

Fashion Business Education for Social Change: Creating impact through Case Teaching and Lego® Serious Play®

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Abstract

Fashion is both an easily accessible subject and an extremely complex global system built on an unjust foundation. Integrating ethical business practices and sustainability literacies into engaging teaching and learning experiences is a priority for fashion and business schools, yet many educators struggle to engage meaningfully with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). More than ever before, fashion education needs to address environmental degradation and social injustice.

This Lego® Serious Play® workshop, led by award-winning educators, provides a range of insights, information, demonstration and resources necessary for participants to write their own sustainable fashion case study, relevant to their specific area and cultural context. A range of innovative and impactful pedagogies drawn from the UN-supported initiative Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) Impactful Five (i5) Playbook are utilised, giving participants a hands-on opportunity to understand and adapt research-based pedagogies for responsible leadership.

Key Words: Lego® Serious Play®, Case Study Method, Ethics, Fashion business, Sustainable fashion.

Subtheme(s): Pedagogies and Ethics

WHY THIS TOPIC IS OF INTEREST / WORKSHOP AIMS

This 2-hour workshop, led by multiple award-winning educators, provides participants with insights, information, demonstration and resources necessary to write their own fashion case study relevant to their specific area and cultural context. In addition to writing templates, participants are introduced to a range of innovative and impactful pedagogies drawn from the UN-supported initiative Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)

Impactful Five (i5) Playbook, giving participants a hands-on opportunity to understand and adapt research-based pedagogies for responsible leadership.

Hence, the workshop aims to:

- Explore fashion educators' experiences with the Case Teaching Method
- Introduce fashion educators to the principles of Transformative Sustainability Learning (TSL), specifically the PRME Impactful Five (i5) programme
- Engage fashion educators through interactive play according to Lego® Serious Play® methods
- Introduce fashion educators to a range of cutting-edge resources to enhance their pedagogy related to sustainable fashion
- Provide fashion educators with templates and a roadmap to publication of their own sustainable fashion teaching Case Study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Graduate jobs require 'fluency in sustainability issues and climate science fields' (Microsoft, 2022). Business graduates should demonstrate an "understanding of 'responsible leadership' (that) incorporate(s) authentic, values-driven, inclusive, ethical, sustainable, systemic and transformative leadership which considers the interests and perspectives of different stakeholders, both now and for the future, while focusing on addressing climate change and other key challenges." (QAA, 2023). Integrating ethical business practices and sustainability literacies into engaging teaching and learning experiences is a priority for business schools (CABS), yet many educators struggle to engage meaningfully with Education for Sustainable Development. Fashion is both an easily accessible subject – we all wear clothes – but also an extremely complex global system built on an unjust foundation. To address negative environmental impacts and social inequalities, we need sustainable fashion education to be inclusive, critical and creative and pedagogies that maximize fashion's potential for positive impact through climate friendly social impact businesses.

Transformative sustainability learning (TSL) uses sustainability-oriented learning experiences to empower individuals 'to change their frames of reference or worldviews' (Sipos et al. 2008:71; Junestrand et al. 2024), achieved through engaging with a student's head (cognitive), hands (practical) and heart (values).

PRME

Responsible Management Education (RME) is a critical factor in advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those most closely related to fashion: SDG5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2024). According to the UN-supported initiative Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), RME educators should Teach in ways that ‘transform our learning environments by integrating responsible management concepts and practices into our curriculum and pedagogy’ (UNPRME, n.d.), so as ‘to equip today's business students with the understanding and ability to deliver change tomorrow’ (PRME, n.d.).

The United Nations-supported initiative Principles for Responsible Management Education has worked with the LEGO Foundation, Harvard Graduate School of Education and Sulitest to develop the PRME Impactful Five (i5) responsible leadership methods, combining cognitive skill set training with creative, emotional, social, and physical skill set training. In this way, i5 aims to activate methods of impacting sustainability and responsible leadership learning through playful pedagogy (Table 1).

Table 1: The PRME i5 Methods and Signature Moves. Source: i5 Playbook

PRME i5 Methods	PRME i5 Signature Moves
Make learning Meaningful	Role modelling Personalising Surfacing Dignifying
Foster Joy and well-being	Delighting Sensing Contemplating Rippling
Develop supportive Social interaction	Communifying Braving Bridging Teaming
Facilitate Active engagement	Animating Authenticating Linking Teching
Design for Iteration	Exploring Prototyping Revisiting Compassing

For the fashion industry to change, we need to engage with those individuals at the chalk face of fashion education. By teaching with Case Studies on sustainable fashion and beauty pioneers e.g. Patagonia, Stella McCartney and Aesop, ‘taking a deep dive into sustainability... we can help fashion students understand how all the elements of the fashion business model and supply chain affect people and planet’ (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2021). Case Study Teaching is one of the purposeful pedagogies highlighted in the PRME i5 Playbook as an Active Signature Move: *Authenticating*, for its capacity to ‘expose students to real-world issues and engage them in experiences that are authentic to their current and future realities’ (UNPRME, 2023:70). Bloomsbury Fashion Business Cases (BFBC) was the first collection of business case studies specifically developed for fashion education. It is an innovative digital resource developed to facilitate student thinking and decision-making capabilities like a fashion industry professional. BFBC helps teachers and students engage with contemporary global issues faced by the fashion industry including sustainable fashion and responsible fashion business. BFBC cases are written by fashion academics, many of whom have industry experience, acknowledging that the types of decisions fashion industry professionals are making at any level or area of the industry, rarely have a single correct answer (Burns, 2021). When faced with a blank page, many would-be Case Study authors feel overwhelmed by the challenge of bringing environmental and ethical challenges to life. In order to be effective as a learning tool, case studies should focus on a relevant business problem or issue, presented in an unbiased manner. Students can then be directed to analyze the evidence presented in the case, to weigh up a range of solutions, and provide their recommendations on addressing the problem or issue. (BFBC, n.d.).

Focusing on developing sustainability literacies through purposeful teaching, learning and assessment (Stibbe & Luna, 2009), the highly interactive workshop will immerse participants in a live case-teaching session which includes a world-first opportunity to experience the Lego® Serious Play® method (Roos and Victor, 2018) specifically adapted for sustainability. By building models with LEGO® bricks - thinking-through-making – we can facilitate new ways of learning (Gauntlett, 2018; Woodward, 2020). As such, it is an ideal method to generate innovative teaching Case concepts and delivery modes.

WORKSHOP FORMAT

The Workshop is delivered by two experienced facilitators as co-leads. Both are also published Case Study Authors and Editors. The latest research and practice on Education for Sustainable Development will be introduced through a short presentation, followed by an

overview of the BFBC platform and discussion of what makes a good Teaching Case. Participants have the opportunity to take part in a lively Case-on-a page activity immersing them into the experience from the student perspective. This will be followed by an experiential guided Lego® Serious Play® Activity resulting in a plan for a sustainable fashion case study to suit the educators' professional discipline, experience and context. The ideal layout for the Workshop is cabaret style with access to a digital screen.

Approximate timings

10 minutes: Introductions to the workshop facilitators

20 minutes

- Transformative Sustainability Learning (TSL) and PRME Impactful Five (i5)
- Introduction to BFBC platform: What is a teaching case study?

20 minutes

- Case-on-a-page Activity: Introducing some of our most popular sustainable fashion-related cases (including Patagonia and Stella McCartney).

20 minutes

- Creative facilitation: Introduction to Lego® Serious Play®
- Writing a case study: Developing impactful business questions.

30 minutes

- Activity: Brainstorm on case identification using Lego® Serious Play® modelling.

10 minutes: Sharing case ideas and topics

10 minutes: Wrap-up, the BFBC commissioning process and writing templates, Q&A.

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