

# Social Entrepreneurship: Study of the Definitions

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## Abstract

Social Entrepreneurship is a growing field, with its new approaches and distinct goals, it has its important role in the development of the economy. In this study, the researchers through an exhaustive review of literatures reveal the several concepts of Social Entrepreneurship and in try to develop a unique dimension towards the study of social Entrepreneurship. Since, Social Entrepreneurship has emerged from different regions and geographical boundaries of the world, it has been defined by many researchers in different ways. In this study, the authors utilize a detailed review of literatures approach through various existing definitions and develop three (3) key dimensions towards social entrepreneurship: Social change, Social Innovation and Social Value.

## Keywords

Social Entrepreneurship, Social Change, Social Value, Social Innovation

## 1. Introduction

‘Social Entrepreneurship’ has been expressed and defined by experts and researchers in many ways. Even after more than two decades, research in Social Entrepreneurship is still very promising. The meaning of social entrepreneurship has been stated in numerous ways by several people. (Dees, 1998). Social entrepreneurship is a developing field and is attracting large number of academicians in the field of research, by policy makers and practitioners. (Editorial, 2006). (Mair & Lanuza, 2006) expresses that there is an absence of complete understanding and distinct views of social entrepreneurship, the author writes that our main aim must be to describe the thoughts and theories of social entrepreneurship so that it can become an organized field of research.

Social Entrepreneurships has the capacity to advance by developing products and services to solve the various societal problems. They are called as ‘change agents’ for the reason that they have the passion and the determination to develop ideas into reality. (Thompson, Alvy, & Lees, 2000). According to the authors, social entrepreneurs can satisfy the needs of the people by utilizing the various available resources to make a difference in all kinds and sectors of the economy from profit, non-profit to hybrid organizations and of all sizes that are not taken care by the government. Growth in the study of social entrepreneurship has led to the advancement of several definitions. To come to a proper understanding of the key element of the construct there has to be an agreement across various fields. (Miller & Certo, 2008). Therefore, the requirement of this paper is to develop key dimensions to the meaning of social entrepreneur.

### 1.1 Objectives

In this study, the researchers focus to understand the important concepts used in the various definitions of Social Entrepreneurship and finally develop a dimensional concept on Social Entrepreneurship.

## 2. Literature Review

As the authors explore and study the definitions of “social entrepreneurships”, there are some common elements in the definitions that need to be understood. Social Entrepreneurship needs to constantly change according to the changes in the wants of the society. These needs occur due to the changes around the world because of the social, political, economical and environmental factors. (Bornstein, 2004) Social and Societal change is an ongoing process in a society, that are caused geographically through various natural calamities, also occurs due to the changes in the demographic and political structure of the country, all these variations bring changes to the social needs of the people thereby affecting their social lives.

These social needs to be taken care are considered as “opportunities” by Social Entrepreneur’s to bring a social change. Social entrepreneurship generates social value by exploiting the opportunity that exists and solves it for the society. (Rawal, 2018). The entrepreneur seizes the opportunity to involve in the product, service, solution or process to be rendered with the unique personality of being courageous, inspiring, creative and direct action that he possesses which are important in the process of innovation. (Martin & Osberg, 2007) . Social entrepreneur creates an idea by being creative and practical. There exists a social need between the current situation in the society and the changes that need to take place, this social need is a vision of an entrepreneur for a healthier world. The author expresses that our own experiences, social demands, sharing of community knowledge will give rise to new thoughts only if the social entrepreneur converts it into possibilities to have a long-lasting social impact. (Guclu, Dees, & Anderson, 2002). The authors in their study highlight on the importance of being sustainable by starting income generating ventures to survive and to become financially independent for a long period of time. (Mohammed, Xavier, & Amin, 2021).

According to the authors there is a positive correlation between social entrepreneurship and sustainable development. When there are new businesses that are started with innovations, that leads to the development and progress in social lives in the community. (Al-Qudah, Al-Okeily, & Alqudah, 2021). (Ong, Shang, Chandra, Wahab, & Hamidi, 2020) Social Entrepreneurship also plays a very important role in the life of the youths. The authors explain that social entrepreneurship leads to the development of the youths by increasing their participation in various activities by giving more meaning to their lives to use their capabilities to bring a positive impact in the society. To create awareness on social entrepreneurship the academic field with the help of the industries could introduce new curriculum and prepare youngsters by enhancing their knowledge, skill and interest towards the field. (Roslan, Hamid, Ijab, Yussop, & Norman, 2020).

The authors have considered that social entrepreneurship has five important concepts to be understood as they are creating social worth, social enterprise, social organization, creating products and services by using latest technology together can be studied under a cluster concept. (Choi & Majumdar, 2014) . A cluster concept can have the various concepts in varying degrees and combinations. Even if the cluster concept consists of all or some of the properties it is regarded as a case of the concept. As the authors explore the various definitions of Social Entrepreneurship, the authors come across some important key elements that characterize a Social Entrepreneurship.

### 2.1 Social Entrepreneur

A social entrepreneur has a different way to solve a social problem. They use earned income strategies to fulfill their goals by employing the group of the population who are physically or mentally challenged or disadvantaged, they also produce and sell products and services that make a social impact. (Boschee & Mc Clurg). Social entrepreneurs are the people having good management skills, moral values and possess a long-term vision. The literature emphasizes on the three elements that are social outcome, social transformation and long-term impact that leads to achievements of the goals towards the society (Gandhi & Raina, 2018). Social entrepreneurs direct themselves into opportunity development process and engage in innovation, re-working, investigation and learning. (Guclu, Dees, & Anderson, 2002) .

Social Entrepreneurs need to adapt an efficient way to solve the problems. ‘Adaptive Efficiency’ is a term given to describe the ability to solve problems in a dynamic and innovative way. Social Entrepreneurs need to create an atmosphere that is highly flexible, decentralized innovation and experimentation to deal with not only the current social and environment problems but also the future problems. (Zeyen, et al., 2012). This re-directing in the managerial function is essential for its growth and development. As Peter Drucker has said, that in an entrepreneurial society, there should be a continuous and steady entrepreneurship and innovation. Re-directing in the resource function is essential to progress. As Social entrepreneurs bring changes by providing solutions through innovation to the troublesome sector of the population they are called as ‘change agents.’ They use new ways through their venture with

a social aim. (Tiwari, Bhat, & Tikoria, 2017). Social entrepreneurs apply their expertise and knowledge to innovate products and procedures. (Singh & Majumdar, 2015)

## 2.2 Social Innovation

Innovation is an important component of Social Entrepreneurship as social entrepreneurship is to entrepreneurship, it helps in its growth and development. Innovation is successful only through the progress of an entrepreneur. (Dees, 1998) states that social entrepreneurs are continuously involved in innovation, adaptation and learning. Therefore, they are called as 'Change agents.'

Social entrepreneurship's activities lead to good consequences in the economic system such as starting a new venture, designing something new and most importantly shifting the resources to the disadvantaged societies. (Santos, 2012). According to Schumpeter, transformation of industries materializes through innovation when an old industry is stopped and a new one is started thereby developing the economic structure. Schumpeter gives more importance on innovation firmly, than on the entrepreneurship. (Sledzik, 2013).

Ashoka: started by Bill Drayton a global non-profit organization based in Arlington, Virginia, US, promotes Social Entrepreneurship. Drayton compares social entrepreneur to a business entrepreneur having similar qualities such as - vision, innovation, determination and long-term commitment, the difference being social entrepreneurship are committed to bring a social change. Drayton says that "an idea can bring satisfaction only when it is realized", to encourage a positive social transformation we must invest in social entrepreneurs having innovative ideas that will give a long-term impact within and outside the country. (Sen, 2006).

Social needs of the rural ecosystem are vast and social changes can be achieved by adapting to the technology. Social needs of the rural sectors like improving the livelihoods and empowering people, educating the children, providing sanitation, promotion of better hygiene etc. can be implemented. Innovation plays an important role in bringing change along with technology. (Singh & Majumdar, 2015). Organizations that involve in the development of innovative activities for a social purpose as its main objective are called as 'social innovation' (Mulgan, Tucker, Ali, & Sanders)

## 2.3 Social Value Creation

The prime aim of a Social Entrepreneur is value creation. A social entrepreneur is a person who has moral ethics towards the social organization he is associated with to create social value. (Carnegie, Weerawardena, & Mort, 2002). Social entrepreneurs gain inspiration by generating value for society and not undertake actions that would increase profit. (Santos, 2012).

To create social value, social entrepreneurship has involved educational institutions, international organizations, charitable organizations and corporations to understand the purpose of social entrepreneurship so that it could be copied with new models and structures to create a larger impact. (Seelos & Mair, 2005). The author expresses that the meaning of social entrepreneurship should support in the growth and development of the sector and a social entrepreneur should be stated as an individual or a group of persons who aims at a stable equilibrium for a long-lasting solution on the society by targeting the unfortunate sectors of the economy such as the marginal and neglected groups with their skill of creativity and courage. (Martin & Osberg, 2007).

Social entrepreneurship can also be considered reasonable even if they benefit the advantaged population as long as they involve in solving problems to provide benefits to society as a whole to fulfill its goal that is value creation. (Santos, 2012)

## 2.4 Social Entrepreneurship: A Hybrid Organization

In social entrepreneurship, hybrid organization blends the two elements of social gain and financial viability to generate a long-term impact. (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014). Scholars have noticed that some social entrepreneurs intentionally pursue hybrid organizing right from the inception of their social entrepreneurial venture (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014). Financial viability is vital in order to remain a long-lasting mission along with the social innovation designed by the social entrepreneur (Haigh, Walker, Bacq, & Kickul, 2015). As a result, there has been an increasing reliance on self-organizing and self-sufficiency through self-generated income that has led social enterprises to intentionally adopt or circumstantially design (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014) mechanisms of revenue generation for their social purpose organizations.

Social entrepreneurship is undergoing a transition where stakeholders not only want to create social value, but also value for their employees and customers by being sustainable and efficient in the long-term. Financial sustainability and creating efficiency in the entire community are the most imperative preconditions in order to resolve the present social problems. (Mitra, Byrne, & Janssen, 2017).

Social entrepreneurs are motivated by financial profits and a double bottom line to accomplish positive social change. (Boschee & Mc Clurg). Social entrepreneurs from the financial gains of their business invests for a social cause thereby channelizing the funds to create a social impact, this double success is termed as double-bottom line. (Smith-Hunter & College, 2008)

Social entrepreneurship can perform in an organization that is not driven by profit or ownership by the state by being innovative to generate value for the society. (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006)

The author tells that when a social mission is being accomplished in an organization along with market-oriented approach such type of organization's is referred as having a blended model of financial gain and to create social benefit. (Sengupa & Sahay, 2018). In order to become sustainable a social organization achieves an equilibrium by the combination of generating social value, becoming financially independent and following the managerial qualities. (Sengupa & Sahay, 2018)

### 3. Development towards key dimensions of Social Entrepreneurship:

As there are many concepts and sub-concepts to understand the definitions of Social Entrepreneurship, authors in this study propose to conceptualize it as a multi-dimensional construct, mainly because it consists of interrelated attributes or dimensions. Social Entrepreneurship has to perform multiple dimensions of the activities within the competitive markets. According to Sullivan, Jay Weerawardena, Carnegie, Social Entrepreneurship are motivated by social task, explore opportunities to create social value and display creativeness and enthusiasm with courage.

Social Entrepreneurship has been recognized as a contested concept; it has been conceptualized as a cluster concept by N. Choi & S. Majumbar. The five major components considered are creating social worth, social entrepreneur, social enterprise, creating products and services through new social practices and methods. The authors express that every definition of social entrepreneurship considers certain concepts as more important by emphasizing them more and some of the concepts are considered as the sub-concepts, these variations of concepts exist in the definitions depending on the understanding of the term by different people. The definition of Social Entrepreneurship focuses on multiple sectors of the society, it depends on the primary activities and the manner in which an entrepreneurship is established. All these forms a base for the definition.

As experts said rightly, social entrepreneurs are found across nations and because of the change in the demographic structure, culture and social behavior of the people, the work of a social entrepreneur also performs in accordance with the geographical boundaries it is working. The similarities in the concepts given by various researchers can be studied under the three main dimensions that are interrelated. It can be understood as depending on the nature and the social, cultural and political differences a Social Entrepreneur may exhibit these concepts in different proportions.

- a) Social Change
- b) Social Innovation
- c) Social Value

#### Key Dimensions of Social Entrepreneurship

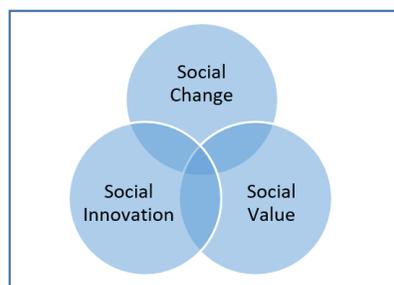


Figure 1. Authors own conceptual framework

A Social Entrepreneur is a natural leader possessing qualities of a visionary, committed and has a passion to bring social change through his social mission. An opportunity that he/she creates by solving the societal problems in the areas of social concern that are unmet by the Government and the private organizations. Social Entrepreneur catalyzes social change to satisfy the basic human needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education, healthcare etc., that are scarcely available to the underprivileged people of the population. He/ She is called as a 'Change agent' to bring a revolution in the social sector by innovating and implementing a task that bridges the gap between a social need and creating an impact on the society.

In 1942, Schumpeter considered social entrepreneurship as an economic activity that creates value by exploiting and combining opportunities and resources such as products, process or markets through technical innovation. In the words of Prof. Gregory Dees, Social entrepreneurship their mission is the most important goal with distinct challenges and that has to be described in the definitions. This clearly states that mission - related impact is a central objective and not wealth creation. Impact of any mission can be seen only after a long period of time, as in the wealth creating commercial enterprises the profits are measured immediately. A social mission is created for a lasting impact on the community and not for solving an immediate social need. "To improve the living conditions of the mankind a new type of innovation is introduced and is called as a Social Innovation".

Social Innovation brings a positive and a large-scale social transformation. Social Innovation is understood as a social value or a benefit that is created to the society at large and not to private individuals. According to Prof Gregory Dees, Social Entrepreneurs implement innovative programs, organizational structures to increase the chances of a long-lasting social impact. As business innovation is a profit- innovation whereas a social innovation can be understood as a new idea that improves the quantity and the quality of the lives of the people. According to the Young Foundation: A center for Past and Future Innovation, new methods of advancing in social innovation are relevant in all the sectors but are mostly used in areas where there are more social problems and in new fields where they are not exploited. Social Innovators are from all the fields, politicians, intellectuals, business people, NGO activists etc., with their idea bring social change individually or through an alliance with the companies or Government. Social Innovation starts from the social need that has to be met, secondly, the need has to be tied up with the possibility, that can be a new organizational form, technology or new knowledge, and after testing the innovative idea it is implemented. Social Innovation is progressing due to the new social developments such as improving in the health and well-being of the people, giving more choice to people to lead a comfortable and satisfied life. Therefore, the key to the success of social innovation is where people learn from each other and share knowledge about the new processes and strategies that are used to promote human development.

Social Innovation can be in any form producing a new product or improvising an existing one or a process that can change a social system. As a social being, we are dependent on the continuity and the stability of the social systems that we have made by our efforts so that it allows us to adapt to the changing social, economic and political environment. Social Innovations crosses larger social boundaries to reach more and different organizations to make a long-term impact. According to the Young Foundation, if many adopt social innovation the impact will be larger.

For a Social Entrepreneurship its main focus is value creation to the society at large. Creating social value is the main focus of a social mission and not to make profits, and this is achieved by many ways such as providing free education and health care to the disabled and disadvantaged population, providing employment in the social ventures, poverty alleviation by providing micro loans to the rural women like in the Grameen Bank. Innovation uses the latest technology creates value by bringing out a product that is useful to the masses for a social cause. When the objective of an organization is fulfilled, it leads to a positive value creation. As the mission, a goal is set by an entrepreneur, the next step is to achieve those goals, the type of strategy to follow to fulfill the mission. As the mission is fulfilled, he delivers social value to the less privileged by remaining financially independent and sustainable.

According to J. Ormiston & R. Seymour, value is created when social entrepreneurs involve in economic activities by exploring products, processes or markets. Authors explains that value creation works in a, cyclical manner where mission, strategy and value creation are the three important components that has to be modified through entrepreneurial adjustment.

(Dees 1998) Social Entrepreneurship can be self-sustainable to create value by assessing their achievements by way of social, financial and decision making gains. Therefore, Social Entrepreneurship to create sustainable social change, innovative ways are necessary.

#### 4. Limitations of the Research

This study, the researchers attempted to explore the various concepts and sub-concepts of Social Entrepreneurship and create the key dimensions, however, the authors explored only limited literature reviews. There is further scope to perform an exhaustive literature reviews for better understanding of the dimensions. In addition, the authors can develop a deeper conceptual model on dimensions after an exhaustive literature review. The authors should also explore the quantitative and qualitative research analysis methods for a better analysis.

#### 5. Scope for future research

The researchers can explore and develop the study on Social Entrepreneurship based on qualitative and quantitative methods and analysis. The authors can also perform case studies and across timeframes. The researchers also need to perform an exhaustive literature reviews for a deeper research study.

#### 6. Conclusion

The study has considered the three key dimensional concepts of social entrepreneurship as social change, social innovation and social value by studying the various definitions. These three main concepts bring out the meaning of social entrepreneurship that has been given by various authors and writers.

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