

## **Research and Practice Informed Case Studies: Dr Sara Jones, Faculty of Management, Cass Business School**

### **About Sara**

Sara Jones is Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Management at Cass Business School. She is a founding member of the Centre for Creativity in Professional Practice, and Course Director for the interdisciplinary Masters in Innovation Creativity and Leadership. From 2011-2015 she was a Senior Lecturer in the Centre for Human-Computer Interaction Design at City University, and from 2006-2011, she held an RCUK Research Fellowship in creativity applied to design and engineering, with a particular focus on the design of interactive systems.

#### **00:15 Who are you and where do you teach?**

I'm Sara Jones, I'm in the Faculty of Management at Cass Business School.

#### **00:24 Can you describe your academic speciality in relation to research and teaching?**

I work at the intersection between digital creativity, which has been my focus for probably the last decade or so. And there are two sides to that: one side of it is looking at how we can use creative techniques in designing and finding out what's needed from digital systems or socio-technical systems, if you will; and the other side to that is looking at how digital tools, apps, websites etc. can sometimes help, can sometimes get in the way of our creative process as individuals and as teams, and in fact innovation processes within organisations as a whole. So there's sort of two sides to that kind of intersection between digital and creativity. And I think both can be really interesting, so I do look at both in my research.

#### **01:13 Who are your students?**

I think there's two groups of students it could be relevant to talk about here: the first group is the students that I taught for quite a few years on the Masters on Human-Computer Interaction Design, doing a module called Creativity in Design. And then the second group of students is the group that I'm currently teaching – again, I've been teaching them for quite a while, but I'm still teaching them on a module called Technologies for Creativity and Innovation and that's part of our Masters in Innovation, Creativity and Leadership – the MICL ["Michael"].

#### **01:47 Who is the audience for your research?**

Two sorts of audience for the research: one would be probably companies developing digital "stuff", or socio-technical systems as we might call them. So, companies developing apps, websites etc. who are looking for more creative ways of thinking about what they're doing. And on the other hand, any of us as individuals who are using apps or websites as part of our own creative processes, creative thinking, making stuff. Teams in organisations that are doing creative processes – I'm interested in looking at how they're using technologies: how they either help or they get in the way. And then on the other hand, organisations that are innovating: how do they use technologies that harness the organisation's capabilities as a whole.

#### **02:35 What do you understand by the term "research and practice informed teaching"?**

Fundamentally I think there's lots of ways that teaching and research can, really usefully, interact. And there's a few different intersections on the MICL with the research that colleagues are doing and the teaching that happens on the programme. For me, I think the most interesting way in which

my research informs my teaching is currently through the Technologies module that I teach on the MICL, where I talk about a couple of quite recent projects as case studies, if you will, in the teaching.

### **03.12 What does research and practice informed teaching mean to you?**

I think that two case studies, or two examples let's say, came to mind when I was thinking about this. The first one was some research funding that we had from JISC quite a few years ago, which we needed to use to look at what would be called "blended learning" now: the way to use digital tools and technologies in support of group-based learning. So, we're looking at teaching students creative design, this was the Creativity and Design module, that I taught for the Masters Human-Computer Interaction Design and the research there was about looking at how students use the mixture of physical and digital tools in the teaching space, as they learn to do design. That kind of fed very directly into the teaching itself. So, the learnings from giving the students the kind of environment we were researching one week, could feed directly into what we did the next week and, of course, the whole lot fed into the next year and the development of our teaching in general. That was a really lovely integrated example of teaching and research being mutually supportive, I think.

### **04.27 How do you integrate your research and practice with your teaching?**

There's creating what we very much think of as case studies, which is a combination of any digital tools that came out of a project, any papers that we wrote, other media images, for example, of what we did; bringing that all together as maybe an hour's material for one week of teaching around a particular topic. That's the most direct use, I think. And then there's the general, like from the JISC example, there's the general "what we learned". Obviously we think about that and we learn from that in terms of how we structure future teaching activities; there's the quite specific use of case studies and then there's the more general "well we're just learning from what we're doing all the time" and that kind of contributes to what we're doing in teaching.

### **05.15 How do you make your students aware of your research and practice?**

In the Creativity in Design module it's more a case of practicing, experiencing the techniques that we were researching as part of our creative workshops; letting students actually use constraint removal as a creative thinking technique, for example, in class, to see how that goes for them and to see how they might want to then use it in their practice later.

### **05.36 How do you engage your students with your research and practice?**

Make it interesting and exciting; give them things to do; give them experience; give them things to practice; physical materials are always helpful; pictures – I like pictures. Yeah, just a variety of ways – as in normal teaching, saying things a lot of different ways just helps get the message across.

### **06.00 What would be your "top tip" for creating research and practice informed teaching?**

Just follow your passions. Do something you find interesting, exciting, motivating, and it will naturally feed through into both your research and teaching and you'll start to see all those connections.

[End]