

A New Approach in Higher Education: Social Entrepreneurship Education

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Abstract: Social entrepreneurship education is one of these approaches recently emergent. It is influenced by several factors at the environmental, organizational, and individual levels. However, through providing social entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions, it is possible to develop individual's abilities and enable them to produce innovative solutions to social problems. Social entrepreneurship education has many positive effects on person in terms of individualistic and society aspect. In this context, the aim of the study is to reveal the need of social entrepreneurship education. It is found out that social entrepreneurship education gives a chance to start up a social business. In addition to that, social entrepreneurship education supports individual's self-sufficiency, creativity, empathy, rational thinking, and entrepreneurship skills. It promotes the social problem solving in society and contribute to developing a sustainable national economy.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, higher education, social entrepreneurship education

1 Introduction

The social entrepreneurship is quite new and complex phenomena, however, in the past decade it has gained recognition in scientific research, national policies, education, and the commercial sector. The policy makers and economists has labelled social entrepreneurship as one of the key factors to increase ethical and inclusive economic growth. It is important tool to tackle social challenges and to respond to them when the market and the public sector do not. Social enterprises and social entrepreneurs create innovative initiatives to unsolved social problems, putting social value creation at the heart of their mission in order to create benefit to different individuals and society [1]. In the wake of this development, social entrepreneurship as a field in academia is fast gaining popularity and attention due the realized need for trained professionals for social problem solving [2]. Social entrepreneurship education has become an effective key to shaping young people's attitudes, skills and the mindsets that are central to developing sustainable economic growth [3]. According to the study, conducted by Brock and

Kim, many universities, engineering faculties, business faculties, and high school institutions take part in giving social entrepreneurship education [4].

However, in Latvia only some higher education institutions include social entrepreneurship study course in curriculum. The only study programme in Latvia based on innovative concept of social economy promoted in EU countries is realized in Latvian Christian academy (master study programme „Social entrepreneurship”, licensed in 2013). The programme links principles and methods of social work and social entrepreneurship in interdisciplinary package with aim to reach social goals in entrepreneurship. It offers insight in both principles of organization and running of social business, deals with social and spiritual needs of socially marginalized people, promoting ensuring cohesion of society. However, researches show that social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship education is influenced by several factors at the environmental, organizational, and individual levels [1; 4].

Different scientists emphasize that social entrepreneurship education is needed in order to improve the quality of education and raise qualified individual [3; 5]. Giving social entrepreneurship education in the higher education institutions makes many things possible in terms of person development. Social entrepreneurship education is likely increase social awareness, make people sensitive to problems in their environment, help them to create innovative solutions for the problems and support their ability of giving an opinion about created solutions. In addition to these individual achievements, it is possible to say that social entrepreneurship education also has effects on society. Social entrepreneurship has come forward to find sustainable solutions for social problems and these solutions have significant role in social progress of the society. Hence, social entrepreneurship education has importance in terms of both individual and social effects. These considerable effects are one of the reason why social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship education gain popularity in recent years [5]. In this context, the aim of the study is to reveal the need of social entrepreneurship education. The research tasks are 1) to determine factors influencing social entrepreneurship education; 2) to identify individual benefits of social entrepreneurship education which can be applied in higher education institutions; 3) to identify benefits of social entrepreneurship education for society.

2 Social entrepreneurship education and its influencing factors

One of the earliest discussions in entrepreneurship literature is whether to be an entrepreneur can be learned or not. This discussion reflects two extreme positions: in one side there are those who defend that “entrepreneurs are born”, on the other side there are those who believe that “entrepreneurs can be made” [6]. However, most accept that entrepreneurship, or certain facets on it, can be taught, or at least

encouraged, by entrepreneurship education [7]. The support for this view comes from a widely literature review of entrepreneurship and business creation, which suggest important links between entrepreneurship education, business creation and entrepreneurial performance [8; 9; 10]. Thus, entrepreneurship education arises as a crucial tool in the development of the competences needed to new business creation [11]. Similarly, Dees states that if individual wants to be entrepreneur, getting education is the first stage in order to acquire and develop entrepreneurial skills [12]. However, there is need for a new approach in entrepreneurship education. There is necessity to provide social entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions because it can give several benefits in addition to those provided by traditional entrepreneurship courses. However, putting social entrepreneurship education in university curriculum is quite new and developing event [13] and it is influenced by several factors at the environmental, organizational, and individual levels [14; 15; 16].

Factors at the external environmental level. Social entrepreneurship is affected by various macro-level factors. The influencing factors of social entrepreneurship education which are related to the external environment are classified according to PEST analysis.

Firstly, the lack of government support is mentioned as one of the key factors that hinder the development of social entrepreneurship [17]. The researchers point out that the government has to create an adequate legal framework for regulating social entrepreneurship and to introduce support instruments for fostering its development [18; 19]. For example, in the UK political climate is one which visibly supports the development of social enterprises but in Latvia the great obstacle is that social entrepreneurship is not legally introduced in legislation and is not accepted as the form of entrepreneurship. The fact that social entrepreneurship is not legally recognized doesn't contribute its development in higher education institutions. Martin and Osberg hold the view that the social and environmental issues should be given a political and academic priority [19].

Secondly, there are problems with access to finance for social entrepreneurship. Hynes research revealed that social entrepreneurs face with funding problems which prevent establishment and development of social enterprises [20]. Financing enables social entrepreneurs to hire talented employees, find a market, pursue pilot projects, and carry out other activities related to growing their enterprises. As social entrepreneurship has no financial support at the national level, it is not conducive to students' interest to address this kind of business.

Thirdly, there is a lack of understanding about social entrepreneurship as a term. According to Zagare research, only 37% of Latvia residents have heard the term 'social entrepreneurship' and have some understanding about it [21]. But the understanding of this term should be strengthened by the explanation of benefits that social enterprises fulfil in society and social entrepreneurship education can provide for individuals and society. The huge obstacle for development of social entrepreneurship in society is 'architecture of capitalism' where the main focus is on profit making. Very often the performance of business which is coordinated

alongside with society aims is not so attractive for students. Bornstein and Davis emphasize that thinking of society has to be moved from 'me' to 'us' and, eventually, to 'all of us' [22]. In order to build strong community, it is essential to respect others' rights and responsibilities because if people work only for their own benefit, it is difficult to reach social welfare and sustainable development. To achieve this aim collaboration skills between different parties are important. Without effective networks and intermediaries, it is very difficult to connect ideas, resources and people, which is a pre-condition for the development and growth of social entrepreneurship.

Fourthly, a study conducted by Hynes reveals that the Internet is an important factor affecting social entrepreneurship [20]. The advancement of technologies and communication facilitates the exchange of information and experiences. Developments in information and communications technologies have created exciting possibilities for introducing online study courses in social entrepreneurship.

Factors at the organizational level. Social entrepreneurship education influencing factors which are related to the organization are connected with managerial levers. There are defined several sub-categories for the identification of social entrepreneurship education barriers at the organizational level: strategy and management of the higher educational institution, management practice and organizational culture. It is proved that social entrepreneurship intentions and initiatives usually come from organizational norms and attitudes [23].

Factors at the individual level. The use of the micro-level perspective and a focus on different individual characteristics emphasize that social entrepreneurship education depends on the knowledge, abilities, skills, motivation and the attitudes of individuals [24]. It means that academics should take the initiative to develop social entrepreneurship study courses.

Fig. 1 summarizes the proposed model, which integrates and structures the three levels of analysis and the respective sub-categories.

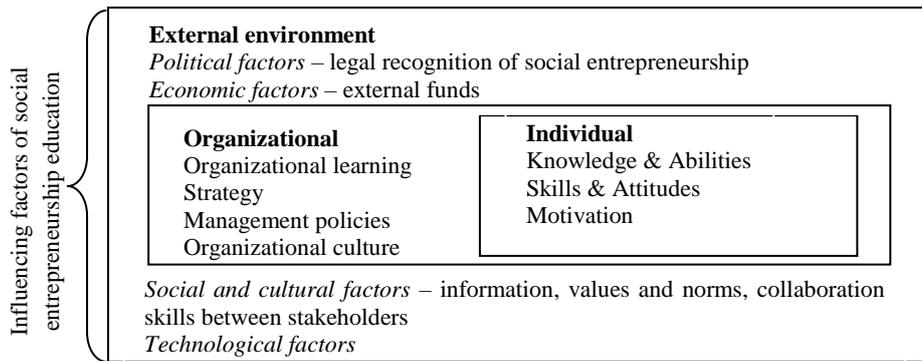


Figure 1

Social entrepreneurship education influencing factors at the environmental, organizational and individual levels

Source: Author's own study based on [17; 20; 21; 23; 24].

Despite the influencing factors, putting social entrepreneurship education in university curriculum is important as it can provide to individuals and society significant economic and social benefits.

2 Benefits of social entrepreneurship education

Scientists has proved that higher rates of education will lead to higher rates of entrepreneurship [25; 26; 27]. A study by Kolvereid and Moen has also confirmed that students who have learned entrepreneurship have greater interest to become entrepreneurs and have acted more entrepreneurial than other students to start a new business [28]. Walter and Block findings from 11,230 individuals in 32 countries support this notion [29]. It means the objective of social entrepreneurship education is to stimulate students to start up their own business and develop knowledge and competencies about how to do that. Hence, social entrepreneurship education can and should be offered to students for them to become social entrepreneurs and to develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Certain studies suggest that higher levels of education lead to better performance in entrepreneurial activities [30], it can provide the necessary cognitive skills so that the individual can better evaluate the opportunities as they arise [31], which leads to a greater potential for productivity and efficiency.

Moreover, once committed to a business activity, entrepreneurs with a higher level of education are better equipped to exploit those opportunities successfully [32]. Pache and Chowdhury developed social entrepreneurship education model. They

indicate that, firstly, social entrepreneurship education adds individual an ability to see entrepreneurship opportunities in any area and evaluate these opportunities. Secondly, social entrepreneurship education develops individual's ability to combine sources effectively. Lastly, network of social entrepreneurs keeps all social activities together and this contributes to sustaining actions of social entrepreneurs. Pache and Chowdhury's social entrepreneurship education model is attracted attention with the idea that by giving qualified social entrepreneurship education it is possible to contribute students' life positively and revolutionize their life and this give students a chance to attempt to enterprise, which will affect the life of wider society [13].

According to Bornstein, entrepreneurship is not only related with economy, productivity, or sustainability. Social entrepreneurship is related to getting all people together by overcoming the obstacles. By considering Bornstein's statement, it is possible to reach conclusion that social entrepreneurship is not only associated with economic terms, it changes the way of thinking, attitudes and culture [33]. In addition to that, social entrepreneurship education supports individual's self-sufficiency, creativity, empathy, rational thinking, and entrepreneurship skills [5; 34]. It can be concluded that the higher level of education can create the non-material advantages of entrepreneurship such as greater autonomy [35] and personal achievement [36]. Comparing with traditional entrepreneurship programmes social entrepreneurship education gives vision to entrepreneurs. Dees supports this idea and according to him, each entrepreneur should have social abilities and social entrepreneur needs to respect others, emphasize with others, and act modestly in order to work with their employees [12]. This will be possible with social entrepreneurship education. Fig. 2 presents the benefits from social entrepreneurship education.

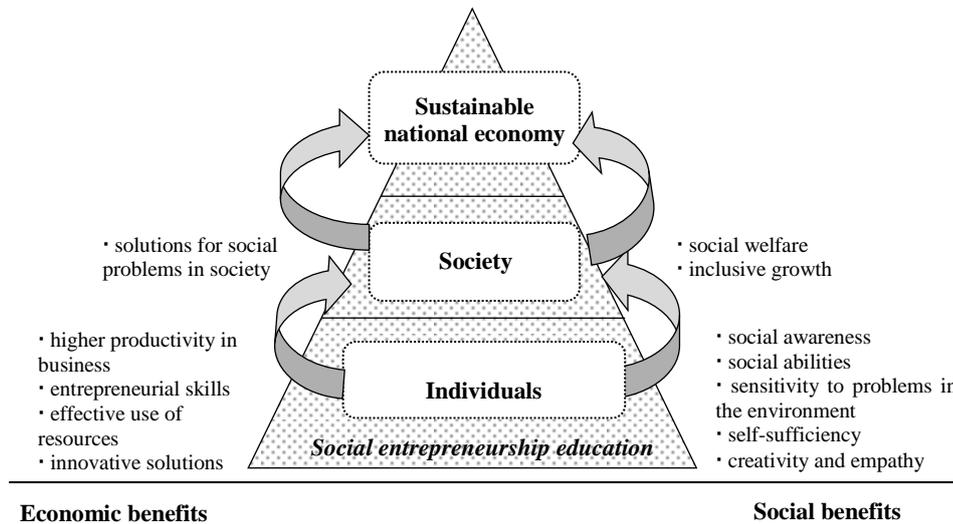


Figure 2

The benefits of social entrepreneurship education

Source: Author's own study based on [5; 12; 33; 34; 37].

Even if requirement of social entrepreneurship education is noticed newly, it has been essential for individuals' personal development as well as for strong social structure. In competitive society, in order to raise generation, who think others instead of themselves, with empathetic thinking it is needed to give social entrepreneurship education. In order to build strong community, it is essential to respect others' rights and responsibilities because if people work only for their own benefit, it is difficult to reach social welfare, inclusive growth and sustainable development. Social entrepreneurship education equips the individual, who is building block of community, with social characteristics and gives them an idea to develop the society. For this reason, benefiting from social entrepreneurship education is very significant for both individual and society level. It can be concluded that social entrepreneurship education result in a beneficial way for the society and strengthen social fabric. Increasing these benefits and raising new social entrepreneurs are even sufficient reasons for giving social entrepreneurship education. Dees indicates that main goal of social entrepreneurship education is understanding how social change can be made in a positive way and creating useful results [37].

Based on the mentioned benefits of social entrepreneurship education, one can conclude that it plays an essential role in shaping balanced and inclusive society development. Yet, by promoting the balanced development of the society, it is possible to contribute to developing a sustainable national economy [38].

Conclusions

Social entrepreneurship in the past decade garnered particular attention from policy makers, academics and the general public and it is influenced by several factors at the environmental, organizational, and individual levels. Significant environmental factor influencing social entrepreneurship development is a lack of knowledge about it, as well as cultural values in society. The introduction of social entrepreneurship study courses in curriculum depend mainly on higher education institution strategy and academics initiative and motivation.

However, social entrepreneurship education plays an important role in the individuals and society development. Through providing social entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions, it is possible to develop individual's social awareness, creativity, and sensitivity to problems in the society. In addition to that, social entrepreneurship education improves individuals' entrepreneurial skills, adds individual an ability to see entrepreneurship opportunities in any area and evaluate these opportunities. Social entrepreneurship education develops individual's ability to combine resources effectively and to produce innovative solutions to social problems. As a result social entrepreneurship education promotes the social problem solving in society, increases social welfare, and contributes to developing a sustainable national economy.

Acknowledgement 10

The paper was supported by the National Research Program 5.2. "Economic Transformation, Smart Growth, Governance and Legal Framework for the State and Society for Sustainable Development - a New Approach to the Creation of a Sustainable Learning Community (EKOSOC-LV)". The research was conducted within the project 5.2.7. "Involvement of the society in social innovation for providing sustainable development of Latvia" of the National Research Program EKOSOC-LV.

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Management, Enterprise and Benchmarking in the 21st Century
Budapest, 2016