstood, limiting their ability to influence institutional culture.

A key challenge for SoTL leaders is navigating fragmented institutional structures. In decentralized systems, leaders must often cross intra-organizational boundaries to build support and legitimacy for their work (Hill 2023). The absence of shared values around SoTL across departments and faculties can further isolate leaders and dilute their impact (Henry, Brantmeier, Tongen, Jaffee, and Pierrakos 2021; Myatt et al. 2018). Even when strategic plans mention SoTL, competing institutional priorities—such as disciplinary research or industry engagement—often take precedence, especially when reinforced by KPIs and informal norms (Roxa et al. 2008; Webb 2019).

Intentional network-building is therefore a critical leadership strategy. Scholars such as Roxå, Mårtensson, and Alveteg (2011) emphasize the importance of robust, cross-institutional networks for fostering a culture that values teaching and learning. SoTL leaders must leverage existing relationships as well as cultivate new ones that bring diverse perspectives into the conversation (Hill 2023). These networks serve as vital conduits for sharing knowledge, building community, and advancing structural change.

Leadership barriers

Effective SoTL leaders, as described by Hill (2023), engage in complex "boundary-spanning behaviors," explaining that "they *find* knowledge resources in the Network, *translate* it for local consumption, *diffuse* what they learn to their local team and relevant stakeholders, and *gain* support across campus for their local... programs" (1034). Hill notes that "through various connections and roles, boundary spanners can advance and influence institutional change by leveraging top-down and grassroots change mechanisms" (1036). Such boundary-spanning and collaborative work is challenging in itself but can be exacerbated by the dispersed nature of SoTL leadership within many institutions.

Based on the literature and our own experiences, SoTL leadership roles can be occupied by a variety of stakeholders and positions in an institution, including students, librarians, sessional staff, and educational developers (Arntzen 2016; de la Harpe and Mason 2014; Marshall, Orrell, Cameron, Bosanquet, and Thomas 2011; Miller-Young et al. 2017; Simmons et al. 2019). However, informal leadership roles are often challenging for those who are trying to enact change in what are often hierarchical HE structures (Miller-Young et al. 2017). More formally recognised SoTL leadership tends to reside in the pool of academic "middle" leadership positions (e.g. Program Leaders, Heads of Departments/Schools and Associate Deans), but the formal recognition or expectation for SoTL leadership does not necessarily lead to more straightforward routes for influence and impact. In her recent systematic review, Maddock (2023) concluded that the academic middle leadership cohort are unprepared for what are often poorly defined middle leadership roles which are recognized for their complexity and leave little time for research. This finding is not new, with the influential SoTL scholar, Boyer (1990) first acknowledging it, as well as Marshall et al. (2011), Flavell, Roberts, Fyfe, and Broughton (2018), and Marchetti and Freeman (2016). Webb and Tierney (2019) note that "educational leaders and teaching-focused faculty are situated within a complex network of personal, professional, and financial tensions" (620).

Future leaders in SoTL may also develop through self-determination, seeking out individual capacity building opportunities such as peer mentorship (Din et al. 2022; Henry et al. 2021; Marquis, Mårtensson, and Healey 2017; Scott, Coates, and Anderson 2008; Webb and Tierney 2019) and leading up within their area of influence (Miller-Young et al. 2017). It is apparent that SoTL leadership development opportunities are context dependent, and the aim of this paper is to explore SoTL

leadership development through that lens—from a global perspective (and considering going forward how aspects of UN Sustainable Development Goal #4 for quality education may lend insight) and from the lived experience, including barriers and enablers, of the diverse members of this ICWG. The authors each self-identified interest, relevance, and lived experience in how their career pathways had influence on SoTL systems through their roles and actions. This team of scholars committed to exploring this on a systems level and developing a plan for investigating it further. The intention is to invite readers to examine their own positionality and lived experiences through this theoretical framework and contribute through SoTL leadership.

As a scholarly team, we are beginning our journey in exploring how our lived experiences sit within these key debates around SoTL leadership. We now seek to consider how our lived experience as SoTL leaders offer further insight into the enactment of SoTL leadership within our various international contexts. We have sought to identify common threads in the development of our leadership practice by aligning our day-to-day work with the 4M model (Simmons 2016) and Simmons et al.'s (2019) work on the Dimensions of SoTL leadership.

SITUATING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE IN THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Within this context of the challenges that SoTL and its leadership faces, we explore our own SoTL leadership work and consider commonalities across at least some of our career pathways. We began this process by mapping our practice to the theoretical frameworks that we have identified as being important to developing an understanding of SoTL leadership. In Table 3, we aim to capture how the various activities that we engage in as leaders influence the development of SoTL across the four dimensions of the 4M framework (Simmons 2016) and across each of the aspects of SoTL leadership identified by Simmons et al. (2019). This may capture both the different ways in which SoTL leadership is and can be enacted and help to identify practical ways to grow SoTL at a range of different levels, from the micro to the macro. We seek to understand how our own career journeys currently influence our approaches to SoTL leadership, as well as whether such a framework that combines aspects of leadership practice with the reach of those practices might be helpful in advancing how we, as a sector, understand and strengthen SoTL leadership practice.

Through our iterative discussions over several months, we discovered many shared experiences that formed a common thread in our narratives. Many of us recounted our entry into SoTL as "serendipitous" or indirect, often transitioning from a primary discipline unrelated to education. Such experiences reflect the micro development of SoTL practice that is situated in individual career trajectories and opportunities accessible to specific individuals. Webb and Welsh (2021) underscore that academia offers scholars, including faculty, staff, and students, diverse opportunities to immerse themselves in SoTL, but they also emphasize the significance of engaging with both informal and formal leaders in order to foster relationships and facilitate involvement. They provide a compelling narrative of "serendipitous conversations" in their journey into SoTL and highlight how these unplanned, often brief interactions, far from the limelight of formal academic settings, can spark dialogues that significantly shape one's academic life and work (Webb and Welsh 2021). This narrative resonates with our own experiences, further emphasizing the importance of individual networks and support, as well as engaging in conversations with leaders in the field that foster connections and facilitate engagement in SoTL work.

Table 3. Summary of our collective SoTL leadership

	Micro	**Meso**	**Macro**	**Mega**
Engagement	Mentoring individuals with SoTL activity	Evidence-informed curriculum change	Institutional pathways recognizing SoTL	SoTL program leadership
Connection	Connecting with peers, students, and leaders; both disciplinary/inter disciplinary	Departmental SoTL community of practice	Supporting staff dissemination of SoTL	National and international leadership networks
Collaboration	SoTL program coordination	Scholarly leadership roles (e.g., curriculum lead)	Supporting staff to disseminate SoTL	ICWG
Advocacy	Demonstrating SoTL engagement	Supporting junior scholars' development	Recognition of SoTL in institutional reward system	Leadership in national and international societies

Despite such serendipitous entries into SoTL careers, we have intentionally leaned into this space, thanks in part to significant mentors or role models who have either reflected our own values in their work or modeled how we might effectively use our values in the service of SoTL leadership or development. The values of collaboration, support, and building communities of practice all seem to be important in the development of our own professional networks. We also recognize the opportunities that we have been offered along the way that have allowed us to develop our own careers, and we speak of providing those opportunities to others in our SoTL networks as part of our leadership work. Examples of "connection" and "collaboration" through building communities of practice and providing collaborative opportunities can be seen at the micro, meso, and macro levels in Table 3. From being mentored (formally or informally by others) to offering mentoring opportunities now ourselves, our SoTL leadership seeks to replicate the micro level support and affirmation that we have received from our own role models and professional friends.

Several members of this group have experienced a long journey into SoTL, starting from a position of not initially understanding what SoTL was, not fully understanding what we were doing, and not having an awareness that SoTL existed. This experience, in part, may be related to the fact that most of us consider ourselves as either mid-career or mature in relation to our SoTL leadership. Our roles have included executive positions with national and international associations (e.g., HERDSA, ISSOTL, SoTL Canada, etc.) at the mega level, and institutional roles (e.g., Director of Teaching and Learning or SoTL centers, Dean of Innovation and Research, research scholars of SoTL, etc.) at the macro level. In these roles, we have contributed to identifying clearer routes into SoTL for those who follow and to create new forms of recognition for others who are working in this space. In contrast to our journeys into SoTL, then, we hope that those engaging with SoTL for the first time might find more clearly defined routes (including courses in SoTL) to support their development in this aspect of academic work. With hindsight, we nevertheless recognize that SoTL has been a "golden

thread" throughout our careers, whether in the form of scholarly teaching or in our early work with novice scholars or academics (Oxford n.d.). This journey echoes the work of many other individuals and groups and potentially provides a shared understanding and empathy on which to base our leadership. However, we also strive to make SoTL more visible at various levels, from helping individuals to find research questions that excite them (micro) to advocating for SoTL via national and international networks and societies (mega).

Some of us have developed our leadership in and through SoTL, while others were leaders in other areas or fields before developing a focus or interest in SoTL. For example, we have come to SoTL from a range of disciplinary backgrounds ranging from the humanities to business to healthcare disciplines. At this stage, we have not explored the implications of these diverse routes into SoTL leadership and the professional or disciplinary expectations that we might bring from our subject areas. Such an exploration may provide further insight into how SoTL leadership approaches are, or could be, enriched by colleagues who take a range of different pathways into the field.

The process of collaborative reflection and the mapping of our experience to the various dimensions of SoTL leadership that were identified by Simmons and Taylor, has enabled us to explicitly understand where the focus of our work has been located. Our own experiences suggest that SoTL leadership transcends more boundaries than some of the more formal, structured leadership within an academic organization or within a subject or professional field; as Table 3 shows it is more firmly situated in the meso and macro levels of the 4M framework. Perhaps that is one reason that the SoTL leaders in our ICWG seem to value collaboration, community building, and mentoring approaches so strongly. Furthermore, for each of us, our networks extend across contexts, from supporting individuals to develop their SoTL practice, to leading (inter)national SoTL networks and influencing subject disciplines to recognize the value of SoTL.

Bringing the framework to life through our trajectories

To expand on Table 3 and deepen our understanding of SoTL leadership, we offer brief glimpses of our individual trajectories as illustrative examples. At the meso level, one author has facilitated cross-departmental SoTL communities of practice, where collaboration and connection were central to cultivating sustained engagement. At the macro level, another has contributed to the development of institutional SoTL strategy, advocating for policy shifts that embed SoTL within promotion and recognition structures, thereby demonstrating advocacy in action. At the micro level, mentoring early-career colleagues in designing SoTL projects reflects the engagement and connection dimensions through more intimate, relational forms of leadership. Together, these examples illustrate that SoTL leadership evolves across levels and dimensions, shaped by institutional contexts, career stages, and relational networks.

This reflective mapping process surfaced previously tacit aspects of our leadership, including a shared value for relational and collaborative approaches. It prompted us to consider how we might intentionally expand our leadership into the micro and mega levels, particularly by mentoring emerging SoTL scholars and contributing to national or international SoTL initiatives. In this way, the framework captures where we are and acts as a developmental tool for envisioning where we might go.

Implications

In this paper, we have reflected on the challenges that continue to face those of us who are leaders of SoTL and have considered how our diverse career paths so far illuminate some of those challenges. Based on the value that we each place on collaboration and the understanding of our own

practice that we have gained through this project so far, encouraging more collaborative learning and sharing of best practices among SoTL leaders may be a crucial step in growing SoTL. The literature also suggests that leaders and scholars in SoTL effectively utilize peer networks to bolster the field's growth across the wider sector including, for instance, the implementation of peer teaching models. A prime example of this is the Engaged Teacher-Scholar Program in the US (Henry et al. 2021). Another effective approach is the formation of SoTL-focused or SoTL-adjacent communities of practice. For example, in the UK, the National Teaching Repository, the Supporting Professionals in(to) Higher Education network, and the Teaching-Focused Academics network all attest to the ongoing work to support academic staff who have not followed a traditional route into HE so that they can develop their academic identities and careers through their engagement in, and dissemination of, SoTL. Such communities, as demonstrated by Lukes, Abbot, Henry, Wells, Baum, Case, Brantmeier, and Wheeler (2023) and Williams et al. (2013), provide a supportive environment for shared learning and collaboration. Furthermore, scholars have explored global initiatives that foster development in SoTL. Notably, ICWGs like ours have emerged as a powerful platform for scholars across the globe to collaborate and learn from one another (Marquis et al. 2017). These diverse strategies collectively contribute to the enrichment of SoTL leadership and scholarship through collaboration and community-building. Additionally, we have been notably impacted by mentoring relationships, and the establishment of mentorship programs where experienced SoTL leaders guide and support those new to the field may aid in the transfer of knowledge and skills, providing a supportive network for emerging leaders.

Advocacy for institutional policies that recognize and reward SoTL leadership is another significant aspect that is likely to support the macro and meso level work that we tend to spend a significant amount of time and energy on. This may be manifested in a variety of ways including structural changes, "in kind" or financial support and peer-led initiatives. Examples of structural prioritization of SoTL include projects such as institutional re-structuring of their teaching and learning leadership framework (Vithal 2016); creation of new educational leadership roles (Frisk, Apelgren, and Sandoff 2023); establishment of pedagogical ideas hubs or institutes (Frisk et al. 2023; Marquis 2015; Schwartz and Haynie 2013); introduction of post-graduate qualifications in teaching and learning (Frisk et al. 2023); and the development and support of formalized institutional pathways for academics to become recognized for SoTL, such as educational fellow or educator track programs (Brooke, Lee, Wai-Cook, Navera, and Khuan 2020; Keshmiri 2023). Explicit "in kind" or financial support for capacity building in SoTL leadership may include funding for faculty to engage with professional development programs (Carey 2020; Din et al. 2022; Webb and Tierney 2019) and investment in engaging with students and alumni (Lock, Johnson, Hill, Ostrowski, Dos Santos 2021; Webb and Tierney 2019).

At the mega level, we suggest that future studies could helpfully investigate how the support systems identified here influence the development of SoTL leadership, sharing future learnings across the sector.

CONCLUSION

For many of us "mature" or "mid-career" SoTL leaders, SoTL was an ill-defined concept when we first ventured into the field. More recently, SoTL has been largely defined as research on small-scale learning and teaching practice that is disseminated through peer-reviewed mechanisms (Dolan, Elliot, Henderson, Curran-Everett, St. John, and Ortiz 2018). Despite this growing clarity as to what constitutes SoTL, we still find that SoTL leadership remains somewhat ill-defined, the pathway to SoTL leadership is varied, and many barriers to growing SoTL still remain. Defining career pathways

for SoTL practitioners and SoTL leaders remains a daunting task for institutional leaders and often falls to external organizations, such as SEDA or Advance HE, looking to professionalize and standardize teaching practices. Furthermore, ensuring diversity and inclusion in SoTL leadership is vital, and this involves recognizing and valuing the diverse experiences, perspectives, and contributions of all SoTL leaders, regardless of their background, discipline, or career stage. By addressing these areas, we can help SoTL leadership to grow up and out, moving beyond the development stage in order to become a mature and vibrant field that significantly impacts teaching and learning. In our quest to understand SoTL leadership, we have endeavoured to understand the similarities and inconsistencies in practice across our varied roles, institutions, and locations so that we can better understand the lived experience of SOTL leadership. We now aspire to use our reflections and understanding of SoTL leadership and its challenges to help build a coherent and effective SoTL Leadership framework.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

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