

Treasure Island Pedagogies Episode 28

Podcast Transcript

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Tünde Varga-Atkins

Hi, this is Tünde Varga-Atkins. And this is episode 28 of our Treasure Island Pedagogics 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 islands. The space for contact time with students. We have 3 guests today. Aga Buckley, Chris Mitchell and Graham Easton and I would like to ask each of you to briefly introduce yourself and your role and how. Did you arrive here?

Aga Buckley

Hi everyone. My name is Aga Buckley. I currently work at Kingston University, London AM and I am I'm a academic and educator in and social work. I currently lead master of. Social work programme. And how I got here is because I met. Sunday through the very uh involvement in. In Treasure Islands in a in a in a innovative ways of of of our teaching and learning. Because I spent last year in secondment in learning and teaching Enhancement Centre. So for one year, one year only, I was I was able to work as an academic developer. That before I return back to my faculty role.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Great hope you had an enjoyable year ago. Thank you very much for your introduction. Chris, can we go over to you please?

Chris Mitchell

Hi, my name is Chris Mitchell. I'm deputy director of academic development at the Royal College of Art and also the programme lead

for our Med in Creative Education. And my background is in sociology. But I've. Somehow found myself via economics, jumping ship to to study with the Creative Arts institution for the last 18 years. And I'm here because I was interested in all all the other podcasts that have been being recorded. And I wanted to to join you on the being stranded on this island.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Brilliant. Thank you, Chris Graham.

Graham Easton

Yes, my name's Graham Easton. My background is in medicine. So I'm a GP by background. I'm I'm currently professor of medical education at Queen Mary, University of London. I'm heading up clinical skills and communication skills. Is my my interest over the last few years and I I've got involved with this through the fact that I'm. To Condit for a year to our Education Academy, the Queen Mary Academy as a fellow looking particularly at Co creation with students this year.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Brilliant. So that's a little bit of a theme here, secondments in and dipping waters toes into education in in a wider sense as well. Thank you, Graham. So can you please as on as you know, on this programme, we share our light bulb moments with students. So some moments where you felt in in your. Heavier as an educator that your students were getting it.

Graham Easton

Yeah, well, my 1:00. Was that moment, and maybe lots of teachers will, will will know exactly what I mean. Whereas I suddenly realised that when I was telling stories, students suddenly became engaged, I suddenly had their eye contact their full, their full attention. UM, and you know, if it was in the lecture, everyone would look up from their distractions. If it was small groups, I could tell that there was a different level of UM listening and interest and these could be stories about clinical practise, patients near misses, anything like that, really. And so I think that was my light bulb moment, which triggered

research and an interest in that area of around telling stories in education.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Can you tell us a little bit more about? So what what were you researching? What sort of angles to that?

Graham Easton

Well, so my background, what really hit me was that my background was both medical and also I'd spent some time as a journalist for the BBC Science Unit and. That had training in how to communicate with audiences about complex medicine and. Science and the way you're trained as a producer at the BBC, at least it was at that time was spending a lot of time talking about how to tell stories and and yet when I started in medical education a few years later, there was absolutely no mention of storytelling, nothing to do with stories at all. And. And I thought. Well, this is this is fascinating. Why is there this sort of gap? Why aren't we being trained in how to tell stories? Why is it seen as a little bit of a A probably a sort of Cinderella, uh, pedagogy or? And so my research as part of my ad was looking at medical science lectures and observing the stories that people were telling or not telling, and how the lecturers felt about telling them and how the students received them, both by watching the reception and also interviewing. Through focus groups afterwards? Uhm. And so, yeah, that's where my sort of interest. And particularly started, I think crystallised at least.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And what was interesting from your story, Graham as well, that the way you described the students eye contact, full attention. So there was a lot of things that were going in in. Your classroom that were. Known verbal that things that you noticed.

Graham Easton

Exactly. I think it was those non verbal things and just just taking time to reflect on the fact that you know where where were those moments where people actually seemed to be paying full attention and there

was a real pattern developing. So along with that sort of background. It was really interesting to just spend some time looking at that and thinking about narrative theories, thinking about well, what narrative units am I gonna use in my in my research, what does that? I mean, how am I going to explore them and and and in the end, coming to some conclusions around, you know the, the, the parts of the learning process that might be influenced by telling stories and receiving stories which were mainly around things like engagement, memory came out. Very strongly and from lecturers and students, and that reflects the literature around it, giving some context for understanding, but also UM, this emotional connection that stories can can bring and. That has been perhaps the most interesting part of it, because, for example, we're very interested in developing empathy in our medical students, or at least supporting uh supporting it. And we've found that actually many of the sort of human emotional. And empathy aspects of medicine came out, often through stories about patients that students were starting to empathise with.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Can I just pause there because I noticed that we've lost Chris, so other Chris here, can you call Chris in and just see, I just wondered if cause I noticed he's frozen on my screen for some time. So I just wondered that as well.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah. So before we progress, maybe just give him a minute to be able to rejoin. But off recording and Graham, that's so interesting. That link between stories and the emotional response and what you said about empathy. Cause again, that's. Yeah. Yeah, that was interesting.

Aga Buckley

Can't wait for. For for my follow up to go and because. I'm just like I'm in my in, in the process of my Eddie right now. Gramme and I'm listening. To you. And I'm like oh.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

That sounds great. So Chris, if we can add other crease, would that work? I mean it might be just that we need to. Wait for him to. Ohh no because you can't.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

It's probably rebooting some device or something which. He did say he they don't use teams a lot, so he he did. That's why he logged on a bit earlier just to. Check that it was working. So it's typical, isn't it? Last time we had on Friday, someone was going to give us a presentation and the the laptop, even though she tested the day before, everything was working on the day the laptop just wouldn't do anything. It was so. But it happens to everybody. So I mean, everyone was fine with it, but it's just annoying that however much you prepare, there's just no.

Aga Buckley

Yeah, I turned them on on the 4th laptop this year, so.

Aga Buckley

You know, I didn't have much. Luck with with technology this year either.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Oh my gosh, sounds good.

Aga Buckley

4th, 4th time Lucky I hope.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

I seem to be going through the uh charger. Unit so like. I had one failure in Hungary when I went there for a week. And then had to buy one there and I come back now. Another one just packed in. I just ordered another one, but I ordered the wrong thing. So I'm gonna have to.

Graham Easton

Where are you doing your red tea yoga?

Aga Buckley

At Kingston.

Graham Easton

Oh yeah, yeah.

Aga Buckley

You know it's it's the, it's, it's the the only way. I suppose you work for the organisation and you and you study with. The same organisation.

Graham Easton

As well, yeah, makes sense.

Aga Buckley

It does. It does. I, you know, I was. I was trying to to to do it when I was still in frontline practise. I was in mental. Health. Social work. For and many, many years, but almost 18 years so. So I actually the only time I was able to start it was when I transitioned to academia. So, you know, before you know, it was very difficult. I I don't know whether you know, you find it through your through your own experience but or or colleagues experience that you know if you are in. A in a sort of professional roles outside of education is significantly more tricky. To actually go with any doctoral. Role the doctoral work. I mean, I yeah, I think actually setting is. Yeah, true.

Graham Easton

Yeah, yeah, totally. In fact, I I didn't even finish my tea. In the end, I had a it was so difficult with my young family and. I I had another project that came on and it just made sense to stop it early, which is a shame. However, I got a huge amount out of it and sort of nearly nearly got to. The end but. Unfortunately, you can't restart it. That's what I've learned, yeah.

Aga Buckley

It's it's. .

Aga Buckley

For me it's the the same.

Graham Easton

I can't pick up. No, it's the journey. It's hugely. I I've. I just found it. The most incredible, transformative journey. How far in are you?

Aga Buckley

I'm going to research first right now, so I'm I'm collecting data and and interestingly enough I I am using. A quite a. Different designs, so I'm using hemolytic phenomenology with adaptation of photo voice, so very interested. To to hear that you're talking about stories because you know I'm I'm, you know, part of my analysis is writing a short stories based on my participants interviews. So they're bringing photographs of the phenomena that I'm looking at. And I'm looking at compassion fatigue and early. At career social work, so the first part is the practitioners share their photograph of photographs. And then we use those photographs, their photographs. So it's a photovoice slash photo photo elimination with then use of story based on their interview and that's how how the. Then we're going to show their. Phenomenon of compassion fatigue amongst newly qualified social workers in the end, so it's going to be a.

Graham Easton

Sounds great. Sounds fascinating.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

We've just been chatting, waiting for you, Chris. Have you? Can you? Hear us?

Chris Mitchell

Yeah, yeah, I I can. Now. The Microsoft team has completely died in me and and killed my computer as well. So I've switched to the browser based and see. How we go from there?

Tünde Varga-Atkins

OK, well done. For persevering, we would. Just yeah. Thank you. And yeah, fingers crossed. OK. So we sort of left it Graham talking about. The stories and the power of stories and empathy and how you're connecting it to medical students. So I think, yeah. So we we left it there and I think our goal you were going to come in. Did you like that moment or did you want to react? To Graham's.

Aga Buckley

I I actually I I think I commented on grammes that, you know, I love, I love the idea of story and I I think I think it's something powerful about it and I I. Think it is interesting because if you think about who is in the room, we are very into in the sort of. Into professional here. And having profiling or background in different disciplines, I think what Graham you mentioned about the use of story is particularly powerful because you don't necessarily need to rely on a pure science or pure theory or pure law or whatever it is that you need to rely on. But. You have. You can add credibility to your teaching through use of actual examples from practise, and I I you know, I for one, I rely on it very frequently in my teaching. Possibly I wouldn't be able to do that if it wasn't for actual, you know, years and years in, in mental health, social work, practise where I, you know where those stories been born. So so yeah.

Chris Mitchell

And I. Think I think it's a really that notion of of narrative and and storytelling. I think it's such a powerful tool in education, not just in terms of introducing individual stories, but also about thinking about what we're trying to do in the classroom. And about thinking about like irrespective of whether it's a lecture, which it's very much an act of storytelling. But even in something like an interactive workshop, there is a tale to tell. There's a beginning in the middle and end, and how you design it and how you kind of lead people through it and share the

stories that you have through that process. So I think storytelling is such a useful device. For us all as educators.

Graham Easton

I think you're right, Chris. And the the thing that's really struck me has. I come from a, you know, medicine is a very sort of positivist environment and often we struggle with talking about stories. I I certainly have tried to sort of spread the word a bit or do some faculty development around at workshops, but even with students and. One of the things that I think has struck them has been challenging them to think. Of a research paper or even research as storytelling because. Of course it is. And you know the data become the the stories and you tell a story around the data and and just showing that it isn't necessarily a UMA stark boundary and uh with uh other ways of looking at knowledge.

Aga Buckley

I I think that you're making it much less. Fitting if you if you change the packaging, you know it's it's I I see it this way that you know, it's almost like maybe changing back packaging is a bit. Yeah. It's not the best example, but it's almost like that. You need to translate it, translate it to. To human and. Make it less, less, less academic.

Graham Easton

That's right.

Aga Buckley

It's almost like that. How do I get that academic out of here and bring a human person who you will be able to relate to someone that you can see as yourself as your system? The father or whoever. It's just finding that connection and I think that you know that what you mentioned that the storytelling around that's that's something that is real skill. And one that. We we're not. I don't think that we're getting. Enough training.

Chris Mitchell

Or possibly even give our students enough training in because we definitely had this this shift in our own practises where we've got a lot of students come to us with the third person perspective and we're saying for this particular. Assessment. All we're asking is to say I. And my and locate yourself within the story of this assessment. Otherwise it could be something that could be done equally well by chat LGBT. And that's not what we're heading for. So we want you to be located. And it's really interesting some students absolutely going. This is perfect, very happy with this. And some students resisting that and talking through. What's happened in the earlier career, which means that that that sort of positivist third person's perspective is academically rigorous and anything else isn't.

Graham Easton

And I think the other, the other uhm, you're so right, and I think the other interesting area was. Uhm, the the word itself story umm put put up some hackles in in my world at least when I did that which is about sort of eight years ago, and that was in that it was seen as childish. So stories are for children. And as you say are going, you know. Getting the academic out of the room, it was seen as dumbing down and that was my struggle. I think it still. Is a bit. Perhaps using different words, different ways in UM, calling it? Anything else?

Tünde Varga-Atkins

So let's look at that. OK, go on.

Aga Buckley

Sorry I'm, I'm just. I'm just thinking that you you know, it's it's it's funny that you say that because you know what? One thing I remember from like 2 weeks ago we had educational doctorate at end of year conference and I prepared my presentation to kind of to talk about like where I'm at right now. And one thing I have presented on one slide it was a picture of. My son's favourite book and the book, if you if you know that book, you're. You're gonna laugh. It's called star. UM by Oliver, Jeff Jeffers. UM and it's it's almost like, you know. I believe that. Every doctoral student should really read that book. It's about a little boy that is throwing things at at the tree just to get his kite unstuck,

and after you know, throwing everything at his disposal. Finally, there is no more space on a tree. And and that kite finally get unstuck and he forgets about everything else. And playing with the kite and. It's almost like the. The the sort of the journey doctoral journey that that a lot of. Us will go through. But the best tool to to talk about it was through a children's literature in my case.

Chris Mitchell

It's such a wonderful book and the things that get stuck include, I think, a whale, a fire truck and a.

Aga Buckley

Absolutely serious. Well, yes, that was, yeah.

Chris Mitchell

Lighthouse, yeah.

Aga Buckley

And I won't like.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

I have read. Many of his books, but not this one. I'll definitely really re read that one. Thank you for the recommendation. Let's share other light, but I mean, in a sense, you were already sharing on the basis of Graham's number of line by moments. But do you want to share some more?

Aga Buckley

You know what? It it's for me. It's it's finding what's in your environment, and sometimes it's it's not necessarily in situations where where you super prepared and you super and you have that sort of idea of what you're going to do. In the classroom. An example I've got in my in. My in mind is is. A particular example that it was just very ad hoc situation where. It was a law lecture. The last thing you want to do is provide the lecture or or interactive lecture at, you know, 2:00 PM after long day. We had a three hour lecture before and students were

very, very, very tired and we continue with the with the ideas of statutory principles of Mental Capacity Act. And there is a. One principle that is is called called less restrictive principle and it's very important for students to get their the difference between less restrictive and least restrictive, so the least restrictive principle is something that is used in a Mental Health Act. Different piece of legislation. And uh, it wasn't relevant. Relevant to our teaching that that day. And so I had the group of students who were obviously very tired and they were just going on and on. But but what is the difference? What what is the difference? What can we how can we just get it? You know, we don't get it we we. Don't get what is. The difference between at least and less restrictive and. There she was, one of the students. With full pack of M&M's munching away with, you know, crunching with you know, the peanut M&M. 'S that are very very. No, no peanut allergies in a classroom and so. I I grabbed the bag. I ask obviously if I can use it. I grabbed those students who really struggled and asked them to come, come, come and help assist me and and then we started with M&M's and that there wasn't plan or anything like that. There was only a pack of M&M's. And uh uh, you know, two guys who were really kind of baffled by the less and least restrictive and and so uh, you know, I've I've put the M&M's on their hand and I said. Like you know. How many you know, count how many MG?

Aga Buckley

55 eminems perfect five. Eminem, Eminem's so. Why don't you grab the least amount you?

Aga Buckley

They grab the one M&M so that the least amount you've taken, right? Yes. Yeah, least it's the one. Right. OK, then I ask another person from the audience and say, OK, so count how many M&M's you've got. OK. And and and. OK, you've got four left. OK, so take. Less less than one, less less than 4, less less than the amount that there is. To the person, grab 3. And there was one. Left there was there was. Just a silly, very silly basic things that we were doing. There was lots of laughter. Lots of, you know, throwing them and arms around the classroom. Very funny sort of atmosphere, but all of a sudden we were not talking about law. We were not talking about starts to the principles, but we

were just throwing M&M's at each other and then trying to. Figure out that what is less and what is least. With using a very basic things and you. Know. Yeah, it's.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And there we remember that I'm sure they will remember this.

Aga Buckley

Box. I'll tell you, you know, although they will Remember Me as Eminem's teacher, but. So that was my moment.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah. And in both cases, with Graham and you, you were, you were very much responsive to who and what and who were and where people were in your classroom at what point and how you needed to intervene and help. So yeah, that's really interesting. Yeah. Chris, what about your you got? Sorry.

Graham Easton

No, no. Yeah. It was about being tuned in and having that sort of radar on, isn't it with nonverbal signals? And, UM, even verbal ones, obviously. And but it strikes me that what you you your example is. Another example, perhaps of using stories through analogy, and one of the things that came up in my observations of lectures was that a lot of the stories were analogies in a different ways, in to the same subject to help people understand. And yeah, so it's a really nice example.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Please what about your light bulb moment?

Chris Mitchell

So my. So my light bulb moment came very early for me. So when I first started teaching, it wasn't academic teaching. I was working at the University of Bristol and through some of the other colleagues who worked there, I ended up teaching a basic HTML programme for senior people. So targeted towards developing web programming for people

50 and above. And I remember preparing for this at great length and turning up in that first session and being so frightened, so frightened, standing up the the front, this incredible sense of being a fraud. And I looked out at this, this group of people who had paid money and had volunteered to be there looking back at me. Equally from. Frightened and I found this an absolutely fascinating situation that I'm here as a teacher, frightened because everyone is looking at me. My my first concern was that no one would look at me and then suddenly I'm concerned everyone is looking at me and expecting things from me and they're looking back at me frightened and it really this notion of of how much anxiety is involved. And learning and how much anxiety acts as a barrier to what we're doing cause these people wanted to be there. They were motivated to be there, they paid. Money to be there. And but yet they have this thing of this thing is going to be hard. And I think the the two things that I really took from that was both. As a teacher, the first lesson I was frightened and I probably look frightened and I think, well, the key thing is for me, I choose to be here, so I've got to react as if I actually want to be in this room, not just perform the fact that I want to be in this room, but actually say I've chosen to be here and act accordingly. And I think the second thing for me was in terms of looking how nervous they are. I think I I probably had misunderstood quite how much anxiety they felt. So the key thing is how can I design this section section in such a way? That within 5 minutes, that anxiety goes. So what we did is an opening exercise is, you know, open up your HTML, writing software, whatever it was. I can't remember what it was now. And then write this and write this and write a word in in the middle, and then then we'll see what it. And within two minutes, everyone had a web page. It only had one word in it, and from that point you say brilliant. Well done. You've made your first web page and it's only 5 minutes. We're doing, really. Really well and that try to settle everyone down and say right now let's go and extend it a little bit further. Let's see what you want to do. Let's think about all the different elements you could do and I think. For me that that focus on a wanting to be in the room and B recognising the role that anxiety has as both a learner and a teacher, that that was for me was my big light bulb moment.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

I think that's a a feeling of anxiety on both sides is generally something that will resonate with many people. So having strategies, as you say, to dissolve that and support that or or even recognise that and then work with it is really helpful. Don't know any. Anyone else has maybe? Experiences or?

Graham Easton

I really that really resonates with me, Chris, in in a couple of ways, I mean. I think a. Your, your, your own your own anxiety. I think it's important to to register before you start, but I I definitely have taken to. Early on, which are. Not quite self deprecating, but normalising about you know I I was a student here for example and I did really badly in my first two years. I failed every exam. There was all that stuff. And umm, I've always struggled to get this through. But there is a way through and you know those sorts of uh uh stories and then the other one is that. In communication skills, we do a lot of role play and that can be incredibly nerve wracking for for learners to have the spotlight on them. Feedback on very personal aspects of interpersonal communication. UM, so frankly, that's even scary. Many years down the line, so I'm not sure we've cracked that one, but it's such a huge part of it and taking it sort of gradually, steadily ground rules and making it a safe place, all that stuff is, yeah, yeah. Really resonates.

Aga Buckley

OK. You see one one thing popped into my head as well is the element of surprise and that's something that you know and it it kind of similarly to what you Chris mentioned that you know it's almost like that you you go into action but with the view of managing their anxiety and it's not only about managing the anxiety of the of the. Of the people in the room, but also managing. Your own anxiety in in that process, you know, and I must say I I I did that a few times as well, and sometimes sometimes quite a a strange things like, you know, moving furniture around the room just, you know, jumping up and down and doing strange things. But it worked in a sense that yeah, it changed the focus or actually, OK let's focus on something else for a minute. So we can all relax and then. Just. Yeah. So we're ready for learning in a sense, you know?

Graham Easton

I'm interested how you deal whether you've got a strategy, Chris, for tackling your own anxiety or.

Chris Mitchell

Oh well, I must admit, I don't really feel it very more very much anymore. I think partly because of that sort of conceptual shift in my head is of that thing is I choose to be here. So I am really conscious about wanting to do a good job and I certainly feel annoyed and cross with myself if if the session hasn't gone well. But fundamentally, when I'm standing up in front of someone at the start of a workshop or a lecture. Or whatever it might be. That notion of I want to be here. I choose to be here is it doesn't completely transform my outlook. So I think to start off maybe that was a mantra that I sort of used to try and make me appear like I wanted to be there, but. Over time, now I get to the point I I just want to be there. I'm happy to be there. Allowed to be there and therefore I don't really feel that same sense of anxiety anymore. So but it's interesting where you know, I could stand up in a room with 300 people and feel absolutely fine. And then in a different year, in a new situation, suddenly it comes back again on a I certainly noticed on on our programme, which is about taking people who are already experts in their discipline. And talking and and introducing them to to discipline in education that maybe is less familiar. It's really interesting how the shift that happens where you've got people who I know have done keynote addresses in big conferences talking about their specialism and they know it and they're confident of it, stand up and then you say, well, could you just do a quick two-minute summary of your action research project around education? And you see the suddenly anxiety levels rise and them holding pieces of paper in their hands, shaking. You're thinking, oh, this is fascinating because you're brilliant in your subject, in fashion or in in, in photography or whatever it might be. But suddenly, because we're placing you in this unfamiliar place and you don't feel. On solid ground. Used to completely change your approach to how you do this, so I think it is interesting.

Aga Buckley

Chris, you just gave a brilliant reason for secondments. You just provide the the very, very argument that anyone in a specialist education field or any sort of faculty sort of role could really try it from time to time to go elsewhere and and and just. Stretch themselves in there and I I yeah, I'm speaking from experience, as in returning from second men in in academic development. But you know, and maybe you, you know, you are in a second rollout right now. So I'm just thinking that, you know, this is I I think this is really quite powerful experience.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

I think that you're all talking about that as well that as a learner, we will, we will shift roles from expert to absolute beginner and and as educators we need to have empathy and facilitating that process and and also we can only do that if we are self reflexive and also have experience or maybe facilitate. Our own learning and our own shifting identities as well, so that it's fascinating. I'm gonna take you on to the towards the island now so would like in, in in addition to what you've mentioned around the light bulb moment, what teaching props or pedagogies would you like to bring to this island where? Really want to create this safe environments for learners where they can experience new learning experiences and and through stories, analogies and and all that sort of thing that we talked about. What else would you want to put in our boats?

Graham Easton

I had. You might have to cut this bit out because I was going to talk about narrative learning theories and things as pedagogy. But I think to move it on. I think I would use. Role play as my approach, if that's the sort of thing we're we're allowed to take, I think it's the most powerful tool uh in in the toolbox. If you're trying to teach about communication and help people. Uh UM, obviously it's. You know you can. You can. I remember at one medical school shall remain nameless. There was a sort of assessment of communication virus sort of MCQ

exam and a, you know and maybe an essay. And of course you know that's not the way to assess how you communicate with with patients. So you know it. Had to be a role play and and I think although role play itself. As we just discussed, can engender sort of anxieties amongst all sorts of people, and it's it's quite high stakes. The pay off can be enormous, whether you're rerunning something and that hasn't quite worked. Let's try that again. Or introducing a way of. Say Breaking Bad news or whatever in a safe environment, it can just be transformative. Umm. So yeah, for me, I think, uh, in my area of medical education, it would be, it would be role-playing. And those, of course, are stories. So I love writing role plays with actors and simulated patients. So we write these stories together. We try and. Bring the cases to life so that the real UM as far as possible and and and in a way you sort of workshop them over time. So that they become authentic and easily and reliably played again and again and again. So that it can be authentic reactions to to what the students do.

Chris Mitchell

Yeah, I would second that. I love the use of role-playing and I agree you have to be quite cautious sometimes with it because it is probably the form of of pedagogy which causes most anxiety. Uh, very much is not on people's kind of safe ground. But there's a wonderful moment if it's going well, I think. When? When someone because it's I find it often it's quite slow to start and then it starts building momentum and some people start introducing ideas. And it's OK. And then people take those ideas and then use that and you get that kind of call and response of a good role play when it develops that momentum. It's it's a really wonderful moment. We've been using it a little bit in terms of this unit. We do called education for change, about thinking about working in partnership. For example, we get people to role play those partnerships and again, it's that first. Awkward. Two or three minutes. You need to get through and once you get through, if you get through, it's fabulous.

Graham Easton

Absolutely, yeah, I think. Definitely, as with a decent facilitator and and and as time goes on, you get more and more, more and more from it. And I think. I think sometimes the. The the the challenge really is

about and I've worked in sort of faculty development around role-playing trying to. Help other medical schools use it, perhaps overseas and and so on. Who perhaps aren't so familiar with it. And so on. And for me, the key the the key to successful role play in our world anyway is around feedback and how to. How to structure it the the your your approach to it? Who does it? How to facilitate the discussions? So that they're safe. And and so that everyone, everyone gets what they need and that the approach to learning is is constructive and safe. I think. I think that's the the crucial thing.

Aga Buckley

I think I'm going to add something. To the mix. I think I'm going to add it with my social pedagogue, my hat, you know, before I become a social worker, I become a social pedagogue. If you, if you think about how social workers are trained in in mainland Europe, that's how you know with social pedagogy. It's not very commonly sort of spoken about discipline in the in the UK, but it is I think it's emerging and it's just kind of, yeah. And then I am. So I'm thinking about. But a good use of. Love, pastor. Lots. His take on teaching and learning that influence highly influenced many, many uh well, well known big educators. You know, a lot of people. Think that do we? Would never do his work if it wasn't for pestilence. His take on things so. So we're talking about the the head heart and hand approach. We're head is ability to become. More than focus on the cognitive areas like Piaget would take it this way. But what I'm thinking, you know from pestilence head, was about being, you know, being yourself, being being able to to to create in your days. But but it's, you know, it's it's have your own voice. So that was the head. Heart was about connecting with others. Connecting with other human beings, connecting with the society. And that connection was necessary to develop ideas without that connection. Without that love for fellow human being, there wouldn't be an idea. Now hence is about work. So the ideas could only be implemented and, you know, become reality through your work, through your hands. And that's the the sort of practical aspect where where it comes in. So if you think about it, these are very. Very, very old. So I'm. Talking, you know we're going. Like over 200 years. Ago now, but it it was the seed that then grew in, you know, many other other cases. You know if you if you go through mostly actually known in progressive education. So if you

think about Maria Montessori, if you think about. You know Steiner Waldorf, all those, you know, progressive educators verbal, you know, the, you know, the kindergarten and all those things. So. So all the progressive sort of educators we're using. Sort of the premise. That, you know, bestiality methods, I suppose they took it places in different places, but I think. I know something. About about it that I really, really. Really love. And I would definitely take it.

Chris Mitchell

And I think that really resonates for, for me, being based within a creative arts institution and that notion of obviously yet. And heart, yes, for the hands. And I think what we've been thinking about a lot is is what? What changes something when you've got education is based on the idea of making something, creating something new, and and I we sort of thought long and hard about whether that is something distinctive to creative arts, and I don't think it is. I think the instinct that the thing that you're doing at the end of it is the making the hands, that instinct, that that will necessarily be part of your learning is. Maybe distinctive to creative arts, but I think actually it's there in every single subject. That national making creating something new.

Aga Buckley

I could not. I could not agree more. It's about the whole body. It's about a whole human is about the learning that the learning doesn't happen independently in your head. The learning happens through different things, through different senses, different different, you know movement, the the practise, the action, the, you know, whatever. Whatever else and you know, social productivity is about. Involving whole body in learning and. I am particularly interested in using arts in in teaching social work, and I'm making my strands into perhaps changing a few things here and there, and actually in January we'll be taking students to National Gallery and Freud Museum and different places. Just because I think we are missing, we're missing important parts. Missing expanding education. It's not only. About sitting in the classroom and. Listening to another boring lecture, I think it's, you know, it. There's more more in it. There's more beauty in it. And I I think that you know, I'm covering it somehow. It's. Important to me at least.

Graham Easton

It resonates so much again in medicine as you probably know, but there's a there's a big drive towards, uh, the humanities and arts in learning medicine because of that recognition that there's so much more to it. Than the sort of scientific knowledge. And so we we've adopted that that same phrase about heads and hearts and. And and in in a sense the the hands bit is the bit we focus on and maybe the heads a lot, but it's the it's the heart that that we're we're bringing out in ours. I think we're trying to work out how to do it best and learning. From others, but yeah, definitely important in that in that area too.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

That seems to be a theme, then this embodied teaching as an embodied and learning experience and and in the literal sense as well. And this holistic in in a number of ways. He talks about it, the sciences and the arts together, the head, heart, hands together and and you know. The sense as well. Is there anything that based on now what you all said? Is there anything else that you think ohh we could grab that for the island? Any teaching and the other teaching prop or pedagogy that we we could Bart away or bring an extra Chris.

Chris Mitchell

The thing I want is added to prop is some ability to write or create mind maps. I think there's so so useful and I think it's for me, uh, whether it's through uh jam board or bits of paper or frontier arranging rocks on a beach, I don't mind. But some, we're generating lots of ideas without critiquing those ideas. In the first instance. And I think that's for me, is the key thing and it's taking me quite a while to get to that point. But the great thing about something like a mind map is is throw throw lots of ideas. Everyone put an idea in doesn't necessarily need to take long. We've had exercises which have been 5 minutes long which have generated so much rich data and then the key thing is right now we've got all of this stuff. Well, we don't necessarily care about who submitted. The idea and I. Think that's critical? Then organising that and creating little connections, because I think fundamental. That's all we're trying to do a lot in education is trying to make connections between things that haven't been connected before. I think using

some kind of mind mapping tools to be able to to enable to do that based on peoples's. Instinctive generation of ideas I want. Something like that please.

Aga Buckley

By 1.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

So pebbles on gem boards on on the board. Yes, we can sort.

Chris Mitchell

That it's pebbles and chalk, and I'll I'll be happy. Whatever, as long as I can make a mine map, I'll be happy.

Graham Easton

You could use the sand. I mean, yeah. That's yeah, yeah. Brilliant.

Aga Buckley

Little shells, yes, and sticks. There we go. Yeah. You know what? You by by. By insisting on that, Chris, you're making this whole process very inclusive. And I think that that's very important all of a sudden. You are removing a lot of barriers for for many of us, you know, and that includes students, educators, so I think.

Graham Easton

You've but you've you've triggered something in me. Now. If I'm allowed to think of a prop as well, Tunda, which perhaps is at the completely other other end of the spectrum, which might feel quite anxiety inducing and and and, you know, goes against pretty much all of my approach as we've been talking about. I'd love to bring a video camera or a way of videoing.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Go for it.

Graham Easton

So that people can see themselves in a role play and their interactions with other people. Because actually when I think about it, that is the moment when you get real insights and breakthroughs and. Often not even if people are able to see themselves consulting, in my case, consulting once during their training, it is transformational and they see that actually they often most usually they see they're actually much more adept, much more relaxed. Much more natural and successful at communicating than they thought, but sometimes it's absolutely fantastic for opening someone's eyes to a repeating issue, which perhaps they have no no real insight in. So yeah, I'd go for some form of. Sort of. Yeah. Observational camera or something like that.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

I think if you can get solar powered ones then.

Graham Easton

Solar powered here.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

You end up. Really have to have the have them on the island, yes.

Graham Easton

Thank you. Thank you. Yeah.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Sounds great. OK, any anything else, saga?

Aga Buckley

You may find me carrying a big bag of toys with me. And yes, you know, we go back to dumbing things down, but actually I do believe that it's sometimes it's it's about using play. And you could you could use play and and force people to think about things very differently. I did that once with the with the doctoral students. I just you know, I. Asked them to why don't. You just build me a definition of active

learning, you know, and you know, obviously, you know, it was it was interesting because you had. A table of people. You had an academic from cyber security with pharmacy and nurse and someone else. And I just you need to agree on one definition of active learning. You use your educational theories and build me the definition and. There were whales and uh Lego blocks and slime and all sorts of planes. And you know dinosaurs and it worked. So I think toys, even a plastic toys, perhaps not the most environmentally friendly considering the island, but maybe we could just focus on wooden toils, toys. But they could be extremely useful.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And I'm sure I'll go with your method. You you grab what you have. So you're very conscious of recycling and reusing things. But yeah, that that's definitely and and based on what you said as well, I can imagine a fire with the storytelling. And so we, we we should definitely have a fire on the island where you can sit around and tell stories and and. And so on. So now you've done a lot, huh?

Graham Easton

No guitars. No guitars allowed. That's all I'd say that's.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Any reason?

Graham Easton

No, sorry. It's just a little. A little personal preference.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

OK, well, all right.

Chris Mitchell

A lot of people sort of are very keen to play guitar, but that that might not always be matched by the requisite desire to listen to the guitar I. Think that might be.

Graham Easton

You've put it beautifully, Chris. That was well, that's what I was.

Graham Easton

Trying to say yeah.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

OK, so you've done a lot of work on on the islands. Uh, educating, facilitating other peoples learning, creating them a safe environment and and using stories. So now it's time to relax. So what luxury item would help you relax off duty?

Chris Mitchell

I I don't know whether this counts as a luxury item, but I'm gonna choose it anyway. It's a the original French version of the Count of Monte Cristo I. And like so many things I've realised in my life, my adult life is is making friends with the monsters of my my teenage years. The things that were. Caused me problems then. I was really bad and continue. To be fairly bad at learning languages. And I'm remember with with horror the sort of the, the humiliation, of being fairly randomly in the top set for French. And almost being there for everyone's amusement because I was bad and the sea I scraped for GCC and friend is one of the proudest moments of my academic career, including my doctorate. But as an adult, everything I will try and uh, you know, learn French and I've got a ridiculously long Duolingo streak, but I'm going to take my, my, my original French copy of the Count of Monte Cristo, and I'm going to try and translate it. This is a process I have started already. And it is probably going to be the low slowest translation that there has ever been, possibly the most inaccurate translation given how much of the first chapter is about boats. But yeah, I'm going to be taking that and I'll be slowly translating that over the course of my many years. Maroon.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

So can we give your homework then for our blog? If you maybe translate a small section for us to appear on our blog.

Chris Mitchell

Ohh yeah, I'm very happy to. Yeah, you can see how badly I'm doing. Yeah, by by all means.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

I I don't speak French, so I won't be able to say, but you can you can convince us it's the real deal. Thanks, Chris. So yes, uh, French book. Anything else?

Graham Easton

Well, I'm. I'm gonna just go for, perhaps unsurprisingly, a massive wide screen HD television and UM, unashamedly. I was brought up to be guilty about watching television. I it was always something that was to be avoided at all costs. And you need to be out there and. Engaging with the world. But I love. I realised that I just love stories. They are so powerful. It's such an incredibly effective way for me anyway, to to down, to wind down and lose myself because they're so engaging. I I just can't get enough of Netflix and films and. All sorts of stories. So documentary, whatever. So yeah, unashamedly A telly and if I'm not allowed that, then radio. At the very least.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

OK, you know the role solar powered or or renewable energy powered, but yes, you can bring it definitely.

Graham Easton

Thank. Thank you very much.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And and you've given a very good rationale for you as well. So yes. Bye bye you wanka.

Aga Buckley

I think that we're going to do a bit of sharing of that solar, solar power, solar battery, to be honest, because I'm I, I cannot live without audio

books. So I'm afraid. In fact, all of my families are. Dictates uh. I don't know how many titles we've got on our account, probably around, I don't know, probably around 500 titles and and and it's kind of growing. So. So audio books are our thing as much as it's my kids thing. It's my husband's thing. It's my, it's my thing, you know and and we get all sorts of different audio books and I I find. Even now, doing my my doctor's thank God that we have audiobooks of Heidegger being in time because actually reading it. In paper in. Paperback it's it's impossible. So it's, you know, listening and reading and reading and listening again and. It just kind of helps to.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Try to understand what.

Aga Buckley

I'm reading because I still. I'm still trying. But still audio. Books, I think, is something absolutely amazing. It just it helps you to do what the teller. Will be able. To do go and bite with your eyes. Close. So it's like, yeah.

Graham Easton

Yeah. Well, I was always told the pictures are much. Better on radio.

Aga Buckley

There you go.

Chris Mitchell

And we've gone full circles. We've all chosen stories.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, I know she's there as well and I noticed.

Graham Easton

That's true. That is true.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

In but in all different. Formats and languages as well. So in Netflix as well, you can choose the the subtitles and the languages as well can't choose so you can you could watch Chris with Graham. He maybe let you use.

Graham Easton

It's like when you buy.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Some French subtitles that might help you with. Your language learning.

Graham Easton

But it's like it is like, you know, and you you you buy a new car perhaps or something like that and you suddenly become. Aware of all? The cars that are the same as the one you've you've just bought or about to buy it once I've engaged. With stories and storytelling, you just you see it everywhere. How it's vital importance to what it is to be human. So it's sort of it's, it's so ingrained in everything from teaching to, you know, just how we make sense of life.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

I think these are perfect parting words, Graham. Unless Chris. Did you want to say anything else?

Chris Mitchell

No, I was just wondering rather flippantly whether whose side of the beach to be more popular. I suspect it'll be great.

Aga Buckley

You know, I would have one more thing on my list. I'm not sure if I'm allowed to say that out loud and I'm thinking maybe, maybe, maybe the other Chris will will. Cut it out. Red wine and dark chocolate. Are we allowed?

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Some people have brought more than one thing on the island, so yes, you can certainly would go well with the stories either listening or telling them, wouldn't it?

Aga Buckley

Very practical, but certainly.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

We're talking about luxury items, aren't we? So yeah, definitely.

Chris Mitchell

And if we're taking inspiration from the counter Monte Cristo, the islands there are filled with treasure. So we could be on one of those islands.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Exactly right. So it's time to sail away to a Treasure Island together with red wine, chocolate stories and in various forms and shapes. Thank you, everyone, for listening. If you enjoyed our episode, please subscribe to our podcast. You can also join as a guest. Just find us at Liverpool Uni. See I podcast website. You can also access our podcasts and as blogs as well. Goodbye for now. And finally, a big thank you to our guest today. Goodbye. Goodbye. Brilliant. Thank you so much. I'm gonna shut the record it. Stop the recording.