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Learning about teaching through interdisciplinary research and collaboration

In this session, I will share my SoTL journey starting with identifying teaching issues through to investigating and resolving them and how this has impacted on my teaching, my students' learning and my research agenda.

I have always taken a professional approach to my teaching and so have, over the last few years, began investigating certain aspects more systematically. Three aspects of my teaching that I will highlight in this session are:

1. assessing class participation
2. predicting student success in first year
3. aligning intended learning outcomes with assessment tasks and assessment criteria

The teaching research projects I developed to respond to these issues eventually became SoTL when I collaborated with colleagues from outside my discipline. In relation to each issue, I will outline how I went about investigating the problem; what I found; how I used the findings to improve teaching and learning in my courses; and how I was able to share the findings with colleagues and with the wider academic community.

By outlining my experiences about doing SoTL in this session, I also aim to encourage and inspire attendees on their own journeys through SoTL. My personal journey may have been long and I often felt way out of my depth as a novice in a new field of inquiry. Nonetheless, it was well worth the time and effort, not only to improve student learning, but also to satisfy myself about my own teaching. Furthermore, by collaborating with colleagues from other disciplines, I not only was able to garner the empirical research skills needed to make sense of the information I had gathered about my students and their responses to my teaching initiatives, I was also able to establish research partnerships that have continued beyond the initial investigation.

The session will be interactive as dialogue and discussion between presenter and attendees and between attendees will be encouraged. I teach legal studies at a university in Australia, but my teaching context will not limit the usefulness to attendees who teach in other disciplines, because we all speak the common language of inquiry into our teaching. Attendees will also have the opportunity to peruse and give feedback on teaching materials I have developed while doing SoTL and consider their usefulness in their own teaching contexts.

At the end of the session, attendees will appreciate that:

- SoTL is a process of inquiry that is but one aspect of a professional approach to teaching;
- Doing SoTL in collaboration with colleagues who have similar interests in teaching and learning and who have the necessary skills for this type of research, makes SoTL research more efficient and more fun than working alone.

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