The Impact of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

Svenne Groeneweg, Natalie Pareja Roblin, Daphne van Weijen, Monique Volman
University of Amsterdam - Teaching and Learning Centre and Research Institute of Child Development and Education

Teaching & Learning Centre

Introduction

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) involves teachers undertaking systematic inquiry of their own teaching practices. The goals are to gain insight into the mechanisms behind student learning, to improve teaching, and to contribute to the scientific knowledge on education (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999). Despite growing interest in SoTL as a professional development strategy for teachers in higher education (Tight, 2017), few studies have examined its impact empirically. The aim of this study is to determine the perceived impact of engaging in SoTL, and the factors that facilitate or hinder it.

Theoretical framework

● Impact areas of SoTL

There are three identifying aspects of SoTL work that are most referred to in the literature on the definitions and aims of SoTL: the epistemic, pedagogical, and social (Booth & Woollacott, 2018). It is expected that engaging in SoTL has an impact on all three aspects.
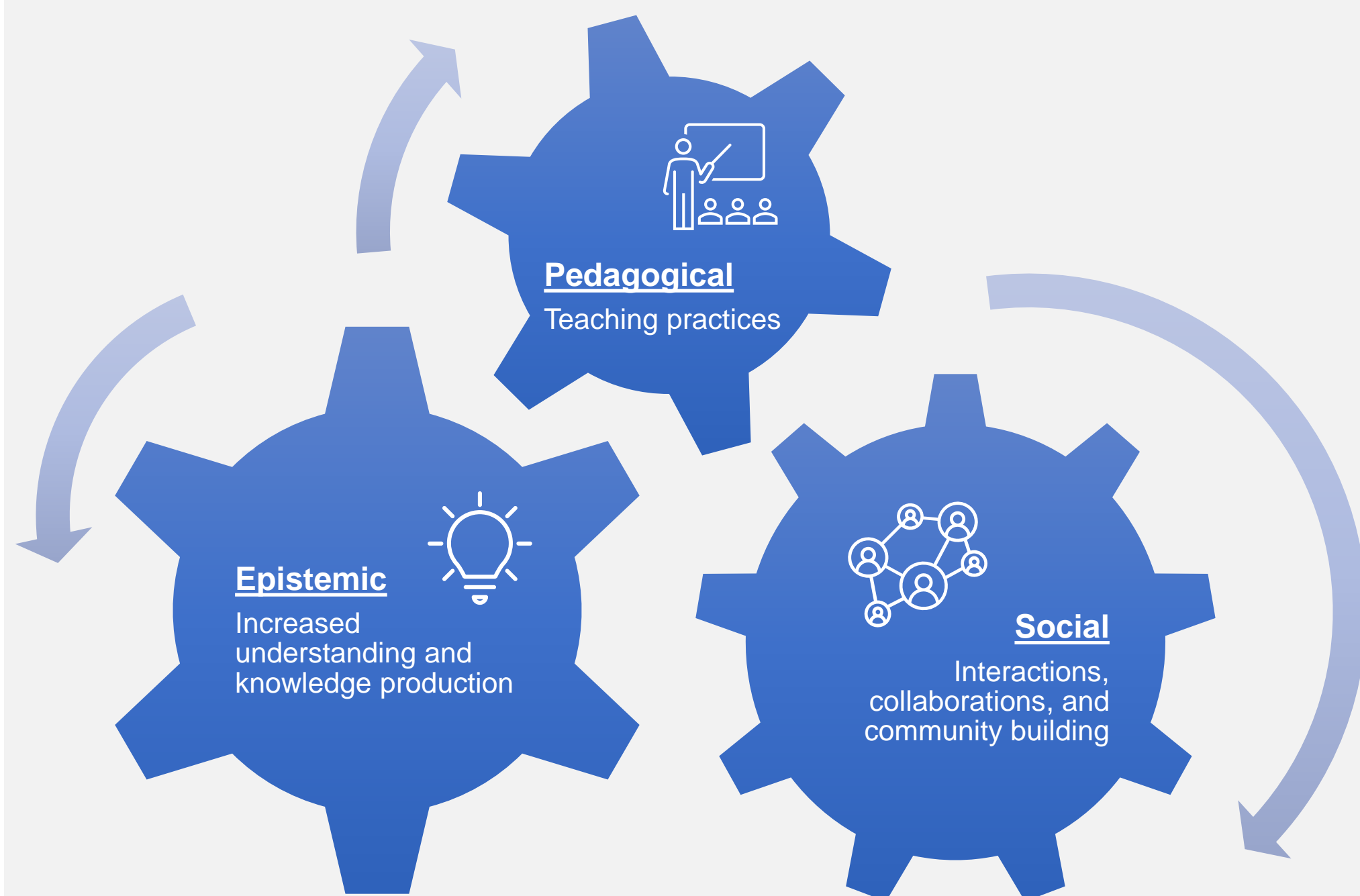

Pedagogical
Teaching practices

Epistemic
Increased understanding and knowledge production

Social
Interactions, collaborations, and community building

Figure 1: Expected impact areas of SoTL based on the framework by Booth & Woollacott (2018)

Material and methods

● Respondents and context

The respondents are university teachers who participate in a two-year SoTL-programme at the University of Amsterdam, which supports them in designing and conducting their research projects. The first round of data collection took place when the teachers were in the SoTL-programme for 1.5 years. After completion of the programme, participants will be invited for a second and final interview.
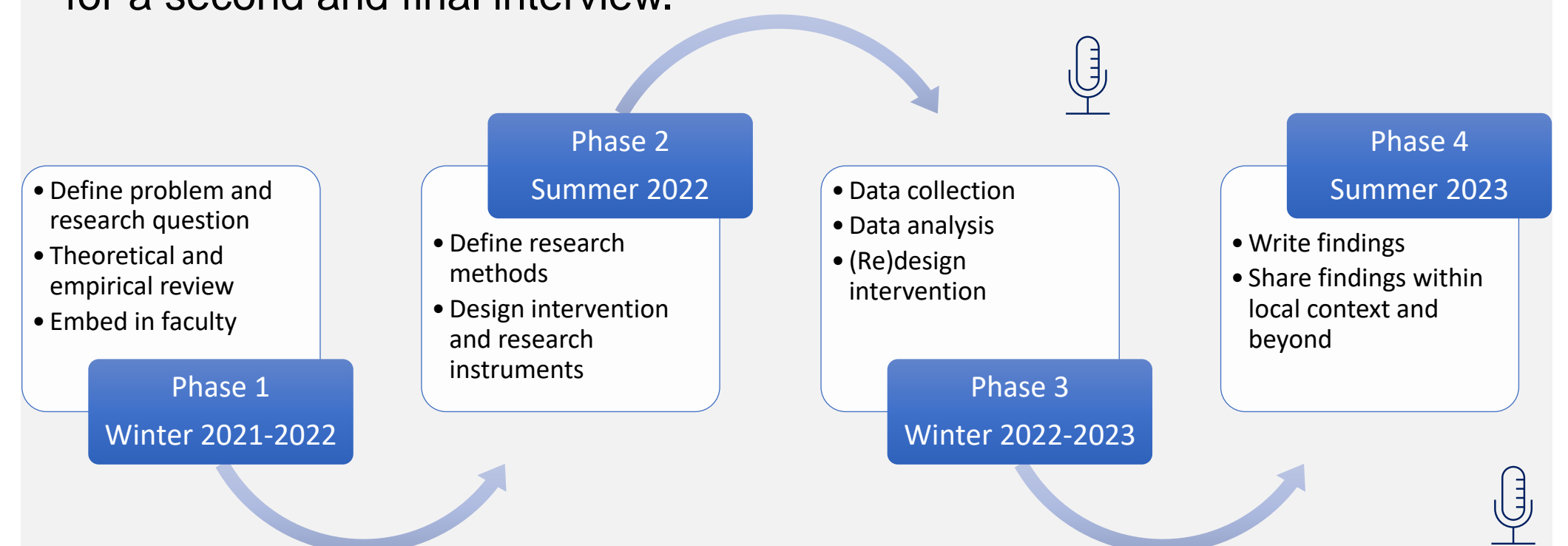

- Define problem and research question
- Theoretical and empirical review
- Embed in faculty

Phase 1
Winter 2021-2022

Phase 2
Summer 2022
- Define research methods
- Design intervention and research instruments

- Data collection
- Data analysis
- (Re)design intervention

Phase 3
Winter 2022-2023

Phase 4
Summer 2023
- Write findings
- Share findings within local context and beyond

Figure 2: Timeline of the SoTL-programme and data collection points of the study (indicated by microphone icons)

● Semi-structured interviews

The interviews were conducted online and lasted approximately 45 minutes each. They were recorded with the participants' permission. Non-verbatim transcriptions of the interviews were analysed in Atlas.ti. Thematic analysis was used to identify and interpret patterns of meaning ('themes') within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Preliminary results

● Impact of engaging in SoTL

Table 1: Perceived impact of engaging in SoTL categorised per impact area (N=14)

Epistemic	Pedagogical	Social

• Increased *understanding* of teaching and learning (N=10)
 	
• Changes in *confidence, attitudes and beliefs* related to evidence-informed teaching (N=13)
 	
• Knowledge of *educational research* (N=13)
 	
• Direct *output*
  • Local knowledge (N=12)
  • Public knowledge (N=8)
	• *Changes* in teaching practices
	  • Changes in one's own teaching (N=2)
	  • Changes in someone else's teaching (N=3)
	  • Intentions or potential to change teaching practices in the future (N=13)
	
	• Evidence-informed decision to *continue* current practices (N=6)
		• Establishment of *new* relations
		  • Community building among participants within the programme (N=7)
		  • New interactions outside the programme (N=8)
		
		• Strengthening *existing* relations
		  • Closer one-on-one collaborations and ties (N=9)
		  • Deepening of existing networks and communities (N=3)

● Facilitators and obstacles

Figure 3: Word cloud of facilitators (green) and obstacles (red)

The preliminary results are based on the first round of data collection in which 14 participants working at 7 different faculties were interviewed. These data already suggest that engaging in SoTL has an impact on all three areas, although it might take longer for certain outcomes, such as changes in teaching practices, to become fully visible. The data confirm that support in terms of funds and time available, as well as interaction with peers and encouragement from colleagues, are essential to increase the impact of participants' SoTL work.

Discussion and next steps

The main contribution of this study is to provide empirical evidence of the impact of engaging in SoTL by focusing on the perceptions of participating teachers at multiple moments in time. Furthermore, the final results may offer design principles for the setup of SoTL-programmes at other higher education institutions.

➢ What would you like to know from the respondents in the upcoming round of interviews?
➢ How can the challenges raised by the respondents be addressed?
➢ How can the impact of engaging in SoTL be sustained?