



Budding Social Entrepreneurs through Social Work Education: A Prospective Analysis

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ABSTRACT: Social entrepreneurship is the use of entrepreneurial principles and market-based methods to solve social issues as diverse as poverty, educational inequity, gender disparity and environmental degradation. This fast emerging field is ringing in innovation, efficiency, sustainability, and rigour to the social sector and has the potential to address the most pressing needs of our society. The last three years has witnessed the government and NGOs such as the CMD, Villgro and Kaanthari spearheading initiatives for finding innovative solutions. An analysis of training for students of Social Work provides opportunities to experiment with start-ups. The same will infuse an entrepreneurship spirit among students who will attempt to address various needs encountered as part of their fieldwork training into different social enterprises. The paper attempts to explain how social entrepreneurship education can be channelized to deal with contemporary issues by way of self-sustaining initiatives and also prove to be a learning experience in developing sustainable business models perceived to be outside the perspective of social work acumen. The data for same has been generated through various secondary literature surveys.

Keywords: Social Entrepreneurship, Social Work Education, Conceptualisation, Student start-ups



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1. INTRODUCTION

The amount of development on account of human activity and environmental damage happening during the last one human generation alone exceeds that quantum possibly generated during the past 10000 generations (Guggenheim, 2006). The unfathomable is the impact of human development on the world on account of globalisation. Social entrepreneurs are individuals who create innovative solutions to society's most pressing social problems. Not only are they ambitious and persistent, but they also tackle major social issues and offer new ideas for wide-scale change. This breed of entrepreneurs rather than leaving societal needs to the government or business sectors, locate what is not working and solve the problem by changing the system, and spreading the solution.

Social entrepreneurship (SE) as a concept, in practice, encompasses a broad range of activities: enterprising individuals devoted to making a difference; social purpose ventures dedicated to

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adding for-profit motivations to the non-profit sector; new types of philanthropists supporting venture capital modelled as 'investment' portfolios; and non-profit organizations that are reinventing themselves by drawing on lessons learned from the business world. During the past decade, social entrepreneurship as a 'new phenomenon' has been restructuring the way we think about social value creation. Some of these practices are uniquely new; however, many have been around for a long time has finally reached critical mass under a widely endorsed label (Johanna et al., 2006). Social entrepreneurship, in India, although a trend of only recent origin, has progressed significantly over the last decade (*Segran, 2008*). It is widely driven by the gaps between public service and the needs.

In the Indian context, this is a remarkable achievement that the government half out of compulsion on account of a dearth of resources, allows NGOs into social entrepreneurship to operate within the government structures; still remarkable is the fact that NGOs take on the challenge of operating within the government structure with the arms tied. Just as entrepreneurs change the face of business, social entrepreneurs act as the change agents for society, seizing opportunities others, especially the government systems miss to improve systems, invent new approaches, and create solutions to change society for the better. While a business entrepreneur might create entirely new industries, a social entrepreneur develops innovative solutions to social problems and then implements them on a large scale.

2. CONTEXT

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2013) reports of 238,000 people starting a social or community venture in the UK, every year. Outstanding is the rise of young people and graduates who take to this path. 'Generation Y' (born 1976-2000) are reportedly the most socially conscious generation since the 1960s. In a study conducted by The Taskforce for Talent Innovation, 86% of 'Generation Y' surveyed stated it is important that their work make a positive impact on the world. Dan Pink reiterates this truth in his book "The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us;" it shows that '... the promise of more money does not influence workers to perform better. Instead, they look for autonomy, a sense of purpose, and a chance to improve.' What better sense of purpose and autonomy than setting up a social enterprise?

An even more encouraging development is the increasing number of students wanting to set up social ventures alongside their studies. UnLtd and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce) led a partnership from 2009 to 2011 to deliver the 'Higher Education Social Entrepreneurship Awards', a £1 million programme that supported the creation of 200 social ventures by staff and students. An UnLtd survey of the award winners showed 75% felt they had improved their employability and 63% cited direct educational benefits. In fact, 83% of winners intended to continue with their social venture upon graduation.

The situation is almost similar in India and especially in the state of Kerala, where the government has introduced a Start-up Village in Kochi and *Kinfrapark* and *Technopark* in Thiruvananthapuram. The number of applicants in the month of February alone was 286, with altogether 1742

applications being processed so far and 540 being funded (*Kerala IT News, 8 March 2014; ToI, 7 March 2014*). For that matter, Kerala is being projected as a Global Hub for Innovation. With staggeringly high levels of growing unemployment, it is essential that we do all we can to encourage and support students in launching social enterprises. However, their sceptics are not ready to take the plunge in setting up their social enterprise. This hurdle to taking the plunge may be the absence of funding; the lack of the sheer experience of 'drawing the blood' while attacking the problem. Others are wary because of their lack of experience.

3. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Social entrepreneurship is the use of entrepreneurial principles and market-based methods to solve social issues such as extreme poverty, educational inequity, and environmental degradation. This emerging field brings in greater innovation, efficiency, sustainability, and rigour to the social sector, and has the potential to impact the most pressing needs of our society greatly.

Social entrepreneurship creates innovative solutions to immediate social problems and mobilises the ideas, capacities, resources and social arrangements required for sustainable social transformations (*Alvord, Brown & Letts; 2004*). In a very broad sense, it may be regarded as an expression of 'virtuous behaviour to achieve a social mission, through coherent unity purpose and action, realising the social value of creating opportunities for innovation, pro-action and encouraging risk-taking behaviour' (*Mort, Weerawardena & Carnige, 2002*).

Consideration of the role of social work in the social entrepreneurship movement requires an understanding of the concept. Although there has been some debate about the definition of social entrepreneurship (*Christie & Honig, 2006; Mair & Marti, 2006*), common to all definitions is the goal of creating social value or mission rather than personal gain or financial wealth (*Peredo & McLean, 2006*). Bill Drayton, the founder of Ashoka, a leading global organisation that identifies and promotes social entrepreneurs, is credited with the term's origin. His famous statement embodies the concept: "Social entrepreneurs are not content just to give a fish or teach how to fish. They will not rest until they have revolutionised the fishing industry".

Scholars have argued over whether social entrepreneurship has specific ingredients, including appropriate responses or specific characteristics of the entrepreneur. Dees (1998) defined social entrepreneurship as the combination of the social mission with business discipline, innovation, and determination to respond to social needs. Martin and Osberg (2007), described social entrepreneurship as a response to an opportunity to create an out-of-the-box solution to an original problem. They described three components: (1) identification of a stable but unjust equilibrium; (2) creation of a transformational social response; and (3) the result is a new, stable equilibrium that alleviates the suffering of the identified group. Their definition clarifies that social service provision, the creation of local programs, and social activism that creates change through long action are not included. Some scholars have suggested that social entrepreneurs have certain characteristics like a willingness to accept the above-average risk, being unusually resourceful (*Peredo & McLean, 2006*), or having a strong ability to seize presented opportunities (*Thompson,*

2002).

In 2006, Light argued for a more inclusive definition. He defined social entrepreneurship as the effort of an individual, organisation, network, or group of organisations to create large-scale, sustainable change by shifting an approach to solving social problems. He argued against the notion of a brave, risk-taking individual, forwarding instead a concept that celebrates working together in novel ways to solve social problems.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Every, social entrepreneurship has certain intention as well as some definite reason to engage and to change. It may differ in every enterprise to enterprise and cause to cause. The unique feature and quality of an organisation make the social change more feasible. The following are the major characteristic feature of social entrepreneurship:

- **Ambitious:** Social entrepreneurs tackle major social issues, ranging from increasing the college enrollment rate of low-income students, generating jobs, starting self-sustaining projects to fighting poverty. They operate in all kinds of organisations: innovative non-profits, social-purpose ventures, and hybrid organisations that mix elements of non-profit and for-profit organisations.
- **Mission driven:** Generating social value —not wealth—is the central criterion of a successful social entrepreneur. While wealth creation may be part of the process, it is not an end in itself. Promoting systemic social change is the real and ultimate objective.
- **Strategic and Opportunistic:** Like business entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs see and act upon what others miss - opportunities to improve systems, create solutions and invent new approaches that create social value. And like the best business entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs are intensely focused and hard-driving in their pursuit of a social vision.
- **Resourceful:** Because social entrepreneurs operate within a social context rather than the business world, they have limited access to capital and traditional market support systems. As a result, social entrepreneurs must be skilled at mobilising human, financial and political resources.
- **Results oriented:** Social entrepreneurs are driven to produce measurable returns. These results transform existing realities, open up new pathways for the marginalised and disadvantaged, and unlock society's potential to effect social change.

5. ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Accordingly, start-up encouragement and entrepreneurship education should be considered regarding how best to facilitate this education, that is, regarding the procedure. Students require a continuous and integrated entrepreneurial learning process, to be able to mature as potential entrepreneurs.

A study conducted in Germany focusing on start-up motives and barriers by W. Ruda *et.al.* emphasis on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education have been included as an increasingly more important strategic issue into the politico-economic discussion since the *Lisbon*

Agenda 2000, where the European Union stipulated the strategic goal, to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". This aim seems especially attainable using innovative business start-ups with their factors positive factors on employment, economic growth and competition.

An empirical analysis of students' entrepreneurial criteria that yields insights into an adequate design of start-up encouragement as well as collegiate entrepreneurship education. Though the *teachability* and *learnability* of entrepreneurial decision-making and responsibility within academic education are repeatedly considered as empirically confirmed in the framework of entrepreneurship teaching and found that no consensus exists concerning a general concept. The orientation behind the social entrepreneurship is not only economic and financial matters, but also individual and social-centric consciousness.

The design of entrepreneurship support measures and entrepreneurship education leads to positive effects on the perceived entrepreneurial climate and start-up sensitization, interest and finally realisation. Certainly, the purpose of imparting students and academics about self-employment options as an attractive vocational alternative as well as general entrepreneurial competencies is an interdisciplinary task that requires pronounced overall skills and necessarily further research activities (*W. Ruda, 2009*).

6. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

The Social Work education, especially in the context of Community Development, aims at developing competency among the students on critical thinking, knowledge building and a set of practice skills in the area of conceiving, designing and managing social enterprises to (or "intending to") creating wealth for the poor.

The objective of the module on social entrepreneurship is to nurture entrepreneurial attribute of young professionals and equip them to build an entrepreneurial venture in the emerging social sectors. Thus, it aims to develop a cadre of professionals competent to visualise economic opportunities, conceive and design plans, raise resources, develop products and services and evaluate and change the system of operation. Also, the students will develop competency in designing and redesigning appropriate and efficient service delivery systems, and create and strengthen an effective organisational mechanism in social enterprises. This calls for developing proficiency in project management.

Although the business and public policy communities have ignited a national movement toward embracing social entrepreneurship as a worthy enterprise and a critical piece in addressing social problems, social work remains notably absent from the discussion and definition of this field. Though the values and practices of social entrepreneurship are closely aligned with social work, social work scholars and institutions have been less at the forefront of this movement than having representatives of other disciplines. The Skoll Foundation, a leading agent for developing and

promoting social entrepreneurship, listed three exemplary social entrepreneurs in their description of the concept with Skoll Foundation. Among those listed is Jane Addams, founder of Hull House and one of the most influential figures in social work history. Social work has done little to align itself with the movement of social entrepreneurship. There remains an opportunity for the field of social action to avail itself of the resources and knowledge created by this movement and to infuse social work knowledge into the study of social entrepreneurship. Understanding the history and definition of social entrepreneurship helps to define potential roles and contributions of social work and provides an opportunity to explore their congruence and possible connections (*Berzin C., 2006*).

The two-year, full-time, Master of Social Work programme aims at training and developing change leaders for social and environment related problem-solving in collaboration with state, market and civil society institutions. The intention of teaching social entrepreneurship is primarily targeted toward developing entrepreneurial skills. There are three major dimensions and components of the social entrepreneurship education:

- a. Social Context - an understanding of the social context; tools to assess and research needs
- b. Entrepreneurship Skills - entrepreneurship teaching and practice opportunity; in short experience gathered through micro-modelling or experimentation
- c. Management Tools - Project Management which takes us throughout the entire cycle of need assessment, planning, designing, implementing and finally evaluation

The facilities to visit and collaborate with established entrepreneurs as part of field work, provision for agency visit in specifically affected areas, discussion and sharing of successful entrepreneurs life and their challenges can be included in the context of the co-curricular activities calendar for Social Work trainees, to enhance the exposure students in this field.

Another way in which students can make interest in drawing SE's plan by encouraging trainees to undertake different successful social entrepreneurship's stories and life aspects for their final project or dissertation. The institutions should take steps towards it.

Case discussion and debate in class on social entrepreneurship and business model has to be encouraged among students. The values-oriented business models have to be rewarded to take up to next steps.

7. CONCLUSION

Social entrepreneurship is a good, entrepreneurial market-based approach to solving social issues, ranging from extreme poverty, educational inequity, to environmental degradation. Social entrepreneurship brings in greater innovation, efficiency, sustainability, and rigour to the True to the spirit and characteristics of Social Entrepreneurship, the professional social work's field training are very ambitious, mission-oriented, strategic and opportunistic as well as resulted-oriented.

Social entrepreneurship is a concerted effort to respond, manage or solve social problems by evolving sustainable business models. It is evident that the governments, especially in developing countries, are incorporating funds to support young social entrepreneurs. This is an opportunity, which will empower the next generation to do a job rather than take a job, and in the process

employ others into social ventures that not only make money but have a positive impact on society (The Guardian., 2014).Colleges need to encourage social entrepreneurship to utilise young talent in creatively resolving social issues.

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