

EDITORIAL

Enabling SoTL via Critical Reflections

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The June 2021 issue of AJSoTL is a distinctive read because it features an exclusive compilation of six Reflections on Practice, which left me pondering upon this question—What are the different roles of reflection on teaching and learning for educators, particularly in relation to the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)? I came up with three conclusions. Firstly, collections of educators' reflections on their teaching practices, students' reflections on personal learning experiences, or any other relevant stakeholders' reflections have the potential to serve as data or evidence that can be further examined by educators to derive meaningful teaching and learning insights via content, discourse, or text analysis. To date, we are seeing an ample amount of SoTL work that utilises written, and even visual, reflections as a data source in addition to data from surveys, interviews, pre-/post-tests, observations, course assignments/portfolio/assessments, think-aloud activities, and so forth.

My second point will highlight educators' critical reflection as a methodology of making meaning from their uniquely individual teaching experiences and disciplinary backgrounds, from their students' learning experiences, from the experiences and expertise of colleagues and/or from other related scholarly explorations. Critically reflective educators are inquisitive about their teaching assumptions, attentively observe their own teaching practices (sometimes in partnership with other colleagues and/or students) to cross-check with their assumptions or theoretical understandings, and may involve themselves in scholarly activities to share practices they find contextually relatable and relevant, that might also be interesting to others. Although critically reflective educators may not necessarily engage in SoTL, such initial reflection practice often inspires the design of further SoTL undertakings.

A critically reflective educator who engages in SoTL will act upon his or her initial observation and analysis (referring to the second role of reflection as described above) by systematically obtaining various other evidence to explain their practices that either support or contradict their assumptions. Drawing on the conclusion derived from the analyses of the collected evidence and how they relate to existing, relevant scholarly sources, the critically reflective educator, who is now a SoTL practitioner, will deeply and carefully delve into the strengths of the current practice and possibilities of future enhanced practice. I regard this meticulous, informed consideration as the third critical role of reflection in any SoTL work.

The Article featured in this issue provides an exemplary showcase of the third role of reflection in SoTL. All the Reflections on Practice in this issue provide commendable evidence on how critical reflections, as described in the second role of reflection, bring forth scholarly activities that benefit the academic community as well as strategies to build up dossiers for academic career advancement. A couple of the Reflection pieces also utilised reflections as their source of data to reveal useful insights.

I eagerly devoured each featured piece in this issue as soon as I received them. Now, after the exciting read, I am delighted to be able to share a brief description of each piece with all of you. I note two major categories of contributions. Four pieces bring refreshing insights into pedagogical practices while another three primarily focus on assessments. I would like to start by highlighting the only full-length Article in this issue. **Mukhopadhyay, Chang-Koh, and Tang** employed a qualitative approach to critically analyse the implementation of a university-community partnerships (UCPs) model, which was practised within an informal undergraduate curriculum in a Residential College to promote holistic learning through community engagement. By analysing students' and community partners' perspectives, the investigators reveal that collaboration and reciprocity can build positive outcomes for both partners. Students learned to build relationships with community partners, nurture deeper empathy towards marginalised communities, develop their organisation and communication competencies while the community partners and their beneficiaries gained a sense of