

促變者

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「促變者」是一個有熱忱及能力去促進社會變革的人。愛創家基金會致力推廣和實踐這個概念，在全球多個國家從事推廣社會企業家的工作，他們發現所有社會企業家都能感染到大批普通人成為促變者，而自己就多數在年輕時已持促變者的心態。愛創家得到的結論是：社會企業家的終極目標是每一個人都成為促變者。要鼓勵更多年輕人成為促變者，社會需將「青年時期」重新定義為發揮領導力及作出社會行動的歲月。

關鍵詞：社會創業家精神、促變者、青年發展、青年充權、全球青年運動

Everyone a Changemaker: Starting with Youth

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A *changemaker* is an individual who has the passion and ability to effect positive change in society. The term and its practice have been widely popularised in recent years by the group “Ashoka: Innovators for the Public.” Ashoka came to recognise the importance of changemakers through its extensive and intensive work promoting social entrepreneurship worldwide. They found that all social entrepreneurs are actually catalyst changemakers, inspiring a large number of ordinary people to become changemakers too. What is more, most social entrepreneurs possess the mindset of a changemaker from very early in their life. Ashoka concluded that social entrepreneurship’s ultimate goal is a world in which everyone has the freedom, skills, and societal support to effect positive change. The key to achieving this is encouraging and empowering young people to become changemakers. This entails a society-wide redefinition of youth years as a time of leadership and positive social initiative, thus significantly increasing the number of changemakers in the world.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, changemaker, youth development, youth empowerment, global youth movement

What is a Changemaker?

A changemaker is an individual who has the passion and ability to effect positive change in

society. The change could be in any area or sector of the society, but it is a positive change, making the society a better place in which to live.

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The mindset of the changemaker could be characterised as follows:

- I am an active and responsible member of society.
- When I see that society is suffering from an issue that needs to be fixed, I will not hesitate to step forward and do something about it.
- I might not have all the skills and resources required to tackle the issue, but I am confident that I will be resourceful enough to acquire the skills and obtain the resources to make a difference.

A Case in Point: Teach For America (www.teachforamerica.org)

In her final year at Princeton University, 21-year-old Wendy Kopp was contemplating her future career. She was appalled and saddened by the level of education of many children in the poorer areas of the country. In her senior thesis, she outlined a dream and a plan to inspire and mobilise the best graduates from top universities to spend their first 2 years after graduation teaching in schools that had an acute shortage of teachers. Her basic idea was to connect the worst American schools with the brightest young college students.

An undergraduate's dream could have ended here once the thesis was handed in—a brilliantly documented intellectual exercise finding its place on the bookshelf and in the writer's fond memory. However, Wendy did not stop here. She gave up lucrative job opportunities and devoted herself full time to making her dream a reality.

As can be imagined, the challenges she had to face were formidable, to say the least. She had to raise funds to start recruiting graduates into her programme, and set up an organisation capable of placing hundreds of teachers at disadvantaged, underresourced schools across America. Above all, she had to inspire a significant number of fellow graduates from top universities to be part of her dream.

Wendy confronted these challenges head on and created a nonprofit organisation "Teach For America" whose mission was to close the academic achievement gap between children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Teach For America relied on the teachers they recruited to carry out their mission: the goal was for its teachers not only to make an immediate impact on their students, but also to become lifelong leaders in the pursuit of educational equality. The story of the organisation is chronicled in Wendy's book (Kopp, 2001), which not only reveals the struggles of an organisation created by and for young idealists, but also provides the blueprint for a new civil rights movement—a movement that demands educational access and opportunity for all American children.

An Imaginative Programme

The basic programme consisted of recruiting recent university graduates to teach for 2 years in schools in low-income communities throughout the United States. They did not have to be certified teachers—most were not—although certified teachers could also apply. Uncertified teachers received alternative

certification through coursework produced while completing the programme. All recruited teachers had to attend an intensive 5-week summer course to prepare for their placement.

The teachers placed under the programme were fully-fledged teaching staff at their schools, receiving the normal school district salary and benefits as well as a modest “education voucher” that could be used to pay for credentialing courses, to cover previous student loans, or to fund further education after the 2-year commitment.

In the first year of its operation, 1990, Teach For America placed 500 teachers. Since then, more than 14,000 teachers have completed their 2-year placements. In 2007, the organisation received applications from 11% of the graduating seniors at Amherst, 10% of those at Chicago and Duke, and 8% of those at Notre Dame, Princeton, and Wellesley. In total, nearly 18,000 graduates applied for an intake of 2,900. According to a *Time* magazine report (September 19, 2007), Teach For America is one of the largest recruiters of graduating college seniors, bigger than Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, and General Electric.

By 2010, the organisation plans to recruit 8,000 teachers a year, who will make up 10% to 30% of the new teachers in the 33 communities they serve.

While I was researching this article, I heard on the news that as part of the Clinton Global Initiative, Teach For America has announced a commitment to found “Teach For All,” a new organisation that will support entrepreneurs in other countries who are aiming to develop the Teach For America model locally. Dell Computer

founder Michael Dell was so supportive of the programme that his foundation has pledged US\$2.5 million to the project.

A Changemaker Par Excellence

Was Wendy Kopp a changemaker? The term was not even in circulation when she began her work in the early 1990s, but her actions and accomplishments speak volumes.

- She was an educated, active, and socially conscious member of the society.
- She saw the lack of good educational opportunities for children in low-income communities, the persistence of which would condemn them to ignorance and poverty.
- She had the courage and commitment to do something about it.
- She had practically no skills and resources for the challenge but she was confident in herself that she could make things happen and make a difference.

Shattering Stereotypes

The significance of Teach For America is far greater than simply the impact it has had on the students and schools it serves.

Just consider how many stereotypes about young people it shatters:

- Young people do not have dreams.
- Young people are too lazy to pursue their dreams even if they do have them.

- Young people could not inspire others into action.
- Young people would not respond to idealistic callings.
- Young people could not create self-sustaining organisations.
- Young people are not imaginative in seeking solutions to society's ills.
- Young people could not have an impact on the society.

Can young people become changemakers? Wendy and her team have proved to us that they can.

How to Change the World: The Role of Social Entrepreneurs

Although the actual practice of changemaking might have existed for centuries, albeit under different names, its current meaning and popularisation owe much to a pioneering organisation, Ashoka: Innovators for the Public.

Bill Drayton founded Ashoka in 1980 in Washington, D.C. It was named to honour Ashoka, the Indian emperor who unified the Indian subcontinent in the 3rd century B.C., renouncing violence, and dedicating his life to social welfare and economic development.

The Ashoka organisation was founded on the premise that the most effective way to promote positive social change is to invest in social entrepreneurs with innovative solutions that are sustainable and replicable, nationally and

globally. It started with an annual budget of US\$50,000, which had grown to nearly US\$30 million by 2006. Currently, it employs 160 full-time staff in 25 regional offices throughout the world.

Ashoka elected the first Ashoka Fellow in 1981. Since then, it has established programmes in over 60 countries and elected over 1,800 Fellows. It provides the Fellows with a modest annual allowance to enable full-time devotion to their projects, usually for up to 3 years. It also facilitates mutual sharing and learning among the Fellows by bringing them together a couple of times each year, and provides them with professional services free of charge to support their organisations' capacity building, scaling-up of operations, and spreading of influence. Working with these social entrepreneurs, Ashoka builds communities of innovators who work together to transform society and design new ways for citizens to become more entrepreneurial, productive, and globally integrated.

Through a powerful network of top social and business entrepreneurs, Ashoka helps the Fellows spread their innovations globally. Mohammed Yunus, the Nobel Peace Prize winner who pioneered microcredit for eradicating poverty, was an Ashoka Fellow during his early years of building up the business in Bangladesh.

Ashoka's modest investments consistently yield extraordinary returns in every area of human need—from poverty to the environment, education to youth empowerment, civic rights to economic development. The organisation's impact is illustrated by the fact that within 5 years of their election, over 90% of Ashoka Fellows

have seen independent institutions replicating their innovation, and over 50% have changed national policy in the areas they work on.

The best introduction to the work and impact of Ashoka Fellows can be found in David Bornstein's book *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas* (Bornstein, 2004).

The Ultimate Goals of Social Entrepreneurs

On the 25th anniversary of the founding of Ashoka, founder and CEO Bill Drayton published a major article summarising the organisation's experience in promoting social entrepreneurship worldwide. Its title dramatically captures the fundamental learning of 25 years of intimate association with leading social entrepreneurs throughout the world: "Everyone a Changemaker: Social Entrepreneurship's Ultimate Goal" (Drayton, 2006).

A number of lessons stand out:

1. Almost without exception, social entrepreneurs are catalyst changemakers, in the sense that not only are they changemakers themselves, but they also inspire and empower a large number of ordinary people to become changemakers. Indeed, no social entrepreneur can accomplish anything on a significant scale without the collaboration and contributions of fellow changemakers.
2. The most enduring impact of social entrepreneurs is not so much the innovative

services they create to meet social needs as the mindset change it brings about that change is possible and that changemakers can effect major, positive change in society. The greater the number of successful social entrepreneurs in the community, the more powerful will be this mindset change, which further encourages more changemakers to surface.

3. All social entrepreneurs started as changemakers at a relatively young age; the changemaker mindset was already evident early in their careers. This point is particularly important as it points to the critical necessity and opportunity to encourage and support young people to become changemakers early in life.

The year 2006 was a watershed for Ashoka. Since then, it has redefined its mission to be about "Making everyone a changemaker." That is, helping to create a world where everyone has the freedom, confidence, skills, and societal support to turn challenges into solutions, to address any social problems, and to drive change. This will allow each person the fullest, richest life, and a society so constituted will evolve and adapt faster than any other.

As Drayton (2006) puts it,

The most important contribution any of us can make now is not to solve any particular problem, no matter how urgent energy or environment or financial regulation is. What we must do now is increase the proportion of humans who know that they can cause change. And who, like smart white blood cells coursing through society, will stop with pleasure whenever they see that something

is stuck or that an opportunity is ripe to be seized. *Multiplying society's capacity to adapt and change intelligently and constructively and building the necessary underlying collaborative architecture, is the world's most critical opportunity now.* (p. 83, emphasis added)

Youth Venture: Birth of a Global Movement

The world is becoming increasingly complex and globally integrated, leading to more complex social problems than ever before with greater ramifications. This requires dramatically more changemakers to address the increasingly complex challenges we face. We cannot arrive at a world where everyone is a changemaker without first transforming the youth years into a time of initiative and positive social change, equipping young people with the skills and empathy to be changemakers throughout their lives.

Ashoka developed the concept of "Youth Venture" and launched a major movement to support it by harnessing the innovations of Ashoka Fellows in the field of youth development and empowerment. In the light of both the Fellows' work and its younger members, Ashoka realised how critical it is to give young people the tools and space to take the initiative. It created Youth Venture to build a movement of young social entrepreneurs. Ashoka believes that Youth Venture is key to its overall vision of everyone becoming a changemaker in a productive,

innovative, and engaged society.

The ultimate goal of Youth Venture is a society-wide redefinition of the youth years as a time of leadership and positive social initiative, thus significantly increasing the number of changemakers in the world.

Youth Venture: Vision and Mission

The vision of Youth Venture is:

"A world of everyone a changemaker through a global culture of young people initiating positive, lasting change."

Its mission is "building a global movement of young people being powerful now, changemakers now" by :

- Investing in young people to give them the transformative experience of launching and leading their own lasting social ventures;
- "Flipping" the culture at the individual, team, school, and community levels by helping all young people to be powerful in causing social change;
- Connecting the young "Venturers" into a global network of like-minded young changemakers to foster the global Youth Venture movement;
- Spreading the message that young people becoming powerful now is the foundation for creating a world in which "everyone a changemaker."

How does Youth Venture appeal to the

young person? Basically, they say to young people:

- If you have an experience at a young age of taking the initiative and leading an effort to address a social issue, then it is likely that you'll continue to take the initiative again and again throughout your life.
- There is no greater gift one can give you as a young person than the opportunity to experience being powerful by launching and leading your own community-changing project.
- Any young person is capable of leading a venture to create positive social change; it is only a matter of support and motivation.

How Youth Venture Works

Youth Venture invests in young people to enable them to launch their own sustainable ventures that create positive, lasting benefit to their communities. The ventures are entirely youth initiated and youth led.

Youth Venture reaches out to young people and inspires them to take the initiative in their communities. It then encourages and helps each young Venturer to form a youth team and develop

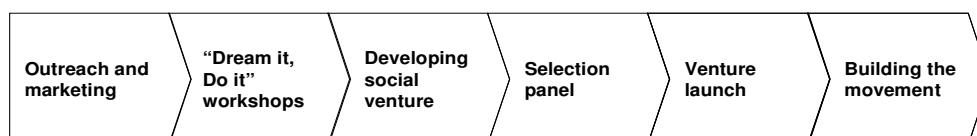
an action plan, with the support of a noncontrolling "adult ally." The team then presents its action plan to a panel of peers and adults, who will determine whether the team's venture is ready for launch.

When the Venturers are ready to launch, Youth Venture offers:

- seed funding (up to US\$1,000 per team);
- training for the adult allies to provide mentoring and support to the teams;
- technical allies to provide additional advice and expertise;
- ongoing tools and support (e.g., workshops, online forums, how-to booklets);
- a supportive fellowship of fellow Youth Venturers, in the United States and internationally;
- an identity as part of the Youth Venture movement.

After the team has launched their venture, Youth Venture works to stay continually involved with them. In the first year, they ask the team to provide reports on the progress of their venture at month 3 and month 12, and to complete a survey that assesses the impact of Youth Venture on the team. Moreover, Youth Venture connects the Venturers into a fellowship of like-minded

The Youth Venture Process



young people, helping them see that they are part of something bigger, thereby catalysing a movement of youth-led social change.

Youth Venture seeks to create impact on four levels: (1) on the individual through the transforming experience of starting a venture, (2) on the Venture team as they learn important life skills and realise that they really can create change, (3) on the community as growing numbers of Venture teams “tip” the local culture toward greater youth leadership, and (4) ultimately on society by fundamentally redefining the role of young people as leaders of social change.

Summary

To recap the salient points of the discussion so far:

- A changemaker is someone who has the passion and ability to effect positive change in society.
- All social entrepreneurs are catalyst changemakers inspiring a large number of changemakers to contribute to their causes.
- Not all changemakers will necessarily become social entrepreneurs, but most social entrepreneurs were changemakers at a relatively young age.
- Social entrepreneurship’s ultimate goal is to make “everyone a changemaker”; to create a world in which everyone has the power, confidence, and skills to effect positive change.

- By enabling and inspiring young people to learn to take the initiative from a young age, it is possible to increase exponentially the number of people who are capable of leading and creating change again and again throughout their lives.
- Building a global movement to encourage young people to become changemakers is key to realising the vision of “everyone a changemaker.”

Implications for Hong Kong

As can be seen from the preceding discussion, the logic of making everyone a changemaker, starting with youth, is strong and compelling. However, the world does not change by logic alone. Human actions are required—precisely the actions of changemakers. What Hong Kong needs right now is a critical mass of changemakers who are true believers in a world in which everyone is a changemaker who can make things happen.

In the course of writing this paper, I did an informal survey. I asked 20 of my friends and relatives (of my age group) this simple question:

“Can you think of a young person, aged between 15 and 25, of whom you are truly proud?”

The question was deliberately vague in terms of the criteria one might use regarding being “truly proud.” The overwhelming majority could not think of any candidates. Two out of the 20 were able to describe a young person who has all the ingredients of a changemaker. (I was so excited that I asked for their email addresses so that I could contact them to show my

appreciation and encouragement.)

I was both disappointed and encouraged by this modest exercise. Disappointed, because so few of my respondents could think of any young person of whom they are truly proud. Encouraged, because 10% of them managed to point to a young person who is thinking and doing great things at a young age.

The challenge for us is to increase dramatically the proportion of young people in our society who have the potential to become changemakers, given the right encouragement and support. It is a formidable task, but it can be done. It takes the changemaker in you and me to get things started.

Just consider this: If most of us cannot think of any young person of whom we are truly proud, what will be the future of our society?

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