

Treasure Island Pedagogies Episode 26

Podcast Transcript

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Tunde Varga-Atkins

Hi, this is Tunde Varga-Atkins and this is episode 26 of our Treasure Island. This is episode 26 of our Treasure Island Pedagogies podcast series from the Centre for Innovation in Education at the University of Liverpool, where we share our light bulb moments, teaching props and pedagogies. As we cohabit our Treasure Island, the space for contact time with students. I have the pleasure of introducing 3 guests today, Carrie Swatts, Evan Dickerson, and Rebecca Wicklin. So can I ask each of you to briefly introduce yourself your original discipline and your current role, please?

Carys Watts

Hello. Yes, my name is Carys Watts. I'm based at Newcastle University, UK. My original discipline was microbiology by degree and I moved around between biochemistry and genetics and then into management before abandoning the lab and moving into teaching. And I am now a senior lecturer. An enterprise in the Biosciences.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

That sounds great. Yeah, go on this one.

Evan Dickerson

Hi, I'm Evan Dickerson. I am a learning technologist at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. My original discipline was history of art and I studied that undergrad level and I then lectured in that for six years, part time before transitioning. Into learning technology. Goal, which I've held at a number of universities around

London since 1999. So I'm. Yeah, I've been in that role for quite some time, but I've been at the Guildhall school now for just over 2 years.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Great. Thanks, Evan and Rebecca.

Rebecca Wakelin

Hi, my name is Rebecca Wakelin. I am currently an assistant professor of Educational development at XJT OU in Suzhou, China. Very new role. I do come from Canada where I have been an educational developer for 10 years and a teacher for 20 years. I started off teaching history and political science and then transitioned to some degrees in education and have been working in the education field ever since.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Yeah. Great to have you all on board. So we've got art sciences education, uh, quite a nice mixture today. So can you, can I ask you to now think about a light bulb moment and share one of these with your with our listeners today. So this is where. You felt that where? Where? Your students? Whatever. And whoever they may be, they were getting it. And what made this happen?

Carys Watts

Shall I dive in? Go first, then. OK, so I'm coming from a science background. We I found that by our very nature we're quite quantitative and we look at process. We want to find a solution and we want to find the most direct route there. So teaching and enterprise and one of the things that I've had to encourage our students to think about. Is is. The value of failure, which sounds terrifying to them, especially for high achieving students. So for me it's the the fail fast and change direction and what are you learning and what are you? Changing so. Encouraging the students to to not just seek an answer, but taking that step back and doing divergent thinking so. I encourage them to bounce their ideas off each other in our sessions so. Sharing their ideas with the group and me standing back completely and just being a listener. Has been really, really valuable and they quite often

change direction radically as a result of getting constructive feedback from their peers. So for me it's the it's the failing, fast learn and change for them rather than the we need to get from A to B as swiftly as possible.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Can I just ask on that, Kerry? So it sounds like quite a big shift from a way of thinking for students where you talked about that they are very solution oriented, they want to progress fast and this what you're suggesting would be that taking a step back and how, how do you make, how do you make this happen for them? Can you? Elaborate a little bit.

Carys Watts

On that. So an example I can give is I run the business enterprise for the BIOSCIENTIST module and.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, I think.

Carys Watts

We we put. Our students into small groups to work. Together and initially the the idea generation process is very alien to them, and that that they're used to being process driven, seeing a pathway through from start to finish or proposing A hypothesis and then testing that. And if it doesn't work maybe questioning why not, but it might be just varying a condition. So getting them to to look objectively at something and really. Really ask those questions. Puts them in the in the the hot seat of being able to both give and receive feedback rather than just being on the receiving end of feedback, which myself as a facilitator would normally be and and that it also, I suppose one of the things is it builds confidence there. There isn't the issue. Academia and student it's peer-to-peer, so peer-to-peer is, so is. It takes away the barriers, I suppose it just makes it a bit more straightforward. There's no judgement, there's just. We're all in this together. So I think that's made a bit more of a community as well with

my students. And I got some lovely feedback the other day. Oh, this is one of the most interesting modules. Studied and that we don't do lectures like we normally do. So we've been away from that. Pure science has been really helpful for them.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Great. Anyone else, Evan or Rebecca?

Evan Dickerson

I can pitch in with my light bulb moment if you want. Goes back to when I was lecturing in art history and museum studies, and yeah, I the traditional way of. Teaching in art history is really around, you know, being a group of students in in a lecture theatre with a, you know, couple of sets of projectors, projecting slides and images. Of, you know, paintings or sculptures or whatever it might be, you're you're discussing at that particular time onto a screen. And of course, everything is in that scenario. It's the same size. It's the same format. You don't get a sense of the scale, the impact the, the three dimensionality of a piece of sculpture, for example. My pedagogic inspiration actually came from when I was a student at the University of East Anglia. The wonderful Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts there, with the Sainsbury's collection of artefacts and paintings and sculptures and things from all around the world that they they collected and actually being able to see and experience. Things up front, you know in person directly, you know, they're talking about it, discussing it, having. You know is reflective conversations and moments with with your professors and peers as well, but you. Know having that direct experience of that object at the particular time. So when I graduated my first job a few weeks afterwards actually was to take students on a. Five week long travelling art history programme around Europe sounds fun. It wasn't. Well, it was. It was just stressful. All the logistics of that. But you know, and that's something I did every summer for for six years. And I also taught a course on museums and galleries in London. And so I I again, I I took students out into the settings and, you know. Made them experience what it was like to go behind the scenes. Of you know. The research and uh Restoration Department of the British Museum, for example, or the OR the National Portrait Gallery and you know, have that hands on flavour of what it's

like to actually work in a in a that kind of context and. And that. Didn't get to everybody, but there are three former students. I I remember. One is now the the head of lighting at the Chicago Institute of Art changed her major to art history from business. One is, you know, very passionate art provenance researcher and the third. You know, is a curator of the art collection of the United Nations. I'm not saying I'm responsible for all three of those, but, you know, a little touch in in there somewhere along the way. Of that early sense of experiencing things face to face and just being able to get that tangibility of an object I think is really crucial in that kind of discipline.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, that, I mean, that sounds amazing as well that where where you know as well how your students progress to some of these, especially where they change direction as Kerris was talking about you know in this case it's a sort of carry direction as well. Yeah. Is. Can you talk a little bit about the? So you mentioned the inspiration for this came from your own experience and how that might work in in our role as educators or I don't know if anyone else has it resonates with any of you.

Rebecca Wakelin

I was going to say I I'm actually really jealous of Evan because I always say if I could go back and wipe my educational slate clean and start over again, I would take museum studies. So I'm a. Little jealous that he's doing that, but I think. One thing when I'm working with faculty, I always say and this is going to sound kind of terrible, but be the teacher you needed when you were doing your undergrad. And again, my generation. I won't age myself in public, but when I went and did my undergrad, it was exactly how Caris described like. The old way, so person standing at the front with a PhD, hundreds of students sort of. You didn't ask your professor anything. You didn't talk. You just sat there and, you know, absorbed the information by osmosis. And I think anybody of that generation seemed to do the opposite now either just by by learning or just because of that experience. And so I think if you if you focus purposefully on being the teacher that you needed, you know, and it and by Evans example obviously he was because his students. Went on to do great things.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, that's that's so true. And thanks, Rebecca. Yeah, that's really good thought there. Do you want to tell us your light bulb moments or one of them? Probably one of the many.

Rebecca Wakelin

One of the many so I as I mentioned.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

And then for your students, yeah.

Rebecca Wakelin

For my students, yeah. As I mentioned, I've taught subjects that can be kind of spicy, so I've taught political science history and now education, and we're going to add that one to the list, and I'll explain why where. Students or learners are often confronted with ideas that make them uncomfortable for lots of different reasons. Politics is pretty obvious, right? So you know you're coming to class with a whole bunch of preconceived notions about the way the world works and the way government works, so on and so forth. History is the same, and education is pretty similar. In that I worked with professors who. Who? You know have many, many years of practise experience have been teaching for a long time and giving them new ideas that make them uncomfortable or would make them think about changing their practise, or even just reflecting on the way they're doing things can be quite uncomfortable and early on in my career I would often. Of students who would.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Sort of fight.

Rebecca Wakelin

Back against the ideas like, no, I don't. I don't agree with that. I don't believe in that. That's not something that's in my belief system. And there was a lot of struggle and you could see the struggle in them. It

was always those students who, you know, constantly put their hand up and constantly disagreed with what you said, constantly picking apart what you said. And in the beginning. With my career, I kind of got a bit annoyed, not outwardly, but inwardly. I was annoyed and. I thought, can't you just listen like why do?

Tunde Varga-Atkins

You have to keep.

Rebecca Wakelin

Challenging me every 5 minutes. You know? Yeah. But I had an interesting teaching when I was I worked for a school of Indigenous Studies and I had an indigenous elder in Canada. Tell me. Did you ever think maybe that's where the learning is happening? The struggle in a lot of indigenous cultures is where is the moment in which the learning is happening and I. Always thought you. Know the learning happened afterwards and the reflection or whatever. But but she told me that. When students are struggling with a concept, it means they're learning and so that was a light bulb moment for me because I still get that I work with great professors and sometimes I will challenge their ideas and challenge their conceptualizations of education and teaching, and they'll push back on it. And I no longer. Get annoyed. Instead, I kind of feel, you know, a light bulb goes off in my head. And I think they're learning right. And I can tell they are too, because they'll e-mail me afterwards and say, you know, sorry, I was so vocal during your session. And I said. No, no, no, no, no. That was good. That was really good. And they'll say, you know, I've been thinking about those ideas that you presented. And I I want to try them or I don't want to try them ever. And that's OK too, but I think. The light bulb moment for me is is sort of allow that struggle to happen and don't be afraid of it. It's not a behaviour thing, it is actually learning in the moment.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

So Carrison Evan was not doing a lot. So do you want to add anything on this?

Carys Watts

Yeah, I think that's absolutely fascinating and thinking about. The cohorts that I've worked with and the the dynamics between the the quiet students to the very vocal ones, the value of the vocal ones is that they're saying something that the quiet ones are thinking but not saying and not brave enough to say and are actually really grateful that someone's actually raising that there. And then so understanding where people's values are based. And then questioning those allows like you said, allows them to develop and go back and go. But why did I think this in the 1st place? And and where does this take me to in the future? So I think. Yeah. Good for you. With your spicy subjects. I love that idea.

Evan Dickerson

I mean it's.

Rebecca Wakelin

Great. One wouldn't think educational theory is necessarily spicy, but oh it is it.

Evan Dickerson

Is. Oh yes, yes.

Carys Watts

I I think in some respects I I fight a similar battle trying to convince what I would consider traditional science. Academics of the value of enterprise, but I would say, well, the value of enterprise is realising that it's more than just the bench science, it's thinking, well, where does this go next? What is the next development? What's the next iteration? And I suppose it's akin to speaking to a computer scientist and saying, you know. So this AI thing, what does? What's this all about? And, you know, 18 months ago, would we even have conceived this? So questioning our values and where we're going? Yeah, absolutely vital.

Evan Dickerson

Yes. And of course, as a learning technologist, everything I do professionally, really. Challenges and changes potentially the way the people I work with and collaborate with as academics and also students, you know, the way they do things, the way they deliver teaching and learning assessments. The very nature of assessment we've we've all had to rethink, haven't we necessarily because of AI recently. And you know what we're doing around assessment and just to use that as an example, you know, do we do, we encourage the use of AI, do we not do? We allow it, but you know, say it has to be, you know, acknowledged to a certain point and then beyond, which there has to be some evidence of the students own learning as as part of an assessment that's, you know. Created and submitted and all that kind of thing. But you know, essentially everything I do every time I walk into a room with with people. I mean, I I had somebody a, a place I worked out once where he went. Oh, here comes trouble.

Rebecca Wakelin

He's learning.

Evan Dickerson

That was his standard reaction to me. I was like, oh, dear, right now, what am I going to have to change this time? But, you know, it was. And he was quite often, as he was saying, Rebecca, he was the vocal one in that group. But you know, you go away and. You go don't. Worry a bit of a grump on his face, but you know a while later you come back and go. You know what we need to do about this thing is we need to do it in that way. I went. I told you. I just told you, you you've got it right. You know, it's finally. Not only being absorbed and being processed, but being accepted as a as a thing as a way to at least try and experiment with and. Just accept failure as well. You know that not everything is going to work first time. You know there are any number of permutations of things that can can affect how a particular you know online. Activity works for example. Could depend on the cohort could depend on, you know, the teaching staff at that particular time, you know who's collaborating on it. You know how much preparation has gone into it. All kinds of things. But you know, just accept that you give it a go, see how it works. You come back to it, you refine it, you try it again, you go OK, well, that idea didn't really work

that well. Let's try it this way instead. So it's, it's that process of continual, you know, reflection revision. You know re enaction.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

And can I ask what is your connection? All three of you? The connection point for the quiet one. So we mentioned about the vocal ones, verbalising their challenges and the thought processes and do how do you how do you pay attention or? Notice the quiet ones, and if they are asking them maybe the same questions or you know what I mean. So funny thoughts on that.

Carys Watts

So I. I started developing a kind of not a set of rules, but a set of guidelines for for working in peer groups and it was the concept of equal time and equal sharing and using a circle to basically move around and if if people didn't have anything to add vocally they could. They could keep a a communal notebook. Going and and one of the things that I will mention is. I'd like to get things on paper, and I know that sounds very retro, but the reason that I like to do that is the eye contact issue is that they're getting people to have the confidence to make eye contact and to talk to each other and and and especially here at Newcastle, we have a cohort of students that joins us in final year from Malaysia and. Being dropped into final year, where people have already got their social groups is quite intimidating. But actually building this group dynamic has really, really helped and really encouraged that ethos of we are a team and got everybody speaking. So that's really helped, that's what. I do.

Evan Dickerson

Absolutely. And I think, you know, particularly online learning, you get used to the concept of lurkers and people who. Just kind of. Read things don't necessarily say things or contribute to forums or whatever it is. If you go back, you know when forums were a thing, like the thing. But you know, I think it's a question of cause from from my point of view, it's a question of knowing who should be involved in those conversations and having continual touch points with them throughout the. And making sure that you know it's not just the

loudest voices that hold the sway of a conversation and completely steer a journey pedagogically, but you know, because not everybody knows everything and it's a team effort. So it's a question of making sure that the quieter voices are somehow, you know, brought into the conversation. Involved, you know, and it could be that, you know, there are only particular points in the creation of. Something that they want to be involved with, or that's where their particular expertise lies. But you know, it's knowing. Thing and knowing the appropriate point and you know, so making sure that they're all involved and valued in in some way I think is is a crucial thing.

Rebecca Wakelin

Yeah. And I I'm always very clear to tell the quiet ones that too, because I don't think anything strikes fear in the heart of a student more than ohh. That's the teacher that randomly calls on people to answer. And I'm, you know, I'd rather melt into a puddle than actually talk in class. So I like that idea of. Number one, I always, always never get people to speak independently. It's always in a pair in a triad, in a group and I, you know, and I'm a very I make fun of the loud people because I'm one of them and I'll say, you know, I'm going to put you in a group of three because I know there's always one loud person. I'm always that person. But I want, you know, the quieter people to give the loud person some ideas, and they will be the conduit through which it's shared. And my thing has always been so I worked in a A2 year Community College. We term you're probably familiar with in Canada where you know it wasn't a long four year undergraduate degree, it was two years and then they're out in industry working. So it was really important for me to ensure that I'm developing some of those workplace. Bills early, often all the time, and one of them is if you are by nature just a quieter person. Which the world needs? We need the thinkers, the people that you know, measure twice, cut once. And that's a very good trait to have. But you need to learn how to ensure that your voice is heard in your future company or your workplace or your job site or whatever. And there's many different ways to do that. And you know, one of it is through personal networking. So. If you have really great ideas, but there's a really loud person in the. Room. You're really great. Ideas may never see the light of day. However, if you have really good networking skills and good, you know, high emotional

intelligence and you can talk to the loud people. And say you. Know this is great idea that I'm I'm too scared to say to the boss or whatever or good writing skills or whatever. So I find it, you know, creating those opportunities. For students who are quieter to to learn some of those skills, that isn't necessarily public speaking, but is still making their voice heard just in a different. Way, yeah.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Really. That's brilliant, right. So let's move on to teaching props and pedagogies. So we are going to our students and to our Treasure Island where we spend special contact time with them. So as you all said, with some active learning and and challenging them, letting them making them fail so they can move on and. Have other I accept other ideas. So what are the what teaching props or pedagogies would you bring to this island? With the students.

Carys Watts

I think the thing I found the most effective that I would I would probably I actually do carry it with me everywhere, but in a smaller format. I always have a pencil case and a notepad with me wherever I go and I play the same with with my students. So if I want to have a really rich idea generation discursive session with them, I'm going to take huge pieces of paper. E3 plus. I'm going to take pens, colour pens, colour pencils and make sure that. I'd be on the beach if it was a real island. I would have space, I wouldn't be in a in a lecture theatre. I'd be on the floor and when I have been scheduled in lecture theatres, I've said use the floor, come and use the floor instead and they really enjoy that. Just the they're sitting around enjoying the fruit as well. I do actually bring fruit to my sessions as well. Because I find it helps. Especially the 9:00. So yeah, getting them to work on paper generates something. Again. It brings the eye contact in it allows that rich discussion to take place. And I just facilitate by wandering around. And so at the start of the session, I'd, I'd say we're not using slides today, you don't need to look at that. You can close your laptops. The only time you'll need that is when you're taking notes that you want to carry forward. There's nothing that you need to understand. You're just gonna need to develop today. So it's them. It's then over to them. And to. Ask the questions and speak to each other and actually a 2 hour

session can absolutely fly by. So for me it's going to be my huge pieces of paper and my pens and if I'm allowed to take my Lego as well just because it provides a nice distraction. So that's me.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Great. So it's a lot more than a piece of paper and pen. There's a lot more around this that you're doing, yes.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

There's a lot.

Carys Watts

More that unpacks it. Yeah, but it's it's. You can use it in. Any environment, so it's great.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, brilliant. Any others store on our island?

Evan Dickerson

Yes, while you were speaking there, Paris, I just had had a reflection. One of the the things I personally do is I always have a little notebook on me. Which I I. Tighten my belt and that's a trick. I I blatantly stole from Leonardo da Vinci. Why not? If it worked for him, it could work for. Me as well just.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, right.

Evan Dickerson

You know if if you if you need to just note some ideas down on the go and things occur to you do it. You know he did he?

Rebecca Wakelin

Did all right? Yeah, he did alright. Exactly.

Evan Dickerson

Media a thing or two, but you. Hey so my two things would be kind of I've talked a bit about experiential learning already, but also reflection as a pedagogic tool and and I think if I think about the creative disciplines, particularly as a practising. Artists, musician, actor, whatever role you're having, you never really stop learning and developing in your. Evolution and your personal development. You're constantly exposed to new sources and new stimuli. Your you reacting to a new play text you're having to perform, or a new music school you're having to to practise and you know, get ready for a public performance or you're collaborating with a new set of actors or directors or musicians or. Conductors or set designers or whoever it might be. But you're constantly bringing what you already know your own prior experience of the world. And you know, this can be just outside of. You know. Thinking about learning to become a practising actor. But you know what your life experience is like and what you have gone through, how you can bring that experience to that role or that that set of things you've got to react to and and it's got an act. So I think of reflecting. Learning and growing. It's that constant cycle. I've had the great opportunity to sit down with some some wonderful musicians over the years and talk to them about how they they learn a piece of music. Or what they what the process they go through and a few of them have said to me, I don't actually sing a note. Until I really have to, a lot of it is just. Working from the school, looking at the text, I have to sing, seeing how the music works with the words, marrying them together, seeing how I what I feel I could bring to that. Combination and and what resonates with that person there and then and obviously. Discussing with their collaborator, maybe their accompanying pianist, or whoever it might be, how that's going to work, how you can make that work, and I think. So you're constantly having your views and your conceptions and your. Identity challenged, I think. And of course for me as a learning technologist, the challenge is really. For an academic point of view, is enabling the students to evidence that online somehow? Because, you know, I think of all our our academic programmes, they have large elements of reflective practise built into them. So how do we do that in an authentic way but is also reflects them as an? But it's not just a kind of bland account of, you know, OK, so this week I'm preparing performance of X and and

this is what I I went through. But you know. Trying to get under the skin of that process of reflection, so that really means something and is evident. For them as well.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

So even as you were talking, I was trying to do a visual. Sorry, a visual. How would we visualise this? As we're growing, so as Carrie said, we are on the beach with the fruits, coconuts and the students are working with pen and paper in groups. Video is is you started talking about individual reflection and how people would bring them. On UM identity, their experienced that so I can I almost like, imagine them rowing over to the island in this bubble which which is like their experience as they come and arrive. But then you also get them to reflect with each other. So perhaps their bubbles meet and get shaped and things like. So I was just trying to visualise where we would put them on the islands. How? How that might look like that space where they're doing this?

Evan Dickerson

So peer-to-peer collaboration I think is a. Key thing. You know external stimuli being able to reference those, being able to, you know, maybe. As part of the reflection, you know pinpoint sources or other other performances or other things that they've they've gone off and and picked up on and they think actually, yeah, I'm, I'm thinking about, you know, this soliloquy for example and. It seems to have this kind of resonance with me as a performer, and I've thought back to something else I've I've heard or I've seen, you know, and bringing that in, being able to reference that as. As something they've thought about in relation to what they're producing. But you know, so yeah, it's a it's a constant cycle I think, but it's it's one of those things where. It's making tangible the kind of internal journey that somebody necessarily goes through in order to develop themselves as a as a, you know, a confident performer who's ready to go out there. And, you know, rock, the stage and whatever they're they're doing.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Grace. OK.

Carys Watts

That's really interesting and I've done a bit about value creation and one of my colleagues in music when we were discussing about confidence and it's that confidence to be able to share what you're doing and that bravery to be able to say this is mine. This is me, find my value and that the value only comes about when it's actually. Shared it's it's it's an inherent value, but it needs it needs to be explicit and out there. And to be critiqued, which is quite a scary thing to do, isn't it?

Evan Dickerson

Yes, it is. As a music critic, yes it is.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Right.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

And I guess that's part of the process because when that sharing happens and then as carries, you were talking about peer-to-peer feedback as well having that as essential parts for. Each for each. Parties to learn from. In a sense, yeah.

Carys Watts

Yeah, definitely great. I mean.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

That's. Yeah, that's already 2 rich experiences on the island. Rebecca, what's your teaching? Proper pathology.

Rebecca Wakelin

So the one I actually had thought about was Karis. Her idea I was actually going to say paper and markers because I love manipulatives that you can use with your fingers. So while she was talking, I was quickly making a Plan B. What says teaching more than that, right? Thinking on your feet, so I guess my second prop then this may come

up after we do some bartering because I may take her paper from her. But so I think my second thing that I would bring is storytelling. I'm a fan of storytelling in the classroom. I myself dabble in writing and take a lot of writing courses and read a lot about writing. And I, you know, and I, the idea of storytelling as something that humans have been doing for millennia, I don't know how long but forever as a way to. You know, teach lessons or give information, pass down things and I find. Not only storytelling as a teacher, but modelling how to story tell for the students as well, because again, no matter what industry or career they're going to get into, whether it be academia or, you know, working as biologist or whatever, storytelling is going to be, you know, part of what they're going to do. And so I am always telling stories. And I always try to connect in writing. You're always trying to connect with the higher emotion of whatever the story is, right? So, you know, if you're reading Lord of the rings, like you may not be experiencing exactly all the things that are happening, but what you're connecting with is that emotion, that human. Feeling of whatever it is, right whether it be frustration or happiness or joy or whatever. So I'm always trying to connect with people with stories, not just trench stories. I do tell a lot of trench stories. So recently I was talking to a group of professors and we were talking about classroom management. And I said, you know, nothing. Prepared me for classroom management. Then my first day teaching high school and a student like through a desk at me. Because that's what high school students do. I know. And I was. I was trying to explain how I felt about that and afterwards, she said. I was so shocked that you told that story. And I said why? It's nothing to be embarrassed about. That's just what happens when you know you're teaching secondary school. But you know, she connected with that cuz I said I felt like such a failure. And and she says, you know, I feel like that.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Oh my God.

Rebecca Wakelin

Today, as a professor and I thought interesting like, you know, you didn't experience that exact thing, thank goodness. But that human emotion is still there. And so I tell stories. I get my students to tell

stories. I also find it's a lot more of a relaxing genre. I guess we'll say as opposed to saying, you know, what's the answer, you know? And students are like deer in the headlight, if you can say, you know, let's tell a story about this imaginary person named John who is dealing with this situation. What should he do? And then we can tell stories through the eyes of somebody else. So. I think I would bring storytelling to the island, if for nothing else it would keep us entertained. I'm assuming we're waiting for rescue. I don't know, but I would definitely use storytelling it.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Ohh we are having learning. We're having fun learning on the island. I think that's the treasure islands. Yes. But yeah, sounds great.

Rebecca Wakelin

Than definitely storytelling. It would be happier stories in that case.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Or being challenged as we learn, as we've discussed today, so. That's brilliant and well done, Rebecca, for quickly thinking on your feet. Although there's nothing wrong with using the same prop for different things, I mean, I guess that's in, in a sense that would have been a great task as well if you all chosen paper and pen which haven't already connected me. And what would you have done? And I'm sure everyone else would have added.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

That's true.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

It's different. OK, so we've got paper and pen reflective learning and storytelling on the island, and then obviously your light bulb moments as well can give us some thoughts here, but is there anything you would like to barter with each other as Rebecca, you said, or anything that we could still bring to the island that we feel? Oh, that would be great to add in the mix of the things that we've already mentioned.

Carys Watts

I'd happily, umm, swap with Rebecca, so I used. I used to I mean. Just because I'm thinking, Oh yeah, I. Did that so when when I have my first class of the year, one of the first things I do on on the first slide after the, you know this is this is the session is the this is me and it's a little bit about my background and absolutely you know. I tell them the number of times I failed my driving test. I tell them about something that didn't go well, something I'm really proud of and and bringing that lived experience in and the vignettes and and it comes back to another light bulb moment that suddenly occurred to me. Some years you see the eyes go down and and they're not paying attention. They're on something on the laptops because they don't use paper. But this year they were still and they were. They were looking at me and it really struck me. I thought, Oh my goodness, they're doing it. They're doing the learning, and it's because this is the first. So, so we we normally put any slides we use up on canvas are blue in advance. So the students have got them and very clear to them. And putting a condensed slide deck on there, so they know the bones of it, but they don't get the full thing. And I think that's really helped because then the vignettes and the storytelling goes in between and it acts, it acts like a progressive ladder for them. So and then from that, that gives them the confidence that they can use their own lived experience and bring that in and they won't be judged. And the reason that we're doing it is so that we can learn from each other so. I'd be happy to swap. Top my pens and paper.

Rebecca Wakelin

Absolutely. OK. I'm gonna. I'm gonna take your pens and paper, but I'm gonna add scissors. And there's a reason. So as much as I like writing on paper, I also like cutting paper into movable shapes. Let me explain. So again. If I taught math, I would use so many things, you know, base 10 blocks that you could manipulate. Legos are good, but what I really, really like is I'll take concepts and I'll cut them out. So it's just the concept, like political concepts like left wing ideology, right wing ideology. And I'll cut them out, and then I'll draw like a big chart or table on a piece of paper on the board. And then they have to take these little pieces of paper and put them under whatever category I

have identified. Right. And so, you know, I'll say, you know, social policy and then they'll and they'll do it and it's it's hilarious. And I still do it with professors to this day, I'll say, you know, here's an educational theory. Here's an educational theory. Here are some instructional strategies. What theory would you say these strategies fall under? And they love it just taking little pieces of paper. That I've cut and like taping them to paper is. Is so great. And then what I'll do. I like to create a little bit of competition. So what I'll do is I'll get them to compare their paper and somebody else's paper and then we play a game called I'm right and you're wrong. And I'm going to explain why. So if a different group has one of their little pieces of paper. In the different category, they have to explain why they're right and the other group is wrong and they have to do that and it works so great. So I'm going to bring scissors because I need scissors to make my little pieces of paper that people can use.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Sounds great. Rebecca. Go on iPhone. Sorry, Twitter.

Evan Dickerson

Yeah, just to scissors and paper, I would add post it notes, I mean, you know, I'm a learning technologist. OK, sorry. I love paper and scissors and pens and crayons and everything else as well. And my second masters was in education policy. Really dull. I know somebody had to me, but uh, you know, I I was studying it a few years ago when I was looking at, you know, the growth of marketization in the UK, UK, higher education sector. And I was kind of charting its development. And, you know, the influences and all that kind. Of thing so I I. I basically ended up with my thesis being like this massive wall chart that you know had influences and the main policy themes and everything and you know. You know statutory input and you know all this kind. Of stuff mapped out on a on a massive piece of paper across my my bedroom wall at the time. And. And then, of course, analysing the situation at the particular time where I thought it might go, what the. Potential directions of travel were all that kind of thing. So yeah, you, you you can't. Get away from using the physical, the tangible, and I think one of the great things is like you're saying, Rebecca, it is. It does very quickly enable you to kind of go, OK, this is what I think. This

is my conception of it. Actually step back from it. Am I right, you know? Or does that actually hold water, you know? And then by looking at it and go, no, actually, that's in the. Wrong place. As you were saying that that doesn't quite fit. It's not, you know, it's like putting a piece of a jigsaw in the wrong fit. You don't quite. Get the right pick. Yeah, but you know, enables you to quickly go. No, it doesn't go there. It goes here instead, you know, or reconfigure your understanding of a concept or whatever it might be, or you know, you can use that in any kind of scenario and. I've done it with.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Kind of links, but yeah, sorry.

Evan Dickerson

I've done it with senior management when they're thinking around, you know how they're going to take this conceptual idea and and enact it in terms of, you know, delivery at university level and all that kind of thing. So, you know, it's I think it's something that holds water in a lot of. Different kind of context at levels of an institution, you know, not only thinking about educational development, but you know, can be all kinds of things really. So it's it's one of those essential. Tools of what we do.

Rebecca Wakelin

That's true.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

I mean, for me it just links back to carries where we started off about talking about change, changing conception. So the modality of movement and as Rebecca you were explaining about the scissors and moving ideas from one side to the other or people changing their minds. But then following that. With that movement. Of moving the postage or moving things that it just really almost like, tangibly, directly embodies that sort of change in what we were talking about at the beginning. OK. So we've done a lot of. So sorry. Was someone going to? Yeah.

Rebecca Wakelin

I was just going to say indeed, I also wanted to point out that Evan did a bit of storytelling when he was talking about how he was mapping out his thesis, so you know. Little bit of barter there.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, the we we. Have all all I think you've all incorporated all of your ideas, which is lovely. It's truly a islands of many. Yeah, many pedagogies and props coming together in Mongo and you've all exemplified it with all of them, which is brilliant. So you've done a lot of work. We now need to relax or you, well, you need to relax for having done all the work. What luxury items would you choose to on the island, which is for it it. It's for you. So not to work, but to relax off duty. Oh, Paris. Yeah, I. Think you're on?

Carys Watts

Hi sorry. Mine has to be my running trainers. Uh, I I just love just getting out there, seeing different places, different things, whether it's running with people or by myself. And I I worked this Saturday and it was twilight when I finished. And I thought. Oh, got to get outside so. And the River Tyne runs through Newcastle. So we went for a twilight run. Along there and I saw bubbles in the river. And I thought. Oh, I wonder if that's an Otter, and I followed them and I waited and I was patient and it was and I saw. An Otter. And it was. You. So it's the little things like that that just takes you out of your, you know, your zone of work, work, work, release. So for me it's just running trainers.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

And you were not listening but watching intently. Because who else might may? Others might may not have noticed that bubble. And so yes.

Carys Watts

That well, I always, I always hope and I I live in hope.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Well done, lovely image.

Evan Dickerson

Yes, uh, my thing would be actually the act of writing itself, probably because I I do a lot of writing, but all work, but also outside of work. I mean, you know, I've just finished a a book chapter on the skill sets of a learning technologist, for example. That's that's one kind of writing. That's. That's the kind of thing that you you do because it's like. It looks good on the CV and everything else and but you know I write a lot about music as well. I've been a music critic in my spare time for 20 odd years. Yeah, and now some of the people I work with I've actually reviewed in the past, which is interesting. Let's put it like that. And so yeah, I I spend a lot of time thinking about music, listening to music. I've got a collection of over 75,000 CD's. Don't ask me how I got that many, but I've reviewed a lot of them over the time I use those as a tool to research and write about. This is music. When I'm doing writing about concert programme notes and things like that. I I also. Secretly, I think this is the first time I've told anybody about this.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Drum roll, drum roll.

Evan Dickerson

I've been writing. I've been writing a spy novel for the past five years, and occasionally it's never going to see the light of day. Don't worry, it's not John Mccarey or anything like, but it's just for me to just kind of like, right? Writing about something completely. Thinking around a different world, a different place, a different time, a different set of people creating different characters, you know, different sets of interactions, yeah. And no one's ever gonna read. It hopefully good.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

That's exciting. Never

say never. I think as as educators here, we all need to encourage you to to follow your dream and yeah, get that published.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

OK.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, OK. To be continued. Thank you, Evan. Thanks for sharing where we feel very privileged to hear about it for the first time from you. Rebecca, what's your luxury item relaxing?

Rebecca Wakelin

This is ironic, but it's actually podcasts, I. I am a tired woman, so I have children I have. A job I. Have lots of things going on and so in order for me to enjoy content, it has to be forced into my head with headphones or else I won't. I won't read it so. I think especially working in an academic circles. You know, you're constantly reading all day long. The last thing I want to do, I would read Evans novel if it came out, but the last thing I want to do is come home and read something. I know that sounds awful, but. Podcasts are just a great way for me to get passively get content without having to put a lot of effort into it. So I listen to podcast on the bus on the way to work, I listen to podcast while I'm cleaning, I listen to podcasts while I'm on aeroplanes and I close my eyes and people think I'm sleeping, but I'm not. I'm listening to podcasts. Nobody talks to me, I'm just listening and I listen to a whole bunch of different podcasts. I like to listen to things that I'm interested in. I like to listen to things that challenge my thinking. This might actually relate to work, I apologise, but I also like to be able to sound really well read when I quote somebody while I'm teaching, but really I just heard it on a podcast, but nobody knows that right? I'll say so and so said this and you know, really was on the podcast, but that's OK. So I find podcasting. Just listening to it, very relaxing and so I'm really honoured to be on a podcast. Hey.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Yeah. And great to have you. Uh, Rebecca on this and yeah, that's sounds like, UM, yeah, that that's. What is it? It is. What? Ohh God it's. Uh, very aft. Is what I mean. Uh, obviously for the podcast, but hope you can share some of your favourite podcast with us as well. On the

on the blog. Which which we might. Yeah, so. Thank you all very much. I think it's time to sail away now to our treasure islands together and it will be a great experience there as we've all heard all all UM, bit busy teaching as well as relaxing. It sounds like you're all very active as well when you relax. So thanks everyone for listening, especially our our listeners and obviously if you enjoy the episode, you can subscribe to our podcast to join as a guest. You can enrol in our expression of interest from on our Liverpool Unici podcast site where you can also access the blog post of our episodes and goodbye. And now, and finally, a big thank you to our guests today. And then sorry, I should have said at the beginning, if you all say goodbye at this point, so I'll I'll just repeat the last sentence. And if you say goodbye, then we can just. Cut it. As if it was naturally done like that. So goodbye for now. And finally, a big thank you to our guest today.

Carys Watts

Goodbye. Thank you very much.

Rebecca Wakelin

Goodbye, goodbye.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Great. So OK, thank you. Don't hang up. Yet just close the podcast on the recording.

Tunde Varga-Atkins

Hi, this is Tunde Varga-Atkins and this is episode 24 of our Treasure Island Pedagogies podcast series from the Centre for Innovation in Education at the University of Liverpool, where we share our light bulb movements, teaching props and pedagogies. As we cohabit our treasure islands, the space for contact time with student. So today I'm very happy to introduce 3 guests. Dr Denise Preece, Roger Saunders and Professor David Webster. And we would love to hear if you all please introduce yourselves by name and your role, your original

discipline and how you did arrive into way. Think do you know where you are today? So let's Denise shall be calling first.

Dr Denise Preece

OK, so I am Dr Denise Preece. I work at the University of Liverpool Management School. My department is work on organisational management. My passion probably is inclusive teacher so I really I lead on the diversity. Slash disability academic support at the. School. And really it's. Probably come from I am also. Neurodiverse so I have dyslexia and ends. A little bit. Of ADHD and interestingly, recording it this week. This is neurodiversity week. And and as a a more senior academic, I'm starting to realise. That holding on to that mask is is. Becoming quite challenging. It's quite tiring and it's just interesting that we're making space now for discussion of difference and recognising that there is a lot of difference and and what is neurotypical to neuro activity. So that's that's my my on on on today's discussion.