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Social Entrepreneurship vs. Social Enterprise

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Research Paper - Commerce

ABSTRACT

Social entrepreneurship and social enterprise are topics that have sparked considerable growing interest among leaders in the business, non-profit, and government sectors as well as among academics in management, non-profit, and public administration or policy programs. Interest in the academic community can be traced to the late 1970s, which saw the beginning of an agenda among those studying non-profits and voluntary action to begin examining the relations between the non-profit, for-profit, and government sectors. This has grown into a major academic focus and now includes theory and research on the limits of each organizational form; their interactions in industries where they coexist; and the blending, blurring, and combining of market and nonmarket structures and organizational forms. Social entrepreneurship touches upon a number of the issues currently being discussed in departments of economics, sociology, and public affairs.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Social Responsibility, Non-Profit Organizations, Natural Introduction:

In 2000, the non-profit sector became concerned about the possibility of further





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budget cuts from the George Bush administration. In addition, conservative outlooks in and out of government brought a rise in calls for both the non-profit and public sectors to invest in market-based solutions to social problems, including paying more attention to earned income as a source of financial sustainability. Accompanying this has been a proliferation of consultants and support organizations as well as a variety of funding sources for these market-based solutions. For example, 2007 marked the eighth meeting of the Social Enterprise Alliance. The meeting is a major gathering of those devoted to promoting non-profit commercialization. The interest in social entrepreneurship has recently taken on global dimensions as well. In addition to those in the United States and Western Europe, active social entrepreneurship agendas can be found in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia. A number of global-level supply-and-demand side factors have led to the increasing interest. On the supply side, Nicholls (2006) cites increased global per capita wealth, improved social mobility, and an increase in the number of democratic governments, increased power of multinational corporations, better education levels, and improved communications. Demand-side factors include environmental and health crises, rising economic inequality, spread of a market ideology, and a more developed role for non-profit organizations. Because the growth of interest in social enterprise and social entrepreneurship is relatively recent and there are a variety of actors and arenas involved in discussion and practice, it is not surprising that there are a variety of outlooks, opinions, and conceptual formulations. Terminology is an issue. For example, the terms social entrepreneurship and social enterprise are sometimes used interchangeably but other times are not. This has been and continues to be a source of confusion and contention. The term social entrepreneurship is problematic in that at this point, there is no agreement on major aspects of a definition. Essentially, however, when the term is used in a manner consistent with the term entrepreneurship, it refers to a process of the development of a new product or an organization to serve a social need. In contrast, the term social enterprise is a narrower concept and there is general agreement on its definition. It refers to methods of commercial or earned income generation. Some commentators and practitioners hold social enterprise as a key component, if not the essence, of social entrepreneurship, but others do not. In addition, most of the discussion to date has been about social enterprise





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Interlink Research Analysis 4.95 Issue: XVII, Vol. II, Jan. 2018 To June 2018 18 and not about social entrepreneur-ship, although this is changing rapidly. As well, a variety of social-enterprise practices and techniques have been developed, which are being used by managers, promoted by consultants and professional schools, and funded by foundations and others. This research-paper will proceed as follows. We will first review some basics of entrepreneurship. We will then define social entrepreneurship, examine how it is related to previous thought on entrepreneurship, and consider some of the special considerations entailed in the management of social entrepreneurship. We will conclude by discussing social enterprise and its management.

Entrepreneurship Meaning?

Before discussing social entrepreneurship in any detail, it is useful to consider entrepreneurship as it has been conceptualized and practiced. This is important because the evolving discussion of social entrepreneurship takes the previous conceptualization of entrepreneurship as its starting point. Therefore, at the very least, all of the factors associated with entrepreneurship are potentially relevant to social entrepreneurship as well. A further question would be the degree to which social entrepreneurship should be conceptualized and practiced differently. This leads to the possibility of a useful distinction between "social" entrepreneurship and, as it is now sometimes termed, "conventional" or "commercial" entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship was first defined in the 1700s. Over the years, a number of different viewpoints toward and definitions of entrepreneurship have developed. Currently, no single definition is accepted by all. Definitions have emphasized a broad range of activities, including the bearing of uncertainty, the creation of new organizations, the exploration of new opportunities, the bringing together of the factors of production, and the production of new combinations. However, two general orientations toward entrepreneurship have been identified. One is focused on the actions of individuals in the market economy. The economist Richard Cantillon (circa 1730) defined entrepreneurship as self-employment. Entrepreneurs buy at current prices to sell at (hopefully higher) prices in the future. They are, consequently, the bearers of risk. Following this orientation, in 1816 Jean Baptiste Say defined the entrepreneur as one who utilizes all means of production to create profit through the value of the products that are thereby created. These early proponents of entrepreneur-ship laid the foundation to





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what has become known as the Austrian School approach to entrepreneurship. The current form of this approach is expressed by Israel Kirzner, who holds that an entrepreneur is motivated by profit and seeks to recognize and act upon market opportunities. This is consistent with Peter Drucker's definition of an entrepreneur as someone always searching for change, responding to it, and exploiting it as an opportunity. An alternative orientation to entrepreneurship was put forth by Joseph Schumpeter in the 1930s. Schumpeter's focus was on the entrepreneur as an innovator, on the creative drive itself, and on the impacts of entrepreneurship on industry and the economy. The entrepreneur develops new combinations of goods, services, and organizational forms in the service of a relentless drive to create (to found a "private kingdom" in Schumpeter's terms). This orientation has been dubbed "high-level entrepreneurship" and linked historically to the birth of new industries and the concomitant death of existing ones through a process of creative destruction. Entrepreneurship, therefore, can be conceptualized on what could be termed a macro (industrial or Schumpeterian) level and a micro (individual, organizational, or Kirznerian) level. It can also be viewed as involving a wide range of complex phenomena including innovation, the management of change, new product development, small business management, and industry evolution. In addition to various parts of the management field, entrepreneurship is relevant to the fields of economics, sociology, history, and psychology.

In addition, the number of colleges and universities offering courses related to entrepreneurship is extensive (it was put at over 1,600 in 2005) and textbooks abound. Most of this academic activity is oriented toward present and future managers in MBA programs and specifically covers aspects involved in creating, starting, financing, and growing new ventures. The entrepreneur (on this micro level) is thought of as someone who perceives an opportunity and creates an organization to pursue it. The process is generally conceived of as involving several stages, including

- a creative or innovative idea that is recognized as an opportunity;
- the decision to start a new organization or venture to exploit the opportunity;
- the development of business, marketing, organizational, and financial plans;
- the acquisition of initial capital;





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- strategies for market entry;
- strategies and resources for growth; and possibly
- The process of ending the venture.

Social Entrepreneurship:

Definitions of the term social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneur vary in terms of the details they include. A scan of current definitions of social entrepreneurship reveals definitions such as the following:

- Creation of viable socioeconomic structures, relations, institutions, organizations, and practices that yield and sustain social benefits
- Use of entrepreneurial behavior for social ends
- Art of simultaneously obtaining both social and financial return on investment Definitions of social entrepreneurs include;
- Change agents in the social sector,
- People who take risks on behalf of the people their organization serves;
- Path breaker with a powerful new idea who combines visionary and real-world problem-solving creativity, has strong ethical fiber, and is totally possessed by his or her vision for change; and
- An individual who uses earned-income strategies to pursue social objectives. Paul Light (2006) has noted a number of limitations in the definitions that have been given. For most, the focus is almost always on individuals as change agents, not on groups or organizations. Social entrepreneurs usually work in the non-profit sector and are invariably only interested in new programs or solutions, which they generally want to start from scratch. This is opposed to creating innovations through adapting existing programs. Throughout, there are only occasional references to management practices. In addition, social entrepreneurs are viewed as entrepreneurial at all time. Finally, the use of social enterprise (commercial income) as a key factor is stressed. Light offers a broader definition. In his definition, a social entrepreneur is an individual, group, network, organization, or alliance of organizations that seeks large-scale change through patternbreaking ideas in how governments, non-profits, and businesses can address significant social processes. In this definition, social entrepreneurs





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- Do not have to be individuals;
- Seek sustainable, large-scale change;
- Can develop pattern-breaking ideas as to how or what gets done;
- Exist in all sectors (non-profit, for-profit, and government); and
- Need not engage in social enterprise to be successful.

In addition, the quantity of social entrepreneurship can vary greatly across individuals or entities and the intensity of social entrepreneurship can and does ebb and flow over time as circumstances change. This discussion raises a number of central questions, three of which will be discussed in the remainder of the research-paper. The discussion will bring to the forefront major management considerations. We will consider these questions:

- How is social entrepreneurship related to its predecessor (commercial or conventional entrepreneurship)?
- What are the implications for social entrepreneurship of a macro (industry-level) perspective on entrepreneurship?
- What are the implications for social entrepreneurship of a micro (individual- or organizational-level) perspective on entrepreneurship?

The Macro Angle & the Micro Angle of Social Entrepreneurship:

With its focus on industry- or economy-wide changes, a macro perspective leads to a view of social entrepreneurship as a process aimed at making large-scale system changes. This would be accomplished through entrepreneurial innovations that have the potential to address significant and widespread social problems. This definition of social entrepreneurship is held and promoted by funding and support organizations, for example,

Skoll Foundation (2007): Social entrepreneurs are society's change agents, pioneers of innovations that benefit humanity. Motivated by altruism and a profound desire to promote the growth of equitable civil societies, social entrepreneurs' pioneer innovative, effective, sustainable approaches to meet the needs of the marginalized, the disadvantaged, and the disenfranchised. Social entrepreneurs are the wellspring of a better future.

Ashoka (2007): Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social problems. They are ambitious and persistent, tackling major





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social issues and offering new ideas for wide-scale change.

What sets social entrepreneurs in this tradition apart from conventional social service providers is that social entrepreneurs will use creativity, innovation, and resourcefulness in non-traditional, pioneering, and disruptive ways that aim at large-scale, systemic change. In order to have the significant, large-scale, systemic impacts sought, however, innovations must be developed and implemented on an appropriate scale. In the social entrepreneurship literature, this process is referred to as scaling for impact (or scaling up). A number of alternatives have been proposed for scaling up, or increasing, the impact of a social venture once it has been developed. According to the Centre for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship (2007), in the most general sense, "Scaling social impact is the process of closing the gap between the real and the ideal condition as it pertains to particular social needs or problems. Scaling social impact can occur by increasing the positive social impact created, decreasing the negative social impact of others, or decreasing the social need or demand." Increasing social impact is the technique most often discussed. Scaling up has been viewed as a process that can be used for programs or services, organizational models, or principles. In this process, a social entrepreneur will first develop a concept (the beneficial program, model, or principle) and demonstrate its utility and effectiveness on a small scale and at a local level. Modest expansion can then be used to develop experience and techniques that will enhance efficiency. Finally, full-blown scaling up through wide-scale expansion will provide the large-scale impacts sought. This can be accomplished through providing significantly more services (with the goal of increasing the quantity or quality of impact), diversifying the communities served or services offered, or expanding geographically. Geographic expansion, or branching, involves establishing new service sites in other geographical locations operating under a common name and using a common approach. Branching can prove beneficial in a number of ways. It may result in much wider social impact through providing access to whole new communities. Also, it may enhance the chances of organizational or program survival by providing access to new resource providers or partners. Finally, it may improve efficiency through economies of scale and enhance effectiveness through innovations resulting from local experimentation. In addition, scaling





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up can be accomplished in more indirect ways, including information dissemination or affiliation with others in networks. For example, a program model might be promoted through licensing agreements or partnerships. Even more indirect channels are available, including influencing public policy, influencing social movements, or changing or creating markets through research, public influence, or advocacy or lobbying.

In commercial or conventional entrepreneurship, the individual or organizational (micro) approach focuses on the entrepreneur's exploitation of market opportunities for arbitrage. The entrepreneur is motivated by profit and seeks to generate efficiencies that will generate more arbitrage opportunities. For social entrepreneurship, the micro approach can, likewise, involve market orientation as a key element (Nicholls & Cho, 2006). This will lead to a definition of social entrepreneurship as involving (or consisting entirely of) social enterprise, an approach that combines social impact with commercial income. This is exemplified by what has been called a double bottom line or blended-value orientation, in which both financial and social returns are sought. In this approach, managerial considerations involve incorporating both social objectives and organizational operations within commercial markets. In general, the notion of social enterprise can be applied to non-profit, for-profit, and government activity. A social enterprise can be generally defined to be an organization that has net positive externalities in its operations, products, and services, and indeed consciously attempts to increase its positive externalities and lower its negative ones (Jamison, 2006). In terms of non-profits and for-profits, social enterprise is conceptualized as occurring along a continuum in what are being termed hybrid organizations. Kim Alter (2006) has provided one of the most extensive discussions of various models adopted by these organizations. Her typology considers corporate structure, mission, programs, and finances. At one end of the spectrum of organizational types are organizations relying on philanthropic capital and concerned exclusively with social returns. Purely philanthropy organizations appeal to goodwill, are mission driven, and seek to create social value, and income and profit are directed toward mission accomplishment. Organizations with these characteristics have been labelled traditional non-profits. At the other end of the spectrum are organizations relying on commercial capital and concerned with financial returns. Purely commercial organizations are market





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driven, appeal to self-interest, seek to create economic value, and distribute profit to shareholders and owners. Organizations with these characteristics have been labelled traditional for profits. Between these poles is a range of organizational forms concerned with both social and economic returns. These are referred to as hybrid organizations. Hybrid organizations have some mix of elements from the poles of the spectrum. Hybrid organizations themselves fall along a continuum and include

- Non-profits with some earned income;
- Non-profits or for-profits with a roughly equal concern for social and financial ends (often conceptualized as "true" social enterprises); and
 - For-profits with some emphasis on social responsibility.

In this framework, social enterprise is defined as any revenue-generating venture created to contribute to a social cause while operating with the discipline, innovation, and determination of a for-profit business. Social enterprises can be classified based on the degree to which they are mission oriented, ranging from completely central to the mission to unrelated to it. Consistent with this, the activities of an enterprise can vary in terms of their social program content and the support they provide to social goals. On the one hand, enterprise activities could be synonymous with social programs, thereby completely supporting social goals. On the other hand, enterprise activities could only be partially overlapping with social programs, thereby supporting some social goals as well as some non-social goals. Finally, enterprise activities could be completely separate from social programs, thereby merely providing financing for social programs.

Concerns in Social Enterprise:

For-profit sources of capital (debt and equity), on the other hand, do not recognize social value creation, and high-risk capital is only available in certain sectors. In addition, basic questions remain concerning the positive and negative impacts of non-profit commercialization on different types of non-profits, on the non-profit sector and its various subsectors, and on community or society. As this indicates, multiple levels need to be considered. For example, social enterprise may benefit particular organizations, but might harm the community, the sector, or society. It may diversify non-profit income, but may reduce the presence or impact of nonmarket activity or values. Of course, debates about





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the characteristics, extent, and consequences of market and nonmarket aspects on society have been held for a long time. Social enterprise should be brought more explicitly into these discussions. One way to proceed as these discussions develop is to adopt a contingency view of social enterprise. The question then becomes not if, but when, how, and with what effect social enterprise takes place. In addition, more research is needed on the limits as well as the advantages and disadvantages of providing goods and services via social enterprise techniques as opposed to traditional philanthropic or public provision techniques. Of concern are impacts on

- The nature of the goods and services produced;
- The distribution of these goods and services;
- The recipients of these goods and services;
- The producers of these (the impacts on non-profits);
- Other stakeholders, including the community or neighbourhood;
- The sector and the consequences of more blurring and blending of organizational forms; and
- Society, including the availability of social benefits.

There are also a host of organizational and managerial questions. What are the organizational impacts of social enterprise on various types of non-profit organizations? To what degree are ventures viable and what are the consequences of venture failure? How should opportunity costs be conceptualized and taken into account? What are the impacts in terms of mission drift, organizational culture, and accountability to constituencies or the community? Finally, increased commercial activity may threaten the legitimacy as well as the tax exemption on which the sector is based (Weisbrod, 2004). We will examine two of these issues here. A major question for both social entrepreneurship and social enterprise is how to define and measure the social bottom line-variously termed the social value, social returns, or social impact—of social enterprise. While a long-standing question for non-profits, this question is also of great relevance to for-profit organizations. Because for-profit organizations have explicit concern about profits and experience difficulties in measuring social impact and assigning value to it, they have problems making decisions about investments or resource allocation. In the broadest sense, things are





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valued because they are judged to be good or worthwhile. More specifically, several types of value have been distinguished. Outcome value results when something improves people's welfare and quality of life. Activity value, on the other hand, lies in the process by which an outcome is produced. Finally, excellence value is created when an outcome or activity inspires others to strive to learn and excel. Assessing social value, therefore, may involve determining the value of things that can't be easily, directly, or at all monetized, such as social capital, cohesion, or quality of life. Without such an assessment, however, how does an organization know to what degree it has provided social value and in what ways the financial bottom line relates to this? Several recent discussions of this issue are illustrative.

Conclusion:

Both social entrepreneur-ship and social enterprise, however, raise a number of issues. Social entrepreneurship is just starting to explore and find its definition and place in both the non-profit and for-profit sectors. Given that it is a manifestation of the powerful process of entrepreneurship, however, it has the potential to make major and positive contributions. If researchers and practitioners together can discover how organizations can promote and harness innovation and creativity and bring these more effectively to bear on social problems, the constituencies of these organizations and society as a whole will benefit greatly. Social enterprise, on the other hand, has been discussed for some time and is being vigorously promoted. Basic questions remain, however, regarding the proper conceptualization and role of market and nonmarket orientations in both the non-profit and for-profit sectors. These questions and issues have, however, been relatively well identified in the literature and addressing them furthers our understanding of current practices and points to future applications. This will both advance our understanding and improve the management of socially oriented non-profit and for-profit organizations.

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