



The Sunshine Project
Student Social Entrepreneurship
moves
communities forward at
**Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Uni-
versity**

Port Elizabeth, South Africa





General Information

Title	The Sunshine Project										
Pitch	Student Social Entrepreneurship Moves Communities Forward at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University										
Organisation	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University										
Country	South Africa										
Author	Hacer Tercanli (University Industry Innovation Network)										
Nature of interaction	<table><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration in R&D</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> Lifelong learning</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Commercialisation of R&D results</td><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joint curriculum design and delivery</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Mobility of staff</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> Mobility of students</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Academic entrepreneurship</td><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student entrepreneurship</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Governance</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> Shared resources</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration in R&D	<input type="checkbox"/> Lifelong learning	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercialisation of R&D results	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joint curriculum design and delivery	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobility of staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobility of students	<input type="checkbox"/> Academic entrepreneurship	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/> Governance	<input type="checkbox"/> Shared resources
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Summary	Through a unique model, the Sunshine project drives social entrepreneurship amongst the students of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. Now 5 years in existence, the project has supported a few dozen NGOs and brings more than 300 students per semester in contact with the principles of social entrepreneurship. Having to work in teams, develop a business, give back to the community and raise funds for NGOs are some of the ways that Paul Tai-Hing's students get to experience a different side to entrepreneurship. Being equipped with a unique set of skills students are ready to stand their ground in society and at the same time support that very same society they are a part of.										



Introduction & Overview

1. BACKGROUND

Although today many societies have a great divide between rich and poor, the contrast could not be bigger in many South African cities. Port Elizabeth is one of them, a city of haves and have nots, of the fortunate and unfortunate. These are two opposite worlds where the chances of a new-born could not be further apart. In the midst of this social divide sits the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) – located only kilometres away from the nearest township. The university is an entrepreneurial oriented organisation and its staff are recognising this divide. Although NMMU still lacks an organisational approach there have been lone wolves that want to make a difference.

Paul Tai-Hing, a senior lecturer in the Business and Economics department, is one of them. Paul lectures on 'Introduction to Management' to first and second year students and is the founder of the Sunshine Project. This course used to be a classical theoretical management course, but Paul converted it into a hands-on social entrepreneurship module. Since 2012, Paul and his students have been making a difference in the most disadvantaged communities of Port Elizabeth, by means of bringing forward entrepreneurial solutions that directly benefit local society.

As part of their study programme, students are grouped and tasked with 'making dreams come true' within their community by running their own business to raise money for a social cause, and managing the execution of a social entrepreneurship project. These series of student projects, referred to as '**The Sunshine Project**' span a period of three years where NMMU students use their social enterprises in order to inject much needed resources into various education-based projects.



2. OBJECTIVES AND MOTIVATIONS

Taking the concept of entrepreneurship beyond the walls of the classroom, Tai-Hing aims for positioning the students ahead of others in getting **jobs on graduation**. The teams that are supported with theoretical content and networking with business emerge from the programme with both embedded theoretical understanding and actual demonstrable entrepreneurial and management experience, established business networks, as well as confidence in business.

All individual projects conducted under the umbrella of the Sunshine Project have the following common objectives:

- ▶ Providing students practice with the theory taught in the classroom;
- ▶ Helping students create a profit through their businesses;
- ▶ Providing students with social skills, through investing the generated profits in local NGOs;
- ▶ Assisting students to realise that as future leaders in business, they have the power to effect positive change within the communities they operate;
- ▶ Ensuring the values of the university are practised through the completion of the projects.

Complementary to the project objectives, critical cross-field outcomes are defined as developing and/or improving skills in a number of areas, including, e.g.

- ▶ communication and negotiation;
- ▶ teamwork;
- ▶ conflict resolution;
- ▶ professional behaviour and ethics;
- ▶ decision making and leadership;
- ▶ project management.

3. STAKEHOLDERS

The main stakeholders of the Sunshine project are the first and second year NMMU students and local non-governmental organisations. In addition, local suppliers support the projects by the services they offer to the social development projects in close cooperation with the students and the organisations they work with, i.e. schools, care homes. These same local suppliers also benefit through the strategic contracting of NMMU when it comes to supporting local SMEs.

The local community of the city of Port Elizabeth can be considered as the direct beneficiary of the activities of NMMU staff and students, receiving the funds and services targeted to their needs. As much as the process seems to flow in a one-way direction, it requires a great amount of coordination and cooperation among the communities, the students and the suppliers for the most productive and efficient results to be achieved for all parties.



Implementation

4. INPUTS

The main input of the Sunshine Project is the theoretical curricular content of the course modules that are part of the curriculum of the first and second year of NMMU's degrees in Management, Marketing, Logistics, Tourism, and Economics:

'Introduction to Management I' is a compulsory 12 credit one-semester course that is offered to first-year students. The theory taught includes the following topics:

- ▶ How to make decisions regarding the form of business to be undertaken;
- ▶ Marketing strategies for a successful business;
- ▶ Human resource management of small business;
- ▶ Operations management of small businesses;
- ▶ Financial management of small businesses;
- ▶ The writing of business plans and businesses;
- ▶ Running an ethical and socially responsible business.

As for the second-year Management programme students, project activities were embedded into the course which covered the topic of 'project management' as part of **'Management II'**, which involves topics such as functions of leaders as planning, leading, organizing and controlling.

In addition to undertaking the project, the second-year students are also encouraged to participate in the **'Beyond the Classroom Leadership Training'** programme. This is a one-year training programme that takes place outside of lecture time. It is an externally funded programme facilitated by NMMU and focuses on unlocking the leadership potential of students. Students receive a certificate of completion on exiting the programme.

Besides the salary of the lecturers involved, there is no financial support provided by the university, or other organisations. The Sunshine project is set up in such a way that is self-sustainable and requires zero input from external sources. The students themselves need to convince their suppliers, manufacturers or other stakeholders to work with them without having any secure financing.

5. ACTIVITIES

The Sunshine Project takes its students through a process of management, fundraising, entrepreneurship and leadership over the course of two years. During two semesters, the students are faced with ideas generation, starting a business, negotiating with creditors and finally supporting NGOs.

In the first year, the students focus mainly on the business-side, where the lecturer sets up the groups, arranges the communication and arrangements with the NGOs and the implementation of the social aspects of the project. Whereas in the second year, the students are placed in the driver's seat. However, the focus on revenue generation shifts towards a mix of both revenue generation and raising sponsorship funding.

Year One: Fundraising through business generation and re-investing their profits in social projects

Process

As the module syllabus centres around entrepreneurship and setting up small business, the projects require students to form partnerships consisting of a maximum of five partners. The objective of each partnership is to market a product and make a profit **as a simulated business**. Each business therefore must:

- ▶ **register a business name** with the lecturer in a formal manner where the documentation highlights both the business name and the details of each partner in the business;
- ▶ **develop a partnership agreement**, with a copy of it lodged with the lecturer for safekeeping;
- ▶ **fill in the stock-sheets** along with the supplier when orders are placed for stock;
- ▶ **keep an accurate record** of the business activities during the project.

An example of a company registered as a business by the students is one selling a **recipe book**. Containing a variety of approximately 60 recipes, the book also contains images displaying the life of young children in the townships to highlight that the money was going to a good cause. All images contained in the recipe book were photographs submitted by students and project partners, as well as members of the community.

The book sold for approximately €7 (R95) a copy. The project received **no cash injection from the university or the local community**. Therefore, the students took a lean approach to the production of their product. Initially one thousand books were printed, and an agreement was made with the printing company that the account would be paid within a 90-day period. The relationship cemented with the printing company was based upon the theory of Lean Manufacturing and Just in Time Manufacturing – the supplier would offer the best quality at the best price, in exchange of the right to be the sole supplier for the books. In addition, no stock would be held but orders delivered as required. In this way, costs could be minimised.

Another example is a Textbook for Change concept, a shop that provides an outlet for students to sell second-hand textbooks.

Year Two: Raising funds through entrepreneurial activity and managing the execution of the project with external business

Second-year Management students raise funds for specific causes in cooperation with NGOs. Following their social enterprise of year one, the second-year students engage with NGOs to

identify urgent 'pains' in their organisation and in teams focus on raising funds and working with local suppliers to support the NGOs. In a sense, all students in the course are responsible for their own social project.

Each semester, around about 350 second-year Management students participate in the project, realising 35 projects to be addressed in local and regional NGOs. The support can vary from the cleaning of school grounds, replacing broken classroom windows, planting vegetable gardens for school nutrition programmes, providing after school services for the learners, to the more complicated needs of repairing of school toilets, replacing broken classroom ceilings, and painting classrooms.

Behind all this is a framework that allows for continuous improvement:

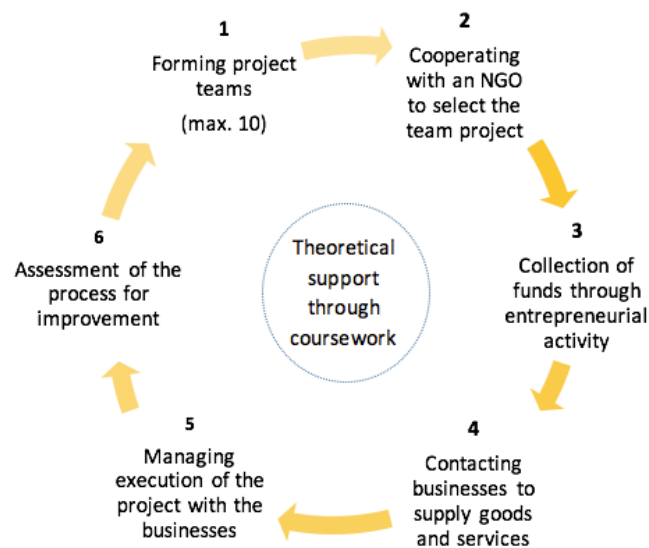


Figure 1: Second year students 'The Sunshine Project' project flow (Source: Own elaboration)

Process

- ▶ **The students are briefed about the project.** The objective of the project is explained to the students as well as the critical cross field outcomes. The critical cross field outcomes are listed as follows:
 - To practise the values as laid out by the university
 - Improving communication and negotiation skills
 - Practise conflict resolution skills
 - Experience working together in teams
 - Practise the skills of ethics
 - Improve decision making skills
 - Practise leadership skills
 - Practise professionalism

- ▶ **The students are divided into project groups** consisting of a maximum of ten members per project group. From theory taught in the classroom on teams, the development of a cohesive team and the key success factors contributing to a successful team, each project group then proceeds to form their project teams. It is emphasised that team members are not allowed to leave their respective groups in the event of problems arising. Conflicts should be resolved by the group themselves and if the group fails to do so, assistance of the course lecturer is sought as an external mediator.
- ▶ All **project meetings are recorded** in the form of minutes, and the minutes are submitted as part of the written assignment document to the course lecturer for assessment.
- ▶ **Each project team is required to choose its own community service projects.** The project teams first meet with the Masinyusane Development Organization¹ which has a readily-available list of schools in the disadvantaged areas, as well as the needs per school. The information session with the organisation empowers the students to make better decisions regarding the choice of projects. Visits to the various schools were also organised so that a better understanding of the nature of the projects could be gained. Working through the Masinsyusane Development Organization legitimised the project. All work needed to be carried out by the project student teams themselves.
- ▶ Once the project teams select projects to undertake, they **raise funds and/or materials to commence work on the projects.** To legitimise the student's efforts, the course lecturer provides a letter of request for each group to be presented to the local businesses. The letter details the objective of the project, as well as the critical cross-field outcomes that were hoped to be achieved.
- ▶ After the necessary materials are obtained, the students are able to commence with their work on the particular project. As the projects progress, **students are provided with theoretical information on project management** in the classroom. This information is then practically applied to the live township school projects.
- ▶ On completion of the project, project teams had to hand in a **report for assessment.** The report needed to contain visual evidence of the project being completed, as well as a letter from the head of the benefiting school stating that the project had been successfully completed. A Masinyusane Development Organization director was also requested to provide each project team with a letter of completion.

6. OUTPUTS

The Sunshine course has a number of key outputs, mainly the (1) financial elements through the business initiatives and fundraising, (2) services provided to the NGOs, and (3) skills gained by the students.

A selection of examples from projects for the NGOs and their outcomes are listed below:

First Year Student Projects	Activities	Outputs/ Outcomes
The Laphumilanga Home	Students raised approximately €1,750 (R25,000), and donated it to the NGO 'The Laphumilanga Home' for future electricity, airtime and food expenditures	Water tanks were purchased, and a play area was built in the back garden for the children
Lwandlekazi High School	Students raised a total of €5,250 (R75,000), with approximately €3,500 (R50,000) to be used to renovate the school	Rubbish from the classrooms was removed, all broken window panes were repaired, three classrooms were painted, the floors were repaired, and electricity, light switches, and ceilings were installed
The Ben Sinuka Primary School	NA	Construction of a new block of toilets, removal of rotting floor boards, replacement of broken window panes, conversion of a derelict classroom into a library
The Kwezi Lomso High School Project	Students raised €5,117 (R73,000) to be paid for construction work	New school kitchen was built
The Missionvale Care Centre Project	€3,500 (R50,000) was donated to the centre.	Approximately €700 (R10,000) has been spent annually on stationery and toys for the past 4 years
The Love Story Education Project	Students raised €1,400 (R20,000) to be paid for construction work	Classroom and office spaces in the organisation were renovated
Second Year Student Projects	Activities	Outputs/ Outcomes
Projects implemented in collaboration with Masinyusane Development Organization	See 'Activities' section of the case study	35 projects were undertaken in disadvantaged schools concurrently, during the period of seven months

7. IMPACTS

The Sunshine Project forms one aspect of assisting the students to become more marketable in the business market. After the students complete the project, they are trained in how to maintain a portfolio of evidence for their three/four years of study. The portfolio serves as evidence of the practical work experience the students have been exposed to whilst at the university.

Approximately 90% of the students who participate in the Sunshine Project find employment in the job market after graduation. This figure is obtained from feedback received from students. No accurate tracking system has yet been developed to flag employment figures.





Support & Influencing factors

8. SUPPORTING MECHANISMS

The Sunshine projects are guaranteed through the embedment in the curriculum of the first and second year NMMU Department of Management students. The fact that the course is compulsory ensures that all students are exposed to these activities and gain a wide range of transversal skills.

To ensure a larger outreach, connections have also been established with other departments and the NMMU Alumni association.

The activities with the local businesses, NGOs and students also lead to an active network, which facilitates successful implementation of the projects and achievement of the course objectives.

9. BARRIERS AND DRIVERS

Major barriers that challenged the implementation of the student projects are identified to be bureaucracy that exists inside and outside the institution, too big student numbers to manage for the projects, and lack of institutional interest in the expansion of the projects to a larger group of students in the same department. The fact that this unconventional module is a compulsory element of the curriculum leads to criticism from the senior management. Questions are raised about its fairness towards the students, and if students are judged equally. The skills they are trained in are still not seen as needed in today's world.

One of the most important drivers is the intrinsic motivation of the course leader. The enthusiasm rubs off on other lecturers and allows for slowly scaling up the initiative. The credibility gained through the successful completion of many projects has also led to various partnerships that will allow Sunshine to further expand; amongst these are the partnerships with the NMMU Alumni Association and the Retail Management Department. These internal partners could also lighten the institutional barriers that exist.

However, the **most important driver of all** is the social contribution the project is making and the effect this has on the students involved. They receive a great deal of life experience and satisfaction out of their participation in the course, which will see their employability highly increased.

10. FUTURE CHALLENGES

The main challenge of the Sunshine project is scaling up. As it is currently still dependent on its main driver, the project coordinator, there is a high risk of discontinuation. This is also related to the number of students involved. In order to effectively execute the projects and bring

it into other modules there would have to be more supervision for the students, which requires more dedicated lecturers.

11. CONTEXT

Social entrepreneurship activities implemented as part of Sunshine Project can be discussed within the context of NMMU, and the city of Port Elizabeth and its community benefiting from the outcomes of the projects.

Port Elizabeth is located at the western end of the Sunshine Coast, a well-known destination with its beaches and surf spots. Despite its attractions, the city has been challenged by lack of foreign and government investment, HIV/AIDS, and a general increase in crime in recent years.²

NMMU has been emerging as a prominent university with its increasing efforts in embedding an entrepreneurial mindset and facilitation of innovation.

Earlier in 2011, the university added a new boost in their entrepreneurial activities through an agreement with **Munster University of Applied Sciences** in Germany. The partnership allows exchange of ideas and knowledge between the two institutions to improve the marketability of students in the Department of Management.

One of the most recent examples is the **Propella Business Incubator** established at its new premises in Humerail Business Park in 2015 as an initiative aimed at supporting and developing businesses in Nelson Mandela Bay. **Innovolve**, the wholly owned commercialisation company of NMMU and **Engeli Enterprise Development (EDD)**, a private sector business support company, joined forces to establish Propella after a need was identified for an incubator to support and stimulate technology-based innovation companies. The R25m partnership deal signed between the SA telecommunication provider **Telcom** and NMMU has bolstered the launch of the incubator, with the intention of creating a conducive environment for entrepreneurs.

The **New Venture Creation Programme** offered in the Executive Education division at NMMU Business School is designed to promote entrepreneurial behaviour by conveying business, finance, marketing and costing skills to ensure sustainable SMEs and wealth creation for those who plan to start their own businesses.

12. KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

The key success factors of the course are its social elements. Through doing good, it is less of a challenge to get the buy-in of stakeholders.

However, without the support of local SMEs to provide their goods and services for free or discount the students would not have been able to help the NGOs.

Additionally, without the buy-in of the Masinyusane Development Organization, Paul Tai-Hing would have faced a great challenge in identifying and coordinating all NGOs.

Lastly, the lean approach towards the course has made it a success. The students do not need to go through a complicated process to start their own business, and learn this is possible without upfront investment. They must become creative with limited resources available to them.





Further Information

13. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The projects are monitored and evaluated by its coordinator. There is a two-page description on each course, highlighting its outcomes, outputs, impact challenges and improvements for future activities. This documentation allows for continuous improvement of the course.

In addition, all students must provide a report following the completion of the course.

14. SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES

Now in its 5th year, the project has grown from a one-person initiative to a project that has gained support both within NMMU as well as from the external community. Some of the activities taken up by the university that will potentially influence the future development of the project are:

- ▶ **Training provided to other NMMU instructors who are interested in implementing similar projects.** Currently, a similar project is being driven as part of the Business Management Honours programme, with one of the department coordinators being trained to facilitate the programme.
- ▶ **Partnership formulated with the NMMU Alumni Association** to ensure the rollout of the social entrepreneurship programme throughout the university in every faculty. This will ensure the future sustainability of the programme.
- ▶ **The project “Textbooks for Change”, that will be launched in 2018** with the involvement of the course instructor Tai-Hing, Retail Management Department, and NMMU Alumni Association. The shop provides an outlet for students to sell secondhand textbooks. Profits made in the shop will be channelled into bursaries and scholarships for financially challenged students, and it will be run by students studying Retail Management.

15. TRANSFERABILITY

Although the initiative is currently taking place in the context of a developing economy, it is easily transferable to any other context. Especially through its low entry costs, the scalability and opportunity to start small the case is well suited to transfer to other settings.

The practical teaching model the course lecturer integrates in his theory-based classroom is transferable to all contexts where the impact and value of social entrepreneurship is acknowledged by the course instructor, students, university management, and the community alike. For the smooth operation of the entrepreneurial activities, the instructor, in the role of project-coordinator, is expected to possess the right combination of project-management skills and business/ entrepreneurship experience, in addition to knowledge of the course content.

16. AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Excellent Teacher of the Year Award (September 2016).

Dr. Tai-Hing was awarded Overall Excellent Teacher of the Year at NMMU's Research, Teaching and Engagement Ceremony, for his approach to teaching that provides students with valuable work experience.

17. LINKS

(2016) Paul Tai-Hing is NMMU's top teacher for 2016: <http://mype.co.za/new/paul-tai-hing-is-nmmu-top-teacher-for-2016/75993/2016/09>

Prof Tai Hing & Students: Making a Difference:

<http://blog.masinyusane.org/post/71415418784/prof-tai-hing-students-making-difference>

18. CONTACT PERSON



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19. REFERENCES

¹ Non-profit educational organisation that operate in the schools and communities of Port Elizabeth.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Elizabeth