Advancing and Measuring the Impact of Changemaker (Social Innovation) Education
Ashoka's 2022 Changemaker Education Research Forum
Overview & Summary Stream 1

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Abstract

The last 20 years have seen the emergence of social innovation as a field of study with its genesis in multiple disciplines, theoretical perspectives, and practices. As the societal, environmental, and economic challenges of the 21st Century become increasingly complex, the need for new thinking, skills, and capabilities to facilitate social innovation that not only tackles these challenges but enhances societies' capacity to act increases. The role of education as a major contributor in creating this new paradigm has come under scrutiny, with attention paid to how social innovation is taught, the skills and competencies social innovation education develops, and the impact such pedagogies and curricula have in developing students as Changemakers equipped to tackle these challenges. The Changemaker Education Research Forum (CERF) held in Nova Scotia between 17th and 18th September 2022 provided a unique opportunity to undertake a deep dive into many of the themes surrounding post-18 secondary social innovation education, exploring the rich seam of practice and research, moving this field forward. This article presents personal reflections on the papers and discussion that emerged in Stream 1 of the forum, the development of social innovation education, and the advances made in the research attempting to measure the impact of such education. These reflections provide an overview of the stream and introduce the varied and thought-provoking papers presented by researchers, students, and practitioners who took part.

Ashoka's 2022 Changemaker Education Research Forum

Ashoka: Innovators for the Public has been identifying, supporting, and learning from some of the most innovative social entrepreneurs for the past 40 years. Ashoka aims to build a world where "everyone is a changemaker" so that "solutions outrun problems." To facilitate this, an annual changemaker[i] education[ii] research forum (CERF)[iii] has been developed with the goal of bringing together practitioners and scholars from across the world to enhance the knowledge base of social innovation and changemaking. Much of the research presented at Ashoka's 2022 CERF is further explored and elaborated on in articles within this issue of the *Social Innovations Journal (SIJ)*.

Ashoka's 2022 CERF was designed to create the conditions for deeper collaboration and knowledge-sharing amongst the Changemaker network[iv] and beyond, tapping into valuable insights from Ashoka Fellows, academics, researchers, Change Leaders, university staff, and students.[v] Research proposals for two streams of inquiry were solicited via outreach to scholars and practitioners within Ashoka's global community of higher education institutions, Ashoka Fellows, and other partners.

Advancing and Measuring the Impact of Changemaker (Social Innovation) Education

The 2022 Forum focused on two interconnected streams of research. Stream 1 focused on the impact and potential of changemaker education. Stream 2 focused on identifying and overcoming barriers to social innovation. Many of the presentations included elements from both streams. The focus of this overview is on the presentations and ideas shared via Stream 1 and are provided by the stream's co-chairs. An overview of the research in Stream 2 is provided separately.

Stream 1 of this year's Changemaker Education Research Forum (CERF) focused on exploring the impact of social innovation education and the pedagogical innovations moving the field forward. As scholar-practitioners engaged in these topics for several years, we cut our teeth on the pioneers of the field, such as Dees, Emerson, and Economy 2001; Dees and Anderson 2003; Nicholls and Dees 2015; Wei-Skillern and Leonard J 2007; Bornstein 2004; Caulier-Grice, Mulgan, and Murray 2010, who provided a grounding for social innovation in a business school paradigm that justified its existence as a field of study and inquiry. At that time, much of the focus was on how entrepreneurship theory related to the social space and could be adapted, applied, and enhanced to address a social purpose or objective. The aim of such education was to maximize the potential for the social element to be more sustainably delivered through social enterprise or non-profit business models embracing traditional entrepreneurship practice.

The work of the pioneers was crucial in codifying and moving social innovation from being the pursuit of a few dedicated champions to a policy driver for addressing the complexity of the global challenges faced in the 21st Century. As those working in this space became more connected and interdependent as practitioners and scholars, the potential for social innovation to tackle the thinking and systems creating these challenges moved social innovation beyond the confines of traditional entrepreneurship theory and practice determined by existing economic norms, power structures, and ideologies. Social innovation produced new products, services, and combinations that were not only good for society and changed systems but also enhanced society's capacity to act by reorganizing social relationships and changing the power dynamics at the root of many societal challenges. Entrepreneurship education, albeit with a social lens on the enterprising non-profit, was no longer sufficient in educating students as social innovators and Changemakers with a call for a specific social innovation education as a distinct pedagogy and curriculum.

Such a pedagogy and curriculum require students to explore and ground themselves, and their learning, in a cultural, environmental, and geopolitical context from which they build knowledge of themselves, the world around them, and their place in that world as active citizens and change agents. This learning process enables individuals to question the dominant narratives,

histories, and wisdom underpinning many of today's crises and injustices and to challenge them to overcome the barriers to generating new knowledge, new understanding, and new systems and relationships.

Stream 1 of CERF 2022 explored this new paradigm of social innovation education as a disruptive force no longer confined to focusing only on social venture development, opportunity recognition, and risk-taking. The key now understands how social innovation education works, why it is important, and the impact it has in the development of students as Changemakers. We must understand more about how the skills and tools to enact systems change might be developed to tackle the uncertain, ambiguous, volatile, and complex world we now face. Rightly, as interest has increased, educators and practitioners are being asked to answer the '*so what?*' question and provide evidence that what we say can be achieved *is* being achieved and how we know this is the case.

Our three contributors to Stream 1a of the Forum addressed this head-on and provided contrasting insights into how the impact of changemaker education can be measured, maximized, and put to the forefront of the development of social innovation teaching.

Stream 1a: Measuring and Maximizing Changemaking Education

Stephanie Haase from the Amani Institute in Kenya identified the non-linear path social innovation practitioners follow in addressing the most pressing social and environmental issues in the world. She noted that this journey of changemaking is often a lonely one as Changemakers take on the huge injustices in the world from a position of passion, belief in what is right and wrong, and desire to put things right. Although being constantly at odds with the world leads to feelings of ostracization, disillusionment, and eventual withdrawal from the field through burnout, cutting short the potential of changemakers and their impact. In her article in this issue, Haase challenges social innovation education to take the personal expectations, well-being, and personal demands of learners into account in how learning and teaching are delivered if impact is to be achieved.[vi] Haase provides insights, lessons learned, and recommendations for this based on her work with the usage of the Satisfaction with Life Scale in a key Amani Institute program.

Changemaking is not always a pursuit of the lone crusader. In fact, the collective intentional acts of groups of changemakers and communities are needed to shift the dial. The presentation by **Marguerite Sheffer** at Tulane University explored this collective approach to changemaking by discussing the role of fostering and measuring collective efficacy within cohorts of learners. This belief in the possibility of success across communities can be a measure and facilitator of success itself. Starting from the basic questions of 'What are the indicators that someone is a changemaker?' and 'What changes over time as a result of changemaker education?', Sheffer suggested the development and measurement of a person's belief that their community can have a positive impact is one way this can be achieved.

Her research suggests a framework that maximizes the impact of changemaker education by supporting the development of collective efficacy belief, leading to sustained social impact delivered through teams and collective action. This suggestion is grounded in literature and

research on collective efficacy, recommending the adoption or adaption of existing tools and collective efficacy scales as a way of measuring the impact of changemaker education.

Finally, in their presentation on impact, **Rachel Claus, Rachel Davel, and Brian Belcher** from Royal Roads University addressed the question of how further research into changemaker education can demonstrate validity and robustness through the application of a quality assessment framework for future research design, planning, and evaluation. The case was made that this transdisciplinary approach can lead to new approaches to researching changemaker education, surfacing new insights, and moving the field on by strengthening the research base.

These thought-provoking contributions illustrated the diversity of approaches to understanding the impact of changemaker education currently being pursued. They also ground this understanding in research, theory, and changes to practice as social innovation education expands the range of changemaking activities, meets the demand for social innovation education, and addresses the need to answer the '*so what*?' question required if the field is to develop further. These themes were expanded upon as Stream 1 moved to explore innovation within pedagogy and the emergence of new approaches to changemaker education in Stream 1b.

Stream 1b: Case Studies and Responsible Stewardship of Knowledge

Stream 1b introduced an action turn, leading us to explore themes of learning and teaching, change the leading, and humility and responsibility in the stewardship of knowledge. **Lois Fearon**, from Royal Roads University, discussed her research looking at the development and delivery of two undergraduate business school programs. Fearon's article in this issue highlights the importance of high levels of changemaker education integration into the curriculum to maximize potential impact, the use of powerful pedagogies, and greater attention to context and the learning environment in developing students' sustainability orientation. [vii] Her conceptual framework for changemaker education places great importance on a whole institutional approach, supporting learning in a multi- and transdisciplinary way.

Secretary General of HEC Montréal **Johanne Turbide** challenged those in higher education to think about the journey to culture change as a process of addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within universities, seeing it as a route, not a destination. Her presentation reflected on the challenges she faced and the progress made at HEC, where changemaker education became an institutional learning process. Turbide highlighted the role of change leaders as catalysts of institutional change and the need to focus on persuading those open to be persuaded by explaining the 'why' and coproducing the potential benefits resulting from breaking down the siloes within higher education by creating collective efficacy for change.

The session was powerfully drawn together by **Rochele Padiachy**. Padiachy is a master's student from Royal Roads University whose personal life experience led her to embark on a lifelong journey dedicated to social justice, human rights, and human security. Padiachy passionately made a case for "changemaker learners" in any discipline to ground their learning and practice in a statement of intent, humility, purpose, and responsibility in the acquisition and stewardship of knowledge. Her development of the Human Rights Scholar's Acknowledgement

– an intentional and personal statement – grounds the learner in a relationship with a tradition of human rights, accountability to others, and responsibility for the future. The acknowledgment challenges the learner to be introspective and take responsibility and provides an entry point for a learner's critical consciousness and connection to the world. In relation to changemaker education, such statements ensure changemakers recognize the responsibility they have, that their practice has consequences, and leads them to own the change they become. This is expanded upon in her article in this issue of *Social Innovations Journal.* [viii]

For us, Rochele's contribution brought the day full circle by demonstrating how far social innovation education had come from the early days when Dees et al. were not permitted to use the term 'social' in their programs for fear of devaluing these programs. We are now in that space where social innovation learning is not only about venturing but acknowledges its role in the personal growth of learners, enabling them to know the world differently and themselves powerfully and believe in the change they want to be and see. This has been achieved through the curiosity of researchers, educators, and practitioners and the innovation they have delivered in the design delivery and engagement with changemaker education. It has required a repositioning of the power relations of teacher and learner, allowing students to be in greater control of their learning and to follow their passion and beliefs as vehicles for change while protecting their well-being from the demands they place on themselves. Alongside this has been an increased requirement to demonstrate the impact of changemaker education by answering the *'so what?'* question in new and innovative ways to convince administrators, senior leaders, and policymakers of the efficacy of what we believe.

The commitment and collective efficacy of all those involved in CERF Stream 1 filled us with hope and pride in how the field had moved forward. At the end of the session, we were left feeling that changemaker education was in safe hands and confident that the developments we discussed to put the whole arena of changemaker education on a path to success.

Our thanks go out to all the contributors for making Stream 1 enjoyable, thought-provoking, and successful.

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[i] Ashoka considers a "**changemaker**" to be someone who is taking creative action to solve a social problem. Change-making involves empathy, thoughtfulness, creativity, taking action and collaborative leadership. Ashoka Fellows are selected by Ashoka as the world's leading change-makers. https://www.ashoka.org/en-us/program/ashoka-fellowship. Change-making and social innovations are often used interchangeably. A key difference is that a "change-maker" is someone who is a social entrepreneur and innovator who is focused on ensuring everyone involved realizes their own potential to create change.

[ii] Ashoka broadly defines "**changemaker education**" as education with the belief that anyone and everyone can make a difference. It promotes innovation and collaboration to address the world's most pressing challenges. Some of the world's most effective providers of change-maker education are Ashoka's Change-maker Campuses: https://ashokau.org/change-maker-campus-overview.

[iii] https://ashokau.org/research-forum.

[iv] Ashoka's network of change-makers includes Ashoka Fellows, representatives from Change-maker Campuses and other higher education institutions interested in social innovation and change-making, Ashoka Young Change-makers, and others within these communities. A "Change Leader" is a liaison from a Change-maker Campus overseeing the integration of change-making across and through their campus in close collaboration with Ashoka.

[v] The 2022 event was held in conjunction with the 2022 International Social Innovation Research Conference – enabling a broader audience. CERF 2022 was held as a hybrid event to increase access.

[vi] "Greater Life Satisfaction in Amani Institute Fellows"

[vii] "Integrating Change-maker Education into Business School Curriculum, Exploring the Impact"

[viii] "The Human Rights Scholar's Acknowledgement"