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Transforming Business, Education and Business Education for Flourishing: Building Capacity for Systems Transformation

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Forty (40!) million students graduate EACH YEAR from a business school programme. Business along with engineering remains the top choice of the future elite. Yet, there are few coordinated efforts to transform business education (indeed all education) to ensure the flourishing of life on this planet. While many efforts focus on transforming economics, which is important, most business school curricula do not or only marginally teach economics. The disciplines they do teach: finance, marketing, accounting and management are not yet rooted in a paradigm other than economism/ neoliberalism. Students in business programs often become less socially concerned as a result of their business education, yet business is the primary driver of the threats to planetary integrity—a challenge for any effort to transform the system. Now at the center of the storm, businesses must play a vital role in mitigating crisis impacts and moving the global economy towards wellbeing for all. Business education needs to prepare managers for a climate-altered world and other challenges of the Anthropocene.

Is the failure to enable current and future leaders to tackle the big challenges of humanity—the polycrisis—a lack of knowledge or a lack of ability? Young people, and all of us, profess a desire to do the needed action. Yet, it is not happening. The traditional route to change has been to create more knowledge, books, reports, data (knowing). We have done far less to enable people to be the change agents (being), and thus inadequate implementation (doing).

What can we do to enhance capacities to lead system and societal transformation to create shared prosperity on a healthy planet: a world that works for everyone within the planetary boundaries, i.e. Creating Earth for All.

Exploring this question, a diverse group of educators, thought leaders, and systems-change practitioners gathered to envision a transformation of business and management education in service of a life-affirming future.

"This is not just educational reform. It is cultural regeneration in service to life."

I. Key Insights

- **Systemic Barriers:** Fragmentation and inertia keep business schools locked in neoliberal, short-termist paradigms.
- **Paradigm Shift:** Education must adopt a living-systems lens, emphasising flourishing, regeneration, interdependence, and dignity.
- **Coherence vs. Silos:** Many promising initiatives (e.g., PRME, GRLI, WEAll) lack coordination; a unifying meta-platform is essential.

II. Shared Aspirations

- Reorient business curricula around life-centric values, sustainability, and wellbeing.
- Foster leadership cultures within universities and business schools.
- Engage mid-sized firms in real-world experimentation.
- Integrate ecological, Indigenous, and spiritual worldviews alongside scientific insight.
- Support students and faculty as agents of systemic change.



III. Emerging Strategies

1. Narrative & Paradigm Development
Build a new intellectual and cultural foundation ("New Story Infrastructure") to mainstream regenerative, life-centered business models.
2. Institutional Prototypes & Experiments
Pilot Local Labs of Systemic Flourishing (e.g., Los Angeles, Barcelona) and launch a Global Network of Regenerative Schools linking MIT, ESADE, Tec de Monterrey, Jesuit institutions, and others.
3. Storytelling & Media
Commission interdisciplinary textbooks, case repositories, and documentaries; amplify stories of transition via podcasts, social media, and immersive films.
4. Capacity Building
Develop doctoral programs, faculty formation, and leadership development tracks that integrate inner growth, ethics, and systems thinking.
5. Open Platforms & Network Alignment
Create a meta-platform to curate curricula, research, and learning tools across initiatives (IGNITED, Open IMPACT), and coordinate global networks for shared purpose.

IV. Why Collaborate?

Business education shapes 40 million graduates annually—the future stewards of commerce, policy, and society. Supporting this initiative will:

- Accelerate a shift toward regenerative, wellbeing-focused economies.
- Equip educators, students, and executives to lead with purpose, ethics, and systems intelligence.
- Connect and scale the most promising efforts for planetary and human flourishing.

"The paradigm is the container of the possible. By shifting the story, we make space for the future."

V. Stakeholder-Oriented “Acupressure Point” Initiatives

These are targeted interventions at key nodes in the system that, taken together, can shift the overall equilibrium.

1. Curriculum and Course Development

- Redesign *core* courses (strategy, finance, accounting, marketing, operations, organisational behavior) to embed flourishing, planetary boundaries, and humanistic theories of the firm.
- Develop plug-and-play **modules** on flourishing, post-growth economics, humanistic leadership, and regenerative business.
- Create **capstones and practica** with regenerative organisations as real-world partners.
- Offer **micro-credentials / certificates** in humanistic and regenerative management, stackable into degrees and executive education.



2. Faculty Development

- Establish **Humanistic/Regenerative Faculty Fellowships** for course redesign and inner development.
- Run **Teaching for Flourishing** learning journeys that focus on pedagogy, psychological safety, and dignity-affirming classroom practice.
- Build **peer learning circles and mentoring networks** for faculty championing the new paradigm.
- Host a **shared resource hub** with syllabi, cases, teaching notes, and assessment instruments.

3. Academic Leadership (Deans, Presidents, Chairs)

- Convene **Flourishing Leadership Labs** for deans, presidents, and provosts to reorient institutional strategy and metrics.
- Create **change-leadership compacts** where institutions publicly commit to specific transformation milestones.
- Provide tailored development for **department chairs and program directors** to support paradigm-shifting faculty and curricular work.

4. Accreditation and Faculty Development Standards

- Co-create **new accreditation expectations** that explicitly recognise faculty development and curricula in:
 - Systems thinking, sustainability, and planetary boundaries
 - Human flourishing and wellbeing
 - Ethics, dignity, and stakeholder responsibility
 - Inclusive, experiential pedagogies
- Develop **rubrics and exemplar cases** for accreditors and schools.
- Form **joint task forces** with accreditation bodies to test and refine standards.

5. Practitioners: Mid-Size & Family Businesses, B-Corps, and Long-Term Firms

- Hold **roundtables and councils** where these organisations articulate their needs from business education.
- Co-define **competency frameworks** for flourishing-oriented leadership.
- Build **practice partner advisory boards** at schools committed to the new paradigm.
- Launch a “**Flourishing Business School Index**” or ranking/recognition scheme that highlights schools serving long-term, regenerative employers.

6. New-Paradigm Research Support Groups

- Create **research circles and working groups** on post-growth economics, humanistic management, regenerative finance, cooperative governance, etc.
- Offer **seed grants and small fellowships** for paradigm-shifting projects.
- Provide dedicated support for **PhD students and early-career scholars** working on flourishing.



7. PhD Academies in Core Disciplines

- Run **discipline-specific PhD academies** (finance, accounting, marketing, strategy, operations) introducing post-growth, flourishing, and regenerative lenses.
- Emphasise methodological innovation (systems dynamics, action research, mixed methods).
- Build **cross-institution doctoral networks** with regular seminars and summer/winter schools.

8. Special Issues, New Journals, and Publication Pathways

- Sponsor **special issues** in established journals on topics like post-growth finance, business education for flourishing, and humanistic leadership.
- Create **new journals or sections** devoted to flourishing, humanistic management, and regenerative economics.
- Offer **best paper and impact awards** to signal prestige and reward risk-taking scholarship.

9. Media Outreach and Public Narrative

- Run **media fellowships** for scholars and practitioners to communicate the new paradigm.
- Develop **storytelling campaigns and documentaries** that showcase living examples.
- Partner with **influential media outlets** and student-led channels to shift the public story about what business schools and businesses are for.

VI. Field-Building and Movement Coherence

1. From Fragmentation to a Recognisable Field

- Reframe dispersed efforts (PRME, GRLI, IHMA, Wellbeing Economy actors, B-Corp networks, etc.) as parts of a single emerging field: **Transforming Business and Business Education for Flourishing.**
- Articulate a shared identity, mission, and minimal common framework while preserving diversity of approaches.

2. Common Tools and Standards

- Co-develop shared language, principles, metrics, and resources that different actors can adapt locally.
- Use the acupressure initiatives as “modules” that coalitions can pick up and implement.



VII. Stakeholder Expansion, Visibility, and Resource Mobilisation

1. Broadening the Coalition

- Bring in additional schools, networks, employers, students, communities and funders.
- Build alliances with policymakers, foundations and regional development bodies.

2. Coherent Case for Collaboration

- Make explicit the leverage: transforming the education of future leaders transforms the operating system of organisations and economies.
- Highlight concrete pathways for action (the initiatives above) and clear roles for each stakeholder.

3. Funding and Strategic Partnerships

- Develop foundation-ready proposals and partnership frameworks aligned with this architecture
- Use early prototypes and pilots to demonstrate traction and attract further support.

VIII. Current Progress Snapshot

- **Clarity of Vision:** Shared framing around business and education for human and planetary flourishing within ecological limits.
- **Strategic Architecture:** Co-designed five core strategy streams and a set of stakeholder “acupressure point” initiatives ready to be piloted.
- **Field-Building Pathway:** Recognition that this is a long-term field-building effort; emerging roadmap for local experiments, global alignment, and narrative change.

“Action Menu for Stakeholders”

(2-3 page style text you can use as a standalone document)

Title: Action Menu for Transforming Business, Education, and Business Education for Flourishing

Purpose:

This Action Menu translates the emerging vision into **concrete, near-term steps** that different stakeholders can take over the next 12-36 months. It is not exhaustive; rather, it identifies **high-leverage acupressure points** that, if activated together, can shift the wider system.

1. For Curriculum Leaders and Programme Directors

Why this matters

Curricula and courses shape how millions of students understand “what business is for.” To move from extraction to flourishing, the core of business education must change.



Priority actions (next 12-24 months)

1. Audit the Core Curriculum

- Map where (if at all) flourishing, wellbeing, planetary boundaries, and humanistic perspectives appear in core courses.
- Identify quick-win opportunities for integrating new readings, cases, and assignments.

2. Redesign 2-3 Core Courses as Flagships

- Choose key core courses (e.g., Strategy, Finance, Intro to Management) and redesign them around flourishing, stakeholder value, and long-term stewardship.
- Co-create with faculty champions and practitioner partners; document as a model for others.

3. Introduce a Cross-cutting Flourishing Module

- Develop a short module (e.g., 3-5 weeks) that can be integrated into multiple courses, covering:
 - ♣ Planetary boundaries and the polycrisis
 - ♣ Human flourishing and wellbeing frameworks
 - ♣ Regenerative and humanistic management practices

4. Launch a Certificate or Track

- Create a “Business and Human Flourishing” or “Regenerative Management” track or certificate that can be completed within existing degrees.

Signals of progress

- Number and percentage of core courses redesigned.
- Student demand and enrollment in new courses/tracks.
- Qualitative feedback from students and employers.

2. For Faculty

Why this matters

Faculty embody the paradigm. Their beliefs, skills, and courage determine what students actually experience.

Priority actions

1. Join or Initiate a Flourishing Faculty Circle

- Convene a small group of colleagues to share challenges, co-create content, and support one another’s inner development.

2. Redesign One Course You Teach

- Choose a course where you have significant latitude and integrate:
 - ♣ Humanistic leadership and dignity
 - ♣ Systems thinking and ecological constraints
 - ♣ Experiential assignments with real organizations



3. Engage in a Learning Journey

- Participate in an existing fellowship, retreat, or online program focused on humanistic/regenerative leadership and pedagogy.

4. Publish and Share

- Document your innovations as teaching notes, cases, or short essays, and share them through networks and platforms.

Signals of progress

- Number of faculty engaged in circles or programs.
- Documented teaching innovations and shared resources.
- Student evaluations referencing flourishing, meaning, and dignity.

3. For Deans, Presidents, and Academic Leaders

Why this matters

Without leadership, faculty and students remain isolated pioneers. With leadership, institutions can become credible laboratories of the new paradigm.

Priority actions

1. Adopt Flourishing as a Strategic Pillar

- Explicitly include human and planetary flourishing in institutional mission, strategy, and key performance indicators.

2. Create a Cross-Functional Task Force

- Bring together faculty, students, staff, and external partners to co-develop a roadmap for transforming business education in your institution.

3. Invest in Faculty Formation

- Allocate budget and time for faculty fellowships, retreats, and course redesign grants focused on flourishing and regenerative business.

4. Join or Host a Leadership Lab

- Participate in multi-institution leadership cohorts; consider hosting a regional or thematic lab to catalyze peer learning.

Signals of progress

- Inclusion of flourishing in mission and strategy documents.
- Dedicated budget lines for transformation.
- Public commitments and progress reports.

4. For Accreditors and Quality Assurance Bodies

Why this matters

Accreditation criteria send powerful signals about what “counts” as quality; they can either freeze or accelerate paradigm shifts.

Priority actions



- 1. Review Standards through a Flourishing Lens**
 - Identify where existing standards already allow for or encourage attention to sustainability, ethics, wellbeing, and systemic impact.
- 2. Pilot New Faculty Development Standards**
 - Introduce optional criteria and exemplars recognising faculty development in systems thinking, human flourishing, and regenerative practice.
- 3. Highlight Exemplars**
 - Publicly showcase institutions that demonstrate exemplary practice in these areas, creating positive peer pressure.
- 4. Co-Create with Stakeholders**
 - Form advisory groups with schools, employers, students, and field-builders to refine future standards.

Signals of progress

- New or revised standards and guidelines.
- Number of schools using flourishing-aligned evidence in accreditation.
- Visibility of flourishing in accreditor communications.

5. For Mid-Size and Family Businesses, B-Corps, and Long-Term-Oriented Firms **Why this matters**

You represent the **demand side** of business education for flourishing—what kinds of leaders and professionals you hire and promote shapes the system.

Priority actions

- 1. Articulate Your Competency Needs**
 - Work with schools to define the capabilities you need in graduates: systems thinking, ethical courage, stakeholder orientation, regenerative practice.
- 2. Co-Design Curricula and Projects**
 - Offer real-world projects, guest teaching, and mentorship aligned with your regenerative and humanistic practices.
- 3. Participate in an Advisory Council**
 - Join or initiate advisory boards focused explicitly on flourishing, not only on recruitment.
- 4. Support the Flourishing Business School Index**
 - Contribute data and endorsements to a ranking/recognition effort highlighting schools that best prepare graduates for long-term, regenerative business.

Signals of progress

- Number of structured partnerships with schools.
- Inclusion of flourishing competencies in recruitment and promotion criteria.
- Public recognition of schools aligned with your needs.



6. For Researchers and PhD Students

Why this matters

Research shapes what is seen as legitimate knowledge and “good science.” New paradigms need a robust evidence base.

Priority actions

1. **Join or Create a Research Circle**
 - Collaborate with others on themes such as post-growth economics, humanistic management, or regenerative finance.
2. **Design Studies with Practice Partners**
 - Co-produce research with organisations that are already experimenting with flourishing-oriented practices.
3. **Seek Supportive Mentors and Networks**
 - Connect with senior scholars, networks, and programs that can back paradigm-challenging work.
4. **Translate Research for Practice and Policy**
 - Complement academic publishing with accessible outputs: briefs, tools, cases, media pieces.

Signals of progress

- Number of flourishing-focused projects, theses, and publications.
- Cross-institution collaborations and grants.
- Evidence of research informing practice and policy.

7. For Journal Editors and Scholarly Associations

Why this matters

Publishing gatekeepers can either marginalise or legitimise transformative scholarship.

Priority actions

1. **Launch Special Issues**
 - Host special issues on topics directly connected to flourishing, post-growth, and regenerative practice.
2. **Invite Methodological Pluralism**
 - Encourage submissions using qualitative, participatory, and systems-oriented methods suited to complex, real-world problems.
3. **Create Awards and Recognition**
 - Establish best paper or impact awards for research contributing to human and planetary flourishing.
4. **Update Aims and Scope**



- Explicitly include flourishing, sustainability, and humanistic perspectives in journal aims.

Signals of progress

- Number of special issues and themed sections.
- Growth in submissions and citations in these areas.
- Visibility of flourishing themes in conferences and association agendas.

8. For Media, Storytellers, and Students

Why this matters

Public and internal narratives determine what feels possible and legitimate. Stories move hearts, not just minds.

Priority actions

- 1. Tell the Stories of the New Paradigm**
 - Develop articles, videos, podcasts, and social content featuring schools, businesses, and leaders living the new story.
- 2. Train Scholar-Storytellers**
 - Offer training and mentorship for academics and students to communicate research in accessible ways.
- 3. Student-Led Narrative Change**
 - Support student media initiatives, petitions, and events that call for business education for flourishing.
- 4. Collaborate Across Platforms**
 - Build alliances between academic, practitioner and mainstream media to amplify aligned stories.

Signals of progress

- Volume and reach of flourishing-oriented media content.
- Engagement levels (views, shares, comments).
- Evidence of narrative change in how business and business education are portrayed.