

Institution: University of Northampton
Unit of Assessment: 19 – Business and Management
Title of case study: Contributing to Social Enterprise theory and evidenced based strategic institutional change and government policy formulation
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The University of Northampton's (UoN) social enterprise research has created new knowledge in the field of social entrepreneurship, which has informed the definitional debate, as well as identifying the added-value that social enterprises deliver to their beneficiaries. This has provided the evidence-base for the launch of a whole-institution strategy at the University to become the leading HEI for social enterprise in the UK. The research has also led to the University supporting external social enterprises and assisting them to deliver organisational growth and change. The University's research has also led to it becoming a leading evidential contributor to policy-makers in the UK.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Research conducted by Tim Curtis (Senior Lecturer and HEFCE/UnLtd Ambassador, 2008-present) in 2008 utilised a 'critical realist' approach to re-evaluating case-study based fieldwork, as well as data analysis and collection. Curtis employed critical management theory to examine the definition and identity of social enterprise (SE). His paper identified that problems in defining SE were due to the plethora of theoretical approaches to emerging SE. Curtis argued that SE had an emergent identity, which meant that outlier data, including failures and weaknesses in SE models (Curtis, 2008) must be considered. Further research by Tim Curtis conducted in 2010 expanded on this by exploring definitions of SE from a Chinese perspective (Curtis, 2011). Curtis argues that heterogeneous SE theory informs the impact that the Chinese concept of 'Danwei' has on formation of SEs in China. This anthropological approach suggested that political, social and cultural contexts are crucial in shaping SE in any locality (Curtis, 2011).</p> <p>Curtis's work was then built-upon by Professor Simon Denny (Director of Social Enterprise and holder of the 'Queen's Award for Enterprise Promotion' 1992- present) and Dr Fred Seddon (Senior Researcher, 2010- present) and Richard Hazenberg (Senior Researcher, 2012 - present). They utilised a 'critical theorist' approach to social impact measurement to conduct research between 2010-2013, which sought to identify the 'added value' that SEs brought to beneficiaries and stakeholders. This research utilised an innovative approach to social impact evaluation and evidenced-based policy formulation. The research findings demonstrated that there was no significant difference in the social impact delivered by social enterprises and for-profit organisations delivering the same interventions. However, the research identified that for-profit organisations employed selection procedures to ensure that their beneficiary cohorts were less socially-excluded than those inducted by the social enterprises (Hazenberg <i>et al.</i>, 2013). Findings of the research were disseminated in three journal articles (Denny <i>et al.</i>, 2011; Seddon <i>et al.</i>, 2012a; Hazenberg <i>et al.</i>, 2013). Further research was also conducted based upon an evaluation of a work-integration social enterprise established through an institutional partnership between UoN and a regional development agency, partially funded by a European Social Fund grant. This research identified that a social enterprise established through an institutional partnership struggled to achieve sustainability due to board decisions being made by members based upon the interests of their own institution over and above the needs of the partnership. The research also led to an invitation by a major international publisher (Routledge) to produce a book on evaluating social enterprise (Denny and Seddon, 2013), which informed the international concept of social entrepreneurship and critiqued social impact.</p> <p>Research conducted by Professor Denny, Dr Seddon and Dr Hazenberg between 2010-2012 also built upon the prior research by Curtis (2008), which called for SE research to identify weaknesses and failures in SE delivery models. This research adopted a 'critical theorist' perspective that was grounded in team-development and partnership theory and identified problems encountered when</p>

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establishing new social enterprises. The problems identified in the research centred upon communication problems between the institutional partners and the social enterprise staff. There was also a negative effect on the running of the programme resulting from the complex monitoring demands made by the funding body to ensure transparency in the programme spending (Seddon *et al*, 2012b). Quality research conducted and disseminated by UoN has contributed to the University's refocusing of its strategic goals that has resulted in its recent designation as one of 22 'Ashoka Changemaker Campuses' in the world. It has also led to the University being recognised as the No. 1 HEI in the UK for social enterprise.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Curtis, T., (2008), 'Finding that Grit Makes a Pearl: A Critical Re-reading of Research into Social Enterprise, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 14(5), 276-290.
2. Curtis, T (2011) 'Newness' in Social Entrepreneurship Discourses: The Concept of 'Danwei' in the Chinese Experience, *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 198–217, October 2011.
3. Denny, S., Hazenberg, R., Irwin, W. & Seddon, F., (2011), Social Enterprise: Evaluation of an enterprise skills programme, *Social Enterprise Journal*, 7 (2), 150-172.
4. Seddon, F., Hazenberg, R. & Denny, S., (2012a), Effects of an employment enhancement programme on participant NEETs, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 16(4), 503-520, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2012.733808>
5. Hazenberg, R., Seddon, F. & Denny, S. (2013) Investigating the outcome performance of work-integration social enterprises (WISEs): Do WISEs offer 'added value' to unemployed NEETs? *Public Management Review* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2012.759670> 2-24
6. Seddon, F., Hazenberg, R. & Denny, S. (2012b), Testing a team-development model: partnership in creating a work-integration social enterprise, *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics*, North American Business Press, 9(5), 47-64.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The UoN research has produced impact in five key areas:

1. the development of a social enterprise research paradigm;
2. whole-institution strategic transformation at UoN;
3. design and development of employability enhancement programmes (EEPs);
4. organisational growth and change at external partner SEs;
5. evidenced-based policy formulation in the UK, Europe and China.

The research achieved these impacts through a proactive 'diffusion' model, whereby the research articles are actively disseminated and promoted across academic and non-academic networks, leading to the development of theory and the incorporation of this theory into everyday working practices and policy formulation.

1 – Developing the SE Research Paradigm:

The theoretical research into SE developed at UoN has contributed to the development of an academic research paradigm around defining SE and the 'added value' that SE delivers. The research by Curtis (2008) that explored social entrepreneurship directly contributed to the development of the UnLtd/HEFCE 'Social Entrepreneurship Toolkit' that is available for social entrepreneurs to access in order to assist them in developing their social enterprise (UCL, 2013: 4). Additionally, the research on social impact measurement led to the creation of a new methodology for assessing social impact at work-integration social enterprises that was centred upon the novel use of a general self-efficacy (GSE) scale (Denny *et al.*, 2011; Hazenberg *et al.*,

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2013). This work has contributed to the teaching and dissemination of social impact measurement through the publication of the Routledge Book, which is being sold internationally as a student textbook and is currently being translated into Chinese. Since publication on 15th July 2013, 120 books have already been sold and seven university courses have indicated it will be a core book. The publishers think this is indicative of high future sales and once the Chinese translation is available, sales are likely to be significantly greater.

2 – Institutional Transformation:

The University's 'Raising the Bar' strategic plan, informed by prior research discussed above, has led to a major shift in how UoN approaches education, training and entrepreneurship support. Currently UoN is No.1 HEI in the UK for SE, an 'Ashoka U Changemaker Campus' (AshokaU, 2013), the 'Midlands Most Enterprising University' and is ranked 47th in the 'Guardian University League Table'. UoN has invested in 30 new SEs started by students and staff, it is the first HEI in the UK to 'spin-out' its infrastructure services into an external SE and it has established Inspire2Enterprise CIC Ltd (I2E) in partnership with Exemplas. The University owns 51% of I2E, which provides support, advice and in depth consultancy to over 4,000 SEs across the UK's social enterprise sector. I2E employs 18 people, involves 230 students, and currently has 5,280 clients, making it the biggest single social enterprise support organisation in the UK. Overall, this activity represents a £1.970m investment in social enterprise by UoN, which has resulted in £850k income generated since November 2011.

3 – Social Impact & Employment Enhancement Programmes (EEP):

The research on social impact measurement and the funding and design of employability enhancement programmes has been presented to local policy-makers and used to inform the future policy of the ERDF and Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (NEP). The ERDF confirms that the research contributed to their evaluation strategy in the East Midlands and provided useful insights into the efficacy of this strategy (see ERDF letter). The NEP also confirms that the research contributed to their evaluation strategy and provided useful insights into the efficacy of this strategy. The research enabled NEP to apply the learning as part of their future delivery strategy for supporting unemployed young people into employment (see NEP letter). This engagement has shaped the on-going delivery of a number of specific policy initiatives and has also evidenced their efficacy in relation to social impact including: the '3e' EEP (see 3e letter); 'Corby Enterprise Ecologies' (see ERDF letter); and the 'Future Jobs Fund' (see NEP letter). The research also contributed to the delivery of a European conference that was held in Kettering in March 2013, which brought together over 250 policy-makers, academics and practitioners interested in social innovation from 14 European countries. The conference resulted in a number of key insights in the field of social enterprise being disseminated to key policy makers in the European Commission and other stakeholders in EN member states (see CJS, 2013; E3M letter).

4 – Organisational Growth and Change at Partner SEs:

In addition, the research conducted at EEPs that have partnered with the University has directly led to those organisations scaling-up and therefore increasing their potential social impact. An example of this is Goodwill Solutions (GS) a CIC, which has quadrupled its turnover since the UoN bought 20% of the company three years ago. Research carried out at GS proactively critiqued their social impact evaluation strategy. This critique resulted in our providing useful insights into the efficacy of their evaluation strategy, which supported the company in restructuring it (see GS letter). Additionally, the research conducted at GS CIC, supported its recently won funding from UnLtd's 'Big Venture Challenge' to enable it to further develop its business plan and increase its turnover (see UnLtd, 2013 and GS letter).

5 – Research Dissemination & Policy Formulation:

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The research activities discussed above have contributed to UoN being commissioned to undertake evaluations, input into policy formulation and to disseminate its research and institutional learning at academic, practitioner and policy seminars, workshops and conferences. The research has also led to academic links and knowledge transfer partnerships between the UoN and the University of Hunan, China. This has led to Professor Wang Zhong currently engaging in a 12-month research secondment at the University of Northampton.

Dr Fred Seddon sat on the Department of Business Innovation and Skills policy-roundtable that explored social impact measurement. Professor Simon Denny has been part of the Companies House working group, put together by BIS, to look at the appropriateness of the Community Interest Company (CIC) structure in terms of taking on external investment. His work on this group in 2012-13 led to him being invited to be part of the HM Treasury working group (2013) on tax relief for individuals wishing to invest in social venture funds and social enterprises. Professor Simon Denny has become an ambassador for the British Council promoting the UK's social enterprise experience and expertise overseas. This position has led to the University concluding a Memorandum of Understanding with Srinakharinwirot University in Thailand, who are aiming to become the number one HEI for social enterprise in Thailand.

The University's expertise in social enterprise led to it being asked to conduct the evaluation of UnLtd's 'Higher Education Support Programme' alongside the University of Plymouth. The HESP has led to the funding of over 600 nascent social entrepreneurs and the evaluation has directly contributed to HEFCE re-commissioning the programme for the 2013/2014 academic year (Bell *et al.*, Aug 2013).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. UCL, (2013), *From Ideas to Social Enterprise: A Guide to Using University Intellectual Property for the Benefit of Society*, UCL, UCLB, UnLtd, Storm Publication.
2. AshokaU, (2013), *Changemaker Campus Panel Reflections & Feedback*, Ashoka.
3. 3e, (2013), *Letter of Impact*, 3e CIC.
4. ERDF, (2013), *Letter of Impact*, European Regional Development Fund.
5. NEP, (2013), *Letter of Impact*, Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership.
6. E3M, (2013), *Letter of Impact*, E3M/European Commission.
7. Bell, L., Hazenberg, R. & Southern, R., (August 2013), *Evaluation of the Higher Education Support Programme*, SE-UEN Research Publication, HEFCE.
8. UnLtd, (2013), *Big Venture Challenge Winners 2013/2014*, online at <http://unltd.org.uk/bvc/2013-14/>
9. GS, (2013), *Letter of Impact*, Goodwill Solutions CIC.
10. CJS Events, (2013), *Growing Successful Social Enterprise: Lessons and Opportunities*, available online at <http://www.cjsevents.co.uk/e3m/>