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MISFITS: Lego, Wool, Art, Equations agus Seanfhocail

Professional Development Pilot –a living teaching portfolio initiative

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ABSTRACT

In the era of technology and a major focus on the “Internet of Things” let us not forget our wise ancestral proverbs and the use non-technological tools as contribution to impactful learning. The NUI Galway Pilot Professional Development team created an innovative space and introduced activities in order to develop and disseminate their National Forum Pilot Professional Development Portfolios. The function of the space was to trial methods of capturing a wide variety of knowledge transfer processes from a diverse academic community. The team met on a monthly basis to explore the use of a number of technological and non-traditional technology knowledge transfer tools.

The 5 Domains of relevance to the PDP were: (1) Personal Development (2) Professional Identity (3) Professional Communication and Dialogue in Teaching (4) Professional Knowledge and Skills in Teaching and Learning and (5) Personal and Professional Digital Capacity in Teaching and Learning. An activity to visualise the relationship and interdependencies between Domains and the effect of change between Domains was initiated. The team formed a circle with each member representing a Domain. Beginning with Domain 1, a ball of wool was used to build a relationship/link with another Domain. The ball of wool journeyed as it passed from one Domain to another Domain forming a web and creating a physical representation of links between Domains. After ten iterations of passing the ball of wool the team were able to visualise a system representing Domain relationships/links. Following this exercise the next step was to visualise the effect of change on the interconnected system. Domain 2 was moved to the left in order to visualise change occurring in that Domain but also to visualise the impact this had on the system as a whole. Domain 2 altered the entire shape of the system as a result. Following this exercise the web was placed on the ground for further discussions on Domain links, relationships and change.

Lego Serious Play (LSP) was then used to facilitate the PD portfolio process. LSP is effective across many disciplines and has been used in a variety of process design areas including: product development, change management, team development, organizational development, and strategy development among others (Barton et al., 2017; Hadida, 2013; Jentsch et al., 2012; Frick et al., 2013; Hansen et al., 2009, Dempsey et al., 2014). The LSP concept is founded on four main theories: (1) the importance of play as a way to learn through exploration and storytelling; (2) constructionism, which states that building knowledge occurs best through building things that are tangible and shareable (Ackerman et al. 2009); (3) the hand-mind connection as a new path for creative and expressive thinking; and (4) the role of different kinds of imagination. Once individuals have created their models the workshop participants can then be challenged to build a shared model, to draw connections and to create a landscape reflecting different scenarios and possible reactions to these scenarios which subsequently enables them to extract simple guiding principles for the team, the organization etc. (Kristiansen et al., 2009).

The Workshop was designed to create a safe space for participants to visualise each of the Domains

for the task of creating a PD Portfolio (PDP) and a method of dissemination. Participants responded to the task by building symbolic and metaphorical models using LEGO bricks. Models were then presented to other workshop participants, creating a flood of ideas through intelligent discourse. The entire process has been video recorded to create a 3 minute "showcase piece" for dissemination at the PD Celebration Day, organised by the National Forum, in September 2017.

The diversity of the group disciplines contributed to the variety of dissemination techniques and added to the creativity ingredient for PDP development. A selection of Art, Equations, Seanfhocail and Video Clips were some of the artifacts generated.

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