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Devkamal Dutta

Associate Professor of Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship, PAUL ~ India & Hong Kong

Thanks in part to the support of a *CIE International Grant for Development and Engagement* I was able to travel to India and Hong Kong earlier this summer for my research and international outreach activities.

Currently, I am working on a research project that examines growth challenges in social ventures. Social ventures are entrepreneurial firms that adopt a business-oriented approach to tackle some of the biggest social challenges facing a region or country. However, at some stage in their life-cycle such ventures have to balance the duality of staying close to their social-oriented mission *and* managing expansion and growth. Many social ventures fail to overcome this tension: either they deviate from their original social mission and operate like a conventional for-profit organization, or they decide to remain as a social venture but forego growth. The project follows from and complements my work on technology entrepreneurship, by extending my efforts towards the social entrepreneurship arena. Also, this work is directly in line with UNH's strategic vision of contributing to a better world through creation and support of social ventures and social innovation at the state, national, and global levels.

In order to get close to the phenomenon, I decided to commence this research by immersing myself in fieldwork through intensive study of a social organization that seems to have been effective at managing the duality. India has a thriving sector of social ventures involved in alleviating poverty, empowering women, and ensuring water supply, sanitation, immunization and healthcare at the grassroots level. From anecdotal evidence, I came to know that **Basix India** might be just the social venture appropriate for my fieldwork. Basix is a livelihood promotion institution that works with over 3.5 million customers in India, over 90% of them being rural poor households. I established contact with Basix senior management in April and they kindly agreed to be a host institution for my study. In July and August, I travelled through India, meeting Basix top management team, project officers, field operations staff and beneficiaries in Kolkata, Jamshedpur, and Shillong. Among several insights that emerged from the field research, the most critical finding was that social ventures that are able to juggle the tensions of mission versus market have it in their mission itself to balance social and economic objectives. In other words, it is in their organizational DNA to give equal emphasis to both economic and social goals even though they are set up as social ventures. In the case of Basix, at the heart of their mission and strategy is the Basix Livelihood Triad. The Triad lays equal emphasis on three ways to ensure economic and social uplift of beneficiaries through (i) livelihood financial services or lending micro-credit to beneficiaries, (ii) agricultural/business development services or creating economic assets by beneficiaries, and (iii) institutional development services or skill and personality development of beneficiaries. Using and balancing through this three-pronged approach, it has been possible for Basix to ensure significant uplift of beneficiary quality of life.



Dev Dutta (left) with Basix Beneficiaries in front of their village hut near Jamshedpur



Dev Dutta in front of the Renewing Business Education in Asia conference Stage at Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Separate from this research project, I visited the **Hong Kong Polytechnic University** (HK PolyU) in July to attend a conference on *Renewing Business Education in Asia*, where I was an invited participant. This was an exciting platform where educationists from across the world deliberated over two days on the emerging challenges of business education and how to reposition business education in Hong Kong, and more generally, across Asia, to take advantage of the 21st century which people suggest is going to be the 'Asian Century.' I met with a wide range of academics, among them Professor Edwin Cheng, Dean Faculty of Business HK PolyU, Dr. Eric Ngai, Professor of Management & Marketing Dept., HK PolyU, Dr. Israr Qureshi, Asst., Professor of Management & Marketing Dept., HK PolyU, Dr. Doo-hee Lee, Dean of Korea University Business School, and Dr. Katrin Muff, Dean of Business School Lausanne. I also participated in a focus group collaboratory for agenda formulation and strategizing for the future. Several learning that came out of these deliberations will be important to consider as I engage in my teaching activities at UNH and work as a member of UNH's *University Panel on Teaching and Learning*.

I am grateful to have received a CIE grant to support my research and international outreach initiatives and I felt honored to represent UNH in Asia.



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