Social Entrepreneurship in the Digital Age (SEDA301)

LECTURE 8

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA | SE DA

How Social Entrepreneurs Develop Innovative Ideas

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MODULE 1: Social entrepreneurship and social enterprise as forces for change	
Learning Pathway	**Topics**
Introduction to Key Concepts	• Conceptualizing social entrepreneurship, social innovation and social enterprise
Drivers of Social Entrepreneurship	• Hybridity and sustainable social impact • Socio-political, economic, cultural and technological factors related to the growth of social entrepreneurship
The Diverse Nature of Social Enterprise	• Diverse forms of social enterprise • Social entrepreneurship in the Tasmanian, Australian and global contexts • Guest lectures (Tasmanian-based social entrepreneurs)
Developing Innovative Solutions	• Understanding social issues/needs in your local community • **How social entrepreneurs develop innovative ideas**

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What is the difference between *innovation* and *social innovation*?

Social innovation is defined as: "*a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals*" (Phills et al., 2008, p. 39)

This differentiates social innovation from business innovations which are generally motivated by profit maximization and diffused through profit-oriented organizations.

Some aspects of innovation theory, for example the defusing and scaling up of innovations, are directly transferable from technical to social spheres; other elements are not.

Surprisingly little is known about social innovation compared to the vast amount of research into innovation in business and science.

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A complexity-based theory of social innovation

- **Action under complex uncertainty:** working with a multitude of different players and dynamics within a complex system with many intricate parts
- **Non-linear:** it's not a matter of if I do A, B will happen, then C, then D, and so on. Social innovation (and social change) is often not linear
- **Iterative processes of sensing, ideation, (re)appraising and adapting:** feedback loops between every stage make innovations more like multiple spirals than straight lines
- **Emergent strategies:** not everything is planned out or done deliberately; instead, social innovation requires understanding systems, identifying patterns of possibility, and acting on fleeting windows of opportunity

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The phases of social innovation

1. **Prompts** – generating ideas by understanding needs
2. **Proposals** – linking needs to new possibilities (e.g. identify 'tentative' solutions, but these still need to be tested)
3. **Prototyping** – prototyping and piloting ideas through a process of active design involving key users
4. **Sustaining** – when the idea becomes everyday practice
5. **Scaling** – assessing, then scaling up and diffusing the good ideas
6. **Systemic change** – involves re-designing and introducing entire systems and will usually involve all sectors over time

1 Prompts
2 Proposals
3 Prototypes
4 Sustaining
5 Scaling
6 Systemic change

Diagram: Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan 2010 – The Open Book of Social Innovation. https://youngfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/The-Open-Book-of-Social-Innovationg.pdf

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Methods for developing innovative ideas: Contextual inquiry

- Places primary importance on context and its subtle influences and dynamics
- Gaining an understanding and empathizing with community members: meeting with all stakeholders, listening respectfully and actively, and being humble enough to change perspectives based on what you are hearing

Contextual inquiry activity for developing innovative ideas: *Bodystorming*

- As a team, act out situations with both internal (local) and external (your team) participants, with the aim to transform the external members' viewpoints so they better reflect those of internal participants
- Output: in-depth data about contextual factors and viewpoints, video of bodystorm session

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Methods for developing innovative ideas: Participatory design

- Designing *with* via co-creation / co-design in which end users become members of the design team - they can contribute to and critique design ideas, and respond to prototypes to provide direct input to the design. Based on Appreciative Inquiry (AI).
- Rather than focusing on the problem, the AI principle is: *A positive focus tends to deliver a positive effect.*

Participatory design / AI activity for developing innovative ideas: *The 4D process*

- <u>Discover</u> the "best of what is" - participants identify what's working well
- <u>Dream</u> "what might be" - participants envision a process or approach that would work better
- <u>Design</u> "what should be"- define and prioritize the elements of these better processes
- Create a <u>Destiny</u> based on "what will be"- a shared sense of involvement in the creation of the design (Output)

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Methods for developing innovative ideas: Concept mapping

- A diagram of knowledge that supports meaningful ideation processes and learning through connection forming
- Because knowledge is made explicit and tangible - literally, drawn out on a piece of paper - it can provoke collaborative development within a design team

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Concept mapping activity for developing innovative ideas

- As a group, draw out and link up relationships between all key elements, e.g. key people involved, possible partners, funding streams etc.
- Output: the map may capture a network of collaboration required for the idea to be implemented, plus it may depict the pragmatic steps the team can take to achieve its goal
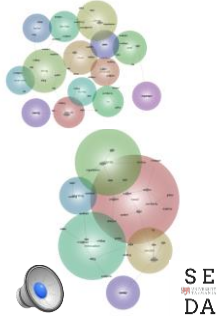
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Methods for developing innovative ideas: Semantic zoom

- Changing the scale of a problem illustrates new problems, issues and opportunities, and enables the group to recontextualize or reframe the problem. Any problem or situation can be repositioned in a larger or smaller context.

Semantic zoom activity for developing innovative ideas: *Zoom out/zoom in*

- *Zoom out* from the identified issue to see it in its larger socio-political context and consider what interrelated, systemic factors influence the problem. Then, *zoom in* on a specific part of the issue or critique it from the individual, familial or local community perspective.
- Output: problem-orientation at varying scales to consider a problem from different vantage points and to see new facets of the problem to potentially identify new opportunities.

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In-built, unavoidable risk in the innovation process

- Social entrepreneurs face great challenges in selling early-stage innovation
- Many of the most obvious funding sources (e.g. philanthropic foundations or government grant programs) may be intolerant of the risk that is inherent to new innovations and initiatives
- A key virtue of quick prototyping is that innovations often require several goes before they work
- Therefore, acceptance of the probability of failure is required for socially entrepreneurial action
- Failure gives us the opportunity to learn important lessons, to respond thoughtfully and to re-engage in new and exciting ways with issues

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Take home messages

- Social innovation can be seen as the mechanisms and processes that create social value within socially entrepreneurial initiatives
- Unlike *innovation* more broadly, *social innovation* is oriented towards societal (rather than private) benefit, and as it deals with complex social problems a systems view of this concept is necessary
- In dealing with systems, we must be able to grapple with complexity. By doing so, we can come to understand that it is not possible to control all of the intricate parts of the system, but that we can attain new innovative possibilities through constantly learning, responding and evolving (e.g. through the processes of understanding/sensing/listening + ideation + prototyping + adaption).
- The methods of contextual inquiry, participatory design / AI, concept mapping, and semantic zoom are useful ways of developing innovative ideas, particularly through collaborative efforts
- Failure and risk are inherent and necessary when engaging in the processes of developing, testing, and scaling social innovations

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