

**Promoting “ SoTL identity play” in higher education- a conceptual framework
for teaching faculty agency and learning.**

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Higher education, according to Budge and Clarke (2012), requires the development of inspiring educators who have the capacity to respond creatively to complex and challenging tertiary educational environments. Educational development as an affective and creative act needs, therefore, to support and motivate faculty within such rapidly changing landscapes through the active exploration of SoTL identities. Recently, the application of a “possible and ideal” self-framework has become more prevalent in research studies which investigate both the evolving professional identities of teaching faculty (Mannix, 2012).

This paper focuses, therefore, on how Ibarra and Petriglieri’s (2010) notion of “identity play” can be redefined and applied in the context of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). The conceptual paper came out of an international research collaboration undertaken as part of an International Society of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) writing group.

Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010) defined the notion of identity work as one’s “engagement in forming, repairing, maintaining and strengthening or revisiting . . . (his/her) . . . identities” (p. 10) in line with organizational strategic objectives. The complimentary notion of identity play is defined in the context of organizational change management as “people’s engagement in provisional but active trial of possible future selves” (Ibarra & Petriglieri 2010, p. 10), which fosters both personal and professional motivational dispositions as well as bridging the gap between institutional strategic objectives, personal and collective aspirations and motivational dispositions.

Key to our understanding of SoTL identity work in higher education is the notion that academics in higher education work towards and sometimes struggle towards achieving certain goals, missions or strategic objectives pertaining to SoTL within the context of their academic institutions. Often there is a discrepancy among their personal and role identities, which is when a disconnect occurs as individuals become confused as to how to make sense of their situation.

The concept of SoTL identity play, therefore, enables faculty, individually and collectively as SoTL voyagers, to embrace the notion of SoTL self-authorship in alternative spaces, as they strive towards embracing rapid change pertaining to teaching, learning and research in higher education. We argue that SoTL identity play is, therefore, an opportunity for individuals and groups to reduce the discrepancy between their actual and feared SoTL selves in the light of rapid change. At the same time, we believe it is also an opportunity for faculty to strive towards becoming their aspirational or future possible selves as they engage in the SoTL identity play.

Based on a literature review and international perspectives, we explore what constitutes professional SoTL identity development and how faculty may be encouraged and motivated to engage in and embrace the notion of “possible” and “ideal” SoTL selves individually and collectively in spaces of being and becoming. This is followed by a discussion on the creative conditions which allow SoTL identity play to thrive and the opportunities that can be created for faculty to venture between the complimentary notions of “identity work” and “identity play,” thereby embracing a temporal dimension of faculty motivation.

References

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