

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: AN OVERVIEW**Fuziah Shaffie****Ab Aziz Bin Yusof****Wan Ab Rahman Khudzri Wan Abdullah****Wan Ibrahim Wan Ahmad****Azizan Bahari**

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ABSTRACT

Social entrepreneurship scholars are in the midst of a number of debates involving definitional and conceptual clarity, boundaries of the field, and a struggle to arrive at a set of relevant and meaningful research. The existence of social entrepreneurship-oriented social work practitioner can bring about new impetus to the approach in trying to find solutions to social problems faced by the community. The data for this study is derived from a research about social entrepreneurship conducted on social work practitioners in the Northern parts of Peninsular Malaysia. Though it is not written to either present the findings of the study, it could well-trigger ideas for researchers, however. The paper draws on the work of others and to this adds personal conclusions from the literatures and observations. It attempts to deal with complex issues and tensions in a straightforward style and thus draw attention to key debates. This conceptual discussion paper aims to contribute to the literature on social entrepreneurship. It draws on published work to flag key issues and discussion points that affect the clarity of the understanding. It aims to provide some greater insight and help both scholars and practitioners in their respective quests for understanding and improvement. This paper also discusses the meaning of social entrepreneurship and the differences between traditional or conventional entrepreneurship and the characteristics of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship has social responsibility, and its main concern is not economic profit. It is seen more as an agent of change than a profit-seeking enterprise. The goals of entrepreneurial are to ensure that issues of social and community problems can be resolved as well as to conduct activities to generate profits. The paper discusses the expected challenges faced by the entrepreneurs. Finally, the paper also provides some examples of successful social entrepreneur locally and internationally.

Keywords: *Meanings; social entrepreneurship; traditional/conventional entrepreneurship, challenges.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are two jargons that lead to various meanings or definitions based on disciplines or individual understanding. The emergence of entrepreneurship is a common phenomenon. Many elder prominent figures deemed entrepreneurship as a growing activity that has been forgotten. In fact, the attention focused only on large companies as a model system of free enterprise. The resurgence of entrepreneurship has taken a broad array of the basic and economical institutions. Government at all levels are now more sensitive to the role of entrepreneurship in generating economy and strengthening the industry.

Academics, businessmen and public have established a deep interest and appreciation of entrepreneurs through what can be cultivated as the economy. International agencies like the World Bank have begun to introduce entrepreneurship as a major boost to the economics of developing countries. Boschee and McClurg (2003) describe entrepreneurs as individuals who organize, manage, and bear the risk in business. A capable entrepreneur should be able to run a business and manage cash flow though their starting point may just be an idea or a prototype.

Entrepreneurship is a combination of various ideas, hard work and systematic coordination to face changes in the market. Entrepreneurship can be defined as the process of combining the production of resources such as land, raw materials, human resources, capital and information technology to produce goods and services to meet human needs and desires. Suhaimi Mansor (1991) defines entrepreneurship as a business activity created by someone who interprets the environment, identifies the opportunities, manipulates the materials, carries out the ideas, expands wealth and promotes social welfare. Entrepreneurs are people who manage an enterprise, also known as operators (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_entrepreneurship).

Among the vital concepts that inspire entrepreneurship is ongoing initiatives. Ongoing initiative is a starting line or a stage of creating something new and expanding that particular business. Entrepreneurs must have the courage, high spirit and ambition, dynamic thinking, innovative ideas and vision to move forward. Entrepreneurs need to be sensitive to the needs and problems faced by the society, take initiatives, create new ideas and innovations, meet the needs and solve community problems. The second concept of entrepreneurship is to take and be brave enough to face risk due to uncertainty of demand of the production of goods or services that they cater. Usually, entrepreneurs make decisions only after they have taken into account risks that they may have to face based upon anticipated profits and consequently risks have to be administered wisely.

The third concept that lies beneath entrepreneurship is activities conducted by an entrepreneur must be rewarded by a return; i.e. profit earned after taking into consideration all operating expenses and reasonable risks. Peredo and McLean (2006) reveal that a big profit is the main factor that motivates a person to become an entrepreneur. Mobilizing resources is the fourth concept of entrepreneurship. Resources are invaluable in yielding products and services to obtain the market requirement. Among all land, capital, human resources, raw materials, technology and information are resources that are very precious. The mobilization of resources requires planning, organizing, directing and controlling.

Many authors perceive entrepreneurship as a process as well as an innovation. Sexton and Bowman-Upton (1991) for example, urge that entrepreneurship is a process of identifying market opportunities, organizing resources to achieve objectives and ensuing actions to exploit the resource needs for

personal gain in a long term. Kao (1995), Hisrich and Peters (2002) defines entrepreneurship as a process of creating a new (creative) and different (innovative) for the purpose of creating wealth for individuals and adding values for the community. Similarly, Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004) describe entrepreneurship as an innovative and a new business creation via four dimensions; individuals, organizations, environments and processes, supported by a government network, educational and economic institutions. Hamidah (2008) views entrepreneurship as a dynamic process for creating wealth. Wealth is created by individuals who risk themselves in term of capital, time and career commitment.

Entrepreneurship is the process of creating something new by taking into consideration the time, effort, financial risk, psychological and social factor and be rewarded by financial benefit, personal satisfaction and freedom. Nevertheless, to maximize profits via entrepreneurship, welfare and social responsibility factors are not uncared for and as a result, creating the emergence of a new field in entrepreneurship; called social entrepreneurship.

2. THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Generally, social entrepreneurship is about individuals who have innovative solutions to social problems faced by a society. Social entrepreneurship is not about welfare or charity organisations or bodies. It is a business that aims to maximize profits. However, the operation of this business enables it to provide assistance in solving social or environmental issues. A profit, in this case, is still important as only profitable businesses can ensure the endurance of social entrepreneurship.

Basically, social entrepreneurship is a form of assistance extended by the non-governmental or voluntary organizations which are ready to face risks in order to contribute something meaningful to the society without expecting any profits. This worthy approach can help the society especially those who live in poverty, orphans, single mothers and the disabled; be it in the form of financial or material. This contributions and assistance can help to improve the state of poverty of a family because what is important is how the poor can utilise the help to change towards the better.

According to Dees (2001), social entrepreneurship refers to a combination of social missions and business disciplines such as innovation. In other words, social entrepreneurship applies entrepreneurial approaches in expressing and helping to solve social problems faced by the society. Other than social and business innovative efforts, social entrepreneurship also includes socially-oriented business efforts such as by implementing businesses that train and give salaries to the local community.

Mort, Weerawardena and Carnegie (2003), refer to social entrepreneurship as an entrepreneur or a practitioner who carries out the social mission with the aim to create a better social value. Social entrepreneurs can be transpired in various characteristics such as innovative, proactive, charismatic, enthusiastic and willing to take risks (Vijaya Sherry Chand, 2009).

After referring to opinions suggested by the prominent figures in this field on the definition of social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurs can be described in general as agents of change who are able to implement and realize ambitions as well as to improve social values and search for opportunities to make changes in society. Social entrepreneurs are always actively engaged in the process of innovation, adaptation and lifelong learning as they go without stopping. They are not easily given up though they

may face barriers or limitations in doing what they do. They are also accountable to the responsibility that they have chosen and promised to the society especially to those who live in the rural areas. All social entrepreneurs have two distinguish characteristics. First, they have a clear social goal, and second, they use a competitive business model. A social entrepreneur should demonstrate high accountability to those who receive services and to the achievement of the mission that he or she established.

3. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITH TRADITIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

There is a distinction between these two terms; traditional entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship means to establish and maintain social values, to concentrate in the continuous innovation process, to adapt and learn, using limited resources, with a high sense of responsibilities to improve the socio-economic status of a local community. Social entrepreneurship will give opportunities to the local community to be involved in making decisions about their life, including an appropriate contribution that benefits both (Johnson and Schwartz, 1997).

John L. Thompson (2002) explains that social entrepreneurs have the quality and behaviour of business people and are more concerned about the assistance and benefits provided to the society and not very much concerned about making money through their business. They are seen as agents of change to the life of the local people because they are significant and can bring social impact.

Boschee and McClurg (2003) separate social entrepreneurs with traditional entrepreneurs. Traditional entrepreneurs often have a responsibility to the society. They donate part of profits made; refuse to cooperate with certain types of business; use of property and training in a safe environment; in fact consider workers as having dignity and respect. Social entrepreneurs, on the other hand, generate income strategies based on the desired mission. They also hire worker who are disabled, have chronic mental illness and internal body pain and other weaknesses.

Secondly, the typical traditional entrepreneur is measured by the acquired financial position. The success or failure of a company depends on the owner's ability to gain profit. Social entrepreneurs, alternatively, are managed by board of directors, virtual financial cycle and social returns. Profitability remains a goal, but not the main goal and profits will be reinvested, not distributed among shareholders.

4. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COUNTRY

Malaysia is moving towards being an industrial country in 2020 where business sector is presumed to play a more important role. The business sector will not only be a supporting sector, in fact, it will become a platform that provides the foundations and technology to ensure a better growth of enterprise development. The introduction to social entrepreneurship is seen timely at this instance of global recession since it assists companies employing this approach and those in need to gain profit. Social entrepreneurship can also help to reduce the government expenditure without undermining the quality of public service during the crucial period of global recession.

This means that every single cents or ringgit spent with a social entrepreneur will in the end benefit the people. Profit is still important as only profitable business will be able to contribute to the country. According to Zimmerer & Scarborough (1996), social entrepreneurship combines the efficiency and productivity of the private sector with the ethics of the public sector. As a result, we gain benefits from both of these working cultures. Social entrepreneurs should possess special characteristics that are pragmatic and innovative in nature. The time has come for us to handle various problems faced by our young generation today by producing social entrepreneurs among the youngsters so as to give a new perspective in the youth development approach.

1. The role of social entrepreneurs in economic development

Social entrepreneurship is actually a capable agent of change that performs its ambition to change and improve the social values of the society. Social entrepreneurs always seek opportunities to maximise profits by making lots of changes that can change the standard of living of the society. Social entrepreneurs should always be a part of the process of innovation, adaptation and continuous learning. Often, these people do not concern about obstacles or limitation that they might face. A successful social entrepreneur should also possess accountability and responsibility in every decision that are made for the sake of the community.

Indeed, social entrepreneurship can help to boost the economy of a country. Besides, it brings a lot of benefits to the society. There are a few roles of social entrepreneurship in helping to develop the economy of a country. Firstly, it helps to create opportunities for occupations. The more social entrepreneurships are established, the more vacancies there are for the society. This is proven through observation conducted at the John Hopkin University in 1998. In the observations made on 13 countries, the result showed that the range of human resource in this sector is between 1 to 7 percent.

To add to that, this sector also helps to provide occupational opportunities to the disabled to be involved in activities that are productive. This figure is further better supported with examples of a social entrepreneur in Bangladesh, Muhammad Yunus, who is able to provide occupations to six million women to generate the country's economic by establishing 'phone-lady' that spreaded over the villages and rural areas. Thousands of the poor and needy as well as beggars are benefited from this as they use it as the platform to get jobs and earn a living, which in a way help to generate the economy for the country itself.

2. Improving the quality of the country's human resource

The second role of social entrepreneurship is to improve the quality of human resource in a country. Human resource can be created by this sector to generate the economy. This can be done by inculcating values in sharing, beliefs and culture twinning. Countries like German and Japan have successfully proven this. They have successfully produced high quality human resources via a long term relationship and a great collaboration that produced innovation of which in the end developed the industries in their particular countries. The World Bank has announced that the critical reasons in handling poverty are due the lacking of quality human capital.

3. Developing creativity and innovation

The third role of social entrepreneurship is producing creative and innovative works. Various measures have been taken by social entrepreneurs to solve social problems that could not be handled by the government, among them, solving HIV and drug problems, eliminating illiterates, lacking vitamins or malnutritions among the needy and others. Social entrepreneurs are able to solve those problems as mentioned in the above because they are dedicated. According to Bill Drayton (2006), social entrepreneurs should get and have the right to get royalty. This is because, when they do something, they do not do it only for the sake of working but they dedicate their life for it.

4. Improving equality and social harmony

Fourth role is to increase equality in society. One of the purposes of economic development is to create equality or social harmony. This can be realized through social entrepreneurship because the entrepreneurs will think of having equality in their income so as to make maximum profits. This in turn can consistently and continuously develop the country's economy. The Grameen Bank, for example, is one of the evidence of equality. Other than that, J. B. Schramm of the United States is also the best example because he has funded thousands of students from needy families to further their studies at tertiary institutions.

5. CHALLENGES IN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Every social entrepreneur will face many challenges. But to be a successful entrepreneur, one should dare to accept the challenge. Usually, successful social entrepreneurs like high and difficult challenges very much because the higher the challenges they face, the more fun and high-spirited they feel. They feel greater satisfaction to be able to successfully face the higher and more difficult challenges.

1. Challenges in the industrial level in the country

Challenges in the industry refer to the problems faced by social entrepreneurs in business such as in deciding or choosing the right business, finding financing for investment, seeking business opportunities, getting a strategic space, facing the competition in the business, improving service, quality and price of other products related to the industry they are in. If they are not able to solve these problems, their business will be affected. This means that the entrepreneur has failed in his business and he will not be able to make profit but will suffer losses, instead.

For social entrepreneurs, not only they want to succeed in business expansion and profit, but they also want to make innovations in their products and be the driving force that can change people's lives. For that, to be successful social entrepreneurs, they need to have clear goals and must be ready to meet future challenges.

2. Challenges in finance

Social entrepreneurship requires a large amount of financial and expenses because the business do not only focus on profit but also welfare. According to Sudin Haron (1990) prospective entrepreneurs must know different types of capitals in business. These include the initial capital, fixed capital, working capital or operational capital and capital proposals. Saat Sulaiman (2008), on the other hand, elaborated that to start a business, one needs to have enough capital to ensure that it can be ran smoothly. Lack of capital will be a deterrent factor for one to start a business. Capital, in this case, does not only refer to enough money to open a business, but also for savings and operational capital.

Therefore, financial related challenge is nothing new to social entrepreneurs and has been regarded as the main problem to social entrepreneurship (Dees 1998; Kingston & Bolton 2004). The results of their study revealed that most social entrepreneurs fail to save or strengthen their initial capital. This is why they are often confronted with failure to maintain their business.

Financial challenges limit social entrepreneurs from recruiting more workers and materials needed in the business. As a result, this will prevent them from using the appropriate and up-to-date technology. This, in a way, will cause the product to not be able to be released at its optimal level.

Nevertheless, to confront the the challenges, they need to be able to differentiate the types of the challenges faced. With careful analysis of the challenges, they can be well-prepared because they know what they should have when faced with financial challenges.

3. Lack of training

Lack of training is perceived as one of the major challenges to social entrepreneurs as identified by several researchers including Dees (1998), Boschee (2006), Chell (2007) and Dees and Anderson (2008). Among the critical training required by them is in financial management, looking for profitable business opportunities and human resource management. Without these skills, it is impossible for them to strengthen their business.

Training for entrepreneurs is also regarded as an important aspect behind the success of social entrepreneurship. Without proper training, a job or business may not be well-accomplished.

4. Products competition

Competitive products among various companies are among the factors that contribute to the challenges of social entrepreneurship, Zafir Makhbul and Fazilah Mohamad Mohd Hasun (2007) mentioned that in order for social enterprise to be competitive, a social entrepreneur should equip themselves mentally and physically so as to deal with products rendered or produced by other competitors. This is because there are products manufactured at a far cheaper rate that create competition among the products in the existing market.

As a result, it will take quite some time for new products in the market to gain public confidence. This is because more people believe in products that have long been in the market and has long secured a name in the business. Meredith et al. (1982) highlighted that in many cases, competition will limit the ability of entrepreneurs to determine the price. Moreover, it is difficult to change the mindset of the society towards these products as most are not willing to bear the risk of using products that they have never known before.

Ismail Ab. Wahab et al. (2008) explained that the level of competition is a factor that must be taken into account in the selection of a business opportunity. High level of competition demands high investment of business resources. Failure to meet these demands often result in a failure of setting a new business. Social entrepreneurs who have capital limitations should choose a business that has a low level of competition.

Competition is one of the most important challenges in the development of social entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs who want to market a product should provide products that can be truly accepted by the market so that in the future they will not suffer from loss.

5. Societal challenges

Society is another barrier to social entrepreneurship. The fact that social entrepreneurship is new in Malaysia and many people still do not know about its existence makes our society not interested in involving in businesses that emphasis on welfare and charity work. They assume this type of a business as not profitable and can cause loss in terms of time and money.

Our society must accept the fact that social entrepreneurship is not a charity. It is a business that aims to maximize profits. But at the same time, the business operations will open up opportunities for them to help solve a social or environmental issue. Profit remains important because only profitable businesses can contribute to the country.

Although the field of social entrepreneurship is still very fresh, every society should be more open to accept new thing. The government of the United Kingdom, for example, is determined to develop the field. In fact, a special ministry was entrusted with overseeing the government's strategy on social entrepreneurship and other 'third sector' organizations. The commitment of this government remains despite the fact that the country is facing recession (<http://www.mail-archive.com>).

6. EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In the context of our country, Malaysia, there is an NGO known as Nur Hikmah Development Foundation which use different strategies in providing social assistance. Nur Hikmah Development Foundation does not solely provide grants on an ongoing basis to certain groups, but rather emphasizes on the provision to help and educate specific groups to generate income from the social assistance that they provide. There is a Chinese proverb that says "if you give them fish, they can eat for a day but if you teach them to fish, you will give them food for a lifetime".

Providing continuous assistance will give them a short term comfort as compared to teaching them to help themselves; which will surely have long term effects. The social entrepreneurship role played by Nur Hikmah Development Foundation is by implementing a few entrepreneurship programs. These programs are conducted on a few selected groups; among them being the single mothers. Single mothers are taught to become entrepreneurs with their capitals, be it financial or equipment will be funded. The concept of the assistance rendered by the foundation has two phases: the first is to provide assistance to bring them up again, while the second phase is to help them to continue to live independently.

There are some examples of social entrepreneurs at the international level. For example, Jane Addams, the founder of Hull House. She established Hull House in 1889 as a social placement to look after the welfare and improve the life of the poor immigrants in Chicago and continued her efforts at the national level. She also received recognition as a defender of women's rights, Pacifism and became the president of the "Women's International League for Peace and Freedom". She worked hard to get women's and children protection law.

Another example of the renowned social entrepreneur is Maria Montessori -- the first woman physicist in Italy. She began working with children in 1906 and created a revolutionary method of education that supports the development of each child individually. She set up a school to make every child realize their potential through social skills education, mental development and physical coordination.

Among other examples in social entrepreneurship includes the Grameen Bank. According to Papa et al. (1995) in Juliet Roper and George Cheney, Grameen bank is a bank that helped people, especially women in developing small-scale business. Grameen Bank ran its business but at the same time gave social assistance to the people. This, to some extent, had influenced the public sector with the rapid economic development and the formulation of financial policy in Bangladesh. The founder of this bank, Muhammad Yunus had managed to revolutionize the banking system by introducing it in Bangladesh in 1976. "Micro loans" to help workers to obtain their own income through "self-employment" had been introduced. According to Mark Schreiner (2003), such micro loan is an effort to increase opportunities for the poor to get loans and savings services. Therefore, the efforts made by Grameen Bank can be categorized as a social entrepreneur effort because it aimed to improve the lives of people in a country. Papa and others in George Cheney and Juliet Roper (2005) stated that one of the well-known cases on non-profit social entrepreneurship is the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, which acted as a representative to help people, especially women in the development of small business scale.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The existence of social entrepreneurship-oriented social work practitioner can give new impetus to the approach of solving social problems faced by our society. Among the objectives of this study is to investigate the need of having social entrepreneurship-oriented social work practitioner in Malaysia. To achieve this objective, the data for this study was derived from a research on social entrepreneurship conducted on social work practitioners in Perlis, Kedah and Penang. Social work practitioners are closely linked with social entrepreneurship. Both of these entities have the same goal in providing support services to the community.

Social work practitioners, in this study, refer to those who participate voluntarily in community works in the public sector, private sector and individually-owned business either with or without credentials and recognition by the government or any other professional bodies related to social work. Social entrepreneurship is, on the contrary, focuses on activities related to social interest. Although these activities are conducted due to economic reasons, the main aim is to achieve a particular social interest.

Since social entrepreneurship in Malaysia has only been established recently and is not that popular yet, not many are keen to be involved in this type of business which does not emphasis on profit but on welfare and charity work. This type of business is considered as something that does not bring profits but will cause great loss in time and money.

The fact that social entrepreneurship is not a charity must be accepted by our society. Social entrepreneurship is a business, just like other business. It aims to maximize profits. However, in its venture towards acquiring profit, the business operations enable it to help solve social issues. Profit is still important because only profitable businesses can contribute to a country.

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