Chapter 2

SAGE: An International Partnership Linking High School Students, Universities and the Private Sector through Social Enterprise

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ABSTRACT

This case study describes an international partnership among four main stakeholders: (1) a nonprofit organization called Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship (SAGE), (2) high school students and their teachers, (3) university students and (4) the private sector, including corporations, foundations, and individual philanthropists. SAGE, incorporated as a nonprofit charitable corporation, is a global network with the following mission: to help create the next generation of entrepreneurial leaders whose innovations and social enterprises address the world’s major unmet needs. SAGE started as a California-only initiative in 2003, but has now grown to operate in eight U.S. states and 19 countries. This would not be possible without available technology. The model provided here can be implemented by others who are interested in utilizing technology to build Transnational Social Movement Organizations (TSMOs), resulting in the creation of social capital to solve local problems.

INTRODUCTION

The next generation of entrepreneurial leaders, guided by creative educational design including service-based learning, can drive global innovation and positive social change through partnerships among educators, the social sector and the private sector. To develop the next generation of entrepreneurial leaders, we can use available technology to engage today’s high school and university students in social entrepreneurship as a catalyst for
partnership and collaboration for societal change. By leveraging existing technology, as well as the underutilized capacity in universities to provide the human capital necessary, we can rapidly scale up and amplify the effects of this innovation to produce a future replete with social entrepreneurs.

This case study describes a global partnership that is successful, in large measure, because of two primary technological tools: a centralized Web site (http://sageglobal.org) and an electronic listserv (sagemail@lists.csuchico.edu). The Web site serves as a hub for information such as guidebooks, PowerPoint presentations, brochures, schedules, sample grant proposal templates and examples of successful social enterprises. While the Web site serves as the primary hub, many of the participating countries have created their own Web sites to address local needs. Furthermore, the listserv allows over 500 subscribers in 19 countries to directly communicate and engage in transnational dialogue. Subscribers include high school teachers and students, university professors and students, NGOs, government officials, business leaders and individual philanthropists. Together, they share ideas and projects that can be replicated in other parts of the world.

The partnership involves four primary stakeholders: (1) a nonprofit organization called Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship (SAGE), (2) high school students between the ages of 13 and 19, (3) universities (especially professional programs like business) and (4) the private sector, including corporations, foundations and individual philanthropists. SAGE, incorporated as a 501(c)(3) charitable corporation in California, has the following mission: to help create the next generation of entrepreneurial leaders whose innovations and social enterprises address our world’s major unmet needs. SAGE is now operating in eight U.S. states and 19 countries.

The model described here can be implemented by others who are interested in utilizing available technology to build Transnational Social Move-ment Organizations (TSMOs). According to Smith (2001), TSMOs:

provide a mechanism for articulating, recognizing and confronting transnational differences in viewpoints and priorities that are caused by class, race, gender, and national political contexts. The ability to engage in such transnational dialogue—either face-to-face or via newsletter or via e-mail—is a necessary component for the formation of social capital and for the strengthening of a global civil society. (p. 206)

SAGE is an example of a TSMO, in that it offers a new way of thinking about how to educate the next generation of leaders, with social enterprise as the focal point.

In this case study, I describe how social capital is being generated by teenagers from around the world as they create social enterprises that address local problems. By providing a platform for youth to describe their innovations on a regional, national and world stage, with business leaders acting as jurists and evaluators, SAGE has become a networked nonprofit as opposed to a traditional nonprofit. According to Wei-Skillern and Marciano (2008):

Networked nonprofits are different from traditional nonprofits in that they cast their gazes externally rather than internally. They put their mission first and their organization second. They govern through trust rather than control. And they cooperate as equal nodes in a constellation of actors rather than on relying on a central hub to command with top-down tactics. (p. 43)

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

Preparing young people for a successful future—this is the job of public education throughout the civilized world. However, ever-increasing pressures have dictated priorities in public spending,