



Outdoortopia | The Changemaker Cycle

How Can We Create Changemakers Capable of Transitioning Our Global Systems Toward Sustainable Development?



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How Do We Create Changemakers?

Changemakers are people who desire change in the world and, by gathering knowledge and resources, make that change happen. We believe every single individual can become a change leader.

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— Ashoka.org

To achieve meaningful change on sustainability issues, it's crucial that the next generation are well-informed of global socio-political and environmental issues and develop well-formed values, based on knowledge and critical thinking. But being informed is only half the answer, as young people also need the confidence and resilience to make real change a reality.

A New Generation of Changemakers

Stable and durable change is most often a slow process, which requires building upon the steps made previously by others until, as if by magic, what seems impossible today becomes a real possibility tomorrow. This is the path that we must follow, if we as a species are going to adapt and thrive on a planet where overpopulation and sustainable development are key drivers of change.



But how do we as educators ensure that these qualities and attributes become deeply ingrained within the hearts and minds of the next generation of youth? How can we get young people to think "What challenges can I solve with my talents?" or "What can I do to make a difference in my community? rather than simply "What career do I want when I grow up?"

Technological Change

With the pace of recent advances in technology and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), the jobs of today simply aren't going to be the jobs of tomorrow. As the 21st Century progresses, it's now widely expected by governments, business leaders and technologists that many of the current job creating industries, will become automated by AI in the coming decades. Indeed, [research from the World Economic Forum estimates that 65% of students will be employed in jobs that don't exist yet.](#)

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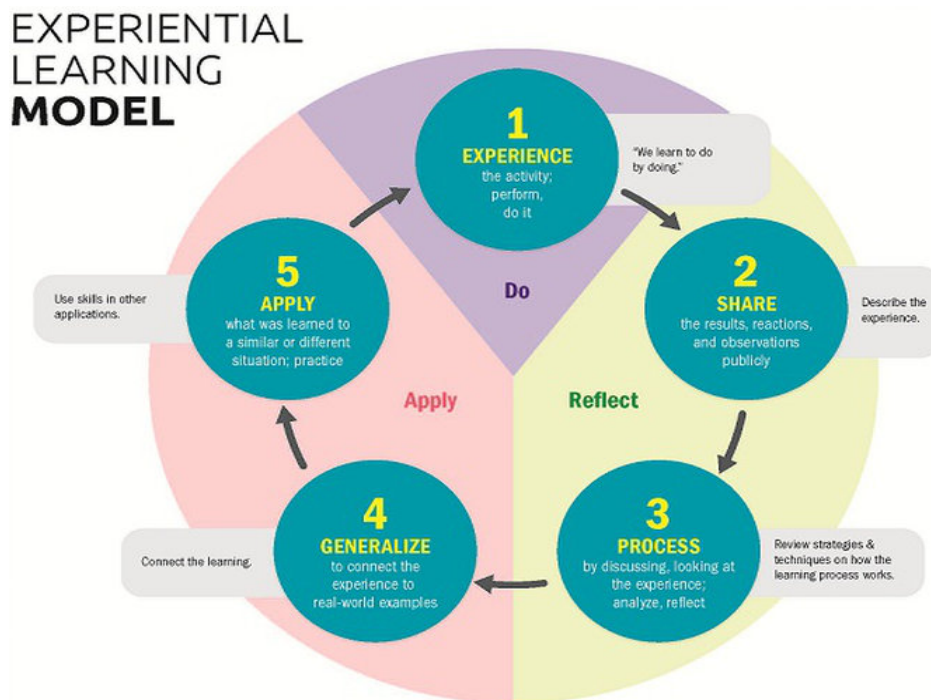
Just like everything involving progress and change, education is absolutely paramount. But not all education is fit for purpose when it comes to creating sustainability changemakers. The uncertainties and challenges of the 21st Century mean that preparing children using the 20th Century model of education is like preparing for the London marathon, only to find out that rather than running, you'll be sailing the English Channel to France!

So what can we do to prepare young people for an unknown future in a highly globalized world? Well, thankfully quite a bit!



The Changemaker Model

At Outdoortopia, we subscribe to The Changemaker Model adapted from the Experiential Learning Model first put forward by Kolb in 1984, and subsequently built upon by Diem (2001) as part of the [National 4-H Experiential Learning Model](#) as shown below:



The 5 Stages of Change

There are 5 essential stages to The Changemaker Model outlined below:

Stage 1: Experience - Children need a wide range of opportunities for learning beyond the barriers of the classroom to ensure that they have concrete experience, and that their learning on sustainability issues is connected to the real-world, where things aren't always as simple as they might first appear.

To put this into context, for the next generation to become interested in conserving the wildlife and the environment, it's of vital importance that children spend time in the outdoors experiencing nature first-hand with their senses, so that they develop an appreciation of its value, its beauty and its vast complexity at a young age.

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Stage 2: Share - Reviewing and reflecting upon the out-of-classroom learning experience is the crucial second step in the change process. This allows the group to assimilate their experiences into what they've learned (new knowledge) and how they felt (connecting with the emotional self), so that together they can start processing how this fits in with their existing knowledge framework and values.

Stage 3: Process - After reflecting upon the outside learning experience, the third stage is to draw out conclusions through group discussion based on the new knowledge acquired, and the deeper lessons learned. This requires detailed discussion led by the children and gently facilitated by the educator.

Stage 4: Generalize - The fourth stage is to connect the experience to real-world examples and understand how this relates to the global sustainability picture.

To develop changemakers, the best way to broaden the discussion is to introduce or reiterate how the experience and lessons learned relate to sustainability issues using a systems approach. The [Compass Model of Sustainability](#) is a useful way to break this down and guide discussion, particularly when it's firmly placed within the context of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Stage 5: Apply (Take Collective Action) - Now it's time to apply the lessons and knowledge gained through the initial experience by thoughtfully taking real action, underpinned by the experiential learning process. This could include socially or environmentally-focused action on a personal or collaborative basis and may require the support of community stakeholders, such as community leaders, businesses, NGOs and experiential education providers.

A Systems Thinking Approach

When it comes down to it, solutions to sustainability challenges require innovation and problem solving using a global systems approach to take action at the community level. By Stage 5 of The Changemaker Model, the children themselves should be much better informed and equipped to develop credible solutions to sustainability issues affecting their own communities.

"Informed citizens are not necessarily empowered citizens with a change mindset. It's up to us as educators to ensure that this overarching outcome is achieved through The Changemaker Cycle."



Taking collective action in Stage 5 is designed to encourage young people to take responsibility and demonstrate that real change on sustainability issues is perfectly possible, with an informed approach and well-focused effort. Successful change can gain traction on an individual basis during day-to-day life (e.g. recycling plastic at home, saving water by taking short showers, purchasing locally produced food) or by undertaking collaborative community action to address local needs.

The Changemaker Mindset

It's important to emphasize that failing to take real action in Stage 5 of The Changemaker Model, risks leading to a sense of disempowerment and an attitude of "How can I possibly have any real impact on global sustainability issues? I'm only one person." That's because informed citizens are not necessarily empowered citizens with a change mindset. It's up to us as educators to ensure that this overarching outcome is achieved through The Changemaker Cycle.

And it doesn't just stop there. Once real action is taken (another new experience), it's back to the beginning of The Changemaker Cycle to share, process, generalize and apply what's been learned.

At Outdoortopia, we believe this is one of the best approaches to empower bright-minded, resilient and confident young changemakers and future leaders, ready for whatever the 21st Century holds!



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We Create Changemakers Beyond the Classroom.

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