

IDEAS Case Study

Using LEGO® Serious Play to encourage a Sustainable Mindset for undergraduate Marketing students

Dr Rebecca Beech, Lecturer in Marketing, Oxford Brookes Business School

rbeech@brookes.ac.uk

Pedagogic research interests in – gamification, UG student support, authentic assessment, internationalisation (including COIL) and sustainability

Context

The use of Lego® Serious Play was introduced in seminars in Week 7 across a brand new mandatory undergraduate 1st year (Level 4) Marketing module called *Sustainable and Ethical Marketing* with 187 students enrolled on the module. Some students hold minor to severe ISPs and disabilities. When using the Lego® Serious Play I took into consideration all levels of students, including neurodiversity and disability and/or mobility issues.

IDEAS challenge: Sustainability Mindset and Inclusive Learning

There were two key challenges I was addressing. Firstly, related to the IDEAS model I was addressing the 'Sustainability Mindset'. This related to embedding the [Principles for Responsible Management Education \(PRME\)](#) from the United Nations into my teaching, which consisted of embedding the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and the [i5 framework](#). The seminar focused on SDGs, 4, 5 and 10. The 'green economy' that encourages graduates to apply for sustainability led jobs means that teaching from L4 should start to foster sustainable and ethically minded Marketers of the future.

Secondly, was to ensure that the use of Lego® Serious Play was inclusive for all students, particularly those that are neurodivergent or have disability and/or mobility issues. Studies show that gamification in education fosters neurodivergent students' creativity and ability to demonstrate out-of-the-box problem solving. Ensuring students with disabilities were included entailed clear instructions prior to the session and adapting how they express or create a Lego® model with their team.

Rationale and aims

My aim as module leader was to encourage students to reflect on Week 7's lecture on 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity' (EDI) during the Sustainable and Ethical Marketing module, and produce an interpretation of what EDI means to them informed by their learning and considering them as an individual and group. The aim was for students to use different parts of the Lego® that were meaningfully placed to demonstrate a visualisation of what was important to them considering EDI.

Development undertaken

The task was for students to use Lego® Serious Play to create Lego® creations that demonstrate EDI to them and are informed by their learning in class.

Each seminar consisted of up to 30 students. My seminar is in the social media lab which allows students to work on round tables in groups of 4/5 for this seminar activity using Lego® Serious Play.

Prior to the seminar for the purpose of students with an ISP, I shared the PPT slides that had clear instructions on how we will be using Lego® Serious Play. In the notes of the PPT, a video from [YouTube](#) was provided on how Lego® is used and created at an education level.

At the start of the activity, I had already prepared a box of Lego® Serious Play on each table and asked students to sit in groups of 4/5 around the round tables.

Students had up to 20 minutes to create the creations in class.

During students' creation of Lego®, myself and seminar tutors in their class went round the tables asking students what the meaning of each creation was, and the meaning of the Lego® used. The purpose was to ensure that students could discuss how EDI informed the creation and it was linked to EDI.

At the end, student groups shared with the class how their Lego® creation demonstrated EDI and the meaning of pieces used. Peer learning and discussion took place.

Outputs

[Guidance](#) – The theme of week 7 was on 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity' (EDI). Students were provided in the seminar a reminder of EDI definitions and signposted back to the lecture slides, along with a video on what EDI is to fully understand the concepts. This topic relates to SDGs 4, 5

and 10. A slide was shown giving examples of Lego® creations which demonstrated the meaning of happiness, anger and portraying a poem. These examples explained by the seminar tutor and by the visual image on the PPT slide, revealed how students can create Lego® creations that demonstrate EDI to them and informed by their learning in class.

Outcome - Students developed their sustainable mindset considering SDGS 4, 5 and 10 through peer learning, discussion of ideas raised, critically analysing the meaning of the creations and developed skills such as team working, leadership and communication. Inclusivity amongst students took place.

Benefits and impact

Seminar tutors took photographs of the student groups' creations, with the consent of the students. The use of photographs from the student creations were shared amongst the Marketing Team Google Space. The post with photographs entailed praising my module team for their excellent support and the students' fantastic creations demonstrating their sustainable mindset. I received positive feedback from colleagues which led to an invitation by the Marketing Research Area Lead to deliver a session on how to use Lego® Serious Play in Marketing modules for all Marketing colleagues. The session will be related to encouraging neurodivergent students, use of gamification, and fostering a sustainable mindset.



Image 1: seminar group



Image 2: Lego®
Serious play



Image 3: seminar group

I shared a LinkedIn post about the use of Lego® Serious Play on the Sustainable and Ethical Marketing module related to creations of EDI by the L4 Marketing students. I raised the profile of this new module for the academic year 23/24 and the profile of the Oxford Brookes Business School. I received feedback from Marketing academics who are based regionally, nationally and internationally on the great use of gamification in class for student experience and fostering of a sustainable mindset.

Students shared positive feedback during and after the seminar and called for more use of Lego® Serious Play. A community was created along with peer praise, as myself and the seminar team took photographs of the creations to share on Moodle to celebrate the fantastic work.

My team shared positive impacts such as normally introverted or quiet students coming out of their shell and expressing interesting and creative creations. Seminar tutors shared that they felt supported on how to use colleagues on the module were provided with guidance on how to use Lego® Serious Play in our weekly voluntary module team meeting to discuss teaching content.



Image 4: LinkedIn post

Challenges and lessons learned

I incorporated the Lego® Serious Play in Week 7's seminar which also had an allotted 20 minutes for the explanation of an Edumundo Simulation used in my module. The Operations Manager from Edumundo joined each seminar for 20 mins at the start to explain round two to the students. In hindsight and considering students enjoyment of using Lego® I would make the whole seminar in future just for the Lego® activity and ensure that the simulation round explanation did not clash.

Considering one student with disability and mobility issues, in the future I would speak with them before the seminar about my plan of how we have adapted the use of Lego® Serious Play for them. By talking to them it would ensure that we included their input and voice on modifications. Cocreation is important with students, to ensure that they feel valued and best supported.

Top tips

- Ensure that your seminar team as well as students are supported on how to use Lego® Serious Play in the seminar. I am happy to share my resources or provide training!
- Ensure that you adapt Lego® Serious Play for students with ISPs and disability/mobility issues. Consider this prior to the seminar to ensure inclusivity in your teaching.
- Use a seminar room with round tables to ensure that students can equally be a part of the discussion and creation.

Lastly, it is important that the students have fun! Go around the seminar room and ask what they are doing, what each piece means, and listen to the students to make them feel valued. This is part of creating a sense of belongingness on the module and course.

Cite this case study

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Rebecca welcomes you to contact her on rbeech@brookes.ac.uk, to share your reflections on the usefulness of the case study, and whether you intend to use Lego® or have done following the case study guidance.