Stream: Sharing Good Practice

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Constructing Active Learning Experiences

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There are many methods for stimulating Active Learning in the Higher Education classroom. Active Learning occurs when higher-order thinking is invoked during learning events, prompting spontaneous analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in participants (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Play-based learning is a common concept in early-years education, but is little-studied in adult and Higher Education contexts (Nerantzi & James, 2015). Sicart (2014) describes play as a mechanism for "understanding the world and, through that understanding, challenging the establishment, leading to knowledge, and creating new ties or breaking old ones" (p. 18).

Lego Serious Play is a relatively new instructional method in Higher Education that facilitates a playful student-centred learning environment (James, 2013). Through the build-share-reflect cycle and the use of metaphor it supports student discussion about complex ideas and the relationship between them, and can also be used to explore identity and foster understanding between individuals (McCusker, 2014). It is a particularly powerful technique when applied to supporting the exploration or consolidation of learning of threshold concepts (Barton and James, 2017).

In Library instruction, sessions on referencing and plagiarism have a reputation for being both passive and boring. However, Lego has been used in a playful way to assist students in understanding how their work is 'constructed' using the ideas and research of others (Buckley, 2015).

This presentation explores the use of Lego construction toys as a playful mechanism for encouraging Active Learning and shares our experiences using Lego as an instructional tool in a variety of Higher Education settings. The purpose of this session is to share our practice and to encourage colleagues to reflect on how playful activities can improve student learning.

References

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