

60-Second SoTL

Episode 36 – SoTL Literature Reviews

(Piano Music)

0:03

Jessie L. Moore:

What strategies can scholars use to compose a literature review on scholarship of teaching and learning projects? That's the focus of this week's 60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning. I'm Jessie Moore.

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(Piano Music)

0:17

In "Reviewing the Literature on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL): An Academic Literacies Perspective—Part 2," published in the open-access journal, *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, Mick Healey and Ruth Healey differentiate between types of literature reviews and share strategies for developing them. The article is a follow-up to their "Searching the Literature" article featured in the previous episode of 60-Second SoTL.

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Healey and Healey open their article with a nuanced and concise discussion about what literature reviews are, their centrality to SoTL, and their role in helping scholars develop their SoTL identities, and I recommend following the link in our show notes to read their summary.

Healey and Healey next differentiate between embedded reviews and freestanding reviews. They note that embedded reviews typically contextualize the research shared in the article. They are forward-looking, setting the stage for the scholars SoTL project. As a result, they focus on key references, placing the scholar's new SoTL work in conversation with prior studies.

1:14

In comparison, freestanding reviews provide a more comprehensive critical synthesis of prior scholarship, looking backward at what's already known about a topic. Healey and Healey further distinguish between narrative freestanding reviews and systematic freestanding reviews. Narrative literature reviews are noncomprehensive syntheses, mapping research on the topic. While they aren't

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comprehensive, scholars nonetheless should be able to describe their method for their narrative reviews, and Healey and Healey encourage scholars to be more transparent about their search strategies in published reviews.

Systematic freestanding reviews follow a series of stages driven by a research question, and they're often undertaken by a team given the scope of work needed to complete a comprehensive review. While the explicit methods used in systematic reviews are intended to minimize bias, Healey and Healey caution that a routinized process does not inherently reduce bias and that systematic reviews might overlook SoTL's rich qualitative traditions, as well as the grey literature that doesn't appear in prioritized electronic databases.

2:19

Ultimately, the Healeys see narrative and systematic reviews as complementary, and regardless of the type of review undertaken, they advocate being explicit about process – articulating guiding questions or foci, naming inclusion and exclusion criteria, and sharing any assumptions or characteristics that inform the identification of themes or key findings. The authors also note that literature review processes are necessarily recursive; as scholars draft their literature reviews and seek feedback from critical friends, they often reconsider early themes or identify a need to more comprehensively reexamine earlier stages in the process.

2:57

Healey and Healey round out their literature review article with a narrative about their own experience writing this manuscript, and they include both a helpful flowchart of example literature review processes and guiding questions for writing a literature review, reproduced from Mick Healey's book with Kelly Matthews and Alison Cook-Sather on Writing about Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and published by CEL's Open Access Book Series.

To learn more about Healey and Healey's literature review strategies, follow the link in our show notes to read this open access article and to review our supplemental resources for this episode.

3:30

(Piano Music)

Join us next week for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning on **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. Learn more about the Center at www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org.

(Piano Music)

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