Small Silos to Global Movements

16

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How many times have we all heard or read that curricular reform is needed to meet environmental and sociological changes that are upon us? **Linda Irwin** and **Isabel Rimanoczy** ask: will educators and administrators transform what we are doing in time to survive and thrive?

Want to hear a secret? Global Movement Initiative (GMI) has a grand-sounding name, but it is only a small (but growing) organisation of volunteers passionate about changing business education to support a flourishing, regenerative, and sustainable future.

GMI was fortunate to collaborate with some of the leading academic experts in business and sustainability topics as we explored how we could contribute to changing business higher education - rapidly. We surveyed deans. We surveyed the literature. We spoke at conferences. And we were thrilled to find many passionate people were already doing great things around the globe to change curricula, courses, or business systems in ways that could help students and graduates dramatically change business practices.

These were true pioneers who were cutting through the wilderness of resistance and bureaucracy to create and implement change. But we found that most of these innovative educators and administrators were working in singular silos. The more webinars and conferences we attended, the more we saw the desperate need and desire from students, faculty, alumni and others to connect with those who were actively transforming what they researched and taught about sustainable business practices.

We decided to compile the stories of these pioneers and share them to energise and support efforts at transforming business education. We began with a call for chapters and soon collected 16 stories from 26 administrators, faculty, students, and business leaders from 13 countries in the North and Global South who are actively working to transform business education. Some stories describe successes, others describe innovations that were developed but ran into difficulties. All the stories provided opportunities to learn. What worked, what didn't,

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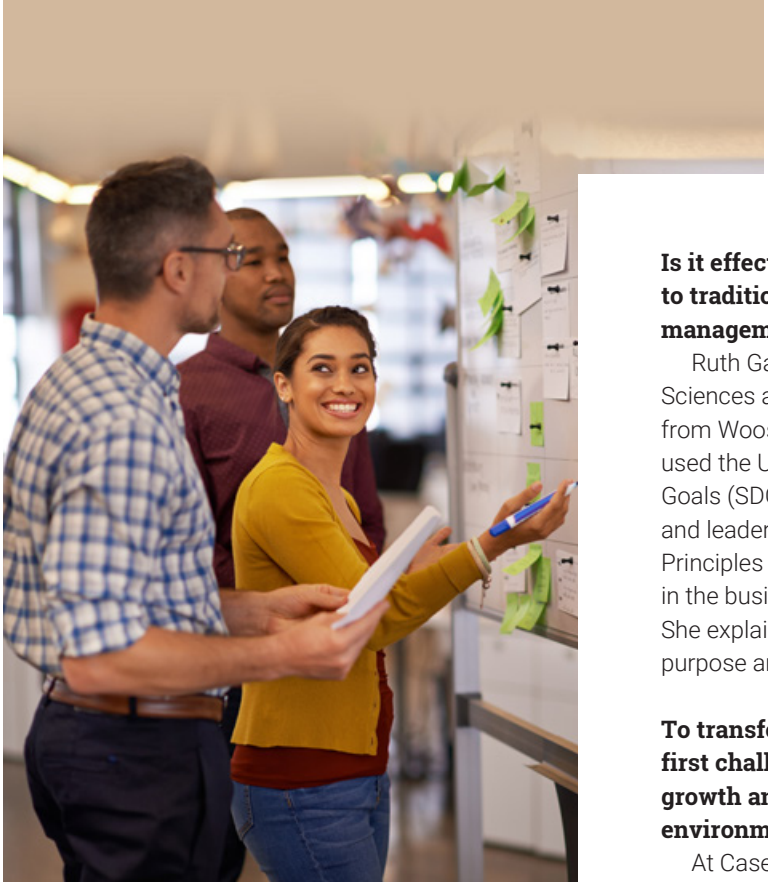
what will the pioneers try next? Their stories are now available from the Routledge Principles of Responsible Management Series, ***Transforming Business Education for a Sustainable Future – Stories from Pioneers.*** (https://www.routledge.com/Transforming-Business-Education-for-a-Sustainable-Future-Stories-from-Pioneers/Irwin-Rimanoczy-Fritz-Weichert/p/book/9781032591162)

As the editors worked through submitted stories, patterns evolved. Some pioneers told stories of transforming business education at the system or curricular level. Others described interdisciplinary or inter-community efforts that engaged students and alumni in programmes of change in their local business community. Some pioneers explained how they changed specific courses or worked within a department to incorporate sustainability, ESG, or ESD concepts within their own syllabi. We also received stories about integrating natural ecosystems, community participation, and humanity in business principles courses.

In total, we saw that no single path represented the perfect transformation of business education from promoting profit-centred business activities that abuse our planet and its people. However, we realised the work being done is truly transformative. As with any global and organic innovation effort, there are more questions than answers, and challenges remain. It takes time to form a common language and definitions that serve as a platform for change. It takes time to research transformative efforts and determine best practices. However, we are running out of time to address climate and humanitarian crises.

What do these educational pioneers teach us about transforming business education? Their experiences reveal important questions still being debated in higher education.



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Is it effective to add SDGs or sustainability concepts to traditional business principles such as economics, management, or marketing?

Ruth Garcia Leon from Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences and the University of Hamburg and Jed Lindholm from Wooster Polytech Institute explained how they used the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to incorporate sustainability into marketing and leadership courses. Orla Kelleher embedded the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) in the business college strategy at the University of Derby. She explains the complexities of a system-wide change in purpose and multi-group integration.

To transform business education is it necessary to first challenge existing economic theories of unlimited growth and policies that put shareholder profit above environmental or human considerations?

At Case Western Reserve, Nurete Brenner was recruited to develop a new MBA programme that put people and planet ahead of profits. She challenged the underlying principles that are fundamental to current business pedagogy. Ken Sagendorf gathered experts and change leaders to help Regis University create a regenerative finance and economic degree programme. The programme was to kick off the College's vision of stewardship where business is a steward of society to improve the quality of life on earth. Luis Rodriguez-Reyes and Gabriel Penagos were part of a Finance Task Force from the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU). Their Task Force developed a sustainable finance course that strikes a balance between the well-being of *all* shareholders and shareholder wealth maximisation. The goal was to develop the sustainability-minded business leaders the world needs.

Will business students develop a more holistic or systems point of view if we incorporate completely new ways of looking at business topics?

Lovasoa Ramboarisata, Celine Berrier-Lucas, and Dimbi Ramonjy collaborated at their colleges of Excelia Business School and the University of Quebec to bring decolonial perspectives to their management and CSR courses. Their work intentionally incorporates a pedagogy of love, liberation, and freedom. Jean-Claude Boldrini and Donatienne Delorme spent 10 years researching, creating, and testing a new circular business model for sustainable business. They explain the need for cross-disciplinary approaches to serve a complex and rapidly changing world. Miguel Córdova from Pontificia Universidad Católica del

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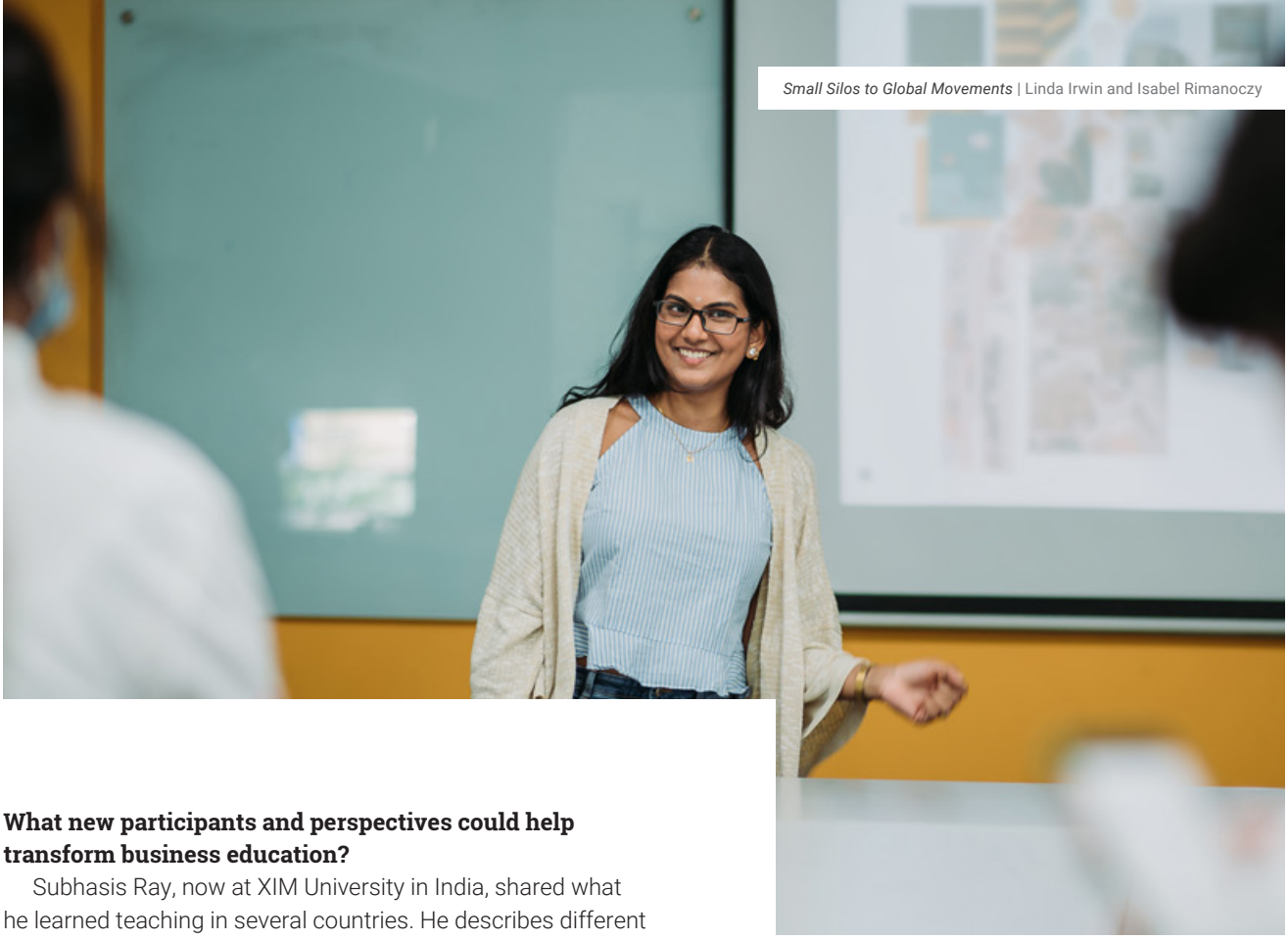
Perú and Marina Schmitz from IEDC-Bled School of Management in Sloveni brought their passion for marine life to business courses that incorporate cases of marine ecosystems. These totally new types of business cases create an appreciation for and application of systems and interdisciplinary curricula.

Can transformation begin at the individual faculty or course level?

Christel Tessier Dargent at Grenoble INP changed her approach to teaching entrepreneurship. She developed a hybrid approach blending the provision of information from experts' with enabling students to actively participate in community businesses. This combination allowed students to learn by living. Before redeveloping several marketing courses at Regis University, Linda Irwin determined that the current product-pushing and promotion definition of marketing was not sustainable. So she created a new definition where the role of marketing must create value for business, customers, and society.

Must change begin at the senior university level where the 'leader' establishes a new sustainability strategy for business education and the college follows?

Valerie Fernandes, Jesus Gonzalez Feliu, and Morgane Fritz shared how each contributed to transforming a sustainable supply chain management programme at Excelia in France by working together at the dean, department chair, and faculty levels.



What new participants and perspectives could help transform business education?

Subhasis Ray, now at XIM University in India, shared what he learned teaching in several countries. He describes different approaches to sustainable business taken in developed versus developing countries. Carina Hopper and Johanna Wagner developed Back to School for the Planet, a programme allowing alumni to learn new sustainability practices along with current students. They went on to form a nonprofit for lifelong learning.

Fabio Botelho Josgrilberg , Luciana Hashiba , and Luis Henrique Pereira shared their process of collaborating with local businesses and engaging students in community projects to complete course objectives by solving real problems for real organisations. Aptly called 'Managing Life in Common', their programme emphasises collaboration and integration.

In a chapter that should give us all hope, Magdalena Rusch describes how, as a *student*, she and other students developed a design-thinking programme to fill gaps in her traditional business programme. Students stepped forward to create the education they wanted and needed to face a changing future.

Global Movement Initiative is privileged to share the stories of just some of the remarkable pioneers who are working every day to address the urgent and necessary changes needed in business education. In our own silos we may feel small in the face of huge global challenges. But the actions of brave pioneers and risk-takers are taking hold and growing in exponential impact. We expect more emerging pioneers to act now to shape a flourishing and regenerative future.

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About the Authors

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Further information:

https://www.globalmovementinitiative.org/