

Serious Play, Serious Learning: Using LEGO to Develop Reflective Practice in Apprenticeships

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The Challenge: Making Reflection Matter

Apprenticeship learners bring diverse workplace experiences, yet many struggle to engage meaningfully with traditional reflective models. Reflection is often reduced to box-ticking or superficial description, lacking the depth needed to demonstrate growth, critical insight, or professional competence (Moon, 2004; Dewey, 1938).

Our Response: LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP)

To address this, we introduced LEGO® Serious Play® to develop reflective thinking. LSP invites learners to use metaphor and storytelling to externalise thinking, making abstract experiences tangible. Rooted in constructivist and constructionist learning theories (Piaget, 1973; Papert & Harel, 1991), LSP supports self-expression, deeper reflection, and metacognition through structured creative tasks.



Extending the Practice

LSP was further embedded in the Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability Practitioner programme. Here, learners tackled complex sustainability and ethics topics by:

- Creating symbolic models of real-world challenges
- Collaboratively exploring stakeholder tensions
- Linking models directly to unit learning outcomes and personal development



Get In Touch

If you would like to know more, we'd love to hear from you.



How We Did It: Two Iterative Sessions

We applied LSP across two scaffolded sessions on our CMDA programme:

Session 1 – Introducing Reflection in 3D

- Enlivened reflective cycle frameworks such as Kolb's and Gibbs' through hands-on model builds
- Used individual metaphor constructions to surface lived work experiences
- Applied “Tap & Tell” – a visual storytelling technique for decoding and narrating reflective insights

Session 2 – Building Depth for Portfolio Evidence

- Invited learners to rebuild their models with added layers of analysis
- Emphasised alignment with Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs)
- Embedded “rebuild and narrate” as a preparation tool for summative assessment

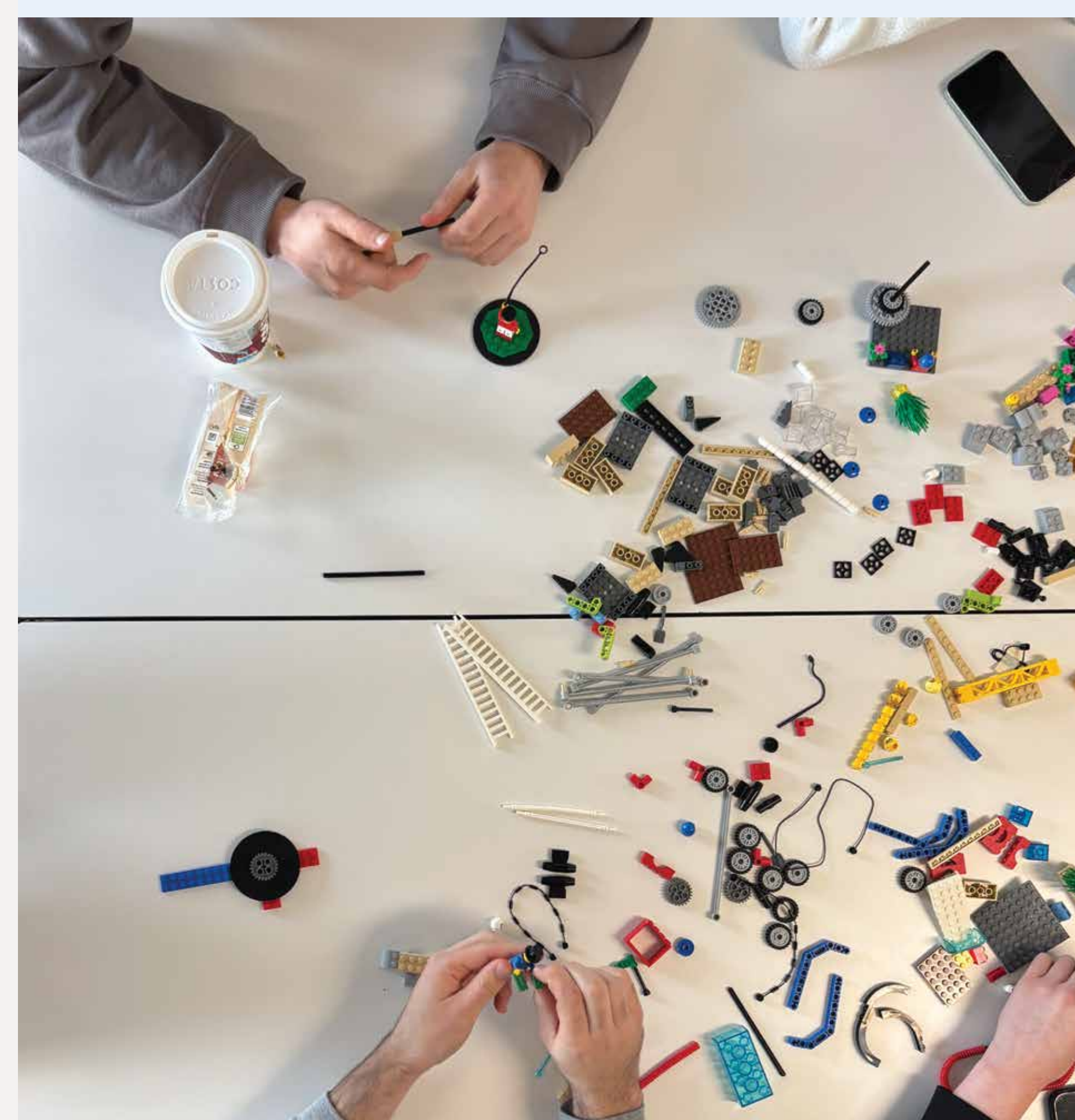
Students reflected more confidently and critically, and shared personal experiences in ways not previously seen in written-only formats.



How might we make reflective practice feel meaningful for every learner?

What We Learned

- **Engagement:** Learners approached reflection with enthusiasm and confidence.
- **Depth:** Metaphor enabled richer, more personal accounts of experience.
- **Critical Thinking:** “Rebuild” activities encouraged deeper analysis and connection-making.
- **Assessment Impact:** Learners demonstrated greater clarity and specificity in reflective writing.
- **Scalability:** The LSP process proved adaptable to other programmes and disciplines.



What's Next?

- Collaborating on a research paper to develop Reflection in 3D through LSP, storytelling and metaphor for reflective thinking
- Developing a toolkit to support storytelling and metaphor in HE
- Exploring applications in assessment reform, enterprise education, and metacognition



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