



CHAPTER 1:

**INTRODUCTION: I AM
PEDAGODZILLA – HEAR ME ROAR!**

Mark Childs

It begins not with a whisper, but with a blather:

‘Hello, and welcome to Pedagodzilla, the podcast that takes the monstrously impenetrable world of pedagogic theory, research and observation and makes sense of it through the far more enjoyable lens of geeky games, books, film, TV, and comics. In each episode we’re going to take a concept, a model, a theory, and just about anything to do with education, really lazily slap an analogy over the top in order to make it real, and then tell you how you can use it in your own practice.’

That was Mike Collins' introduction to the very first episode of season one of *Pedagodzilla*, way back in March 2019. The idea behind the *Pedagodzilla* podcast was a very simple one – two or more people talk about an aspect of learning and teaching, explore it through the lens of popular culture, then situate that learning within practice.

The result ended up being enormously popular – by education podcast standards anyway – and by the time we took a break from releasing monthly episodes in September 2021 we were heading towards 20,000 downloads. We have listeners on nearly every continent (still waiting for those elusive Antarctica hits) and the episodes have been used in teaching programmes and graduate schools as learning resources. We've even guest starred on other education podcasts.

Who is 'we'? We is Mike Collins – the man with a microphone and impostor syndrome incarnate – and Mark Childs – the man with a PhD in education and a National Teaching Fellow. And throughout the life of the podcast, we have been joined by a wide range of colleagues who have contributed their own education perspectives and love of pop culture.

The beginnings of the podcast were serendipitous. We both worked in Learning Design at The Open University (OU) and had just been to a reading group, looking at Paul Kirschner's paper on urban myths in education (Kirschner and van Merriënboer, 2013). Mike was heading towards a podcasting booth with some more reading in hand – his plan being to talk it through to himself and record it so he could embed it more firmly in his memory. Mark was walking around with a mug of coffee. We bumped into each other, explained what we were up to, and decided it made a lot more sense to record our thoughts as a dialogue. Mike would find it easier to get the ideas straight in his head, and Mark would have a warm place to drink his coffee.

The first conversation, about communities of practice, evolved into a pop-cultural link because of a paper by Oliver and Carr (2003) which was Mark's main touchstone for the topic. The pop-cultural lens of *World of Warcraft* turned out to be a great way to explore the issues, for two reasons. The first was that both Mike and Mark were using an educational concept that they knew something about, and the other was that they had the chance to talk about (in this case) a game they'd both played, albeit with different degrees of success.

That narrative has continued ever since – *Pedagodzilla* is the story of Mike's journey to learning more about pedagogy and Mark getting to offload all his pent-up geekiness. The reality is, it's a lot of fun. Particularly during the pandemic, meeting up and talking about all things teachery and geekery was a lifeline. And, by extension, it proved to be a lifeline for hundreds of listeners as well. In short, we'd be doing this even if no-one were listening. The fact that people are is an amazing bonus.

Our biggest thanks go to the special guests who've kept the show so varied and interesting. It would be a full-time job adapting all of the episodes we've produced so far, and the collection gathered in this book is just a fraction of the topics we've covered. The contributors to the episodes covered in this book are:

- Paul Astles
- Becky Cohen
- Olivia Rowland
- Mark Williams

Together – plus Elizabeth and Rebecca, they are the Zillas.

About the book

Rather than compile a ‘book of the podcast’, which would have been a series of transcripts, we chose instead to create a digital written resource, pulling together the pop culture and the pedagogy in a more coherent way. Beginning with a transcript of a particular episode, we have developed a more discursive, but still to some extent scholarly, output. There were far too many episodes to include them all in one book, so for this first volume we’ve focused on the Big Concepts in teaching and learning, with some preliminary chapters on why they’re important. Our plan is to follow this up with more volumes and perhaps eventually catch up with the podcasts.

As the concepts chosen were those Mike selected to inform his own understanding, when grouped together they form a relatively solid introduction to pedagogy. As a guide, Mark knows enough to give a good general overview, but not so much that the explanations get bogged down in nuances. We’re offering these as an entertaining way to get up to speed with broad-stroke explanations of most of the basic ideas about education, and they are not intended to be comprehensive.

The guide to pop culture is even more scattergun, as we’ve obviously selected based on our own personal preferences (or those of the Zillas) and talked predominantly about our own perspectives on them. There are many, many still to talk about. As far as our geek obsessions go, we’ve barely scratched the surface.

It’s also been pointed out (by Rebecca, the third major creative force behind the book) that we make a lot of pop-culture references without fully explaining them. We made a conscious decision early on that we’d unpack only the bits that a reader would really need to know to understand what we’re talking about – this also keeps us honest when we start to lose ourselves in our fandoms. This has been helped in no small part by Elizabeth Ellis,

who took on the unenviable role of editor, and whose discerning eye and steadfast dedication to clarity guided our enthusiastic, if occasionally chaotic, chapters into a coherent narrative.

We hope this doesn’t feel as if we’re excluding anyone, but we acknowledge this is heavily targeting an audience who share our cultural references.

We’ve also organised the chapters, so that they read as a coherent whole.

Part 1 is the introduction, with a rationale for why we think learning about pedagogy is important, what it is, how a little learning about learning can be detrimental and how it can transform people if you get it right. We introduce some of the basics, such as the ontology and epistemology of approaches to education and how these have led to the different approaches discussed in the rest of the book.

Part 2 is a series of chapters focusing on two different approaches to education – those drawing chiefly on positivist approaches to learning (like how the brain works) and those associated with constructivism (interpreting how learners make sense of the world) – together with the strengths and weaknesses of each. We have chapters on approaches that draw on the positivist end of things, on constructivist approaches, and also on whether ‘virtual’ counts as experience. We wrap the section up with a chapter comparing neurological and constructivist approaches.

Part 3 looks at learning approaches that are concerned with interactions with society, the environment, and other contexts. We wrap this all up in our final chapter, which is our plan for what comes next. This was a journey for us, so we’ve presented the chapters as a journey here too, with twists, challenges, and dead ends along the way.

A note on authorship

Due to the origins of the chapters in their episode form, attributing authorship has been a challenge. For that reason, we have adopted the following convention.

The person who did most of the keyboard tapping comes first in the list of authors. As the episodes are mainly Mike's brainchild with some input from Mark, most chapters should be attributed to both.

The episode guest usually follows afterwards, unless they have written the chapter. Or are Rebecca, who saved our bacon by writing a lot of the chapters.

Hopefully, that's fair and collegiate for everyone.

How to read this book

Move your eyes from side to side and turn the pages. Hah, no, random *Monty Python* reference notwithstanding, we're offering the following explanation and suggested routes.

So that these read like book chapters rather than transcripts, we've adopted a single authorial voice rather than multiple ones, though there were points where the difference in opinion or experience between individuals was worth preserving, so we kept those in too. Where we've switched to personal perspectives, a little Zilla head accompanies the text.

Like this! My perspective here is that podcasting is a heck of a lot easier than writing and not mucking up the typesetting.
-Mikezilla



A link to the original podcast episode is included as a QR code at the end of each chapter, and in two cases there is an

empty void where the episode hasn't (at time of publication of this book) been edited and published yet.

For people who are completely new to some of the concepts, we recommend starting with Chapter 6: Mapping the Realm of Pedagogy, which lays out the basic concepts, then flicking through looking for the Mikezilla interjections. For a more in-depth introduction, read the chapters on behaviourism, active learning, and social constructivism. If you have more background knowledge and just have specific things you're interested in or confused by, dipping into individual chapters works fine too, they're all written to be read as standalone pieces. However, the chapters are ordered to convey a journey through the subject, so if you're up for it, start at the very beginning (we've heard it's a very good place to start).

To convey a sense of that journey, we've written a short narrative around the chapters, explaining where we are in the process of learning about learning, and what the next chapter involves. We've written this from the perspective of three explorers. Meet the Zillas: Markzilla, Mikezilla and Beckzilla, including cameos from other Zillas in some chapters.



And thus begins the tale of the Zillas, and their exploration of the realms of pedagogy. With a song in their hearts, and a healthy supply of coffee and biscuits they depart...

The secret origins (and references) of *Pedagodzilla*

Kirschner, P.A. and van Merriënboer, J.J.G. (2013) Do learners really know best? Urban legends in education, *Educational Psychologist*, 48:3, 169-183, DOI: 10.1080/00461520.2013.804395

Oliver, M. and Carr, D. (2009) Learning in virtual worlds: Using communities of practice to explain how people learn from play, *British Journal of Educational Technology*, Special Issue: Out of This World: 3-D MUVES, 40:33, 444-457. Available at <https://bera-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/14678535/2009/40/3>



This chapter is an extract from the book **Pedagodzilla: Exploring the Realm of Pedagogy** by Dr Mark Childs, Prof Rebecca Ferguson, Mike Collins and Elizabeth Ellis. First Edition 2024.

If you find this useful in your practice or study we would love to know. Drop us a note at mark.childs@durham.ac.uk, at Michael.collins@open.ac.uk or at [@pedagodzilla](https://twitter.com/pedagodzilla) on Twitter (we refuse to call it 'X'). All feedback helps us with our next book!

To download all chapters of the book for free, listen to the Pedagodzilla podcast or purchase a paperback copy (royalties go to funding our next project) [visit the book landing page](#) or scan the following QR code:



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