Playful learning with bricks and boxes: constructing, collaborating, communicating

Fiona Prendergast, LTD, SOAS
Dr Eileen Kennedy, UCL IoE/Knowledge Lab
Moira Wright, UCL Digital Education
My digital dream box

Write here

Who am I?

Or here

Is this you?

Or here

Or here
Playful constructionism in HE

Playful approaches to learning have gained ground within higher education (Nerantzi, 2016)

“Play bonds people, helps resolve conflict, breaks down barriers, boosts positive atmosphere, can relax and energise... because it is about looking at something from an entirely different viewpoint.” (James, 2015)

http://www.iedp.com/magazine/2015issue19/index.html#28

How can we theorise the use of playful constructionism in HE?
From constructivism to constructionism

Shift from didactic teaching to learning as a constructive process:
students actively engage in learning to build knowledge structures inside their heads

Constructionist approaches:
learning can happen “especially felicitously in a context where the learner is consciously engaged in constructing a public entity, whether it’s a sand castle on the beach or a theory of the universe” (Papert and Harel, 1991).
“Conceptual gateways” to learning can appear as “troublesome knowledge” causing a shift in learner subjectivity (Meyer and Land 2011, p. 373).

“Play within this process is helpful in that it literally plays with students’ preconceived ideas and concepts” (Rice 2009, p. 96)

Games offer countless opportunities for learning as players explore alternative solutions to solve complex problems in a safe environment (Gee, 2007; Squire, 2011) (Marone, Staples, and Greenberg 2016)
How could you use this?

• encouraging ‘quieter’ students to engage in challenging/controversial discussion topics in seminars
• student reflection/feedback/evaluation
• explication of doctoral theses, UG/PG dissertations and/or proposals
• curriculum planning
• strategic decision making
• between teams/departments; students; researchers
• ???

When and where can it be used? What thresholds/limitations do you meet?
Lego bricks

- started as ideas generation method in the business world from within the Lego company
- **building** models with our hands is actually **thinking** with our hands
- visual representations and rich metaphors of our ideas, thoughts, feelings and understandings
- democratic approach to manage participation and give everybody a voice
- playful approaches like this can help students open up and connect with peers and their tutors

Chrissi Nerantzi, principal lecturer in academic CPD at Manchester Metropolitan University
The use of Lego as a research method

- Aarhus University, Denmark and University of Leuven, Belgium
- Use as an ethnographic research method, cf. PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal)
- Visual scaffold in an interview setting


cc: Nukamari - https://www.flickr.com/photos/44926815@N00
Student/Module evaluation

MMU: Evaluating Nutritional Science module

- Obtained rich information and deep insights about the student experience.
- These informed module evaluation and future developments.
- Students and lecturer loved it and found it extremely valuable.
- The students felt that they connected with their peers so much more quickly.
- They suggested that similar activities should be introduced at the beginning of the course as well, to build community and a sense of belonging.


cc: University of Saskatchewan - https://www.flickr.com/photos/34146973@N04
Discussion of challenging/complex issues

HEA/UAL: Strategic team building/discussion of challenging/complex issues, e.g. the future of HE (Barton and James, 2016)

- Warm up activities
- Individual model building
- Collective model building
- Different resources (Playdoh, boxes)

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Case studies: digital dream boxes

Use of storytelling and creating cardboard boxes to explore the student’s digital journey through higher education (Wright, 2016)
The challenge: tell us about your digital journey to UCL ...

Technology can arouse affective responses - pleasure and pain - flaming or ‘great happiness’ (Silva 2012, p. 159)

Cognitive objects (Hodgkin 1988)

transitional objects (Winnicott 1971) objects are neither inside or outside the child – ‘affectionate type of object relationship’ (Winnicott 1971, p. 1)

“lively knowledge both inside and outside the brain” (Hodgkin 1988, p.357)
New ways of surveying students’ digital education needs

UCLU Education conference

How can playful learning and creativity help?

• Narratives and story telling
  • (Re)tell your story through a well known tale
  • Reinvent the story to highlight your experience

• Making and creative construction
  • Make ideas concrete by creating something
The Owl and the Pussycat went to UCL...
What are your digital dreams? Put them in the box and give them to us...

…and in return we will supply your digital prescription at our stall over lunch and...

…give you a voucher to help you on your way!

Tell us if you want iOS or Android
Take a box and use it to share your ideal digital environment

I wish I could...

...digitally
Put things inside

my technological hopes and fears...
And they gave us ...
Our response ... A digital “prescription”

You told us your digital dreams.....

...here's some ideas on how you can achieve them

Your digital prescription from UCL Digital Education

We would like to recommend the following advice which is based on the stories of your digital journey to UCL.

Keep missing your favourite TV and radio programmes and find it difficult to archive and manage your recordings?

BoB can help! Box of Broadcasts gives you free TV and radio with a media archive of more than 1 million programmes available - get watching now - sign into BoB here.

Feel like something is missing?

Free and discounted software available to UCL students go to the UCL Software database.
Play as a way of knowing

“Being playful involves the safe exploration of otherwise risky ideas through suspension of disbelief. Its motto comes in two parts: make it up (do as if) to try it out (do!) and revisit (re-enact) it and build on it (re-create) to learn from it.” (Ackermann 2015: 407)

Private/public knowledge

“the childish transitional object functions best by remaining private, whereas the scientist's cognitive object may start private but is intended for public discussion.” (Hodgkin 1988, p. 359)

imagine -> externalise -> share -> feedback
We need “the opportunity to grant ourselves the mental “elbow room” needed to free the cognitive miser from digging itself into a hole. It takes a trickster to let the genie out and make us see afresh.” (Ackermann 2015, p. 410)
How could you use this?

Take a box and use it to tell us how you could use playful and creative approaches to learning in your teaching

Then share your box on our padlet http://padlet.com/mooc/soas

Thank you!
References


