

‘Making transparent how learning is being made possible’: Designing and writing about pedagogic research

“The scholarship of teaching and learning is about making transparent how learning is being made possible” (Trigwell, 2004)

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Brief biography

- Associate Professor in Pedagogy in Higher Education, University of Chester
- HEA Senior Fellow
- National Teaching Fellow (2017)
- International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSoTL) Inaugural Fellow (2019)
- Geography and Education Research Group Chair (2018-2021)
- Editorial Board member *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*
- Inaugural co-editor of *International Journal for Students as Partners*
- Research interests: teaching for social transformation, teaching through debates in small groups, teaching ethics, ethical SoTL, and students as partners and change agents
- Director Healey HE Consultants

Participants previous experience

Which of the following statements most applies to you:

1. I have *no* experience of pedagogic research
2. I have experienced a *few* examples of pedagogic research
3. I have experienced *many* different examples pedagogic research

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

“...SoTL is the process of **exploring, researching, developing, refining, reflecting upon,** and **communicating** better ways and means of producing, promoting, and enhancing scholarly learning and teaching in ways that are ethically reasoned and inclusive”

Healey et al. (2013)

The scholarship of teaching and learning

‘One of the key ways in which to engage colleagues in their development as critical and reflective teachers, in a way that goes beyond the hints and tips they may need at the beginning of their teaching careers, is ... to stimulate their intellectual curiosity. ... The asking of questions is at the heart of **intellectual curiosity** and engaging staff in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).’

Breslow et al. (2004, 84)

Structure

- A. Designing a SoTL project
- B. Writing for publication**
- C. Conclusion

Designing a SoTL project

“In scholarship and research, having a “problem” is at the heart of the investigative process ... But in one’s teaching, a “problem” is something you don’t want to have. ... Asking a colleague about a problem in his or her research is an invitation; asking about a problem in one’s teaching would probably seem like an accusation. **Changing the status of the problem in teaching from terminal remediation to ongoing investigation is precisely what the movement for a scholarship of teaching is all about.**”

Bass (1999, 1)

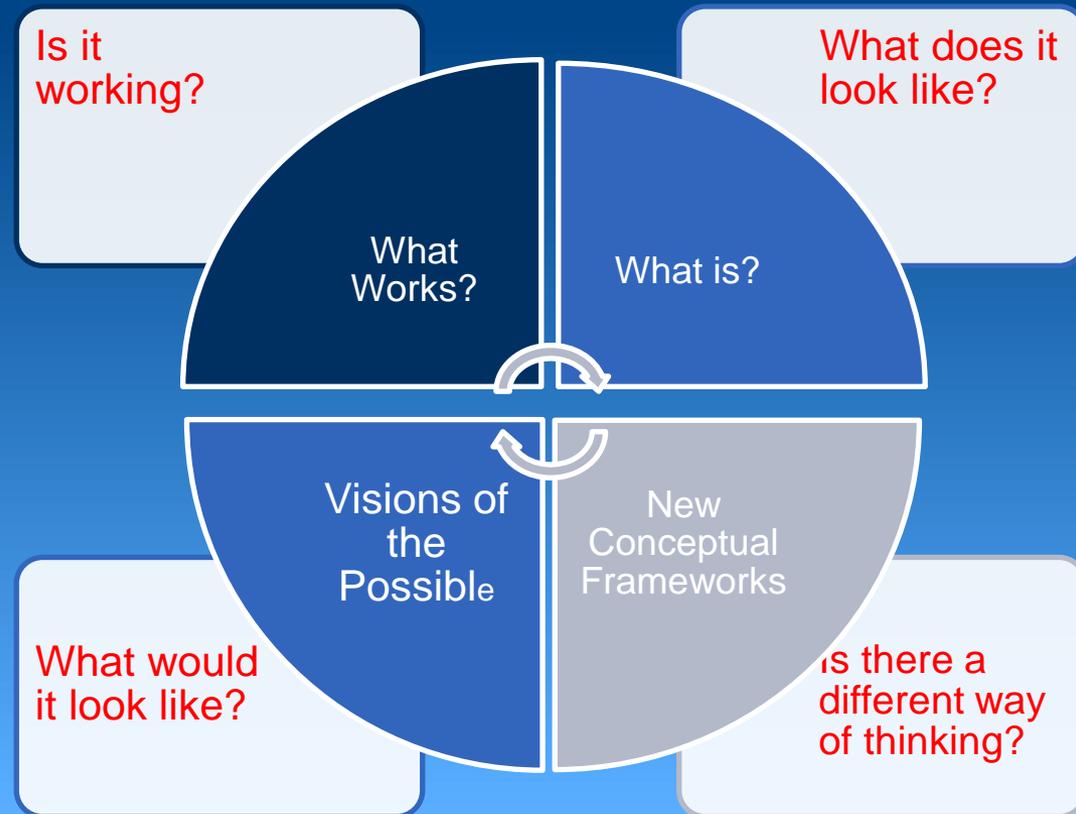
Hutchings' Taxonomy of SoTL Questions

Focus

- Learning Environment
- Learning Process
- Learning Outcomes
- Policies and Practice

Audience

- Peers
- Higher education community
- Discipline education community
- Strategic Stakeholders



Source: Based on Hutchings (2000) original slide designed by Gwen Lawrie
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCxPttq_e_Y

Designing SoTL: Questions

In general, however, a good pedagogic research question should be:

- **Clearly phrased and focused**
State what needs to be investigated
- **Not require a simple answer**
Cannot be answered by a simple yes or no answer
- **Not too complex to answer**
Data can be collected within a reasonable timeframe
- **Feasible**
You must have access to appropriate methods of data collection including: participants, resources, and, depending on the nature of the project, ethical clearance
- **Analytical rather than descriptive**
Your research question should allow you to produce an analysis of an issue or problem rather than a description of what was observed

What is a good SoTL question?

- What do you want to explore and why?
- Write down a possible 'burning' SoTL question that you have ...

Example of a SoTL project

Identifying '**bottlenecks**' (Pace & Middendorf, 2004) and '**troublesome knowledge**' (Entwistle, 2001; Meyer & Land, 2006; Perkins, 1999).

Key question about whether learning is taking place is:

“What do the students have to do to show that they understand?”

Designing a SoTL project



Source: University of Glasgow

SoTL project discussion

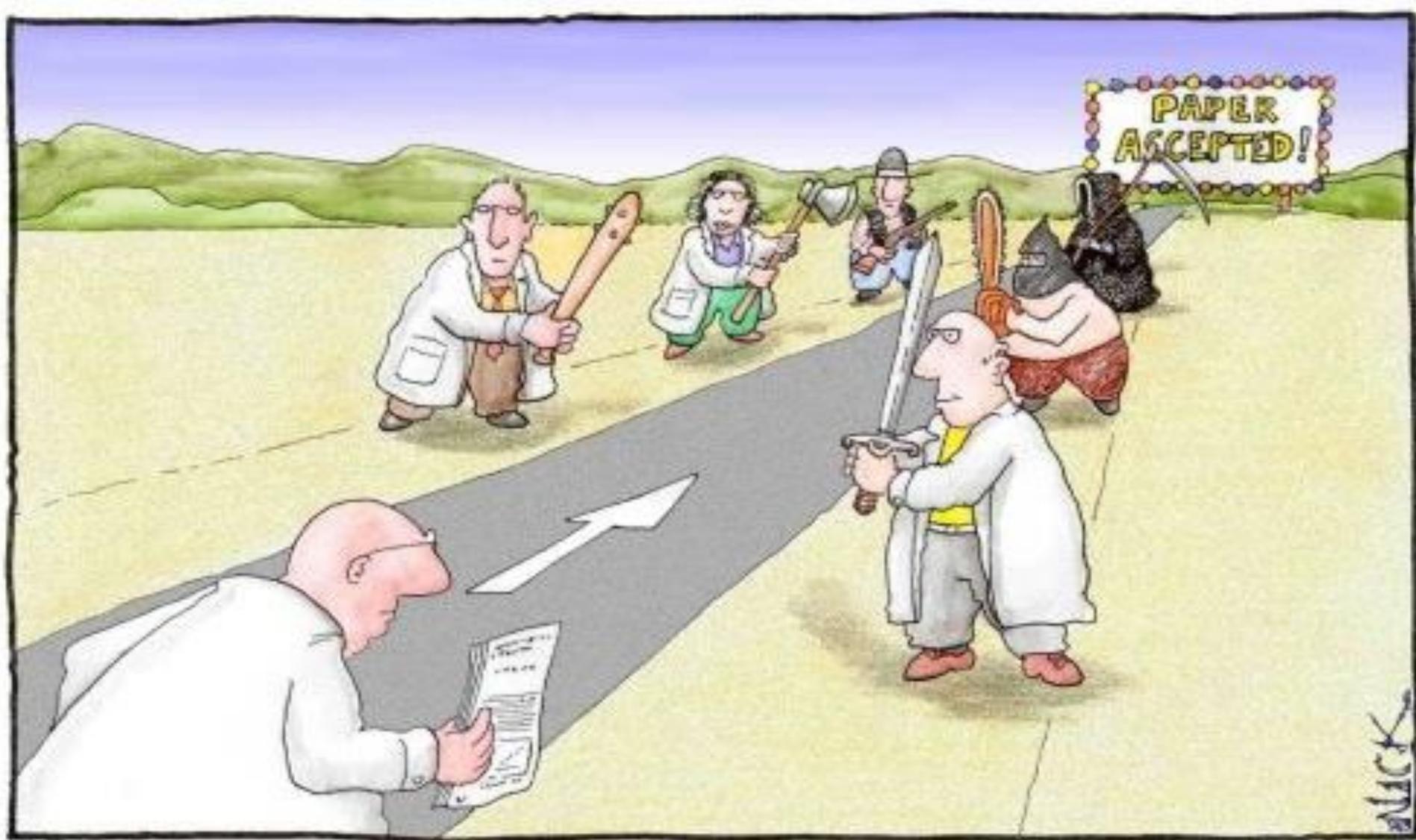
In small groups discuss a SoTL project that one of you would like to undertake.

10 mins

Writing for publication

“There are distinct issues in SoTL writing and publishing that remain unaddressed in generic or disciplinary publication materials.”

Chick et al. (2014, 4)



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as 'quite an improvement.'

You the writer

Your academic identity comes through writing.

Writing for publication in a journal involves:

1. **Developing an argument**
2. Engaging in a conversation with a particular discourse community
3. **Structuring and submitting your argument in an appropriate format and style to a specific journal**

(Thompson & Kamler, 2013)

Writing for publication

Healey, M., Matthews, K. & Cook-Sather, A. (2020) *Writing in a range of genres about learning and teaching in higher education: Joining scholarly conversations and fostering identities*. Center for Engaged Learning Open-Access Books, Elon University.

Free to download:

http://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/writin-about-learning_2020-08-24.pdf

Eleven genres

- empirical research articles
- conceptual articles
- literature reviews
- case studies of practice
- reflective essays
- opinion pieces
- books and edited collections
- presentations
- story telling
- teaching awards, fellowships, and promotion applications
- social media

Guiding questions to support planning, revising, and refining of an empirical research article for publication

1. Why is this topic important in research into learning and teaching to whom, and why at this time?
2. What previous research has been undertaken on this topic? What is your contribution to the literature and the learning/teaching conversation?
3. What is your argument or stance? What question(s) is (are) you addressing?
4. What is your underlying conceptual or theoretical framework? If appropriate, what is (are) your hypothesis(es)?
5. What are your research methods and what is the rationale for your approach?
 - What data have you collected, and how?
 - Who are your participants?
 - What is the context (e.g. discipline, institution, nation)?
6. How have you analyzed the data?
7. What are your findings and what do they contribute to the ongoing learning and teaching conversation?
8. How do your findings compare with previous research?
9. How do you handle / present unexpected findings?
10. How does the context influence your findings? What are the implications for others in different contexts?
11. What are the limitations of your research? What unanswered questions remain? What other questions follow for future learning and teaching research?

Top Tips

- Select an appropriate journal or outlet for your work.
- *Read* articles from that journal or outlet before submitting to it.
- Select the title in relation to your chosen outlet e.g. disciplinary specific or not.
- Prepare the abstract before you start writing the main outlet e.g. as a planning tool.
- Plan and structure your paper – use guidance from Healey et al. 2020 (if it helps).
- Rewriting, revising, and refining – seek feedback from trusted colleagues.
- Ensure that your work meets the formatting, layout and referencing style of the intended journal

Conclusion

“... writing for publication is not simply producing a text but is, rather, a complex process of joining a conversation, forging an identity, and embracing an opportunity for ongoing learning.”

(Healey, Matthews & Cook-Sather, 2020)

Questions and discussion