



SUMMARY OF THE SUSTAINABLE PATHS TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

As part of the NZ Community Economic Development Conference held in Waitakere City on 9-11 February 2010, Justine Munro, CEO of the NZ Centre for Social Innovation, together with international guests Charlotte Young (Chair of the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) UK) and Steve Lawrence (Founder of SSE Australia) facilitated a workshop titled "Sustainable Paths to Community Development."

The focus of the workshop was to introduce the School for Social Entrepreneurs model to attendees and to explore the potential it could have in NZ. Approximately 40 conference delegates from the private, public and non-profit sectors attended this workshop.

The SSE, currently operating in England, Ireland, Wales and Australia, with a Canadian school in development, brings a different learning model to that of the current formal education system. Charlotte Young describes the school as a support mechanism for social entrepreneurs with an emphasis on personal development. Steve Lawrence elaborates, "It does not teach large chunks of skills but instead it teaches knowledge of where to go to and who social entrepreneurs can approach for help. Social entrepreneurs don't learn by being taught, they learn by action. They need support from people who have done it, with whom they can talk and establish long-term mentoring relationships. This is the purpose of the SSE."

Steve Lawrence is a firm believer that "bottom-up is the only satisfactory way of working. We are facing massive problems and know that government solutions often don't work. Citizens can come up with better ways of doing things because they live amongst the problems and they have it in their guts. There is a need to encourage good leaders within communities and to support their development. Steve observed that, as in Australia, an SSE in NZ will be a key ingredient in fostering social innovation and creating sustainable community development.

A keen sense of enthusiasm was felt among the attendees and the group agreed unanimously that an SSE is needed and could work in NZ. A summary of attendees' questions and responses from the panel is provided below.

**Q. I'm interested in how it could work in NZ.
I just want to clarify: is it a school for venture creation or more for community activists?**

Charlotte Young: There are two types of students who benefit from the programme. In our school in the UK, two thirds of the students are originally members of disadvantaged groups and want to create solutions to problems they see, often working initially within the current infrastructure. The other group comes from a professional environment, people who see that something desperately needs

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to be changed, something outside of the current infrastructure and they know that if they don't do it, nothing will happen. The programme benefits immensely from this diversity. Powerful learning can come about when vastly different people begin to dialogue and challenge each other. The outcomes for each student are different but the programme attracts enthusiastic students who want to get something done and go into the programme with the intention of finishing with a business, a project or a community organization.

Q. What kind of support do participants get? Do they get any kind of emotional support?

Charlotte Young: They get mentors, a staff and alumni network, an action learning set, collective learning and reflection. Each student gets given a mentor based on their specific needs and personal deficits and they meet regularly. Peer and self evaluations are often valuable. If they have deep emotional needs, we can refer them to further assistance so it is a holistic programme. In terms of financial support, there are bursary arrangements and sponsorships the students can access. We do require each student to provide a small upfront financial commitment of their own as well (at least \$1000).

Steve Lawrence: We have a careful selection process. We search for people with a level of resilience and capacity. It's for people who are ready to run a venture and we focus on developing them as individuals as well as their venture. We also make sure that the staff at the school also have high emotional intelligence.

Q. How does this fit with the formal education system? Could students get access to student loans?

Charlotte Young: We've explored the idea of creating a qualification, but have concluded that this puts too many constraints on us and the students and it's not worth it. However, we are working on the idea of having the programme as a stepping stone towards the MSc and MBA for students who are interested in writing a thesis.

Steve Lawrence: Students need hard skills and knowledge and at the point of entering the programme, they need just-in-time learning, not a qualification. It would complicate things trying to bring it into the education system, although Charlotte's solution may work. Social entrepreneurship is about learning from people, the questioning and the challenging. The students can be illiterate but still be successful in the programme.

Justine Munro: Regarding accessing student loans, we would need to look into that and explore possibilities.

Q. Do people work part time?

Steve Lawrence: Not recommended. If you are ready to kick off a venture, it needs to be done full-time. Having a job is too much of an obligation.

Q. Have you thought of partnering with UNITEC's Non Profit Management programme?

Justine Munro: We are looking forward to talking with the people at UNITEC about how we can support each other's work. At the moment though, we do also see that these are two different learning models which respond to different needs.