

Session title: Designing with Emotion in Mind: Embedding wellbeing into courses with Universal Design for Learning.

Session type: Workshop (60 mins)

Presenter: Kevin L. Merry, De Montfort University

Session summary:

This workshop breaks with standard conceptions of inclusion which focus on labelling learners as belonging to a particular group (disabled, LGBTQ+ etc.), to recognising that all learners are variable, in true UDL fashion. Variability goes beyond standard groupings, and includes under-explored factors such as the emotional response to learning. Specifically, the workshop demonstrates how, using a UDL approach, programmes can be designed by accounting for learner emotional variability, supporting their learning and subsequent wellbeing.

Session outline:

Learning is an inherently emotional activity (Mortiboys, 2013), arousing emotional responses ranging from outright joy to despair. Central to the UDL principle of Engagement is the concept of learner self-regulation (CAST, 2018). Self-regulation is about learners developing their ability to regulate their emotions (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016), and subsequently be more effective at coping with the demands of the learning environment (CAST, 2018). Self-regulation is critical in developing the metacognitive skills essential to learning effectively. It is also critical to supporting wellbeing (Heatherton & Wagner, 2011; CAST, 2018). However, learners are highly variable when it comes to their emotional responses to learning and their level of emotional self-regulation (ES-R). Learner ES-R represents a source of learner variability currently given little consideration by HE teachers. Furthermore, support for learners to develop ES-R as a means of learning more effectively is almost non-existent. This session places current teaching approaches "in the spotlight" by showing how devoid of emotional considerations they often are, and how limiting this can be for learner growth and development. The session also demonstrates how many approaches adopted by HE teachers evoke negative emotional responses among learners, erecting barriers to learning and negatively impacting upon their wellbeing. Specifically, the session demonstrates how HE teachers can embed learner emotional considerations into the design of their modules and courses, as well as adopt teaching approaches that reduce the likelihood of learners experiencing negative emotions and subsequently poor wellbeing. Finally, the session demonstrates how learners can be supported to develop their ES-R skills as part of their learning experience, developing emotional literacy, reflective skills, as well develop their executive functioning for the benefit of their continued wellbeing and lifelong learning. The session offers attendees a potential future direction in the shape of developing learner wellbeing, thus shaping the future of instructional design.

References:

CAST, Center for Applied Special Technology (2011) 'Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.0', Wakefield, MA (available at <http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines/downloads>)

Heatherton, T. F., & Wagner, D. D. (2011). Cognitive neuroscience of self-regulation failure. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 15(3), 132-139.

Mortiboys, A. (2013) *Teaching with Emotional Intelligence: a step-by-step guide for higher and further education professionals*, London: Routledge.

Vohs, K. D., & Baumeister, R. F. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbook of self-regulation: Research, theory, and applications*. Guilford Publications.