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## Advancing the scholarship of teaching and learning through quality assurance: Empowering academic identity for transformative practice

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### Abstract

This conceptual study explores the dynamic interplay between *Quality Assurance (QA)* and the *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)* as mechanisms for empowering *academic identity* and advancing transformative educational practice in higher education. The paper argues that QA has evolved beyond its traditional compliance-oriented function to become a developmental and scholarly process that reinforces reflective practice, professional autonomy, and institutional credibility. Within the South African context, QA is increasingly positioned as a catalyst for pedagogical innovation and scholarly engagement, aligning teaching and learning with national transformation imperatives and global competitiveness. Drawing from recent literature (2020–2025), the study conceptualises QA as a vehicle for embedding SoTL within institutional cultures, fostering continuous improvement and scholarly teaching. The analysis demonstrates that QA-driven processes such as peer review, curriculum alignment, and systematic evaluation facilitate evidence-based decision-making, strengthen academic agency, and enhance the quality of student learning outcomes. Furthermore, the integration of QA with SoTL is shown to enhance institutional reputation and accountability by situating academics as co-creators of educational quality rather than passive recipients of policy mandates. This engagement promotes reflective inquiry, collaborative knowledge sharing, and the development of professional communities of practice that reinforce academic identity as both scholarly and transformative. The paper also situates QA within broader global educational trends such as internationalisation, digitalisation, and inclusivity arguing that QA frameworks grounded in SoTL enable academics to adapt to these shifts through innovation and research-informed teaching. Through this reframing, QA is reconceptualised as a scholarly and developmental process that validates academic expertise, encourages reflective pedagogy, and sustains institutional excellence. Ultimately, the study concludes that advancing SoTL through QA not only strengthens academic identity but also enhances institutional legitimacy and global competitiveness. By embedding QA within SoTL driven frameworks, higher education institutions can cultivate a culture of continuous improvement, scholarly teaching, and transformative practice that redefines academic professionalism and drives systemic educational reform.

**Keywords:** Quality Assurance, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Academic Identity, Transformative Practice, Institutional Credibility, Reflective Teaching, Higher Education.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, quality assurance (QA) has evolved from a compliance-driven mechanism to a transformative pedagogical catalyst that actively shapes academic identity and enhances the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) across higher education institutions globally [1, 2]. Within the South African context, QA is no longer perceived merely as a regulatory obligation but as an essential framework for promoting reflective teaching practices, professional growth, and institutional accountability that align with global competitiveness and local transformation imperatives [3]. This paradigm shift is underpinned by the recognition that academics are not only instructors but also scholarly practitioners whose identity formation is deeply embedded in their engagement with evidence-based teaching, curriculum innovation, and continuous improvement [4, 5]. By positioning QA as a vehicle that supports scholarly teaching, it becomes instrumental in advancing SoTL as a core dimension of academic professionalism and educational excellence.

The intersection between QA and SoTL foregrounds the active role of academics in shaping learning environments through reflective inquiry, peer engagement, and data-informed pedagogical decisions [6]. Research indicates that institutions that embed QA within a SoTL framework report enhanced academic agency, improved student outcomes, and stronger alignment between teaching practices and institutional mission [7, 8]. This shift acknowledges that quality is not imposed externally but co-constructed by academics whose identity is empowered through collaborative engagement in QA processes that recognise their disciplinary expertise and pedagogical autonomy [9]. Consequently, QA becomes a transformative practice when it fosters academic identity formation through scholarly reflection, professional recognition, and engagement in communities of practice.

Furthermore, contemporary literature emphasises that academic identity is increasingly shaped by the imperative to demonstrate excellence in teaching as a scholarly endeavour that is evidence-based, research-informed, and aligned with learner-centred outcomes [10, 11]. QA mechanisms such as peer review of teaching, curriculum alignment, and systematic evaluation serve as platforms for academics to engage in SoTL by critically reflecting on their teaching philosophies and adopting innovative pedagogical strategies [12]. This identity formation is not merely individual but deeply institutional, as higher education institutions strategically deploy QA to cultivate transformative teaching cultures that support academic growth and advance social justice, employability, and global relevance in the post-pandemic era [13, 14]. Considering these developments, this paper argues that quality assurance is a critical enabler in advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning by empowering academic identity as a driver of transformative educational practice. By reframing QA as a scholarly, developmental, and identity-enhancing process rather than a bureaucratic exercise, higher education institutions can cultivate academic agency, increase pedagogical innovation, and strengthen the overall quality and relevance of teaching and learning in South Africa and beyond.

### 1.1. Problem Statement

Quality assurance (QA) is increasingly recognized as a strategic mechanism for advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). However, many higher education institutions still implement QA primarily as a compliance-oriented exercise, rather than as a developmental process that fosters academic identity and transformative teaching practices. This bureaucratic approach often results in disengagement among academic staff, who may perceive QA processes as an administrative burden that undermines their professional autonomy and scholarly agency [15, 16]. Consequently, the transformative potential of QA to promote reflective practice, enhance teaching scholarship, and strengthen academic professionalism remains underutilized [8]. Furthermore, in the South African higher education context, persistent challenges such as regulatory pressures, resource constraints, and uneven institutional cultures exacerbate the marginalization of academics within QA frameworks, limiting their capacity to engage meaningfully in SoTL [5]. This misalignment poses a significant risk to the development of empowered academic identities and the achievement of high-quality, student-centred learning outcomes. Therefore, there is a critical need to investigate how QA can be reconceptualised and operationalised not merely as an evaluative tool but as a catalyst for academic identity development and transformative educational practice through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

### 1.2. Research Question

How can quality assurance in higher education be leveraged to strengthen academic identity and promote transformative teaching practices through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning?

## 2. Methodology

This study adopts a conceptualisation approach to critically examine Quality Assurance (QA) as a scholarly mechanism for advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and strengthening academic identity in higher education. The core concepts analysed include QA, SoTL, and academic identity, supported by interconnected constructs such as institutional credibility, regulatory alignment, institutional reputation, and global educational trends. Peer-reviewed literature from 2020 to 2025 was systematically reviewed using thematic analysis to synthesise how QA functions as a developmental and reflective process rather than a mere administrative requirement. Through this analytical process, QA is conceptualised as a catalyst for pedagogical transformation, scholarly autonomy, and institutional trust, enabling academics to engage in evidence-based teaching and professional identity formation. This methodology advances theoretical understanding by framing QA as integral to embedding SoTL within institutional cultures and positioning academics as agents of transformative practice. Rather than testing hypotheses, the study deepens conceptual clarity, generates new insights into the interrelationships between these constructs, and contributes to global debates on the future of higher education systems [6, 7].



**Figure 1.**  
Conceptual Flow Chart: Quality Assurance as a Catalyst for SoTL and Academic identity.

Quality Assurance initiates structured mechanisms for evaluating and enhancing teaching practices. This drives continuous improvement through reflective inquiry and data-informed pedagogical decisions. These practices align with the principles of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), transforming teaching from a routine task into a scholarly endeavour. Through active participation in QA-led SoTL processes, academics develop a stronger academic identity, characterised by professional autonomy, scholarly recognition, and transformative teaching agency. As these scholarly identities are strengthened, they positively impact institutional performance, enhancing accountability, reputation, and global competitiveness.

### 2.1. Key Concepts

#### 2.1.1. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning refers to a research-informed and reflective approach to teaching where academics systematically investigate their pedagogical practices to improve student learning outcomes [17]. SoTL involves evidence-based inquiry, peer evaluation, and dissemination of teaching innovations, positioning teaching as a scholarly and transformative act. Within this study, SoTL is understood as both a framework and a professional identity space through which academics engage in continuous improvement and pedagogical innovation.

### *2.1.2. Quality Assurance (QA) in Higher Education*

Quality assurance in higher education comprises the structured processes, policies, and mechanisms implemented to ensure that teaching, learning, and institutional practices meet established standards of excellence [16]. Traditionally viewed as regulatory and compliance-focused, QA is increasingly conceptualized as a developmental and capacity-building process that drives institutional improvement and academic empowerment. In this study, QA is interpreted not as an external imposition, but as an enabler of scholarly teaching and professional identity formation.

### *2.1.3. Academic Identity*

Academic identity refers to how academics perceive and construct their professional roles, values, and purpose within higher education. It is shaped through engagement in teaching, research, leadership, and community service [5]. Academic identity is dynamic and influenced by institutional culture, policy frameworks, and recognition systems. Within the context of this study, academic identity is a central construct that mediates the relationship between QA engagement and the development of scholarly teaching practices.

### *2.1.4. Transformative Practice*

Transformative practice involves intentional, reflective shifts in teaching and learning approaches that lead to meaningful improvements in student engagement, equity, and learning outcomes [13]. It is grounded in critical reflection, innovation, and responsiveness to changing educational needs. Transformative practice in this study is seen as the outcome of effective integration between QA and SoTL, leading to enhanced academic agency and institutional change.

### *2.1.5. Professional Agency*

Professional agency refers to the capacity of academics to make autonomous, informed decisions about their teaching and scholarly roles. It is a manifestation of academic empowerment, where individuals actively shape their professional environments and identities [4]. Within the QA-SoTL framework, professional agency is a critical element that determines whether academics engage with quality mechanisms as passive recipients or active contributors.

### *2.1.6. Reflective Practice*

Reflective practice is the process through which academics critically analyse their teaching approaches, student feedback, and learning outcomes to inform continuous improvement [18]. This concept is foundational to both SoTL and QA, as it promotes introspection and inquiry-based enhancement of pedagogy. Reflective practice serves as the bridge between quality assurance processes and the development of scholarly teaching identities.

## *2.2. The Necessity of Embracing Quality Assurance Practices in Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and Strengthening Academic Identity*

The necessity for academic staff to embrace quality assurance (QA) practices is increasingly being recognised as pivotal to advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and strengthening academic identity in higher education. Recent scholarship argues that QA should not be seen merely as a regulatory mechanism but as a scholarly and developmental process that enables academics to critically reflect on pedagogical practices and contribute to transformative teaching and learning [2, 6]. Through this lens, QA becomes a conceptual bridge between institutional expectations and academic professionalism, positioning teaching as an identity-forming activity rather than an administrative obligation [8]. When academic staff actively engage in QA processes, they participate in systematic curriculum review, evaluation of student learning outcomes, and pedagogical innovation all of which are core activities within the SoTL paradigm [7]. This engagement promotes a culture of continuous improvement where academics adopt evidence-based teaching practices, reflect on their instructional strategies, and align their teaching with both disciplinary standards and student needs [16]. By conceptualising QA as a reflective scholarly process, academic identity is strengthened through recognition of teaching as intellectual labour and professional expertise [5]. Academic staff are therefore repositioned from passive implementers of institutional directives to active co-creators of educational quality and innovation.

Institutional credibility is closely related to the scholarly identity of its academic staff, and QA frameworks reinforce this connection by embedding accountability within reflective practice [19]. When QA outcomes are made transparent through accreditation reports, performance evaluations, and peer reviews, they enhance the public trust and institutional legitimacy that are essential for global competitiveness [9]. Transparency not only reaffirms institutional integrity but also validates the academic's role in shaping teaching excellence and student success. This alignment between QA, accountability, and scholarly identity repositions academics as institutional ambassadors of quality whose pedagogical practices underpin institutional credibility [13]. Furthermore, QA enables scholarly autonomy when regulatory standards are interpreted and enacted through discipline-specific and research-informed practices. Rather than limiting academic freedom, QA can enhance academic agency by providing platforms for reflective engagement and scholarly negotiation of quality standards [6]. In this capacity, QA becomes a transformative practice that empowers academics to lead teaching innovation in ways that align with both institutional goals and global educational trends [3]. As higher education navigates rapid digitalisation, internationalisation, and calls for inclusivity, QA functions as an enabler of adaptive and scholarly teaching, reinforcing the academic identity as a driver of transformation [8]. Ultimately, embracing QA practices is fundamental not only to institutional success but also to the intellectual empowerment of academic staff. By embedding QA within the SoTL paradigm, higher education institutions cultivate environments where academic identity is affirmed through reflective teaching, professional recognition, and scholarly contribution to transformative learning. This integration

ensures that QA becomes a catalyst for innovation, academic legitimacy, and pedagogical excellence in the evolving global higher education landscape.

### *2.3. Institutional Credibility and Accountability: A Catalyst for Academic Identity Formation and Scholarly Teaching*

Institutional credibility and accountability are no longer peripheral expectations in higher education; they are central pillars through which academic legitimacy, trust, and global competitiveness are constructed [20]. Contemporary scholarship argues that quality assurance (QA) is pivotal in shaping institutional reputation, as it ensures transparency of processes, public trust, and stakeholder confidence [8, 16]. In this context, QA practices transcend bureaucratic functions and become deeply interwoven with the academic identity of staff, who are custodians of institutional credibility through their pedagogical practices and scholarly engagement with teaching and learning [6]. When QA processes are conceptualised as scholarly endeavours rather than regulatory impositions, they empower academics to position themselves as co-authors of institutional excellence, thereby strengthening their academic identity. Arguments emerging from recent literature suggest that institutional accountability is not only a mechanism for reporting but also a reflective space that enables academics to critically examine the impact of their teaching on student success and societal outcomes [19]. This reflective engagement aligns with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), which promotes teaching as a form of scholarly inquiry. By regularly participating in quality reviews, peer evaluations, and curriculum audits, academic staff co-construct the institutional narrative of quality, building both credibility and ownership of academic standards [7]. In South Africa, where disparities in educational quality persist, QA serves as a transformational tool that promotes equity, accountability, and inclusivity, thereby reinforcing institutional integrity and strengthening public trust [5].

Furthermore, QA-driven accountability frameworks enhance academic identity by validating the academic's role in institutional performance. Through evidence-informed quality practices, academics can demonstrate the effectiveness of their teaching, which increases their visibility and recognition within the global higher education landscape [9]. This recognition is critical in a globalised academic environment where institutional rankings, accreditation outcomes, and international partnerships depend heavily on demonstrated quality and accountability. QA processes such as program evaluations and accreditation reports not only assure external stakeholders of institutional credibility but also create opportunities for academics to engage in scholarly reflection, peer benchmarking, and professional development [13]. Thus, institutional credibility becomes both a product and a catalyst of scholarly teaching practice. Transparency, as a core dimension of QA, plays an essential role in reinforcing institutional accountability. By making quality processes and outcomes publicly accessible, institutions demonstrate ethical stewardship, academic integrity, and responsible governance [16]. This openness is integral to academic identity formation because it positions academic staff as trusted professionals whose work contributes meaningfully to public good. In this way, QA not only builds institutional credibility but also affirms the academic as a central agent in the transformation of teaching and learning through scholarly engagement. Ultimately, institutional accountability, when implemented as a reflective and scholarly process, empowers academics to advance SoTL and to enact their academic identity with confidence, agency, and institutional legitimacy.

### *2.4. Quality Assurance Practices in Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*

Quality assurance (QA) has increasingly emerged as a central pillar in higher education for advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and strengthening academic identity in ways that transcend traditional compliance-driven narratives [21]. Rather than functioning merely as a regulatory mechanism, QA plays a developmental and transformative role by fostering evidence-based teaching, reflective practice, and pedagogical innovation. Through QA-driven processes such as curriculum evaluation, peer review, and student feedback integration, academics are encouraged to engage in continuous improvement cycles characteristic of SoTL, thus positioning teaching as a scholarly activity grounded in inquiry and reflection [7]. This engagement not only enhances educational outcomes but empowers academics to construct their professional identities around scholarly teaching rather than administrative obligation, reinforcing their agency as knowledge creators and pedagogical leaders [6].

Institutional credibility is intrinsically linked to the academic integrity and scholarly engagement of staff, and QA provides the framework through which institutions build public trust and demonstrate accountability [22]. When QA processes are transparent and informed by stakeholder participation, they create an environment of academic legitimacy where teaching excellence is validated through scholarly evidence and peer recognition [8]. This transparency enhances institutional standing and simultaneously affirms academic identity by positioning educators as central actors in knowledge production and quality enhancement. Rather than imposing external pressure, QA creates meaningful dialogue between the institution and its academics, reinforcing professional autonomy and enabling educators to negotiate and interpret standards in alignment with disciplinary values [5]. The result is a form of accountability deeply rooted in professional ethics and academic responsibility rather than bureaucratic compliance.

Moreover, the integration of QA with SoTL promotes a culture of reflective teaching that drives institutional reputation in both local and global contexts. Institutions recognised for high-quality teaching and strong QA practices often demonstrate excellence in student outcomes, accreditation success, and global competitiveness. These indicators are not merely institutional metrics but manifestations of the scholarly engagement of academic staff who contribute to teaching excellence through innovation, peer collaboration, and evidence-based transformation [9]. Academic identity is thus enhanced through recognition, reward systems, and opportunities for scholarly dissemination that stem from QA engagement. As academics align their professional practices with institutional quality objectives, they simultaneously enhance the institution's academic prestige and their own scholarly reputation.

Furthermore, QA provides academics with the tools and frameworks required to adapt to global transformations in higher education, including digitalisation, internationalisation, and inclusivity. By encouraging continuous professional development and reflective practice, QA empowers academics to respond proactively to emerging trends and to integrate global best practices into their teaching [3]. This adaptability repositions academic staff not as passive recipients of global pressures but as active agents of innovation who shape institutional futures through scholarly teaching.

It is within this dynamic interplay between QA and SoTL that academic identity is most powerfully articulated as a construct defined by reflective inquiry, professional autonomy, and commitment to transformative learning [23]. In essence, quality assurance is conceptually inseparable from the advancement of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and the strengthening of academic identity. QA acts as both a structural and intellectual catalyst that integrates accountability with scholarly engagement, ensuring that higher education institutions uphold standards while simultaneously enabling academic staff to innovate, reflect, and lead transformative educational practices. By repositioning QA as a scholarly, identity-forming process, institutions can foster environments where teaching is valued as a rigorous academic endeavour, academic staff are empowered as change agents, and student learning is enhanced through continuous improvement and reflective excellence [23].

### *2.5. Advancing Institutional Reputation through Quality Assurance as a Scholarly Practice*

Institutional reputation in higher education is increasingly shaped not by branding or external perception alone, but by demonstrable commitment to quality teaching and learning underpinned by scholarly engagement. Quality assurance (QA) mechanisms serve as a crucial platform through which institutions signal their academic excellence, credibility, and transformative capacity to internal and external stakeholders. Contemporary scholarship recognises QA not simply as evaluative infrastructure, but as a scholarly-driven process that enhances institutional reputation by embedding reflective teaching practices, promoting curriculum relevance, and validating academic identity through excellence in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) [8]. In this regard, institutional reputation becomes a direct function of the academic community's capacity to demonstrate pedagogical innovation, student success, and evidence-based improvement.

The strategic implementation of QA practices contributes to institutional reputation by establishing a culture of academic rigour and transparency. Institutions that adopt QA systems aligned with SoTL principles can continuously evaluate and improve their academic programs using data-driven approaches, peer review, and stakeholder engagement [16]. This fosters institutional trust and credibility, not only among current and prospective students but also among employers, government bodies, and international partners. According to Altbach and Hans [9] institutions with embedded QA systems grounded in scholarly practice are more likely to attract international collaborations, secure funding, and enhance global ranking performance, owing to the clear articulation of teaching quality and academic integrity. In this way, QA enhances the institution's prestige by positioning it as an intellectual hub producing competent graduates who meet industry and societal needs.

Importantly, institutional reputation is inseparable from the academic identity of its staff. When academics engage in QA as a scholarly activity publishing on teaching innovation, participating in peer reviews, and generating evidence of student learning they contribute directly to the institution's intellectual capital and global standing [6]. This creates a reciprocal dynamic where institutional reputation reinforces academic identity, and empowered academic identity enhances institutional prestige. The dissemination of QA outcomes through accreditation reports, teaching excellence awards, and SoTL publications serves as evidence of institutional commitment to quality and creates opportunities for academics to be recognised as thought leaders in their disciplines [13]. Consequently, QA becomes a driver of academic recognition, reinforcing universities' reputational capital in regional and international spheres.

Moreover, the credibility derived from QA processes positions institutions competitively in the global higher education landscape. Institutions that demonstrate transformative teaching practices and measurable student achievement are more likely to be perceived as world-class [3]. QA systems that foreground continuous improvement and reflective practice enable institutions to adapt to evolving educational standards, technological shifts, and global mobility trends. This adaptability enhances institutional resilience and fosters a reputation for innovation and excellence. As Brown and David [8] assert, in the post-pandemic era, reputation is increasingly tied to institutional capacity for pedagogical agility and commitment to learning quality both of which are outcomes of robust QA systems integrated with SoTL. In essence, institutional reputation is not merely an external perception but a conceptual outcome of the intersection between quality assurance and academic identity. By embracing QA as a scholarly and transformative practice rather than a compliance exercise, academic staff strengthen their identity as agents of quality, while institutions enhance their global competitiveness through demonstrable excellence in teaching and learning. Thus, QA serves as a catalyst for institutional prestige, academic empowerment, and long-term sustainability within the global higher education ecosystem.

### *2.6. Quality Assurance, Global Educational Trends, and Academic Identity Transformation*

The rapid evolution of global educational trends has positioned quality assurance (QA) as a strategic mechanism for enabling higher education institutions to adapt effectively while simultaneously empowering academic identity and advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). In an increasingly interconnected academic landscape, institutions are expected to demonstrate agility in responding to international benchmarks, technological transformation, and shifting learner expectations. QA processes offer the critical infrastructure through which academics engage with these global imperatives in a scholarly and reflective manner, ensuring teaching practices remain relevant, innovative, and aligned with international standards [2]. When QA is conceptualised not as a fixed compliance mechanism but as an evolving scholarly endeavour, it supports academics in integrating global pedagogical innovations such as blended

learning, inclusive curriculum models, and digital assessment strategies, ultimately reinforcing academic identity as responsive, future-oriented, and globally engaged [3].

In this context, QA serves as an enabler of global competitiveness by embedding continuous improvement cycles that promote research-informed teaching and evidence-based decision-making. Institutions that integrate QA with SoTL demonstrate the capacity to adapt to international expectations for quality while preserving contextual relevance, thus positioning themselves as active contributors to the global knowledge economy [9]. This adaptive capability strengthens institutional reputation and enhances academic identity, as educators assume roles not only as teachers but as scholarly practitioners whose work impacts both local and global educational ecosystems. Engagement with QA-driven pedagogical innovation empowers academics to lead transformative practice rather than merely respond to external demands, reinforcing professional agency and scholarly autonomy [8].

Moreover, the integration of QA with global trends promotes an identity shift from traditional academic roles to those of global knowledge brokers and shapers of educational futures. Academics who engage with QA practices are encouraged to adopt international quality benchmarks, participate in global teaching scholarship, and publish on innovative pedagogies, thereby embedding their professional identity within a globally competitive and collaborative framework [13]. QA-driven SoTL engagement enables academics to conceptualise teaching as a form of academic leadership, one that transcends local boundaries and contributes to global discourse on quality and transformation in higher education [6]. This identity transformation is particularly crucial in the post-pandemic era, where digitalisation, internationalisation, and rapid upskilling have become defining characteristics of sustainable educational systems.

Ultimately, quality assurance stands at the nexus of global educational change, academic identity empowerment, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. By facilitating ongoing professional growth, fostering adaptive pedagogical practices, and promoting scholarly engagement, QA empowers academics to lead institutional transformation with confidence and credibility. In doing so, QA not only enhances institutional resilience in a rapidly changing global environment but also positions academic identity at the forefront of transformative practice, ensuring that higher education remains responsive, innovative, and purpose-driven in its pursuit of educational excellence.

### 3. Conclusion

This study affirms the critical interplay between *Quality Assurance (QA)* and the *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)* as transformative mechanisms that enhance teaching quality, strengthen academic identity, and sustain institutional excellence. When QA is reconceptualised as a scholarly and developmental process rather than a compliance-driven exercise, it fosters reflective, evidence-based pedagogy that empowers academics as active contributors to educational transformation. Integrating QA with SoTL cultivates a culture of inquiry, collaboration, and continuous improvement, positioning teaching as a scholarly endeavour grounded in research, innovation, and professional reflection. Through this integration, QA becomes a catalyst for academic empowerment, reinforcing the educator's role as a co-creator of quality and a driver of institutional credibility. Academics engage more deeply in reflective teaching practices, curriculum alignment, and peer review, all of which enhance student learning outcomes and institutional accountability. Such engagement nurtures academic identity as dynamic and contextually responsive, shaped through scholarly practice and institutional trust. In this way, QA and SoTL operate synergistically to elevate the status of teaching as an intellectual pursuit that advances both individual professionalism and collective excellence. In a rapidly changing global education landscape characterised by digitalisation, internationalisation, and inclusivity, QA frameworks grounded in SoTL provide the necessary adaptability and scholarly resilience for higher education institutions. By aligning accountability with developmental purpose, QA supports academic agency, pedagogical innovation, and institutional competitiveness. Ultimately, advancing SoTL through QA signifies a paradigm shift in higher education one that bridges institutional accountability with academic empowerment. This integration ensures that teaching and learning are not merely evaluative processes but transformative practices that define modern academic identity and contribute meaningfully to institutional and societal advancement.

#### 3.1. Implications of the Study

The conceptualisation of Quality Assurance (QA) as a scholarly and developmental process for advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and strengthening academic identity has wide-ranging implications for multiple stakeholders in higher education. When QA is reframed from a compliance mechanism to a transformative scholarly practice, it influences teaching quality, professional development, and institutional effectiveness across various levels. The implications of this study are directed towards five key groups: academic practitioners, higher education institutions, policy and regulatory bodies, students and learners, and future researchers.

#### 3.2. Implications for Academic Practitioners

For academics, the study underscores QA as a mechanism for reflective practice, scholarly growth, and professional empowerment. Engagement with QA allows academics to integrate SoTL principles into their teaching, encouraging inquiry-based approaches and continuous improvement in curriculum design and pedagogy. This process fosters scholarly autonomy and strengthens academic identity by recognising teaching as a core element of academic professionalism. QA participation also supports collaboration, peer review, and pedagogical innovation hallmarks of transformative academic practice (Owens 2024).



### 3.3. Implications for Higher Education Institutions

For higher education institutions, QA serves as a strategic framework for achieving institutional credibility, accountability, and sustained excellence. Institutions can leverage QA to promote teaching quality, align curricula with global standards, and enhance institutional reputation. Embedding SoTL within QA frameworks encourages continuous improvement and creates professional recognition pathways for teaching excellence. Moreover, by institutionalising reflective QA practices, universities can cultivate a culture of scholarly engagement and innovation that supports institutional transformation and global competitiveness [8].

### 3.4. Implications for Policy and Regulatory Bodies

At the policy level, the study calls for a reimagining of QA frameworks as tools for scholarly empowerment rather than mere compliance instruments. Policy and accreditation agencies should create participatory QA models that value pedagogical innovation and contextual flexibility. Collaborative policy development between regulators and institutions ensures that QA criteria are dynamic, inclusive, and aligned with both local realities and global educational standards [16]. By promoting academic agency within QA policy design, regulatory bodies can contribute to sustainable quality cultures across higher education systems.

### 3.5. Implications for Students and Learners

For students, the study highlights the indirect yet profound benefits of QA-informed SoTL engagement. QA practices that promote reflective teaching, curriculum alignment, and assessment transparency directly enhance learning experiences and outcomes. When students are engaged as active stakeholders in QA processes providing feedback, co-creating curricula, and evaluating instructional quality they develop critical learning skills and agency (Tran & Nguyen 2022). Thus, QA becomes not only a tool for institutional quality but also a mechanism for empowering students as partners in knowledge construction and beneficiaries of scholarly teaching.

### 3.6. Implications for Future Research

This study provides a theoretical foundation for future empirical investigations into the relationship between QA, SoTL, and academic identity. Researchers are encouraged to explore how QA-informed teaching practices shape academic motivation, student engagement, and institutional change across diverse contexts. Longitudinal and comparative studies could offer insights into how QA models differ in effectiveness across regions and disciplines. Additionally, research could examine how global educational trends such as digitalisation and internationalisation interact with QA frameworks to shape SoTL and academic identity development [9].

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