

Training and Support for the Next Generation of Social Entrepreneurs – Insights from a Global Discussion

Readers of this Newsletter might already be aware that there is currently a lively discussion at Social Edge (a website ‘By Social Entrepreneurs, For Social Entrepreneurs’ www.socialedge.org) on the subject of ‘Training and Support Models for the Next Generation of Social Entrepreneurs’. It was hosted by Paul Lamb in February 2011 and the exchanges are still going on.



Paul started the discussion with the following:

Social entrepreneurship is hot and getting hotter as [training programs](#), [business plan competitions](#), and [idea challenges targeting ages 30 and under take off on college campuses and online](#).

In 2009, 149 business schools in 24 countries offered courses incorporating social, environmental, or ethical issues - up from 111 schools in 18 countries in 2007. [Over 50 social innovation challenges](#) are listed in this one compilation alone. [Entrepreneurship programs](#) are working with youth as young as 11 years old, and funders like the [Foundation for Youth Social Entrepreneurship](#) are emerging in support of young social innovators internationally.

But as Deron Triff of Changents pointed out in this [Huffington Post](#) piece the bulk of next generation entrepreneurs aren't necessarily coming out of formal training programs found in top business schools and through support networks like [Ashoka](#). Moving forward many may bypass formal training and funding networks altogether, forming their own collaborative ecosystems outside of the mainstream and generating startup capital directly through [crowdfunding](#) and other means.

Which training & support models do you think will prove most effective and what are the pros and cons of each?

- *Formal academic training tracks and business plan competitions offered at many business schools*
- *Competitive seed funding programs providing training and/or mentoring like [Echoing Green](#), [Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation](#), [Yoshiyama Young Entrepreneurs program](#)?*
- *Professional training programs like the Global Social Business Incubator ([GSBI](#))?*
- *Self organizing groups like those found at [the Hub](#) or on [Entrepreneur Commons](#)?*
- *Online peer-to-peer support programs like [Changemakers](#)?*

- *Self made and self sufficient entrepreneurs?*
- *Cause engagement platforms like [Koodooz](#) which encourage social sector involvement at an early age?*
- *A combination of the above or others?*

Editor's note:

1. Please check out the links above to see the rich resources available.
2. Before reading on, please ask yourself the following questions:
 - Am I aware of any training program(s) on social entrepreneurship that I could confidently recommend to others who want to know more about the subject?
 - Do I know of any events that have an element of 'training' for social entrepreneurship?
 - What kind of support do I know of that could be of great assistance to would-be social entrepreneur?
 - Am I playing a part in bringing up the next generation of social entrepreneurs?
 - What could I do to support the younger generation to enter the field of social entrepreneurship?

It is questions like these that would make the discussion on training and support models for the next generation of social entrepreneurs meaningful and relevant.

Some Insights for Hong Kong

Having read through the multi-national exchanges on the subject, the following appears to me to be most insightful:

1. 'Training' for the next generation of social entrepreneurs will take many different forms and modes, and conventional class-room teaching might not be the most effective.
2. Instead of focusing on 'training' in the conventional sense, it would be more productive to think in terms of creating more learning opportunities for the would-be social entrepreneur. These may take the form of on-line or print publications, videos and YouTube, conferences and 'unconferences', experience sharing, mentoring and coaching, 'Hub-like' facilities, incubation and self-incubation, peer-to-peer learning and support, 'intrapreneurial' opportunities at established social enterprises, and many more.
3. There should be more attention to the 'inner cultivation' of the would-be social entrepreneur, i.e. self-reflection on personal values and life purposes. 'Training and nurturing should not just be about technical skills and knowledge, but about delving into values, personal motivations, and deep listening.'
4. eLearning and social media will be powerful forces of impacting knowledge and sharing good practices. But there is no substitute to face to face communication and inspiration. The impersonal media resources have to be combined with high personal touch to yield the best results.

5. Training is not enough; providing support is the key to accelerate the development of the next generation of social entrepreneurs. We need innovative ways to connect would-be social entrepreneurs to business mentors, angel investors, knowledge volunteer, social impact investors, etc. While all these could happen without any planning or coordination, some ‘central’ facilitating effort could make a lot of difference.

6. Training (in the broadest sense of the terms) and support for social entrepreneurs is not a one-off event; they are needed throughout the career of the social entrepreneur, albeit with different emphases at different stages of development. Hence the necessity of on-going networking and fellowship which can be best supported by some form of association of social entrepreneurs.

Summing Up: An Insider’s Viewpoint

One of the contributors, Risa Littman, sums it up nicely (posted on February 20, 2011):

“I am presently enrolled in a new Master’s degree program in Social Entrepreneurship and Change at a university in Southern California....I cannot tell you how important it is for such formal programs to be led by faculty who have real-life experience in the field of social change. While theory is helpful, nothing can replace the insight and perspective of someone who has lived the experience we strive to find in our future.

“I also believe that highly formalized university-based academic programs are not necessarily the answer. Such programs may help individuals determine whether or not they have the “right stuff” to become effective social entrepreneurs, or they may help existing social entrepreneurs hone their skills, but I believe the best approach to fostering the education and preparedness of the next generation of social entrepreneurs will include a bit of each type of learning model discussed in the original discussion prompt. Specifically, I see these learning opportunities as invaluable components of a continuum that social entrepreneurs will utilize throughout their careers:

- On-the-job, hands-on learning through personal failures and successes
- Mentoring/coaching
- Start-up incubation services
- Peer learning and real time discussion forums (both in person and online)
- Formal training programs that range from short-term topical crash courses to long-term certificate or degrees programs

“I see all of these learning forums being most successful when coordinated by a trusted and highly respected central clearinghouse to which emerging and existing social entrepreneurs know they can turn. As much as the newest generations may enjoy less formalized discussion forums, these are not necessarily the most effective ways for adults to learn, absorb and be prepared to move forward in meaningful ways. I believe that if they are properly coordinated and quality-verified, the learning opportunities noted above - or capacity building opportunities, if you will allow me - will collectively ensure that the next generation of social entrepreneurs can demonstrate competency in the critical components of leadership and adaptive capacity, in addition to managerial and technical capacity necessary to ensure a sustainable and effective social venture.”

In the coming issues of this Newsletter, we shall be exploring what we should do in HK to ‘train and support the next generation of social entrepreneurs. Your views, personal experience, and suggestions are most welcome. Please send them to kakuitse@gmail.com to enrich our discussion.

Quote of the Fortnight

名句精選

“I think the ideal support ecosystem is rooted in a strong, shared value system and provides:

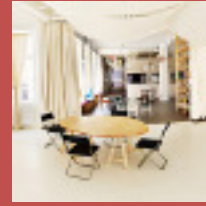
- inspiration (an environment that fosters the spontaneous creation of new ideas),
- motivation (goal-setting, moving forward with a particular idea), and
- accountability (peer checks on the progress towards stated goals).”

William Huster

Website of the Fortnight

精選網站

The Hub, UK



<http://the-hub.net/>

The Hub is a major social innovation. Places for meeting, working, learning, innovating and connecting dedicated to inspiring and supporting enterprising initiatives for a better world.

Its co-founder and Executive Director, Jonathan Robinson, was a Guest Speaker at last year's Social Enterprise Summit. But I wonder how many of us realize that it is an unconventional place to incubate social entrepreneurs.

Book of the Fortnight

新書精選

The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism by Naomi Klein

A 2007 book by the Canadian [Naomi Klein](#) (best known for her 2000 book No Logo), and is the basis of a 2009 documentary by the same name.



Video of the Fortnight

錄像精選



Watch this young man's video at TEDxYSE

<http://www.tedxyse.com/2011/01/rocco-falconer/>

“I think the work Planting Promise is doing in Sierra Leone is really important. Africa, Sierra Leone, does need new answers to complex problems, and I think Planting Promise is one such novel and effective solution: using the profits from business to fund sustainable, quality education.”