TEACHING FORMATS

FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

TOPICS: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, SYSTEMS THINKING, FUTURES/UTOPIA

Pilot @ CBS International Business School, September-December, 2021

CBS
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SCHOOL

COURSE INFO IN SHORT

Level of studies: Master

Group size: 15-20 students

Course duration: 7 weeks (2x90mins per week)

Credits: 6

Workload: 21h; Self-study: 54h

Learning environment: Hybrid

INTRODUCTION

- unique combination of the discipline of **futures studies** and its **application to sustainability/sustainable management** within the broader field of management education
- journey of the different **future workshop** ("Zukunftswerkstatt" in German; Jungk & Müllert, 1997) phases (**preparation, critique, visioning, and implementation phase**)
- students **create and develop their own narrative/story by experiencing selected exercises** reaching from trends analysis, foresight, and scenario planning to backcasting and prototyping etc.
- Two **additional workshop sessions**: improv (theatre) and LEGO® Serious Play®

SDGs

To what SDGs does the course link to?

SDG 1-17:
To envision their future scenarios, students were asked to choose relevant SDGs matching their particular sectors/industries

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning objective dimension (UNESCO, 2017)	Operationalisation from competency framework of of Rieckmann (2018)	Competency referred to
Cognitive	Understanding current social, environmental, and economic developments and its interlinkages	Systems thinking competency
	Understanding the connection between sustainable development, SDGs, and business	Systems thinking competency
	Evaluating business sectors in regard to current global challenges	Strategic competency
	Familiarising oneself with the field of scenario development and future studies	Anticipatory competency
	Developing scenarios/visions of desirable and/or potential futures, evaluating, and using them in strategic decision making	Anticipatory competency
Socio-emotional	Reflecting on one's learning experience and the creative and strategic solution development process of the group/class	Self-awareness competency
	Increasing collaboration skills through group work	Collaboration competency
	Fostering futures literacy ("futures literacy empowers the imagination, enhances our ability to prepare, recover and invent as changes occur" (UNESCO, 2021))	Anticipatory competency
Behavioural	Applying creativity techniques for brainstorming and ideation/prototyping	Integrated problem-solving competency
	Fostering communication skills through group work, presentations, and reflective journal writing	Collaboration competency/Critical thinking competency

COURSE OUTLINE IN SHORT

Phase	Week	Session focus/content
Preparation phase	Week 1	Course introduction, Intro to future studies, Administrative details, Team formation
Critique phase	Week 2	Grand challenges, VUCA/BANI world, wicked problems, megatrends, systems thinking, SDGs, systems mapping, utopias
Visioning phase	Week 3	Express and explore your utopia through creative means (improv theatre workshop with trainer)
	Week 4	Businesses and the future, Utopias and future(s) research, scenario development, foresight, gamification
Implementation phase	Week 5	Utopias and transformation, transformation theories, path congruence, extrapolation, retropolation, backcasting, prototyping
	Week 6	Prototyping your scenario/solution with Lego® Serious Play® (LSP workshop with external facilitator)
	Week 7	*Debrief and Final Presentations*

Note: Sessions take place bi-weekly (2x90mins); homework/reflective journaling questions are handed out after each week

TEACHING APPROACHES & METHODS

- **Active learning, Experiential learning, and Collaborative learning** were achieved by using the future workshop methodology
  - Ensured through group settings, joint exercises, weekly reading assignments, and a reflective journal
  - To introduce the basic tenets of the course and respective exercises, **brief lecture-based learning elements** are used in addition (max. 15min.)
  - two **workshops**: LEGO® Serious Play® and improv theatre, during which students could **physically engage** and elaborate on their sector visions and scenarios

TEACHING APPROACHES & METHODS

- **Future workshop** phases helped to facilitate **group discussion** and **vision-building**:
  - e.g., trends analyses/megatrend map, foresight approaches, can be used during the critique phase to familiarize oneself with the current status quo/near future.
  - Visioning phase introduces students to scenario development exercises, causal layered analysis, utopian/dystopian storytelling, science-fiction thinking (e.g., solarpunk), forecasting etc.

- Very active in-class working phases were paired with **individual self-reflection tasks/journaling exercises** (both in class, but mostly outside of class as homework assignment)

SELECTED EXERCISES

- **Exploring Mega Trends**
  - This exercise can be used during the critique phase and the main goal of the exercise is to familiarise oneself with current trends/risks and applying them to a respective business sector.
- **Systems Mapping – Stakeholder Mapping**
  - This exercise can be used during the critique phase (or implementation phase) and the main goal of the exercise is to understand which stakeholders are relevant.
  - Stakeholders are ranked/assessed according to values, loyalties, and tension/losses
- **Scenario Development (Four Scenarios)**
  - This exercise can be used during the visioning phase and the main goal of the exercise is to develop four scenarios and discussing respective (un)desirable futures.
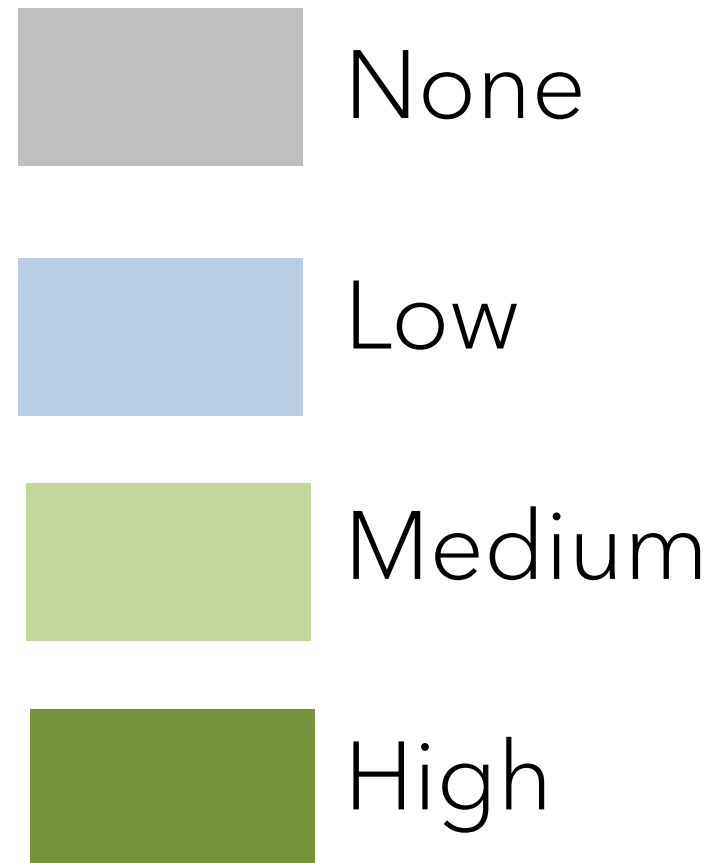
SELECTED EXERCISES

- **Futures Wheel**
  - This exercise can be used during the implementation phase and the main goal of the exercise is to explore some "what if" scenarios (and their consequences) which match to respective sectors
- **Backcasting**
  - This exercise can be used during the implementation phase and the main goal of the exercise is to identify steps to realise your future.
  - Backcasting is a method for planning the actions necessary to reach desired future goals. This method is often applied in a workshop format with stakeholders participating

Note: These five exercises present only a small selection – in case you are interested in receiving further material, please send an email to Marina: marina.schmitz@iedc.si

IMPACT

None

Low

Medium

High

Degree of student participation / activeness

Degree of inter-/transdisciplinarity

Degree of nature-related experiences

Degree of student collaboration / group work

Degree of student (self-) reflection

Degree of stakeholder integration
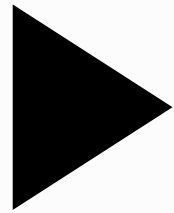
Degree of student emotional involvement

Degree of experience of real-life situations

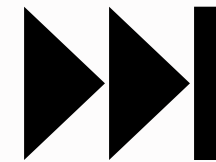Degree of integration between theory and practice

ASSESSMENT

- The course assessment is divided into a **media output (70%, group grade)** and a **reflective journal (30%, individual grade)**

- Students are invited to ***choose one of the following media formats*** to present their final vision/future for their chosen sector:
  - Video (8-10 minutes)
  - Podcast (25-30 minutes)
  - Blog (8-10 content elements, approx. length of 3,000 words per group member)

- Additionally, after each session, students will receive 1-3 guiding questions which will compose their reflective journal. They are asked to write 1-2 pages after each session, a total of min. 3000 words.

RESULTS & FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

▶

- More time for / less exercises
- LSP workshop after the critique phase/earlier
- Readings fit the overall scope of the course topic but sometimes difficult to connect to individual sessions
- More questions about the readings for the reflective journal
- More details about the change models

▶▶

- Nice workshops
- Workshops, readings, reflective journal, in-class exercises
- Miro board, surveys, engaging the class
- Indipendent student work during the semester
- Creative course work
- Focus on teamwork
- Great mix of methods
- Being able to choose an industry to work on

"It was great to have had the opportunity to move around in class during the improv workshop and not just sit on your chair and hide behind a laptop"

"We wanted to say thank you for the great course! It was really very interesting, interactive and a lot of fun. I have not been so attentive in a course for a long time and especially the workshops were a highlight. Thank you very much :) "

- LSP in online format