

## **Title**

How to ditch technology and think *inside* the box – the **Culture Shoe Box?**

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## **Abstract**

With the fast development of technology, engaging students within higher education has shifted towards the use of more technology in the classroom (Selwyn 2009 and Dey *et al*, 2009). However, when it comes to teaching challenging topics such as ethics, business and culture, there is a belief that learners need to engage with these subjects in a different way (Wassif, 2015).

This session will demonstrate the use of a Culture Shoe Box (CSB): a new, inexpensive, hands-on educational resource introduced to facilitate workshops and enhance students' learning experience (Wassif and Zakher, 2015). The session will tackle some practical activities using the Culture Shoe Box, the impact on students' engagement and ways to develop this resource further to use as a teaching and learning tool in other subjects in the social sciences.

## **Overview of The Session**

### 1- The resource and how it is used

The Culture Shoe Box (CSB) was developed using an empty shoe box that was filled with cultural items (e.g. a papyrus bookmark, some hand-made items from different parts of the world and a traditional African shirt, Fig 1). Students were encouraged to donate cultural items that are inexpensive and could fit inside the CSB. When a student donates an item to the CSB, they are asked to tell the class about the item, how it is significant, what cultural values/dimensions it represents, etc.

### 2- The impact on students' engagement

The different nature of this educational tool (in comparison with screens of computers, phones, PowerPoint presentations that this generation of higher education students seems to be constantly bombarded with) adds a new exotic experience to the classroom and allows for more students' engagement.

The variety of the cultural artifacts provides some flexibility in how CSB can be used in the class. One way is to ask students to pick from the box an item they like and apply what they have learned on that day through the item in the theme on cultural ethics, business management, etc. Students enjoy discussing themes such as 'the evil eye', 'hierarchical structures', 'marriage commitment', 'luck' and others while inspecting real cultural items at their tables. Some artifacts spark discussions

not directly related to the item; for example a 3-legged mug holding the symbol of the Isle of Man led to the discussion of the morality of tax avoidance schemes on the island.

The 'bring-an-item-and-tell-us-about-it' task and the engagement with real cultural artifacts foster contribution-and-discovery-based learning rather than simply receiving information.

### 3- How to further develop the resource to use with other social sciences subjects

The CSB could be used as an ice breaker or filler. It could also be used to teach psychology (items that trigger different ideas and emotions) and communication skills in different disciplines. Different groups of students can develop their own Culture Shoe Boxes. Topics related to culture and its impact on human resources, management, politics, businesses, communication, social care, etc. can be effectively addressed using the CSB utilising the flexibility of the box and the possibility of the continual renewal of items.

This practical session will encourage participants to take part in using the Culture Shoe Box and to develop different ways in using it in their own disciplines.

Figure 1



### References

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Selwyn, N. (2009): Faceworking: exploring student's education-related use of facebook. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 34 (2), 157- 174.

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