

Treasure Island Pedagogies Episode 33

Podcast Transcript

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Tünde Varga-Atkins

Hello, this is Tünde Varga-Atkins from Liverpool University Center for Innovation in Education and our Treasure Island Pedagogies podcast. This is a very special episode, episode 33, where we returned to our original guests whose conversation helped inspired based formats of the series we have on Anna O'Connor. Diana Jeater and Stuart Wilks-Heeg. With us today and James Gaynor, who can't be here in person but is here in spirit as he told us all from University of Liverpool. And let us track back to April and June 2020. It's four years ago now, just to see how this podcast was born in April, we recorded. With your podcast on your teaching experience during COVID, when I asked you to bring an artifact that describe your remote teaching. Whether in the form of a piece of music or something else, and from this discussion, it became very clear that there was a this space of special contact time for students during the pandemic that had to be reconfigured to offer students the best possible learning experience. And this is how the concept of Treasure Island. Was born and in our first episode we discussed what you would bring to the island to facilitate light bulb movements for students. Any other teaching props or pedagogies to make this possible? As well as luxury items to ensure our well-being as educators and now roll forward to June 2024 and let's revisit our island together to see how those experiences have influenced your practice since then. Are there any aspects that you've kept or happily abandoned and any? Anything else that may have changed or stayed the same? Yeah. So I will open the discussion and and then just please say your name as well. Introduce yourself just briefly when when you. Speak. Thank you.

Anna o'Connor.

Hi, I'm Anna o'Connor. We've, we've just. Finished the assessment period. The one thing I want to say is we've kept some exams online. I love marking exams that are on computers now. I can read the writing. We don't have issues. I that is one thing. That has been you. Know a great you know, positive. And I think from the students perspective as well, we don't do it

online at home anymore. It's not open book. But coming onto the campus just I think it gives them the the best possible chance. So it's that's just fresh in my mind cause we've just coming to the end of the assessment. Period right now.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

And I'm still, we'll take from politics. Actually, my exams have gone back on campus and I didn't mind reading them, actually handwritten. They were pretty good. I didn't struggle too much with the the writing. The reason for that is AI. So my exams, they do include as part of the multiple choice questions. And I did. Test what the what the AI would would come up with for those. So I use chat, CBT on multiple choice questions that I thought were. And ChatGPT got 100% so I realised I really couldn't leave that online and we've gone back on campus. I've gotta say, the students didn't necessarily love it. There were some complaints. But, I mean, this might sound weird, but I think exams are partly collective experience and being together on campus in the exam room, going through that, I know it's stressful. I know nobody really likes it, but afterwards you go for a chat, you go to the pub, you have a drink, you talk about the exam, everybody doing it in front of their PC individually I think kindly you lose that collective spirit. So I I hope exams make a bit of a comeback, but I can. See the advantage of online of.

Anna o'Connor.

Yeah, well, this is on on campus as well. So in in the computer lab, all this tip tapping away as they're doing it, but the AI side of things is very interesting, isn't it? We're look, we're just coming into seeing that with assignments at the minute and trying to, you know, navigate that.

Diana Jeater

Yes, this this is Diana Jeater here from history. Two things arising from that conversation for me that the 1st is that perhaps before COVID we hadn't paid enough attention to how important the the coexistence in a. Base is because we just took it for granted, but we didn't have other experiences to to draw on and I think now we are really thinking about the importance of coexistence in a space and then how do we make best use of that coexistence in a space and maybe we weren't making the best use of it. Now we've become more aware of it. I'm certainly thinking more about how to make use of having the students all in a space. Together. But the other thing is a I, you know, we just kind of staggered sort of crawled out of the the

nightmare of COVID and all of the work that's been done and we've just come through and we're hit with AI. And now we've got to start this all.

Speaker

Yeah.

Diana Jeater

Over again. How? Do we teach with AI and it's the same as, you know, those of us who are old. You have to remember when when the Internet came in, we had to teach students how to use the Internet effectively and use critical skills and using the Internet. We're gonna have to do the same with a I I I don't think we should regard it as an enemy. I think AI is our friend, but we've really got to think about how we design assessments so that they. Learning how to use AI critically rather than using AI in place of thinking critically.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

So have you started yet? Gone.

Anna o'Connor.

Really valid point that you know sort of, I'm starting, you know, looking at all the advantages of AI as well and certainly from a medical perspective there, there are lots of positives out of it, but you know going that assessment, we want to ensure that they have the knowledge and the skills from a clinical perspective that they can assess. Patients safely and accurately, and it's their knowledge and their skills. So yeah. It's a big challenge.

Diana Jeater

But there is an entire world of people thinking. About it and and there are lots of conversations going on about it, including the forthcoming learning and Teaching Conference in here at Liverpool. So I I I think we can do this, but the I think the difficulty is as I said, we're just exhausted. We've just used so much. Of our of our pedagogic innovation and creativity and thinking to think our way through COVID. And we've just recovered from that when we've got to start doing this, which is a different kind of challenge and requires a different kind of headspace. And wow, we're good. You know, we are picking up these challenges and running with them, but we shouldn't underestimate the toll that it takes on teaching. No.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

I think I remember Diana from your, from our conversation four years ago, that this is exactly what we were talking about that whilst also looking after our students well-being and and and making it the best experience that we can during the pandemic. Also about being mindful of staff and how we can support. Each other. As well, and you're right, it is now almost like from one thing to another and and and I think with AI as well is the fast pace of developments because it's you know one month you can say that I don't know ChatGPT is not available for everybody or some versions of the. People and now we know that is now becoming available to everybody. So like almost like months for months changes as well, that's probably an additional bit as well.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

It I mean it's a massive challenge. It's absolutely huge and I do agree the only the only way of responding to this is to work with the technology rather than against it. But it's, as you said, it's moving forward so fast and I don't think our procedures in terms of how we design curricula, how we design modules, how we approve them. I just don't think they're they're. Well, they're not flexible enough to to respond to these challenges really because it's so, so rapid. I mean, just one example, I mean a lot of that technology is being used in a very raw way and quite badly by students where they are using it. But what I did is an experiment I. I actually gave myself half an hour with ChatGPT to answer an essay question on my own module, so I'll put it through ChatGPT did a few different things and then I did a bit of editing you. Know. Wrote a proper introduction very quickly. Proper conclusion tied it up. The references whole thing to 1/2 an hour. I uploaded it on canvas as a test student. And then I sent it to my fellow markers to say Ohh not sure about this one. Could you have a look and and they? Both said they'd give. It a first right, so that combination of the technology and having some knowledge about the subject was incredibly powerful, right? And, you know, in the context of a first year module that looked like a really stunning piece of work. So we are gonna be very soon. That point where that technology will be used in in that I think they're already and you know I don't, I honestly don't know what we what we are gonna do about it. I'm all ears. I wanna know what the solutions are. I don't think we got them yet.

Diana Jeater

Well, and apparently there's there's also AI that will mark the essays for you. So we had a situation where the students were writing the essence with AI, and then we're marking them with AI and and nobody would know. So we have to do something completely different when we think about what

assessment is. And I think we've started to do that. When we started thinking about COVID, one of the things that we all talked about when we talked before was about the value of iterative assessment, more frequent, smaller bits of assessment that involve more engagement. And we can get students to use. Who's AI to do that kind of work? Without it being what the final project is, so that in so that we're we're assessing them on their ability to use AI effectively rather than assessing them on the outcome. So I think we've already started thinking along these kinds of lines in response to the challenge of COVID and the needs to keep students engaged. So I think we're already developing.

Speaker

And.

Diana Jeater

Ideas about how assessment should be something completely different from what it was in in a. In a pre Internet pre AI pre online teaching age.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah. No. Do you have any thoughts in terms of because I know in terms of your area and clinical skills and how that might work or or play out in your?

Anna o'Connor.

In terms of engagement, clinical skills, the student, that's the one thing students, the highest attendance they enjoy the most. They're hands on, they're doing stuff and they can see how it relates to their future careers as well. And we can talk about patients so. I think. AI hasn't necessarily filtered into that sign of things as yet, but we're just marking some assignments and, you know, looking at the API scores that you know that is suspected. Levels of AI and use and it's trying to make sense of that as to what that means and what we do with that information and. Don't think now you know one of the things we're going to think about all these assessments doing what we want them to do, you know. And I don't know the answer at the minute and I think we're, you know, we've we're just starting to sort of think about that and realise with some of our specialty stuff. We've tried chat, ChatGPT like I I looked at some stuff a couple of years ago and it was nonsense. You know, I think with some some areas, some medical fields. It it doesn't have that. The the complexity of the sort of the thought processes. But it's evolving and it's evolving and rapid rate. So I think we haven't necessarily worried too much

previously, but now we're kind of going ohh hang on a second, we need to try and sort of be thinking one step ahead, but that's really hard when you don't know. What that step is?

Diana Jeater

But I think one of the things you said there that I find really exciting to think with is. Is thinking what do we want the assessment to achieve and one of the things that I have got out of the COVID experience and then thinking further about things and also being inspired by something that Stuart said last time about involving students in thinking about learning outcomes is let's.

Anna o'Connor.

MM.

Diana Jeater

Let's make that part of the learning process. So let's talk to the students and say what we want the assessment to achieve and Co design that with the students, because if we involve the students in thinking, what do we want the assessment to achieve, what do they want the assessment to achieve for them? Then they have a by. Which means that. We're likely to end up designing assessments that do something useful and also avoid these issues of cheating and so on, because the students are doing the assessments because they can see they're getting something out of it. So I think that that there are multiple reasons why moving towards much greater staff, student partnerships. Will help will help the students to engage and will help us to avoid some of these problems with old style assessments that we keep tripping up.

Anna o'Connor.

And involvement students are essential. I think that's a real positive. One of the challenges again, though, is we sometimes one year get the the feedback on the module. Oh, they love this bit. Then the next year. They hate it. Like I ohh yeah, trying to make sense of that and to have something that's going to sort of be, yeah. Suitable for the next year.

Diana Jeater

Well, what I've been trying to do is actually get each year to design the assessment. OK, so you're involved. We discuss what are, what are the

marking criteria? Why are these the marking criteria? What are the learning outcomes? Do we need? How do we design the final assessments to meet those things that we think are important? And do we think that this is the right way to? These are the right marking criteria for them, so I, apart from anything else, uncovering my own back that the students can't then. Complain they they like.

Anna o'Connor.

Line set.

Diana Jeater

The way that things are marked cause they agreed the marking criteria.

Anna o'Connor.

Within certain programs, certainly clinical side of things, we we have some constraints on us by the the regulatory bodies that we have to teach and have to meet certain learning outcomes because we can't say you know if they graduated, they have to be able to you know able to assess any type of patient or have that knowledge. So there are some criteria that they have to meet. I think it's more about for us the flexibility you know is is more the side of how we achieve that rather than some of those learning outcomes. We don't have that flexibility. Hmm.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

And it's picking up on this, I mean in a lot of ways, my biggest concern is. With. Year one, because year one, we can't do some of these that you can't really have a discussion with 200 students about marking criteria and all the rest of it, you've gotta have something pretty standard that you just give to them and then they give you the stuff back and and you know, on a big first year. If you're setting them fairly standard assignments, it's very, very hard to identify whether there's AI in there and what you might do about it. And if they're coming through first here and they haven't really got their heads around, what university study is how to write a university essay. If they've relied on artificial intelligence to support that process. That they're not gonna be ready for second year and you know our assessment methods do change in second year. We we do ask them to do different things more challenging. You know that we are able to work with them and the way you describe them in terms of shaping some of that and so on. So if they haven't got those

foundations in first year just because we can't do it at that scale does worry me. About where we might then be with them.

Anna o'Connor.

Do you think some of that comes? From. Which was mentioned previously about their perceptions of being a student and what they're there for and what they want to get out of it.

Speaker

Hmm.

Anna o'Connor.

You know, I know I've got a sense of how things have changed, sort of post COVID, but what do you think in? Terms of what? The students. You know, sort of that are coming now.

Speaker

Yeah. So.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

So I mean it just there seems to have. Been. A shift right, so obviously during COVID, I mean I think it's no secret most students didn't like online learning.

Anna o'Connor.

All those black screens with all the camera. Was off. Ohh yes.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

Yeah. And it would challenging Britain.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, I remember. And you were asking them to switch the screens on so you could actually spot who was understanding what you were talking about. Who wasn't? Yeah.

Anna o'Connor.

Yeah, it it's not just partly, you know, it's a bit sort of soul destroying sitting in a room just staring at a screen with a load of little black blobs on it. But it's nice to have that engagement and see if they understand it or, you know, I want to help.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

Yeah, exactly. And there were, you know, a lot of complaints about having to watch recorded lectures. And students say they wanted to be on campus and be in the lecture rooms and be in seminar rooms. And to be able to see each other and all the rest of it. So yeah, eventually we got back on campus. And for a while, you know, campus felt full again. And the. That lecture theatres filled up and students came. It didn't last very long and so now we, I mean certainly we've got a very real attendance problem, but really really battling with it and. The students more and more than they're relying on the lecture recordings and you know, I've given lectures and then I've gone back to my office to upload it to the right place on our virtual learning Environment canvas and just do that and and you know, within 20 minutes I've got students emailing me saying, where's the lecture video? Where's the lecture video? Only did the lecture 20 minutes. Yeah. So the demand for that content is really, really there and it does seem to me that there is a, there's a shift which and everybody's kind of weighed things up post pandemic and all the rest of it, but. It does feel like students now see university as just one thing they're doing, not necessarily. The main thing they want it to fit around. The other things they're doing more and more of them having to work part time. But you know, they're doing sports. They've got social life. All these other things going on. So they want the course to fit around all of that. But the catch up generation, they don't watch live TV. Very much so. They they like stuff being available. On demand. So I'm starting to hear stuff like, well, why can't I join the seminar online? I can't be in the room, but I could join if you can. You know, if you can make it available on zoom. Certainly. If you don't put a lecture recording up, you hear about that very, very quickly because the numbers you want it. So I mean, I'm. I'm slightly taken aback that we shifted. So rapidly from hating online learning to wanting it.

Speaker

Yes.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

I don't know how we respond to that because I think it's really hybrid teaching is really difficult, really challenging. I don't know if we wanna go

down that route. You know, I'm wondering what I'm gonna do when I walk into a lecture room and there's literally nobody there because they've all decided to rely on the recording. Do I teach to an empty room just to record it? So I think we're going into a really challenging space, but I think that is where we're heading.

Anna o'Connor.

Do you think one student said to me well, colleagues, sorry I said, well, you know, this is I prefer learning online. It's like, well, OK, yeah. Is that working for you? And the marks are not reflecting, you know, and you're like, but it's not working for you. So what are you gonna do differently? So that expectation like, OK, yeah. You know, if it's if you can get the information that way you think well, OK, they're putting in the work and OK then we have to, you know shift our thinking but then if they're not. So many of our students will come and have put feedback and said we want more on campus stuff. We want more on campus. Stuff. But then the attendance isn't reflective, it's the ones who are coming on campus. What more? And then there's a.

Diana Jeater

Yeah, that would fill out the forms. Yes, but this goes back to a a comment that I made previously, which is that we don't have to lecture in a large room. We can do other things in a large room and in my experience, students will turn up if.

Anna o'Connor.

Absolutely.

Diana Jeater

If it's an enjoyable experience. So for example, with our first years, there's been a general problem with attendance with first years this last year. But actually I had 100 and I'm I'm. I mean, I think it's partly because it was a really. Good group I. Was just lucky, but it was right at the end of the day it was going through until six was 4 till six in the evening at the end of the week. And yet I had 100% attendance and I think that was because of the relationships that the students built up in that seminar through the group work that they were doing together in the seminar meant that they wanted to be there because it was their chance to hang out with people that they enjoyed hanging out with. And so next year, for my second year, I've got 24 students on a 15 credit module. So I've got two hours, which which is normally

it would be an hours lecture and then one hour seminar. And then because it's 24, is that going to be 1 seminar group or two? And because of cuts and so on, it's going to be one. I've decided that I'm actually going to record. All the lectures. And I'll use that as a 2 hour slot where we can really do some work together as a group so that they'll have a reason. To turn up. And that the assessment will be very closely linked to what actually happens in the seminar, so I'm not assessing their attendance. But I'm building the assessment around what they do. So that there is a reason to be there. And I think if they get into that habit of coming to campus because going back to this question about the value of being in a space together because it's fun. Then we get the engagement and then you get all that peer learning because frankly, students teach each other far more than we teach them.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

So the the way I look at this is it's what political scientists and economists call the collective action problem. So. So I do think what everybody wants, right? They want the lectures to be like they are in American movies, right where you've got this brilliant, usually glamorous professor at the front who's really engaging. And so but all the students. That there it's the lecture room is packed. They're really attentive. They're not behind laptops and all the rest of it. Everybody's really engaged. So everybody wants a lecture to feel like that. But for it to feel like that, everybody has to play their part. Yeah, not just the lecturer. The students have to show up. They have to be engaged. They have to be attentive. And the more we make alternatives available, like lecture recordings and through the and. And it's the right thing to do. I'm not saying we shouldn't, but the more we do that, the more it means that it might be individually. Passional not to go. It's a it's a hassle to go. It's raining. I've gotta get on the bus. I'll use the recording so everybody wants that outcome that I've just described. But you know, in the moment you might think, well, I won't today and everybody who makes that decision not to do it undermines the the thing that we're all aiming for. So we need to change and that's what you're saying. And really we need to change the incentives. We need to change the reasons why people are there. Why they want to be engaged, how they so that they feel that it's worth it so that it is rational for them to go and to to achieve that outcome we want, but it it needs a fair bit of rethinking for. Us to get there.

Anna o'Connor.

And think and having conversations students about what are the barriers to attending. And there's some things that we can't take away the the part time jobs or the the caring responsibilities or whatever it is their their personal

values. They're commuting now. Maybe it's, you know, financially there's. I think there seems to be more students commuting, they think well, I don't actually have to be on campus every day, so I'm not going to live. Campus. So then they think, well actually today that's another. You know, however much money to commute. So I'll save that money. So I think there's some of the things we. Can't take away.

Diana Jeater

But forget that mental health problems are still a big problem. I think the cohort that's just finishing. Now, for students who are on three-year programs with the worst affected by COVID. But even coming back behind them with our current first and second years. There's still higher levels of anxiety, mental health problems than we used to see and, and we need to take that into account as well.

Anna o'Connor.

Very much. I mean I'm. I do the disability support within our program so and I and I see that with you know support plans from you know for the school as a whole as well. And so yeah, it's a challenge and I think you said start recording the lectures is definitely right thing, completely and utterly this was pre.

Speaker

Yeah.

Anna o'Connor.

COVID, I always said. Look the eyes and I the corner doesn't start to move around. The retina stays where it is. You know, there's some things that are not gonna change. Let's use our resources in the best way possible. Record some of the factual. We'll do that. Use the lecturers. You know we are there to help you understand it, not to affect deliverers. You know, that's our job. That's what I get and get the most. Out of. My favorite sessions you know, are always the tutorials towards the end of the third. They're they're really motivated. They've got a load of knowledge and they're asking brilliant questions. We're having discussions and I love those sessions, you know. But it's trying to. Get the first years to that. State, you know, level that's the challenge.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Or some some strategies you've discussed already like that and you were talking about how to make those sessions engaging and and some of the peer because there is also the perhaps relating or or to the mental health issues and and for first years as well to. To create a space for students to meet each other and get to know each other so they could have those conversations, that's usually helpful. Are there other things that maybe either from COVID or or or you've picked up or things that you think might be beneficial for tackling some of these issues which which can be and and also coming next year to what you said about collective action and and sometimes a bit of a tension between? What students think they want and what they actually say they want? Because I know that. Recently, some research has been done by students on on for instance, about their preferences for online learning or or on campus, but they're still very much what comes across from those reports that they still very much on the on campus experience, which is somehow attention with some of the things that you just mentioned. All of you about perhaps. They have various barriers to come on to campus in engaging with some of those.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

Yeah. I mean, I think that, you know, I think students want the on campus sessions to be there and they want to go if they feel they can, if they've, you know, and there's as we said, there's all kinds of barriers which which may be preventing students from attending. But they also want the alternative forms as well and. You know, I think that that is the challenge and it does feel that sometimes we're tipping so far towards the students relying on the back up the lecture recording or whatever else it is. And as I say to to get us back to where we were, but it is, you know. Always say COVID kind of rewired everybody's brains, right? And and we're we're just kind of learning at the scale of that. So I think almost every individual felt post COVID. Ohh I wanna live my life a bit differently. I don't wanna go back to the old ways, you know, I want a different balance. In my life and and because we're all trying to navigate that and work out what we want from our own lives, we just haven't got the kind of the systems, the, the processes, the ways of working that we used to have because it's all, it's all been jumbled up and we haven't yet arrived back at an equilibrium and I don't know when we will, I don't know when we will, so we're. You know, we're just working through it still, I think.

Anna o'Connor.

I think you right. Life is definitely more complicated. And I'm trying and. You know, sort of thinking back to my student days, it was a that's when the lecturers that you know there's that's what you do and you you turn up and

we didn't you know. Yes I am that old that you know pre sort of recorded lectures and all the rest of it so there was. More incentive to be there, but. I just think it's difficult for students as well, and I do appreciate the the challenges with the finances and all the responsibilities and sort of that, you know, that they're not necessarily able to completely just give their time to being a student.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

Yeah. Look, I'm so old that the lecturers didn't even use PowerPoint, so.

Anna o'Connor.

OHP that's.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

Exactly. And most of them didn't even do that. And usually if you missed the lecture, the advice was try and get some lecture notes off.

Anna o'Connor.

But I'm sure.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

One of your mates, that was it, right? So, you know, I don't think we should go back to those days. No, absolutely not. Absolutely not. But that was a very particular incentive structure and that gave you very strong reasons to attend and we are now in a different incentive structure. So I think we we need to think about.

Speaker

And.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

That we need to think about it.

Diana Jeater

So I mean, if you couldn't, if you didn't get the book in. The library before somebody else. You were stuck, I must say. When I was an undergraduate, I didn't actually go to lectures and I quite often didn't go to my tutorials either.

But but what I did do was I read the stuff and then I talked to my colleagues, my peers about it. And as I say, that's where we did our learning. We talked to each other. Can I can I link that to what we did in COVID? One of the things we did. Was we?

Anna o'Connor.

We.

Diana Jeater

We organised our students in and I think quite a lot of people did this, organized our students into small groups to meet outside of the formal sessions, because that was less threatening to have a small group, especially when you don't know each anyone and you're not going to meet them any other way. And we set those up as learning groups. What has been interesting. Is when we've come back to campus, is that those haven't really worked because part of their function was. Give people a chance to get to know somebody. Well, and when? They're on campus. They they don't need that. So if we want to keep those learning groups going, we have to have some other way of making them work and some other incentive to make them work because I think they do still operate. Quite an important learning function. But but but the the it's it's we need to get better at them if we actually want them to work now.

Speaker

Yeah.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Do you think that you know that they may work done better for, let's say, the students are commute to students or the students who might not come to campus that often? Is there a school perhaps to target slightly different people with?

Diana Jeater

I think that's true, but also what I found interestingly is that the students who are really flying academically in the first year also didn't want to spend their time with students that weren't at the same. Place as they.

Speaker

MHM.

Diana Jeater

So I did a little focus group thing with some of those. Now third year students about reflecting back on their first year experience and that was one of the things that came up was I've got so much reading to do. I've got so many conversations. To have with other. People I don't want to be spending my time with these people who haven't read. Stuff.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

In terms of things that we've kept from COVID, this is a small example, but it's the one thing I've kept, which is when we were doing those lecture recordings, I decided that, you know, an hour lectures recording was really too long. So I split the ball so it was, you know, lecture 1A and 1B. So they were. Awesome. Length each and where I can do that? I can't do that on really big modules, but where I can do it? I've kept that structure as the live lectures so I do about 25 minutes, half an hour, then I have a break and then I do the rest of the lecture. So it means extending the lecture slot to an hour and a half so that we can break it and so on. But you know, we all know about attention spans and that the hour lecture was the wrong length and all the rest of it. But for all kinds of reasons, we've never adjusted to that. So now I have, and I've kept that structure.

Diana Jeater

Do you not get back from timetabling about asking for an? Hour and a half.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

No, it's been fine actually. I mean, it does tend to mean that I get scheduled to teach early on a Monday or early on a Tuesday. So I'm in those slots and I mean one of the issues then is attendance. I've got to say, getting students there for 9:00 AM and I did have a couple of complaints from students that the lectures are too long. But you know, equally you could get. Complaints that the lectures aren't long enough. So I mean overall I think it's it's worked.

Diana Jeater

That's brilliant.

Speaker

Yeah.

Anna o'Connor.

Yeah, with our Bank of recorded lectures, every time we've updated one, just like used, you've been cutting it down into more sort of bite size. You know, I think we've tried to stick 2025 minutes type of thing.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Definitely.

Speaker

Yes.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And then can I return back to the? I mean, Diane, you mentioned the coexistence of of spaces and their role and it comes back to Stuart something that you talked about four years ago about think you did a Twitter poll about where you have your life, about moments for students and and it tended to be in between lectures or large. Passes to more the. Formal or even, the study groups Diana that you just mentioned, so sort of how these spaces may interact with each other is, is there anything else that we have seen maybe has developed since called it as people were returning to on campus, but also what we saying that we're not? By returning fully to in terms of students.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

So one thing I suspect is that students are even more digitally connected as cohorts. And I strongly suspect there is a lot of students talking to each other about modules and so on via WhatsApp. I suspect they're in WhatsApp groups. Yeah, Snapchat. And you know, those things can be helpful because actually, sometimes students need to sort of just ask each other and tell each other, you know, just.

Anna o'Connor.

All Snapchat.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

And really practical things like there's the lecture today or what's the word limit for that essay or or whatever I do think sometimes. Stuff kind of goes round on those. That is just entirely false and eventually then get an e-mail from the students saying ohh I've heard such and such and you replied to that one student, but then you think actually clearly this is a WhatsApp discussion. So I now need to e-mail the whole cohort just to to deal with this misinformation that that's gone around.

Speaker

Yeah.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

And I strongly suspect those WhatsApp groups are being used to share attendance codes and that's another challenge because you know, a few times I've. Actually counted the number of students in the room versus the number that are on the list of having attended, and I've had to make some manual adjustments if if if I'm confident that I knew who was in the room. So that's obviously going on. And I think that's just, you know, that's always gonna exist. Students always gonna have those channels outside of the. They always existed, they just existed in the past. The students meeting and the student cafe or whatever. But do start to feel those kind of online spaces. They're curating and participating in for themselves. I think they've got bigger and more import. And how that interacts with the formal teaching. It's something we need to be very conscious of and just, you know, respond, you know, as I say, sometimes you do need to e-mail everybody just to to correct something that's clearly got legs.

Diana Jeater

Yeah, so having you know, commenting live in a WhatsApp group while the lectures taking place, I I personally I find that really helpful when I'm doing that myself.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

As a Rimmer.

Diana Jeater

With with my cohorts and I would encourage the students to do that. But then I also, and I'm sure you do too, encourage the students to interrupt me when I'm lecturing. If there's something that they want to say. So I I think

again, make that L stand for large space rather than lecture and and and encourage the students. To to chat amongst themselves were during the lecture because I think that way. Again, there's more incentive to turn up.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Great. OK. So yeah, Anna.

Anna o'Connor.

I was just going to say that thing about the sharing the attendance codes. It's not necessarily what they, you know, I think students perceive it as a, you know, as a punitive thing. And they're gonna get in trouble. We wanna know if they're not turning up and just check them. All right, exactly. Because that sense of community sometimes if we're not seeing them on a day-to-day basis as we used to be, hang on. Is everything alright? What what's going on there and. Sort of that the role within our. School these days got the learning teachers support officers a lot bigger role these days, doing welfare checks and things like that, which has been really helpful to to us to just check in on people. And just like you were saying about mental health issues and so many different things. Are they having issues? Is it financial? What what's going on, what's the barriers? And you just so because we want to help students, but if they're not turning up, we're not seeing what those issues are.

Diana Jeater

Yeah. And of course that goes back to, we really need to emphasize that in the first year because it's so different from the culture they've come from at school, in a lot of places and and if see us as being police rather than people who who actually care about their well-being for its own sake. That that, yeah, that that message. Needs to be really pushed in the first year.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And then it comes back to what you said at the beginning about the Co creation is OK. So it's come back to me now what what you talked about is Co creating the experience with the students and it it comes. Back to all. Of all of what we were saying, that how important he is to consult with students and check in why things are happening or what. Can we do? Because we might not know exactly what's happening and how we can rectify that. So I think it it comes back to the importance of. Finding things out and why they are the way they are. OK, so we talked a little bit about light bulb moments revisiting

and and taking things from COVID, but also reflecting on today's context with the in the changing context with our students. So let's move on to teaching props and pedagogies. So four years ago, you brought to the island a swingometer that's was you to Stuart, which I think is very, very relevant today just before the elections on now, you had an eyeball animation on the model. And then Diana, you brought a whiteboard pen and Marcus and then James brought the whole chemistry lab, which I think you also wanted to bring the British Museum with James could have the chemistry lab. So that that's fine. So any, anything. Shall we reconsider these items? Is there anything else you might want to add to these?

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

Like I definitely still want the swingometer because with this is the year of elections around the world actually, not just the UK general election U.S. presidential election. I mean, if you just turned on the radio or the TV this weekend, you would have heard about the South African election, the Mexican election. There's so many of them and and the great thing about my swing ometer is that. The base of it is a blackboard, so I can change the scale on it for any type of election, and I think this general election we're gonna see some enormous swings. So that's gonna be very, very important. And so I'd, I'd definitely like to to have that something. I've talked about it beforehand. Actually, I'd really like to take the sound cap. Pneumonia. No. But other brands are available, I'm sure, which is just it's like a portable radio studio really. It's absolutely fantastic with its clip on microphones, great sound quality. And one thing I feel that we didn't do during COVID enough, I mean, I did it with my students on my radio module. Just don't think we made enough audio content. We made lots and lots. Video and everybody was sick of watching videos. Everybody hated being sat in front of a laptop or a computer, having to watch videos with audio. You can listen to it on the move. You can go out for your, you know, COVID permitted walk that day or whatever and listen to something you can listen to it while you're cooking or washing up or whatever you're doing. And and I think audio is just great actually for for making connections and and so on. And so actually you know if I was in that situation situation again I would make a lot more audio content, but I'd need the equipment which is why I want that device.

Diana Jeater

Can I add to that we? So. Told our first years this year for their final group project, they could make whatever they wanted and over half of the cohort decided they wanted to make a podcast and they had to do presentations talking about their project and the choices they've made in the project and in

the presentation as they talked about why they chosen to do a podcast and they made exactly those points that Stuart has just made. You can listen to a podcast anyway. You can listen to it on the bus on your way to college podcast that just just speak to this generation it seems.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

That is so true. Yeah, you can use them anywhere. And that that's really interesting, Diana, that they cause, I think, probably a few years ago that probably would wouldn't have been the case. Yeah.

Anna o'Connor.

I think because we're just mentioning about having more people commuting and you know having that that space that time to use, you know it can be used, you know in lots of different ways as well I think, yeah, I I still wanna keep my eyeballs obviously. But can I add some quizzes in there? Because whenever we do, Diana, you were talking about interaction. And making it worthwhile being there and enjoy. But I I love doing Sessions where it, you know, I've put on the the lectures or the videos. I've watched those and I wanna see if they understand it. It gives students feedback without putting them under pressure cause they're anonymous. Because if you ask them. A question they're like, don't know, but. They can check their own understanding. They can. I can give feedback like oh look fine, you know. You've got this one wrong. Let's go back over that and, you know, given that interaction, give them that opportunity to check their learning and fill in the gaps. You know, sometimes I sit like. Yeah, I know everything. It all makes sense. And then you actually put it to the test and. They. Go. Oh yeah, I really didn't. Did I? So it gives you that opportunity to find out what they do and don't know and help them to understand it. So that's, you know, who queers alert, you know, poll everywhere, quizzes, whatever it is, you know, sort of the news. Just that, that ability to do that, because I think going back to those first years, again they they come in, maybe they've done you know, a lot more didactic teaching or that their expectations are that you know that that they're worried about engaging or for whatever reason they're holding. Back. This gives them an opportunity to sort of engage and then they might feel a bit safer. Ohh, actually those people got it wrong and you know it's a bit more of a safe space as well. So yes, quizzes please.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

Yeah. Can I just pick up on that cause I've been using poll everywhere a lot post code being back on campus and I find all of those advantages and

actually it's great. You know, I get them to do things like voting intention polls.

Speaker

Yeah, yeah.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

Where I've got the actual poll from the UK population, but I get the students in the room to do it as well, and then we compare the results in the room to the population as a whole and I've also been using them at open days because I've been running all of those getting students and their parents to scan a QR code and ask any questions they want about the course and he gets so many more. Questions that way, because you know, they don't have to put their hand up and ask it in front of 100 strangers. And so yeah, I found that really, really useful and and really powerful.

Anna o'Connor.

Yeah. Yes.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

Ashley.

Diana Jeater

Yeah. And I'm similarly, I've used Paul everywhere in big lectures, big first year lectures to to get the students to, to, to pose questions and to do lots of other things as well. It's a, it's.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

Yeah.

Diana Jeater

A wonderful tool.

Speaker

I.

Diana Jeater

Looking back, it's interesting that I asked for a white board rather than a smart board. I think I was thinking about, you know, the realities of the desert island, you know, you. Might not have any. Students come from schools that he called the Fe Colleges. But that use smart boards, we don't use smart boards and smart boards are wonderful. I've always used before. Liverpool is the 1st place I've I've taught at since smart boards were invented where I haven't had smart boards to use. And I I think they're really helpful at capturing conversation and allowing annotation and all kinds of things. So I'd like to upgrade my whiteboard to a smart board also with an endless supply of post it notes, because I think there's a lot to be done with post. It. Notes and also the kinetic stuff of moving around and posting things up. Is valuable, but I would also like to I I think like Stuart, I'd like to have some recording tech since COVID. I've been thinking a lot about what what are we actually trying to equip our students to do? Is it to write academic essays and to prepare them for? Doing doctoral work. Well, for a tiny number, yes, but for most of them, we're trying to train them to be effective citizens in the world in all kinds of different ways. And so I've increasingly moved away from the traditional. Kind of assessment towards doing podcasts, making websites, making video. Those. And I'd like the opportunity to to be able to do that as well. I really don't want to lose that. I think that these are essential skills and we really students like having the opportunity to acquire those skills where you know and they get them for free. They get access to all this kit for free. Have the opportunity to use all of this software. Try out all of this kit in these precious 2 1/2 years that they're with us, so I think we should make sure. They have those opportunities.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And I love Diana. How you made the smart board into a hybrid format. So you have got the the physical post it notes with the smart more capabilities that's very 21st century I think as well I love it. Is there any? Yes. So I think those items will be great additions. Uh. So we move any any other bars that you've already voted really efficiently. I think all the ideas you said someone someone else picked up, yeah, I could do that. I could do that as well, so.

Anna o'Connor.

All share nicely.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Is there anything else that you might want to add to this so we've got smart board recording swingometer. Increases anything else that might be. I mean,

you've got quite a good selection already. Yeah. So we can leave it. We can leave it is. I think your war chores and heightens that the opportunities are endless. So let's talk about luxury items. So this is now.

Speaker

Thanks.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

We have understood the the fast-paced nature of your experiences as we talked about from COVID to AI and whatever is happening at the moment. So in terms of relaxing on the island, we've got Spotify, Netflix and some knitting and crafts with music and films. Anything else that will help you relax from these busy life of educator being an educator?

Anna o'Connor.

Well, since the The last podcast, we've acquired a dog, so I quite like to bring her. I have to get out the house to walk it. I have to keep walking. I have to, you know. And yeah, I just walking through the walls or the beach or whatever. Yeah, it's time to clear your head.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Lovely.

Stuart Wilks-Heeg

So just yesterday, actually or the day before, I was listening to a profile on radio four of Alan Bleasdale, the playwright and screenwriter, and I didn't know. But at one point, he taught in a school on a literal desert island somewhere in the Pacific. And in the podcast he explained on on the radio programme rather. It explains it was so small that it was just about big enough to play a football match and I found that so evocative, actually. So what I'd like is 2 really good goals and a good football and enough people to play a little game of football now and again. So I definitely like that.

Diana Jeater

And I think I would, I'd I'd like some, I'd like a garden and some gardening equipment.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Sounds good. That's lovely. So that's all outdoors and that just we definitely make sure that we've got blow the cobras away from academic life. Sounds great. And I can. Already imagine lovely flowers dining or. Or maybe it will be vegetables. Who knows?

Diana Jeater

I'm afraid I've I I I do flowers. I feel I ought to do vegetables that would be more. Virtuous. But I'm a woman. Those trees. Bushes.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Sounds lovely. So that's pretty. And that will conclude our Island Island reunion with with Jay. I'm, I'm sure James will bring maybe something. I don't know. We can ask him after. After what he would bring to head to the island. But thank you so much for our listeners to tune in and thanks to. All of you for a brilliant discussion and and a very useful revisit of an island to really reflect on how things are going now. So thank you and goodbye.

Diana Jeater

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you all again. Me.