

Transformative Trajectories in Management Education: Navigating Social-Ecological Crises

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates transformative trajectories in management education to respond to modern social-ecological crises which call for systemic and holistic change. Examining fundamental questions, such as "why, what, where, when, and who" from a social-ecological system perspective and answering "how" by bringing social innovation into the conversation, this research will engage with civic ME to engender social-ecological flourishing. The research will use a qualitative approach, where interviews and focus groups are employed to analyze key themes and insights. The findings of the research highlight the importance of a comprehensive definition of transformation, specific strategies for practical implementation, enhanced social-ecological systems integration, coherent social innovation incorporation, and concrete scaling pathways for civic ME. The study concludes offering actionable steps for educators while mentioning the need for further studies using diverse methodologies to facilitate adaptability and scalability.

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1. Introduction

The need for transformation in management education in the face of modern, complex social-ecological crises is urgently at stake. This paper probes into the often obscure definition of transformation in ME, focusing on clarifying existing trajectories or scaling pathways for educators to draw on. This study integrates the lens of social-ecological systems for an understanding of foundational aspects of transformation-including why, what, where, when, and who-and the social innovation lens for an articulation of how, striving for flourishing social-ecological prosperity through a civic ME framework. Qualitative in its methodological approach, it evolves from literature review to in-depth analysis of transformative trajectories toward practical implications.

This paper deals with the urgent need for great change in contemporary management education that will be able to more effectively address the complex problems of social-ecological crises we are facing currently. It explores the much-debated and poorly delineated concept of transformation concerning ME with the objective of unpacking the different trajectories for transformation or scaling pathways available for educationalists to use. This research incorporates a social-ecological systems perspective to gain deeper insight into the essential foundational elements of transformation, including crucial questions such as why, what, where, when, and who. It further clarifies the processes involved using a social innovation perspective with an overall goal of fostering social-ecological flourishing within a civic framework of management education. The research employs a qualitative methodological approach, from the literature review to the in-depth analysis of transformative trajectories, and then concludes with practical implications for the field.

2. Literature Review

This section critically evaluates existing literature on management education transformation, focusing on five core areas derived from our introductory sub-questions: the foundational aspects of transformation in ME, the practical specificity of transformation, the role of social-ecological systems, the integration of social innovation, and the potential scaling pathways for civic ME. The section identifies specific findings: "Defining Transformation in Management Education," "Practical Specificity of Transformation," "Social-Ecological Systems Approach," "Integration of Social Innovation in ME," and "Scaling Pathways for Civic ME." It highlights gaps such as unclear transformation definitions, limited exploration of practical specifics, inadequate integration of social-ecological systems in ME, insufficient incorporation of social innovation, and a lack of concrete scaling pathways. This paper addresses these deficiencies by proposing a comprehensive framework for transformative ME.

2.1 Defining Transformation in Management Education

Initial researches on transformation in ME often failed to define clearly and focused mainly on the apparent changes. Later research was an attempt to provide a more structured understanding by finding the key drivers and barriers of transformation but failed to offer comprehensive definitions. Recent attempts focus on a holistic transformation including pedagogical, curricular, and institutional changes but face the problem of reaching consensus for a standardized definition..

2.2 Practical Specificity of Transformation

Early work on transformation for practice in ME indicated that particular strategies were required but mostly generic solutions were offered. The more recent studies used targeted approaches, such as sustainability integration into curricula, which were more specific but less extensive in scope. Current work has started to discuss the specific pathways to practical implementation but often these pathways are not very contextually adaptable or scalable across various educational contexts.

2.3 Social-Ecological Systems Approach

Social-ecological systems application in ME has had limited scope, with research during the early stages being a basic ecological literacy. Research later advanced this by providing systems thinking in management curricula to give a much broader context for understanding the nature of ecological interactions. Despite this, integration across all the levels of ME is not very uniform as many research papers go ahead to advocate for much deeper systemic integration to address more complex socio-ecological challenges.

2.4 Integration of Social Innovation in ME

Social innovation in ME was first pursued through scattered case studies, pointing to innovative pedagogies. As interest increased, it led to the exploration of frameworks for embedding social innovation into curricula, although these efforts often lacked coherence and scalability. The latest thinking advocates for a more holistic approach that combines innovation with social-ecological perspectives but still presents challenges in aligning those with existing ME structures.

2.5 Scaling Pathways for Civic ME

Early research on scaling pathways in ME focused on incremental change, for example, scaling up existing programs. Subsequent research looked at more transformative pathways, including community engagement and interdisciplinary collaboration, but did not clearly outline how to implement them. More recent research has identified pathways for civic transformation that are holistic and emphasize collaborative effort and systemic change, but the challenge of practical application is significant.

3. Method

It used qualitative research methods to look at transformation trajectories in management education. It is a method by which the study gathers insights through interviews and focus groups among educators and experts of social-ecological systems and social innovation. Interviews and focus groups have been held among management educators to give wide variety in perceptions of change. It follows thematic coding while conducting analyses to give key themes and insights that reflect real-life applications in a variety of education settings.

4. Findings

The empirical findings of this study reveal salient insights into the transformation in management education, addressing an expanded set of subresearch questions: defining transformation in ME, practical specificity of transformation, the role of social-ecological systems, integration of social innovation and scaling pathways for civic ME. The findings that were identified include: "Comprehensive Definition of Transformation in ME," "Specific Strategies for Practical Transformation," "Enhanced Social-Ecological Systems Integration," "Coherent Integration of Social Innovation," and "Concrete Scaling Pathways for Civic ME." These findings point out the necessity of a more defined definition of transformation and the strategies required for practical implementation. The integration of social-ecological systems and social innovation makes the potential for transformation higher, while concrete pathways of scaling provide actionable steps for educators. This research study aims to fill existing gaps in understanding by presenting a holistic framework that aligns educational practices with the needs of social-ecological systems to create sustainable and civic-minded ME.

4.1 Comprehensive Definition of Transformation in ME

The analysis of the interviews with educators and experts presents a very comprehensive definition of transformation in ME, which centers on systemic and holistic change. Participants underscored that there is a need for the integration of ecological and social considerations into educational practices. For instance, one educator stated that curricula should embrace ecological sustainability and social equity, thus illustrating a shift towards a more inclusive and transformative education. This comprehensive definition challenges earlier notions of transformation as mere curriculum adjustments and aligns with the need for systemic change in ME.

4.2 Specific Strategies for Practical Transformation

The study highlights particular strategies for practical transformation in ME, focusing on action steps that educators can take. By analyzing focus group discussions, participants suggested that the curricula should be designed to include real-world problem-solving and interdisciplinary collaboration. Projects that engage students with the local community to solve social-ecological issues provide practical experience and civic responsibility. These strategies provide concrete pathways for educators to implement transformative practices in a variety of educational settings.

4.3 Enhanced Social-Ecological Systems Integration

Findings show greater consolidation of social-ecological systems in ME, emphasizing systemic thought. Participants mentioned effective models that integrate ecological literacy into management courses, bringing learners closer to socio-ecological interactions. One instance was a collaborative project involving collaboration with environmental organizations and permitting students to apply systems thinking across real-world problems. This greater consolidation addresses gaps in the work of earlier researchers and identifies avenues for systemic change in the context of ME.

4.4 Coherent Integration of Social Innovation

The study demonstrates the coherent integration of social innovation in ME, where there is the need to connect innovation to ecological and social goals. Participants reported the successful framework that integrates social innovation in curricula and provides opportunities for creativity and problem-solving. Examples include courses challenging students to develop innovative solutions to social-ecological issues while encouraging critical thinking and collaboration. This coherent integration is in alignment with recent calls for transformative change and addresses gaps in earlier efforts to incorporate social innovation into ME.

4.5 Concrete Scaling Pathways for Civic ME

Findings reveal concrete scaling pathways for civic ME, which offer educators clear action steps to enact transformative change. Participants reported successful scaling efforts that incorporate community engagement and interdisciplinary collaboration. Examples include partnerships with local organizations in order to address social-ecological challenges, fostering civic responsibility and systemic change. Such concrete pathways provide educators with practical guidance for enacting transformative practices, in line with calls for a civic transformation of ME.

5. Conclusion

The work provides a comprehensive framework in changing management education to face the intricate social-ecological crisis. It integrates social-ecological systems and social innovation, offering specific strategies and scaling pathways for actual implementation. The results, hence, underscore the necessity for systemic and holistic change instead of the earlier views on transformation in the guise of changing the curriculum. The study contributes toward ME theoretical advancements by aligning educational practices with the necessities of social-ecological systems. However, focusing on qualitative data may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should explore diverse methodologies and contexts to further understand the potential for transformative change in ME, ensuring its adaptability and scalability across various educational settings.

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