

SEED Podcast, Episode 07, Dr Tippett and M.Sanderson,
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Welcome to the SEED eLearning podcast. My name is Rachel Willder and I will be your host for this podcast where we focus on all things e-learning in SEED. Today I'm joined by Dr. Joanne Tippett and Matthew Sanderson, and we're going to be having a discussion about student engagement and in particular the use of breakout rooms in dual teaching. Hello, Joanne. Hello, Matt. How are you Both?

Matthew: Yeah. Hi Rachel, Thanks very much for inviting me on yet again. This is now my third podcast I'm becoming a bit of a regular here, and of course my colleague and in fact, in many respects, my boss, Jo Tippett is here with us as well today aren't you Jo.

Joanne: Hi. Yes, I'm really delighted to talk about our experiences of dual learning because we've certainly learned a lot ourselves. I'd say in the last well, over the last year. But in particular, the last few weeks in terms of doing this, both face-to-face and online at the same time.

Rachel: So the listeners have already met Matt from previous podcasts, Joanne. Could you tell us a bit about the subject you teach and how this led to your creation of the Ketso boards that are so fantastic for developing learning?

Joanne: I teach about designing sustainable Futures and it's in a planning school. So, the core questions I'm asking in my teaching and my research, I'm very fortunate that they really come together is, how do we imagine a sustainable future? And how can we work together effectively to achieve that, and the Ketso boards that I the use, so kits that I use in my teaching actually came out of my early work in rural and urban regeneration, working with people to help them rethink their neighbourhoods, their Farms, their villages to think how they could achieve, what they wanted in a more sustainable way, but I wanted to hear everybody's voice and developed a toolkit for creative engagement, stakeholder, and Community engagement, which I've since been using in my teaching, to engage students, in their learning. What's been

really exciting as through the pandemic we suddenly had to go from very intensive discussion-based teaching; I always stop and interject and ask questions and I have people doing very active learning, Hands-On learning, Building images together and building the Ketso on the table together. During the pandemic, I suddenly had to think, how do we do this, when we're not together, when we're apart, but I wanted to keep the hands on visual learning that had been so successful in earlier teaching in that online context. So, we came up the idea of Ketso connect, which is a small individual kit that you send to each individual student to use wherever they are. They use it in short bursts of Engagement with time on their own to reflect, put the ideas down on this felt that can move them around and develop clusters and then use that as a prompt to talk to each other and engage with each other. They're developing their thinking for their group reports, for their essays, for their assignments, in questions, in response to the teaching on these Ketso boards, sharing the ideas verbally or even visually on Padlet and we've brought that technique into dual learning and that has been really interesting, bringing that active embedded learning into the classroom and outside of the classroom at the same time.

Matthew: I've really enjoyed working with Ketso over the years that I've known you and first as a student, when I started at Manchester, and now, as a PhD researcher as a teaching assistant, and in fact as your supervisee, and yeah, I've always found Ketso to be really, really helpful, but also actually great fun. The, the tactile experience of being able to set your thoughts out in front of you, on your table, on a big desk, whatever, and then, to be able to move around, you know, to create this mind map of thoughts. But then, rather than having to sit there with a pen on paper and scribble it all out and rewrite. You can pick things up, you can move them around. And it's always struck me and as a wonderful way to help develop ideas, to restructure Ideas, to build links between one idea in the next to, you know, to allow you to develop themes and I think certainly, as a TA when I've dropped into breakout rooms where we've had students using Ketso connect, I've noticed that they are getting into the same idea, you know, they're building they're ideas, sharing their ideas with others as you say through Padlet and they're really getting on board with the whole concept.

Joanne: That was something that's been really different. Something that's been really different for me since we've come back to teaching is really thinking about the way we've taken this pandemic inspired response. So ok, Right? We're not together quickly. Let's get something out to people, into much into normal teaching and thinking about, About the fact that the students have their own kit that it's theirs and they get to use it throughout the whole of their time at University. I think is really different and interesting because what I'm seeing is that they're taking the ideas from a workshop. So for instance, today, we were running an essay planning workshop with undergrad with first-year undergraduates. I asked them that they take this home. A lot of you've got some gaps and you can now see the gaps. Do some reading. I'd like to see some more leaves of all the different colours, which breaking down this, the components of the essay and I particularly want you to look for some evidence examples, Etc. This case. I'd be right in that on brown leaves, that's the sort of soil that they're growing their ideas in, and I want you to bring that back to a workshop in two weeks. And then we're going to start clustering them and structuring them and seeing if we can come up with themes and headings and think about what the key points are and actually start to develop your storyline from that. Almost granular ideas that we've broken it down. And now we're going to build it back up. But the key thing I'm seeing is that the students are drawing their ideas more effectively through from the lectures, the workshops and into their assignments, which is so often a problem isn't it that you see that students that it's a can almost feel quite fragmented, but we have a lecture and then we have an assignment and they don't always join up the dots between them. And I think this is a way to help them do that. Almost naturally. It's Just Happening organically because they're physically carrying something. Through and developing their ideas actively from both the lecturers through to the workshops and into the assignments.

Matthew: One thing I've noticed is that obviously that your modules both of your modules actually involve a group assessment and we've got students, some of, in the classroom others are at home in the UK, others are abroad, and they can't travel for. Well. We know the reasons, of course, I've noticed very much that for the group work especially students are using the Ketso connect through Padlet, and it's enabling them probably much better than in the past to develop and to share their ideas. Okay, not everybody, yet has

received their Ketso connects, in a few cases, students are having to participate by scribbling on multiple Post-it notes and things like that, but they're entering into the spirit of the methodology of the technique and people are really getting on board with this whole idea of developing as you say ideas and then flows. And for group work, especially it's been a brilliant way for them, not only to build their ideas together, but also to come together and to create a little learning mini community. And again, from what I've heard. It's it has helped people for example, who might not speak English as a first language of have found it useful way to be able to put their ideas down and to share them without necessarily being or feeling embarrassed or shy because of their language skills. So there's been some really, really obvious benefits there, you know where people have really, really found it useful.

Rachel: In us moving to online learning and now dual delivery, can you tell us of your perspective of student engagement with teaching?

Joanne: So I think one of the things I've seen is that I think there is a real hunger for engagement, but also a bit of a sense of isolation and disconnection for the ones who aren't in the classroom. And I think what we've been really working to do is take how we bridge those experiences between, it's not just the people who are studying from abroad, although that's some of them that are, some of them are suddenly having to not come in because they're ill or they have symptoms or something. And so, we're also experiencing that it's quite, there's a sort of desire for engagement but a difficulty engaging and there is that bit of a disconnect and a fragmentation that comes from the, the halt, the jerkiness of the zoom, the zoom interactions, which is quite interesting. It's a different timing and a different sort of way of engaging that you need on Zoom then in person. It is less fluid. You've got lesser the easy body language, of course, only one person can speak at time so you have to have lots more of those slightly jerky gaps when you're trying to work out who was speaking. So we've really been thinking a bit about how we bring the people who are on zoom into the classroom and help the people in the classroom also engage and connect some of the ideas that people on Zoom as much as possible. And a few things I think of really help with that giving people time on their own to reflect and think before they share ideas. Now, that is just generally, I think really good

teaching practice. We often launch right into, okay, just turn to your neighbour and share. They should all go into a breakout room and discuss this, but actually stopping and giving people a few moments to write some ideas down to think, to think what, what is it? I want to say, what are my key ideas in silence before you share them? That really helps people to collect their thinking, to gather their thoughts, it does help the shy people or the people with different who speak, perhaps different languages just to have a moment to get their thoughts together. Using the Ketso kits to do this is, It's really interesting. It gives more permission to do it. It makes it feel more comfortable than if you just stop and say, just write something down. It's almost like the kit gives the sort of ground rules itself to enable that sort of Reflective pause plus, of course the fact you can move the ideas around means that they can move ideas in response to the conversation. So I always ask students to choose one out, one or two top ideas. They'd like to share using one of the coloured icons and I find that they, I see them in the classroom and I suspect this is happening on Zoom as well as they're going around the circle and the ideas are changing. Some of them might move their icon or they'll move leaves around a little bit. And I know for me personally, I always find it quite stressful when you know, it's going around the circle and it's going to come to me, and I've got to say something. If it's if I'm trying to just hold it in my head. I'm spending most of my time. Remember, trying to remember what I was going to say and thinking, oh no, somebody said that. Now, I'm gonna have to say something else. And I find and I'm seeing this reflected in my students. It's much more relaxed and calm or for me, if I've got some ideas in front of me. It's almost something physical and tangible. I can see and I can hang onto and I'll be able to respond and I can move it around a bit in response to the conversation. I feel much more relaxed about joining in and we're seeing that in person and we're seeing it in the zoom. So I think that's been really interesting giving that permission and the sort of the sense that this isn't. This is the thing, this is what we're doing.

Matthew: Yeah, I think definitely with anybody, everybody we all speak more confidently, if we have something pre-prepared in front of us and so certainly when we begin and the lecture

session or the workshop, depending on what it is. If we give them those few moments to take a break to introduce themselves to their neighbours, in the lecture hall or to introduce themselves to a random breakout group on Zoom. Then they have that opportunity to just as you say to pause and to focus and it brings them into the room, whether it's whether it's virtual or whether it's their face to face, it brings them into the teaching space and it's, as you say, it allows them to then concentrate and take you forward.

Rachel: So, some of the feedback we have received from other academic staff is how to use breakout rooms, effectively, what has your experience being of this, and do you have any tips for our listeners?

Matthew: Arr, that's interesting? I think generally it's something that we got on with really, rather well though there have from time to time been challenges technological, of course, to start with, you know, way back when a year or so ago. We were really learning how to use zoom and it wasn't always easy from day one, but we got there very quickly, but I think the use as Joanne has said already, the use of Ketso connect in the breakout rooms to give the students something to do there, and then they've got this tactile learning tool in front of them in a breakout room and they're working on something. It's not like they're just sitting there twiddling their thumbs or wagging their pen around, and looking at a blank sheet of paper saying. What do I do? They actually have something and then yeah, we get them, you know, to, to work together and it's really effective. I found,

Joanne: I think that one of the issues we found with breakout rooms and dual teaching as well, is in a mismatch in timing. So, We've discovered is that if you put the students into a breakout room in zoom, they it takes a bit longer to go through the same questions and it does for the room, the students in the room. Because if there's that like I said that waiting and that that sort of politeness of oh, no, you go next. Oh, no, you go next. And so what we found is that tends to take a little longer than the, the ones in the room. But again, if you give students a Ketso connect, they've got so much more to talk about in the room, then actually, they We can even that out a bit because for two reasons, the ones in the room have got more to talk about. It's less awkward. If you haven't quite got that. That moment when it all goes silent again, and then you were thinking at all. No, and they but they

haven't come back from Zoom yet. We're that's that that mismatch in the room and equally in Zoom the fact that they've actually chosen an idea to say and they know they're going to go around the room in that the round their breakout room in turn. Each one has got an idea to say and it builds a sense that they're their facilitators. They're managing their time. They get through their rounds and everybody gets the same work quickly. So I find that that brings it together a bit more. One of the things we've done there, which I think is really quite interesting. It's a try and have at least one of the breakout rooms just before break so that, because another thing that's mismatch is breaks take longer in the room because it takes longer to get out of the room. They have to go to find the toilet. They are might have to queue, might want to go to get a coffee that takes longer than it does at home Obviously, if you're at home, you don't have to queue for the toilet and you're just there and you could just lose interest and start flagging a bit if the breaks too long. So what we've been doing is giving one of the trying to give one of the breakout sessions right before a break and then say, okay, so people in the room after two or three minutes you, okay? I'll whoever's in the room. Okay, great night off. You can go off. Keep them there until they've had some chat though. But then what we find is the ones in the zoom. I think so go with expect you to talk for at least five or so minutes. We're having a 10 minutes break and there that's giving them a bit of a chance to catch up and talk. So that so that that's been one of the things we've been doing is just thinking a little bit about the where the mismatches and timing comes with. Another mismatching timing is at the beginning of the lecture where it takes longer to come in and settle down in a room and then people are chatting and it's quite lively, and it's fun. And, and it's part of seeing people. And, and in the meantime, the lecturers so, they're frantically trying to get your computer up and running, and it's taken a long time and the zooms taken a long time. Time, and you're not there and it's, oh my goodness. This is a bit frustrating. And, but the people on Zoom, they're sitting there going. Okay, great. Now, I'm just staring at, I'm listening to a bunch of other people having a nice chat and, or, and nothing's happening. And this is a bit boring that it's not getting them off to a good start.

Matthew: So to be fair and what we've, what I found, I tend to start the Zoom 3 to 5 minutes before you're due to start the session. Before you come in. I have a bit of a chat with them. Tell them what we're going to be doing today. Ask them to say what the weather is like where

they are, ask them, how they are things like that. So I try to keep a little bit of conversation going and that draws them into it straight away. And then, as you know, when you come in sometimes if you're going to be busy for a minute or two, you'll turn the sound down in the lecture hall, so you can't hear me and I continue to engage with the students on Zoom. I think something that some of the listeners to the podcast might not realize is the size of the sessions that we're talking about. I've heard feedback from colleagues and appears that they're dealing with say a workshop or seminar group of a dozen and they're finding it challenging on Zoom or whatever. Of course in your modules. We've got about 100 110 people on each and Sometimes given the time, obviously there on the zoom. Most of the time, I quite often. I've got 40 40 plus students who I'm engaging with in parallel to you engaging with people in the classroom. So he's actually quite a large cohort on on zoom and it can be quite challenging but it's it's also great fun. And I think that probably the most interesting thing is when we when you open a session up to questions, and we've got to try and invite questions and participation from this great, big number of people in zoom , but we get some really, really good ones. And some people are still very shy with the language skills, and I've noticed more, so this year, I mean, it's a fact that overseas students who haven't moved to the UK aren't getting the immersion in the language that they would have normally so more. So this year, we're seeing Some of the students being quieter than we might hope for, but even they will type questions into chat and then you were I read them out over the zoom in the course everybody in the lecture hall, then hears them as well. So we definitely getting the participation and I think the more effort you put into participating with them, the more effort they give back to you. And that, of course, is to come back with us where the Kesto connects help. So, so well, because It's effort going in and in return they are they're giving us that effort back and it's making the great sessions.

Joanne: I think something else that has really helped with this as well Is the fact that the TAs working on the other side of zoom and know the subject and are able to engage with the students. So what we're actually finding those I've started posting the chat files on with the lecture because there's so much Interesting interaction going on in the chat file that I can't possibly follow all of while teaching in the room. It's just not possible. Not with that much flow, but I'm finding also that the TAs are filling in some interesting anecdotes or ideas or

putting in some web links and just in response to the conversation that's happened that I've having their own thoughts and bringing that and I think that's making it lively and more engaging for the students on that are not in the room as well because I think, broadly speaking, let's face it They're not they're not getting the same immersive, interactive feeling that the students that are in the room were having. So I think this has really helped bring them, bring them something more and extra as well. And I think and it does really help because we got, we could have what up to 8- 10 breakout rooms easily on zoom in any one of these workshops that the TAs are dropping. They drop in on the breakout rooms. They've told we tell them in advance, we will drop in but and sometimes when it's Zoom, only I'll do that you but we see if I'm doing both. I can't, manage both at the same time. You can't be quite focused at both. The TA is dropping in on the sessions means that you can quickly just gauge interaction. See how they're doing. Answer a specific question that they might not come out with in the main room often also because we've got the Padlets and, and the Ketso connects might be on the pad. That's, we can click on the Ketso that we can click on the pad. Let's have a look at them and just comment about something comment about. Oh, I saw one of these ideas was this and this is a really interesting point? The TAs help bring some of that interaction that's happening in the breakout rooms, and they might come back and say, back into plenary. And so, speaking through the screen and speaking to everybody, an interesting point that came up in this room was this and this and then that will spark a conversation that I can have, and I'll bring, I'll have seen some leaves when I'm walking around the room; I'll have seen a few ideas on leaves that

Students have got with their Ketso connects because I can it what it helps me do is very, very quickly get a view of what the students talking about and writing about on their Ketso's and I can say well there was an idea over there around finance and models of finance and that really linked to an idea that I saw over there and then, Matt might come in with a comment that something that happened on zoom and would just knitting together, the students' ideas, and we're able to bounce off what they're writing. Because we can see it and we can bounce off that and build our sort of teaching on our content a little bit in response to that. So, the lessons are actually live and lively and building on their knowledge

Matthew: In fact it's easier to monitor the breakout rooms by watching the Padlet . It's because of course ducking in and out on Zoom from each breakout room does take quite a bit of time and if you've only got a five-minute break out, you don't get to talk to everybody. But yes, exactly the face that we have it all there live. I mean it allows you allows us to do what we do to respond. And if somebody comes up with an idea or theme that is pertinent, but maybe you've not thought of or you know, you can spend a bit of time on it and give them that extra bit of content that they're obviously looking for in it. It is, it's great. It is as you say, it's, it's life teaching, its real-time lesson Planning, you know, it's adaptive

Joanne: And I think you can't underestimate the value. I've got a certain learning outcomes. I want to cover a certain amount of content, but you can't underestimate the value of teaching that content in a way that reflects on and bounces off questions, ideas, prompts different International experiences that the students bring in live. So, you might Actually cover a lot of the same things just in different ways. But because the students are helping co-construct that knowledge, even in our more traditional lectures, won't get still got a hundred, odd slides, and lots of bullet points and things. I'm going through but there's those pauses to reflect and write and then you draw on those ideas because the students are helping co-construct that they're going to take it in so much better and engage with it, so much better than if I just give a performance and that's it. So I think that's what that that has been. Just phenomenally different for me and I'm loving having the students having this Hands-On learning kit in the lectures because I was sort of is all I was almost dreading going back from having had some of the zoom meetings where every single session we do something where I get them to write or Draw Something. It's not always Ketso, sometimes we get them to take a picture and talk about that or draw a map and talk about that. That I think I've got to bring that into the lecture hall. I can't, I can't lose that. At and of course the dual, we need it even more because we need that liveliness. If you like. It is interesting though that because they've got this physical kit for the students to do for whatever reason miss a lecture with the recorded podcasts; They can still go through and do the exercise and catch up with it because that's okay. We say, take out your green leaves and do this. Okay, and then we pause the recording they can do that and they can catch up as well. So that's been really helpful. And I think, possibly helpful for the equity. Value of saying well. Yes. Okay. You didn't quite get the live experience, but you can at least catch up with some of the actual interaction. It's not just like watching TV

afterwards or bad TV because let's face it. But production values via zoom and little tiny person waving their hands around at the bottom will lecture theater is not going to be great tv as a one thing.

Matthew: That struck me actually is although there are plenty of breaks in the sessions now and even in even in your lecture, You say, you're still take you break here with, are your take your break out, letting the students develop ideas, having seen your lectures in previous years and I knowing more or less what your content is as quite amazed that you're getting through the content at the same rate and yet allowing these breaks, and it's working. And despite the fact that are more breaks, the students seem to be taking it all in just as well. So, in that respect, I don't think the, the switch, the dual learning has had a negative impact. I honestly think that the students are getting just the same content, but because they're getting in a more interactive way. It's probably actually sinking in better. Even so I, I know there are people who, you know, have different opinions on it, but from where I'm standing watching, I can't see it as anything other than beneficial.

Joanne: hmm, something that's really interesting as well Matt is looking at because we're capturing these ideas on Padlet, not every week. But you know quite a few ideas on Padlet. Most weeks. There's it's almost like the students see a stack of their learning over the weeks as well. And I think it's building a bit of confidence in them about how much they've learned and how much they've said they they've developed. But as tutors, we can really see where some of them have misunderstood, maybe the gaps are oh, I see. Saw something over there. And this was the achieved some more like this or that was a brilliant idea, and it would be great to look at it in this way and to read this work. And I think that having that visual record has been really interesting. And as you say Matt for, in terms of the Dual engagement, we're often. It's harder to get the engagement for the people offside. We can see it so quickly. They either are, or aren't adding pictures to Padlet? You can quickly, see which breakout room Do I need to jump into and help out Live. And you can just jump right in and actually help the ones that seem to be struggling more. So that's been really useful because it can feel a bit like you're in a void. When you're, you don't know which breakout rooms are teaching or which are a working on, which aren't when you can't see them because we don't get any, you can't hear it. You can't see it if you're not in it, but we can see the

Padlet words on or not as the case may be.

Matthew: That's very true. And you know, it's something I do watch closely whenever we break out, but, you know, there's one last thing I want to admit to here. In fact, this is going to be an admission, it isn't one-sided. I feel that I'm benefiting here as well. You know, as a TA. I'm, I'm learning new teaching techniques. I'm seeing you in practice here. I'm learning. I'm watching, I'm observing. But, of course, I'm developing my own skills through using Zoom every week, with this large cohort of students who aren't there. And let's be fair. It's going to can awfully well towards my AGA application.

Joanne: I think that is actually a really good point because in the past I've never I've never had my TAs in a lecture because that would be a little bit of a waste of paid time If you like almost like I'm giving a lecture, I'm up front and I'm giving a lecture and so why do I need somebody sitting there watching me. That feels a bit like that That doesn't feel like a great use of the University's time. But because you're sitting there doing the zoom and adding a huge amount of value to the zoom interaction and the students that are that are engaging in the Dual way, you're actually also hearing the lectures, watching the Interaction, seeing how that's working. It's got see that's a really good point that's got to be incredible capacity, building for TAs going on to teach in the future.

Matthew: That's yeah. I can't but agree with that. I think you're exactly right. Is, it says beneficial for us as it is for the students and of course, helpful for you guys for us to be there. So from the TA point of view, it's a win-win

Joanne: And also, another thing that I've realized as well as a tutor, let's face it with large cohorts, In particular, we're going to have to do group, we have to do some group work. We need, we need to assess one, it's not possible to mark, 200 assignments in the middle of teaching, and then go to around and watch 200 assignments, again later. We've got to do some group work. So often brings that sense of frustration people of free riding etcetera, a real benefit for me, is the fact that I'm requiring visual evidence on the Padlet that students have actually contributed and we're checking that. And we tell the students were checking that and there's so much more of a sense that the students are actually pulling together and

working as a team, and they know that we're doing the best we can to support them working as a team and that we can see it and they can see it. And that I think as another major benefit for me as a teacher because I've, there's no choice. I have to do some group work. Obviously. It's got its own pedagogical value as well in terms of professional development. But it's always fraught. And I think that this has really helped to make it a little less fraught and helped us all to see it a bit more the learning process. It were learning from each other and the TAs can put in so much more value because they can see it no matter where they are. And I think that's been really helpful.

Matthew: Yes, do you think this will continue going forward?

Joanne: I really hope so. I would like to see this become the norm that students when they show up at the University. They get a Hands-On learning Aid to support them in their learning throughout their entire time at the University. And it's just becomes the normal part of one of the tools, we offer to help support their learning. It's like a platform for their, their own personalized learning, but I'd love to see that happen.

Matthew: I think that that would be great, maybe, if We do continue with your learning and from our experiences. I don't see it as a bad thing, then. Yes, and the if just students can sit down and engage hands on, you know, with the with the, as you said, the entire tactile learning aid I definitely think it's going to help them future. And of course, I mean, their subsequent years as well.

Joanne: So and I, but I don't think it's just a dual learn anymore. I think it's bringing interaction into teaching, no matter where you are, whatever the setting and bringing that so personalized, active learning that do. This is a tool for you to use. You go home, write your essay work, on your planning schedule things, working your groups together. So I think it's goes beyond dual or face-to-face. It's a Hands-On learning Aid that works across settings.

Thank you so much. Rachel. That's been a really interesting discussion. Great questions. And thank you, Matt, for your, for your contribution, obviously, in the teaching. And for let's working out and thinking, what we're learning from this, for the future of learning, because I think there's so much Innovation coming out so quickly. We really need to say what do we

want to take forward into the future to improve our students learning experience and our own experiences to teachers and TAs?

Matthew: Rachel it's you know, it's been a brilliant, Brilliant experience for me these last month's I've learned so much about dual learning and delivery and as you can tell working with Joanne and has been for me, hugely beneficial. I honestly think I've learned more about teaching in this last few months, definitely since the start of the pandemic then I had learnt previously as a TA. Well, thanks. Once again, thank you for the chance to come along and talk on one of the best practice podcast.

Rachel: So thank you to Joanne and Matt for a really interesting chat about student engagement. You can find out more about this topic and so much more by visiting our humanities Pages, which include our best practice resources and is full of information from the e-learning team in Humanities. There's a link to this from the note section of the podcast where you can also subscribe to this podcast and you'll automatically get the latest episode on release from wherever you get your podcasts. Finally. If you liked this episode tell other people about us if you have any ideas of things. We should be covering get in. Touch with us. We love to hear from you. See you next time and stay safe.