

English as a Medium of Instruction on the Arabian Peninsula

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Professional Learning for Faculty
at an EMI Institution in the UAE

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Introduction

Being a reflective practitioner is at the heart of the most effective teacher professional development models such as Communities of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998), the Inquiry Model (Downes et al., 2001), the Individually Guided Model (Hall, 1997) and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) (Boyer, 1990). While engaging in reflection is an integral part of being an educator, using reflection in a systematic way to help improve teaching practice requires training and targeted mentorship.

This chapter describes the design and delivery of a professional development programme that utilised the SoTL framework to help faculty at an English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) university in the UAE improve the effectiveness of their classroom teaching practice. Since being developed in the US, SoTL has gradually spread around the world (Fanghanel et al., 2016), including through EMI universities that follow an American model of higher education. Several leading universities in the UAE advocate the SoTL framework.

The professional development programme that is the focus here aimed to raise awareness among faculty of the benefits of reflective practice and guide them through the process of designing their own classroom interventions to help measure the extent to which their teaching strategies and materials were effective in supporting students successfully attain their learning outcomes. Faculty in EMI institutions in different content areas have the added challenge of teaching their courses to students who are learning in a second language, thus having to adopt teaching strategies targeted at better supporting their students negotiate linguistic challenges in their education journeys (see Bradley et al., Chapter 12; Dickson & Litz, Chapter 11; Gobert, Chapter 9; Green, Chapter 10). This challenge is further amplified when the faculty themselves are also non-native speakers of English and have to deliver, assess and interact with their students in a second language in university environments where supplementary use of their learners' first languages is not always feasible or welcomed by administrators (Hopkyns, Chapter 5; Zoghbor, Chapter 6).

Given the multinational nature of the faculty body at the selected institution, three case studies are examined in this chapter, each selected to represent a

segment of higher education faculty in the UAE: an expatriate from an English-speaking background; an expatriate from an Arabic background teaching in English; and an Emirati teaching in English. Each of the faculty members attended the SoTL professional development programme at the target institution and went on to design and implement their own SoTL projects in their EMI classrooms. By drawing on case studies of practitioners' direct experience in the English-medium teaching context in UAE universities and their engagement in reflective practice, the chapter attempts to illustrate how this approach facilitates change in both pedagogical ideas and classroom practice. Indeed, the chapter critically analyses how reflective practice has been used as a change agent in classroom practice of faculty working in an EMI institution and how it has fostered teacher professional growth, behavioural change and increased student performance as it has done in other parts of the world (see Felten & Chick, 2018). Recommendations for how higher education institutions can best support the professional development of their faculty by engaging them in reflective practice are also made.

Reflective Practice and SoTL

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is a field of study and research that concerns itself with the effectiveness of teaching in the higher education context. At the heart of SoTL is the belief that student learning can be improved by strengthening teaching through systematic inquiry into classroom practice. SoTL practitioners are higher education faculty who bring their skills in conducting research into their classroom practice. In other words, SoTL advocates a critical and research-based approach to the teaching and learning process in the higher education context and in this way it “attempts to elevate the status of the teaching role in comparison to research” within higher education institutions where research tends to be highly valued (Tight, 2018, p. 61).

A SoTL practitioner starts by asking meaningful questions about student learning and the teaching activities and learning experiences designed to facilitate student learning. Answering these questions requires the design and implementation of an intervention followed by the collection of evidence that makes student learning visible before the systematic analysis of the evidence using scientific research approaches and tools. The final step in being involved in SoTL is the dissemination and sharing of the findings that the analysis of evidence produced and in this way being open to peer review while also making a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge (Trigwell, 2021).

While reflection (see Schön, 1995) has always been a formative pedagogical tool and a critical component for developing school teachers, in higher education institutions, reflection is usually something students, rather than faculty, are encouraged to do in order to develop their critical thinking. However, faculty involvement in SoTL, through elevating them to become reflective practitioners, can lead to long-term transformation of teaching and learning (Zhang et al., 2021), which is why SoTL has been heralded as an effective model for faculty professional development (Zizka, 2020).

The SoTL Programme

The SoTL professional development programme which is the focus of this paper was established in 2014 at one of the federal institutions in the UAE. The programme was deemed necessary because many educators at the tertiary level do not have formal qualifications in teaching pedagogy (e.g., PG Cert), with a subject-specialist PhD and publications often being deemed sufficient for employment at a higher education institution (see also Bradley et al., Chapter 12). Consequently, many educators employed at universities around the Gulf, including those teaching in EMI institutions like the university where this study took place, have not received such training and mentorship. This is one reason why professional development programmes introducing reflective practice are desperately needed. In preparation for designing and implementing the programme, the facilitator completed the *SoTL Leadership Certificate on Curriculum and Pedagogy in Higher Education* with the Center of Teaching, Learning and Technology at the University of British Columbia in Canada. The focus of the certification course was on how to build, support and sustain a community of SoTL practitioners in higher education. Upon completion of the certification course, the SoTL facilitator designed the programme.

The SoTL programme comprised five two-hour sessions delivered over a period of eight weeks. The sessions were structured to address different aspects of SoTL research and to mentor faculty to design their own classroom-based inquiries. The first session introduced participants to SoTL as a field of scientific inquiry. Participants were involved in discussion of the importance of classroom-based inquiries, how these differ from discipline-focused research studies and how being a SoTL practitioner can improve teaching practice without compromising participants' discipline-specific research profiles. For most participants, the field of SoTL was something new, and they needed to be convinced that while educational research was not their field of expertise or something they wanted to pursue as academics and researchers, involving themselves in SoTL offered benefits to their practice. Benefits included the opportunity to address a challenge they were facing in their classroom and find ways to overcome it and the chance to develop greater understanding of their learners and the issues they encountered. At the end of the first session, participants were asked to complete the online Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI, 2021) to help them reflect on their teaching beliefs, intentions and actions. The TPI was created by a team of SoTL practitioners for higher education faculty. Through the use of an extensive array of multiple-choice questions, it creates a profile that provides a visual representation of a respondent's teaching practice across five different teaching perspectives (www.teachingperspectives.com/tpi/). Participants were encouraged to complete the TPI at the start of the course and repeat it at the end of the course and also at the end of their SoTL project in order to see if and how their teaching profile had changed as a result of being a reflective SoTL practitioner. As homework, participants were asked to reflect on their current teaching, think of one or two challenges that they encountered in their classroom and formulate research questions based on these challenges.

The second session was an overview of research designs that are most appropriate for planning SoTL inquiries. This session was particularly important for a number of reasons. Some faculty, although seasoned researchers, had never conducted research with human participants; therefore, being able to see what designs are most useful when involving students in the research study and understanding how human participants can affect the research study were critical. It was also important to expose faculty to different research paradigms. For most faculty, research tends to be synonymous with experimental research. SoTL, though, is research conducted in a naturalistic environment by practitioners without the ability to randomise the sample or even have a control group. Hence, there was a need to expose participants who were familiar with researching human subjects to other valid ways of doing research that targeted the measurement of teaching and learning. Finally, there were faculty whose research was confined to textual analysis, literary work or statistical analysis of databases. For them, doing SoTL research was a completely new learning experience. At the end of the second session, participants were asked to think about the research questions they had written following session one and to choose the best possible research design to address them.

The third session looked at the structure of a SoTL research proposal. This was done to ensure that all participants, regardless of their field and expertise, were aware of how to design a research project in humanities and also to help them clarify a rationale for their SoTL project and the methodology of their research. During the same session, participants were given a brief overview of major learning theories and the pedagogical approaches connected to each theory. This was important in order for the participants to reflect on their own beliefs about how learning happens and to be able to frame the instructional strategies they were planning for their SoTL project in a particular theory of learning. At the end of the session, participants were invited to start drafting a research proposal document with the specified sections and then write the Introduction (rationale for their study) and the Methodology. They were given two weeks to complete this task.

The fourth session was devoted to research ethics. Conducting research with human subjects raises a number of ethical issues, particularly when the subjects are the students in your class. Participants discussed various ethical issues such as conflict of interest, asymmetric power relations, bias, informed consent, etc. Having your own students as the subjects of your research creates a complicated landscape, and being able to clarify what is ethical and how to avoid pitfalls was important and, for many, quite an eye-opener. Usual questions that arose were: *So, what if some students do not consent to be part of the project? Do I need to send them to another class? Or do I exclude them from activities related to the SoTL intervention? What if telling my students what I am measuring will make them focus on it more? Won't that change the results of the project? What if I want to use my own published textbook to measure how it helps my students learn better? Am I allowed to do this?* A variety of scenarios addressing different ethical issues were discussed during the session until participants felt they had a good grasp on how to conduct

SoTL research in an ethical manner. Following the fourth session, participants were asked to register at the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Online Program (CITI Program, 2021 – <https://about.citiprogram.org>) and complete the training for the Certificate in Social and Behavioral Research. Participants were given two weeks to complete their certificate. This was needed for the ethical clearance application process at the university.

The fifth and final session focused on data analysis. It looked at the kinds of data that would be most appropriate for a specific research design and how SoTL favours mixed-methods approaches that provide a rich cadre of learning evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as direct and indirect. Participants who had experience with only one type of data (e.g., quantitative) and data analysis (e.g., statistical analyses) were able to expand their repertoire of analytical tools and consider also other types of data and possible analyses. The session also took participants through the ethics clearance process at the university. Some of the faculty were familiar with this process because of research they had conducted before. However, others were not aware of the process, either because they were new at the university, they had not been a Principal Investigator in a project before or they did not usually have to go through this process at all because their research did not involve human subjects. Participants got to review the ethical clearance application and what they needed to write in each section. At the end of the session, participants were given a week to write their ethics application and, after receiving feedback from the facilitator, submit it to the university Research Ethics Committee for review and approval.

Once SoTL participants had received their ethical clearance, it was time to design their interventions. They received advice and support in instructional design, teaching materials, pedagogical strategies and data collection instruments on a one-to-one basis. The target was to have the intervention planned and ready for teaching at the start of the following semester. When the new semester started, faculty had 14 weeks to implement their interventions and collect their data. Not every project required the full 14 weeks. For example, some projects targeted the use of a specific app or simulation game in one of the topics in the course which was taught over two to three weeks. All projects were completed in one semester. Following that, participants were encouraged to analyse their data and write up their reports for dissemination.

The SoTL course was designed to cover five face-to-face sessions of 120 minutes each, and it was delivered in this way each semester. However, during the pandemic, the course was delivered online using Zoom. The individual sessions were shortened to 90 minutes each, while the total number of sessions was increased from five to six in order to allow enough time to cover the course material.

In order to aid the dissemination of SoTL projects, the facilitator organised a SoTL conference (www.sotl.info). Participants were given the opportunity to present their projects and their results to the academic community at the university. Since the first SoTL conference in 2015, the event has been organised on an annual basis, and it has been opened to the wider community in the Gulf and

beyond in an effort to showcase best practices that work in the higher education context in this part of the world.

In an effort to further assist faculty with their classroom inquiries, the university established the Teaching Innovation Research Fund (TIRF), which offers AED 25,000 per project for a maximum of 20 projects. The money can be used by faculty to help pay for online subscriptions to websites, apps or any other teaching and learning materials and equipment, as well as for the dissemination of their findings, such as attending conferences or publishing papers.

Impact

Participants

Since 2015, the SoTL course has been delivered each semester to at least four groups of faculty across the two university campuses. In an effort to provide adequate attention to each participant and to ensure all participants have a chance to contribute to the discussions in each session and raise their concerns and questions, the groups are capped at eight participants.

Since 2015, a total of 216 faculty members have attended the SoTL course. This represents about 30% of the total faculty population at the university, although the relatively high faculty turnover in this part of the world means that the actual number of SoTL practitioners at the university is lower than that. Participants have come from different disciplines, e.g., Business, IT, General Education, Health and Natural Sciences, Education, Media and Communication, Arts and Humanities. While no record has been kept of their age and nationality, they represent numerous different nationalities around the world, with varied language and cultural backgrounds. Both genders have been represented, although with more females (77%) than males. Of the total participants so far, 61% have held Masters degrees, with 39% holding PhDs. On average, about two-thirds of the participants had between 7 to 20 years of teaching experience in the higher education context at the start of the course, while a further 11% had more than 20 years of teaching experience and 23% had less than six years of such experience.

Projects

While all SoTL participants are supported in designing a SoTL project, which is a classroom intervention to address a challenge in their teaching, and applying for ethical clearance, the actual number of projects that have been carried out is smaller because of external factors beyond the control of the faculty. For example, sometimes the course for which the project was designed has been cancelled, or faculty have been assigned to teach a different course in the following semester. Also, when the lockdown occurred during the pandemic, all courses suddenly shifted online while the SoTL projects had been designed for a face-to-face classroom environment, leaving faculty unable to conduct their classroom inquiries. Other times, discipline-specific research commitments have meant that faculty

were too busy to also carry out their SoTL project, having to postpone it for another semester or indefinitely. The majority of the SoTL projects, though, have seemed to address issues related to the EMI context of the university, such as trying to find effective ways and strategies for improving students' language skills, academic reading and writing, vocabulary, communication skills, etc.

Feedback

Each time the SoTL course has been offered, feedback has been collected from the participants using a pre- and a post-course survey. The pre-course survey collects information on the participants' expectations about the course, and it is administered the week before the course starts. The post-course survey collects feedback on the course and the extent to which it has met the participants' expectations. The post-course survey is administered after the course has been concluded.

On average, the results of the pre-course survey have shown the majority of participants expected the course to help them improve their teaching (89%), learn how to design activities (95%), use technology in their teaching (95%), motivate students (94.5%) and use effective classroom management strategies (88.9%). A further 94.5% expected the course to help them improve their academic profile, while 72.2% hoped that the course would help them get promoted. All of the participants wanted to learn how to measure the impact of their teaching on student learning, a further 88.8% wanted to learn how to design a classroom intervention, while 61.1% wanted to publish a paper as a result of attending the SoTL course.

The results of the pre-course survey have prompted the facilitator to explain to the participants during the first session of the SoTL course that while SoTL can help them improve their teaching, this is done through designing classroom interventions, encouraging reflective practice and measuring teaching effectiveness using scientific methods rather than providing demos of apps, teaching strategies and instructional materials.

In the post-course survey, participants are asked to evaluate the different aspects of the SoTL course, i.e., the length and frequency of the sessions, the knowledge of the facilitator and the instructional strategies employed and the overall effectiveness of the course in helping them transition into reflective educators and engaged SoTL practitioners. The results of the post-course survey have indicated that all participants thought the course was delivered at the appropriate pace, even though half of them reported that they would like more time spent on direct instruction, and a further 62.5% said they would like more time for discussion during the sessions. Nevertheless, 85.7% found the length of the SoTL course and the length of the individual sessions to be just right. All of the participants found the instructional strategies and materials helpful for their learning and thought the facilitator was knowledgeable and experienced on the subject. All of the participants rated the SoTL course as effective, and a further 87.5% also found the SoTL course contributed to their knowledge and skills and reported that they were planning to use these skills in their future research projects. All

of the participants reported that, as a result of attending the course, they now knew how to apply for ethical clearance at the university and how to design an applied research project. A further 75% indicated that the course helped them improve their research skills, and they were confident they could design appropriate data collection instruments for their study and analyse their data. In terms of the dissemination of their study, 75% reported that they were confident they could write a research paper based on their SoTL study, while 62.5% said they could put together a conference presentation based on their findings. Finally, all participants agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped them improve their teaching.

Case Studies

To further investigate the impact of the SoTL course, case studies have been periodically carried out. Each case study has sought to uncover the specific effects of the course on faculty teaching practice and their understandings about effective instruction and the value of being a reflective practitioner. Each year, faculty who have completed the SoTL course and designed a project are invited to complete a reflective essay where they are asked to talk about their experience in the SoTL course, how useful it has been for their teaching, the project they have designed, the challenges they have faced and the lessons they have learned. A small sample of three such case studies is provided here. The three case studies were chosen to represent different groups of faculty in the EMI institution: an expatriate who is a native English speaker, an expatriate who is not a native English speaker and an Emirati faculty member. Two of these faculty are female, and one is male, which is representative of the gender distribution in the total population of participants in the SoTL course. Each of the case studies is outlined below. Pseudonyms have been used to protect identities.

Case Study 1 – John

The first case study, John, is a British male in his early 50s with 20 years of teaching experience. John holds a Master's degree and teaches Academic English at the university. As an English teacher, he had previously received training in pedagogy. He attended the SoTL course in the second year it was offered. At the time he attended the course, John was experimenting with a writing app in his academic writing course. He thought that attending the SoTL course would give him the encouragement and support he needed to develop an area of research he was interested in, i.e., online collaborative writing. He felt the SoTL course helped him develop his career by going beyond the classroom and exploring the academic world of research and the connection between them both.

As a result of attending the course, John designed a research proposal and successfully applied for a university grant. He then proceeded to carry out his research project, collected data and analysed the results. John used his experience from doing this project to develop a new area in his academic career, i.e., the

SoTL study became a springboard for a continuous engagement in evidence-based teaching. In particular, John explained that the SoTL course helped him define teaching practices, theories and research questions in academic terms and allowed him to put his teaching interest into focus by making connections with the relevant pedagogies. He became aware that, through using action research and classroom interventions, he could explore the effectiveness of his teaching strategies and the impact of technology on students' academic writing in a systematic and scientific way. The SoTL course not only gave him a way to test these pedagogies and theories but also to develop new ones.

Doing the SoTL project gave John insight into what worked in his classroom and how to improve his teaching. He shared the following example:

Analysing the Computer-mediated communication – the text chats between the students gave me important insights into how they worked together and how this could be improved. It showed me that they tended to separate different parts of a project and work on them individually and then put them all together at the end. But they never really looked at and checked each other's work – there was little sense of collective responsibility for a group task.

By spending time analysing the process of his students' writing, John gained insights into the difficulties they faced. He realised that teachers in EMI institutions perhaps often assumed that the students have more understanding of the metalinguistic language used in providing feedback to them than they have. Looking at the dialogic chat in the writing app, John could see clearly that students did not often understand the feedback that they received from him. This prompted him to change his feedback strategy and use language that was easier for students to understand.

John was able to disseminate the findings of his research by presenting at regional and international conferences and having his papers published in conference proceedings. His experience of the SoTL project encouraged him to enrol in a PhD programme, and he is currently working on his doctoral study, which is in the same topic area as his SoTL project.

When asked to evaluate the SoTL course, John commented on having received generous support for his project from the course facilitator, not only during the course but also long after it finished. He found the feedback he received in the SoTL tutorials extremely helpful. He felt that the facilitator had complete understanding of what he was trying to achieve in his academic writing course and was able to identify weaknesses in the intervention plan and recommend effective ways to overcome them and improve the research design. John also reported that the course made him reflect deeply on his teaching practice, as he connected between pedagogical theory and teaching strategies and designed interventions and then reflected on the impact these interventions had on student learning. John exclaimed, "The SoTL course is still affecting me 6 years later!", alluding to the fact that, in the years since attending the course, he continues to research his practice, publish papers and work on his PhD.

Case Study 2 – Sarah

Sarah is of French–Arab background; she is in her early 40s and has 11 years of teaching experience. She holds a PhD in Microbiology and teaches environmental sustainability at the university. Sarah had not received any teacher training as part of her degree. She attended the SoTL course in the fourth year it was offered. She reported that the greatest benefit she received from attending the course was being made aware of the project-based approach to teaching Microbiology. She ended up designing a composting project for her students to carry out and then evaluating the efficacy of the project-based teaching approach against the lecture-based approach she had used the previous years she taught her course. She found that the project-based approach benefitted her students more than the lectures in teaching environmental sustainability. Sarah explained, “By integrating the composting project into the microbiology course, I helped students in understanding the importance of developing environment-friendly skills and values and stimulated them to find solutions for local environmental issues.” The project improved her students’ knowledge, made them aware of the benefits of composting for the environment and more fully engaged them in the course than the previous cohorts of students.

Sarah commented that, by conducting the SoTL project, she now understood the importance of designing campus activities that could help students shift their focus from classroom-based, predominantly instructive learning to inquiry-based learning using observation and reflection. In this new approach, she found herself acting as a coach for the students who were employing active learning strategies. She found that this approach to teaching her course not only increased student collaboration and hands-on practice but also paved the way for students to work over long periods of time with less supervision, leading to improved decision-making and problem-solving abilities.

While she was a seasoned researcher on the topic of Microbiology, as a result of attending the course, Sarah was able to submit a paper for publication on the topic of teaching Microbiology, her first-ever paper about teaching! Furthermore, Sarah reported that her experience with the SoTL course encouraged her to submit her application for the Advanced Higher Education Fellowship, which she was able to receive. The fellowship is an international recognition of excellence in teaching in the higher education context. So clearly, the SoTL course had contributed to sustained changes in her teaching practice.

Case Study 3 – Aisha

The third case study is from a female Emirati faculty member teaching courses in Applied Linguistics. In her early 40s and with 10 years of teaching experience and a PhD, Aisha attended the SoTL course the very first time it was offered. By attending the course, Aisha reported that she was able to enhance her research agenda while saving time because she was able to research her own practice. Thus, her research and teaching worked together. The SoTL course also gave her

opportunities to reflect on her practice. She commented, “Reflection, I believe, is very critical for improvement, and SoTL allows that to a great extent.” She also found that the course provided her with opportunities for self-growth and professional development by helping her better understand her teaching context in-depth and modify her practices to better fit her course and its learning objectives. She explained that SoTL invites educators to identify an issue that may exist in their teaching and seek evidence of what works and what does not work in the classroom. She reported:

Such an approach informs practice and makes me, as an educator, modify my style and performance on solid ground. It makes me have concrete evidence of why I am changing my practice and how I am changing the things that do not work in my course. It makes me more confident and comfortable about the modifications I am making in my teaching and the suggestions I am making to my colleagues and my department based on my experience.

She offered an example of a SoTL project she designed. When classes shifted online after the pandemic lockdown, students in her college were initially told that attendance for the online classes was optional, but the following semester, attendance was made mandatory. Aisha thought of conducting an investigation on the effects of students’ attendance in online classes on their attainment of the course learning outcomes. She hopes that this will provide evidence that can inform her practice and also her college’s decision on whether to keep the attendance of online sessions optional or make them mandatory.

Aisha pointed out that the higher education landscape is ever changing, especially since the pandemic, and therefore there are always new issues to investigate, even if someone has been teaching the same course for a while. The SoTL course can help raise faculty’s awareness of issues they may be facing in their classes and help them identify ways to remedy those issues so that they can improve student learning.

When asked what she values the most from being a SoTL practitioner, she responded with this comment:

It did help me in becoming a more reflective practitioner, I believe. This is a skill that I am using not only in teaching, but in all other practices in higher education. Becoming a reflective practitioner is very necessary and the SoTL course is doing a great job in enhancing this skill which can be implemented in all aspects of our performance in higher education (not just in teaching). Let me just mention two occasions; faculty submitting their annual evaluation are actually asked to “reflect on” their performance in teaching and in other duties. Faculty applying for promotion are asked to write their dossier where “reflection” is a major part of the process of writing their dossiers. I felt that the SoTL course (with its emphasis on reflective practices) is helping university faculty to keep improving, be successful and survive in higher education, especially if they haven’t learned anywhere else how to be a reflective practitioner!

This comment shows that the reflective practitioner skills that SoTL helps faculty develop extend beyond classroom teaching and can help them in other areas of their academic careers, such as writing reflections for their annual appraisals and their academic promotion portfolios. Aisha definitely put these skills into use when she successfully applied for her promotion to Associate Professor a couple of years later.

Conclusion

This chapter describes a programme of professional development for faculty working at an EMI higher education institution in the UAE. The programme was designed following the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) framework. The chapter reports several measures of the impact of the SoTL programme on faculty development and provides three case studies to further examine how the programme fostered teacher professional growth, behavioural change and enhanced student achievement. The evidence provided from the programme evaluations and the case studies demonstrates how useful the SoTL framework is for encouraging faculty to become reflective practitioners, examine their beliefs about teaching and effective teaching strategies, enrich their research portfolios with projects that focus on teaching and learning and ultimately transform their practice in meaningful and sustainable ways.

In this EMI institution, the SoTL programme managed to draw attention to specific problems and challenges that students in an EMI institution encounter and help faculty seek and adopt specific strategies to mitigate them. In some cases like John's, for example, the SoTL programme sparked an interest in approaching teaching and learning issues using a systematic scientific method and became the springboard for further academic development, such as the pursuit of a doctoral degree focusing on Emirati students' academic writing in a second language. As various chapters in this volume highlight (e.g., Gobert, Chapter 9), it is crucial that teachers in the Arab Gulf region have such a mindset, rather than depend on perhaps inaccurate received wisdom.

Faculty members going through the SoTL programme became aware of not only the specific challenges that their students faced but also of the value of obtaining concrete evidence that a specific instructional method works or does not work. The SoTL course gave faculty members the impetus to experiment with new ways of teaching and supporting EMI students and observe how these affected learning outcomes. This is evident in Sarah's case where the project-based approach she adopted not only increased her students' engagement in experiential learning but also improved their confidence and helped them become more independent learners. Given the need for this kind of innovative pedagogy in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) classes at EMI universities on the Arabian Peninsula (Dickson & Litz, Chapter 11; Bradley et al., Chapter 12), this case underlines the value of a SoTL programme.

For others, like Aisha, the habit of reflecting on their practice was a major benefit of the SoTL course as it deeply permeated every aspect of academic

engagement, from teaching to preparing promotion portfolios in a second language. Universities in the region aiming to be centres of excellence benefit enormously from having such self-inquiring practitioners amongst their faculty.

For EMI institutions that attract a multinational body of faculty with different linguistic, cultural and academic backgrounds, as was the case in the target university in this report, a professional development programme can be a powerful incentive for transforming teaching practice. It focuses their attention on teaching and learning, sensitises them to linguistic and cultural issues as they learn more about their students and invites them to apply scientific methods to their classroom practice in order to assess what works and what does not work. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning offers a framework that utilises the skills of scientific inquiry that academic faculty possess and encourages them to apply these not only to their discipline but also to their teaching because being a great teacher is part of being a great academic (see also Bradley et al., Chapter 12). This is particularly important in the EMI context where students have the added challenge of learning in English, a language they may not be as proficient in or that they may feel anxious about using (see also Gallagher & Jones, Chapter 2; Hopkyns, Chapter 5). Helping faculty become aware of the challenges students face, such as not understanding the feedback that they receive, and staying attentive to their needs though systematically observing and reflecting on what is happening in their classrooms can contribute to better teaching and learning.

For faculty interested in facilitating a SoTL programme, it is important to have significant research experience in education or humanities, be familiar with the use of different tools and methods (quantitative and qualitative) and research designs applicable to SoTL projects. Facilitating a SoTL programme transcends training workshops on teaching strategies and demonstrations of resources and technology. The more extensive the repertoire of research tools and experiences at the facilitator's disposal, the more likely they can provide valuable assistance and guidance to faculty across disciplines who want to engage in classroom-based inquiries and become SoTL practitioners. And by becoming SoTL practitioners, academic faculty can bridge the gap between research and teaching as this comment on the benefits of SoTL from one of the faculty members in the programme describes:

Perhaps more importantly, the focus on teaching and scholarship, and how to work in such a way that one informs the other. Action research can be challenging from a theoretical perspective, but living through the exchange of teaching (action) and theory (scholarship) is an intriguing possibility.

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