
Thailand - UK University Dialogue on Social Enterprise and the Role of Higher Education Institutions

Date: 7-8 March 2015

Venue: Asokmontri Music and Performing Arts Hall (MPA Hall)
Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand

Day 1 : March 7th, 2015

The morning session started with welcome remarks from HE Dr. Teerakiat Jareonsettasin, Vice Minister for Education at the Thai Ministry of Education and Assistant Professor Chalermchai Boonyaleepun MD, President of Srinakharinwirot University. There were also opening remarks from Andrew Glass, Country Director of British Council Thailand and Nutthaphong Jaruwannaphong, Director of the Thai Social Enterprise Office (TSEO), outlining the importance of social enterprise and the role of higher education institutions, as well as defining the objective to develop the possibility of cooperation concerning social enterprise development between British and Thai universities.

The director of TSEO briefly introduced the social enterprise development plan, and how social enterprises develop from socially-minded academics, passionate students and entrepreneurs adopting social enterprise into their business models. He gave examples of social enterprises such as Doi Tung, which uses a cross-subsidy model, the restaurant Cabbages & Condoms, which uses a plough-back profit model and the Abhaibubejr hospital foundation, which uses a social need model. These foundations do not only wait for donations, but have raised income and invested in their foundations for better service. The director also highlighted cooperation between all sectors as an important factor, for example responsive and high quality public services, positive contributions from the private sector, active and socially engaged academics, and efficient and self-reliant NGOs and NPOs. He voiced the need for policies which offer more specific support for research-based social innovation, strategic interventions (resources and mechanisms) to support the integration of social entrepreneurship in the education system, and promotion of sustainable procurement systems in the public and private sectors to scale social impact.

Before the first session started, a British Council video presentation provided more detail on their Skills for Social Entrepreneurs Programme.

The first session started with a panel discussion, chaired by Andrew Glass, Country Director of British Council Thailand, and included Judith Reynolds, Director of Social Enterprise at Plymouth University, Wray Irwin, Head of the Centre for Employability and Engagement at Northampton Business School, University of

Northampton and Professor Dr. Kriengsak Chareonwongsak, President of the Institute of Future Studies for Development. In this session, they discussed innovations in social enterprise academic qualifications, together with experiential learning and opportunities for students on campus.

Professor Dr. Kriengsak also highlighted proposed competencies for social enterprise students which should include development visions, inspiration, entrepreneurship and business skills, innovation skills, community linkage skills, skills for creating cooperative strategy knowledge, business ethics, and the developing of a holistic mindset.

The second session also included a panel discussion chaired by Professor Dr. Kriengsak Chareonwongsak, Peter Ptashko, Programme Leader of SEE Change Programmeme at UnLtd UK, Phonchan Kraiwatnutsorn, Deputy Country Director of Ashoka Thailand and Associate Professor Dr. Pattamawadee Pochanukul from the Faculty of Economics at Thammasat University. In this session, panelists discussed how universities are regarded as hub of innovation and examined their role in building social enterprise culture locally, nationally and globally.

Mr. Ptashko shared UnLtd UK's vision of "a world where people act to make it better" and his organisation's work, which has three main areas of focus: supporting social entrepreneurs when they start up, supporting those with more established ventures to scale up, and developing the ecosystem of support for social entrepreneurs to make it easier for people to find help, get started and thrive. He also gave insights into how to sustain effective ecosystem support with cash awards, and the journey early-stage social entrepreneurs take as they develop.

The afternoon session started with a panel discussion chaired by Kristoffer Amin, Former Corporate Fundraiser and Event Director at Street Child UK, with Dr. Pathik Pathak, Director of Social Enterprise at the University of Southampton, Arch Wongchindawest, Founder and CEO of Socialgiver and mysocialmotion, and Prinn Panitchpakdi, Country Head of CLSA Securities (Thailand) Ltd. and Resource Connector at Thai Young Philanthropist Network (TYPN). In this session, they discussed how student networks can be activated to promote social enterprises, what role a social entrepreneurs' network can play and how groups of students can be engaged.

Dr. Pathak explained the importance of defining a mission and motivation which are innovation focused, publically engaged, focused on diversifying enterprise activities and support entrepreneurial students. Method and values also need to engage internal networks by embedding social innovation into the curriculum and working with students, and external networks, collaborating with existing initiatives and engaging alumni. He also shared the programme of the Sustainable Cities Innovation Lab which includes a social innovation module and the social innovation challenge series.

Mr. Prinn suggested that a "success champion" should be created to promote a positive image and enhance people's perception on how to succeed.

Mr. Arch gave the presentation “Win Win Solution” to highlight the comparison between traditional CSR, which focuses on pushing messages to consumers and new transactional CSR, which helps connect more people and networks.

The last session of Day One started with a panel discussion chaired by Associate Professor Dr. Tiranee Achalakul, Associate Dean for Education Development at King Mongkut’s University of Technology Thonburi, Wray Irwin, Head of the Centre for Employability and Engagement at Northampton Business School at the University of Northampton, Dr.Supoet Srinutapong, Director for the Public Sector Programmeme at Microsoft, and Ada Chirapaisarnkul, Lecturer and Executive Director of GLab at Thammasat University. In this session, they discussed how universities and other institutions use their links with business to support the social enterprise agenda in an innovative way.

Mr. Irwin highlighted key interests for business: CSR, micro solutions, micro problems, intellectual property, brand, internal innovation, procurement/supply chains, consultancy and knowledge transfer and the bottom line for business, which is profit. Ms. Ada suggested that all sectors should leverage, cooperate and share knowledge and resources to promote higher awareness and understanding of social enterprises.

Day 2 : March 8th, 2015

The first session started with a video presentation from the Thai Social Enterprise Office that briefly introduced the supporting programmes offered to social entrepreneurs, including talks, ‘SE 101’ (a 1-day seminar about social enterprise), trips and awards.

After this was a panel discussion on commercialising university intellectual property for the benefit of society by four panelists: Keith Jeffrey, Managing Director of CUSE Hub at Coventry University, Assistant Professor Dr. Duanghathai Pentrakoon, Deputy Director of the Technopreneurship and Innovation Management Programme (TIP) and Lecturer at the Faculty of Science at Chulalongkorn University, Assistant Professor Dr. Akkharawit Kanjana-Opas, Director of the Science Park at Prince of Songkla University and Associate Professor Dr. Tiranee Achalakul, Associate Dean in Education Development at King Mongkut’s University of Technology Thonburi.

The first panelist, Keith Jeffrey, introduced the social entrepreneurship programme at Coventry University called “CU Social Enterprise” and the initiative-based “HOPE programme” which is a self-management programme of positive psychology and evidence-based activities for people living with, and affected by, long-term medical conditions such as cancer. Finally, he highlighted the benefits of these social enterprise programmes; namely the ability to attract and recruit students to the university, and more importantly, the positive impact on society.

The second panelist, Assistant Professor Dr. Duanghathai, introduced the Chulalongkorn University social entrepreneurship organisation CUIPI (Chulalongkorn University Intellectual Property Institute), which

provides intellectual property education, knowledge and support for social enterprises during the business start-up phase. She also pointed out the contributions of research and intellectual property education to society in terms of economic benefits which generate new entrepreneurs and enhance competitive advantages for business and society, and their social impact, including raising awareness of energy and environmental concerns as well as concerns about the welfare of elderly citizens. She also gave some examples of intellectual property education at the university that benefit the environment and community such as the development of Aquanes fish anaesthetic and biogas production tanks.

The third panelist, Assistant Professor Dr. Akkharawit Kanjana-Opas, talked about how we can utilise university intellectual property or research to benefit the public and society. He gave some examples of research from students that has helped address major problems in Thailand, such as light-weight prosthetics and the medical nanotechnology that has helped in post-surgical healing. The university is also currently partnering with three hospitals in Thailand to test products and technology before commercialising them.

The fourth panelist, Associate Professor Dr. Tiranee Achalakul, talked about the soon-to-be organisation of social enterprise initiative at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT) that she has been putting together over the last few years. She mentioned that students often have a lot of good ideas, but do not know how to commercialise them. As a result, she initiated the 'entrepreneur eco-system' to provide marketing suggestions and advice on finding strategic partners. The university also helps students to build social entrepreneur networks and includes social entrepreneurship knowledge in a range of other programmes. Following this, she went on to explain the organisational structure of KMUTT's Innovation Foundation, the university's investment model and student support model. Finally, she summarised the two keys to success, which are to identify the right strategic partners and the talent mobility programme between partners and KMUTT personnel.

After that, a question on the barriers of social enterprise was raised. Mr. Jeffrey mentioned the difficulty of producing engagement from students and the long lead time involved in implementing business models. Similarly, Dr. Duanghathai added that one barrier is the ability to ensure students understand and become engaged in social enterprise. In addition, Dr. Akkharawit suggested that the Thai habit of being 'afraid to lose face' could discourage students from investing in 'risky' start-ups, while Dr. Tiranee posited that the key barriers to successful social enterprises are how defining markets and strategic channels through which to sell products and services and the need to find right strategic partners.

The sixth session started with four panelists discussing the incubation of social enterprises: Micheal Roy, Lecturer and Assistant Professor in Social Business at Glasgow Caledonian University, Dr. Edward Rubesch, Director of the IMBA Programme and Centre for Sustainable Enterprise at Thammasat University, Judith Reynolds, Director of Social Enterprise at Plymouth University and Dr. Varintra Sirisuthikul, Deputy Director of the Social Entrepreneurship programme at Srinakarinwirot University.

The first panelist in sixth session, Michael Roy, briefly introduced Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU). The objective of the university is education 'for the common good'. He mentioned that the university has been conducting several social enterprise studies and their impact on social well-being. Several of these programmes include focus on providing incubation space for social enterprises, such as the Ideas Hub, the Social Innovation Platform and the Social Innovation Space, which brings the community into GCU. He then explained how universities can support social enterprises by critiquing new development and innovation, bringing ideas from one field into another.

The second panelist, Dr. Edward Rubesch, mentioned that new social enterprises are fragile for two reasons: no existing customers, and no existing investors. The job of a new enterprise is to figure out how it will create value for customers and find resources, both of which are very challenging. Most important for entrepreneurs is the learning process gained by blending together people, solutions and resources (fragile→failure→learning). He then stated that one of the most important things for social enterprises is to keep pushing towards an acceptable trade-off; it must focus on creating value in a way that customers (even if they are poor) get a range of choices, while investors also get a range of choices. In his point of view, the true definition of a social enterprise is "a business that minimises profits". At the same time, it is important to encourage social enterprises to "think big". He then ended his speech by concluding two key points for social entrepreneurs: Give yourself permission to 'think big' but also be persistent and 'act small'.

The third panelist, Judith Reynolds, mentioned several resources at Plymouth University for incubation such as the 'Formation Zone' (a space where social enterprises can work on starting to run their businesses), the network of 'Innovation Centres' across the local region, access to academic experts, joint research and product development projects, incentive funds such as the Dominic List Innovation Fund for students, and the SEEDBED accelerator programme. She explained that this programme offers scaled loans at an affordable level to social enterprises, mentoring and coaching services, workshops, master classes and peer-to-peer mentoring, providing a highly effective way to develop social enterprise. The university has also entered a partnership with the Darlington Trust (a large trust promoting social enterprises and social ventures) and the South West Investment Group, while funds are also available from central government. Lastly, she highlighted the importance of "acceleration" not just "start-up incubation". In her opinion, anyone can start a business but what is difficult is to "run and grow" the business following this.

The fourth panelist, Dr. Varintra Sirisuthikul, talked about what the Business Administrative Department in the Faculty of Sciences at Srinakarinwirot University currently do to aid social enterprises, which is to run a short course on social entrepreneurship. This allows the department to reach a diverse group of people, such as those in remote areas and social entrepreneurs without standard university-level education. She further explained that the department also seeks help from social enterprise components and key partners. In summary she concluded that the mission of the university is to help social entrepreneurs achieve their dreams of making society better while maintaining the realistic mindset of the business world.

After this, the discussion moved on to the final topic: recommendations and ways forward. This included three panelists, Michael Roy, Lecturer and Assistant Professor in Social Business at Glasgow Caledonian University, Keith Jeffrey, Managing Director of the CUSE Hub at Coventry University and Nuttphong Jaruwannaphong, Director of the Thai Social Enterprise Office.

The first panelist, Michael Roy, reviewed UK-Thailand partnership opportunities in social enterprise education.

The second panelist, Keith Jeffrey, talked about opportunities for joint research between the UK and Thailand. In his view, social enterprise is not focused on maximising profit, but on supporting people to live more fulfilling and productive lives.

The last panelist, Nuttaphong Jaruwannaphong, proposed potential areas for long-term collaboration between Thai and UK universities following on from this two-day discussion. Potential collaboration can be categorised into five types, namely: education, via joint programmes and joint degree courses, capacity building via scholarship programmes for university staff, creation of an online knowledge sharing platform including courses, tools and case-studies, exchange programmes for professors and students and finally, partnership programmes on intellectual property education for social entrepreneurs in business and academic sectors. Partnership with private sector businesses was also recommended as an addition to this approach by Judith Reynolds. At the end of the session, it was emphasised that actions are required to make all of the discussion's outcomes a reality.
