

Oscar Jerez Yañez, *UNIVERSIDAD DE CHILE*, ojerez@uchile.cl
Jorge Maldonado Mahauad, *UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA*, jorge.maldonado@ucuenca.edu.ec
Gisela Schwartzman, *UNIVERSIDAD HOSPITAL ITALIANO DE BUENOS AIRES*,
gisela.schwartzman@hospitalitaliano.org.ar
Carolina Rodríguez Enríquez, *UNIVERSIDAD DE LA REPÚBLICA*, crodriguez@fenf.edu.uy
Sugey Montoya Sandí, *SINAES*, smontoya@sinaes.ac.cr
Álvaro Herrera Alcaíno, *UNIVERSIDAD SAN SEBASTIÁN*, alvaro.herrera@uss.cl
Cristina Del Mastro Vecchione, *PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA DEL PERÚ*,
cmastro@pucp.edu.pe
Miguel Morales-Chan, *UNIVERSIDAD GALILEO*, amorales@galileo.edu
Wendy Díaz Pérez, *UNIVERSIDAD DE GUADALAJARA*, wendy@cucea.udg.mx
Ivory Mogollón de Lugo, *UNIVERSIDAD CENTRAL DE VENEZUELA*,
i.mogollon@campusiesalc.com
Gina Camargo De Luque, *UNIVERSIDAD DEL NORTE*, glcamargo@uninorte.edu.co
Alejandra Martínez Barrientos, *UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA BOLIVIANA SAN PABLO*,
mmartinez@ucb.edu.bo
Fábio José Garcia dos Reis, *SEMESP*, fabio@semesp.org.br

SoTL in Latin America: Bridging Cultures, Transforming Teaching and Learning

ABSTRACT

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is rapidly emerging as a transformative force in Latin American higher education, bridging diverse cultures and reshaping pedagogical practices to meet the region's unique challenges. Inspired by Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy—which emphasizes education as a means of social transformation and empowerment—this article examines how SoTL integrates interculturality, identity, and equity into university education across Latin America. By aligning teaching and learning with the rich sociocultural realities of the region, SoTL effectively addresses educational inequalities and promotes inclusive access to learning opportunities. Institutions have embraced innovative practices such as faculty development programs, the integration of SoTL methodologies across various disciplines, and active student participation in pedagogical innovation. National policies and regional collaborations, notably the formation of LatinSoTL, have further propelled this movement, fostering a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement. Despite significant advancements, challenges remain. These include the cultural integration of SoTL concepts, heavy faculty workloads, limited interdisciplinary programs, technological disparities, and the imperative to align educational practices with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Overcoming these obstacles requires sustained efforts in faculty development, investment in technological infrastructure, and supportive policies that recognize and reward teaching excellence. The impact of SoTL is evident in the growing valuation of teaching, increased student engagement, and policy shifts that prioritize teaching in academic evaluations. By embracing SoTL and the principles of Freire's critical pedagogy, Latin American institutions not only improve educational outcomes, but also

contribute valuable insights to the global discourse on higher education. This article highlights the critical role of culturally responsive education in transforming teaching and learning, ultimately bridging cultures and fostering social change throughout the region.

RESUMEN

La investigación académica sobre la docencia y el aprendizaje (scholarship of teaching and learning, SoTL) está emergiendo rápidamente como una fuerza transformadora en la educación superior latinoamericana, estableciendo puentes entre diversas culturas y reformulando las prácticas pedagógicas para enfrentar los desafíos particulares de la región. Inspirado en la pedagogía crítica de Paulo Freire—la cual enfatiza la educación como una vía hacia la transformación social y el empoderamiento—este artículo analiza cómo SoTL integra la interculturalidad, la identidad y la equidad en la educación universitaria a lo largo de América Latina. Al alinear la enseñanza y el aprendizaje con las complejas realidades socioculturales regionales, SoTL aborda eficazmente las desigualdades educativas y promueve un acceso inclusivo a las oportunidades de aprendizaje. Diversas instituciones han adoptado prácticas innovadoras, tales como programas de desarrollo académico para docentes, la integración de metodologías SoTL en múltiples disciplinas y la participación activa de estudiantes en innovaciones pedagógicas. Las políticas nacionales y colaboraciones regionales, particularmente mediante la conformación de redes como LatinSoTL, han impulsado aún más este movimiento, fomentando una cultura de práctica reflexiva y mejora continua. Pese a estos importantes avances, subsisten diversos desafíos. Entre ellos destacan la integración cultural de los conceptos de SoTL, la sobrecarga laboral docente, la limitada disponibilidad de programas interdisciplinarios, las brechas tecnológicas y la necesidad de alinear las prácticas educativas con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS). Superar estos obstáculos requiere esfuerzos sostenidos en la formación docente, inversión en infraestructura tecnológica y políticas institucionales que reconozcan y recompensen la excelencia en la enseñanza. El impacto del SoTL se evidencia en la creciente valoración de la docencia, un mayor compromiso estudiantil y cambios en políticas institucionales que priorizan la docencia en las evaluaciones académicas. Al adoptar el enfoque del SoTL y los principios de la pedagogía crítica freireana, las instituciones latinoamericanas no solo mejoran los resultados educativos, sino que además aportan valiosas perspectivas al discurso global sobre la educación superior. Este artículo enfatiza el rol esencial de la educación culturalmente sensible para transformar los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje, promoviendo el diálogo intercultural y favoreciendo el cambio social en toda la región.

KEYWORDS

higher education; LatinSoTL; faculty professional development

INTRODUCTION

In Latin America, SoTL is emerging as a valuable tool that encourages university faculty and institutions to critically reflect on their teaching practices. By applying experiences and analyses grounded in pedagogical theories, SoTL aims to enhance students' educational experiences. It promotes a continuous process of evaluation and adjustment, where educators collect and analyze data on student learning, reflect on the results, and modify their pedagogical practices in order to foster more effective learning (Reedy and Farias 2019). Rooted in systematic inquiry and empirical evidence, SoTL facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and the exchange of knowledge within the academic community (Felten 2013; Trigwell 2013, 2021). However, implementing SoTL faces challenges, especially in research-intensive institutions within a region that often prioritize research over learning. Achieving a careful balance among theory, methods, and practice is necessary to make this approach effective and recognized (Boshier 2009; Boshier and Huang 2008; Ghislandi and Raffaghelli 2014).

Sharing educational experiences in Latin America is crucial for generating collective knowledge that transcends national borders, strengthening the scholarly focus on teaching through collaboration and the exchange of best practices. This process is essential for adapting pedagogical and didactic strategies to local realities—which are highly diverse in the region—thereby promoting more inclusive and relevant higher education. In turn, the initiatives and knowledge developed will better equip us to address global problems and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (Lozano et al. 2017).

The main objective of this article is to analyze and systematize the current state of SoTL in Latin America, highlighting the importance of the SoTL approach for the continuous improvement of teaching in the region. Additionally, it seeks to explore the various initiatives and experiences that have contributed to the development of SoTL, identifying the challenges and opportunities that arise along the way. Finally, it aims to reflect on the lessons learned and future steps to implement SoTL within the Latin American context.

In the following sections, we present an analysis of the development of SoTL in Latin America. First, we examine the context of higher education and the beginnings of SoTL in the region. Then, we highlight key experiences and initiatives at the institutional, national, and regional levels. We also discuss the challenges, impacts, and lessons learned in the implementation of SoTL. Finally, we offer recommendations to strengthen and expand this approach, promoting higher education that is more inclusive and adapted to local contexts.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGICAL MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA

The convergence of economic, political, and social factors have shaped the development of higher education in Latin America. Significant strides in digitization and virtualization have enhanced flexibility and accessibility, breaking down geographical and temporal barriers to education (Mogollón and Rama 2017; Rama 2021). Government initiatives have expanded access and reduced inequalities through scholarships, student aid, and the establishment of institutions in rural and marginalized areas (Chiroleu and Marquina 2017). These efforts have notably increased enrollment, particularly among low-income students, but challenges remain regarding educational quality and equity, underscoring the need for ongoing improvement efforts.

The neoliberal economic model has facilitated the expansion of private institutions and the commercialization and privatization of higher education. This shift has transformed education into a consumer good, raising concerns about quality assessment, equitable access, and social conditions. Such trends exacerbate exclusion factors affecting enrollment and completion rates, with socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, and geographic location serving as key determinants (Chiarino et al. 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of digital technologies, highlighting the importance of digital literacy and adequate technological infrastructure (Paredes et al. 2021; Rhodes and Lancaster 2022). This rapid shift exposed ongoing challenges in teacher training and institutional adaptability to digital environments (Vaillant 2016).

Influential pedagogical movements and scholars have shaped higher education in the region. Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy in the 1960s laid the foundation for viewing education as a tool for social transformation (Freire 2000). Movements such as the Latin American Pedagogical Movement and popular education initiatives inspired by Freire promoted inclusive and critical approaches during the 1980s and 1990s. Scholars such as Adriana Puiggrós have analyzed the impact of neoliberal educational policies on equity, advocating for a more just higher education system (Puiggrós 2004). Since the early 2000s, intercultural universities in countries such as Mexico, Peru, and Bolivia have integrated Indigenous knowledge with western practices, enhancing inclusion by combining critical pedagogy and interculturality (Lehmann 2013). Global influences, notably the Bologna Process, have also impacted the region's higher education landscape, fostering collaboration between Latin American and European institutions and influencing curricular reforms (Ferrer 2010; Gacel-Ávila 2011; Brunner 2009). While some view this as a model for reform (Aranda and Belén 2006), others caution against the potential homogenization of diverse educational systems (Figueroa 2010).

Progressively, relevant initiatives have emerged to promote the evaluation and improvement of university teaching and learning in Latin America. Organizations such as the now-defunct LASPAU played a significant role, promoting innovation and enhancing educational practices across the region. Similarly, multiple capacity-building projects under Erasmus+ have focused on this area. UNESCO's International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) has also been instrumental in driving innovation and improving the quality of higher education.

However, there is a need to transcend isolated experiences of innovation and improvement by connecting them with processes of research, systematization, and dissemination. Starting in 2010, competitive projects within universities began to encourage innovation and research, along with SoTL support programs. Concurrently, the first regional initiatives related to research on teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education emerged. In this context, the desire arose to connect these experiences with an approach that responds to the local, regional, and international levels.

Despite these efforts, significant challenges remain in faculty development, including insufficient initial training, limited support for novice educators, and uneven professional development opportunities (Vaillant 2016). The pandemic intensified the urgency of digital transformation, revealing deficiencies in infrastructure, training, and resources (Okoye et al. 2022). Nonetheless, there are opportunities to innovate teaching practices, integrate artificial

intelligence in education (Salas-Pilco and Yang 2022), and utilize distance education to bridge learning gaps (Ricardo et al. 2020). The development of competencies in technology management and innovation is increasingly important (Arciénaga et al. 2018).

In summary, the evolution of higher education in Latin America reflects a dynamic interplay between local pedagogical movements and global influences. Current challenges in access, equity, and quality require ongoing reforms that incorporate technological advancements, critical pedagogical approaches, and supportive policies. Strengthening university teaching through political will and long-term commitment remains crucial for fostering a more inclusive and effective higher education system in the region (Vaillant 2016).

BEGINNING OF LATINSOTL

A group of academics and higher education professionals in Latin America began to explore and rethink teaching practices through the lens of SoTL. Initial barriers, which still persist, involved translating and conceptualizing this approach—and its terminology—in a way that resonates within the Latin American context. This led to the emergence of concepts such as formative research, research in teaching, innovation in teaching, and training in reflective teaching practice. More recently, the scholarly approach to teaching has gained significant traction, conceptualized as a research based method to examine and improve teaching practices and student learning outcomes (Fanghanel et al. 2015; Rowland and Myatt 2014). This approach also seeks to develop the teaching dimension as a valid and viable facet of academic work.

In 2014, the first meeting between this group and the vice presidency of EuroSoTL took place during the VIII International Congress of University Teaching and Innovation (CIDUI) in Tarragona, Spain. The need to connect these initiatives and begin collaborative efforts to advance the consolidation of SoTL in Latin America emerged. Between 2016 and 2017, LatinSoTL made the first calls to share experiences at the regional level, inviting participants to contribute their knowledge through the publication of books on the topic, *Innovating in Higher Education: Key Experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean*. These calls resulted in three volumes: (i) curriculum management and teaching development (Jerez et al. 2017a), (ii) active teaching and learning methodologies (Jerez et al. 2017b), and (iii) the integration of ICT (Jerez et al. 2017c). This experience mobilized the regional community to continue networking and progressing.

In November 2018, at the University of the Basque Country, preparations were made for the group's participation in EuroSoTL the following year, establishing future lines of action to convene more systematically and efficiently. At the EuroSoTL 2019 conference, the regional experience was presented alongside representatives from 14 Latin American institutions. In collaboration with the president of ISSOTL 2018–2019 and the vice-rectorate of innovation of the University of the Basque Country, the LatinSoTL network was formalized (see Figure 1). In 2019, representatives of LatinSoTL subsequently participated in ISSOTL in Atlanta, fostering new collaborative connections. That same year, the first LatinSoTL conference was scheduled to take place in Chile in October, but social unrest in the country prevented the conference from taking place. Nonetheless, the website www.latinsotl.org was launched, and events were planned for 2020 in Brazil and 2021 in Colombia. The COVID-19 crisis impeded these events, but a new initiative emerged to continue the work: a regional call to share experiences from a disciplinary

perspective in *Innovate and Transform from the Disciplines: Key Experiences in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean 2021–2022* (Jerez et al. 2022). This call generated record participation and commitment.

By the end of 2022, part of the founding group, after participating in EuroSoTL in Manchester, promoted the need for a Latin American conference to strengthen the local network and advance the development of a regional perspective. Consequently, the first LatinSoTL conference was held at the University of La Serena in October 2023, aiming to gather over 300 participants from Mexico to Tierra del Fuego. The conference proceedings were indexed to Scopus, marking a formal step in institutionalizing the event. During the planned assembly, three foundational committees were established: network life committees, academic faculty development committees, and regulations. Additionally, the transition from a network to a Latin American society was proposed. The second conference, Andean Connect, was a week-long event from September 30 to October 4, 2024. It began at the University of Cuenca in Cuenca, Ecuador, and concluded at Cayetano Heredia University in Lima, Peru. The 2025 conference will be held in San José, Costa Rica, in collaboration with a group of universities in the country.

SOTL EXPERIENCES IN LATIN AMERICA

In Latin America, the diversity and richness of higher education institutions have significantly contributed to the development of SoTL. The variety of institutions, each with its unique characteristics and modalities, has fostered innovative practices. These experiences can be categorized into three key areas: institutional initiatives, national initiatives and public policies, and regional collaborations. Below, we present a synthesis of the most representative efforts in these categories.

Institutional experiences

Higher education institutions across Latin America have implemented various initiatives to enhance teaching and learning. These efforts fall into four main areas: innovation and institutional research, disciplinary approaches, student participation, and faculty pedagogical training. Collectively, these areas illustrate how universities are adopting SoTL and adapting it to their local contexts.

Innovation and institutional research

Many Latin American universities have invested in innovative projects aimed at enhancing teaching quality, often supported by competitive funding programs. For instance, the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru established the Competitive Fund for Innovation in University Teaching to incentivize faculty to adopt innovative pedagogical strategies. Similarly, the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile implemented FONDEDOC, which supports projects addressing specific educational challenges through significant pedagogical innovations. The University of Chile's Incentive Fund for Research in Undergraduate Teaching (FIDOP) promotes systematic research and innovation in teaching across disciplines, ensuring quality educational practices.

The University of Cuenca in Ecuador has created an innovation office to bridge research and faculty professional development, fostering continuous pedagogical improvement. In Venezuela, the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) developed a bimodal system with a virtual platform for ongoing faculty training and pedagogical reflection, which has since expanded to other institutions.

In Guatemala, Galileo University integrates SoTL into its educational innovation strategy, systematically analyzing teaching practices to promote continuous improvement. Its teaching-learning center supports faculty in professional development and academic research on pedagogy. Similarly, the University of North in Colombia, through its Center for Teaching Excellence (CEDU), provides faculty with pedagogical and research support via programs like “pedagogical laboratories,” enabling educators to design and implement research-based teaching strategies.

Specific disciplinary efforts

Various disciplines, such as medicine, engineering, and social sciences, have adopted SoTL methodologies in order to enhance teaching. The Italian Hospital University in Argentina applies integrated curricular designs in health sciences, connecting education and research to improve professional training (Schwartzman et al. 2014). The Catholic University of San Pablo in Bolivia links psychopedagogy with indigenous community needs, fostering context-sensitive education.

In engineering, Galileo University in Guatemala employs artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies within an iterative cycle of implementation, research, and learning to maximize pedagogical impact. Similarly, the faculty of medicine at the University of Chile has developed an academic framework that incorporates SoTL through seven progressive levels of faculty development, promoting scholarly teaching and inquiry in order to enhance educational outcomes.

Student participation

Students play an essential role in teaching and learning innovations. At the University of Chile’s faculty of medicine, students actively engage in an SoTL ecosystem, reviewing their learning experiences, proposing evidence-based improvements, and conducting educational research. Similarly, the Catholic University of San Pablo in Bolivia fosters student participation in pedagogical projects with direct social impact, reinforcing students’ role in co-constructing knowledge and enhancing engagement in learning processes.

Faculty pedagogical training

Faculty development is fundamental for advancing SoTL. Institutions across Latin America have strengthened pedagogical training programs that support educators. This trend was evident in discussions at the first LatinSoTL Congress in 2023, where Chilean and Argentine representatives shared their faculty development initiatives.

In Argentina, an increasing number of accredited postgraduate programs now focus on higher education pedagogy, reversing the traditional emphasis on disciplinary over pedagogical training. According to Delorenzi (2021), at least 109 postgraduate programs specialized in university teaching existed in 2021, covering fields such as medical and experimental sciences

education. In Chile, the expansion of university teaching and learning centers has played a crucial role in fostering innovation and research-driven pedagogical practices. These centers act as institutional drivers of SoTL, promoting research on student learning and supporting evidence-based teaching practices.

By strengthening these efforts, Latin America continues to expand and consolidate the role of SoTL in higher education, driving improvements in teaching, learning, and faculty professional development.

National initiatives and public policies

At the national level, collaborative initiatives and public policies have played crucial roles in advancing SoTL, reflecting a commitment to promoting educational innovation and improving teaching quality across Latin America. Consortia and accreditation agencies have been instrumental in fostering this approach. STHEM Brazil promotes academic innovation through a cooperative network that brings together more than 65 higher education institutions. By encouraging research and pedagogical development, STHEM Brazil fosters collaboration and the dissemination of innovative teaching practices in Brazil. It has also established the International Journal of Academic Innovation in order to publish research related to innovation in higher education in Portuguese and English.

National accreditation agencies emphasize the importance of innovation in teaching. In Costa Rica, the National System of Accreditation of Higher Education (SINAES), through its Division of Research, Development, and Innovation (INDEIN), fosters the SoTL approach via competitive funds for collaborative SoTL research, training programs to develop skills, and various academic activities promoting this approach or the exchange of best practices. In Chile, the National Accreditation Commission (CNA) has implemented new accreditation criteria that, for the first time, includes research, teaching innovation, and improvement of the formative process as a key criterion. These standards require universities to implement continuous improvement processes for teaching, emphasizing the importance of innovation and research in educational practices. Universities are now undertaking actions to research and innovate their teaching experiences, positively impacting formative processes and aligning with institutional projects.

Networks of teaching support centers are significant national experiences contributing to the advancement of pedagogical innovation. In Chile, the Network of Teaching Support Centers (REDCAD) has been a key driver of pedagogical innovation since 2013. By facilitating the exchange of experiences and promoting educational research, REDCAD strengthens teaching practices across various institutions. Similarly, in Colombia, the Network of Teaching-Learning Centers (CREA) has established itself since 2016 as a collaborative space to enhance educational quality. By bringing together centers from different higher education institutions, the CREA fosters cooperation and sharing strategies to improve the teaching and learning process.

Regional initiatives

At the regional level, institutions have developed various initiatives to promote knowledge exchange and cooperation among institutions from different countries, fostering

academic development through innovation and enhancing the quality and relevance of higher education across Latin America.

LatinSoTL serves as a prominent example of an initiative that actively facilitates connections between educators and institutions across the region. With over 208 members from 12 Latin American countries, LatinSoTL plays a crucial role in advancing SoTL by fostering collaboration and coordinated efforts among its members. The network emphasizes a distributive leadership model based on shared responsibilities and mutual support among its members. Membership in LatinSoTL is not based on individual fees but rather on contributions of time and active participation in SoTL initiatives. Educators and institutions promote and work with the SoTL framework, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to advance teaching and learning practices in the region. Society operates through donations rather than individual fees, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity and reinforcing the collaborative spirit that underpins its activities.

Another significant regional initiative is the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Quality in Distance Higher Education (CALED), which contributes to improving the quality of distance higher education across the region. CALED promotes a culture of evaluation and quality, develops guidelines and tools for evaluation and accreditation, and advises universities on quality assessment processes. By promoting academic development through innovation, CALED plays a crucial role in enhancing distance education and helping institutions meet the needs of the modern educational landscape.

In Mexico, initiatives such as the Institute for the Future of Education (IFE) at the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education (ITESM) and the 360 Innovation Network foster collaboration among faculty from different universities. These platforms facilitate the sharing of educational innovations and best practices, contributing to the overall improvement of higher education in the country.

CHALLENGES, IMPACTS, AND LESSONS LEARNED

In recent years, Latin America has increasingly recognized the importance of teaching as an integral component of higher education institutions. This realization, though gradual, has shown notable progress. While the full effects of these initiatives will manifest in the long term, early, yet significant, indicators are already evident. These influences can be categorized into three broad areas: cultural, disciplinary, and stakeholder influences. This section analyzes the current challenges facing higher education teaching in the region, reviews the observed impacts of the initiatives undertaken, and reflects on the lessons learned in order to guide future development in the field.

The implementation of SoTL in Latin America presents multiple challenges that are deeply intertwined with the region's academic, institutional, and socio-economic realities. One significant obstacle is the need to culturally integrate the concept of SoTL into academic practices. Historically, higher education in Latin America has been predominantly focused on disciplinary research, with pedagogical inquiry often perceived as secondary or even irrelevant to academic prestige and career advancement (Cox et al. 2018). This perception has limited the natural adoption of SoTL because it leads to faculty members viewing SoTL as an external imposition rather than an integral part of their professional development. The challenge,

therefore, is not just about promoting SoTL but about shifting deeply rooted academic cultures and evaluation systems that prioritize traditional research outputs over teaching innovation.

Another challenge arises from the heavy workload that academics in Latin America often bear. Faculty members are typically responsible for teaching, research, community engagement, and, in many cases, educational management, often without protected time for pedagogical research (Altbach 2015). In some countries, academic engagement is only a part-time aspect of professional life, with teaching lacking the institutional recognition and compensation needed to encourage deeper reflection on pedagogical practices. This situation is systemic, rooted in structural issues such as the underfunding of public universities, the high prevalence of temporary or adjunct faculty contracts, and the lack of institutional policies that integrate teaching development into career progression frameworks. As a result, SoTL may be perceived as an additional burden rather than a pathway to professional growth and institutional innovation.

The emerging presence of higher education as an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary field in the region also poses difficulties. Unlike in other regions, postgraduate programs in higher education that address university teaching and scientific production are still scarce in Latin America (Brew and Ginns 2008). This scarcity limits the development of more complex and holistic approaches to contemporary challenges, as most faculty members receive little to no formal training in SoTL methodologies. The integration of SDGs into SoTL adds another layer of complexity, requiring both pedagogical adaptation and cultural transformation within higher education institutions. Given the significant inequalities that characterize the region, this integration must respond to local realities, adapting global frameworks to context-specific challenges (Lozano et al. 2019).

Strengthening training initiatives on the SoTL approach and methodology is essential for its sustainable adoption. An improved understanding of SoTL among faculty, students, and university leaders will reveal its potential for innovation and relevance in higher education. Beyond methodological knowledge, sustained implementation requires institutional support structures, including mentorship programs, dedicated SoTL funding, and recognition systems that value pedagogical research alongside disciplinary inquiry. Peer support within the same discipline is also crucial to reducing resistance to pedagogical change, as academic communities often rely on established networks of trust when adopting new educational practices.

The scarcity of high-impact journals and conferences in Spanish and Portuguese also presents a significant barrier to the dissemination and scaling of SoTL practices within Latin America. Although there is growing interest in communicating findings, the lack of formal academic recognition for SoTL publications within institutional evaluation systems discourages faculty members from prioritizing this area of research. Additionally, in a region with vast geographical distances, significant socio-economic disparities, and fluctuating public policies, the establishment of interregional SoTL networks becomes essential for ensuring continuity in educational innovation efforts. International connections with other SoTL communities can further enhance the visibility and impact of Latin American contributions, fostering a more globally integrated discourse on pedagogical research.

Another systemic challenge is the lack of adequate technological infrastructure in many higher education institutions, particularly in rural or less developed areas. Limited access to digital resources, restricted funding for research, and weak inter-institutional collaboration often hinder faculty members' capacity to engage in SoTL research effectively. This issue is particularly pressing in an era where artificial intelligence and digital tools have the potential to impact teaching practices, transforming assessment, feedback, and curriculum design (Castillejos Lopez 2022; Vera 2023). However, without institutional policies to ensure equitable access to technology and provide training in its ethical and pedagogical use, these innovations may further exacerbate educational disparities rather than alleviate them.

Finally, for SoTL scholars to generate meaningful changes in Latin American higher education, it is crucial to facilitate the translation of research findings into institutional decision-making. Administrators and policymakers must recognize the strategic role of SoTL in improving educational quality, equity, and inclusion. Strengthening the link between SoTL and institutional governance will not only enhance faculty engagement but also ensure that SoTL-driven innovations lead to sustainable transformations in higher education.

At the cultural level, higher education institutions in the region are increasingly adopting practices that value teaching, often driven by accreditation processes that emphasize improving teaching practices and enhancing learning outcomes. This cultural shift is also reflected in the growing participation in various forums and the notable increase in centers, units, or offices supporting teaching and learning. These structures, which were uncommon two decades ago, have now become integral parts of the academic environment. These centers are beginning to engage in research and dissemination of best teaching practices, fostering a continuous improvement cycle in educational quality.

In the disciplinary realm, networks, events, and specialized publications are increasingly incorporating teaching as a relevant topic in their discussions. Conferences, associations, and academic societies in the region now consider teaching and research in the discipline essential components for quality education and professional development. This trend is also reflected, albeit less so, in specialized journals where discussions on higher education and SoTL are gaining ground. However, there remains a need to increase the number of journals dedicated exclusively to higher education and SoTL in the region.

At the institutional level, SoTL contributes to rediscovering educational policies in many universities across the region. Institutions are increasingly adopting policies that formalize the valuation of teaching as a fundamental component in evaluating academic performance. Some universities, for example, are incorporating quality teaching criteria in promotion processes and allocating resources for faculty professional development. Notably, when writing this article, one of LatinSoTL's commissions is undertaking its first multicenter and regional research project to conceptualize and contextualize faculty academic development in higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean. This working research group has embraced the significant collaborative challenge of carrying out this project, including developing an instrument that acknowledges the particularities and heterogeneities of the region.

The efforts made by LatinSoTL to promote the SoTL approach, coordinate actors, and generate support and collaboration networks have been significant. These networks encompass local and regional actors and connections with other regions where SoTL is more established. Development has been constant, involving more actors and organizations in the organization's

objectives. Transitioning from a network to a formally constituted society will foster greater involvement and professionalization of the development process, facilitating a more profound impact on the academic community.

The lessons learned throughout this process are fundamental for progress, as they allow reflection on accumulated experience, identification of acquired knowledge, and highlighting of the best practices to guide future actions. A key lesson is the necessity of regional collaboration, which has not been widespread historically in Latin America. Working together and valuing each context's cultural, social, and academic contributions facilitate the development of new opportunities and perspectives to improve teaching. This shared work requires generosity, active listening, and a willingness to learn from one another rather than imposing predetermined solutions. Classrooms should become living laboratories where experimentation and innovation take place.

Promoting distributed leadership is another crucial insight involving diverse actors in the joint construction and direction of educational processes. Establishing common goals and approaches requires the participation of leaders who, rooted in their context, collaboratively promote new regional leadership, avoiding centralized power dynamics.

Additionally, connecting people and organizations before beginning collaborative work is essential. Recognizing each other, integrating, and combining efforts is crucial in a region with many similarities but also great differences. Many regional integration initiatives have failed by not considering these elements, unintentionally fostering dynamics contrary to collaboration and mutual understanding.

CONCLUSION

SoTL in Latin America has undergone significant evolution, adapting to the region's unique sociocultural context and addressing both historical and contemporary challenges in higher education within the region. This article has analyzed the development and implementation of SoTL in Latin America, highlighting key institutional, national, and regional initiatives that have contributed to its growth.

A critical aspect of the progression of SoTL in Latin America is its capacity to integrate interculturality, identity, and equity into university education. By aligning teaching and learning with the sociocultural realities of the region, SoTL effectively addresses educational inequalities and promotes inclusive access to learning opportunities. Institutions have adopted innovative practices, often supported by competitive funds, to enhance teaching quality and student engagement. These initiatives reflect a commitment to contextualizing pedagogical strategies, making them more relevant and effective for students and communities.

Despite notable advancements, the implementation of SoTL in Latin America faces significant challenges. These include the need for cultural integration of SoTL concepts, heavy faculty workloads, scarcity of interdisciplinary programs, limited technological infrastructure, and the need to align educational practices with SDGs. Overcoming these obstacles requires sustained efforts in faculty development, investment in technological resources, and the creation of supportive policies that recognize and reward teaching excellence. The impacts of SoTL initiatives are evident at the cultural, disciplinary, and institutional levels. Culturally, there is an increasing valuation of teaching excellence, reflected in the growth of

teaching and learning centers and participation in SoTL-related activities. Disciplinarily teaching is gaining prominence in academic discussions, conferences, and publications. Institutionally, universities are redefining policies to formalize the importance of teaching in academic evaluations and promotions.

The insights learned emphasize the importance of regional collaboration, distributed leadership, and the necessity of connecting people and organizations to foster a supportive SoTL community. Embracing a collaborative approach that values the contributions of diverse contexts enhances the potential for innovation and improvement in teaching practices. Classrooms become living laboratories where experimentation and reflective practice lead to continuous improvement.

Recommendations for future development

To advance the SoTL in Latin America, it is essential to strengthen regional collaboration by fostering partnerships among institutions, sharing best practices, and establishing formal networks such as a fully constituted LatinSoTL society. Enhancing faculty development programs through comprehensive training in SoTL methodologies, reflective practice, and pedagogical innovation will empower educators to integrate SoTL into their teaching effectively. Additionally, increasing access to resources and infrastructure, particularly in rural and less developed areas, will help bridge technological disparities and ensure equitable participation in SoTL activities. Promoting high-impact publications and conferences in Spanish and Portuguese will facilitate the dissemination of research and best practices, increasing academic visibility. Aligning SoTL initiatives with the SDGs can further ensure that education contributes to societal needs and global challenges. Moreover, advocating for policy changes that recognize and incentivize teaching excellence and SoTL research can motivate faculty engagement. Finally, fostering students as active participants in SoTL initiatives will enhance teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes, ultimately strengthening higher education in the region.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Oscar Jerez Yañez (CHL) is an academic in the department of health sciences education and a director of the teaching and learning center, faculty of medicine at the University of Chile.

Jorge Maldonado Mahauad (ECU) is an academic at the department of computer science and director of educational innovation at the University of Cuenca.

Gisela Schwartzman (ARG) is an academic and director of the department of education at the Italian Hospital University of Buenos Aires.

Carolina Rodríguez Enríquez (URY) is an academic in the faculty of nursing at the University of the Republic.

Sugey Montoya Sandí (CR) is the division director at the National Higher Education Accreditation System (SINAES).

Álvaro Herrera Alcaíno (CHL) is an academic and national director of medical education in the faculty of medicine and science at the Universidad San Sebastián.

Cristina Del Mastro Vecchione (PE) is an academic in the department of education at Pontifical Catholic University of Peru.

Miguel Morales-Chan (GT) is an academic and director of the digital education area, and coordinator of MOOCs, GES department at the Universidad Galileo.

Wendy Díaz Pérez (MEX) is an academic in the teaching innovation center and CUCEA at the University of Guadalajara.

Ivory Mogollón de Lugo (VEN) is an academic in the distance education system at the Central University of Venezuela.

Gina Camargo De Luque (COL) is an innovation and research coordinator in the Center for Teaching Excellence at the Universidad del Norte.

Alejandra Martínez Barrientos (BOL) is an academic and director of the department of education at the Universidad Católica Boliviana San Pablo.

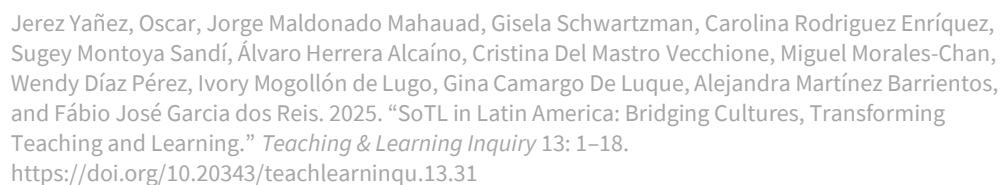
Fábio José García dos Reis (BRA) is the President of the STHEM Brasil Consortium and Director of Innovation and Cooperation Networks at SEMESP.

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