

# **Social marketing AS pedagogy**

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## **Abstract**

### **Purpose**

This study aims to share the use of social marketing as pedagogy and provide a transformative social marketing pedagogy for social marketing educators. By this, the authors mean the same principles used by social marketers to improve the well-being of a person or group are used as a pedagogic tool to bolster students' learning and understanding of social marketing. In the described course, students are asked to choose one area of their lives to try and change using concepts taught to them in class. They are then asked to reflect on their personal change journey and apply it to others in the form of a social marketing plan.

### **Design/methodology/approach**

The authors share a conceptual journey using social marketing as pedagogy following the evolution of a marketing for behavioural change undergraduate course. Benchmark criteria for social marketing are used to discuss and conceptualise a transformative social marketing pedagogy. The authors take a reflexive approach to explore course development, motivations, assumptions and activities to expand on their approach.

### **Findings**

Social marketing as pedagogy suggests that behaviour change is not just taught through course content but also embedded throughout the course as a learning tool and outcome. A social marketing course can encourage individual behaviour change by asking students to critically reflect on their own behaviour change journey to fully experience and understand the underpinnings and implications for social marketing. In this way, the authors adopt transformative learning as the outcome of social marketing AS pedagogy. The authors suggest through experiential learning, including active learning and reflexivity, students are able to change their frame of reference or how they interpret the world around them, in regard to complex social issues, which may encourage behaviour change.

### **Originality/value**

As social marketers, the authors must reflect not only on what they teach students (Kelly, 2013) but also on how they teach them. Previous literature has not provided any unique pedagogy for how to teach social marketing. This article provides the first pedagogy for social marketing education – the Transformative social marketing pedagogy which views social marketing AS pedagogy. The authors present the value of experiential learning as a three-pronged approach incorporating Interpretive Experiences, Transformative Experiences and developing Praxis, which includes elements of feeding forward and authentic assessment.

This approach provides a unique contribution to the area by providing a pedagogical approach that goes beyond mere knowledge acquisition to transformative learning.

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## Introduction

In this 50th anniversary special issue, there will be many who speak to the development and growth of social marketing research and practice, but what of social marketing educators? Many of us are stuck between business schools, health ontologies and competing graduate attributes. The question still remains, with all its complexities and nuances: How can social marketing be effectively taught?

In reviewing the handful of articles on social marketing pedagogy (Biroscak *et al.*, 2014; Kelly, 2009, 2013; McKay-Nesbitt *et al.*, 2012; Radford *et al.*, 2015; White, 2018), one may glean that social marketing is a course not often offered. Current literature covers *what* we should teach students (Kelly, 2013), but *how* we teach them is missing. The main shared assessment identified in the current literature is a social marketing plan, which is a good way to assess application of course content and explains what should be taught to students. This helps an educator to understand whether a student knows the process of achieving behavioural change but does not necessarily help the educator know whether a student can successfully action behavioural change. Is it possible to develop a pedagogy that teaches both the steps to change behaviour and also experience these steps in a practical manner to develop a deeper understanding of what is involved in social marketing and behavioural change programmes? That is, Praxis?

When developing a course specifically designed to convey the complexities associated with social marketing and behavioural change, we argue that a traditional transactional lecturing model of knowledge exchange is just the first step. We posit that students also need to critically reflect on not only the behaviour change in question but also the intersectionalities and complexities associated with behaviour change. Here, we provide a blueprint of how educators might do this. That is, how the course allows students to experience personal behaviour change that informs how they might make an intervention plan for others to change. We posit that experiencing personal behaviour change can provide a deeper understanding of how such change does or does not come about for others. Engaged teaching practices, such as classroom participation, engenders a deeper understanding of a topic. However, they do not easily demonstrate the individual challenges with changing that direct experience is able to convey. This article is a conceptual piece which outlines the pedagogical approach and thinking we have taken over the years in a Marketing for behaviour change course. We do not claim that this is an empirical piece but have, on reflection, found that students became conversant in behavioural change theories; practised at encouraging behavioural change; and engaged in participatory learning to understand effective change drivers. Thus, we suggest behavioural change, not just knowledge acquisition, should be woven into the very fabric of social marketing courses and assessment. This way, theories and concepts could be conveyed in class, practised in students' everyday experiences and reflected upon in a conscious manner allowing for student transformation. A pedagogic approach combining learning behavioural change principles and their application to oneself is symbiotic. We argue that one without the other presents an incomplete learning experience for the student engaging in social marketing theory, concepts and practices.

In keeping with the transformational nature of social marketing (Lefebvre, 2012), we propose that social marketing education can seek to also be transformative. Thus, we propose a pedagogy for social marketing education which treats social marketing *AS* pedagogy. By this,

we mean, the same principles used by social marketers to facilitate change are used as a pedagogic tool to bolster students' learning and understanding of social marketing. We present this as resulting in a three-pronged approach: Interpretive Experiences, Transformative Experiences and developing Praxis. The proposed pedagogic approach adapts Kolb's (1984) experiential learning framework to incorporate elements of Feeding forward (Quinton and Smallbone, 2010) and Authentic assessment (Gulikers *et al.*, 2004) to provide a transformational learning experience. Feedforward requires students to reflect on assignment feedback and feed their learnings forward into their next assignment (Quinton and Smallbone, 2010), while authentic assessment goes beyond mere low-level knowledge acquisition and repetition to the use of assessments that develop competence and skills for future employment contexts (Gulikers *et al.*, 2004). We explain that through the use of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), students are able to experience both personal behaviour change along with planning for *other's* behaviour change first-hand. This was achieved by a project where they chose one aspect of their current lives that they wish to change for the better; reflected on their behaviour change journey through journaling, in class discussions and activities; and used learnings from lectures, discussions and journaling to create a social marketing plan for others (Svinicki and Dixon, 1987).

It is through the four steps of experiential learning that reflective (Peltier *et al.*, 2005) and active learning (Wright *et al.*, 1994) take place. As a result, students can transform their own behaviours and understandings of their chosen area (smoking cessation, exercise, diet, etc.). Thus, our approach goes beyond surface learning (i.e. passive knowledge transfer) (Harlen and James, 1997) and also focusses on attitude and behaviour change. The transformational approach that is taken aims, at a philosophical level, for students to experience social marketing in action. This occurs through their experience of personal change and then feeding their learning forward to plan for other people to change with a social marketing intervention plan.

We share our conceptual journey using social marketing *AS* pedagogy following the evolution of a *Marketing for Behavioural Change* undergraduate course from its inception in 2010 to the present day. We draw on examples from student learning and development to demonstrate the approach. We do not claim that this is the only way social marketing should be taught. Nor its objective efficacy, as this is a conceptual article. We use the benchmark criteria for social marketing (Andreasen, 2002) to explore and share the use of social marketing *AS* pedagogy and provide a transformative social marketing pedagogy for social marketing educators.

## **Pedagogical background**

Social marketing *AS* pedagogy suggests that behaviour change philosophy is embedded not just throughout course content but also used as a learning tool and outcome. We propose that a transformational social marketing course should encourage individual behaviour change. While also asking students to critically reflect on their own behaviour change journey. Thus, they fully experience and understand social marketing underpinnings and their implications for practice (e.g. Praxis). We suggest that through reflection and journaling, reflexivity and experiential learning, students are able to change their frame of reference (e.g. how they interpret the world around them – Ogbu, 1993) in regard to complex social issues and encourage authentic behaviour change.

Transformative learning is the process of change within the learner's frame of reference (i.e. associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses) (Mezirow, 1991, 1997). These frames of reference help guide learners, providing assumptions through which learners understand experiences and shape expectations, perceptions and feelings. Such preconceptions are hard to change as individuals are often resistant to ideas which fail to fit their preconceived notions (Mezirow, 1997). Transformative learning not only involves an epistemological change (frame of reference) but also ontological (Taylor, 2007). In forms of relatedness, for example (Lange, 2004), it is usually directed towards socially orientated topics (Taylor, 2007). As such, we reason that transformative learning, as described by Mezirow (1997), is essentially social marketing enacted in education. A critical reflection of the assumptions held by learners helps to transform their frame of reference. For example, reading a book, hearing a point of view, engaging in task-oriented problem-solving (objective reframing) or self-reflectively assessing one's own ideas and beliefs (subjective reframing) may all lead to critical reflection (Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1997). Thus, students can learn to understand their own behaviour (i.e. through their behaviour change journey) and, in turn, are able to reflect, empathise and understand others' behaviours (Cranton and Taylor, 2012) in the context of individual, micro, meso, exco and macro influences. Indeed, previous research demonstrates the ability to empathise with others after engaging in service-learning programs (Carrington *et al.*, 2015). While not all transformative learning would be considered social marketing, the similarities between their objectives (i.e. change in frame of reference) lead to significant overlap. We contend that the contribution of this article is in sharing how a social marketing course can be made transformative.

In this course, we asked students to journal their personal behaviour change journey. Journaling and reflection ensure a high level of self-reflection and thus reflexivity (Hibbert, 2013; Peltier *et al.*, 2005). Reflexivity is especially sought around what we take for granted and examining the privileging, marginalising and insulating effects of policies, practices and hierarchies (Allen *et al.*, 2019). Reflective learning is key to promoting active learning, such learning is frequently assessed through journaling (Thorpe, 2004) and involves:

- a state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, mental difficulty, in which thinking originates; and
- an act of searching, hunting, inquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity (Dewey, 1933, p. 12).

In this course, self-reflexivity involves an “ongoing conversation with your whole self about what you are experiencing as you are experiencing it” (Nagata, 2004, p. 139).

To enable transformation and reflexivity, experiences (Cranton and Taylor, 2012) and experiential learning (Peltier *et al.*, 2005) are used to provide a basis for change. Experiential learning theory suggests a four-stage learning process (Kolb and Kolb, 2005). The cycle begins with a concrete experience causing the learner to make observations and reflections, drawing logical conclusions (abstract conceptualisation). The learner may add this to their theoretical constructs and use these to guide decisions and actions (active experimentation), leading to new concrete experiences (Kolb, 1984; Svinicki and Dixon, 1987). Experiential learning can be transformative for learners if *all* four stages of the learning process are considered (Radford *et al.*, 2015). While experiential learning may lead to the possibility for cognitive transformation, this is not necessarily its objective. The term “experiential learning” is frequently used as a pedagogical technique that focusses on experiences to promote learning, focussing only on the first stage of experiential learning theory rather than the full

theory (Frontczak, 1998; Kolb and Kolb, 2005). For example, most social marketing courses use assessments which only involve the development of a social marketing plan (Kelly, 2009, 2013). However, while most “experiences” in the marketing management discipline are those associated with internships, simulations or client projects (Bascoul *et al.*, 2013; Wynd, 1989), experiences also vary and may include journals and case studies (Bergsteiner *et al.*, 2010; Svinicki and Dixon, 1987). Figure 1 highlights these varied experiential learning activities.

Active learning is a key component of experiential learning (Labrecque *et al.*, 2021) and posits students are engaged in discovering knowledge, whether that be through co-construction or transformation (Johnson *et al.*, 1991). Instead of being passively received (i.e. traditional lecture formats), they must learn through doing, through active processing and understanding activities (Wright *et al.*, 1994). Student experience, guided by educators, creates knowledge and learning on the topic at hand (Shakarian, 1995). Studies have shown that active learning increases student involvement (McKay-Nesbitt *et al.*, 2012), student learning (Boggs *et al.*, 2007) and the ability to apply theory to real life situations (McKay-Nesbitt *et al.*, 2012). The approach lends itself to skill development for future workplaces, as well as the development of lifelong learning processes.

While there is a precedence of experiential and active learning within social marketing pedagogy, educators have not applied all four aspects of Kolb’s experiential model. For example, McKay-Nesbitt *et al.* (2012) outline the use of a social marketing plan as an assignment in an introduction to marketing class. The social marketing plan related to environmental concerns, and so students’ environmentally-related awareness, attitudes and intentions increased. However, students were provided with specific education on their specific environmental area. Teams also included a student from environmental studies as a consultant. It is difficult then to ascertain whether students’ attitudes increased due to increased knowledge or the social marketing plan process.

McKay-Nesbitt *et al.* (2012) based their pedagogical stance on the first two aspects of Kolb’s experiential learning (Concrete and Reflective). They also claim active learning occurs solely through the assignment (Shakarian, 1995) because students must think deeply to write the assignment up (Hamer, 2000). Such an assignment does develop students’ skills for future workplaces, however, does not seem to offer the most fully realised versions of active and experiential learning. Further, the course the article is based on is an introductory commercial marketing course, rather than a social marketing course. Similarly, Radford *et al.* (2015), in a social marketing and entrepreneurship course, asked students to begin researching a social issue with little guidance, which forced them to research a relatively unfamiliar area (e.g. poverty, human trafficking, violence, etc.) and form abstract conceptualisations to understand the context of the problem and possible solutions. Students were encouraged to apply marketing concepts to form creative solutions, but there is no mention of creating social marketing interventions or taking a social marketing approach. The article states that active experimentation and concrete experiences were gained but unfortunately gives no detail on how these were achieved.

Overall, previous research shows a gap in how to apply all four aspects of Kolb’s experiential model to social marketing. We deliver this and extend the area by proposing that experiential learning, alongside associated practices of active learning and reflexivity, as well as feedforward and authentic assessment, provide opportunities for transformative learning. We argue this results in Interpretive Experiences, Transformative Experiences and Praxis (which we will discuss further below).

The current article addresses the gaps in McKay-Nesbitt *et al.* (2012) and Radford *et al.* (2015). Firstly, through developing and sharing pedagogy for a stand-alone social marketing course. Secondly, through the incorporation of all four aspects of Kolb's experiential learning model. Thirdly, by extending the area with multiple layers of active learning (including and beyond a straight social marketing plan), journaling reflection and reflexivity, within a transformative context that encourages perspectival, attitudinal and behavioural change. We now aim to explore and share the use of social marketing AS pedagogy in the hopes of providing a transformative social marketing pedagogy for social marketing educators.

### **Social marketing AS pedagogy**

Andreasen (1994, p. 110) defined social marketing as the “adaptation of commercial marketing technologies to programs designed to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of the society of which they are a part.” We apply this definition to pedagogy and discuss how social marketing principles can be used to transform student behaviour and learning. Using Andreasen's (2002) benchmark criteria as scaffolding, we take a reflexive approach to exploring course development, motivations, assumptions and activities to expand on a teaching approach using social marketing AS pedagogy. The six benchmark criteria are:

1. *Behaviour change*: As the main goal, not just knowledge, attitudes and beliefs.
2. *Research*: To gain a better understanding of the target group and effective interventions.
3. *Segmentation*: Of the target population.
4. *Exchange*: Including the value provided by the intervention.
5. *Competition*: Understanding what competes for time and attention away from behaviour change.
6. *Marketing mix*: Applying a range of methods to enact behaviour change (Andreasen, 2002).

As an overview, the social marketing course began as an elective third-year course called Social Marketing and later changed to Marketing for Behavioural Change to open its appeal to a wider audience and remove confusion between similarly titled social media courses. It is open to all students, even those without a marketing background.

While we do not claim our course as “perfect” as it is an iterative learning experience for us as educators as well, we *do* provide reflection on what we have undertaken, as well as our *ideal* scenarios for the course in the following outline. Together we hope that other educators may gain guidance in undertaking such a pedagogy. We use the benchmark criteria for social marketing to explore the use of social marketing AS pedagogy through both the experiences of students and reflections of the educators. The key behavioural objective for the course was student's transformative learning. As such, the figurative “social marketer” is at times the educator and at other times the student in the following narrative. This is part of the transformational nature of the course.

From the outset, there was a desire to build an assessment module that would be formative and help students become active learners (Wright *et al.*, 1994) in their engagement with class material. Active learning pedagogy allows students to experience their change topic directly (whichever they choose) and on a personal level (Labrecque *et al.*, 2021). Concepts were applied in class in an active manner (i.e. through open forum discussions and class

engagement in workshop type activities). This was coupled with the behaviour change project where students have agency over their change choice. Increasing engagement, insights and personal reflection around the topic more than if it were pre-defined. The reflective diaries also enabled this by encouraging students to explicate *why* they were making changes and how efficacious they were (Thorpe, 2004). By not simply accepting wins and failures but reflecting on why and how these changes were occurring, it was hoped that greater levels of insight would be drawn from the project (Peltier *et al.*, 2005). The social marketing plan assignment that followed allowed them to apply their personal learning to others.

Previous scholars have linked social marketing behaviour change theories to cognitive, conative, affective, socio-cultural, consumer behaviour and social change models (Brennan *et al.*, 2014). We argue that transformative learning touches upon conative, affective and socio-cultural models as individuals are considered “stuck” in unsustainable and unhealthy behaviours through: practices and routines (conative models), norms, values and belief systems (affective models) and micro (socialisation), meso (community, schools), exco (media, policy) and meso (ideology, culture, rituals) level effects on behaviour.

Table 1 displays how the benchmark criteria is used with each expanded upon in the following sections. While slightly out of order, we start with the Marketing Mix so as to explain the course more clearly to the reader.

### **Marketing mix**

“Product”: The main assessment piece was developed based on one initially created by Julie Ozanne, then at the University of Virginia and then further developed for this course with Lucie Ozanne. It asked students to use their experiential learning journey as part of their assessment. The current assessment asks students to choose a behaviour they wanted to improve; draw on theories in class to help them adapt or change the behaviour in question; keep a written diary over 6–12 weeks (depending on the iteration) expressing their thoughts and experiences as they go through the behavioural change process and finally write a social marketing plan to encourage others to change their behaviour. The class size ranged from 50 to 200 people. The social marketing plan instructions were based on Kotler *et al.* (2002) and Weinreich (1999) and asked students to write using the following headings:

- Background context.
- Target group.
- Intervention objectives.
- Past intervention learnings.
- Intervention mix.
- Intervention evaluation.

The assessment was used as a platform to develop a deeper understanding of how social marketing practices can affect the individual being targeted as part of an intervention but also allow the students to reflect on the underpinning psychology and sociology that drives their current behaviour. Topics chosen ranged from increasing exercise; dieting or nutritional changes; smoking, drinking and drug reduction/cessation; saving money and budgeting; studying; decreasing procrastination; sustainability-related behaviours; mental well-being; and mental health. In recent years, students also contribute questions to a class survey to gain insights regarding the change area for others (that is, market research insights). Examples of



their questions include: How many times a week do you currently exercise? What are the barriers to you exercising?

Following this, students are expected to use their experiences to write a social marketing plan for an intervention in that same area. Overall, the social marketing plan, as well as the class survey, creates authentic assessment which ensures learning and using the same skills they would use as a social marketer (Gulikers *et al.*, 2004). Specific social marketing skills developed include:

- data collection and analysis for consumer insights;
- segmentation experience;
- behaviour change theory application;
- experience of intervention value exchange creation;
- intervention goal setting and testing;
- experience of mitigating competition for change;
- social marketing advertising creation;
- social marketing intervention planning; and
- social marketing plan writing experience.

In the discussion section of this article, we explain how transformative learning was achieved through this approach. Aside from the main behavioural change project, the class included an early concepts test to ensure students have a strong grasp of key theories before progressing to future behaviour change practices.

“Place”: No class comes without change; however, the nature of this class and its location in Christchurch, New Zealand, meant that it faced more change than most. Within four weeks of the course commencement, the Canterbury region was hit by the largest earthquake in living memory. The remainder of the course was carried out under a cloud of constant aftershocks and fear of further structural damage, despite no lives being lost. In 2011, another major earthquake hit the city, leading to the destruction of much of the central city, major damage to the campus and 185 lives lost. Many students who had enrolled in the program unsurprisingly withdrew to study elsewhere. This sudden withdrawal was experienced across the campus and resulted in a flow-on effect with lower students enrolling in the course 3–4 years after the earthquakes. From 2011 to 2014, a further 25,000 aftershocks hit the region requiring students to be constantly ready for any change and having a significant impact on mental well-being. One silver lining from this is that the impact of the behavioural change course had been realised by many students and course enrolments increased dramatically. In 2019 Christchurch faced New Zealand’s deadliest terrorist attack with the loss of 51 lives, plunging the city into a full day lockdown and sent ripples of unease across the city, especially for our international students. Finally, in 2020, as with much of the world, COVID-19 forced lockdowns and alternative practices for engagement, student interest in the area increased.

“Price”: From a cost perspective for students, some students ended up spending far more time focussed on the assessment and not preparing for other classes’ assessments. This was reflected upon by some students who found the behavioural change project was “consuming” and so engaging that they were willing to put extra effort into the assessment rather than study for another test. This was not only an unintended consequence but also shows that the development of programs and assessments that build student engagement are likely to be engaged with in an active manner, driving greater levels of understanding and insight. As educators, we addressed these issues by changing the assessment structure and both

decreasing the number of diary entries (from 12 to 6) while also changing the final social marketing plan to a group assignment. Unfortunately, the potential transformative effectiveness is likely to have decreased somewhat. Future iterations of the course will look at having 12 diaries again but submitting them as video diaries only to aid in both student workloads while also giving students more freedom to express themselves.

“Promotion”: The usual university level promotion of the course has been undertaken and student numbers have grown organically and through word of mouth. Communication and contact with students occurred through live in-class lectures (due to COVID restrictions some classes in 2020/2021 were online) and through Moodle where lecture recordings and readings were placed.

### **Behaviour change**

At the heart of the course is a focus on behaviour change and as stated earlier, the overall behaviour change goal for the course was enabling transformational learning in the students (Mezirow, 1991, 1997). The class is twofold:

1. it educates students about behaviour change (knowledge acquisition); and
2. it asks students to participate in experiential, reflective learning (through diaries and the behaviour change project) to encourage transformational learning.

For students’ personal goals, clear, specific, measurable and time-bound behavioural goals were set (French and Blair-Stevens, 2006). Specifically, instruction in creating SMART goals and making interim goals was given and student’s goals were checked in class by the lecturer during workshop type activities. In this case, early classes discussed the differences between attitudes, intentions, sentiment and behaviour to establish that the final drive for behavioural change is one that is difficult. This was further exemplified through the students’ own transformational learning journeys (Mezirow, 1991, 1997; Russell-Bennett *et al.*, 2019), as shared through their diaries which enabled reflexivity (Thorpe, 2004).

The weekly diaries documenting students’ behaviour change journeys were the main vehicle for goal assessment for the students and the educators’ vehicle to create student reflexivity. To ensure this, students were told that the diaries would be kept private between the student and lecturer and not used as a judgement against the student’s ability. They were also encouraged to present a raw reflection on their journey to reflect honestly on both the successes and failures, to use language that portrayed their emotions and be creative in their diary delivery (Thorpe, 2004). A few students presented video diaries of their journeys (particularly useful when assessing stress management and anger control projects) so as to show the physical change on their bodies as a result of their behaviour change. These diaries shared both the students’ successes and failures with behavioural change. The things that worked and things that did not. By understanding the nuances of behavioural change in a non-linear manner that is fraught with ups and downs, the students were able to adapt their plans and practices to suit their progress. Although not mandated as part of the course, some students would contact the lecturers years later to share how their behavioural change progress was being maintained. These emails provide examples of sustained success from students’ behavioural change projects and diaries that students have found the process transformational.

Using a feedforward approach (Quinton and Smallbone, 2010) and providing scaffolding for student learning improved marks in the diary assessment and proved to ensure more reflexive diary submissions from students. That is, it enabled deeper reflection and experiential learning from the diary assignment (Quinton and Smallbone, 2010).

To help students reflect on their own concrete experiences in their own journey, as well as develop abstractions and implications (Kolb and Kolb, 2005), the lecturer also undertook their own behaviour change journey along with students. In the first week of class, the students voted on what behaviour change area the lecturer would embark on and the lecturer kept the students updated with a weekly vlog post of their own journey, challenges and successes. For instance, examples of the lecturers' goals over the years include to build their flexibility and do the splits in class, conquer their fear of heights and do a bungee jump and train to run a half marathon at the end of the course. Students avidly followed the lecturer's process and final success in their goal.

## **Research**

Educators identified “actionable insights” from students leading to a deeper understanding of what motivates and induces change in their chosen behaviours (French and Blair-Stevens, 2006). In a practical way, insights were gained for students from conducting a class survey and for educators through student feedback and evaluations of the course.

The class survey assessment was introduced when students found it difficult to find secondary data to support their target group assumptions for the overall marketing plan. As many students picked topics where no or little research exists on the target group (such as the area of procrastination), their final marketing plans were theoretically correct but evidentially baseless and so potentially impractical. A class survey assessment has now been introduced to fill the gap in secondary data available for students. The 10% class survey assessment asks students to submit two survey questions along with a 250-word blurb “explaining the relevance of the questions to gaining insights from your target market regarding your chosen behaviour (e.g. what you hope to find out)” (Course outline, 2021). These questions are collated and edited into Qualtrics surveys and students are then sent one survey each to complete. The anonymous raw data from all survey responses is collated into a spreadsheet and then released to students for analysis and use in their marketing plan. This has greatly increased the standard of the evidence used in the marketing plan but did not come without challenges. The major challenge for this assessment is the administrative burden of collating questions into Qualtrics. The help of a tutor was gained for this aspect specifically, and future iterations of the course will explore more collaborative ways for students to submit questions, such as through Wiki creation.

The social marketing educator seeks to fully understand the lives, behaviour and the issues involved (French and Blair-Stevens, 2006) with students, their learning and transformative experiences. These insights were gained through student feedback and course evaluations. For instance, we had to be sensitive to the issues students would be investigating and discussing in class. The course was the first in the business school to incorporate trigger warnings and discussions regarding safety of expression and identity in class. Many of the concepts and topics discussed in class would be confronting to some students, and so discussions around what a safe learning environment looks like and how it is used were co-constructed with the students. This has recently spilled into the area of recorded lectures during COVID. Students increasingly seek flexible forms of learning through recorded face-

to-face lectures in New Zealand. The lecturers dealt with the conflict between providing flexibility for students by allowing lectures to be recorded and protecting their privacy when they discuss their personal change journeys in class. There is no easy or perfect solution to this conflict.

At its inception, the course assessment was created prescriptively to ensure students did not choose topics that may be ethically problematic as well as difficult to complete given the short time frame of the course. As a result, a list of topics were suggested and students were forced to choose one of those topics to complete as part of their behavioural change program. However, almost immediately students expressed an interest in having greater agency and ownership of their own learning and choosing their own topics. The following year (2011) was the year of the Canterbury Earthquakes and led to not only a significant number of students choosing to leave the campus but also a greater level of ownership around personal well-being and safety. As such, a focus on students' needs was put first, and students were enabled to choose their own topics. Similarly, after student numbers increased past 100 consistently, the administrative load of marking that amount of 5,000-word assignments without marking support forced the final marketing plan to be a group project. Unfortunately, this has taken some of the transformational nature of the assessment away as students form groups too early in the course and allow group members to dictate their behaviour change goals instead of negotiating a shared separate goal for the marketing plan later in the semester.

## **Segmentation**

We discuss here the student “segments” from the educator’s point of view. Segmentation was specifically avoided for this course as its philosophy was based on reaching any university student who wished to look at behaviour change in marketing. This meant that students without any experience in business or marketing are welcome to attend and goes against the traditional targeting aspect of social marketing. To date, this inclusive approach has presented no problems. In fact, this has ensured interesting and interdisciplinary views are shared within the class. Ultimately leading to reflective learning through an awareness of different types of people and their worldviews, experiences and expertise (Hibbert, 2013; Sterling, 2011). Students also seemed to enjoy it: “LOVE this topic, should talk to health science people for those doing health promotion as I found this super relevant” (Student comment, 2019).

## **Exchange**

Exchange considers the value (both positive or negative) provided by the social marketing intervention and behaviour change (French and Blair-Stevens, 2006). Here, we consider the exchange as occurring between the educator and the student in the form of time, effort and learning involved with the course. From a transactional approach, a lecturer providing good notes from class leading to a higher chance of getting a good grade would be a simple exchange. However, instead, the behaviour change project goal sought a transformational learning experience for the students (Mezirow, 1991, 1997; Sterling, 2011). This was, so students developed a deeper understanding and reflection on one’s self, personal mental models and behaviour (Hibbert, 2013; Peltier *et al.*, 2005; Quinton and Smallbone, 2010; Thorpe, 2004). Transformation in thinking, perspectives and behaviour provided exchange for students beyond higher grades. Instead, a belief in a general improvement in one’s self (Sterling, 2011) was exchanged for partaking in the course, as the following comments show:

“[Course name] has a real practical class project about how to using this course theories to help everyone being a better self!” (Student comment, 2020); “I just want to make the most of this project and use it to actually improve my life.” (Student comment, 2021).

As such, there is the realisation that there is a value on education for itself, along with its benefit for employment (Clarke *et al.*, 2006). Similarly, the course was valued for its transformative learning.

## **Competition**

From the educator’s point of view, there was much competition for the student’s cognitive learning space, creating a tension between course goals and competing university goals. The overall course student learning objectives map somewhat onto the university’s graduate attributes (the expected mix of skills/knowledge for students completing a bachelor’s degree). The social aspects of the university’s graduate attributes reflect its underlying ethos around personal growth, but for other more commercially oriented business schools, this may create problems. That being said, the implementation of a test, which seems counter to the pedagogical bases of the course, is there to fit with university guidelines for assessments. The issues with increasing class size also echo the needs of the university in the area of income from student enrolments, which have limited some of the transformative nature of the course due to administration and time costs for the lecturer.

Due to the nature of the course content, there was also competition between students’ pre-understanding of commercial marketing principles and social marketing principles. The educators were tasked with reframing students’ thinking to how marketing can benefit consumers’ well-being, not just to maximise shareholder value. This competed with previous understandings and conceptualisations (Allen *et al.*, 2019). As one student commented, “I had no idea social marketing was a thing before this course. Obviously I'd seen social marketing campaigns but I didn't know they were different and had different objectives. This course was super informative and engaging. I thoroughly enjoyed it” (Student comment, 2020).

One common example is re-learning the concept of “cost” or “price” associated with a social marketing campaign. The cost of a behaviour is not necessarily financial but can come from time, opportunity cost to do other things, loss of friendships, etc. Many students who have only been exposed to financially anchored definitions of cost struggled with these concepts. Similarly, understanding surrounding distribution when no product is available or physical service space; and the abundant use of promotion without the other marketing mix aspects was rampant. Avoidance of incorporation of the “people” aspect beyond online influencers and ignoring policy implications also were grounds for redevelopment of course materials and teaching approaches. To ensure students really understood these concepts, the lectures on the marketing mix topics were changed to interactive workshops. These students formed groups, were presented with each topic one by one and then discussed in groups how they would apply that to their behaviour change project. The lecturer walked around each group checking for understanding.

## **Discussion**

This article provides a pedagogy for social marketing education – the transformative social marketing pedagogy which views social marketing *AS* pedagogy. We have demonstrated that the same principles used by social marketers to facilitate change can be used as a pedagogic

tool to facilitate students' learning and understanding of social marketing. Teaching behavioural change should not just be about knowledge acquisition but also be embedded in the core of social marketing courses and assessments. In practice and at a minimum, the proposed pedagogy enables students to experience personal behaviour change to inform (through a deeper understanding) how they might make an intervention plan for others to change. At best, the transformational approach means that at a philosophical and ontological level, students have experienced a change in frame of reference, changed their behaviour and empathised with others.

We propose experiential learning, alongside associated practices of reflective and active learning, provide opportunities for transformative learning. Students are encouraged to choose to change a behaviour that resonates for them and apply their learning from class to their own behaviour change journey. In other words, the assessment can be tailored to their interests and personal circumstances. The experience includes both engaging in personal behaviour change as well as planning for other's behaviour change. This experience allows students to engage in reflective learning through diary entries reflecting on why and how behaviour change did/did not occur using a feedforward approach and providing scaffolding as well as interacting with a variety of students from different disciplinary backgrounds. It includes active learning through chosen topics, open forum discussions and class engagement in workshop type activities.

We present the value of this pedagogy as a three-pronged approach resulting in Interpretive Experiences, Transformative Experiences and Praxis which include elements of feeding forward and authentic assessment. Theoretical bases that were used for class activities and assessments can be seen in Figure 1, which is the theoretical contribution of this article. As can be seen, we suggest a layered approach to social marketing *AS* pedagogy to ensure a truly transformative outcome for students.

Through the harnessing of Experiential learning, Interpretive experiences were created through a mixture of both abstract conceptualisations and concrete experiences, as well as feeding forward. The aim of this aspect is for students to reflect and gain deep insights on marketing for behaviour change at multiple levels – as a person changing *and* as a social marketer aiming to facilitate change in others. These Interpretive experiences happen through abstract conceptualisation through standard lecture delivery and readings to introduce new ideas, as well as with in-class storytelling and analogies to aid in interpretation and understanding of those new ideas. This was followed and concurrently run with the student's concrete experience of the personal change project allowing them to try personal change in a completely new way or reinterpret personal change that they had tried before (Sterling, 2011). Classes centred around how theory can be applied to students' individual projects, rather than simply generic reflections of behavioural change. This created a more focussed environment with an onus on personal growth and development (Sterling, 2011). In this way, the assessment was co-created between the lecturer and the student, providing students with greater ownership of their own learning and practice. This active learning ensures educators provide learning activities and assessments that enable students to explore their own ideas, attitudes and beliefs about their chosen subject matter (Shakarian, 1995).

Transformative experiences occur in the following ways. In the weekly diaries' students were asked to provide reflective observations of their behaviour change project, which was also sought through in-class activities and discussions. Further, reflective observation was encouraged through discussions with students in class and the incorporation of feedforward

(Quinton and Smallbone, 2010). This allowed students to develop their own ability to reflect and grow on their own and others understandings, experiences and interpretations (Peltier *et al.*, 2005; Thorpe, 2004). The “Un-learning” of commercial marketing also provided a reflective and transformative experience because it allowed students to reflect on and critique their current knowledge of the world and discipline (Hibbert, 2013). They were encouraged to actively experiment with the weekly content, such as theories of behaviour, in their behaviour change project. Students did so through both journaling reflections and incorporation into their social marketing plans aimed at others.

This pedagogical approach, social marketing *AS* pedagogy, supported the development of both personal and professional skills in social marketing. As such, the third component to theory applied in this course was the active encouragement of Praxis to ensure class content was translated into professional social marketing skills. They achieved this through active authentic learning activities and assessments (Ashford-Rowe *et al.*, 2014; Gulikers *et al.*, 2004). These included the workshop style in-class activities, consumer research survey creation and analysis and the overall social marketing plan. These assessments enabled students to combine reflection and action. Future iterations of the course will have students implement their social marketing interventions within the university environment.

In essence, transformational learning is social marketing in action in the classroom. We explore how educators can effectively translate social marketing principles into pedagogy using social marketing benchmark criteria. Just as for a behaviour change campaign, social marketing educators can influence specific student behaviours, not only knowledge, attitudes and beliefs. Applying social marketing principles, educators also need to understand the lives, behaviour and issues for students, their learning and transformative experience. Students have become increasingly overworked and stressed, especially due to rising costs of living. Thus, we must understand their “exchange” in the form of student time, effort and learning involved with the course. While also considering what competes for the students’ time and mental resources. We must cater to different students from various disciplines, backgrounds and cultures. Identifying them as student segments and appealing appropriately through assessment customisation and unique perspectives and insights in class discussions follows.

As social marketers, we must reflect not only on *what* we teach students (Kelly, 2013) but also *how* we teach them. We suggest social marketing *AS* pedagogy as a means to further understand the nuances, complexities, tensions and intersections associated with changing behaviour. This transformational approach not only enables students to build a deeper understanding of theories and concepts covered in class but also the human side of behaviour change that can be fraught with failures and how to overcome these. It further develops their Praxis and professional skills in social marketing. Future research should explore the nature of personal experiences in a behaviour change program as a means of driving deeper understanding of encouraging change in others. Whether reflective practices during a behaviour change program effect the efficacy and longevity of the change might also be studied. Finally, how best to encourage a similar transformational learning practice through distance learning techniques and without direct engagement with class needs further research, as universities continue to build distance modules.

## **Figures**

## Figure 1.

Transformative social marketing pedagogy

**Table 1.**

Benchmark criteria for social marketing AS pedagogy

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Pedagogy</b>	<b>Example</b>
Methods mix	Educators' can use the methods mix to understand the context of the course. Students take part in and are surrounded by the context (i.e. the course)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Context of the course including the assessments (product), location (place), time and effort required (price) and communication (promotion)</li><li>- Clear, specific, measurable and time-bound behavioural goals were set by students for themselves</li></ul>
Behaviour	The educators' behavioural goal of the course was transformational learning. This goes beyond knowledge, attitudes and beliefs change alone. Student's behavioural goals varied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Diary reflection of success and failures of own behaviour change journey to increase reflexivity</li><li>- Feedforward and scaffolding allowed comments and engagement between student and lecturer</li><li>- Lecturer undertakes own behaviour change journey</li></ul>
Research	Educators identified "actionable insights" from students leading to a deeper understanding of what motivates and induces a change in their chosen behaviours. Students are led to also gain actional insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Insights were gained for students from conducting a consumer insights survey</li><li>- Students gain personal insight into their chosen topics</li><li>- Educators gain insights through student feedback and evaluation too</li></ul>
Segmentation	The educator can identify student "segments" and appeal to these appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lack of pre-requisites opening the course to all students</li><li>- Cross-fertilisation of student ideas and approaches as they come from different disciplines</li></ul>
Exchange	Understand the exchange between the educator and student in the form of student time, effort and learning involved with the course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Transformation in thinking, perspectives and behaviour provided exchange for students beyond higher grades. Instead, a belief in a general improvement in one's self was exchanged for partaking in the course</li></ul>
Competition	From the educator's point of view, there was much competition for the student's cognitive learning space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Consider tensions between university goals, graduate attributes and course objectives</li><li>- Reframing students' thinking to how marketing can benefit consumers'</li></ul>



<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Pedagogy</b>	<b>Example</b>
		well-being, not just to maximise shareholder value

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### **Further reading**

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