

# 60-Second SoTL

## Episode 89 – Leading SoTL from the Margins

### Featured Article

Dorner, Helga, Gorana Mistic, and Anna Maria Wach. 2026. "If SoTL is Not Recognised: Strategies for Creating Opportunities." In *Routes to Change: Strategic Leadership in SoTL*, edited by Irma Meijerman and Andrea S. Webb. University of British Columbia. <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/routestochange/>

### Transcript

(Music)

0:10

#### Jessie L. Moore:

What happens when the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning isn't recognized, supported, or even well understood within an institution? That's the focus of this week's 60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning. I'm Jessie Moore.

(Music)

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In "If SoTL Is Not Recognised: Strategies for Creating Opportunities," Helga Dorner, Gorana Mistic, and Anna Maria Wach explore how faculty and academic developers can cultivate SoTL in institutional contexts where teaching is often undervalued compared to disciplinary research. Their chapter appears in the new edited collection, *Routes to Change: Strategic Leadership in SoTL*, which is available as an open-access text from the University of British Columbia.

1:00

The chapter offers a set of reflective case studies drawn from the authors' experiences leading teaching and learning initiatives in Hungary and Poland. The authors begin with a familiar challenge. Although SoTL is widely defined as the systematic study of teaching and learning made public for others to learn from, many faculty members still encounter skepticism about its legitimacy or question whether SoTL is "real research." Others struggle to see how inquiry into teaching fits alongside expectations for disciplinary research.

Yet the authors argue that these challenging contexts can also create opportunities. Across several institutional stories, they identify strategies that helped build SoTL cultures from the ground up.

1:46

One example comes from the Central European University's Teaching Certificate Programme for doctoral students. Created in 2011, the program emerged from a perceived deficit: doctoral students had limited opportunities to teach. Rather than viewing that limitation as a barrier, the program provided structured pedagogical training focused on peer teaching, course design, reflective practice, and teaching portfolios. Faculty and doctoral students learned from one another, creating a community where conversations about teaching became more visible and valued.

2:20

The authors also describe an innovative online mentoring program for Global Teaching Fellows. The program connected novice faculty teaching in countries around the world with Center for Teaching and Learning mentors who supported reflective, context-sensitive teaching. Rather than imposing a single teaching model, mentors encouraged fellows to adapt evidence-informed practices to their local contexts. Monthly conversations, teaching portfolios, and structured reflection helped participants develop agency as educators while also building international communities of practice.

2:55

Another example comes from Eötvös Loránd University in Hungary, where the EDUflow faculty fellowship program was launched in 2024. The program combined online modules, in-person workshops, and mentoring to support participants' development of innovative course designs and teaching portfolios. The mentoring component was particularly important because it created reciprocal relationships across disciplinary boundaries and helped distribute leadership for teaching and learning throughout the institution.

3:24

At Poznań University of Economics and Business, faculty development programs gradually evolved from a single pedagogical course into a comprehensive institutional infrastructure supporting teaching excellence. In addition to fostering an institutional culture that values ongoing professional learning related to teaching, some faculty also contribute to workshops and publish on teaching and learning.

3:48

Across these examples, a common theme emerges: SoTL rarely becomes established because of a single policy or mandate. Instead, it grows through relationships. The authors repeatedly emphasize the importance of trust, mentoring, communities of practice, and opportunities for faculty to engage in conversations about teaching. They argue that leadership for teaching and learning is often distributed rather than hierarchical, something my own work with Deandra Little on pathways for SoTL development also suggests. Faculty, academic developers, mentors, and graduate students all can contribute to creating cultures where teaching becomes visible and valued as a focus of scholarly inquiry.

4:30

The chapter also highlights the important role of Centers for Teaching and Learning. Whether through teaching certificates, mentoring programs, teaching grants, teaching observations, conferences, or informal networking events, these centers can serve as catalysts for SoTL by creating structures that support reflection, collaboration, and pedagogical innovation.

4:52

Ultimately, Dorner, Mistic, and Wach remind us that SoTL leadership often begins at the margins. In environments where teaching lacks prestige or formal recognition, meaningful change frequently starts with small acts: creating a workshop, mentoring a colleague, hosting a conversation, launching a community of practice, or encouraging faculty to investigate questions about student learning. Over time, these local efforts can reshape institutional culture and increase the visibility and value of teaching itself.

To learn more about these case studies, visit our show notes for a link to the open access chapter.

5:29

(Music)

5:34

**Jessie L. Moore:**

Join us for our next episode of 60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning. Learn more about the Center at [www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org](http://www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org).

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