

Raising awareness on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through Lego Serious Play (LSP)

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Abstract

In September 2015, world leaders agreed on a new sustainable development agenda based on a set of global goals aimed at eradicating poverty, ensuring planet protection and guaranteeing prosperity for future generations (Stafford-Smith et al., 2017). Since then, the education sector has played a fundamental role, not only raising awareness among young people about the importance of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also promoting innovative ideas around sustainability (Owens, 2017). SDGs implementation needs of business actors rethinking their understanding of economic growth, taking into consideration not only economic aspects but also social and ecological concerns (Crespo et al., 2017). Thus, the traditional paradigm based on continuous economic expansions needs to adopt a triple bottom line perspective (Slaper and Hall, 2011).

In this context, it is remarkable to bring economic and business students closer to the importance of SDGs, involving them in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. For this purpose, a LEGO Serious Play (LSP) workshop is held to envision a more sustainable tomorrow and collectively reflect on the main challenges of our society from the business perspective (Kristiansen and Rasmussen, 2014). LSP is an unconventional methodology based on brick-building and metaphoric storytelling. It involves kinesthetic learning given that participants are asked to build metaphoric structures with Lego bricks that respond to a challenge raised by the instructor. This hands-on methodology is often accompanied by facilitated reflection, becoming a language for emotional content and promoting discussion around complex issues (Peabody and Noyes, 2017).

The workshop started with an introduction to LSP for students to familiarize themselves with its dynamics. Then, a challenge related to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was raised by the instructors who accompanied students through the process of strategic thinking. The last part of the workshop was devoted to sharing ideas and reflections among participants, both regarding the designed prototypes and the potential of LSP for developing new ideas. This last phase was developed firstly within the different work groups and, after, with the broader group so that participants could receive the feedback of their fellows before presenting the prototypes to all participants.

To analyze the results of this innovative education project, we conducted a survey among participants about LSP methodology, workshop dynamics and skills acquisition using a Likert scale. The results show how LSP is especially suitable to foster ideation around SDGs since it raises awareness and understanding about how these goals might be integrated into daily business initiatives. It also allows participants to significantly improve their communication and problem-solving skills. This suggests LSP methodology is suitable in higher education contexts as it allows students to reflect on complex issues through an ideation process where kinesthetic learning plays a crucial role. LSP speeds up the process of finding sustainable solutions and allows unconscious ideas to take shape in 3D. It also helps students to foster self-confidence as well as network with other students, given its socializing nature. All in all, students develop key skills for their professional development.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Lego Serious Play (LSP), gamification.

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