

Title: “You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation” – Plato (*possibly!*)

Presenter: **Danielle Hinton, Sarah King**
University of Birmingham

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Appreciate the Lego® Serious Play® methodology and the opportunities for serious play in an HE setting.
- Reflect on the ways in which Lego® Serious Play® might support problem-solving and creative thinking.
- Identify ways in which play might support enhanced collaboration and the building of communities of practice at their institution

Session Outline

The increasingly complex structures within HE institutions require not only co-operation, as suggested by Baume and Popovic (2016) but also continuing dialogue between key stakeholders. Often opportunities for dialogue are restricted to the formalities of meetings and committees where the playing field is far from level (those that shout loudest get heard and hierarchies of experience and influence take precedence). It can be difficult to encourage collaboration or build communities in these formal settings.

An educational developer and instructional designer at Birmingham University are working on a project to respond to the changing landscape of HE and promote the development of skills of creativity, innovation, problem-solving, team working and reflection through play. They are using the Lego® Serious Play® (LSP) methodology to promote hands-on engagement in workshops designed to give everyone a voice and an opportunity to contribute to discussions and decision making processes as well as to unlock creative and innovative ideas.

LSP is a well-established method, underpinned by sound educational theory including principles of:

- Constructionism (Papert)
- Social-constructivism (Vygotsky)
- Creating new understanding through metaphors (Schon and Feynman)
- Flow (Csikszentmihalyi)

Both project leads are trained LSP facilitators and are working on several initiatives, including:

- Supporting colleagues in the newly established Technology Enhanced Learning Hub at Birmingham University to develop shared team identity and values as they work with new stakeholders across the institution.
- Supporting the University's Careers Network in their "Working Wonders" initiative by working with students to articulate their personal and professional identities.
- Working with the University's Teaching Academy to offer LSP "taster" sessions to staff.
- Exploring the use of LSP in the curriculum design process.

The workshop will include a hands-on activity using Lego and a chance to find out more about the experiences of the project leaders. It will provide an opportunity for discussion about the ways in which serious play might facilitate other forms of collaboration.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

- Hands-on Lego activity, facilitated by presenter (15 minutes)
- Reflection on the activity – whole group (10 minutes)
- An introduction to the theory behind Lego® Serious Play® (10 minutes)
- An evaluation of the Birmingham University project & how could we use play to support collaboration – whole group (10 minutes)

References

Baume, D., & Popovic, C. (Eds.). (2016). *Advancing Practice in Academic Development*. London: RoutledgeFalmer

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1991). *Flow- The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York City: HarperPerennial

Feynman, R. P. (1985) *Surely you're joking Mr Feynman. Adventures of a curious character*. (London: Vintage).

Harel, L. and Paper, S. (1991). *Constructionism*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation