

Output 02 “Universities for the society of tomorrow”: An introduction to Social Innovation in Higher Education Institutions – Background for HEI staff

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i. Social Innovation

Social Innovation (SI) means different things for different people across disciplines and around the globe (Galera and Borzaga, 2009). SI is often context and country specific, therefore there is much conceptual debate surrounding Social Entrepreneurship (SEn) and SI literature, as it embraces varying and often competing discourses (Luke and Chu, 2013; Kerlin, 2010). The term ‘enterprise’ and ‘entrepreneurship’ is often related to actors being profit-driven, opportunity-focused, innovative, commercially business orientated and also risk-takers (Chell, 2007; Luke and Chu, 2013). The term ‘social’ (in social enterprise or social innovation) adds an additional complexity given that SEn focuses on grasping opportunities for social purposes (Corner and Ho, 2010). The conceptual debate surrounding SEn stems from the application of entrepreneurship theory to the social domain. Prior literature suggests that simply rebranding community processes as a new form of entrepreneurship may omit some ideological, political and practical principles at their roots (Krashinsky 1998, Paton 2003, Pearce 2003, Dees 2004, Cho 2006; Parkinson and Howorth, 2008).

Pol and Ville (2009:881) propose the following working definition for SI: “[an] implied new idea [that] has the potential to improve either the quality or the quantity of life ... innovations conducive to better education, better environmental quality and longer life expectancy [being] a few”. Understood in this capacity, SI has many implications and is also potentially system-altering (Maclean, Harvey and Gordon, 2012). Social entrepreneurship is associated with SI as a means of fulfilling social objectives or goals, and has *opportunity* as a central focus (Thompson, 2008). In many parts of the world social entrepreneurship and related SI, has received much interest in Higher Education (HE). The UK’s Quality Assurance Agency (QAA, 2012:8) has been likened to the Ashoka Changemaker principles (<http://ashokau.org/changemakercampus/>) as they suggest that the goal of enterprise education is to: “...*produce graduates with the mind-set and skills to come up with original ideas in response to identified needs and shortfalls, and the ability to act on them*”. Developing students’ outlook towards enterprise reinforces entrepreneurial and innovative education. SI in education is not a completely new conception (Mulgan, Tucker, Rushanara and Sanders, 2007), as developing new approaches and innovative mind-sets among students is a key focus in many Higher Education Institutions (HEI).

Nurturing students' capabilities for positive social change is important for SI and related social impact. It is further suggested that SI may be embedded into education via a re-examination and re-design of the academic curriculum. As Nair (2014) identified, it is crucial that the learning designs of curriculum courses continue to be flexible, specifically tailored and inspiring for students. Prior research has found that as with the majority of disciplines, teachers' style of teaching is affected by their own beliefs and principles (Kember, 1997). Trigwell, Prosser and Waterhouse (1999:10) discuss the relationship between teachers' approaches to learning and teaching, and students' learning: "Now, it would appear that there is a relation between approach to teaching and the quality of student learning outcomes". Owing to the contact between students and their teachers, it is suggested that any approach aiming to embed SI into HE, ought to consider teachers' existing beliefs and principles on SI and how this can be incorporated into student learning.

Defining SI education poses several challenges: firstly, SI definition varies in different HEI; secondly, there is no definition of 'SI education' in prior literature (Schmitz, 2015); and finally, owing to the absence of a definition for SI education, there are challenges in developing a teaching and learning theory across all HEIs. With these challenges in mind, guiding principles outlined in Table 1 are suggested for defining SI in HEIs.

Table 1. Guiding principles for defining SI in HEIs (Alden Rivers, Armellini, Maxwell, Allen and Durkin, 2015).

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| 1. Social innovation education promotes systemic and sustainable approaches to improving society through positive social change. |
| 2. Social innovation education aims to develop qualities for positive changemaking in students, such as those referred to as Changemaker Attributes. |
| 3. Social innovation education subsumes the development of employability skills and 21st century skills, while working towards a more sophisticated set of competencies. |
| 4. Social innovation education promotes learning on a more critical and socially impactful plane than traditional undergraduate education. |

In light of the guiding principles in defining SI in HEIs listed in Table 1 (improving society, developing students' qualities, developing employability skills and promoting social impact), SI in HEIs is understood as complex. However what emerges is that SI in HEIs involves an underlying goal

of supporting learners to become graduates who aim to create positive impact on the world, irrespective of their chosen careers. Ultimately, HEIs need to re-examine and design their own methodology for embedding SI across their own institution as UoN is doing.

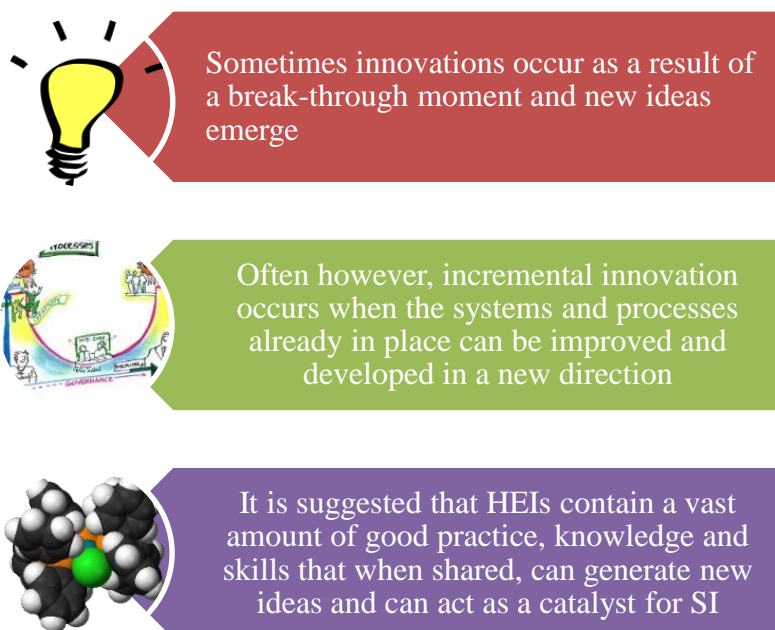
ii. Introduction to the University of Northampton

In 2010 the University of Northampton (UoN) began on a journey of placing Social Innovation (SI) at the heart of its activities. As a new institutional strategy, the UoN had a goal to “transform lives and inspire change” in order to distinguish the university among others. To “transform lives and inspire change” became an embodied objective for the UoN and an institutional ethos: To develop stronger thinkers and stronger communities (Alden Rivers et al., 2015). The aim for the UoN is to provide opportunities for students to engage with SI and social impact through means that remained flexible, meaningful and relevant. As a result, consideration of how SI principles could be embedded within student learning experience was vital. To develop students that are ‘agents of positive social change’ became part of the UoN’s vision. Consequently, the UoN offers a wealth of opportunity for embedding SI across courses and disciplines. This relates to course design, course structure, learning, teaching development, student assessment, as well as extra-curricular opportunities for students to engage with.

iii. Social Innovation Application for other HEIs

There are many different types of SIs, for example, transformation innovation, breakthrough innovation or incremental innovation.

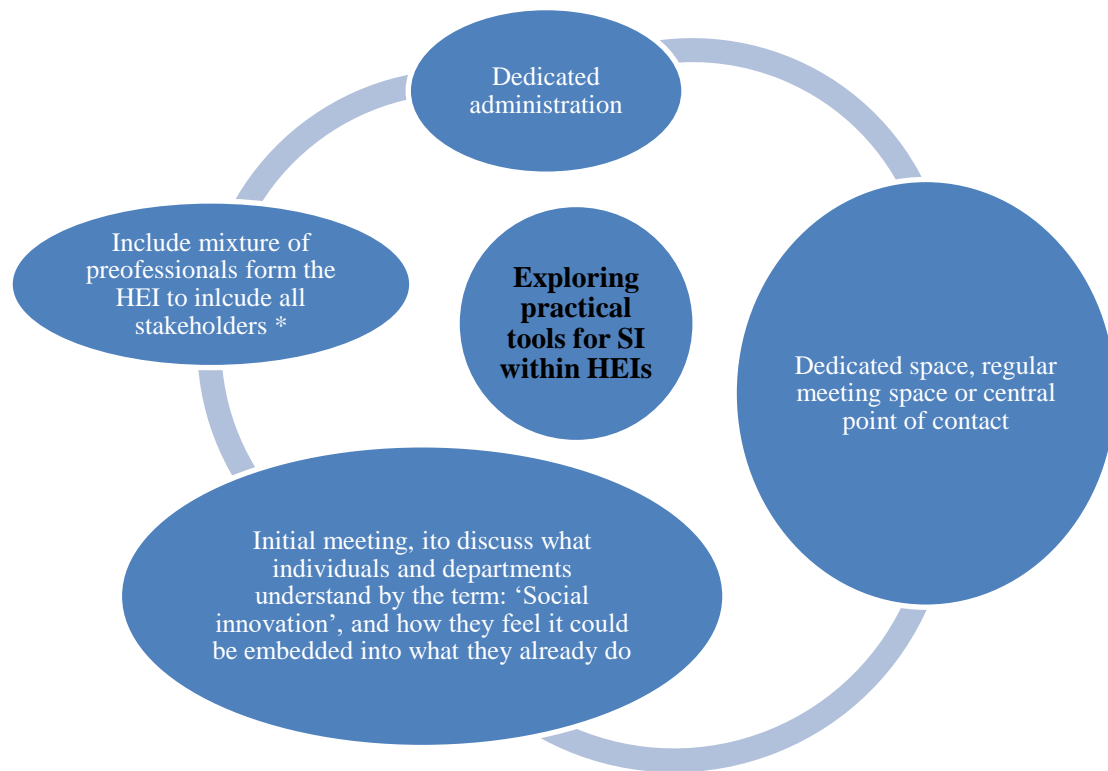
Diagram 1. Innovation process in HEIs



Managers and provosts of HEIs can consider as an overall aim: How can SI be embedded in our institution? Please see Worksheet One (separate emailed document).

Stage 1: Senior management and governors at HEIs create a SI meeting group, with the overall focus being: Exploring practical tools for SI within the HEI.

Table 2. Exploring practical tools for social innovation in Higher Education Institutions



:* lecturers, governors, managers, support staff and administrative staff, as this will create a dynamic environment for discussing the practicalities of embedding SI practices institution-wide.

In many cases, SI may already be embedded in several institutional practices. During this beginning consultation stage it may be useful to ask of these internal and external contacts:

1. What do you understand by the term: social innovation?
2. How do you embed SI?
3. What challenges have you encountered that you can share with us?

After this initial ‘consultation process’ with university staff and local communities, it may be valuable to consider what the institutional strategy is going forward and how can this be articulated (for example, in a table, diagram, institutional ethos etc.). Once the HEI has identified what the guiding

principles for SI are in consultation with their SI working group, the HEI may be in a good position to share their ideas and evidences of good practice in the form of case study examples (see stage two for further information).

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