

Editorial: SoTL Conference Special Issue

Bekithemba Dube¹, Friedrich-Nel Hesta², Zenzile Khetsha³, & Xolani Khohliso⁴

Background

Over the past decade, integrating theory and practice in Higher Education (HE) has become a cornerstone of effective Teaching and Learning (T&L). Theoretical frameworks had laid the foundation for understanding educational phenomena and shaping innovative with evidence-based strategies. By applying various theories in real classrooms has provided practical insights that enriched theoretical perspectives and drove continuous improvement. This theory-practice connection has proven vital in demonstrating researchers' ability to use evidence to clarify key concepts, support conclusions, and guide future inquiry, ultimately reflecting their intellectual growth and critical thinking.

The conference under the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) has cultivated a dynamic community focused on enhancing educational practices through rigorous research. Conferences showcased how this synergy transformed teaching approaches, curricula, and learner outcomes while pointing toward future research and pedagogical advancement avenues. However, the 10th Annual

International Conference on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education brought the curriculum into praxis, through broad thematic engagement with the central theme titled "*A Decade of Embracing Theory and Practice in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*". Various authors presented papers to build on this theme with the intention of enhancing the scholarship of teaching and learning especially within the higher education sector.

Papers published as a result of this conference focused on embracing the curriculum in praxis, a study on the hybrid style in a university of technology provided some alternative pedagogic strategies to improve learning. Such papers, they student voices being emanated as a key engagement, where reflexivity by the teacher through student voices is highlighted as a core praxis of the curriculum transformation. As the T&L strategy adopted by various applied universities and universities of technology globally, the applied student-centred framework was also reported extensively in this conference proceeding, seeking a meaningful balance between the student-centred and teacher-

¹ Guest Editor, Professor, Central University of Technology, South Africa, ORCID: 0000-0003-4327-7838, E-mail: bdube@cut.ac.za

² Guest Editor, Professor, Central University of Technology, South Africa, ORCID: 0000-0002-1347-8914, E-mail: hfried@cut.ac.za

³ Guest Editor, Dr., Central University of Technology, South Africa, E-mail: zkhetsha@cut.ac.za

⁴ Guest Editor, Dr., Central University of Technology, South Africa, ORCID: 0000-0002-2462-1296, E-mail: xkhohliso@cut.ac.za

centred frameworks, with emphasis being on the depowering of the teacher for ease of learning. Within the current challenges with the curriculum transformation, various pedagogies were reported in different disciplines (Biglan, 1973), a certainty that teachers in universities are capturing the critical importance of the teaching philosophies underpinning their praxis (Quinn & Vorster, 2016). In this day and age of the Internet of Things, and Technology as a key Graduate Attribute across applied universities and universities of technology globally (Thumiki & Mujumdar, 2025), extensive studies have reported the usage of various platforms for learning, with the well-known learning management system being the centre of approach for Higher Education Virtual Exchange/COIL projects.

Review Procedure

The review process for this issue adhered to the protocols established by the Journal of Inquiry-Based Activities (JIBA), utilising a double-blind peer review system for all manuscripts submitted to the conference proceedings. The conference submission management system was OJS/PKP for the full paper manuscripts. Initially, the editor(s) reviewed each article for format compliance and relevance to the journal's scope. Manuscripts that fell outside the journal's focus were rejected without undergoing further review. Those deemed suitable were forwarded to two external reviewers. These peer reviewers, recognised as experts in their respective fields and representing diverse academic institutions, evaluated the manuscripts using a standardised reviewer form. In cases where the two reviewers provided conflicting evaluations, the guest editors or occasionally a third reviewer intervened to make a final assessment. This peer review process complies with the requirements for subsidy as stated by the South African

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Authors whose manuscripts were accepted after the double-blind review process was completed were provided anonymous reviewers' reports and requested to submit their full papers addressing these comments. Evidence was required relative to the authors' actions regarding the comments received. Based on the reviewer reports, the editors reserve the right to make minor alterations and accept or reject any manuscript. Final papers are published in the conference proceedings after evidence and after further technical alignment by editors and copy editors.

Quality Criteria and Key Metrics

All recognised as experts in their respective fields and representing diverse academic institutions as peer reviewers followed the conference theme and subthemes, originality/value, ethics considerations, academic originality and contribution to the body of knowledge through robust research methodologies, theoretical frameworks and findings. From the conference submissions, the following are the key metrics:

Total abstracts accepted for conference proceedings: 123

Number of full paper manuscripts submitted for the Special Issue: 23

Number of manuscripts accepted: 14

References

- Biglan, A. (1973). Relationships between subject matter characteristics and the structure and output of university departments. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 57, 204–213.

- Quinn, L., & Vorster, J. A. (2016). Pedagogy for fostering criticality, reflectivity and praxis in a course on teaching for lecturers. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41(7), 1100-1113.
- Thumiki, V. R. R., & Mujumdar, A. (2025). Evaluating the student attainment of graduate attributes through the direct method. *Industry and Higher Education*, 39(3), 255-266.