



Social Entrepreneurs
Newsletter
edited by KK Tse

6 Days at the Height of the Summit

The Social Enterprise Summit held earlier this month in Hong Kong was another spectacular success. To most participants, the Summit was a two- or three-day event. By contrast, I have had the fortune of having six days of the Summit in one go. No wonder I felt blessed that I benefited so much from it. I am sharing with you below what I experienced and gained in these six days in the hope that you have an equally rewarding Summit in the coming years.

Day 1, Saturday, November 1

Prof. Scott Sherman arrived in Hong Kong at 7.15am. This was his first visit to Hong Kong and I was responsible for arranging his intensive lecture tour during his six-day stay here. Although the Summit secretariat had given him detailed instructions on how to come to the hotel, I did not feel comfortable for him to find his way by himself. Fortunately, one of my students, Sherry Fung, who has just enrolled in our Social Entrepreneur Incubator Program, volunteered to meet him at the airport. Indeed, Sherry would be coordinating Scott's visit during his entire stay.

Scott is by far the most respected and influential teacher of social entrepreneurship in American universities. His courses and workshops are being taught or conducted in over 50 US campuses.

Scott's visit to Hong Kong meant a lot for us. The 'us' represented quite a number of organizations:

First and foremost, **the Summit**, where he would be one of the keynote speakers on Day 1

Second, **Education for Good and Fossil Foundation**, for whom he would be doing a full-day Train-the-Educator workshop on Sunday, Nov 2

Third, **City University of Hong Kong** and **University of Hong Kong**, where he would be giving talks to faculty members and students respectively

Fourth, the newly inaugurated **Inter-University Social Enterprise Taskforce**, formed by two representatives each nominated by the Vice-Chancellors of the eight universities in Hong Kong – the British Council and Education for Good were the initiating bodies. Scott will be addressing the Inter-University Forum on November 6, where the Taskforce would be officially inaugurated.

Fifth, the **Efficiency Unit**, HKSAR Government, where Scott would meet some key decision makers on social innovation and social entrepreneurship development

Last but not the least, the **Master Class** organized by Education for Good on two days immediately following the Summit

As Scott would have to address this diversity of audiences, I felt obliged to give him a good briefing and orientation. I met him for a long lunch on Saturday, and took him for a walk around the occupied sites in Admiralty. Then we took him to experience Dialogue in the Dark with a number of my students, which he found to be quite impressive.

In the evening, we gave him the option of sightseeing or resting. He chose the former naturally as he needed to recover from the long flight.

Day 2 – full-day Train-the-Educator Workshop

With a sponsorship from the Fossil Foundation, Education for Good will be launching a new educational initiative next year – to offer a month-long training program for young aspiring social entrepreneurs from mainland China. The program was tentatively called **University of the Future** and the mission is to inspire, equip and support a new generation of social entrepreneurs in the Greater China region.

The Workshop went exceptionally well. Indeed, the participants found it difficult to find words to describe the experience and impact. The words chosen ranged from magic, stunning, life-changing, provocative, to soul-searching, impactful, outrageous, and role model difficult to emulate. The ratings on most of the items in the evaluation form were all close to the highest. It was an unforgettable learning experience for this group who would be helping Education for Good to design and deliver the University of the Future program next year.

Day 3 – which was the first day of the Summit, Monday, November 3

In the morning, I met with **Caroline Watson** of the Beijing-based social enterprise **Hua Dan** to explore the possibility of bringing it to HK. I was much impressed by Hua Dan's success in using participative theatre to train up female migrant workers to become performers, directors, and trainers. The model should also work in HK engaging other disadvantaged women.

In the afternoon, the Summit commenced with three keynote speakers, **Jenny Bowen of Half the Sky Foundation**, **Scott Sherman of Transformative Action Institute**, and **Meera Shah of Shell Foundation**. I was particularly impressed by Jenny and Scott, although it was heartening to hear Meera representing a commercial organization so much involved in social entrepreneurship.

This was followed by the **Dinner to Remember**, held on the floating restaurant in Aberdeen. The Dinner has now become one of the most memorable events of the annual Summit. This year also witnessed the staging of **Grand Silence** by Dialogue in Silence, during which a large team of hearing-impaired friends entertained the guests with a silent performance.

In my table, we were honored to have a special overseas guest, Amy Neugebauer, Deputy to the President of Ashoka. She had come to HK specifically for the Summit and I was too busy to arrange a meeting with her that I invited her to join our table. She was much impressed by what was happening in HK in the social entrepreneurship field.

Day 4, Tuesday, November 4

I was the facilitator of the session on **Changemakers in Asia** in which two distinguished social entrepreneurs from Singapore were the speakers. They were: **Benny Se Teo, Founder and Head Chef, Eighteen Chefs**, and **Koh Seng Choon, Executive Director, Project Dignity**. To say that they were impressive would be an understatement; they were both extremely inspirational, highly entertaining, and provocatively creative. As we know, the single largest category of social enterprises in HK is catering. But none of our businesses comes close to these two examples from Singapore in terms of scale and social impact. Unfortunately, I did not see too many operators of our catering social enterprises present at this sharing. **Roger Lai of Ginkgo House** was the only one I spotted at the audience.

The HSBC sponsored Business Luncheon on **Technology for Social Enterprise** was another highlight of the day. The speaker was Catherine Bracy of Code for America. For those who know about the power and impact of Teach for America founded by Wendy Kopp, you would appreciate the potential impact of Code for America. One figure that Catherine mentioned struck me absolutely: for government IT projects with budget of over US\$10million, **94% failed**. I do not know the corresponding figure in HK, but I presume it would also be very high. This was certainly my experience when I was a management consultant back in the 1990s. This demonstrates how much we could do from the civic sector, including giving a hand to the public sector in shaping and enhancing its service.

In the afternoon, I went around several sessions and was lucky to catch the sharing by **Ricky Yu, founder of Light Be (Social Realty) Co. Ltd.** Although I heard his sharing at last year's Summit, he had made substantial progress in the course of the year. The number of units last year was 11; this year he reported 26. What was more, the company was poised to make a quantum leap forward in the next twelve months.

Towards the end of the Summit was the **Policy Dialogue** hosted by Jane Lee, Chairperson of the Summit Organizing Committee for seven consecutive years with Florence Hui of Home Affairs Bureau as the Respondent. As all those who were present could testify, the Dialogue was the best ever in our Summits. There was frank and constructive discussion on how the government could further support social

entrepreneurship development and how the civic sector could work closely with various government departments and bureaux in bringing about more positive social change. It's still a long way to go and I was gratified that towards the end of the dialogue, Florence proposed to continue the discussion after the Summit on an informal basis.

Day 5, the 'longest day' for Scott Sherman

While some of the Summit delegates proceeded to visit various local social enterprises, Scott was to experience a fully packed schedule of talks and sharing. It began in the morning with a visit to the **City University** to meet the faculty members of Project Flame, a program which is unique among local universities offering multiple opportunities for the students to learn about and experience social entrepreneurship and social innovation. They were particularly interested in learning from Scott's experience in teaching social entrepreneurship and hearing his views and suggestions for the CityU's new minor program on social entrepreneurship.

Scott was invited by the **Efficiency Unit** to have lunch with key decision makers of the **Social Entrepreneurship and Development Fund**, including Chairman of the Taskforce, Prof. Stephen Cheung of Hong Kong Institute of Education.

Right after lunch, Scott gave a talk at the Efficiency Unit on his observations and experience in promoting social entrepreneurship in the US. The audience included senior civil servants, members of the Social Entrepreneurship and Development Taskforce, business and community leaders. It was to the credit of the Efficiency Unit that it has been constantly creating opportunities for the government to be exposed to new ideas and practices from other parts of the world.

Scott had just half an hour to grab something to eat before he appeared at the Good Lab to conduct the **Master Class** which started at 6.30pm and lasted till around 10.00pm. Earlier in that afternoon, I was facilitating another Master Class conducted by Jenny Bowen of Half the Sky Foundation, which was an eye-opener for the participants.

Scott's Master Class was facilitated by Rebecca Yung and it was a fantastic experience for everyone present. Not only did they have a taste of Scott's unique delivery of a transformative and experiential learning experience, they were also much impressed by the passion and energy of a great teacher.

Scott worked for a solid 11 hours on this single day. We were impressed and most thankful.

Day 6, a milestone day for Inter-University effort in social entrepreneurship teaching a research

The morning witnessed a special event known as **Inter-University Forum on Social Entrepreneurship** held at the Social Science Chamber of University of Hong Kong. It was one of the Forum series jointly

organized by the British Council and Education for Good in the past two years. But the Forum on this day had a double agenda, namely, a talk by Scott to the faculty members from the eight local universities, and a simple but solemn Inaugural Ceremony of the newly established **Inter-University Social Enterprise Taskforce** with representatives nominated by the Vice-Chancellors of the eight universities. The Guest of Honor of the ceremony was Prof. Peter Mathieson, Vice-Chancellor of University of Hong Kong. As we all know, the teaching and research of social entrepreneurship in HK universities lagged behind that of the leading universities in the West by at least ten to twenty years. But things are changing fast and the setting up of the Inter-University Taskforce could greatly accelerate the development in this vital area. The British Council and Education for Good will continue to provide support to the Taskforce and the Efficiency Unit had also expressed interest in lending us support.

In the afternoon, Scott delivered a **two-hour workshop to a group of HKU students**, which was part of a six-credit course on social entrepreneurship. HKU had been offering credit-bearing course to students from all years and all departments two years ago, when two directors of Education of Good began to teach the first course on this subject at the University. I was one of them and I must say I was much impressed by the passion and interest of the students enrolled in the course. Some of them went on to start their own social enterprises before their graduation; some took a gap year to spend more time on the subject; and some enrolled in other courses offered by Education of Good. After two years, we handed over the course to faculty members of the University. And they asked us to design another brand new credit-bearing course for students who have taken the introductory course. The new course will be entirely experiential, meaning that the students will spend most of their time in actual social enterprises and learn on the ground. This course will be offered in early 2015.

The final **Master Class with Andreas Heinecke** was held in the evening of Nov 8, also at the Good Lab. Andreas as the founder of Dialogue in the Dark was of course not new to Hong Kong. Indeed he knows the city and many of the social entrepreneurs here that he promised to be very provocative in the Class. Indeed, he was, as Patrick Cheung the facilitator of the Class would concur. What he said was extremely humbling; he reminded us practicing or aspiring social entrepreneurs to be humble. He said that too many social entrepreneurs and social innovators had over-estimated their impact on the world. He insisted that what we could change about the world was actually very limited.

“I don’t think I could change the world”, he said, **“I could only change my underpants.”** He was trying to make the point that there were too many things we need to change in the world. The global social entrepreneurship movement had been making a lot of difference, but compared to the magnitude of the challenges the world was facing, we were only touching the surface.

Andreas highlighted in particular the absolute necessity to change the nature of business, changing it from an obsession about maximizing value for the shareholders to maximizing both social and monetary returns for the stakeholders. Indeed, the challenges of realizing a world in which all business are social business are immense. That’s why Andreas reminded us to be humble, regardless of what we feel we have achieved to date.

Six long days

This was my longest Summit – by far. But it was also the most fruitful and rewarding. My takeaways are as follows:

- 1. Rewards are directly proportional to the effort you put in.** A few months back when I was planning all the activities of the week, many of my friends and associates thought that I was crazy. Indeed I was, trying to squeeze so many things into a few days. But I was leveraging the presence of a number of overseas speakers who were coming to the Summit. Fortunately I had the support of a number of organizations and individuals who provided me with critical support to pull it off.
- 2. Make the Summit more than a Summit.** The Summit is now in its seventh year. We could be more innovative and enable it to create a greater impact. This would be my suggestion to the Organizing Committee which will soon be meeting to review the last Summit and start preparing for the next one.
- 3. The Master Class is amazingly powerful.** “Life influences life”. This has been my motto. The speakers of the Master Class are truly inspirational individuals and they are ready to do an up close and personal dialogue with the participants. I would like to suggest to the Organizing Committee to make it a regular feature of the Summit. Another equally amazing thing is to have local Masters to be the facilitator of the Class. For example, this year we had Rebecca and Patrick serving as facilitators for Scott’s and Andreas’ sessions respectively – with dramatic effects beyond my expectations.
- 4. Inter-University Forum on Social Entrepreneurship should become an integral part of the Summit.** This was the first year that the Inter-University Forum was held in the Summit week, but in a venue outside the Summit. I think we should make it part of the Summit program next year so that we could have a number of world-class social entrepreneurs inspiring, and interacting with, faculty members from different universities. What is more, faculty members who are leading programs on social entrepreneurship need to build strong network with practicing social entrepreneurs.
- 5. Re-imagining the Summit.** The six long days this year taught me a good lesson. It should not be repeated next year – for me. But the basic arrangement leveraging the overseas speakers was brilliant. What we need to do is to share the responsibilities among different parties or individuals so that they could organize a variety of activities either before or after the Summit proper.

I look forward to hearing from you on these ideas. It’s about time that we multiple the impact of the Summit by becoming more innovative and resourceful.

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