

The Contributions of Social Innovator Development Programs: Insights from Waseda University and The University of Hong Kong

Abstract

Today, the challenges we face cannot be solved by knowledge from a single domain. Through global collaboration among actors with diverse backgrounds and expertise, and by mobilising convergent knowledge, we can address individual issues to build a more sustainable society. In higher education, it is an urgent task to cultivate social innovators who have a strong aspiration to improve society and who demonstrate integrated knowledge that enables collaboration across industry, government, academia, and society. With Global Asia as our scope, our presentation reports two cases of social innovator development: the Social Innovation Accelerate Program of the School of Social Sciences at Waseda University in Japan, and the SIGC Global Bay Areas Impact Lab Program of the Faculty of Social Sciences at The University of Hong Kong.

The presentation outlines the objectives, design (curriculum/partnerships), implementation structures, and outcomes of the two programs. By comparing these cases, we identify how program design can foster transnational and cross-sector collaboration and how regional contexts shape social innovation pathways. The findings offer insights for universities seeking to embed social innovation into teaching and engagement, contributing to discussions on higher education's evolving role in building sustainable futures.