

Pedagogy Matters: Episode 25 Transcript

Hello and welcome to the latest episode of the Pedagogy Matters

Podcast. The Purpose of the podcast is to bring to the fore key

topics of conversation in relation to learning and

teaching, to discuss and break down aspects of practice and

provide snippets, advice and guidance as to how to integrate

these into our daily practice. Today, I'm delighted to be

joined by Boyd Stewart Lecture and bricolage, and we'll be

discussing really Boyd's teaching practice and how last

few years have helped to shape his practice. So Boyd, good

morning, how are you?

Good morning. I'm fine. Thank you very much. Pleased to be

here.

I'm delighted you, Jonas Boyd, and I think it's really useful

to start off with, if you don't mind just sharing a little bit

about kind of what your role is, what your background is and kind

of what you do then our college.

OK, I've been teaching for 25 years and I teach, especially

subject and particularly confectionery at Edinburgh

College, which is a HNC level course.

And over the years I've talked various amounts of different courses, from learning support all the way up to HNC professional cookery.

Not fantastic. So 25 years. I bet there's lots that you've seen over that period of time. Lots of changes, lots of things that have worked, lots of things that have come around in a circle again. So yes, I think I'm gonna start with a really broad question. So how do you think your teaching practice has evolved over your career?

Wow. Like I said, it's it's been a long career. I've I've delivered a a a range of courses and I've talked to numerous different amounts of courses through different awarding bodies and I think that's one thing that's kind of gone in a cycle. You know, we started when I first started. We had a particular warding body and we've gone on to other warding bodies and we found ourselves back at the original warding bodies again.

I think that.

Both me and the learners and a colleagues have have have just seen a vast change in the way that the delivery model has come about. I think more recently with with COVID and

with the now this year with the economic situation that we're

having to think even more about our delivery.

Knowing this, reading some points here, and let's dig into

that a little bit. So you touched upon COVID, you stole my

Thunder a little bit. So in terms of, yeah, so so COVID

obviously throw everything up in the air and and and change

everything that we know and deliver. So let's start with

kovat how I guess how was that for you, how did that change

your delivery models and delivery practice?

Well, COVID for us was and I'm I'm sure a lot of my well you're

listeners all.

Yeah, and empathize with this is that.

We thought it was gonna be a couple of weeks and for me

personally, I remember. I remember the day I was teaching

a practical class and I was told that.

When you finish up, you will not be returning to the classroom,

and it was as as blunt as that. Now, fortunately for us, it was

in March, so we coming towards the end of our course so that

the learners and that particular course weren't may get affected.

However, we still haven't completed all our assessments

and yeah, it was, it was quite a shock. So we went from teaching

practical subjects to not teaching practical subjects,

which meant we had to then try and.

Crossover learning and assessment successes and try to.

Put them towards.

Other parts of the course that perhaps we could cross all the

evil results and to finish off all our sort of underpinning

knowledge, air parts of it, we literally had to learn how to.

Teach online and for us that was was massive because we didn't

have the technology. We didn't have the understanding of teams.

I think like a lot of people, we didn't start with teams we

started with with their Google.

Right. OK, Google Classroom, yeah.

Google Classroom. And it was it was horrendous. It was really,

really horrendous and we got through it. But.

And luckily, our students went along with us and we got there

in the end, but then it meant we had to develop a whole range of

teaching material for the following year because it became

clear that we were not gonna be back on campus anytime soon.

Yeah. No, I think that's really interesting. Yeah, there was

that initial shock. And then there was realization. While

this is more than two weeks that the the the positives of saving

Yeah.

and petrol are then far outweighed by great how we're going to engage with all these learners in this medium then for significant period of time and the absolutely touched upon that next bit there is right well the next element session will start afresh online. So how did that go.

So we we.

Our course is built as two parts. My my course is very practical course, so it's it's teaching, it's teaching practical skills and and I'm I'm I want to talk about that a little bit later on and and how I've developed the change in my my approach to teaching. The other part is underpinning knowledge. You know the underpinning knowledge generally was teach something and then test it.

Yeah.

And teaching something online where.

85% of your learners.

Work face to face, they what? They might have the microphone on, but they certainly weren't prepared to have the camera on.

And I'm I'm also, we joked and I'm sure other teachers been the same as cousin pulling their bed in their pajamas while they were

while they were listening to us.

But it was really, really, really difficult to actually engage with the students and to when, in my particular subject,

Yeah.

when I teach underpinning knowledge, it's generally done in the kitchen. So it's done in a side or in conversations or.

Yeah.

Micro demonstrations or, you know, student, asked the question and how maybe just develop the question and and and speak to the whole group rather than just that student. So a lot of their learning was done.

In in the kitchen.

And it was naturally occurring.

Yeah.

Whereas I had to then go and write a plan, write a lesson.

To.

Person that knowledge for them to learn to be tested because they weren't doing the.

They weren't doing the the same amount of practical. I mean we we were quite lucky that we had.

We had this dispensation we could bring as soon as we were

allowed to bring students back into the kitchen, and we did.

However, we still had to practice the the the 2 meter

rule. So instead of having 14 students in a kitchen, I had 6.

Which meant I had three groups of students per week. So instead

of teaching them 18 hours a week, I was teaching them six

hours a week and then the rest of the time was what week.

Yeah.

Now we call it blended learning, but you know we were. I was

trying to give them activities to do.

Outside.

Actual, practical classroom. And again, that was challenging the

the the end result for us was that we we only.

We only gave them their award based on their minimum that was

acquired by SQA, which was 20 years, whereas we actually

Yeah.

deliver 18 units on our course, which makes it a full time

course. So by doing the 12 units.

But what I was forced to do, I was forced to take away two

probably the key units that the students really wanted, which

for my course was.

But advance chocolate skills and advanced sugar and Pasteur

skills because they were quite intensive and I just did time to

Yeah.

to develop them.

So, so the year finished with with those group of students

getting just the minimum credits that there was required for the

award, which was, which was a shame. It really was, you know.

Yeah, and that's a real difficulty, you know. But I

think it was more of a needs must kind of take with.

The and the type of television we had to go to Bob, kind of we

Yeah.

interested you kind of alluded to one or two of these bits

already, you know and as always kind of professional

practitioners, we're always reflecting and I know you can't

touched upon in terms of moving forward. So what I'm keen to

know is kind of based upon your learning from the 25 years as

well as with COVID kind of what principles do you now put at the

forefront of your teaching practice?

I think.

I recently I recently did a a course on critical and creative

teaching and what what I and I I kind of was hidden this way

myself is because I think over the years that I've taught when

when we've had sort of low engagement or or high dropout rate or you know where we've not had the successes we want, we've tended to blame the student for that and not and not look at ourselves and not reflect on perhaps.

It was our course content or the way delivered the course, or even just personalities. We we can we kind of thought that we were.

We were better than that so that we were wasn't our fault of a Yeah.

student in engage with us and and and I thought that Polly ring a bell with a with a, with a few people and and I'm not suggesting that that's approach that everybody takes. I think there are the people take a different approach but I I.

When when I was doing this course I I was, I did quite little research and I I came across a a paper written in 1957. So you know it wasn't a new thought.

And and it was a. It was actually a lecturer in Australia talking about teaching carpentry skills.

And what he concluded in this paper was that.

We can't teach.

Fine develop skills in 36 weeks in college. It's just

impossible, and that the emphasis needs to be on the employer and the apprenticeships to actually develop these skills and what we should really be looking at is we should be more looking at meta skills and capabilities and getting getting students ready for work. And that's our. That's our sort of result. That's what our results should be. And one of the things I've got I've got.

Because I can't remember, I can't remember it precisely, but.

I I have a couple of coats here.

That I found really, really interesting. And of course I put them somewhere in. I can't. I can't remember where they put them.

But really what we're saying is that.

Most most.

Schoolchildren and and college leavers leave.

And.

The education and about 50% or 58% of them aren't ready for work.

Because we haven't developed these skills. So I think over the last few years that's where I focused is, is, is look at

capabilities. You know look at things like communication,

problem solving, resilience, you know and.

Leadership skills only sort of things, and trying to build them

into my lessons and consciously when I do a Lesson plan now I I

look at these things and say these are the things I want to I

I want to help teach my students as well as just the the

practical skills because not all of them can reach the level that

that you know you've always got your four or five students who

will always better at at at this sort of practical skills and

just have that natural ability that you can develop the rest of

them. They can develop the skills but they're never gonna

they're never gonna win any prizes are never gonna win any

competitions but they're still competent.

Or what they do, but I think it's important that you know,

when you have students across the range of abilities that you

give them the same opportunities in terms of working on their

meta skills and working on their capabilities and do it

consciously and feedback or as well not just just sort of do it

silently.

No, I would totally great, fast and yeah, I'm a big believer in.

Actually, what hit step back often as a new lecturer or?

Yeah, you getting routine of delivering a course in the way that.

In a cyclical way, might be not 12345 or you get used to new develop those routines and have us and and you go. So so far down a path that you get used to this teaching the course as opposed to reflecting on.

The skills and the knowledge required for the student be successful for their next step, which is what you're going to Yeah.

there. It's really important that I've also depend on what course we never and then how we deliver that. Those points are actually the forefront of our thinking and that our curriculum, our teaching, our assessment is focused around the skills and knowledge. And I guess college this may think great, I kind of do that or I don't know where to start. So Umm.

what are your thoughts around that? How do we do that? So how do you reflect on our commitment, Boyd and kind of look at well?

And how do we focus that our own skills and knowledge reduce here from your experience?

I think the great believer in asking the student or asking the learner, you know what, what, what do you want to learn, you know, what are you gonna get out of this lesson?

Yeah.

And and ask yourself what? What? What I want to achieve in this lesson.

Because I think sometimes over the years you do kind of forget, you know, I mean.

You you teach the same PowerPoint you teach, you know

Yeah.

you, you and you, you hand out the same handouts. You you follow the same to a certain extent I do. You know, you follow the same teaching plan and I and I can imagine people that teach purely academic subject. Just wonder how how

Yeah.

much they change it every year and how do they, you know, how do they react to feedback?

And I'm sure all colleges have their student reps, and they have their their their sort of engagement with the students and we certainly are and what a college we have, every every course has a student left on the course and they do get training

Yeah.

by our by our.

And exit and colleagues and we, we should pay more heed to that

and we should pay more heed to to to the.

The results will be got. You know we've if we're only getting

60% retention why why is that we really should be looking at that

and say not blaming the students you know and and trying to find

out what what we're doing or what we could do better to

actually achieve better results and listen to the voices

student. I just said to students last week that you've got a

bigger voice than I have in terms of of shaping this course.

Yeah.

Because if, if, if and I've been doing it for years, have I go to

my.

Play manager and say.

I need more equipment, the equipment's broken. I need to

replace it. It's the same moment. We've got no money.

Yeah.

However, it was a student goes and said I can't do this course

because I can't get a mixer because there's not enough mixes

to go around that has more sway.

Yeah.

So if students looked at it from that point of view in their learning as well, and we took on board somethings that they said, perhaps we would, you know we would have a bit more success or we would maybe.

You know, access would be a little a little higher than it is.

I don't have a understanding of it, but.

Yeah, and.

No, no, I've I've told sense because, yeah, there's all these kind of macro factors as well that kind of contribute to student engagement, student satisfaction. And what I say

Yeah.

Microsoft is.

You know, there are so many components that we need to consider when developing, designing and delivering the curriculum that if actually would be the best teacher in the

Umm.

world for other equipment, then unfortunately students can't then develop the skills and reflect the skills and so on and so forth there as well. And I think it's really important to

connect and I'm keen to go back to what you're saying prior in terms of the knowledge and skills required for their employment offer industry or for apprenticeship, that absolutely needs to be at the forefront of our thinking when designing, developing and delivering.

The curriculum, and often I'm not sure about kind of what your views are on this, but I I feel like they often get overlooked something in initial assessment or induction.

Big and not for the worst reasons in the world, because we often want to just get straight into the nitty gritty of delivering the course. But actually I think if my belief is if we spend enough time understanding the skills and knowledge requirements as being behaviors as well.

Using effectiveness assessment and then developing the skills on the back of that, then it's a very clear starting point.

Yeah, yeah, I I would. I would agree with that. I mean, I I think what what I tried to do over the last few years is I've.

But try to get students to take more.

Ownership of their of their learning as well.

Yep.

And.

One of the one of the key things I do on my course is they it

it's a it's a an SUV curve level 7, so it's an HNC level course,

which means it's got it, it's got some unit set at level 8,

Yeah.

so. So in terms of.

In in terms of.

Phillips, they need to use, you know, they need to. They need to

understand they need to develop. They need to explain. It's not

just a case of show me a product and that's that's sufficient for

competency. It's a it's a lot more to that. So one of the

Yeah.

things that they have to do is they they have to they have to

run the kitchen and develop a menu for our restaurant we have

we have a a restaurant in the in the college that's that we use

as our realistic working environment for for our cookery

students and they have to they have to develop a.

Quite a substantial portfolio around designing a menu and take

hundreds of aspects into it, but one of the things they you know

they they have to look at working with others and so they

have to take that into account. So they are thinking about.

Yeah.

And respect, you know, things that you know, appreciate that not everybody got the same ability as each other and and and and be respectful of that. Think of a cultural differences and and.

Look at an awful lot of unconscious biases that they have, and we all have, and so, you know, I I spent quite a bit of time on on the sort of different types of unconscious bias that might be in place, especially when you're being left in charge. You know, you basically, it's your kitchen, Yeah.

you've got 15 colleagues who are all on probably would be you have to be the boss for a week and you have to, you have to manage that whole sort of thing. So.

So that's that's, that's a, that's a good way of developing these these kind of skills because they're they're they're spread all the the whole sort of like first semester learn them in the second semester they put them into practice.

So.

Yeah. And I think it's often important even and and again, something's these things are either assumed or just done naturally. It's important to highlight those as well. And

that skills development over time as well with ourselves

first and foremost and kind of with extra sorry with students.

Tell them to stand their progress.

So that's really interesting and conscious of.

A bit of advice because as a lecturer it's it can't be so

complex because there's always new things that that there are

so many things that we need to consider.

Yeah.

And and often referred to that as noise sometimes, which can

detract from the basics of planning, delivering and

assessing and developing. Assume skills.

So I guess the final point from me reading now, Boyd is.

What advice would you give to yourself if you have to start

teaching again?

So we've got used to talk 25 years. So you've seen so many

things. If there had so many qualifications, you've yeah,

that's not even going to that. But let's just draw back to,

yeah, what advice would you give yourself if you were starting

off again?

Well, I think if I briefly explain my sort of path to to

how I got into teaching and where I am now in in my

previous.

Might not my previous work life I was a I was a I I went in, I was in hospitality, management and side. So I I I did a a degree in hotel team management and I work basically on the food and beverage side all my career eventually come out general manager and I think after sort of four or five years of being a general manager there was something wrong you know I just my career just wasn't.

Wasn't satisfying. I was in the wrong job, I think, and I spent all my sort of life training and I I was doing a lot of training, so I I.

I decided not to do that anymore and I I got a I I did A6 single 7073. I think it was called which was which was a practically of teaching and I did that, Edinburgh's Telford College.

And I learned how to all the practical ways of teaching. None of the none of the none of the other methods which I I learned all about the sort of motivation and learning teaching when I did my TQFE, which was further down the line.

But I think when I first started, I was very much it was all about practical.

And I didn't really engage with students that much because I was just all I was interested in was this is your settlement. Show me your competency, your competent of that move on to the next thing. Move on to the next thing, then move on to the next thing. So I think what I what I am. I started part time and and I think.

I I learned from I would not disabled, but I learned for some old school.

Teaching staff. So when I first started learning, I was learning from somebody who had had 35 or 40 years experience.

And they were very, very sort of set in their ways and they didn't change anything. Everything was done the same sort of way. So I went along with that. I think that's what you do when you knew when you were saying I and I was definitely learning all the time and.

I I think.

Now what I would say to myself is.

Engage more with the student and their person. Be more empathetic with them. Find out more about them, because the more you know about them, the better relationship you have with them and and when there are issues and things are not going well,

you can sense it more you you because you because you're all engaged with it with the students.

And then I think the other thing is, is for me is.

Allow them to take ownership of their learning.

What? What I what I used to do is I used to come into the class and I used to pass out recipes and say you're doing that, you're doing that you're doing that.

And then.

Teach them or help them as they were going through it. What I do now is and what I would say to myself now is.

Give them some credit.

You know, one of the things I looked on this course I did recently was was schemas.

And you know people, people have got knowledge inside. They don't actually know they have it. And it's important that you get that information out and they can build on that. I think in, in, in, in TQFE speak, we called it building blocks or or scaffolding. But it's the same sort of thing but recognize it and and actually explain that to you you learners that you know you can.

You you can actually build on what you already know, and you

don't really. You know you don't know. You know it until I ask you a question and you realize you do know it.

And so definitely.

If I was doing things differently, it would be engaged with the students in a different way, completely different way than I used to engage with them in the beauty. And I could get well it was very.

Again, I'll recognize it now as an unconscious bias.

I'm the boss. I know something you don't know it. You need to learn it from me.

And I think that's kind of the way you learn at school, but not the way you should be learning at college, you know?

And I think it took me a long time to realize.

That that's the way I was. That's that's the way I've been teaching.

No, I think that's really interesting, but it's really kind of honest and an interesting reflection and and somehow, OK, totally agree with again based my own practice there as well. You know I think it's difficult because as a new lecture.

You do it really knew anything apart from, you know, your

subject area and you're trying to think of so many things. And as you then evolve the next kind of 2345 years, more things get added on top there as well. So you're absolutely right and it's own kind of reflect them back to well, why are we here? We're here for the learners and helping shape them and help them shape their career. And it's difficult because every student is different. Every level is different, qualification is different. But those overarching principles you just alluded to I think are are fundamental and are really interesting. And yeah, they'll kind of certainly help shape the practice.

And kind of help students on the right path with their learning journeys.

Umm.

So so I think it's really innocent and I've been a really nice conversation probably and I guess to kind of bring it to a close. Are there any other reflections either that you would like to share or are like to think about and what we've talked quite a bit there and I'm missing quite short period of time.

But yeah, I think there's some some really honest and interesting reflections. And yeah, I'm just thinking of

something else for you to kind of add on there. If not, it's

absolutely fine. But anything else from yourself?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. A couple of things. I think the things, the

other things that have changed over the years is is.

A star I. I start my lessons with a mini lesson quite often,

so something that's not necessarily related to what what

Yeah.

the actual content of my my Lesson plan is and that could

just last five or 10 minutes and it's kind of just to introduce a

little bit of fun into the classroom and get, you know, get

a little bit of maybe get their brains working a little bit.

And they can be a little quiz.

And a little storytelling.

Yeah.

And last last week I asked my my group to I I gave them 6 words

and asked them to in in less than 50.

And make a story just and you include these 5 words in it and

Yeah.

it doesn't sound much on its own. And and they were a bit

dubious when they started but but the time we'd finished we

had some hilarious stories going. And again it's it

develops a relationship that, you know, I can laugh with them and have fun with them. I mean, I did it as well. It wasn't a case of you're gonna do this.

And I think that, you know, it's some sometimes rather than just going straight into a into a lesson.

And it gets them a little bit. Woke up a little bit engaged and and I do that fairly regularly and.

I I'm constantly checking for unconscious bias. I find myself sometimes saying something that will plan on doing a thing, saying something and then stop myself.

So from actually, you know actually doing it and and there are hundreds I didn't realize there are hundreds of ways you can.

You know, apply a bias that you you don't even realize you've.

You've done it until sort of afterwards.

And.

And what what I've tried to do at the beginning is but one of things I learned to on this course I did recently was was about neuroscience. And without going into too much in it about how memory works and it's really, really fascinating and I think.

When? When I learned this, I thought to myself, Oh my God,
I've been teaching.

The wrong way for 20 years.

Because basically, what do we do we we put up a PowerPoint.

And we talked to students for 15 minutes. We might have a little
break in between, and they do a little activity and then what
you do at the end of it, we ask them to regurgitate everything
and learned.

Yeah.

Actually impossible. The brain can't possibly retain that kind
of information that short term memory. So I've kind of used
that and and tried to not to do that anymore, so I I wouldn't
say I haven't got rid of PowerPoints, but I rarely use
PowerPoint and I used to. And when you're online that's quite
hard because it's dead easy to put up PowerPoints and and and
give them all this information and expect them to.

Regurgitator. So I think that's quite important as well is look
at creative ways that you can pass on information without
using PowerPoints.

No, I think it's really interesting nugget and that that
just took me back to Bombay a moment about 10 years ago, when

yet when I was still full time lecturer and we had a null pens,
no PowerPoint week. We challenged all the stuff and
that was the extreme, but they could not deliver with a
PowerPoint in students couldn't use pens. Now it said that was
hard for a rifle 10 week, but the principal of which is
exactly what you're saying there. It encourages you as a
practitioner thing actually. Well, what are the PowerPoint
for? What are students write down? How can they learn? Help
me learn different ways. I guess it just goes to show.

You've got to say last 30 minute conversation is all of the
different considerations that we need to consider. OK, that's the
same way as we know. What I mean as a lecturer and all the
different permutations out there, and that's why I think
Yeah.

it's really important to draw back those principles you
touched upon earlier around. We're trying to develop the
knowledge and skills of our student. How we do that. There
are so many different ways. But for those things are
fundamental, you touched upon it. They run around the
importance of assessment and feedback.

It you know, there's a few core principles that are at the heart

of our teaching, whether depending on our irrespective
rather of the subject, the level, the medium by which we
teach, that are really, really important to have at the call
and then those other aspects and just come around the side there.

So I think that's really interesting. And boy, I'm afraid

Yeah.

to run out of time, but I think we could talk for another hour

No.

about so many other different things there. But I just want to
thank you for your input there. I think it's really interesting
and really insightful. And it also goes to show that.

You know, when people reflect on lecture and when people were
reflected on what makes good learning.

I would say it's a highly complicated space with a lot of
noise, but actually if we draw back to some of the principles
that you've just touched upon there and how that shaped your,
your, your career and your teaching experience it, it shows
actually where we should focus our time and attention. So thank
you for your time today. Really appreciate it and good luck for
the rest of the academic session. Hopefully it's
positive.

OK. Thank you very much. I've enjoyed our conversation and

hopefully speak again in the future.

Fantastic. Thank you, Boyd.

Thank you. Bye bye.