

A Journey towards Positive a Social Impact Hub at Payap University's International College

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Abstract

This article provides the context for the development of a Social Impact Hub at Payap University by presenting a brief overview of social enterprise education in institutions of higher learning both globally and within Thailand and an analysis of the development process of the centre's model. The outcomes of this development process led to the re-examining of the initial vision of the centre and the subsequent expanding of the scope of the centre to support a wide range of initiatives that create social value and positive social impact for the communities that Payap serves. The development process also highlighted the requirement for more research in the field of social enterprise education in Thailand, especially in the area of curriculum development and teaching methodologies, in order to identify best practice in teaching social enterprise related subjects and thus ensure students engaged with this topic are fully prepared for the careers of their choice.

Keywords: Social Impact, Social Enterprise, Social Entrepreneurship, Higher Education Institutions, Organisational Development, Service Learning, Capacity-building, Stakeholders



Introduction

A Short History of Social Enterprise in Academia

The term social entrepreneurship can be generally defined as the “process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs” (Mair & Marti, 2004). Since its first use, generally attributed to Bill Drayton, founder of ASHOKA in the 1980s (Brock & Steiner, 2009), the field has gained significant attention as a discipline that shows how the major social issues of our time can be addressed through the innovation, creativity, flexibility and sustainable results associated with socially responsible entrepreneurship.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are in the position of being able to contribute to the development of this field by creating and nurturing the next generation of social entrepreneurs through the introduction to students of the unique business models, concepts and principles such as social impact, social capital and blended value that form the foundations of social enterprise (SE).

From an academic standpoint, Greg Dees, who Bornstein and Davis (2010) referred to as the father of social entrepreneurship education, has been widely recognized for the impact he had on the social movement. Dees also developed and taught the first known social entrepreneurship course in the United States as well as helping to found some of the world’s top academic centres on social entrepreneurship (Worsham, 2012).

World renowned universities such as Harvard, Stanford, and Berkeley were the first to offer courses in social entrepreneurship in the late 1990s. Europe soon followed with the first European course at the University of Geneva in Switzerland co-taught by university faculty in partnership with the Schwab Foundation in 2003 (Brock & Ashoka, 2008, Brock

& Steiner 2009).

After having introduced the beginnings of the social entrepreneurship movement and its development on campus, the purpose of this article is to give a brief overview of the growth of the global social enterprise landscape in Higher Educational Institutions over the past 15 years or so, and how it has been adopted into Thai academic institutions. Once this review has been covered, the steps Payap University has taken to launch its on social enterprise centre will be presented as well as some recommendations for future action.

Global Growth of SE Education

In the years since the emergence of the social enterprise field, the involvement of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with the subject of either social enterprise or social entrepreneurship has grown significantly (Brock & Steiner, 2009, Worsham, 2012). In 2004, the then dean of one of the world’s top business schools Laura D’Andrea Tyson, noted that while “just a decade ago, there were virtually no business school courses or student projects on social entrepreneurship, today, most top business schools have both” (Tyson 2004).

In a recent survey conducted by SERIO (Socio-Economic Research and Information Observatory) at Plymouth University covering over 200 HEIs across 12 countries and four continents, 75 per cent of the institutions surveyed were actively involved with at least one social enterprise and over half of those institutes were also engaged in an international social enterprise partnership (SERIO 2016a).

Further research (Turner 2011) identified that the number of HEIs offering a social entrepreneurship course has increased rapidly over a relatively short period of time. Over 90 HEIs in the US and 122 internationally were reported in 2011 compared to

only 20 a few years earlier. The research attributes this uplift to HEIs increasingly “responding to the importance of their role in equipping students with the skills necessary to make transformational social change” (Turner 2011).

Ashoka U, an initiative of the Ashoka network of Social Entrepreneurs, has carried out extensive surveys across campuses and in 2013 surveyed more than 200 campuses globally to assess the status and institutional location of social entrepreneurship initiatives (Enos, 2014). The report found significant growth in both curricular and co-curricular offerings, including speaker series, incubator development, course development and implementation, and institutionalization of Social Entrepreneurship in campus centres and other offices. Top business schools now offer twice as many courses on non-profit management as they did in 2003 (Janus 2015).

According to Ashoka’s research, while programs related to social enterprise are most likely to be located in business schools (55%), recently the field has seen the development of social entrepreneurship courses elsewhere, such as in public policy (9%) and social sciences (6%).

In addition, there are now several Social Entrepreneurship centres around the world promoting the engagement of students, faculty and administrators with the field. In the United States, the Centre for Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship at Duke University and Stanford’s Program on Social Entrepreneurship both provide a variety of opportunities for students to learn about the field of social entrepreneurship (Brock 2008, Janus 2015). The Sustainable Venturing Initiative at the University of Colorado combines social entrepreneurship and sustainability. In Europe, the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford University has global award and fellowship

programs, and its annual Skoll World Forum has become the flagship event in the field. (Bornstein and Davis, 2010). In addition, the Geneva-based Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship has raised the profile of social entrepreneurs in the international business community and media through its linkages to the World Economic Forum and its awards programs. The Asian Institute of Management in the Philippines has a Social Entrepreneurship program with social entrepreneurs only graduating if they meet their organisations goals over the course of the 18 month program while the Tata Institute of Social Sciences has developed the first Masters in Social Entrepreneurship in India (Brock 2008). The Catholic University of Louvain in Collaboration with the University of Liege in Belgium offered the first PhD course in social entrepreneurship. (Ashoka U, 2014)

One of the key drivers of this growth has been the evolving social attitudes and career choices of the millennial generation. College students are interested in jobs that incorporate a more meaningful way of earning a living (Wessel & Godshalk, 2004). According to a global survey of millennials conducted by the consulting firm Deloitte, 50 per cent of young people want to work for a business with ethical practices and 60 per cent choose their workplace based on its purpose (Deloitte, 2016). College students around the world are interested in jobs that incorporate a more meaningful way of earning a living. Studies in the US show that for 55% of students who obtained degrees from HEIs, concern for social causes will be an important factor in their decision on choosing a workplace (Janus 2015).

Many students find a home in the sphere of social enterprise and the related topics of social entrepreneurship and social innovation which provide them with the space to engage with the



social issues that reflect their value orientations and career choices.

SE Education in Thailand

In the case of Thailand, a drop in the United Nations Human Development Index rankings from 59th in 1998 to 93rd in 2014 (UN, 2014) has in part fuelled the growing debate on income and social inequality in the Kingdoms. This has led to an increasing interest in the use of social enterprise to address some of the most pressing issues within Thai society by delivering both social impact and economic benefit (Doherty & Chirapaisarnkul, 2016).

Whilst social enterprises in many countries can trace their origins to non-profit organizations diversifying their income away from grant-funded activities, social enterprises in Thailand are often found to be independent, new start-up ventures (SERIO, 2016b). From the first modern social enterprise, Cabbages and Condoms in 1974 to Doi Tung in 1989, to more recent technology-based SocialGiver.com and LocalALike.com, which was incubated and supported by Change Fusion, social enterprises are serving disadvantaged communities across Thailand (Doherty & Chirapaisarnkul, 2016, SERIO, 2016b).

The Thai government has been attempting to support social enterprises in different ways. The establishment of the Thai Social Enterprise Office (TSEO) in 2011 was designed to be a national focal point for promoting social innovation and social enterprise in Thailand (Nuttaphong, 2013) although the activities of the office currently seem to be on hold. The proposed Social Enterprise Promotion Act is designed to offer tax relief for corporations setting-up social enterprises and tax incentives for social investment (Doherty and Chirapaisarnkul 2016). The government also recently announced the formation of the Social Enterprise (Thailand)

Co Ltd which would have multiple shareholders including the Thai provinces and large Thai corporations such as ThaiBev, AIS and Mitr Phol (The Nation, 2016).

In terms of Thai Higher Education Institutions, the landscape is rapidly developing. Thammasat University offers a degree in Global Studies and Social Entrepreneurship (GSSE) at the bachelor's level. Chulalongkorn University's Social Entrepreneurship Organization, based at their Intellectual Property Institute (CUIPI), provides intellectual property education and support to social enterprises during the start-up phase. Udon Thani Rajabhat University launched the Masters of Arts Social Entrepreneurship with the aim of supporting collaboration between practitioners, business leaders and academics in the North-eastern region of Thailand. King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi's (KMUTT) and Sriakarinwirot University are other examples of Thai HEIs developing social enterprise programs (British Council, 2015, SERIO, 2016b). There are curriculums in social enterprise both in graduate and undergraduate levels. In Thailand, the department of Business Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, Srinakarinwirot University offers a degree program in Business Administration with field of study in social enterprise. Interest in the study of this field is constantly increasing, due to social and environmental problems caused by economic activities. Social enterprise applies commercial strategies to improve human and environmental well-being. This may include maximizing social impact and profits for external shareholders. Governments of several countries such as England, Finland, Canada, United States of America, and Korea have realized the importance of social business and granted legal support for social enterprises. The government of Thailand also

has been aware of this issue and has ordered to set up a board and a master plan to promote social enterprises. International institutions such as the University of Oxford and Harvard university have targeted the study of social enterprise and offered programs in this field. The University of Northampton does not only offer courses or seminars but integrates the ideas of social enterprise into teaching, learning and research throughout the university, which is known as a socially enterprising university. The department of Business Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, Srinakarinwirot University believes that they must provide an education based on sustainable self-reliance and prepare their graduates for the new world of work, which social enterprise is an increasingly important part. Srinakarinwirot University is committed to play an active part in the service of our local community. The university does not only provide a degree program in social service, but also academic service projects with a focus on social enterprise e.g. the trial course in social entrepreneurship, the qualifying business plans for society project. These projects are conducted in partnership with Population and Community Development Association. It aims to develop knowledge and understanding about social enterprise among students and individual and will significantly enhance their ability to develop community and country.

Rungsit University, College of Social Innovation: Rungsit University offers a Master of Arts Program in Leadership in Society, Business and Politics, which is particularly relevant to social enterprise.

The concept of this program is to promote and to support the development of leaders at all levels, who respect to values of humanity, recognize humanity problems such as social inequality, environmental problems caused by the impact of capitalism. Such leaders with wisdom, vision, ethics

and ability will lead society to sustainable peace and to sustainable future.

In addition, The Yunus Centre (YCA) based at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) has been supporting social business initiatives since 2009 by acting as a knowledge hub and an enabling platform to support the use of market-based initiatives to eradicate poverty.

Apart from Northern Chiang Mai University's partnership with Purdue University in the United States to offer a Social Entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia summer program, and MaeJo University's specialisation in environmental social enterprise, there currently is not enough engagement of upcountry HEIs with Social Enterprise education or incubation. This, however, is being addressed by Payap University through its numerous community-based initiatives which have led to the proposed development of a Social Enterprise Centre at the university's Mae Khao campus in Chiang Mai.

Payap's Journey towards SE

Since 2013, PYU in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Project for Local Empowerment (PLE) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has been offering certificate courses in Organisational Development and Management. At the core of the program is the desire to empower others with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to become autonomous, secure, and thriving individuals and communities.

During the first year of the project, the focus was on developing the capacity of staff of local Community-based Organisations (CBOs) operating along the Thai-Burmese border but based in Mae Sot, Thailand. Since events in Myanmar have changed the reality on the ground, access to target communities within Myanmar is now easier for both



International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and International HEIs. This change has allowed the project to significantly expand its scope.

In 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between PYU and Mawlamyine University, the largest government university in Mon State, Myanmar, to offer training to university lecturers interested in the certificate program. The Certificate in Organisational Development program is now in its 4th year and courses have been opened in Mawlamyine (Mon State), Loi Kaw (Kayah State), Hpa-An (Karen State) as well as in two refugee camps along the Thai-Burmese border in Mae Hong Son province. The participants in these courses now include not only local CBO staff but also academics as well as business leaders and to date over 450 students have successfully completed the program.

At the same time as the Organisational Development certificate program was being developed, PYU has also, since 2013, been developing programs in social entrepreneurship. Under the leadership of the then Dean of the International College, Dr. Somboon Panyakom, this initiative started with the founding of a social business, Tobeebay Coffee, which is primarily focused on the improvement of local society, natural environment, and the well-being of Karen and other hill tribes in the North of Thailand. In addition, PYU started to offer Social Entrepreneurship short courses in partnership with HEIs in the ASEAN region. The first course was offered at the International College at PYU in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Subsequently, courses were held yearly in Myanmar (2014 in partnership with the Royal Thai Embassy), Indonesia (2015 in partnership with Satya Wacana Christian University) and 2016 in Vietnam (in partnership with Hue University).

As the Organisational Development certificate course and the workshops on Social Entrepreneurship were both projects developed at the International College, it was only a matter of time before cross-pollination occurred. This became a reality in September 2016, when a 2 day introductory workshop on SE was provided to the participants of the Organisational Development certificate course being offered in the Refugee Camp 1 in Mae Hong Son. The purpose of the workshop was to encourage the students to develop social enterprise application projects and help them consider ways to generate funds for their community organisations independently from relying on donors, thus enhancing their capacity to become self-sufficient, especially in light of the current focus by the Thai and International authorities on repatriating camp residents back across the border.

This workshop, several long-term community service projects that PYU professors have been engaged in, and PYU's strong links with potential donor community, in particular amongst Christian faith organisations, all led to a decision at the International College to start the development of a more formal structure in which social enterprise engagement could be nurtured, supported and scaled. In addition the fact that both the Community-Based Tourism Initiative (CBT-I) and World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) are located in the International College building means there is ample room for leveraging resources and finding synergies amongst organisations that are essentially focused on the same goal – creating positive social impact.

The International Business Management Department (IBM) has been managing the Organisational Development certificate program since its inception as well as several social enterprise education initiatives and was a natural

home from which to start the development process.

The first step was to conduct an internal workshop within the department to conceptualize the scope, role and form of this new entity. Takeaways from that meeting included that the focus of the new initiative should be social enterprise practitioners in the northern provinces of Thailand who do not currently have a resource centre available to offer guidance and support while they develop, launch and manage their enterprises. Additionally, it was felt that we could also have a positive impact through engagement with other HEIs both within Thailand and the wider region as PYU already has a research project in motion on social enterprise and poverty reduction in collaboration with Satya Wacana Christian University in Indonesia.

However, the key learning outcome from the workshop was that we were using too narrow a base of influencers to develop this idea. Academia is often seen as insular and remote and by default the risk of a narrow vision develops. The timing could not have been better as lecturers from PYU had recently visited the Yunus Centre (YCA) in Bangkok and mentioned the developing ideas at the International College. At the proposal of Dr. Faiz Shah the YCA director, the IBM department organised a workshop facilitated by Dr. Shah and his team held at PYU on the 28th September, 2016.

For the founding team of the centre at PYU the workshop had two key objectives. Firstly, to examine the rationale for setting up a Social Enterprise Centre at Payap University and to identify the relevant drivers and challenges for creating interest in social business. Secondly, and more importantly from an operational point of view, to agree on viable action points for taking the Social Enterprise Centre proposal forward, based on

discussion and reflection throughout the workshop, and identify clear, tangible and attainable targets for the initiative in terms of general outcomes.

In order to ensure a wide range of diverse views and ideas would be present throughout the workshop, participants from all the potential stakeholders the centre would serve were invited. Participants included social enterprises from Chiang Mai, local socially responsible businesses, faculty members from the social science and business departments as well as representatives from PYU's Institute of Religion, Culture & Peace. In addition, students from the International Business Management program attended as well as the International College's Management team.

The results from the workshop validated the general direction the founders have envisioned and added valuable insights into additional areas of interest. To this end, the below model has been developed to represent the form of the centre and its core constituents. At the time of the writing of this paper, the centre is still in development and is slated to be launched in the 3rd quarter of 2017.

The following represents a work in progress and will no doubt be revised time and time again as the development process continues.



Figure 1: PYU Social Enterprise Centre Business Model



As can be seen from the model above, the centre will operate in three key spheres.

The Practitioner sphere will act as a bridge with a network of cross-sector stakeholders serving as a resource hub providing access to advisers, mentors, investors and donors. The centre will also support skills development of SE practitioners through short courses and workshops aimed at capacity building. The opportunities for PYU students to engage with SEs through service-learning projects and internships will offer potential benefits to both the organisation and PYU as well as helping raise PYU's profile with local communities.

The Academic sphere's objective is to challenge the status quo by promoting the inclusion of social enterprise in educational institutions through campus workshops on the subject as well as offering teacher training for academics interested in including the principles of SE in their courses. Additionally, the Centre will promote the conducting of further research into SE and supporting activities. To this end, the International Business Management program has already proposed a new curriculum to include a major in Social Entrepreneurship which is planned to be offered from the academic year 2017. This will also serve as a conduit for recruitment of socially engaged students to PYU programs.

The third sphere in the Centre's model is Advocacy & Impact. Here the objectives are to raise the awareness of the general public about the role and benefits of SEs and to lobby local and national government in support of SE-friendly policies and regulations.

The overall vision and mission of the centre will be to create meaningful strategic social impact by facilitating interactions between policy makers, practitioners, educational institutions and the general public to promote and support social

enterprises and other positive social impact initiatives. One key insight from the workshop is that the centre should be organised under the umbrella of Social Impact rather than Social Enterprise in order to widen the scope of engagement with identified stakeholders. Additionally, space needs to be created both figuratively and physically to allow the centre to act as a bridge creating a network of cross-sector stakeholders to engage in conversation and thereby avoid the silo mentality so harmful to a project of this nature.

Conclusion

Payap University's mission over the course of its 44 year history has always been driven by a focus on creating positive social impact for the communities it serves. The university is already engaged in activities such as the certificate course in Organisational Development, social enterprise training workshops and social enterprise start-ups. With the addition of the Institute of Religion, Culture & Peace, PYU is uniquely positioned to develop a centre in Northern Thailand to advocate the ideas of social enterprise and its underpinning values. The strong relationships with local communities through its long-term community service projects, partnerships with social organisations such as CBT-I and WFTO, an extensive network of partner educational institutions as well as strong links with the potential donor community all provide extensive opportunities for fulfilling Payap's five core values of Peace, Truth, Service, Unity and Stewardship through the Social Enterprise Centre.

The centre will benefit PYU by offering community service opportunities, service learning opportunities for students, promoting PYU's national and international reputation as a centre of excellence as well as creating a vehicle to attract new students and faculty.

Recommendations

The recommendations offered by the author in this article are in two areas. Firstly, there is a lack of research on Thai HEIs engagement with Social Enterprise, especially in the area of curriculum development and teaching methodologies. It is recommended that further research be conducted to fully survey the number of HEIs teaching Social Enterprise related topics as well as the depth of their engagement with the field. Further research is needed to identify best practice in teaching SE related subjects. At the time of the writing of this paper, a research proposal is being submitted by PYU's International Business Management department to specifically address the need for more information on the academic side of Social Enterprise.

Secondly, with regards to the foundation of the Social Enterprise Centre at PYU, the centre

should be designed to be larger than just a home for Social Enterprise. By broadening the scope of its activities to include any engagement that produces positive social impact, PYU can utilise its full resources to drive meaningful and sustainable social change by challenging the status quo and providing opportunities for stakeholders to engage in impact community service which stands at the core of its mission and values. Additionally, the new curriculum proposed by the International Business Management program at PYU, with a major in Social Entrepreneurship should be offered in conjunction with the department of Social Sciences, thereby offering opportunities for a multi-disciplinary approach to Social Enterprise education. This will mirror the global trend of the spreading of SE outside of the traditional home of business programs described in the introduction to this paper.

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