

Education is social management: a review of *International Models of Changemaker Education*

Book review

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Abstract

Purpose – This book review seeks to clarify the contribution of the (2022) edited collection, *International Models of Changemaker Education*, to the field of work-applied management. It proposes that the many international models of changemaker education described in this book offer management professionals an array of innovative methods which support workplace learning and change by fostering organizational and educational flexibility.

Design/methodology/approach – This book review frames the collection's contribution in the context of work-applied management by systematically reviewing its chapter in order to present their relevance to conversations in and adjacent to the field.

Findings – This book review provides insights into how changemaker education might be conceived of and utilized in work-applied management contexts as drawn from the many innovative and demiurgic methods described in the collection and its chapters.

Research limitations/implications – Changemaker education is a wide-ranging theoretical perspective, which is often loosely defined across contexts. However, this lexical amorphousness provides important flexibility for an expanded range of theoretical application.

Practical implications – This review includes important implications for the development of work-applied management theories drawn from models of changemaker education that demonstrate methods for achieving organizational agility and flexibility.

Originality/value – This review provides new and innovate models of use to work-applied management theorists and professionals.

Keywords Management practice, Changemaker, Work-based learning, Change approaches and methods, Changemaker education

Paper type Viewpoint

Alexandrowicz and Rogers's (2022) edited collection, *International Models of Changemaker Education: Programs, Methods, and Design*, presents a series of informative, innovative and practical models of changemaker education that demonstrate the efforts of many notable international educators to generate the educational, intellectual and organizational flexibility necessary for learners and employees to manage an increasingly complex and demanding world. The stakes are high, according to Rogers and Alexandrowicz, because of the "accelerating change, volatility and hyperconnectivity" which make social equity and cohesion difficult to achieve and which may even threaten our long-term survival as a species (*xv*). From these pressing global and societal problems are wrought the organizational and educational exigences to address the environmental, social and economic concerns of metastasizing complexity, which imperil our schools and society and which increasingly

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require enhanced organizational agility and more clearly defined senses of collaborative purpose.

Changemaker education, the argument goes, is first and foremost a pragmatic, “reality-based approach to learning, teaching and human development” (*xvi*). That sense of pragmatism, or what Alexandrowicz and Rogers inventively call, “cultivating a bias towards taking action”, is what best positions changemakers to lead collaborative efforts to solve real-world problems. But it is also what has positioned those who seek to make change as in need of the knowledge and skills necessary to adapt their work to account for and oblige the intensifying needs of an increasingly connected global community whose success (and perhaps survival) hinges upon its capacity for holistic and empowering educational and organizational management.

Far from an alarmist screed, Alexandrowicz and Rogers foreground the social and environmental stakes in this volume in order to make salient the impact on and responsibility of managers and educators who are tasked, for better and for worse, with orchestrating the preparation of the next generation of leaders so as to have the collaborative capacity, technical knowledge and empathetic values requisite to make an impact and to make change. A changemaker, according to the authors, is “an empathetic person who has the will and the skill to take action, to lead and to collaborate with others to solve real-world problems” and thereby become one of “the creative and complex problem-solvers the world needs” (*xvi*). It is in this regard that committing to changemaker education means facing the many structural and societal problems which plague the educational, governmental and social systems of the myriad regions, countries and communities of our planet.

These systemic social and environmental problems combined with the global teacher shortage and outdated models of teacher preparation further delimit the capacity of our educational systems to meet the needs of the millions of children worldwide who do not even have access to basic education, “let alone *changemaker education*”, a problem amplified further by the lack of diversity in the teaching profession (*xvi*). It is against the backdrop of these challenges that Rogers and Alexandrowicz offer a volume which seeks to highlight and map the *why, what and how* of changemaker education, a movement drawn from diverse corners of the globe that shares a collective vision of what success is or might look like for the many young students, learners and future employees across the world charged with handling the frenetic changes in technology and society which face our world today.

The very first chapter, “Empowering students through integration of supports across sectors”, by Mary Walsh, Amy Heberle and Kirsten Rene, is an incredibly moving and apt example of what changemaker education might look like, particularly for the uninitiated. Focused on an intervention program for high-poverty, urban schools which seeks to serve and support the basic, nonacademic (outside of school) needs of more than 30,000 primary school children, the chapter uses student vignettes to movingly illustrate the interventions’ impact, which has been shown to lead to higher grades throughout students’ education and long after they have left the intervention program.

Ask any manager and they will agree: an employee’s success in the workplace is often predicated off their success outside the workplace. However, entering into the fraught space of personal circumstance and family life can be not only debilitating, particularly at scale, for any one manager, but also well beyond their expertise and ability. It is a similar situation in which teachers often find themselves as they attempt to manage their classrooms: how are teachers to deal with the empty stomachs, shoeless feet and underserved mental and behavioral needs of their students *while also* trying to teach them math or social studies, etc.? This account of an intervention program aimed at serving the basic needs of children in high-poverty, urban schools not only provides a model of how to address and reduce educational inequities but also allows teachers to do what they do best: teach; much as it might free managers up to do what they do best: manage. Through accounting for the holistic (and out of

class) needs of students, Walsh, Heberle and Rene offer fresh insights into how managers and communities must work together to make change for the benefit of the high-risk learners and employees most in need.

Chapter 2 “Education as a force to unite: The United World Colleges (UWC) model of education” by Lodewijk van Oord, a Dutch researcher, educator and administrator, presents the UWC model of changemaker education. By drawing together students from all types of backgrounds and encouraging them to be active participants in their own education, the UWC model offers an experiential pedagogical approach which seeks to integrate out-of-school service and learning with students’ own in-school learning needs. Through out-of-class experiences like community service, project-based learning, outdoor educational experience and forums for discussion of international affairs, students are encouraged to get to know one another “in profound and meaningful ways” and in doing so, learn to live, and thrive, with one another (*xix*).

Van Oord’s discussion of the UWC model is particularly powerful because it speaks to the contexts in which the model works best and also the challenges faced and resources needed to account for the nature of the contexts where students live and learn. As many managers know, far too often extracurricular service opportunities remain disconnected from the employee’s experiences in the workplace. Through providing forums for discussion in which to reflect on their experiences, the UWC model of changemaker education positions employees and students alike to build rapport and cultivate communal insights with one another as they serve their communities.

Chapter 3, “Community connected learning: social innovation in education: A case study of the Native American Community Academy in Albuquerque, New Mexico” by Laura Hay, investigates how the Native American Community Academy (NACA) has supported disadvantaged students using a qualitative case study. The NACA curriculum includes community partnerships, mental and social health services for students’ families and culturally responsive college preparation. Through accounting for the communal context in which these students live and learn, Hay’s case study highlights how the NACA program integrates the “relational components of culture” in order to align curricular approaches with students’ lived experiences. In doing so, this chapter helps to shift dominant views of Native American education, which mostly focus on deficits in order to reframe these youths’ cultural contexts as an important element in their own growth.

Cultural differences can be a significant, overlooked factor in serving those communities most in need of support. The model Hay presents in this chapter foregrounds a necessary sensitivity to the ways of life which many disadvantaged and minority students bring to the classroom that applies equally to the ways of life which disadvantaged employees bring to the workplace. It is through reframing the many cultural assumptions these learners face as valid and valuable elements in their shared cultural experience that this chapter is able to provide an important model for accounting for and integrating cultural differences in the classroom and workplace in productive and profound ways.

Chapter 4, “Practice what you teach: a case for emotionally intelligent educators” by Amy Franklin and Kai Franklin, centers on the notion of preparing students to be emotionally intelligent (EI). Though there are many different models for EI learning in schools, Franklin and Franklin posit that the most powerful way for students to develop socioemotional skills is to surround them with teachers and other professionals who themselves embody these attributes and abilities. Two specific models are highlighted: one where students are coached to engage in introspection and another which focuses on how EI can be utilized to engage in discussion of complex, divisive topics while still maintaining respect and compassion for others.

The revealing accounts of the challenges and successes of the two EI models highlighted in this chapter help to broker a space for discussion of the practical feasibility of crafting

workplace cultures that promote empathy, curiosity, agency, respect and ethical conduct in order for employees to “become effective and ethical changemakers” (xx). In a world increasingly in need of the emotional intelligence requisite to engage in divisive topics while still respecting those with different views, Franklin and Franklin are able to offer an important, practical model which helps prepare students and future employees to be the EI changemakers, which the world needs.

Chapter 5, based in Chile, entitled “Training student teachers as changemakers: The case of the school of education” by Santa Cruz Josefina, Matsumoto Kiomi, Valdivia Josefina, Rios Trinidad and Guzmán Paulina, shows the value of two-way communication between communities and classrooms. As a part of the teacher education program at a University in Chile, candidates choose from among seven different, nontraditional courses intended to prepare them for educational leadership in the 21st century. Renovating public spaces and creating mobile libraries are two example projects which demonstrate the value of teachers working to serve children in the communities, and not just the classrooms in which they work and live.

The key takeaway in this chapter is the invaluable and indeed essential nature of community feedback. Through incorporating changemaking values, collaboration with local stakeholders can help to better inform the types of outreach efforts which managers might consider as they seek to support their localities. Kiomi *et al.* offer here an important model for changemaker education that accounts for the local, communal service beyond the workplace which changemakers are increasingly interested in. The authors are able to show that offering nontraditional courses in leadership can help students to broaden their own conceptions of the potential impact of their work on the communities they seek to serve in the same way nontraditional approaches to leadership might benefit employees as they seek to impact the communities in which they live and work.

Chapter 6, “Born to live: the transformative journey of Colombian youth as changemakers through peace education” by Catalina Cock Duque and Ariel Safdie, centers on the youth in the (often) violent contexts and communities in Columbia in which they live and learn. The PAZALOBIE educational model attempts to support youth development by encouraging curiosity and life skills through art, play and social entrepreneurship. In bringing together parents, local stakeholders and community leaders, this model of changemaker education seeks to empower young leaders by encouraging them to share their lived experiences and communal goals with one another. The tools inherent to this model attempt to break down the rigid vertical structure of education structure and incorporate socioemotional support in order to offer educators the flexibility necessary to adapt curricular activities to respond to and support children’s needs in inventive, newfound ways.

Many managers are lucky enough to live in contexts where their employees are not faced with violence as an everyday part of their lives. For those who are not, however, the PAZALOBIE model offers a vital lifeline that encourages the type of holistic education and training which is so important for both employees caught in difficult circumstances and the communities in which they live. By encouraging parents and local community leaders to be involved, this model of changemaker education presents a timely and important example of how enmeshed the educational, social and managerial elements of employees’ lives and communities are and the value of accounting for employees’ everyday lives in their education and training.

Chapter 7, “Passion projects: a case study of changemaker education in action” by Kate Dickinson-Villasenor, examines a program which promotes student-led inquiries into their own self-designated passion projects. Through positioning students to engage in that which they are most interested in, this program promotes academic skills *and* motivates students to wrest control of their own education. As many of these projects are interwoven into the local communities in which students reside, Dickinson-Villasenor is able to offer insights into the

challenges that come with supporting students' efforts to become changemakers in specific, local contexts. In honoring students' passions, this program positions students to be the owners of their own knowledge, experience and wonder and, in doing so, develop a passion for connecting with the other members of their communities.

As any manager knows, employees are people, and people *are* passionate. That their passions do not always necessarily align with workplace practices is a persistent challenge of organizational management. By supporting students as they pursue their own self-designated passion projects, Dickinson-Villasenor presents a model of changemaker education, which importantly centers on students' own self-defined goals. In doing so, this chapter offers an important and powerful model for connecting employees' motivations to the communities they serve within the border context of owning their own education and training, empowering employees and students alike to pursue what is most important to them and the communities they serve.

Chapter 8, "The Trilema Foundation's Rubik's cube model for changemaker education" by Carmen Pellicer Iborra, Martín Varela Dávila, Rosa López Oliván, Marta Monserrat Salcedo and Miguel Ignacio Garcia Morell, uses the Rubik's approach to instruction as an element in the Fundacion Trilema educational model in order to highlight student self-assessment and metacognition as potentially valuable sources for driving students' learning goals. Through real-world experiences and engagement with local community networks, the Trilema model seeks to explain how collaboration can "bring the real world into the classroom and the classroom into the real world in order to prepare students for the future real-life situations that they will face" (xxii). The authors use the construct of the Rubik's cube to show the complexity of integrating curriculum, methodology, assessment, organization, leadership and personalization into alignment with one another in order to foster curiosity and creative thinking in students who attempt to make change in a world which increasingly requires their resilience and problem-solving.

Centralized, nationalized learning assessments offer very little in the way of formative feedback for teachers and bring students very little joy or fulfillment. Iborra *et al.* disrupt typical models of assessment in order to center assessment as a potentially valuable source of feedback to support students' learning goals. By encouraging curiosity and creative thinking, this model of changemaker education helps to further students' ability to problem-solve in real-world contexts, which increasingly demand alternative methods of assessment and change in the same way it might serve managers interested in creative and unorthodox forms of assessment that offer the potential to generate new, dynamic capacities in their employees.

Chapter 9, "Changemaker education is for everybody: the sky school model" by Polly Akhurst, chronicles an organization which works to provide refugee youths in seven different countries access to quality education. By addressing the critical needs of these students, this program seeks to support students' acquisition of technological skills and engagement with community members outside the classroom in order to foster partnerships with community organizations that can serve students in the low-resource environments in which many refugees live.

This chapter argues that helping students to develop and become "compassionate problem-solvers and innovators" can provide "context-proof curriculums" that convey across regions and contexts. In an era in which policy instruments have increased the additional layers of complexity requisite to successfully implement organizational development approaches, Akhurst's contention that students can then "embrace uncertainty and complexity" cross-applies in vital ways to employee development concerns (152). Akhurst's model presents a potentially important approach which foregrounds community engagement as a conveyable element across the many wide-ranging and complex contexts in which employees live and learn.

Chapter 10, “The practitioners’ guide to changemaker education Colégio S. José Portugal” by Isabel Valente-Pires and Luiza Nora, centers on the VOAR model which seeks to create environments in which students develop autonomy, responsibility and initiative in order to understand the impact of their actions in their communities. This model promotes connections with others through a tutoring service which provides support to help children develop. This chapter demonstrates that the development of resilient personalities in youth learners through learner-centered approaches to changemaking education can help students to connect with others and maintain a positive outlook in their life and education in much the same way that employees might benefit from professional development policies which encourage their own resilience, autonomy and responsibility through fostering connections with other like-minded colleagues and peers.

In Chapter 11, “Design for change: a methodology for young people to change the world” by Asma Hussain, Beatriz Alonso and Elena Bretón, the design for change (DFC) methodology is shown to impact student’s education through an inclusive initiative that focused on addressing problems such as alcoholism and disability in their local communities. The DFC method seeks to empower educators and families and students to work together to solve problems that are often beyond the scope of their own individual ability. The chapter presents the DFC’s Feel, Imagine, Do and Share (FIDS) program, which has impacted more than two million children and youth across more than 60 countries. By using design thinking to “act on the problems and challenges they face through a lens of empathy”, FIDS serves to help students become active citizens of society and denizens of their own educational experiences in ways which might benefit managers trying to toe the line between academic theory and the locus of individual workplace responsibility under the auspices of broader efforts to align more effective senses of collaborative purpose across organizational levels.

Chapter 12, “The ecosystemic pedagogy of Vila School: A Brazilian educational proposal for socio environmental transformation” by Patricia Limaverde, contends that student development is a holistic undertaking and that through the promotion of key skills such as collaboration, appreciation for and tolerance of diverse opinions and conflict mediation, students can at once learn to care for themselves, the environment and their local community members in ways that help prepare them for the real world beyond schooling. Using a Freirian theoretical perspective, this model highlights an environmental education pedagogy in Brazil which uses nontraditional experiences like cultivating gardens, building tools and toys out of junk and promoting socio-environmental campaigns to expand the spectrum of educational experiences beyond the classroom and into the immediate contexts in which students live.

Chapter 13, “Educators as changemakers: a model for infusing social emotional learning during educational transitions to increase readiness and address intergenerational poverty”, by Seth Sampson, Nancy Lewin and Paul Rogers, uses interviews and participant observations to highlight a collaborative project that seeks to address intergenerational poverty in preparing teacher candidates. The chapter details the many contributions of local and national organizations who are committed to integrating community-based resources in order to surface and utilize local knowledge and establish culturally responsive development. Through accounting for the many barriers that young teacher candidates face in trying to become teachers, Sampson, Lewin and Rogers are able to showcase a model of collaboration focused on solving real-world problems and, in doing so, supporting students and their families in culturally sensitive ways that promote greater social mobility.

The final chapter, “Changemaking in teacher education: a journey from inspiration to action”, by Viviana Alexandrowicz highlights the essential role that teacher education plays in preparing educators to promote their students’ acquisition of contemporary skills. This chapter presents a powerful example of how integrating changemaking into a teacher preparation program at the University of San Diego can led to alignment with teaching

performance standards and expectations. Through reviewing the many roadblocks to implementation and evidence of the benefits of integrating changemaking into the program, Alexandrowicz is able to offer a valuable roadmap to thinking about the place of changemaker education in teacher education programs, and beyond.

What all of these chapters share is a pervasive insistence on the need to account for the broader social contexts in which students and employees live and learn and in which they seek to change their communities, and the world, for the better. One potential shortcoming of the book, however, is the incredibly diverse and wide-ranging nature of what typifies a changemaker. If a changemaker, to Rogers and Alexandrowicz's minds, is "an empathetic person who has the will and the skill to take action, to lead and to collaborate with others to solve real-world problems" and thereby becomes one of "the creative and complex problem-solvers the world needs" and if changemaker education is first and foremost a pragmatic, "reality-based approach to learning, teaching and human development," then one comes away from the book wondering if a changemaker is ultimately anyone interested in recognizing the deeply interwoven nature of education, society and humanity (*xv; xvi*). Then again, that may be the point.

Rivers *et al.* (2015) have previously noted the many different conceptions of what a "changemaker" may be. Delafield and Mukherjee (2016) have lamented that social innovation has become a buzz phrase. Wall (2016) has critiqued models of workplace learning and change methodologies by suggesting that in over-focusing on the practical, these models often obscure deeper insights into how to "potentially disrupt inequalities or social injustices in the workplace" (6). However, another research study, by García-González and Ramírez-Montoya (2021), has found that "incorporating transversal social entrepreneurship projects in various courses resulted in students feeling more capable regarding their social entrepreneurship potential" (1,236). Further, Maxwell and Armellini (2018) found that "there is tangible benefit in adopting an integrated framework that enables students to develop personal literacy and graduate identity" and that embedding changemaker attributes can help bolster students' employability (77).

This is all to say that changemakers and changemaker education continue to evolve in the same complex ways which our increasingly digitally connected world does, and what typifies a changemaker may be less important than the tangible benefits of integrating these values into the educational, organizational and managerial models which will prepare the next generation of employees and leaders of our world. Alexandrowicz and Rogers have produced a volume which is a valuable contribution to changemaker education that applies equally well to work-applied management and workplace learning. The models in this important volume span the globe, introducing wildly disparate localities and contexts each with their own challenges and demands and yet which all share the common ground of valuing the potential impact of social entrepreneurship and communal connectivity. In this volume, Alexandrowicz and Rogers have surfaced (and synthesized) a deeply held belief that the authors of this collection all share: that, as James Moffett (1994) once put it, "education, at its core, *is* social work" and that, in turn, education is at its core, social management (299).

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