

FingerTalk: Breaking the Silence and Empowering the Special Needs

Representative: Associate Professor ACKARADEJRUANGSRI P., APU

Summary of Teaching Case

Established in 2015, FingerTalk is an Indonesian social enterprise that serves the disabled community, specifically those who are hearing impaired, by providing them market-oriented skills, employment opportunities, and venues where hearing impaired and unimpaired people can (re)connect. For the past years, Dissa Ahdanisa, the founder and CEO of FingerTalk had put her whole heart and efforts into establish, run and expand FingerTalk as a business for a good cause. Her Deaf FingerTalk Café was well received and supported by the communities. With the mission of changing perceptions and providing equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities, FingerTalk has expanded from one small Deaf FingerTalk café to three cafés, and recently to the FingerTalk Shop where a handicraft workshop and carwash services are provided. The FingerTalk social enterprise has grown to employ 30 Deaf employees. That was when the unprecedented pandemic hit. All FingerTalk businesses and services had to be suspended. Dissa and her crew faced unexpected challenges. Given the effects of the pandemic, Dissa wondered what could be done to sustain her social enterprise and continue to help not just the hearing-impaired people exclusively but also individuals with other disabilities. Will her dream of providing equal employment opportunities to people with special needs and empowering them come to an end? Dissa sat quietly alone in one of her once busy and crowded Deaf FingerTalk cafés. She was very deep in thought finding the solutions that would be good for all.

The case is suitable for undergraduate and graduate courses in inclusive leadership, social entrepreneurship, and diversity. The case outlines how FingerTalk became a social enterprise under the lead of Dissa that involved the entire value chain of disability inclusion: educating lip reading, imparting market-oriented skills, providing jobs, career support as well as career advancing, highlighting the challenges to overcome the social stigma and communication barrier when working with the underrepresented groups in the society. The case will let students to confront the tradeoffs that arise when an unexpected event accentuates the tensions between organization purpose and sound financial management.

Through this case, students will:

1. Understand the concepts and essences of inclusive leadership, social entrepreneurship, and diversity and inclusion in workplace
2. Understand the new perception and culture of communication in a professional setting and overcome the social stigma, negative perceptions, and communication barrier when working with the underrepresented groups in society
3. Articulate the challenges and opportunities faced by social enterprises and/or inclusive leaders

4. Discuss the tradeoffs between social impacts and economic values, when an enterprise is confronted by unexpected obstacles.
5. Formulate strategies balancing inclusivity and financial sustainability