Sustainability Mindset Toolkit - Reflexive Sustainability QAA 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 #ImpactFund

Group Size
Small group (teams of 4-6), Large Group
Learning Environment
Carousel Tables (small working group), Special
QAA Enterprise Theme(s)
1Creativity and Innovation 2Opportunity recognition, creation and evaluation 3Decision making supported by critical analysis and judgement 4Implementation of ideas through leadership and management 5Reflection and Action 6Interpersonal Skills 7Communication and Strategy 8Digital and Data Skills

Objective:

- To provide students with an opportunity to visualise and verbalise sustainability issues as a prompt to action
- To provide students with an opportunity to reflect upon the perspectives and values of stakeholders
- To develop a deeper understanding of a real contextual problem through the lens of sustainability
- To provide students with an opportunity to develop their communications skills and strategies
- To provide students with an understanding of the impact of their decisions making, environmentally, socially, and economically
- To enable students to become reflexive practitioners

Overview:

This workshop provides students the opportunity to take ownership of a real problem that they recognise from their lived experience. Using an auto-photography methodology as a prompt, the session uses student derived lived-awareness problem statements to initiate the activity (Thomas, 2009). Through understanding the background and context:*'Learning as seeing in a new way'* (Tsai, 2004), students integrate awareness to determine who the key stakeholders involved with the problem area are,). Small groups take on the role of the individual stakeholders to complete an insights analysis.

The session provides the opportunity for students to deep dive into the perspectives and actions of alternative stakeholders without addressing blame or ecological/economic accountability (Ideland & Malmberg, 2014). By moving between positions this provides insight into what influences or develops a sustainability mind-set. Ultimately they gain a reflexive viewpoint (Cunliffe, 2009) whereby the sustainability proposition they develop can be offered as meaningful insight and opportunity to community or institution stakeholders.

Sustainability Mindset Principal Themes addressed:

SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

Long Term Thinking

Flow in cycles

Both - And Thinking

Interconnectedness

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Reflection

Self-awareness

Enterprise Educator Framework addressed:

- Raising awareness of enterprise and entrepreneurship and its value to the learner in their journey
- Developing the learner's mind-set associated with being enterprising and entrepreneurial
- Developing their skills and competencies associated with being enterprising and entrepreneurial

Activity:

This activity is designed to have some pre-work then be an in-person half-day session or can be adapted to be a 'challenge' event over 24 hours (to include branch campuses/global audiences).

1. Pre-work ideation

Students are given a set number of days prior to the workshop to observe and scope for problems in their lived environments. Students are encouraged to photograph or create an AI-derived image to illustrate what sustainability issue they observe, and to capture the context (modified auto-photography methodology).

- Photograph objects/environment or create an AI-derived image to signify or summarise the problem (photographs should not include people without their permission).
- Very brief (sentence) notes on **what** the photograph/image signifies, **why** it is a sustainability problem, and **who** the problem impacts.
- Students submit this as a one-page PowerPoint or similar, for collation by the facilitator.

- The facilitator groups these by theme/similarity or alternative grouping ahead of the session.

2. Workshop reflexivity

Students will attend the workshop and the facilitator explains the guidance for equitable collaboration:

- **Respect** each other's right to their personal views and opinions
- **Communication** is an exchange of listening, verbalising, writing, drawing and body language.
- **Equity** amongst members – everyone should have the opportunity to, and feel comfortable to contribute.
- **Acknowledge** participants cultural diversity and neurodivergence.
- **Be aware** that participants may have unconscious bias.

Students view the collated photographs and the sentence explanations (these can be displayed either around the room or as a slide deck). If comfortable to then the image owners can talk about what the problem means to them. Students comment on and discuss what they are seeing and feel drawn to as a sustainability issue to awaken critical consciousness of the issues. Each student then selects between their own themed problem group, or another that resonate with them, aim for groups of 3-5 people per theme or have multiple groups per theme.

Using a spiral process (with the problem at the centre), in small groups students write down or draw out **what**contributes to the problem (e.g. plastic pollution; might be: lack of litter bins, cost of waste disposal licenses), adding points round the spiral till they run out of ideas. Then with a different colour pen write down **who** are the stakeholders associated with the situation (e.g. city council, business owners, children who play out, dog walkers etc.).

Compare the different group's spirals and either choose or allocate a stakeholder per group and swap after 45 minutes or take two opposing stakeholders per small group and work through the **why** for both perspectives. Small groups investigate the stakeholder perspective using AI, web-searches, and societal understanding to build a picture of the situation and how change can be made.

Groups take a refreshment break and visit the other group's tables to see what perspectives and suggestions have been developed. Facilitator brings the cohort back together to gather the insights (using a screen/whiteboard). Suggestions should indicate stakeholders involved, resources required and possible timescales as well as identifying the risks of inaction. Each group to identify one change/initiative that could be made towards sustainability with regards to the problem statement.

3. Post-reflexive outputs

Facilitator captures the stem auto-photography/images along with the spirals and qualitative outputs of the groups. The overall insights are summarised and shared with the cohort and if appropriate with any stakeholders who may be able to action suggestions. The outputs may benefit the community or institution depending on context.

Skill Development:

UNESCO Sustainability competencies covered using this tool.

Cognitive/ Thinking competency

- **Anticipatory competency**: the ability to understand and evaluate multiple futures – possible, probable, and desirable – and to create one's own visions for the future, to apply the precautionary principle, to assess the consequences of actions, and to deal with risks and changes.

- **Critical thinking competency**: the ability to question norms, practices, and opinions; reflect on own one's values, perceptions and actions; and take a position in the sustainability discourse.

Behavioural/ Ways of Doing competency

- **Collaboration competency**: the ability to learn from others; understand and respect the needs, perspectives, and actions of others (empathy); understand, relate to and be sensitive to others (empathic leadership), deal with conflicts in a group; and facilitate collaborative and participatory problem-solving.

- **Integrated problem-solving competency**: the overarching ability to apply different problem-solving frameworks to complex sustainability problems and develop viable, inclusive, and equitable solution that promote sustainable development – integrating the above-mentioned competencies.

Socio-emotional/ Ways of Being competency

- **Self-awareness competency**: the ability to reflect on one's own role in the local community and (global) society, continually evaluate and further motivate one's actions, and deal with one's feelings and desires.

- **Normative competency**: the ability to understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie one's actions and to negotiate sustainability values, principles, goals and targets, in a context of conflicts of interests and trade-offs, uncertain knowledge and contradictions.

UNESCO Sustainability competencies please delete those that are not aligned with this activity.

There is a recognition amongst participants that seemingly simple problems are in reality more complex and that change requires more than just funding or rules but a common understanding of the impact of inaction and benefits of action to stimulate behavioural change. Providing the alternatives of photography or AI-derived images as prompts enables students to articulate their problem statements effectively.

Resources:

- Access to PC and internet
- *Flip-chart paper or sustainable wipe-clean, static stick flipchart sheets*

References:

- AdvanceHE (2019) Framework for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education; *Engaging Students in entrepreneurship education: Thoughts on the present context and future challenges*. Williams, N, https://advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/framework-enterprise-and-entrepreneurship-education-0
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- Thomas, M. E. (2009). Auto-photography. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University

- Tsai, C. C. (2004) Conceptions of learning science among high school students in Taiwan: A phenomenographic analysis, *International Journal of Science Education*, **26**(14), 1733–1750.

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