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Social Innovation Enablers and Barriers in Higher Education Institutions

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Overview

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Research Context

- Recently, many universities are incorporating social impact and social value into their university agendas, strategies, missions and visions (Anderson, Domanski and Howaldt, 2018).
- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) might face challenges when rewiring campus relationships, power dynamics and changing campus culture and curriculum as a part of social innovation processes.
- Existing efforts to study the enablers and barriers of social innovation (Alden Rivers, Hazenberg and Bajwa-Patel, 2015), but not within HEI contexts.

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Research Overview

- **Key Objective:** is to understand how stakeholders interact with each other towards social innovation within HEI contexts across East and South East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, South Korea & Vietnam).
  - Analyse the influence and power of each stakeholder in social innovation processes within HEIs in the five countries.
  - Investigate if social innovation processes are initiated through bottom-up or top-down processes within HEIs.
  - Investigate if hierarchy in university matters when developing social innovation.

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Methodology

1. **In-depth Literature Review**
   - Explore global & local literature in relation to SI
2. **Online Survey (n = 253)**
   - Capture data from SI academics working in HE across the 5 countries
3. **Participant Semi-structured Interviews & Focus Groups (n = 193)**
   - Explore perceptions of multi-stakeholder groups on the SI ecosystem
4. **Ecosystem Mapping**
   - Map SI research, teaching & knowledge exchange across East & SE Asia
5. **Triangulation of Data**
   - Triangulation of Stages 1-4 data into cohesive analytical discussion on SI
6. **Develop Recommendations**
   - Prepare recommendations for improving SI engagement in HE

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Research Tools

Survey

- respondent demographics
- publications & research outputs
- teaching activity (courses & modules)
- perceptions of student experience
- HEI positioning within society
- government support for SI
- collaboration & trust between HEIs & partners
- social problems in each country & SI challenges

Interviews

The interviews & FGs explored stakeholder interaction in more depth, with nuanced questions for the four main stakeholder groups:

Academics
HEI Leaders
Policy-makers
Practitioners

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Findings

1. **Research and teaching on social innovation in HEIs in 5 countries are increasing over time.**

   - ***Research:*** a total of 351 publications focused on social innovation were identified across the 5 countries:
     - 262 academic publications and 89 non-academic publications
     - No. publications increasing over time (+54% per year)
   - ***Teaching:*** 311 modules/courses focused on social innovation were identified across the 5 countries:
     - SI teaching gives students communication skills, empathy, problem-solving, and analytical thinking
     - No. modules/courses increasing over time (+31% per year)

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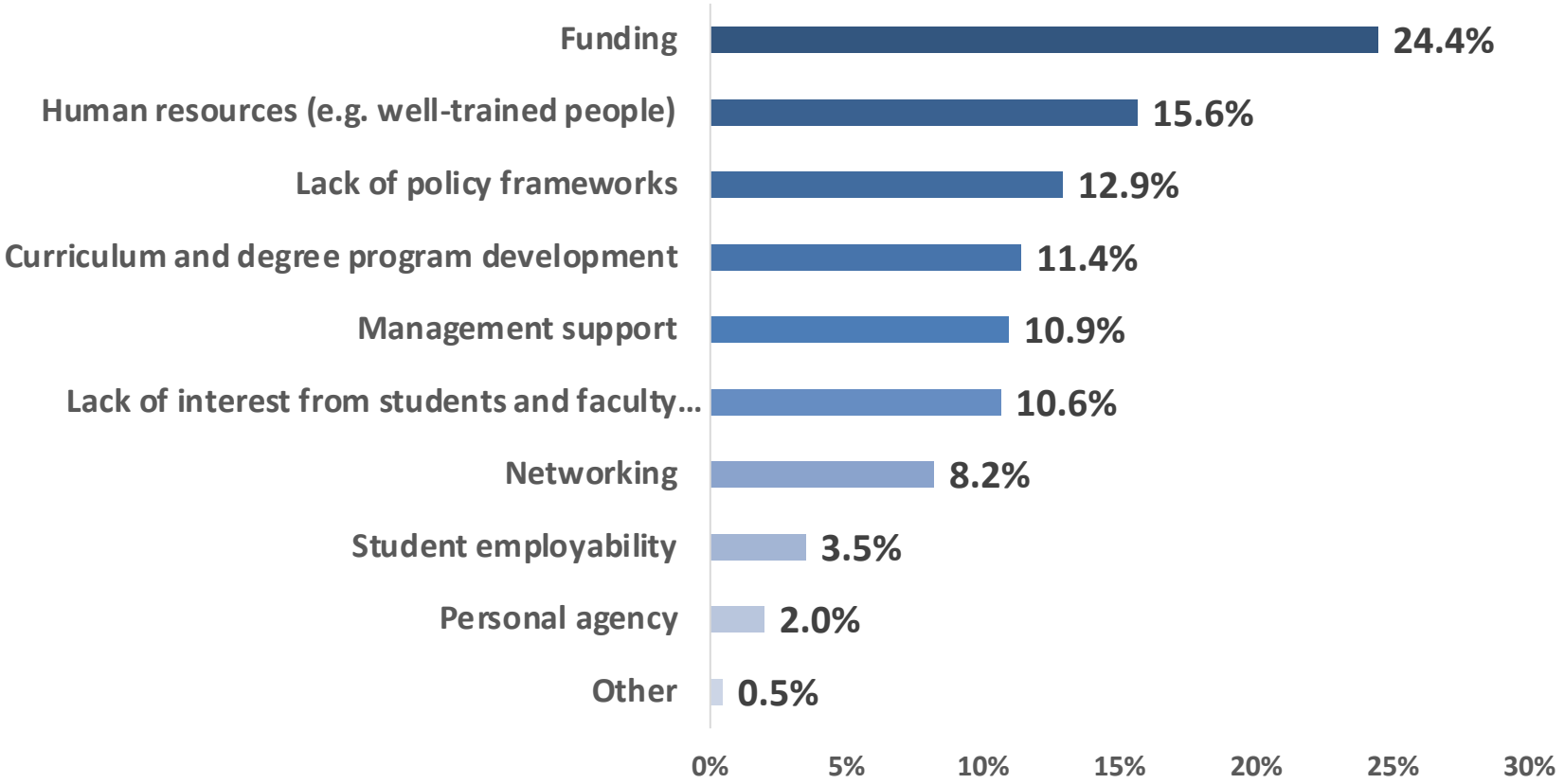
Key Challenges for SI



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Findings

2. Lack of institutional support for SI Research and Teaching

- ***Research Funding***: Significant proportions of research are non-funded/self-funded (Vietnam = 66%; Malaysia = 48%; Indonesia = 46%; South Korea = 32%; Philippines = 21%)
- ***Teaching Funding***: Most teaching activities were non-funded/self-funded apart from Indonesia (HEI own funds: 38%), and the Philippines (HEI own funds: 34.9%).

'In research, for example, if I want to make packaging for rice out of rice stalk, because we are not a rich company we have to wait. We wait for someone who wants to fund that research. There are so many innovations, but the limitation is funding.' (Filipino practitioner)

Findings

3. Academics are engaging and collaborating with communities for SI research and teaching, but they need more support from HEIs and government.

- ***Impact:*** 251 SI related community engagements across the 5 countries:
  - Academics engage as board members, volunteers or officers (especially NGOs, schools and social enterprises)
- ***Collaborators:*** Main collaborations are with NGOs, schools & public bodies:
  - Indonesia = 35%; Malaysia = 74%; Philippines = 62%; South Korea = 50%; Vietnam = 75%

Still,

- ***HEI support:*** lack of institutional support/funding for community engagement, with most collaborations being informal & pushed by academics themselves
- ***Government support:*** low-levels of government support for community engagement

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Findings

4. Changing university structures or policies to embed SI teaching in their degree programmes is not easy.

'One of the most difficult challenge is the university bureaucracy.'
(Indonesian academic)

'In order for social innovation to grow, the management teams of the universities have to be proactive. However, it requires convincing the management teams, and that requires organisational efforts, people, and budgets.'
(Korean academic)

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Findings

5. Social innovation scholar groups have a collective agency that can make changes within a university.

- Indonesian academics, especially, recognize themselves having a collective agency, which can influence other stakeholder groups to make organizational changes within their university.
- Still, they found promoting social innovation research and teaching is not easy due to the university bureaucracy, poor management of resources across the university, and misconception of the social entrepreneurship teaching.

Findings

6. HEIs and its leaders should be aware of the importance of promoting social entrepreneurship culture.

- HEIs should train lecturers and teaching staff for improving their knowledge and understanding of social innovation, as teaching staff can create the direct impacts on students.

'The university leaders must focus on this issue, and put it into the key performance indicators (KPI) too. If it's voluntary, I'm not sure every lecturers of the school will voluntarily learn something new that doesn't cater to their career or career advancement.'
(Vietnamese academic)

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Implications and Conclusion

1) In 5 countries, SI research and teaching activities are increasing over time, and academics engage and collaborate with external organizations (NGOs, social enterprises, schools, and public bodies) for SI research and teaching.
2) Academics are recognized as they are having a collective agency that can make organizational changes within universities for embedding social innovation in their teaching and degree programmes.
3) Still, it's hard to make organizational changes due to the university bureaucracy, poor management of resources across the university, and misconception of the social entrepreneurship teaching.

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Implications and Conclusion

4) While academics are voluntarily making changes by researching and teaching SI within their HEIs, institutional levels of support (funding, training staff, management support, university-wide decision to embed SI into HEIs strategies, research, and teaching) are necessary.

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Any questions?

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