

Introduction

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It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to this special issue of *SoTL Africa*, the first and only journal of its kind that is focused solely on Africa!

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is a pedagogical approach that contends that scholarly inquiry into teaching practices and student learning is essential for academic excellence (Boyer, 1990). SoTL seeks to generate scholarly insights into how students learn best, develop effective teaching strategies, and encourage educators to adopt a reflective, objective, and pragmatic approach to teaching and learning. A SoTL journal rooted in the African context will play an important role by providing a platform for sharing research, strategies, and insights specifically relevant to African educators and students. As Abrahamson argues in this volume, there are no dedicated institutional structures and policies to support SoTL and its growth in Africa, even as Universities across the continent are recognizing the need to move beyond traditional lecture-based teaching models and adopt more interactive, evidence-based pedagogical approaches.

In the Singular Teaching approach, which has dominated traditional classrooms, the teachers' work is private. Instruction is characterized by a predominantly teacher-centered pedagogy in which the instructor controls the learning process, and students occupy a largely passive role. It emphasizes the structured delivery of content, leaving limited room for student autonomy, critical thinking, or independent inquiry. The pedagogical relationship is hierarchical, positioning the teacher as the active subject and the student as the passive recipient of knowledge. Consequently, opportunities for dialogue, interaction, and collaborative knowledge construction are minimal, reinforcing a vertical rather than an egalitarian learning environment (Serin, 2018; Hu, 2024). In this case, there is little or no evidence gathering of effective teaching. SoTL addresses this teacher-centered approach by promoting a more student-centered, reflective, and participatory teaching paradigm. Instead of viewing teaching as simply delivering content, SoTL encourages educators to systematically investigate how their teaching practices impact student learning. This involves engaging students as active participants, fostering collaborative learning environments, and continuously assessing and refining teaching strategies based on evidence. Africa's diversity and complexities bring to the fore a unique set of educational challenges, cultural nuances, and resource considerations. The development and growth of SoTL on the continent will foster locally-informed teaching practices, encourage collaboration among African scholars, and promote the publication of studies that reflect African perspectives and experiences. *SoTL Africa* will help improve teaching and learning outcomes within the region, ensuring that educational innovations are culturally appropriate and effectively tailored to African contexts.

The goal of *SoTL Africa* is to create a vibrant platform where scholars, practitioners, and students can share insights, challenge existing paradigms, and contribute to the broader academic community's understanding of effective pedagogy across disciplines. This special issue features a handpicked selection of papers presented at the first *SoTL Africa* Conference, held at Ashesi University in September 2025. The papers reflect the journal's commitment to excellence, diversity, and relevance. We are proud to highlight contributions from both distinguished experts and emerging voices, underscoring our dedication to inclusivity and collaboration. Earle Abrahamson's essay offers an essential point of departure for understanding both the promise and the pressing challenges of advancing SoTL across the continent. By weaving together the themes of culture, community, and

co-creation, Abrahamson provides an irresistible vision for a distinctly African SoTL landscape—one that is deeply attentive to local epistemologies, power structures, and institutional realities. His analysis highlights not only the structural barriers that continue to impede pedagogical scholarship but also the tremendous opportunities emerging through regional networks, technological innovation, and collaborative capacity-building initiatives. In doing so, the essay sets a powerful tone for this issue's broader reflections on how African universities can cultivate a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable SoTL ecosystem. It reminds us that meaningful educational transformation requires not only new strategies but a renewed commitment to the shared values and collective energy that define the African higher education community. Nancy L. Chick offers a compelling reflection on what she calls a "SoTL mindset," an orientation rooted in epistemic responsibility, pedagogical humility, and deep attentiveness to the contexts that shape teaching and learning. She illustrates how meaningful inquiry requires acknowledging the limits of our own perspectives while actively learning from diverse educational realities—especially those outside dominant academic centers, such as those on the African continent. Through five interrelated moves—contextualizing, embracing complexity, engaging multidisciplinary thinking, practicing pedagogical humility, and fostering collegiality—she presents a framework for navigating SoTL as an ethical, reflective, and relational practice. Her essay invites readers to consider SoTL not as a fixed method but as an ongoing commitment to noticing, questioning, and learning across difference, making it a fitting contribution to this special issue of *SoTL Africa*.

In their paper, "Revitalizing Institutional Identity Post-COVID: A Pan-African SoTL Study Grounded in Kotter's Change Model and African Ontologies," Owusu-Ansah, Abrahamson, Annoh, and Owusu present a compelling Pan-African model for post-COVID institutional renewal by integrating Kotter's eight-step change framework with African philosophies of *Sankofa*¹ and *Sunsum*.² Through a five-week participatory intervention grounded in storytelling and student partnership, they show how cultural revitalization can be accelerated when indigenous knowledge systems and structured organizational change processes work in tandem. The initiative re-energized students' sense of identity, dramatically improved class attendance, and restored core institutional values of Scholarship, Leadership, and Citizenship. By highlighting care-driven practices, collaborative inquiry, and experiential learning, the authors offer a culturally responsive SoTL approach that is relevant across diverse African higher education contexts. This article provides a timely and innovative blueprint for addressing grand challenges in institutional culture and student engagement.

In "Cultivating Curiosity and Community: Teaching and Learning SoTL," Schrum, Fleming, Grunder, Harris, Knight, Kreitzer, Lemmons, and McKenna offer a rich and compelling exploration of how a thoughtfully designed SoTL course can become a transformative space for educators and emerging scholars. Through inquiry-driven learning, flexible assessment, and intentional community-building, the course invited students from diverse disciplines and professional backgrounds to discover SoTL not merely as a research approach, but as an intellectual home—one that values curiosity, humility, collaboration, and the shared commitment to improving student learning. The reflections featured in this article reveal how SoTL empowers practitioners at every career stage to ask better questions, rethink their teaching, embrace feedback, and situate their work within a wider community of scholars. Their contribution to this volume powerfully demonstrates that teaching SoTL is itself an act of cultivating the very dispositions the field seeks to advance, making this article a fitting and inspiring addition to the issue's broader conversation about reimagining teaching and learning.

SoTL Africa aims to be a catalyst for scholarly exchange, to encourage critical thinking, and to foster connections within and across disciplines. The articles in this volume demonstrate that. We invite you to engage with the content, participate in lively discourse, contribute manuscripts for publication consideration, and join us in shaping the journal's future direction. We look forward to building an impactful and dynamic community with you.

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NOTES

1. A central philosophy that emphasizes learning from the past to shape a better future.
2. It symbolizes the invisible energy that drives reflective action, reinforcing the intention to restore a culture to its authentic state.

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