Ducks, elephants and sharks: Using LEGO® Serious Play® to surface the 'hidden curriculum' of *equality, diversity and inclusion*

Abstract

Despite widespread agreement on the importance of preparing management students for working in diverse organizations there is evidence (Perriton, Elliott and Humbert 2021; Perriton and Elliot 2018) that this is often ignored or marginalised in formal curricula. Our article draws on the concept of the hidden curriculum to present the results of a project in which business school academics and support staff explored the 'unthought knowns' (Bollas 2017: xix) that influence how equality, diversity and inclusion are, or are not, engaged with in the classroom. Our data were generated during workshops using the LEGO® Serious Play® methodology in which participants built LEGO® models to develop their own understandings of equality, diversity and inclusion. The models, and the discussions about them, uncovered complexities and contradictions inherent within these topics, alongside significant levels of anxiety and fear. Our study makes two contributions; firstly through the animal metaphors that featured in the models, we identify some of the anxieties that are generated by these topics which are likely to influence the hidden curriculum. Secondly, our innovative use of LEGO® Serious Play® contains important implications about the actual mechanism through which such insights can be 'surfaced' so that they become available for reflection and thought.

Keywords: hidden curriculum, equality diversity and inclusion, higher education, LEGO® Serious Play® methodology

Introduction

The project we discuss in this article was inspired by the realisation that although there has been much discussion about the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion in management education, these topics are still not well represented in business schools' curricula. Perriton and Elliott's research, presented to the Chartered Association of Business Schools in 2018, found that 'only 15% of programmes explicitly mentioned diversity in their publicly accessible module descriptions, an even smaller percentage of UG (8.5%) and PGT (6.7%) programmes included core diversity modules, and only a *single module* in the 2,735 programmes audited made mention of disability issues' (Perriton and Elliott, 2018: np, emphasis in the original). Perriton, Elliott and Humbert's article (2021) confirmed that these topics remain peripheral, suggesting that students are leaving university without the necessary skills and understanding to perform management roles that challenge, rather than reinforce exclusionary stereotypes.

UK higher education institutions (HEIs) are regulated by the Department of Education and the Office for Students while quality issues are managed through the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. All three organisations have clear policies for complying with the 2010 Equality Act and increasing access and participation in higher education. Furthermore, there are many initiatives around inclusive learning (British Academy of Management) charters and quality standards (Advance HE) and policy development (Chartered Association of Business Schools) that demonstrate the high level of attention these issues are attracting. Specific guidance on curriculum planning is, however, left to the

individual HEIs as long as it meets the appropriate quality indicators and knowledge thresholds for each of the different levels of undergraduate and postgraduate education.

While the Perriton et al (2021) and Perriton and Elliot (2018) research focused exclusively on module content for our purposes we have extended our boundaries more widely, beyond the 'overt' curriculum (Johnson 2020), and into influences that may be covert and unacknowledged. The overt curriculum includes not only the content of teaching sessions but also those activities that are developed to support the students' learning, such as decisions about the structures and processes of exercises and assessments and various classroom management strategies (Johnson, 2020). Critical analyses of textbooks (such as Ehrensal, 2001; Kim, Cameron, Ireland, Lussier, Randolph and Robbins, 2003; Mir, 2003) conclude that curriculum is never value-neutral but it is imbued with beliefs, assumptions and values, both overt and covert.

The concept of the 'hidden curriculum' as formulated by Jackson in 1970 (cited in Margolis, Soldatenko, Acker and Gair, 2001) can help us explore the covert aspects of management education. Our study draws on Warren, Mitten, D'Amore and Lotz's (2018) definition of the hidden curriculum as 'the unspoken or implicit messages, beliefs, values, and assumptions in the educational setting, including the unstated promotion and enforcement of certain behavioural patterns and professional standards […] implied through teacher and student actions and inactions, unwritten rules, and what is and *is not* talked about' (Warren et al, 2018: 141). Thus, the hidden curriculum encompasses not only the unspoken narratives, behavioural patterns and impressions but also physical spaces (Baykut, Erbil, Ozbilgin, Kamasak and Bağlama, 2022), institutional routines (Apple, 2004) and structural arrangements within the learning environment (Orón Semper, Víctor and Blasco, 2018). Our

focus here is on the ways in which the overt curricula are reinforced or contradicted by the hidden curricula; in our case, by omission of equality, diversity and inclusion.

In the literature there is a debate regarding the extent to which such 'hidden', covert messages are intentional and controlled (consciously or not) by teachers, or are co-created by students, support staff and other people involved, and in constant flux (Margolis et al, 2001; Gair and Mullins, 2001**)** 'beyond the teachers' or the students' awareness' (Warren et al, 2018: 142). In Jandric and Loretto's (2021) study of spatial meanings in business schools, meanings were *intentionally* manifested through conversations between managers and architects (although interestingly, these meanings were understood and interpreted quite differently by the students). Costello's (2001) study compared two different buildings on the same campus – one housing the law school and the other, the social work department. They uncovered a complex interplay of influences and intentions which included changing notions about the relative values of the different subjects, manifested itself in the treatment the buildings received by students, staff, maintenance departments, and donors (the latter through their levels of support). Thus the 'hidden curriculum' is not *necessarily* hidden or at least not to everyone; sometimes it may be taken for granted or may be hidden for some stakeholders but not for others (Orón Semper et al., 2018). Furthermore, Costello's study suggests that the intentions embedded in spatial expressions lead to multiple, and shifting forms of agency and intentionality and may be located in the nexus between the overt and the hidden, with intentionality partially, or even wholly unacknowledged.

Since intentionality is a complex phenomenon, especially in emotionally charged areas such as equality diversity and inclusion, we adopted the LEGO® Serious Play® (hereinafter LSP) Methodology to uncover some possible explanations as to *why* lecturers and support staff may be reluctant, or even resistant to incorporating these topics into the overt curriculum.

With the LSP methodology participants are encouraged to develop models that can be regarded as three-dimensional metaphors for particular aspects of their lived, organizational experience. The process of creating and reflecting on these models offer participants the opportunity to 'surface' what Bollas (2017) termed the 'unthought knowns' that may influence the participants' hidden curriculum.

We begin by clarifying our core problematic: why we believe the topics of equality, diversity and inclusion are of relevance to all business students, regardless of their disciplinary dispositions and specialist interests and yet they are neglected in the classroom. We believe that the notion of the hidden curriculum may provide a useful, explanatory resource. We then describe our research design, using LSP methodology to offer business academics and support staff the opportunity to surface their own understandings of the challenges and barriers they experience when engaging with equality, diversity, and inclusion. We present our findings through an analysis of three metaphors that featured in the research: the duck, the elephant and the shark. In the discussion, we offer some suggestions as to why the unthought knowns these metaphors represent may lead to these important topics being ignored, or glossed over in the curricula of business schools.

Equality, diversity and inclusion and their importance in management curriculum

Equality, diversity and inclusion represent different approaches to address the discrimination(s) and inequalities experienced by people who are systemically marginalised in society due to their membership in certain identity groups and categories such as race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, class and age. These approaches are sometimes referred to singly or in combination (diversity *and* equality, diversity *and* inclusion, etc) but

increasingly by the shorthand of 'EDI' in the UK, or 'DEI' in the US. These semantic differences highlight significant confusion what is actually being meant/ intended by different speakers and writers. Ahmed (2008) suggests that while some people recognise the distinctions between these concepts others see them as synonymous, with one or other more 'fashionable' at any given time.

We hold that the three concepts are quite distinct. The equality paradigm has its roots in the social justice movements and the struggles for rights and recognition that emerged in the West during the late 1960s - early 70s. Much of this work is focused on achieving change through legislation and is founded on the assumption that equality can be achieved through identifying and challenging practices that discriminate against people, moving towards the achievement of equality of opportunity and outcome (Tomllinson and Schwabenland 2010; Liff 1997). In contrast, the diversity paradigm has roots that are more recent as it emerges alongside the neo-liberal consensus of the 1990s, promoting the idea that recognising and celebrating differences will lead to reducing inequality, and delivering a competitive advantage. Diversity strategies focus more on practices than policies (Özbilgin, Tati, Ipek and Sameer, 2014; Kandola and Fullerton, 2003). 'Inclusion' is the newest formulation and has focused more on 'soft' processes and organizational cultures (Oswick and Noon, 2014).

Within higher education institutions policies and practice documents also reflect differing approaches to problem formulations, with some concentrating on widening access (inclusivity), improving attainments (equality) and HEIs as employers (staff HR policies). Prescriptions on curriculum development tend to focus on the need to foster an awareness of ethical practice and of wider, societal implications (QAA 2015). The FHEQ Benchmark Standards regulating management curriculum development can be vague too, encouraging

postgraduate level students to 'behave ethically and with integrity and manage with a strong sense of social responsibility' (SEEC, 2021:13) and to develop the 'soft skills [of] understanding the needs of others and empathy towards them; sensitivity to diversity in people and in different situations' (SEEC, 2021: 11). Meanwhile, the skills of working productively with colleagues from different communities, cultures and life experiences are highly valued by employers' organizations. For example, the World Economic Forum lists 'cultural and civic literacy', 'collaboration' and 'social and cultural awareness' among the core skills that are vital for the 21st century (UCAS nd: 2).

However defined, Sanyal, Wilson, Sweeney, Smith Rachele, Kaur and Yates state that 'diversity is *everyone's* business' (2015: 21: our emphasis) because it has impact on multiple organisational dimensions such as external employment-related legislation, as well as internal policies. Any employee who transgresses these requirements is potentially bringing their organisation into disrepute. Sanctions may differ, not only across countries but also in terms of how transgressions are presented in the media and the extent to which they can lead to reputational damage if a company is, for example, found to have behaved in a racist or homophobic way. However, knowledge of the legislation and the skills to work within it, are, arguably, essential for all employees.

In the longer term, the challenge would be in equipping students to understand the need for, and participate in, social change in the workplace. Yet Perriton et al claim that 'the visible curriculum of management to prospective students does nothing to challenge the expectation that management is male, white and neurotypical' (2021:10). In contrast, many students themselves are likely to come from diverse backgrounds and experiences and if they do not believe the curriculum, overt or hidden, speaks to them they may feel alienated and

disengaged. Writing specifically about trans and non-binary students, McKendry and McKenna (2020) write that ‘trans students were very unlikely to see themselves, trans experiences and history reflected in their studies’ (p.104) and this point is surely equally applicable to students from other minority groups. If these topics are *not* addressed, or are addressed poorly, the danger highlighted by Perriton et al (2021) and McKendry and McKenna (2020) is that systemic patterns of discrimination are reinforced, rather than challenged. We are, of course, not implying that equality, diversity and inclusion are *only* relevant to management students; all students would benefit, in their future roles as employees and potential change agents.

The hidden curriculum of equality, diversity and inclusion

Despite considerable agreement on the importance of these topics and a plethora of policy initiatives, evidence provided by Perriton and Elliot (2018) and Perriton et al (2021) revealed that 60% of the courses they surveyed did not cover equality, diversity and inclusion at all. In 2021, a small scale, internal survey carried out by a London-based university business school, asked module leaders to say the extent to which they covered equality, diversity and sustainability in their curricula (private correspondence with the authors). The response rate was 18%. Obviously, we cannot conclude that the 82% who did not respond were *not* including these topics in their teaching, but the low response suggests either lack of interest or evasive behaviour. The respondents’ data indicated that most of the modules that do touch on this agenda aim to raise students’ awareness; fewer modules are sharing actual solutions or tools to address equality, diversity, inclusion and sustainability challenges.

Furthermore, even when there are attempts to engage in these topics, it is important to distinguish between *what* is taught and *how* it is taught, and the risks when these conflict. Amoroso, Lloyd and Hoobler's (2010) use the phrase 'diversity education dilemma' to show that the teacher who engages directly in 'discussions of the various organizational problems related to racism, sexism, and other "isms" can inadvertently reinforce status differences among students' (p. 796).

One way this can happen is through tokenism; Amoroso et al (2010) give the example of 'a discussion on affirmative action, [where] a student may be asked explicitly or implicitly to explain the African American perspective' (p.801) which risks inadvertent stereotyping, as well as reinforcing the unrealistic expectation that one student can speak eloquently on behalf not only of their own experiences, but of the ways those experiences are relevant to others. Even if this is meant to validate that student's perspective, it may increase any lack of confidence and confirm their potentially marginalised position within the student group.

Another aspect of tokenism comes from Killick's (2016) work identifying instances where the teachers' behaviour may, directly or indirectly, contradict the values that they are promoting in their lectures. Alexander describes an experience as an MBA student in an accounting class in 2001 where the lecturer dedicated a whole session on business ethics, while, in other sessions, he took great relish in explaining how corporations can use accounting frameworks to minimise government taxes, continuously assuring the class that it was all very legal. That contradiction served to undermine the ethics session; the hidden curriculum was that in accounting, what was important was about behaving legally, not ethically.

Another example is that of teamwork, where there is an overt learning aim to develop skills of working in multi-cultural teams. If the facilitators do not consider how to supported this, they may inadvertently undermine this overt aim (Killick, 2016). Self-selected teams are usually monocultural, as students opt for teammates from the same social, cultural, ethnic background or similar academic competency. In contrast, when groups are formed by academics the students are more likely to work with unfamiliar peers. It is this exposure to others that has the potential to make multicultural teamwork such a powerful learning experience (Kofinas and Tsay, 2021). However, as Killick (2016) and Amoroso et al (2010) highlight, there are a number of conditions that have to be met in order to maximise the benefits of such an intercultural experience and enable a learning opportunity that enhances students' awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion.

These conflicts between what is taught and how it is taught provide one way of understanding some of the difficulties educators face in tackling these topics. But the existence of these challenges does not entirely explain why so many academics seem to be avoiding them altogether. The paradox here is that while all policies and stakeholders involved pay explicit attention to the topics of equality diversity inclusion, this does not translate to the curriculum and practices in the classroom. Thus, our desire to explore why this hidden curriculum persists, despite the imperatives to engage in EDI-related issues.

There are explanations suggested in the literature. Critical theorists have often pointed out the complexities and contradictions in the 'EDI' project (sfe Ahonen, Tienan, Meriläinen and Pullen, 2013). Schwabenland and Tomlinson's (2015) work demonstrated this complexity when one of their respondents said 'I'm not actually sure what equality and diversity should look like for our organization [but] I'm aware we are not doing enough in that area' (p.1913), suggesting that equality and diversity are hard to define (while also being very desirable).

Commenting specifically on diversity, Christensen and Muhr (2018) suggest that it may be an empty signifier. It can mean anything – and therefore, nothing. 'The concept of diversity empties of signifiers, but remains imagined and desired as if it did contain signifiers' (p. 128).

Despite the eliding of equality, diversity and inclusion into one signifier, 'EDI', as previously discussed, these represent different approaches to addressing inequalities, along a continuum proposed by Liff (1997) of ignoring, eradicating, accepting or valuing diversity. Although these concepts overlap to some degree, and for many practitioners they are interchangeable (Ahmed 2012), there are contradictions between these different approaches.

For managers (and management students) these ambiguities are most clearly expressed in the key question posited by Edwards in 1987: 'which of a multitude of differences between people justify us in treating them differently and which similarities justify similar treatment?' (p.45). If we look for answers in the new 'professions map' (2020) recently produced by the UK based Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (the organization that oversees professional standards in human resource management) we see these ambiguities clearly illustrated. 'Working inclusively' is listed as one of the core behaviours that all HRM professionals should demonstrate with the suggestion 'Get to know people as individuals so you can work together more effectively'. Rather confusingly, 'diversity and inclusion' is only listed as a topic of 'specialist knowledge'. Equality does not appear in the mapping document, although 'fairness' does. For 'valuing people' core behaviours are to 'Treat people fairly and considerately in your work' and 'Enable others to develop skills and capabilities to be their best at work' (supported by a case study with an illustration of three, happy, engaged White men) (CIPD 2020). The implication of these prescriptions is that implementing them is unproblematic.

Given these complexities, academics without a specialist understanding in these topics may choose not to engage with them at all, as there is a considerable time investment needed to get a grasp of these issues. The students in Høgdahl, Rasche, Schoeneborn and Scotti's (2021) case study on the teaching of corporate social responsibility (a different concept but which attracts similar debates about how it should be covered) suggested that teachers might avoid discussing topics when their own understanding was limited. One student commented that academics 'learn all these theories and then they go on and have their Masters and more theories, and then they have their PhD and a project on these theories. And then they teach these theories again. And then you don't get this real life "how-to-be-an- actual-responsible-manager". Because they don't know' (p.183).

The notion of a 'hidden' curriculum has been helpful in shining a light on how the overt curriculum can be supported or undermined by the ways in which it is created and delivered (Koutsouris, Mountford-Zimdars and Dingwall, 2021; Blasco, 2012; Ehrensal, 2001). Impactful implications of the hidden curriculum for equality, diversity and inclusion in an HEI context, can be located where the curriculum reinforces, rather than challenges systemic discrimination whether it is about trans and non-binary people (McKendry and McKenna, 2020), people with autism (Hughes, 2020), experiences of being in care (Jones-Devitt, Pickering, Austen, and Donnelly, 2020) and working-class students (Speirs, 2020). The issues covered include the absence of representation (McKentry and McKenna, 2020) and the ways in which collaborative learning strategies can reinforce a deficit model of disability (Hughes, 2020) and privilege (Speirs, 2020).

The most insidious way the hidden curriculum can affect the overt curriculum is via the absence of certain ideas, concepts and behaviours. Orwell (1949/1990) argued that if there are no language or words to express a feeling, a concept or an idea then it essentially vanishes

from social interactions. Thus, the absence of conversations and ideas regarding equality, diversity and inclusion in the policies, behaviours, institutional routines, narratives and other aspects of the hidden curriculum, that silence indicates that these concepts are not even considered by the dominant stakeholders in management education. In HEIs the silence (or presence) of equality, diversity and inclusion in the curriculum is heavily dependent on the educator/facilitator (Farmer, Dawes, Hamm, Lee, Mehtaji, Hoffman and Brooks, 2018) and other representatives of the business school including the top management, academic administrators and auxiliary staff. The studies by Perriton and Elliott (2018) and Perriton et al (2021) clearly demonstrate that despite the aforementioned formal policy discourse, the actual inclusion of these topics in curricula is very patchy; in many units and modules they are simply not there and this 'silence' is itself, a message.

Assuming that these outcomes of the hidden curriculum are unintended, we now turn to our second analytic resource, the concept of the 'unthought known which underpins our LSP research design. Our suggestion is that the hidden curriculum is determined (at least to some extent) by motives and beliefs that may not be consciously articulated, and are thus 'unthought' and yet believed to be true, or 'known'. This concept is often credited to the psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas, who wrote that 'although I am working on an idea without knowing exactly what it is that I think, I am engaged in thinking an idea struggling to have me think it' (2018: xix). Bollas's early formulation of the unthought known was focused on his practice with individuals, however, the concept has been developed by organizational consultants such as Lawrence (2000) and Diamond (2008) to explore processes in groups, in which it represents 'knowledge that can rarely be acknowledged by thinking. Yet once it is acknowledged it makes a difference to the life of the organization or the group' (Lawrence, 2000: 12).

Lawrence (2000) suggests that the process of surfacing the unthought known begins not, therefore, with thinking, but with phantasy or symbolic expression, either through art, dreams or, in our case, through play. Play is seen as a potent and powerful way to learn (Bellotti, Kapralos, Lee, Moreno-Ger and Berta, 2013; Dubbels, 2013; Landers and Callan, 2011; Martey, Stromer-Galley, Shaw, McKernan, Saulnier, Mclaren and Kenski, 2016) because it allows participants to utilise visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic skills. 'To say something is known does not mean that it is consciously known or readily accessible to consciousness. Rather, sensations and memories are embodied' (Diamond, 2008: 353). Our research design allowed participants to use play to surface their unthought knowns predominantly through the use of three-dimensional metaphors they constructed using LEGO®.

Research design

We have argued that the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda is complex and imbued with many underlying tensions and paradoxes which make these very sensitive topics to address. Thus, we needed to utilise a methodology that allows participants to engage with this agenda in an exploratory, safe and non-threatening manner. The LEGO® Serious Play® methodology aligned well with our needs. The methodology is well established in a range of fields and disciplines including tourism (Wengel, McIntosh and Cockburn-Wootten, 2021), advertising (Piironen, 2022), and education (Dann, 2018; Wengel et al., 2021; Wheeler, Passmore and Gold, 2020; Zenk, L., Hynek, Schreder, Zenk, A., Pausits and Steiner, 2018). The LSP Methodology was developed by two professors in the early 2000s as a facilitative and exploratory tool that would help their client, the LEGO® Corporation, to develop a strategy that would lead to profitability and innovation (Dann, 2018; Roos, Victor and Statler, 2004).

Conceptual foundations of LEGO® Serious Play® methodology

According to Wengel et al (2021) the LSP's philosophical foundations can be found in four inter-related streams of thought: (i) constructivism/constructionism, (ii) play as a developmental activity with its focus on (iii) metaphors and imagination, and (iv) the theory of flow.

Constructivism/constructionism: Learners are seen as active creators of a knowledge that is derived from interaction with their environment and the actors and objects within it (Peabody and Turesky, 2018). Learning is mediated through the senses which facilitate creativity and imagination (Dann, 2018; Wengel et al., 2021). We see this as connected to the concept of the unthought knowns, the things that a learner may 'know' through their senses and yet may not necessarily find it easy to explicate via language (Lawrence, 2000). Artefacts created through the senses (in this case constructing LEGO® models) are then the result of the interactions between the learner and their environment and they are expressions of learning and meaning (Simon, Neuhofer and Egger, 2020).

Play is the main means through which young children interact with the environment and themselves (McCusker, 2020) and is fundamental to their development. However, play is also important for lifelong learning because it has cognitive, emotional, and social benefits and can also facilitate creativity. Through play, we can potentially surface hitherto unexpressed or unacknowledged ideas (Wheeler et al., 2020), the unthought knowns. LSP is *serious* play because it has serious aims, but it is still play because it relies on the players' imagination: the LEGO® bricks have no inherent meaning, other than those given to them by the participants as they build their conceptual models (Dann, 2018). And it is through the use of the bricks

that the participants enter a positive, creative, psychological state and connect meaningfully with other participants (Wheeler et al., 2020).

Metaphors: The models that participants build are fashioned out of individual LEGO® pieces, some of which may 'just' be building blocks but others are trees, animals, castles etc. Therefore, the models are both built through individual metaphors but also, in their totality, constitute three-dimensional meta-metaphors. Through the participants' accounts and reflections on their models meanings are constructed and reconstructed, in an emergent and playful way (Dann, 2018; McCusker and Swan, 2018). Thus, there is no single interpretation of the models but a multitude of possible interpretations and the creator of each model chooses their own narrative.

Flow: Csikzentmihaly (1975; also Csikszentmihalyi and Csikzentmihalyi, 1990; Wheeler et al., 2020) is credited with being one of the first writers to use the word 'flow' to describe the emotional state we are in when we are intensely engaged in an activity (Wengel et al., 2021). LSP as a methodology relies heavily on participants getting into the flow to reveal their unexpressed knowledge, their unthought knowns. Often the ideas, creative thoughts and reflections that arise during flow may surprise even the creators of the models themselves (Peabody and Turesky, 2018).

LSP, thus facilitates the discussion of complex issues (Dann, 2018) through creating a playful, positive activity that encourages sharing while simultaneously defuses tensions (Wheeler et al., 2020) through two 'safety protocols' (Dann, 2018). The first one is that participants are asked not to offer their own opinions and interpretations of other people's models and stories; any questions posed should be neutral and open-ended (Gkogkidis and Dacre, 2021; McCusker, 2020). This means that participants have a choice about how much to disclose regarding their thoughts and feelings surrounding the models they created. The

second safety protocol is that at any given moment is ok for a participant to say ‘well actually, this is just a brick’ as a response to an inquiry.

Secondly, LSP is appropriate for exploratory research (Gkogkidis and Dacre, 2021), where there are no single ‘correct’ answers. Participants are led by a trained LSP facilitator through a series of activities, each probing increasingly deeper into the subject matter through model building and through participants’ interpretations of their own models which effectively serve as the stimulus for self-exploration and group discussion, enabling knowledge sharing, problem solving, and decision making. The LSP methodology thus deepens the reflective process of participants and supports open dialogue amongst them while removing some of the tensions the participants may feel about the particular topic (Dann, 2018). LSP allows for a multitude of possible answers and rejects none; following the safety protocol above critique of others’ models is discouraged in order to ensure that participants feel safe to discuss their models without fear of other participants’ censorship or “critical” interpretation of the models.

Thirdly, the LSP methodology is philosophically aligned to the concepts of equality, diversity and inclusion. It is a methodology that allows all participants to engage on an equal footing throughout. It democratises the sharing of thoughts and ideas via the stories and models developed, and allows for a safe expression of challenging, difficult thoughts and concepts as participants focus on the models and not the creators (Gkogkidis and Dacre, 2021) as well as its insistence against critique which in LSP methodology is perceived as oblique censorship. Therefore, the LSP methodology is egalitarian, inclusive and allows for diversity (McCusker, 2020).

The workshops:

In delivering LSP the facilitator initially introduces the philosophical foundations of LSP and the rules of engagement. The second step is a warm up exercise to get participants into the mood of play, albeit serious play. In the third phase the facilitator guides the participants through a series of core activities (or challenges) designed around the theme of the event. Time is given at the end for participants to reflect on what they have learned and the key insights they are taking from the process.

Our workshops aimed to uncover the concerns that staff within business schools have when engaging with equality, diversity and inclusion. We designed challenges that would enable participants to engage with these themes and their impact on curriculum, both overt and hidden. The challenges were framed with increasing complexity, starting with participants' individual understandings of impact of these concepts on their own workplace, curriculum, learning and teaching. We used the LSP *Identity and Landscape* Kit and the LSP *Connections* Kits; the former contains a variety of LEGO bricks, figures and other material while the latter contains pieces that can be used as connectors and boundary indicators. Together, the two kits form the basis of the material commonly used in LSP workshops: (both photos taken from the LEGO official company website: http://www.lego.com) .

Insert Image 1 here: The LSP Identity and Landscape Kit

Insert Image 2 here: Connections Kit

At the beginning of the workshop each participant was asked to record the main challenges they were experiencing regarding equality, diversity and inclusion. Following the construction of their individual model, participants worked in small groups to link their models together by identifying connections between them. The group then discussed any surprising and/or overlooked connections, and finally, they shared the descriptions of their

model with the other groups, focusing on the insights gained. They would end the day with a single, team meta-model which reflected the accumulated understandings of the participants framing a set of ‘simple guiding principles’ to address them. Contrasting the final output with the original challenges they were facing provided the participants the means to reflect to their advances in tackling the three concepts.

We ran two pilot sessions with students, followed by four one-day-long workshops in three locations in Southern England between June 2019 and January 2020. The workshops targeted business school academics and support staff. Numbers of participants averaged between 7 and 19 per workshop, with 44 participating in total.

The table below shows the breakdown of participants:

Participants	1st workshop	2nd workshop	3rd workshop	4th workshop	Totals
Academics	13	4	8	7	30
Support staff	6	3	1	2	12
Totals:	19	7	9	9	44

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected via voice recordings and photographs taken (with participants' permission) during the workshops and coded using NVivo software. The coding was of two types: categorical coding (based on concepts of categorisation such as participants, types of activities etc.) and conceptual coding. The conceptual codes were created via an iterative process where the researchers brainstormed the themes that were recurring in the data and relevant to our aim and objectives. This first cycle of coding was exhaustive, meaning that when a particular concept was identified as worth coding, then all possible data from the

workshops were coded against it. The level of interest for each code was inter-subjectively determined by the team. Our underlying, guiding principle was that each conceptual code should be linked to the context and the relevant concepts of our investigation. Thus, our coding approach was closely aligned to axial coding for the first cycle of coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1997) and Armstrong's (2010: 103) for the second cycle. By the end of the first cycle of coding we formulated six conceptual groupings of codes: hidden curriculum and the unknown; equality, diversity and inclusion; health and well-being; higher education; narratives and context – the environment in which the theme occurred. We cross-analysed the data by juxtaposing the six conceptual groups against each other and seeking for intersections of high frequency. Second level coding analysis focussed on the high frequency areas for each of the cross-matrices as well as instances where the findings were unexpected and did not seem to be easily located in the literature. Our analysis follows Armstrong's (2010: 103) work on the discovery of meaning, which, he proposes, emerges 'as a function of relatedness' and is determined by the interpretations made. Participants are likely to focus their interpretive efforts on those ideas and thoughts which they deem most significant, and for this reason, within the areas of high frequency, and also of surprise and humour, we highlighted comments that seemed to be infused with 'the emotional undertow, or affect that animates the exchange' (Armstrong 2010:101). We identified these through observations made by the facilitators and participants as the discussions unfolded, with some comments generating significantly more attention than others.

Surfacing the hidden curriculum of equality, diversity and inclusion

We begin our analysis with two excerpts from the discussions that illustrate the process through which thoughts are surfacing, connections are made and practice implications

identified. We have not named the participants we cite below, partly because in the transcriptions of the tapes, it is not always possible to identify particular voices, but also because these workshops were designed so that meanings could emerge in the dialogues within the group, as part of a process of questioning and exploration, rather than 'owned' solely by their originator. In each of these examples the speaker is presenting a train of thought that connects their experiences in the workshops with reflections on challenges in the classroom. The way they phrase these connections strongly suggests that these are new, or at least unfinished, rarely articulated insights, which is why we suggest that they are unthought knowns. These extracts are a little confusing to read but are important because they are illustrative of this process of emergence.

I wanted difference to be represented beyond [just] two colours […] these colours here represent, that sometimes we do find batches of similarity and they're quite chunked. Other times they're just, you're on your own. Sometimes it's about supporting that, being with that and also recognising that you're going to be, have to be overwhelmed, when there's a lot of people that are, say, similar, it's difficult.

Here, this participant is surfacing thoughts and making connections between the multi-coloured ducks (*difference to be represented beyond* [just] *two colours*), the emotions and confusions they are experiencing (*you're on your own; you're going to be overwhelmed)* and their practice *(it's about supporting that).*

The next excerpt also demonstrates the participant making connections as they speak, in this case between unengaged students, classroom management problems, diversity and different management responses; '*it's interconnected'*. This quote demonstrates thoughts becoming, and specifically how these shape a hidden curriculum - the assumption that that diversity can lead to management problems.

Some students might not be very engaging in class and that leads to classroom management problems. That's leading to this bit of [LEGO®] model whereby the different colours symbolise again the diversity of students, teachers, and facilitators. So that's interconnected together in terms of the diversity of students and how the teachers [are] managing classrooms in different contexts.

These examples of thoughts emerging and connections being made exemplify the use of play to surface thoughts that, as Lawrence (2000) observes, once acknowledged become available for thinking and reflection.

Ducks, elephants and sharks; surfacing unthought knowns in symbolic form

We have structured our analysis around three animal metaphors, the duck, the elephant and the shark. We approach these animal metaphors as examples of unthought knowns surfacing in symbolic form. The elephant and the shark are treated as findings, as emergent metaphors, as both animals were used extensively in model making and are featured strongly in the discussions, with demonstrable affect, guiding our decision to focus on them. In contrast, the duck was an integral part of our workshop design, a deliberate metaphor and forms an adaptation of an exercise well known in the LSP methodology, designed to warm up the participants' abilities to think in metaphors and narratives. Our adaptation focused on the additional potential of the duck metaphor as a platform to surface issues of identity, a concept that underpins discussions of equality, diversity and inclusion. Although the choice of the duck, as a metaphoric medium, was ours, the interpretations and comments presented below belong to the participants.

What makes a duck a duck?

Participants had seven yellow bricks each and were asked to use them to make as many LEGO® ducks as possible within a short period of time. Participants enjoyed this exercise, smiling and laughing and joking about each other's ducks. We then took away the yellow bricks, and asked them to choose another seven LEGO® pieces, picking any they liked, and to use these to create a duck that expressed something about themselves. These new ducks had much less in common with each other visually, they were made using many different colours and shapes (see photo one).

Insert photo one here; Diverse Ducks

We asked participants to identify the defining characteristics that made all of these diverse ducks, ducks. Subsequently, different groups were asked to compare their ducks' set with other groups' duck-sets. Most participants could find very little that was common across all the ducks in the workshop's 'duckverse'. Often the participants ended up concluding that beyond the fact that all ducks were made of LEGO® bricks, the only other shared characteristic was that their makers had defined them as ducks; simply put, if we claim the shape to be a duck, then it is a duck.

This exercise exemplified the potential of the LSP methodology. Duck building is fun, light-hearted, non-contentious. LEGO® ducks are not serious creatures. We presented duck building as an ice-breaker, participants did not expect it to be confrontational, they were relaxed. Thus, we were setting the conditions for unthought knowns to emerge. And indeed, as participants grappled with the problem of defining the characteristics of LEGO® ducks, questions arose, including discussions about whether self-definition is enough (it's a duck because I say it's a duck). Thus, the similarities between the challenges of defining what

makes a duck a duck and the complexities of identit(ies) in the classroom and in the workplace, became impossible to ignore.

We illustrate these discussions with two examples that show participants struggling with the implications of their emerging understandings of the complexities of identities, and confusion about how to respond appropriately; the first being concerns about ‘triggering’ - echoing Amoroso et al.’s (2010) concerns with ‘diversity education dilemmas’.

‘[the exercise] really highlighted the difficulties of managing these situations as diplomatically as possible […] there may be issues related to gender or race that that need to be addressed. But [how] how can you address those without causing perhaps further issues, or triggering other people's sensitivities about these topics?’.

And in the next example, another teacher describes her struggle to combine responding to diversity with treating people fairly:

I can see some techniques, which are about going down this personalised learning, making sure that you make the environment rich, dealing with well-being issues, dealing with spatial issues, all of those things [but] it still comes back to when is appropriate to treat people differently and I don't know the answer to that!

These comments reveal a sense of uncertainty about how to respond; perhaps the first signs of a level of anxiety and confusion that could lead to a silencing of the conversation. In the next section we will discuss the two animal metaphors that figured significantly in the models and more frequently in the discussions than other creatures in the LEGO® pantheon. We will start with the elephant.

Elephants and unthought knowns

Elephants are large and they take up more room in the models than other LEGO® creatures. Our analysis of the elephants focused on the contexts in which they were deployed within the models, and the associations participants made with them. The interpretations made draw heavily on the extended metaphor of the 'elephant in the room' indicating something very powerful and important but not acknowledged or discussed – a fitting metaphor for an unthought known. As one participant put it '*the elephant was always going to be part of it* [her model] *because for me, EDI is the elephant in the room'.*

Insert photo of LEGO® elephants about here

Another participant made a connection between the importance of time for reflective work and the elephant; time viewed as an unacknowledged necessity.

[I've been] reflecting on a journey I've been through recently about me as a White person and my role and how that is influenced by the institution […] and it's taken me a long time. And the elephant is still in the room because most people never understood that time or don't even see where it needs more than the rest. So that's why I put the lack of time [in the model] really close to the elephant in the room.

The need for more time to reflect also features in the following extract:

This is a sort of mad scientist in this little runaway trolley […] represent[ing] people who keep pushing on with these [EDI] initiatives without that kind of reflection or without anyone else telling them to stop at an earlier stage, take a break, revisit it, and go slower. Maybe the elephant can step in front of the runaway trolley […] because unless we devote some time to

the elephant in the room, expose the elephant in the room, only then can the elephant can leave the room.

The first participant we cited made a direct association between 'EDI' and the elephant in the room while for some participants the elephant 'stood for' something specific. For example, another participant said '*people do actually just use the phrase "elephant in the room" and don't, won't use the word "racism"*'. However, in the last two examples cited above the elephants are not named – they are there, in the model, but what they represent is not clear.

An elephant plays a pivotal role in the next account, but again, its precise meaning is less easy to discern:

So on my elephant is the teacher and the students sort of hanging on for dear life at the back. […] And then these gates are sort of like a Valhalla, you know, this is where the elephant is going. And, and at the end, these two […] complements and prizes. So being an elephant, the elephant will usually go for the food.

Although this excerpt suggests a driving force, or momentum towards some sort of reward (the prizes beyond the gates of Valhalla) what is really striking is that the elephant is choosing the direction, the teacher herself is not in charge; The unthought known being expressed here is that the elephant is more powerful than either the teacher or the students. But what does the elephant represent? We are not told; although as she discusses how she created her model, she says '*I knew that the food would look good to the elephant. So then it was like, what would look good to the people that were affected?'*. This suggests more of an interplay between the agency of the elephant and that of the teacher who has created the model, and has chosen the elephant's reward. There is also the reference to the prizes, the rewards, which would seem to be different for different people.

What can we make of these different associations to the elephant? Where participants made a direct metaphorical interpretation, it was to racism, or ‘EDI itself’. In the other examples the elephant was not named but conveys a sense of power (able to stop the runaway trolley), and of heaviness. In the extended metaphor of ‘elephant-in-the-room’ there is a sense of something unknown and maybe, unknowable. The metaphor implies that naming the elephant carries risks, that it will destabilize existing power relationships.

Sharks: fear and dread

The themes of the unknown as a lurking, but hidden presence, also feature strongly in the discussions around our next LEGO® metaphor, the shark. However, here fear and dread dominate the descriptions. The elephant is powerful but not always feared; sharks on the other hand are terrifying.

The sharks underneath represent the unknown […] Sometimes we don’t know what we are scared of, we’re just scared here […] They can come and bite you at any point.

Insert shark photo about here

A very similar interpretation was given by another participant who connected the sharks with the unknown and with hidden danger;

The shark represents the fact there's always something unknown, the shark in the water that is going to come up and bite you on the backside at some point […] it's behind me just to show that it's just lurking, always lurking…

These comments provoked a lot of responses in the discussions, with participants talking over each other at times, to offer supporting comments. It was clear from the transcriptions that the shark metaphors resonated strongly with many participants. As with the elephants, some participants did try to locate the source of their fears. For the academic cited above they were '*the psychological demands of lecturing; however much you can prepare, how much you can be aware, there's always things that you don't know'*. In the example below, it is the sense of isolation that comes across more strongly:

This is me in a boat. You see, feeling constantly that you're so on your own with this. So wanting to be inclusive, etc., and to encourage your colleagues to get on board [...] But then they also face their own challenges which is why there are sharks in the water as well. So, isolation I guess, this constant feeling of being snowed under with workload, wanting to do to the right thing and not having the head space to do that.

Although these sharks are connected to definable aspects of the job; not being able to answer every question a student might ask, too much work, too little time, the '*lurking'* presence of the sharks strongly suggests that these issues are anxiety provoking, and not easily solvable.

One participant was very clear that her sharks were connected to racism, prejudice and red tape. Two other participants were more ambivalent; their sharks were *'beautiful', 'wonderous', 'majestic'* but also linked to fear; '*it's kind a dichotomy, isn't it, where you feel you want to be protected, but also you still want to gaze the wonder of this thing'; 'you can sit and have joy and watch it or you can just be in fear of it* […] *but I feel that the unknown isn't always scary, although it might appear to be sometimes, the unknowns are good even though they appear otherwise'.*

As with the elephants, some participants were quite clear about how they were deploying their LEGO® creatures. However, for others these creatures allowed them to give some shape to more formless, hidden harbingers of dread.

Discussion

Our study contributes to understanding of the challenges of embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into the curriculum, and also, through our innovative use of LEGO® Serious Play®, to understanding of how unthought knowns that influence the 'hidden' curriculum can be uncovered and exposed to reflection and interrogation. The observations we recorded in the workshops provide important insights into our core problematic, the paradox that the hidden curriculum of equality, diversity and inclusion is not evolving, despite explicit, and high-level demands that it does. The models that our participants created, and the discussions about them, uncovered complexities and contradictions inherent within these topics, alongside significant levels of anxiety and fear. Most recurring and notable was the sense of confusion around how to respond. It is worth noting here that our participants were self-selecting; they were people with an interest in these topics. Thus, if these individuals, who were likely to be experienced and motivated, were articulating such uncertainty and confusion, it is very likely that these feelings are more widespread. '*EDI is the elephant in the room'* one of our participants said. Elephants are heavy, generally slow moving and have famously long memories. Sharks are much faster, they are constantly in motion, endlessly swimming. The workshop participants saw both creatures as majestic, powerful, awe-inspiring and, to a large extent, metaphors of the unknowable. At the same time both animals evoke fear and anxiety.

Why should these topics be regarded as unknown, or unknowable, and why should they provoke so much fear? Evidence we presented from the literature suggests that even when there is coverage of these topics in the curriculum this is more likely to be limited to awareness raising, with much less attention given to identifying and practising actual tools that would equip future managers to work creatively and productively with the issues that EDI gives rise to in the workplace. Moreover, we have seen that in many textbooks and frameworks for professional standards, equality, diversity and inclusion issues and practice within a management context are often presented as straightforward, requiring few specialist skills and carrying little risk to staff or students. Challenging this orthodoxy, especially from a position of unknowing, is likely to be daunting. The subject expertise that academics bring to their teaching does not necessarily equip them with the skills they need. Support staff may be uncertain about their role, how to respond the differing needs and circumstances. Furthermore, there are inherent conflicts and tensions depending on which protected characteristic one focusses on; our participants focussed far more on race, culture and gender than they did on disability, religion, sexual orientation. But without such a focus, discussions often result on amorphous generalities.

Alongside the difficulties in admitting to confusion or un-knowing about topics that are 'supposed' to be straightforward, is the palpable sense of fear and dread as manifested by the sharks. There are risks in in responding in ways that may exacerbate tensions and inequalities; *'how can you address those without causing perhaps further issues, or triggering other people's sensitivities?',* as one participant said, echoing Amoroso et al's (2010) 'diversity dilemma'. Working though these issues requires time and reflection, as our participants note, and also specialist training and expertise.

What are the consequences of not addressing equality, diversity and inclusion in curricula? We have already suggested that students are leaving their studies without the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to work creatively and productively with diverse colleagues in the workplace. Despite the rhetoric, the relative absence of these topics in the curricula is likely to convey a message that they are unimportant, or only relevant to particular management roles and functions, such as HRM. Hence, the hidden curriculum promotes an ‘unlearning’ of the relevance and centrality of these issues in all aspects of management. As McKendry and McKenna (2020) highlighted, if the curricula and learning experience students have are not reflective of their own experiences, this may foster alienation and disengagement. The likely consequences of all of these implications are that inequalities are not challenged and the status quo maintained.

Implications for the hidden curriculum

Our study has utilized an innovative methodology, the use of LEGO® Serious Play®, to surface unthought knowns that may directly influence the hidden curriculum. LSP offered a playful, safe way for thoughts to emerge, to become available for thinking. This is important, because the risks and anxieties that surround equality, diversity and inclusion, mean that these insights are much less likely to emerge voluntarily in discussions. LSP allows them to be expressed metaphorically; with the metaphors potentially providing a road map to the subconscious, but in such a way that the speaker can control how far down that road they wish to journey. The LSP models are co-created, this allows people to be stimulated by each other and to learn from each others’ insights, but with the safety net provided where individual interpretations are not critiqued nor challenged, thus giving participants control over the extent to which they want to share their experiences with others, or even with themselves.

In conclusion, we suggest that the fears and anxieties that were surfaced in the workshops and represented by the elephants and sharks, are not irrational. There are real dangers inherent in tackling issues of racism, religion, discrimination and oppression, and of exploring deeply held beliefs and very painful experiences. Some people will be offended, some people will be angry. Sharks do, indeed patrol these waters. This leads us to two, consequential observations. The first is that universities need to recognise that these topics are highly complex and require specialist skills, and for measures to be in place so that academics and students alike know that they are supported and protected when tackling these tensions.

The second observation is that mainstreaming 'EDI' in curricula is bound to be challenging. If teaching equality, diversity and inclusion requires specialist skills and knowledge, it is unrealistic to expect people teaching across a broad curriculum to be in possession of them. If we then consider the risky nature of these subjects, it is not hard to understand why academics and staff do not truly engage with them.

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Images one and two (copywrite LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®.)

Images one and two (copywrite LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®.)

Photographs

Photo one: Diverse ducks

Photo two: Elephant

Photo Three: Sharks