

Treasure Island Pedagogies Episode 27

Podcast Transcript

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Tünde Varga-Atkins

Hi, this is Tünde Varga-Atkins and this is our 27th episode of our Treasure and 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 Island, the space for special contact. Medical student. So this is, uh, very wintry addition, uh. So we know we probably have a more winter land of our uh picture of our Treasure Island and I have the pleasure of introducing 3 guests. Jen McBride, Tim Hinchcliffe and David Roberts. Can I ask each of you to introduce yourselves your role and your discipline?

Jen McBride

Yes, sure. So I'll kick off. So my name is Jen McBride and I'm a senior lecturer in cognitive neuroscience and psychology at the University of Manchester. So I definitely started out as a a psychologist. My first degree was in psychology, deviated a little bit, but my particular interests. Always in pretend perception, attention, learning and memory.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

That's very topical. And pertinent to education, Jen, thank you.

Tim Hinchcliffe

Hello everyone. My name is Tim Hinchcliffe and I'm a principal lecturer in learning teaching at BPP University, which is one of the five private universities in the UK and I generally describe my role as helping to grow sector leading professional educators to produce industry relevant courses. It sounds like a lot less of a mouth form. Paper than it

does when you say it. Cloud, UM, I guess technically and very briefly. My original discipline was a mixture of mediaeval history and political science, which was a very odd concoction, but I've been very nomadic across my career and really I've spent most of it in sort of developmental roles, so educational development, academic development and learning development.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

That sounds great. Thank you, Tim. But about you.

David Roberts

Hi, I'm David Roberts. Tim, I love your use of the term nomadic because that would describe my disciplinary evolution. I'm presently a senior lecturer in peace and conflict studies and international relations. But I said in a Business School which kind of skews how I think about what I'm going to be teaching. My background was international relations to begin with, with a PhD in Cambodia, so I was mostly a field work, kind of a person, but now most of the work that I do in terms of research is on pedagogy and that's me.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Thank you, David. And if any listeners are hearing any snoring, apologies, this is my dog and I just hope that there's not a reflection on our discussions. Clearly, she's not knowing what she's missing. So thank you, everybody. As you all, as you've all heard, you've got loads of different experiences. From different disciplines and and and developing your learners. Disciplinary knowledge in various ways. So can we ask you to share a light bulb moment where you felt that what you were doing you could see really see that your students were suddenly or not? Maybe not suddenly, but getting it. And can you share some of those moments please?

Jen McBride

Yeah. So I suppose I'll have a go. So as I was saying at the beginning, my discipline expertise is really in cognition and cognitive neuroscience. But psychology is a hugely popular subject, especially

with undergraduate students. At the moment that many of my students would sometimes come in with the preconception that the topics I was going to be teaching them were going to be difficult or challenging or boring in some way because I was going to be talking about things like neuroanatomy and the brains are pretty complex organ. And so students would kind of come in sometimes with the preconception that this was going to be tricky. And and I think especially in year one, I think my job in the classroom is to set the tone that this is not going to be the case and that this is going to be really exciting. So something that I found to be quite useful is to start the session with a particular phenomenon or illusion or experience for the students and then frame the entire discussion around that interesting demonstration. Illusion or phenomenon? So there's loads of different ways you can do this. So for example. We might talk about the magic of misdirection. For instance, if we if what we actually want to talk about is visual attention, we'll talk about it in terms of how you can use your visual cues and where you're looking to actually misdirect your audience and perform some kind of magic trick. And it kind of I can do that quite successfully in year one at the start of the session in. Huge cohorts of. You know 4 or 500. Kind of plus students. But you can do it at higher levels as well in kind of smaller groups seminars. So one of the things that I teach is neuropsychology. So this is where we might take a particular. Neuropsychological case study. So somebody who's got some really interesting neuropsychological disorder or symptom. Which my students are probably never going to experience for themselves in the same way that we can talk about magic for, for example. But we can often find a way for the learners to experience something like it for themselves. So, for instance, if I'm talking about out of body experiences. Or alien Hand syndrome, or phantom limbs or something like that. We can use a very well known illusion called the rubber hand illusion, where essentially you can get healthy adults to take a sense of ownership over a rubber hand or a mannequin's hand. And then use that as the hook to explore the topic of. How is it that we create a sense of ownership over our own bodies and using that really inexpensive prop. And I've done this with with Marigold, so rubber gloves that I've stuffed with cotton wool that I can still get it to work really effectively. You can ask students to be recreating this illusion. And then you get the students to make predictions on the basis of that for what it means. So great, you've just taken ownership of this rubber

hand and you feel like it's a part of your own body. Now, students, what do you think? Would happen if. I moved to the rubber hand. What would that do to your sense of ownership? For it and you can just see the penny drop in the students as they suddenly realise that they could make a prediction about what this would mean and therefore can kind of draw extrapolations to these rare and fantastic patients and the neuropsychological symptoms that they're never likely to experience directly for themselves. And seeing the students kind of confidence grow that they can now make predictions about these really complex kind of mechanisms and phenomena is just brilliant. I just feel such a privilege when I when you can just see that click suddenly. Comes to light in the students brain and watching their confidence grow that this topic they thought was going to be really tricky. Now they can really understand and they can predict what would happen in hypothetical situations. So for me, I guess that's my light bulb moment. It's getting students to experience something for themselves and to then make predictions about what this would mean.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, that is fascinating. And as you say, the, the, the empowerment that you're providing for the students by creating this environment as when when they may be feeling daunting in their first year and just having that sense of well, I can do this, I I mean, I could just feel it from how you were telling this story and that sense of. Empowerment. That OK, we can do this, that's.

Tim Hinchcliffe

And I think it was just great to hear you say Jen about having fun. You know this idea that you know, you said it was quite a dull topic and you were there to make it fun. And isn't that what learning's about? Right, you know. Why can't we have fun whilst we learn and I wonder what the power of that might be in terms of how you're you're delivering these wonderful light bulb moments for your students.

Jen McBride

I mean, I totally agree. And just for the sake of of clarity, I think less fun regardless of kind of making them fun for my students. I think these

are fascinating topics, but I can understand, you know, exactly as you say, that they can be a little bit daunting. But I think if you can have fun with them, if you can play with them, you know, I'm having my students, they're playing with some some rubber gloves and and cotton wool. And from that we've we've actually got a really serious point and we're targeting those kind of really kind of higher level skills of critical thinking and understanding and independent kind of thought. But doing it in a kind of way that is hands on and playful, I just think it's so important and you know, students can look forward to the next class instead of kind of being a little bit. Anxious a little bit daunted, perhaps that we're going to. Be using some very long words and parts of the brain are going to be mentioned in the session, you know, and it it just seems to work. Do you use sort of playful techniques? As well too.

Tim Hinchcliffe

I do. It's almost if if you plan that as a segue into my light bulb moment because as you were speaking, I thought, wow, these are very similar. So my light bulb moment, I is and don't draw breath when I said this word gamification. And I'm really not a zealot of it. I'm I'm I describe myself as an acolyte, so I'm not gonna come along and tell you, you know, you should always be using gamification. It can solve any problem. It really can't. But I think when it's sort of used really appropriately and it's evaluated like you would any other approach it it can be very powerful and the light bulb moment that I really remember. Is playing a social deduction game called One Night Ultimate Werewolf and you might not be familiar with this game, but the idea is you'll take on different person. Leaders and then through questioning techniques, you have to find out which persona everybody in your group has taken on. And it's very simple. And I played this with group of educators in Thailand actually as a way of getting past a a language barrier and a cultural barrier for myself, much to anything. And it just creates that magic. So I'm going to use your word magic in the classroom, you know, you see this explosion of energy and. Fun and joy taking place. It's and what I do is I challenge those educators because it's usually I'm working with other educators to sort of consider how do we capture this magic that's taking place and how do we go and recreate that in other environments with other learners

because we don't want to lose that, do we? You know, if we can get that spark and joy in that engagement, that is real. Magic dust. So I don't just get them to play the game. They also have to step back and watch other people play the game and do that observation role and then kind of reflect on what's happening and why it's happening and sort of analyse how they might harness that. In their own context, you know, recognising it, it didn't work for everybody, but it did work, perhaps for learners who you struggled to engage through other approaches so. It is, it's really like you say that light bulb moment and I know it works because with their permission I sometimes record them playing and then I show them the video and they almost don't recognise themselves. You know, the way they're leaning over tables and and people who are. Usually really shy. Putting their hand up and screaming and yelling and I want to talk and you know they don't. They witnessed that. Transformation first hand. And then when you know you do those sort of module and course evaluations, even if you don't ask for feedback on it, they will give you feedback on. I love those games we played and I've been thinking about how to use them. So it's not just me that thinks it's happening, they're writing it down and they're telling us. So that's really the light bulb moment for me is when they see they're changing themselves.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

So team, are you? We must ask you. So what? Just give us a few examples of personas in the vampire.

Tim Hinchcliffe

OK. Yeah. One night all went well. So there's werewolves.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Ohh werewolf, sorry.

Tim Hinchcliffe

Yeah. Well, we can talk about vampires later if you like. There are werewolves. There are people called seers who get to sneakily look at other people's roles. And then there are people called mischief makers

who move people's roles around and switch people about so they don't know what they are anymore. There's my favourite role, which is called the drunk, who randomly has their role changed, and they don't know anything about it. Uh, so they played different roles within the game, and then they wake up and then they sort of have to think. Ohh, which team am I on? So they use a whole range of skills to do that. You know, that social deduction element and so almost anybody in any discipline can take those mechanics and figure out how might they be useful to me and my students.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Great. Has Jen and Davis have you got any roles that I don't know? These rules resonate with you.

David Roberts

Not the roles will not immediately if reflected.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

No, I mean, I didn't mean personally, but in terms of your, because I I just when you said drunk team in terms of sometimes students can be like that in your classroom that they don't know what's going on. You know they probably didn't prepare for the lesson. They just turned up after a long night. And so sorry I'm I'm making generalisations, but I just just that that resonated with me just sometimes not sure what what is going on in terms of that character.

Tim Hinchcliffe

Yeah. And I think you you could, you're probably diving into a disciplinary context there. Maybe you're taking on a sociological perspective of how could we look at our our students and and some of them, maybe the tropes that assigned to them and whether they're true or not and we could explore. That through game mechanics I guess.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, David, what what about your light bulb moment?

David Roberts

Well, I'm going to try and make a Segway that maybe connects both Jennifer and Tim to something that I've been experiencing as a light bulb moment. And I think I'm going to try and combine uh, time's werewolf, but it's a vampire, and I'm going to try and add the magic that Jennifer. Refers to. The one of the things that that caught my attention there with the will was this idea of the vampire state, and that is the state which sucks the life from society. To try to convey that to students, I've used visualisations and there's so many images you can use of vampires sucking the life out of stuff, but that's direct imagery. But I also use metaphorical imagery. This as a pedagogy of multimedia learning, was my own sort of developmental light bulb, and I will. Come back to it. But the student light bulb thing was a consequence of being able to represent visually something that they found very challenging to get past. Now, in the world of international relations is. Presentation of the world as kind of hobby, not life, is nasty, brutish and short, and it's it's unchangeable, it's fixed, it's biological. It's human nature. And all the less. Realistic inclined students who want a better world. They always come up against this argument that, you know. Oh. That's just the.

Speaker

Way the world.

David Roberts

Is you paint a horrible picture of it. And So what I wanted to do was introduce the idea of constructivism that the world isn't fixed. It's a consequence of human activity. And it's this light bulb moment that most young people haven't been exposed to before. The higher education, where they get to, say, get, they get to go past this horrible argument that says the world's just the way. It is just. The way things are, just accept it. Get used to it and to find out that it's actually how we've made it. Now. That was a huge light bulb. To the to the extent that one of my students in the middle of the lecture stood up and she shouted. Dr Roberts, you just rocked my world and it prompted a conversation right in the middle of a lecture amongst. The whole group. Half of whom were saying the world's fixed and grotty, and we

can't do anything about it. And the other half of whom wanted to believe in a different world, being possible and giving them that tool. Presenting the idea of the social construction of reality to give it its academic term and allowing them to visualise human agency in change in changing the world and buying both of the dynamics of using imagery as a way to teach which was my own. Developmental light bulb. And the impact that on students suddenly realised they didn't have to be in a very fixed, ugly, horrible paradigm that dominates thinking in the schools of international relations and the associated stuff. So I was just so lucky. That I had managed to find a way of communicating something fluid. Using a static image to students who didn't understand fluidity, who only saw stasis in the world, and that for me was probably the most satisfying moment in my career, and it combines the student light bulb moment with my own developmental light bulb. And are realising that you can use imagery to do all this kind of stuff as well as or better than. Just using text, which is the hegemonic academic practise. And that was where I sort of planted my flag, as it were, in terms of my professional trajectory.

Jen McBride

I I just think that sounds so great and I I the I suppose the thing that kind of struck me David, when you were just talking about that was when you said something like the students realised their own agency kind of in this process and it it kind of strikes me that actually that light bulb. Students kind of realising that they've gotta that they're not passive observers in this process, that actually ties quite nicely, I think with some of what, Tim? Was talking about. With students and and taking on kind of different roles and how it is that you can do that and kind of playing with that and what I was talking about around students kind of having the confidence to test their own understanding and kind of push forward their predictions of what they think was kind of going to happen in particular. Situations and maybe giving our giving our learners more agency might be something that kind of ties together. They're they're they're quite different things that we've all just said I'm not. Sure, if I'm not. Sure if I've if. That's a fair assessment of that.

Tim Hinchcliffe

I think you're on to something there. There's something about this liminal space we've all just described, doesn't it? And we're talking about how our students navigate through that, and in some ways, we've all taken different approaches to helping students get beyond some sort of threshold concept, haven't we? So you know, David, your activism and it just shows us that actually, there are multiple ways for us. As instructors and educators to think about this, but how learners might experience them really is individual. And we could probably pick many of our students up from all three of our classrooms and plant them in the other and they'll still go through some sort of transformation. And I think that's. The power of what we've been talking about.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

I think the other connecting properly in your three examples to me is around multi modalities. So all of your examples offer students different meaning. Making devices as in modes of meaning making. So Jen in your case you are using very much bodily artefacts. You know you your hand of of gloves and movement and for the students to experience almost not, not through words, but it's just experiencing in in the bodily sensory experiences and. And things your yours was about performing, so using gestures and movements and in inhabiting that role and and and then, David, you were talking about the power of images, which it it was interesting in in your example how fluidity was expressed through. Thetic image but it just shows the power of different and how you're enabling students to make meaning in different ways. You you're almost like giving them a a wider repertoire of resources through which they can make these insights and and meanings so that.

David Roberts

What they all what? All three also seem to share is that their vehicles for active learning and as a consequence, their vehicles for enhanced engagement, and these are higher level, non passive, more active forms of connecting. What we want to teach to. How they might best be able to learn what we want to teach them, and I think that that pedagogic bridge of active learning precursors or practises is quite evident across all three of the. Approaches that we're taking here.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And another one is collaboration or peer learning. So in all of your examples you talked about how the other students, you know that it wasn't an individual experience, they were all in a situation where they were collaborating, discussing or sharing those experiences. Brilliant so that. I mean already on the island there is loads of really interesting stuff going on. So can we move on to your treasure? Treasured pedagogies what, what props or pedagogies would you bring to the island? As we're rowing over, we're creating this environment for the students when they can learn. We've already got active learning and all the examples you've mentioned. What else would you like to bring?

Jen McBride

Well, you know, can I build on what we've on? What we've just said. Because I think I think one of my favourite props, actually combined was having just thought about it in this moment. I think it combines kind of peer learning peer-to-peer learning as well as collaboration as well as active learning kind of all thrown. Together. So I. Think in summary what I would bring with me would be a chat box, an online anonymous chat box. Now this is something that I started during during I started doing during the COVID-19 pandemic, which I'm sure an awful lot of people it it's when this podcast started, isn't it so? As I kind of mentioned earlier on, our cohorts are pretty large. We're looking at 400 or so learners kind of in a in a typical session. And during the pandemic. Lots of decisions were made about making our learning asynchronous, so learners would study materials that were pre prepared in their own time and this generally wasn't particularly well received by. A lot of. Our learners. So I tried to think about what I could do that preserved the benefits of the asynchronous learning. But combined it with the benefits that we used to get from the in person on campus, learning that we could no longer do because of the social distancing requirements that we. That and so I. Tried something that I called a watch party and I've since learned that other people around the world were doing something similar at the same time. It's that common thing, isn't it? Where you've got different groups of people all doing similar things in different places at the same time to solve a problem. But so for anyone not familiar with this that you know, I've

stolen the term from the likes of Netflix and Amazon. Crime and the other popular streaming services, but the idea is that the learners come together at the same time online, but they're physically separate. They come together online. In the same platform I happen to use zoom, but I'm sure it would have worked just as well in something else to watch together the same pre recorded materials, but I think the crucial thing was I got my learners to be discussing it in the chat box while we were doing it. Now I had to get over that. Awful thing when you hear your own voice kind of recorded back at you because I was actually looking at a pre prepared video of myself talking that I was showing to kind of 400 learners at the same time and chatting away about it. And and the reason I did it was because I wanted to create that kind of sense of shared experience that my learners had. They're all doing the same thing at the same time. They're all focusing on the same thing. And and that was the reason I did it. But it turns out that actually, that's not what made it so successful. And it was really successful. I've never had feedback from students. Like it that it seemed to be that the really crucial factor actually was the chat box and the interaction that the students got with one another, but also with me as the member of staff. So as I said right at the right, the start of this recording, I'm a cognitive psychologist by background, right. So my natural and possibly very overtrained instinct here was to therefore run controlled experiments to work out exactly what the causal factors were to the success of this approach, if indeed it was successful. Just cause students tell me they liked it doesn't actually mean it's any good for their learning. Right. But it turns out that following these kind of controlled experiments, yes it is successful. This approach of having pre recorded materials along with the chat box materially improved students test scores relative to not having the chat box even if the pre recorded videos were exactly the same. It's not just a testing effect. This is the idea that just by testing yourself, you're learning improves like a control for that. But it also significantly improved my learner's sense of community. Having the chat box there but and like I'm talking preliminary data now, those two previous effects look pretty solid. More preliminary data is that this doesn't seem to be consistent for different kinds of students. All students were not created equal essentially. So, for example, students who score particularly high in measures of social anxiety showing even bigger benefit than students who don't show such high levels of social anxiety. And so if we can

kind of use that as well to kind of particularly support those students who might have difficulty interacting in a large lecture theatre of 400 students, then that's something that I think is kind of worth exploring. So if I could take one thing to our Treasure Island, it would be an anonymous. Online chat box in real time. Because I think it makes a difference?

Tim Hinchcliffe

Jen, that's so simple and brilliant.

Jen McBride

That's. And you know, Ted, that's something I really like about it. It's so easy for all of us to do. I now put a chat box in just about any place I can find an excuse to put one in because it's so, so easy to do. But it like. The the data seems to show that this this really does work.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And Jen, just a pragmatic question. So do you find students can go back to the chat box, have a look. But I mean, just the just the as you said for hearing that the students who would never, I was just reading some student feedback from one of our. 1st 100 day surveys with first year students and one of her her one of a students highlight was to be able to. To ask a question in a lecture and have the courage to do that. So I think just that student is in my mind at at this point when you were saying about the benefits of having this chat box and and it sounds like the anonymity is really helpful. Is that correct?

Jen McBride

Yes, so I've tried. This anonymously and non anonymously, and I don't think it made much difference to the kinds of questions that we got. It seemed to be just the use of it being a chat box rather. Than having to stop a lecture. So David was talking earlier about a student who stood up and shouted hey. You've just rocked my world and. I would love to have had that. Experience and. I don't know. I'd like. I'd like to think I'm reasonably approachable to my students, but I think I can probably count on my fingers the number of times a student has put their hand

up to stop a lecture or some other class to ask a question and having kind of spoken to students about it, there seems to be a reluctance to interrupt the learning for everybody else in the room to get your question. That, but if you're doing it on a chat box and the the learning for everyone else is just continuing but you get to ask your question there in the moment, that seems to make a really big difference. So, but in answer to your question though, yes, students do return to the chat box after the session, so I've tried it in different platforms. Started out using just the chat function in zoom, but actually now. I tend to use put. That if you're familiar with that tool because it it's got different functionality, that means you can create different threads of kind of conversations and it just seems to work a bit better and I can embed that in our virtual learning environment. We happen to use Blackboard, but I'm sure it would be, you know, pretty similar in the other options that are available. And yes, students do return to it and they seem to be returning to it more. Then the discussion the the moderated discussion boards that we set up, there's something about the informality of the communication that that the kind of chatter between students that students seem to find really valuable have I got haven't put my finger on why. That is yet, but it does seem. To be a bit of a trend, yeah.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Sounds like worthy of further investigation.

Jen McBride

Well, I mean, I would say that because I'm a cognitive psychologist, right? This is my bread and butter. But yeah, I think it might be.

David Roberts

Well, as it happens, I was doing an observation on a colleague. Uh, only yesterday. And she was doing a a lecture to about probably 250 students on a biological issue skin. And as you said, Jennifer, there seems to be a tendency for students not to want to put their hands up and shout out. It's not how it's always been. When I was first teaching this, you couldn't stop them and they didn't really care about interrupting and stopping and slowing down all the rest of it. And you

reacted on the spot to that. But. Nowadays, yeah. Now this the. Colleague I was observing yesterday was using a chat box in vivox. So she had combined serve at the means of doing of back checking what she just taught. So she'd done a section on the derma. Yeah. She would stop, put up a vivox which asked 4 questions and at the same time as the questions were being answered, she got nobody else could see it. That she could see questions coming into. Her. And then she verbally responded to the entire class so everyone benefited from the question after she repeated it whilst everyone else was doing the survey completing the survey. The short survey questions, so she'd integrated it so that it didn't interrupt the flow of the taught material. It was ongoing with the assessment of. The learning process of the talk material so that that's the first time I'd seen that done. I'd I've done it myself with other software, but as a separate entity rather than embedding it inside. You know, a limited amount of learning and teaching time. You know, the one hour or two hour block that you normally normally get. So I noted that and and trying now to learn how to use vbox to enable me to do that as well. But it seemed there was an ongoing churn of questions. That really in today's lectures with today's students, much less likely to occur with hands up, you know, and shout out kind of.

Jen McBride

Thing. Yeah, I think your colleagues done something really sensible there. There does seem to be something in the feedback from my students about getting your question answered pretty immediately. So if there's, if there's something that's causing an obstacle for a learner, that means you've talked about something they've missed it or haven't quite grasped it, and that is now an obstacle for them to continue their learning in the session. Being able to ask your lecturer even at the end of the lecture, much less by e-mail or through discussion board or something, and get a response days later, there's something about the immediacy of it that also really seems to make a difference. So I think your colleague has, I think their instincts are spot on, yeah.

David Roberts

And if if I had that experience as a child. At school, in chemistry and biology, where I would miss part of a formula being put on a

blackboard with chalk as they were, were then I don't think I would have lost the ability to pursue the entire learning process if I'd just been able to get a quick answer. To A to a short question. In immediate it, it would have, it would. Have been a game. Changer for me. In the end, they said. I I. They wouldn't let me. Sit the exam, they said. I was. Too stupid based. On how I behaved in midterm assessments on, but if if just that momentary intervention could make such a cumulative kind of a difference.

Jen McBride

Yeah, exactly. And often what I'm talking about is neuroanatomy, which I think is probably at least as complicated as as formulae and such, at least in chemistry. When I was at school anyway, yeah.

David Roberts

Yeah, definitely.

Tim Hinchcliffe

It sounds like we're talking ohh no, go on today.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Also mirrors. Sorry. Go on Tim.

Tim Hinchcliffe

OK. I'm just gonna say it sounds like what we're talking about here is using back channelling for personalised learning. That that effectively was, and it reminded me, he said all students are different. And you know our system is really set up to design for the average student and the average student just doesn't exist because they're all so different. So if you design for the average person, you're actually designing for nobody, aren't you? So I think what you've just demonstrated there, both of you, is that idea that actually you've designed for nobody. And in that way, you've designed for everybody.

Jen McBride

Yeah, I guess so. But you know, I think you're right. Him. I think that kind of personalised support in real time, both from peers and from the you know, the the discipline expert, if you like, I think seems to be really key and something that is worth embedding everywhere that we can do. You know, I was a bit nervous though when I started doing it anonymously. That one thing I might be doing is setting up a mechanism for online anonymous trolling in real time and.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

I was going to ask.

Jen McBride

That one.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

You about Jenny. If you had any experience of that, did you have to set any ground rules or it was? Just like it, it was fine.

Jen McBride

I you know tiandi, I have had no experience of that whatsoever in the three years since the pandemic that I've been doing this. So I have I do kind of I do set some ground rules pretty early because I try to present the the content. If you because I've got large cohorts and I typically have more than one screen in my classroom, so I can present the material, the learning material on one screen in the chat box on the other screen. And I do explain to students early on that. This will not. I will not allow this to be a mechanism for online anonymous trolling in real time, and this must remain respectful and the moment that I feel that line is crossed, I. Will be turning off the screen. But it's never happened. I've never even come close to that happening. The questions the chat box is only used to ask questions, and some of the questions are kind of simple clarifications like David was talking about earlier, but some of them are completely kind of, well, no, not completely, somewhat off pieced. So one of the topics that I. Was talking about. Using this technique with the cognitive neuroscience of empathy. So what are the what are the neural underpinnings for our

empathic? Abilities and and I had a student ask a question about what the implications of this were for psychopaths who had perhaps different empathy than people who were not psychopaths, and this was not directly relevant to the topic that was under consideration, but even more so, I think that's the kind of question that I just wouldn't. Get in a kind of.

Speaker

Yeah, yeah.

Jen McBride

A more traditional lecture kind of format. It's that kind of discussion just gets missed, but it can be really value.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, as you said, in your earliest example of the light bulb moments, this is the sort of question that shows that people are thinking about application and other context and is exactly what what you want them to do. Brilliant.

Speaker

Yeah, it's what we.

Jen McBride

It's what we're aiming for, isn't it? Yeah, yeah.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

For people to think, think hard. Right, So what are the teaching props and? Pedagogies will we have on the islands?

Tim Hinchcliffe

Yes, OK. Next one is my own. So you won't have heard of it. I've invented it and made it up and this this this podcast is it's first out outing actually. So you've got like a an exclusive roommate. There you go. I should have said all this. Let's put a load of pressure on.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Ohh extra special.

Tim Hinchcliffe

It but it. Almost came up earlier actually, so it's called vampire ring. Uh, so we've had werewolves, and now we're going to talk about vampires. And it's this idea of using the sort of motifs or the tropes traditionally associated with vampires as a method for collaboration and fostering collegiality. And that could be with your students. That could be with your colleagues. It could be with whoever. And these aren't scary vampires. This isn't Christopher Walken. This is more like Mona the vampire on CBC. And we're all very happy. But there's there's basically 3 stages to how this works. OK, so the first stage is called being invited. Across the threshold. So it's this idea that you, as the vampire you are the one doing the vampire in. You can only engage with people if it's optional and it's by their own free will. So they have to invite you across that threshold. So vampire can't just wander into your house. You have to let it in. And the reason for that is that, UM, if people are willing and ready to accept your presence as sort of an interloper in their sort of area of expertise, their design space, it means they're actually willing to meaningfully engage in change. Whereas if you're an interloper, there'll be some form of resistance. This I'd have been invited against the threshold helps deal with. Any kind of resistance that that might be there. And then the second stage is called seeing yourself in the mirror. So it's this idea that change involves around some sort of reflexive. Activity, yeah, but this idea is that the person you're working with you're collaborating with is looking in the mirror, but the only person they should see is themselves. They shouldn't see you. The interloper in their space. And vampires obviously have no reflections. So as a vampire, you're. There and why is that important? Well, it's because you're there simply to support them through that change. And if they have to reflect and focus on themselves, it fosters a commitment to sort of taking positive action. They've got to take the action. You can't do it for them. But also that means they're personally accountable for change. So often I notice when we want. Change. People are quick to disown it and perhaps go. I can't do this because of XY and Z, whereas actually by reflecting and focusing on yourself, your own locus of

control and with the confidence of your vampire there to support you, you can make that change happen. And then the third step is. Called the Kiss of blood. UM, yeah. Well, don't get too excited, Jen. It's it's not what you think it is. I think so. It's those who participate in this idea of vampirina are then expected to come vampires themselves. So you've given them the kiss of blood and they can be a vampire and they can go and repeat it. And they're meant to do that by sort of advocating and promoting this. Legit approach so they kind of almost sign up to this and say this is how vampires act and I'm gonna do it too. And what you then do is you build a grassroots approach to change because working in these kind of development roles often is kind of like that head of department level where I've seen change not really work particularly well is when it's dictated or it comes from above. And so this is a way of fostering grassroots buying. You get invited in. Your lower resistance, you could get people to focus on and take account for their change. They want to see and then you get them to advocate that approach to become a vampire themselves. So as I said, nice and friendly vampires. Nothing scary to see here, but that's that's my my approach I've developed and it and I think it has underpinned my success in my roles today through my. Area and I I just keep trying to refine it and keep it going and I think it's just you know, a useful hook that people are interested in perhaps.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

It's definitely a new perspective of empires, and yeah, sound sounds great.

Jen McBride

It's such a a strong, visually powerful image, isn't it? It just seems to make sense. I like your kind of indoctrination you are. Now a vampire, and you're gonna and you're. Gonna kind of take this approach and and use it kind of where? It makes sense for you.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

It's it sounds like that David was you were talking about metaphors and. And so again, the power of metaphors and. Kind of looking at things from a slightly different perspective. So we have got uh, the

vampire ring, we've got uh chat box. What else have we got in our teaching prop and pedagogies on the island?

David Roberts

I think that for me it would have to be the World Cafe method which I've used internationally online. When online was first a thing. But which also works within, you know, a disconnected classroom, and it transcends the sage on the stage and the guide on the side kind of mentalities to. Draw from. The wisdom that already exists in the room, despite the displacement of that wisdom into the student versus the teacher kind of dichotomy and the the World Cafe thing, is something that was developed in, you know, from peace and conflict stuff maybe 4050 sixty years ago is the basis of. Shared learning and really all all that happens is you create a European style cafe and in it you have have a many round tables that you want with 4-5 or six people. Uh sat there with a nice tablecloth, a candle and a bottle of wine or something that looks like wine. As the metaphor. And there's a short introduction to the topic by a facilitator, not a, not a lecturer, and then it's handed off to each table to discuss. Now, after 5/10/15, however, minutes have a long is desired. One person from each table gets up and goes to another table. And then integrates that knowledge with the. Developments that have happened on every other table and it goes around and towards the end, the facilitator then mobilises different representatives from each table to interpret and express what it is that has grown in learning from each group, and that then goes up. On a whiteboard or wherever, whichever form you want of the expression you want to use, projection or whatever, and everyone then gets to immerse themselves in. And not just the overall lessons that have been drawn from a particular question. You know how how, how do we do this, that or the other? They also have their own positions on it, have been changed by the influences from each table. So each table debates and. Aspect of a given topic and then it evolves, revolves, grows and is then redistributed. And it's quite. There's a lot of hostility to it in disciplines that favour masculinity as a determining influence. So my old discipline, international relations is all pale, male, stale, old white men, blah blah blah. This kind of stuff that have dominated for, for, for decades. And when I ran the first one that I ran, there was open hostility and resistance to it. By the end of it, some of them were

saying this is the best experience I've ever had, not all by any stretch, but it achieved its objective of, first of all, enabling a different form of learning in Group events where everyone got to participate and redistribute their participation. But it also transformed. People thought about what they were experiencing themselves as a learning mechanism without ever relying on the dominant pedagogic norm of the sage on the stage. It's much harder to do it with first year undergraduates, and they they come with much less than, say, a third year student has developed and the third year student normally has much less than the sage on the stage or the guide on the side. But the process of evolution and growth applies across all of them. That's what I would. Take it. It allows an informality to brace to bracket what is really otherwise a formal pedagogic expectation and process. So you sit down, you've got cheese and biscuits, wine, tea, coffee, whatever it might be, and it takes it down to the rather stuffy stayed seminar room or, you know, with all the four. Great, dismal kind of environments that pedagogy normally happens in in most UK universities and it gives you a different kind. Sort of atmosphere to it, which you know, I've really enjoyed doing. We don't get to do it very much because the institution being masculine as higher education is despite the relative equity amongst, you know, female male employees, it's still a hyper masculine, it's still mostly dominated by old white men. There's still resistance to that. Frankly, at this point in my career, I've stopped caring and I just do it anyway. I just don't tell them you don't. Have to if. It fits the existing learning objectives. I don't have to declare anything and of course it does because in fact it exceeds the normal learning learning objectives when it works well. But that's what I would take as as a prop. As it were.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

That's brilliant. And then I guess another barrier institutionally, some of our learning spaces to this, because when you describe World Cafe, if you don't always have the. The right rooms and the light right environment to be able to. Do that. Any any bartering between some of your ideas so we. Had gamification genuine, talking about the illusions and magic and sharing that, and the metaphorical imagery, and then some of the props you've mentioned just now, can you see using each

others? Or maybe is there anything else that we could grab off the shelf? As it were, to bring anything.

David Roberts

Yeah, I can see I can see. I can see some. Crossover with Time's vampire onto each table, the person moving from one table to another is the external one and requires permission to pass the threshold of the table. Tim, can you take that any further using your model using the next two levels of the vampirism?

Tim Hinchcliffe

There's an analogy that says.

David Roberts

Put on the spot there. Sorry about that, Tim. I that. Wasn't my intention.

Tim Hinchcliffe

Well, no, I think you can cause often in that World Cafe model. Don't you sometimes leave somebody behind? Who's there to help the next group interpret what's going on. And in that way, that might be the second stage that's seeing yourself in the mirror. And how can that presenter actually remove themselves as the object and make sure that the next group is focusing on? Whatever is the issue is that they're tackling at the table. So yes, I think so, yeah. And the third stage, the kiss, I don't know, maybe that comes in the plenary. At the end or something?

David Roberts

Yeah, this sounds like the right place to put it.

Tim Hinchcliffe

Yeah. So I I, I want to take the chat box even though it's so simple and I wanna even apply it to something like this because as the two of you have been discussing, I've been so fascinated and my brain's been

whirling away and I've got 100 questions and I kind of wish I could have chat, put them all in the chat box to you and you could, we could have discussed them as we went. Obviously we can't because we're both. I guess the sage on the stage and the learner at the same time right now and we're you know it's it's an absolute mess, but I'm definitely gonna think about how can I use that back channelling approach in other things that I do.

David Roberts

Same here.

Jen McBride

I think exactly as you just said there, Tim, with the sage on the stage. But you know David was also talking about the guide on the side and actually I guess what this approach does is get you to be both of those things at the same time, which may, I don't know, maybe maybe that's the key. But I think what I might do just to come full circle, I might steal the the World Cafe kind of pedagogy here from David. And I was just one thing I was thinking about while David was talk. There was. Could I do this with my large cohorts of of learners? Could I set? Could I kind of set up several different chat rooms so that each room is discussing a particular aspect of the topic and then we? All kind of move. Around and then at the end we come together and everybody leaves. With all the information that's been discussed in those different places. So I can see an amalgamation of all of these things kind of coming together really nicely actually.

David Roberts

That can be done that the the experiment my first. The first time I experimented with this internationally, we've got a a tribal chief from Sierra Leone in a chat room in Freetown. And we've got a professor. In Japan and we've got my students and some academics. Who are also. Interested on on the campus? And it was our undergraduate and pH. D

students who set this up because they've found something called Google Rooms. Maybe it was this is 2010. This is this would have been ultra primitive. It would have been it would. It's the thought. It's the predictor of zoom. It certainly would. But they made it. Happen just by connecting rooms in Google, Google Chat, Google something or. And yeah, you could do exactly what you just described there, and that was 1014 years ago. So it's going to be ultra easy compared to then to do something like that.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, I mean, Jen, you were talking about peddlers and or or even vivo. Yeah, I mean, zoom or in either of those scenarios. Now I think it's. Quite easy to to make that happen.

Jen McBride

I think it will. Quite, I think it can be quite easy, at least for me. Maybe I'm just a bit of a magpie and get distracted by shiny things, but I think a lot of the things that we've talked about today you can do in a really low tech, low cost kind of way, you don't need. Fancy bells and whistles to. To do the things that we've. Been talking about here today.

Tim Hinchcliffe

I just want to say I think what you I was trying to think what it was called was. You're both speaking, I think what you're talking about there is jigsaw learning.

Jen McBride

That's a new phrase for me.

Tim Hinchcliffe

Yeah, it it came around. I can't remember where it was. I think it was. Like Texas or. Something and it was used for school children and it was to get into improved interracial relationships, I think so to get. Different students from different communities to work together, and they each get assigned a task, and then they have to share what

they've learned about that task with the rest of the people in their group, and they put the jigsaw pieces together to form the whole.

Jen McBride

Right.

Tim Hinchcliffe

Picture that no one person on their own could complete the task they had to work together. So I think there's elements of that in what you're saying.

David Roberts

Something that strikes me, Tim, based on from what you were just saying, is that. There seems to be a tendency to be reproducing stuff that's already been done without knowing that we're reproducing it. So which Jennifer and I are talking we're talking about, you know, our our two sort of notions but you then connected it to a pre-existing conceptualization of exactly this. And to me, one of the great frustrations of of. You know, trying to keep. Up with pedagogy today is that it's so diversified. It's exists in so many locations in so many formats in so many outlets that it's simply impossible to a. Have even a glimpse of a tiny percentage of everything and be to know whether something has been done before or not, and whether we're just reinventing wheels time and time again.

Jen McBride

Yeah, it's almost. I almost feel like I need a structure or a framework to kind of to organise the different things that I know must be going on so.

Jen McBride

Kind of pull them together in a way that makes sense to me if you like. But yeah, I totally hear what you're saying.

Tim Hinchcliffe

That David? Anyone else notice that recent phenomena of newsletters?

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And I guess.

Tim Hinchcliffe

Summarise other newsletters. So you could just get one and now it's like, here's a newsletter that tells you everything you need to know about these twenty other newsletters. And I think that's the issue, isn't it? You know, what level of abstraction do you take that?

Jen McBride

Yeah, it could all get very meta, couldn't it?

Tünde Varga-Atkins

I mean, that's what that's the, that's the, I guess the beauty and the limitation of the human brain that we need to learn ourselves whereas with with the. AI and machine learning, you know, that's that's kind of a different ball game, but yeah, that might open a new. I mean, Jen, I see your eye slits up at that point. So you that's probably we would you could probably talk about that for hours, let's let's look at some relaxation on this island. So we've been work or you have been working. How how would you relax what luxury item would you take with you?

Tim Hinchcliffe

I'll happily go first this time if you like. So initially I thought I was gonna take a chess board because I I really got back into chess during the pandemic and I find it can actually help me with both extremes. I can either just completely lose myself in it and relax, but at the same time, I

can take it really seriously and study it. So it's it's it's quite useful that way. But I realised that wouldn't be much fun on our Treasure Island if I'd just go away and play. Yes, and I figured nobody else would probably want to play with me. So instead I thought I'd been juggling for I don't know who knows, but anyone else here likes to play chess, but I just thought actually I'll bring a set of juggling balls instead, because I just thought that was.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

You never know.

Tim Hinchcliffe

So much more sociable and fun, and because, as you mentioned at the beginning of episode, it's quite wintery. I actually learned to juggle because of a Secret Santa present. Somebody got me in an office once. And it was a set of free Christmas puddings. So over the Christmas break I went over and I taught myself how to jog. When I came back and showed everyone in the office and then everybody else was like, oh, I want to learn too and just started picking up random items and unsuccessfully throwing them about. So that's what I would bring. Some juggling balls, Christmas theme.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

To entertain us, that's brilliant.

David Roberts

I would take. I would take a solar powered motorcycle electric motorcycle. I've been a biker all my life since.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Jen or David?

David Roberts

I was 14 anyway. UM and. Assuming that the island is more than you know, a few square feet, I would want to be because I see this island as

quite tropical and very, very wide and long. And I would want to explore so it would be a trail bike and I would be able to go up hills, downhills, over mountains, through forests and so on and so forth. And it's not simply the exploration of my habitat. And and it would be a solo thing. And that's what I like doing. There but. Motorcycling was described by someone as the combination of meditating with your hair on fire. It creates A dualism. It enables A dualism, and it is both ultra. Painting, especially at speed, especially over difficult terrain, but at the same time it induces an almost trance like peace. Inside your head, presumably as the rest of your head deals with the obstacles coming up at, you're at at speed. And for me it creates a place of calm. Tranquilly and that's what I would take with me if I realised I was going to be isolated on a damn desert island for the rest of my life. So yeah, that that would be a very good thing for my mindset, I think.

Jen McBride

And you know, I think my luxury item is similar to Davids, but also the polar opposite kind of all at the same time. So I bring something much more sedentary, I think, and I would bring my knitting needles and yarn. So I'm really quite sedentary. I taught myself to knit when I had COVID, nor the first time and like. A lot of other people well, but it's kind of not at the same time because like so many other people who got, you know, the milder versions of COVID, I really had brain fog to the point that I couldn't think I couldn't read. I couldn't listen to a podcast like this. I couldn't do anything.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Wow, that's impressive.

Jen McBride

But I realised that I could use my hands and so I went through what I now affection me affectionately refer to as the the online scrolling portion of self isolation during, you know, the first time I had. COVID and I. Found kind of teach yourself to nip kits and just it was a bit of an impulse. It wasn't very expensive. I just bought 1. But I found that I could knit even though my brain wasn't really functioning at kind of doing anything else. And since then it's a practise. But I've kind of

continued. So a couple of nights a week for 20-30 minutes or so, I'll be knitting something and there's just something about the gentle kind of clicking of the needles or the rhythmic kind of motion of the hands. I'm not an expert knitter by any structure of the imagination, but it seems to just occupy my mind just enough as David was just saying. Thing that I can think through the things that have eluded me during the day. So David, on his motorcycle is you know, dealing with impending death and that's kind of the the mechanism for meditation with your hair on fire if you like. Whereas I suppose mine is is rather more sedate than that. But I do wonder if it achieves kind of the same thing. And I embarrassed myself as a psychologist here because I say things like it. It occupies my brain just enough that I can solve the problems that have eluded me during the working day. But as Tundi was saying right at the beginning, this this tropical island might not be tropical. It might be a bit wintry, so we'd have blankets to keep us warm and warm, comfortable on our Treasure Island.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, we would have. It feels that you can meet for us. That would be amazing. While Tim keeps us busy with the juggling.

Tim Hinchcliffe

Yeah. Then is there anything you've knitted that you're? Yeah. Look, Jen is there. Anything you've knitted, you're really proud of.

Jen McBride

I can't say I'm proud of it, but this is the first thing that you can see. Yeah, this in my rainbow blanket that I knitted. This was the first kind of project that I made when I had COVID and it now lives in my office because my other half declared that he wasn't a fan. So it now lives in my office as well.

Tim Hinchcliffe

I did wonder.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

That's amazing. Can you describe it for us? So the people who are.

Jen McBride

Both both. The other thing is this.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

So Tim, can you describe what you see? So for our listeners?

Tim Hinchcliffe

Where it looked like Joseph's technicolour Dreamcoat to me. I don't know if that's actually what it was and it's wonderful. It looks like it will keep us very warm on our wintery Wonderland Island and then it was. Was it a bumblebee? Is that because of Manchester? Isn't the? Symbol of Manchester are being.

Jen McBride

It was so this is this is technically crochet, but I hope you'll allow me some poetic licence that I can call this knit. So yes, it's AB. I'd love to tell you that it's because of Manchester and the Manchester Bee and I do backwards engineer that explanation, but really it's because it was a simple. Kind of shape. It's just a set under that I could make work is is the honest answer there, Tim, but I like your explanation better.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Brilliant, I think. Yeah, we definitely have a colourful zoning out, one with nature on the motorbike and juggling our our our way and and learning new things as well. I think that's in a fun way which seemed to be a a theme of today. Thank you all so much for sharing. All these light bulb moments and seaching props and luxury items with us. So it's time to sail away now to our islands. Thanks for our listeners for listening. And you can subscribe to our podcast if you've enjoyed it and also if you want to to become a guest, you can do so now leave you an ECI podcast website. And goodbye for now. And finally, a big thank you to all of you. All our guests today. Jen, team and David, goodbye. Brilliant. Thank you so much.

