

Sustainability Mindset Toolkit –e Career storytelling for the Sustainable Development Goals (QAA 1,2,4) #ImpactFund

Group Size

Small group (teams of 4-6), Large Group

Learning Environment

Carousel Tables (small working group)

QAA Enterprise Theme(s)

1Creativity and Innovation 2Opportunity recognition, creation and evaluation 4Implementation of ideas through leadership and management

Aim:

To develop your own career story, rooted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Objectives:

- Apply the SOAR employability framework to personal careers in the context of the SDGs
- Deepen self-awareness through connecting SDG interest(s) to Sustainability Competencies and the Sustainability Mindset Principles

Develop a personal career narrative (story) based on the above

Overview:

This session is designed to blend employability-related aspirations with sustainability. It is focused on developing a personal narrative (story telling) that leverages students' interest, passion, and knowledge about (and for) sustainability. This is structured around the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which encompass environmental, societal, and financial equity interests and concerns. The activities are presented through a PowerPoint with an accompanying worksheet that students can complete during the session (noted in the slides as SB1 etc. to indicate this is a Story Board activity). Much of the session develops 'self-awareness' (as part of the Sustainability Mindset Principle under 'Emotional Intelligence'), and it also explicitly addresses the Sustainability Mindset Principles as a tool that can be used on when responding to job descriptions. For students seeking to a start up enterprise, or in situations where job applications/interviews are not applicable, the activities can be flexed towards a 'business pitch' when seeking investment and the like.

Sustainability Mindset Principal Themes addressed:

SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

Both-And Thinking

ECO LITERACY -

My Contribution

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Reflection

Self-awareness

SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

Purpose

Enterprise Educator Framework addressed:

Developing Skills and Competencies associated with being Enterprising.

Activity:

Further instructional guidance is also provided in the 'notes' section below each slide

S1 Introduce the overall purpose of the session (5 mins)

Present the IKIGAI concept to frame the session's intentions to help students reflect on what they love, identify what they are good at and what they can be paid for and how this can help work towards a more just, equitable and sustainable world.

S2 Introduce the session aim, objectives and structure (2 mins)

Introduce the focus on developing a career story to use in application processes and pitches, structured around the global Sustainable Development Goals. The session follows the SOAR framework for employability to help to do this and will involve a number of activities such as sustainability competencies and Sustainability Mindset Principles to help in constructing a career narrative (story).

S3 Definitions of sustainability (5 mins)

This sets out there are multiple views of sustainability from diverse viewpoints. This session sees the following interpretation of what sustainability means in the world of work today. Sustainability is more than 'green' or environmental skills, ESG reporting or technological development. It is wholly relevant to *all* workplaces. Information is then provided on the current growth in 'green jobs' that students can leverage in their career. *[Educators may wish to adapt with localised/programme specific job market information]*

S4 Opportunities for finding a job with personal impact (3 mins)

Ask students what kind of organisation they wish to work for and if it is important that the organisation is well-regarded for sustainability practices. This matrix illustrates that in the bottom right-hand corner is a space where organizations may be less currently engaged with sustainability, thereby offering a potential opportunity for personal impact to introduce and create ripples of change. In the top right-hand corner, organizations might be highly engaged in sustainability, potentially offering lots of opportunities but also making it more competitive. Positions on the left are to be avoided – either by helping the organization to get involved (bottom left), or finding opportunities to get involved with what is happening (top left)

S5 A student example profile (3 mins)

Ask students if they have a LinkedIn profile, and if they have developed the 'about' profile section. Outline that

this session is to support students to create their own sustainability changemaker story. Here is one example - Adam Lister's changemaker story from pre and post graduation. It illustrates clear strengths, interests and aspirations that can shape a powerful employability story. *[Educators may wish to upload a LinkedIn profile from their own university students]*

S6 Scripting a storyline (2 mins)

Ask students to think about their favourite film/book/play and what they like about the story. Briefly outline the stages of a compelling plot, using the stepped tiles, and link this to developing a convincing employment narrative that moves towards empowered, meaningful responses to the world's sustainability challenges.

S7 Introducing the SDGs (5 mins)

Ask students some basic questions about the SDGs to gauge existing knowledge. Introduce the wedding cake model of the SDGs, in the context of stirring early thoughts on which layer triggers/interests students most – biosphere, society or economy.

[the link on the slide provides full information on this model for educators to refer to]

S8 The SDG call to adventure (20 mins)

Through paired/small group discussion, invite students to select one SDG that resonates with them and note it on the story worksheet as per the prompts for SB1. Students then reflect on *why* they chose it, prompting them to think about related skills, interest and experiences (*SB2). After they have discussed, they should write some brief notes in the storyboard worksheet document. *[This is a particularly important stage,*

as it sets students up for the rest of the session. It should be stressed that students do not need technical knowledge or deep understanding of the SDG, just to notice what they are drawn to and why. Educators can indicate the full listing of the SDGs that are included at the end of the storyboard worksheet]

S9 Meeting the mentor; Introducing the UNESCO sustainability competencies (5 mins)

Explain that as well as recognising and gaining knowledge about the key issues encompassed by the SDGs, we also need to respond to their call. This means not only gaining knowledge but also developing the skills, values and attributes needed to address them. Core sustainability competencies, that employers actively seek, are outlined in the 8 UNESCO competencies (2017) model and so can serve as a guidance tool – like a mentor. *[The competencies can be briefly introduced (see the full listing at the bottom of the storyboard worksheet)]*

S10 Raising self-awareness of sustainability competencies (3 mins)

Explain that the 8 competencies are categorised into 3 groups (ways of thinking, practising and being). One of the competencies from each group is presented here, and students can be advised that the full listing can be seen at the end of the worksheet.

Before they choose which competency to work on for the activity, go through the example on the next slide.

S11 An example of how to write the competency (7 mins)

This example draws on 'systems thinking' competency. Encourage students to think about specific examples from their experience, as required in competency-based interviews. They might need help with this and reminding that every experience counts, even if it appears insignificant to them personally! Students should

discuss in pairs/small groups and then make notes in the worksheet. It might be helpful to elicit one example from a student to help illustrate how to approach it to others.

S12 Exploring opportunities for volunteering and student societies (10 mins)

Invite students to 'cross the threshold' and take a leap into action to build their employability potential. Stress how valuable this experience can be in demonstrating purpose and drive and how seizing these opportunities can help them gain valuable experience and stand out from the crowd. They can look for new opportunities relevant to their chosen SDG. *[Educators can replace the links so as to feature volunteering and/or society opportunities at the relevant university and/or local community]. If they have internet access, students can explore these in class and share ideas, including talking about what they are currently involved in].*

S13 The Sustainability Mindset Principles (SMPs) (5 mins)

'Cross the threshold' into trying out new ways of responding to job role specifications. Introduce the SMP's; there are 4 dimensions Isabel Rimanoczy identified through researching leaders and CEOs that were sustainability champions in their fields. Building on SDG knowledge and sustainability competencies, the SMPs explore ways of thinking, being and behaving for the greater good. Much of this is not always visible and requires reflection on the values, norms and behaviours that drive 'unsustainability'. *[See the Power Point slide notes and information at the bottom of the worksheet for an overview of the principles]*

S14 Use the SMPs to inform a job role 'fit' (10 mins)

Share this example of a management graduate scheme application that can illustrate how the SMPs can be used to develop the applicant's response. The examples given provide a strong rationale for the candidate's 'fit' for the job and will help them stand out from the crowd. On the worksheet, students can practise developing their own written response to the job criteria, drawing on the SMP of choice. *[Educators may wish to replace with a job role profile of choice]*

S15 SOARing to IKIGAI (3 mins)

Review the stages of the SOAR model outlined in storytelling for the SDGs so far, using the steps outlined in the slide. With 80, 000 hours in the average career span - there is enormous potential for the 'world of work' to create a positive and impactful career story (seizing the treasure) and opportunity to meaningfully respond to the sustainability challenges the world faces - (the 'return' stage of the plot).

Stress here that Results are ongoing, iterative and lifelong - that they need to be consciously and intentionally refreshed and reframed as a career unfolds in response to a changing world.

S16 Interview: question practice (30 mins)

This activity presents typical interview questions that students can respond to referencing the SDGs, Competencies and Sustainability Mindset skills they have identified in their SDG storyline earlier.

Allow time to reflect on each of the stages of the STAR framework outlined before 'interviewing a partner' stage. This works well if students can stand up and mingle around the room, talking to differing partners and refining their story on each articulation. The final 5 minutes can be used for a whole group feedback on what they felt in talking and listening to each other

S17 SDGs in the world of work (1 min)

Illustrate that through looking out for the SDGs that organisations explicitly (or perhaps without knowing)

address, students can match individual values with organisational values. Recommend students look out for how organisations tell their SDG stories.

S18 Session summary (1 min)

Summarise the key elements of the session framed around IKIGAI & The SOAR framework. Signpost the resource sheet link to helpful job site websites and books. Stress this is the first iteration of a sustainability focused story, that will be revised, refreshed and rewritten multiple times throughout their working careers. invite them to revisit and reflect the SDGs, the competencies and the SMP in their own time and to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to accompany them on their career journey.

Skill Development:

UNESCO Sustainability competencies covered using this tool.

Cognitive/ Thinking competency

- **Systems thinking competency:** the ability to recognize and understand relationships, to analyse complex systems, to perceive the ways in which systems are embedded within different domains and different scales, and to deal with uncertainty.
- **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.

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.

Resources:

Powerpoint slides with all required resource links included on the slides: [Career story telling for the SDGs - PowerPoint Resource.pptx](#), to be used alongside [storyboard worksheet](#)

References:

Rimanoczy, I. (2021), The Sustainability Mindset: A Guide to Developing a Mindset for a Better World, Routledge, New York, NY.

For more information/testimonies on this masterclass resource see [here](#)

About the Author

This guide was produced by Dr Karen Cripps (Senior Lecturer in Responsible Management and Leadership Oxford Brookes University Business School). If you would like to contact the author, please use this email address:-

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