
Editorial

Patrick Dawson*

University of Wollongong,
School of Management and Marketing,
NSW 2522, Australia
and
University of Aberdeen,
Business School,
Aberdeen AB24 3QY, UK
E-mail: patrickd@uow.edu.au
*Corresponding author

Lisa Daniel

University of Adelaide Business School,
10 Pulteney Street,
Adelaide, South Australia 5005, Australia
E-mail: lisa.daniel@adelaide.edu.au

Jane Farmer

UHI Millennium Institute,
Centre for Rural Health,
The Greenhouse, Beechwood Business Park,
Inverness IV2 3BL, UK
E-mail: jane.farmer@uhi.ac.uk

Biographical notes: Patrick Dawson holds a dual position as a Professor at the University of Aberdeen Business School (UABS) and as a Professor in the School of Management and Marketing at the University of Wollongong. He holds a PhD in Industrial Sociology from the University of Southampton and during his early career worked at the University of Surrey and the University of Edinburgh. Since taking up the Salvesen Chair at Aberdeen, he has held Visiting Research Professorships at Roskilde University and the Danish Technical University in Denmark. He has published widely in the area of organisational change.

Lisa Daniel is a Management Lecturer with The University of Adelaide's Business School. She has a PhD in the field of Technology and Innovation Management and a Bachelor of Science with a first class honours in the field of molecular plant pathology. Her research focuses on the activities, relationships, conditions, structures and organisational dynamics that support innovation, R&D and technology development and its social integration. Her research interests include technology strategy, knowledge systems and high performance teams.

Jane Farmer holds the UHI Millennium Institute Chair of Rural Health Policy and Management. She studies and writes about the social, policy and management issues of rural healthcare provision. Her current research interests centres on new ways of providing services to remote and rural areas and involving stakeholders in configuring services. A key focus of her work is on how to increase, rather than deplete, rural community capacity in bringing together service stakeholders (public, patients, health professionals, managers and policymakers) in decisions.

This special issue presents a collection of papers on the new and emerging field of social innovation. The term ‘innovation’ has long been ubiquitous and over the years has been used to mean many different things. It has referred to the dealing of old problems in new contexts, to invention and the translation of new ideas into commercial products, to the dynamic capability of a firm in learning to deal with new practices, and to new approaches to managing our intellectual and social capital (see also, Bessant and Tidd, 2007). In a recent edition of this journal, Llorens-Motez et al. (2008) examine the relationship between knowledge management, flexibility and innovation. Their focus was largely on factors within organisations that promote innovation and support the achievement of a firm’s innovative potential. They note that innovation can be seen as the application of knowledge in the production of new knowledge [Llorens-Motez et al., (2008), p.2]. This is a useful marker in highlighting how innovation is not the same as invention or the generation of new ideas (that Eureka light bulb notion), but rather it’s about managing processes of harnessing knowledge and developing insights in the pursuit of a successful resolution and novel outcome. But what warrants as a successful outcome for a company who is driven by competitive pressures and the profit motive is likely to differ in significant ways from social innovations aimed at improving societal well-being. However, on both commercial and social dimensions, the public gaze is often on the radical innovations, which gain rapid acclaim, rather than on the myriad of less prominent evolutionary innovations that occur on a more regular basis.

In this special edition, our concern is with both the radical and incremental types of innovation. However, rather than focussing on the profit driven business of commercial innovations, we aim to draw attention not only to the social side of innovation processes generally, but to what is increasingly being dubbed as social innovation. At its simplest, social innovations aim to improve the welfare of groups and communities, as such they may: seek to further the social conditions of work; hope to provide socially useful solutions to ongoing community problems; or provide improvements in well-being for remote or socially isolated communities. Their goal is socially derived and motivated; they are not principally driven by commercial gain and profit motives but embrace broader objectives of improving social circumstance and enhancing the lived experience of people in society.

Whilst social issues are well noted as a factor in the successful uptake of new innovations (Austin et al., 2006; Harrisson and Laberge, 2002; MacKenzie and Wajcman, 1999), in recent years, the emphasis has shifted towards recognition of the importance of social engagement in the pursuit of societal well-being. Changing contextual conditions, media coverage and public debate has raised public awareness about social and environmental issues and with the growing disparity between top income earners and the rest of the working population, the assumptions behind the drivers for economic prosperity are increasingly being called into question. New bodies, such as the Institute of

Contemporary Scotland, have emerged and developed with the aim of supporting social innovations that improve the education and well-being of individuals in economically rundown and remote areas through community engagement and social participation.

The notion of social entrepreneurship emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, and has more recently taken on increasing significance, such that it is currently a growing area of public and academic interest (see, Bornstein, 2003). Essentially, a social entrepreneur can be defined as an individual who utilises their commercial skills in managing ventures that bring about well-being for others in the pursuit of social change, embracing economic and technological interventions as necessary to achieve their goals. Further to that, 'economic' and 'technical' imperatives have long been assumed as the main triggers for innovations aimed at providing social benefit. These are now being questioned and there is a re-emergence of social issues being recognised as drivers of change accompanied by a growing interest in social innovation and social entrepreneurship (Leadbeater, 1997). For example, in the USA, Jerr Boschee founded The Institute for Social Entrepreneurs (ISE) in 1999. This consulting company provides seminars, workshops and consulting services for social entrepreneurs in the US and around the world. Similarly, the Said Business School at Oxford University, has recently founded the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship (SCSE) and in March 2007, they ran a forum with speakers, such as, Charles Handy, David Galenson and Mahammad Yunus. This more recent and growing interest in socially based innovation marks a shift in emphasis, from the previous focus on technical imperatives and the profitability of new business ventures, toward socially responsible innovations and outcomes that can improve the well-being of people in society.

These developments in social innovation do not deny commercial pressures or the need for companies to change and adapt to highly competitive and dynamic business markets. Under such conditions, it is appropriate for management to focus on technical innovations and to understate the associated social processes as well as the effects that these developments can have more widely on groups and society. However, this special issue draws attention to those complimentary social processes as well as the potential conflicts of interest between technological innovations and social benefits, as well as the importance of innovations that are fundamentally socially motivated for the improved well-being of people. Our interest remains within the areas covered by innovation, social change, technology and organisational development.

In a manifesto for social innovation, the Young Foundation [Mulgan, (2006), p.5] notes that it is surprising how 'little is known about social innovation compared to the vast amount of research into innovation in business and science'. Yet innovations that bring about significant change are necessarily composed of social and technical dimensions; they are not devoid of social processes in the creation of new ideas, their implementation and broader diffusion. Spotlighting these social processes and their place in supporting and legitimising technological and organisational change, helps us to better understand this concept of social innovation. As Green (2005) states 'if you only concentrate on technology research then you invariably get technology innovation, but if you also research the social and the cultural, then you get social innovation. Technology and social innovation promises a more balanced quality of life and a more inspiring future'. In seeking to understand the social intentions and agenda behind technological developments, as well as innovations that seek to advance social well being, we recognise social innovation as necessarily founded in collective goals.

Given that this is a new and emerging area of research and public concern, it is perhaps not surprising that there is still considerable ambiguity around what notions of technical innovation, social entrepreneurship and social innovation mean. As we shall see, some of our contributors have built on these various notions in developing their perspectives and understanding. If we view the drivers behind these ideas of technological innovation and social entrepreneurship as being fundamentally different, then the contrasts between their development and implementation and use become a central focal point in the differentiation of social innovation. This is the starting point for some of the contributions in this special issue that focus on the social objectives of innovation and change. Taken as a whole, an emerging theme that derives from these papers rests on the simple question of: how do we recognise and implement social innovation. On this, as in the broader field of innovation studies, there remains a considerable degree of ambiguity and a good deal of debate, discussion and controversy.

An attempt to understand what we mean by the term 'social innovation' is taken up in the first paper. In examining the growing interest in social innovations, the authors reflect on our current stock of knowledge and forward a provisional framework that draws on the knowledge domains of social awareness and innovation. They contend that whilst there is much that can be drawn from existing studies that examine social processes in the development and application of innovation, the starting point for social innovation is, in fact, fundamentally different. They argue that in order to develop a sound understanding of social innovation, there needs to be a synthesis in knowledge domains which embraces the social side as well as the innovation (creative) side of the process. To achieve this intellectual synthesis, they offer a framework which integrates both the perspective of the social challenge and that of the innovative goal into a four component model of recursive negotiation between

- 1 the people involved
- 2 the shared challenge they face
- 3 the negotiation process to finding a suitable resolution
- 4 the goal of improved well-being in that successful resolution.

This simple and logical framework offers a fundamental model for both theoretical comparison and practical analysis of situations of social innovation. In regard to the practical, the authors suggest there is a high likelihood that the social innovation process may be confounded by inappropriate delineation of those components they have identified and a paucity of dialogue for successful negotiations between relevant parties. The use of Socratic dialogue is advocated as a potential tool to guide reflective discussion and constructive open negotiations between parties that seek a resolution towards the achievement of social goals. With respect to the theoretical, the model provides a common ground for the deconstruction and comparative analysis of social innovation.

In the second paper of this special edition by Ho, Chung, Chen and Lee, the issue of social innovation is developed through the notion of enabling community involvement in socially relevant issues through mobile phone messaging. There is no doubt that mobile phone technologies have changed the nature of communication and provide a vast mechanism for the provision of social information. Nations such as Taiwan boast almost 100% mobile phone use have begun using short message service (SMS) technology to deliver public messages from the Government to the population about events, issues and

support services of interest or importance to the community. Following the revelations from previous research that SMS technology promoted a sense of trust and personal recognition, Ho et al. explore the use of SMS by the Taoyuan county in informing the public about local government policies, issues, positioning and regional events. The local government had adopted the initiative in an attempt to develop social engagement and community building. This research was undertaken to explore the affect of the receivers' attitude, the message delivery time and content to help understand how to improve the efficacy of such information services. What Ho et al. reveal is that the attitude of people to the government sending information via SMS was an important factor in their receptivity and that the clarity and brevity of the content and time of delivery further influences its effectiveness. Importantly, as a tool for social innovation, it was found that public trust in SMS use was impaired because of connections with cases of fraud. This finding suggests that reliability and trust as well as timing and content are important issues for those wishing to use the technology as a communication device that is widely accepted.

In attempting to integrate aspects of health and safety into the workplace with designs that support the socio-technical changes in the environment, the paper by Broberg reveals that an extensive participatory process is required. In the past, developing positive ergonomics in the workplace has been difficult as the process has been viewed as an intervention rather than a contribution to the well-being of employees. A Danish research program 'work space design' (WSD) has undertaken to explore ways to constructively engage engineering consultants in the design process and to ensure the positive inclusion of workspace users in the design process. The program recognises the workspace as a dynamic four dimensional place which requires coherent design between the work that needs to be undertaken in that environment and the space that is involved. The role of workplace designers is explored with a view to providing a resource which can negotiate the multiple goals and perspectives of those involved in the development of the workplace as a collaborative process and as a shared social goal. The provision of a healthy and safe workplace that is acceptable and appropriate for users rather than an imposed requirement is the objective of participant engagement in the process. The project recognises the fundamental role of social input into innovative workplace design and through its dynamic four dimensional models, attempts to provide means for overcoming political and organisational impediments to achieve improved workplace well-being through appropriately designed technology and structures. Simulations, layout games and scenarios are some of the participatory methods used to ensure ergonomic measures and work procedures are specified into the design.

In examining the social challenges that arise with innovation projects, the authors Raven, van den Bosch and Weterings explore sustainability issues in the Netherlands through 'transition experiments'. Transitions are viewed as major shifts in socio-technical regimes which tend to be long term and complex and herald conservative structures which are resistant to change. The authors suggest through exploration of different social niches, the way to stimulate more effective transitions to new socio-technical regimes can be deduced. Niches are recognised as a location which has been protected or isolated from a dominant regime such that the regime can be introduced without any direct or immediate pressure from other sources. A niche also infers a micro-level involvement with the change process and flexibility in the environment such that innovative practices can be trialled. They suggest the niche will have an environment which presents an alternative framework to that more widely recognised and as such offers a location where

radical innovations may emerge without the constraints of broader influences. In this way, niches are seen as strategic places for learning about new innovations and the social and technological developments necessary for successful diffusion and adoption. Once identified, they suggest the development of 'competence kits' to provide a functional tool for practitioners in transition development and adoption. The importance of social well-being is brought out through transition experiments by recognising the importance of the co-evolution of technical improvements and their fulfilment of social goals.

The paper by McLoughlin and Preece examines a failed attempt at social innovation through the transformation of the rural pub into a cyber hub similar to that developed in internet cafés. Following the success of internet cafés in bringing internet technologies to those seeking access, the authors follow a project by the UK Countryside Agency (CA) to establish internet technologies in rural pubs as a means to bridge the 'digital divide' for those in rural areas through the commonly accepted central community institution, 'the pub'. The project sought to enable rural residents to become engaged in broader national and international issues by providing them with a means and local expertise to access internet resources in a familiar arena. The paper highlights the importance of social engagement rather than an agency agenda in the integration of technologies into communities. In this case, the perceived social benefit appeared to fail because of a mismatch in the user's view of the pub's amenities and the CA's perspective of the hotel clients' desire for the internet facility. As the authors suggest, this case represents an example of failed 'innofusion' and 'domestication' of the internet facility in the rural pub environment. Clearly, the immediate social facility of the pub could not be matched by any post-integration design changes or modification of technological capabilities which would enable the internet to offer a similar level of convivial engagement for the clients as the non-technical pub domain. In this case of attempted innovation for improvement of well-being to rural communities, the situation of technology push versus social demand amounted to failed learning by the target group – the imposed initiative sought a presumed need but in fact offered a service that was not needed. This emphasises the importance of community commitment and engagement in the social innovation project.

Clements and Sense premise their paper on the idea that supply chain integration improves supply chain quality and performance. They argue that, until now, improvements to integration have been suggested to lie with technical improvements such as new systems or technologies, but there is increasing acknowledgement that viewing supply chains as interlinking social organisms and enhancing social connections is important. The authors suggest that a way of enhancing social integration is to view the supply chain as a situated and inter-connected learning environment. Elements of recognising work going on within the supply chain and developing a passion for learning (a 'learning libido') are seen as crucial to understanding how the social environment of the supply chain can be enhanced, leading to performance improvements. They argue that social innovation, in the form of a learning system that can be developed within the supply chain, could be both tacitly and explicitly used to build greater social integration, and how harnessing these elements together could be a way of introducing whole system innovations. These ideas seem intuitively likely and are worthy of testing through research as the authors suggest.

Kinder's paper draws on a similar theme that technology alone is not enough. The human animal needs a social dimension in order to attain a proper quality of life. Kinder points out that the human element has sometimes been missing in discussions of how to care for our increasing proportions of older people. He shows how, in several ways,

addressing the social dimension both improves the reception of technology by individuals and their carers, but also implants technology within the whole system of health and social care. The author highlights how the social dimension has been the crux of providing 'a new care paradigm' for older people's care in West Lothian, Scotland. What, on the surface, represents a technological model, consisting of alert, alarm and assistive technologies, is argued to really work because of the low 'psychic distance' or close social interconnections between key players. This means that: technology is provided within a socialised package; health and care professionals work highly integratively; and users and carers continue to inform the evolving service model. Kinder argues that, because of the open, listening, learning and extending approach taken – rather than that of a closed project managed (technical) approach, the model of care is a paradigm shift rather than just a new service model. It is socially innovative in many ways. Like the last paper, but not so explicitly, the author highlights West Lothian telecare as a learning situation – where all actors have had to be open to learning and listening. Some useful factors in this context are noted as being conducive to supporting this social innovation such as (the right sort of) leadership, a tradition of volunteering and social welfare and small settlements. Since this model seems so successful, one wonders why it is not happening more widely, as the challenges for older people's care are ubiquitous.

In their paper, on the role of social enterprise organisations that help to develop locally-appropriate businesses, Klein, Tremblay and Bussi eres highlight the importance of getting beyond the contemporary obsession that science and technology businesses are the answer to economic regeneration. They argue that building on local resources and socially embedded traditional business sectors represents the truly innovative way forward (socially and economically). The Montreal CDECs described draw on the resources of a local network and apply these to supporting and nurturing creative local talent. Their unique selling point is that they are both local, but part of an overarching structural network for Montreal so they can utilise local know-how and access a wider structure of network resources. As with the two other papers just discussed above, this paper reflects on the learning that CDECs have accrued since their establishment in the 1980s. They can apply this knowledge base to new initiatives while, all the while, learning and adding to the stock of knowledge about establishing creative locally-appropriate enterprise. This paper is also similar to the others just discussed as it notes that technological innovation is not enough for society to grow and change; there needs to be concomitant social innovation. The paper raises the question in our minds; however, to what extent is endogenous help or stimulation important for social innovation?

Lettice and Parekh's paper is quite different to the others. It sets out to identify ten social innovators and explore barriers and enablers to social innovation. The choice of enterprises itself is intriguing and interesting. They are diverse! In spite of this, the authors identify four common themes in enabling and limiting social innovation. Perhaps the most outstanding issue here was the way the innovators had reframed the challenges they faced with their business, seeing them 'through a different lens'. This topic is well explained and a fascinating table of different ways of viewing challenges is provided. How the challenges are converted into positive business ideas looks worthy of a task on 'The Apprentice'. Other themes are connecting previously unconnected aspects of the marketplace and seeing new client bases. The latter often meaning seeing those previously viewed as vulnerable, as customers. As with commercial enterprises, networks of like-minded innovators are identified as important not least for the support they offer,

but also in indicating where to get resources. The authors provide an intriguing, well-founded and testable framework and a review of relevant evidence.

Taken as a whole, these papers juxtapose the ‘traditional’ contemporary fix that ‘technology will solve it’ with constructive debate on the import and value of social innovation. The papers variously examine the use of innovations to enable community involvement, attempts to integrate aspects of health and safety into new workplace designs, methods of supporting social well-being through transition experiments, and they provide examples of how addressing the social dimension can improve performance (of supply chains), stimulate economic development (local social enterprise organisations supporting a new fashion industry in Montreal) and improve older people’s quality of life (Scottish scheme to implement telecare), as well as tackling the more conceptual issues in seeking to explain and understand this notion of social innovation. They provide plenty of material for further thought and discussion and as with all newly emerging areas, highlight the need for further research and theoretical refinement. In closing this opening editorial, we would like to thank all the reviewers that gave up their time to review submitted articles and to further comment on those that required more extensive revisions. From over 50 initial submissions we have ended up with nine papers for inclusion in this special edition. We would also like to thank the Editor of the *International Journal of Technology Management* for his support and advice throughout.

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