



An Analysis of Theoretical Framework of Social Enterprises and its Implication: A Case Study Approach

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Abstract:

This paper demonstrates the current scenario of social enterprises from the existing point of view. It focuses on global enterprises those are already involved in contributing to the society. The author develops the framework based on the practices which could be adopted in the corporate sectors in Bangladesh. This research describes the overall theme, including the characteristics and benefits of socially responsible organizations, and their impacts for the betterment of the society. The study evolved from secondary data, i.e. online databases, books, journal papers, conference proceedings, etc. This case study approach extends the contribution to Bangladeshi industries in respect of social responsibility and provides the guidelines for the practical applications considering the traditional local business practices.

INTRODUCTION:

The concept of social enterprise has been on a rise all over the world and gradually organizations have started to accept and understand the need of this phenomenon. This particular term of social enterprise is somewhat different from that of the traditional organizations and is often referred to as the “third sector”. In other words, the “third sector” does not comprise non-profit organizations alone; it also includes all organizations in which the material interest of capital investors is subject to limits, and in which creating a common patrimony is given priority over a return on individual investment. (Laville and Nyssens 2001).

However, in the United States the social enterprise remains a very broad and often quite vague concept, referring primarily to market-oriented economic activities serving a social goal. The social enterprise is then viewed as an innovative response to the funding problems of non-profit organizations, which are finding it increasingly difficult to solicit private donations and government and foundation grants (Dees 1998).

The evolution of social enterprise responds to the overall need of developmental efforts especially required in the third world countries. It is an answer to the requirement of establishing financial independence to all the strata of the society and hence it is answered by people or groups of people who want to provide



more to the society around them and their main focus isn't on maximizing profits for the stakeholders only.

This concept, when embedded, into the economy of a country, leads to a nation which continuously develops, grows and evolves. It means that, once implemented properly, this phenomenon can help nations in poverty alleviation and focusing on the opportunities being offered by the environment to harness advantages in the long run.

Conversely, one needs to remember that considering the modern business world and its challenges, it is not possible for an organization to focus only on the social perspective. The organizations need to revamp themselves and run their organization like any other business organizations in order for them to remain profitable concurrently with the purpose of serving the society. This fact has also been supported by Bowie (1998) who states that "In recent years, both government agencies and nonprofit organizations are "reinventing" themselves to be more businesslike. Financial pressures on most social-purpose organizations have increased, and the situation is expected to get worse. In many areas of the social sector, costs have been rising much faster than general inflation."

The primary purpose of this research is to prepare a model to illustrate the overall activities of a Social Enterprise and its impact on society.

Objectives of the Research:

- To suggest a model for the establishment of a Social enterprise.
- To advocate the role of a Social Enterprise in the uplifting of a society.
- To emphasize the role a social enterprise as an important development strategy in a country.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Social Enterprise; Defining the Concept:

There has been quite a large range of topics studied under the context of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship as interest in the subject keeps increasing in the world over as an effort for larger equity and inclusivity of capitalism.

A social entrepreneur can be described as individual whose efforts in business comprise of social goals that aim at serving the community at large rather than just the individual.

Prabhu, 1999, describes social entrepreneurs as persons who create and manage innovative entrepreneurial organizations or ventures whose primary mission is social change and development of their client group.



Thus, social entrepreneurship is the creation of viable socio economic structures, relations, institutions, organizations and practices that yield and sustain social benefits, as per Fowler, 2000.

Social enterprises result from non-traditional use of resources (Eckhardt & Shane, 2003). Social entrepreneurs put value on effects of business which are usually not considered in traditional businesses. Hence, in a manner, social businesses have higher value, and allow higher opportunity costs of resources used in their activities.

Social enterprises are thus businesses which primarily focus on the benefit of the general population or specific target groups. They use the regular business methods and aspects of business and use the marketplace to further their own ideals and social, environmental and human justice agendas.

For a social business, it is a goal to directly address an intractable social need and serve the common good, be it with their output or the group of people targeted or the real changes made in a society. Also, the general benefit, and the social positive externality derived is the primary objective trumping all other objectives.

According to Yunus in his book 'Creating a World without Poverty', a social business is a non-loss, Non-dividend Company designed to address a social objective within the highly regulated marketplace of today. It is distinct from a non-profit because the business should seek to generate a modest profit but this will be used to expand the company's reach, improve the product or service or in other ways to subsidize the social mission.

History

The idea of a distinct "third sector", made up of most enterprises and organizations which are not primarily seeking profit nor are part of the public sector, really began to emerge in the mid 70s. Such organizations were certainly already very active in many areas of activity and were already the subject of specific public policies. But the idea of bringing these bodies together and the theoretical basis on which this might be done had not really been put forward until then, Borzaga and Defourny (2001).

He adds on about the two theoretical approaches to the third sector gradually spread internationally, accompanied by statistical work aimed at quantifying its economic importance. One approach is the "non-profit sector" approach already mentioned ; the other, French in origin, forged the concept of the "social economy" to bring together co-operatives, mutual societies and associations (with increasing frequency, foundations are also included)⁶. Although the first view has an advantage of simplicity and the strength of a framework designed the grasp the U.S. situation,



the second approach has also found an ever-greater echo throughout Europe and has been taken up by the European Union's institutions.

The general theme underlying the emergence of social enterprise in all of the seven regions and countries is weak state social programs or funding, due to either the retreat or poor functioning of the state. The United States, Western and East-Central Europe, as well as South America all experienced, to differing degrees, a withdrawal of state support in the 1980s and/or 1990s. In the United States, scholars attribute the beginning of the contemporary social enterprise movement to government cuts in funds supporting non-profits. A slow-down in the U.S. economy in the late 1970s resulted in government deficits in the 1980s that, in turn, brought on government cuts in funds for non-profits by the Reagan administration. These cuts were estimated to have affected a wide array of non-profits, not just those involved in human services. According to some scholars, non-profits in the civil society sphere seized upon the idea of commercial revenue generation as a way to replace the loss of government funds (Crimmins and Keil 1983; Eikenberry and Kluver 2004; Salamon 1993, 1997).

The influence of culture also offers much insight into the intention to give to society, (Dunning, 2005; Waldman et al., 2006).

The Need for Social Enterprises:

The social business spectrum lies over the methods, motives, and goals spread around the joint arena between purely philanthropic to purely commercial, comprising of different combinations of the two extreme and pure elements.

The need for social enterprises emerged from the efforts of previous non-profit philanthropy oriented organizations in dealing with increasingly smaller sources of funds. "An increasing number of non-profits have been seeking additional revenues by behaving more like for profit organizations. Some are raising funds through auxiliary commercial enterprises," (Dees 1998).

The activities of most non-profits were aimed to better society or to correct objectionable inequity. Most such activities were not very remunerative in financial terms. Further, as Dees points out, a pro-business atmosphere lead to de-stigmatization of business as a capitalistic ill and encouraged its coupling with social causes.

With increasing studies into the human psyche, it appeared that charity is sometimes more harmful than beneficiary, and it is better to allow the needy some work and thus dignity in reception of returns of labor. This also led to development of social business models. This had an advantage of allowing financial stability to both the provider and the provided through their joint efforts.



This appears to be based on the belief that given proper resources and support, the affected can very well help themselves (Alvord, Brown and Letts, 2002).

Moreover, traditional organizations are forced to diversify into social businesses to better compete for the available funding, especially considering the increased commercialization of the funding procedures and targets.

Additionally, social businesses evolved to fill the gaps where government efforts were not adequate or sufficient for proper societal effect (Masendeke and Mugova, 2009).

In Southeast Asia social enterprises, whether for profit or not-for-profit, are small social ventures that simultaneously address unemployment, provide needed services, and protect the environment (Santos, 2009).

Current Global Scenario

Over the last three decades the concept of social enterprise has grown dramatically in many regions of the world. Broadly defined as the use of nongovernmental, market-based approaches to address social issues, social enterprise often provides a “business” source of revenue for many types of socially oriented organizations and activities. In many cases, this revenue contributes to the self-sufficiency and long-term sustainability of organizations involved in charitable activities.

However, within these broad parameters, world regions have come to identify different concepts and contexts with the social enterprise movement in their areas (Kerlin 2006). Largely lacking in the social enterprise literature are explanations of what these regional differences are and how socioeconomic context may play a role in these variations.

Across most world regions, the idea of revenue generation in the service of charitable activities is not a new concept. However, the contemporary application of the term “social enterprise” to this phenomenon is new. With the new term have come increased attention and an aura of a “newly discovered” form of revenue for social benefit. As this “new” concept has spread, the discourse about it appears to be increasingly associated with certain sets of organizations and activities, old and new, which are related and at times specific to the regional context at hand. Indeed, as the concept has grown in popularity, the actors and institutions involved in the promotion and development of social enterprise appear to reflect its immediate regional socioeconomic environment in terms of social enterprise emphasis, structure, and resources. Moreover, some types of activities and organizations included in the social enterprise discourse in some countries may not be included in the discourse in other countries even though these same activities and



organizations may exist there. This article proposes that current differences in social enterprise found in various regions of the world are, in part, reflections of the regional socioeconomic contexts in which the term came to rest. In order to test this proposition, the article matches data from a number of international social and economic databases with newly gathered information found in social enterprise.

How region-specific factors may have differently shaped the conceptualization of social enterprise, including its uses, organizational forms, legal structures, and supportive environment is shown in Kerlin (2009). Different factors, like motivation, legal and social infrastructure, wealth distribution, research and government support etc caused different shaping and growth of the social business phenomena in different areas of the world.

Local Scene

Two of the world's highly successful social enterprises, Grameen Bank and BRAC are Bangladeshi in origin and operations.

Grameen helps create (also introduced and tested) the microcredit system and has expanded to thousands of beneficiaries. It provides capital for small starters, helps create employment, and creates empowerment and involvement of women in newer economic roles.

Grameen now serves over 2.4 million borrowers and has over 20 businesses including Grameen Shakti (GS), a not-for-profit rural power company whose purpose is to supply renewable energy to unelectrified villages in Bangladesh as well as create employment and income-generation opportunities in rural Bangladesh; Grameen Telecom whose objective is to provide mobile phone service to 100 million inhabitants in rural Bangladesh by financing members of Grameen Bank to provide village pay phone service and by providing direct phones to potential subscribers; and Grameen Knitwear Limited, a 100% export-oriented composite knitwear factory.

BRAC, on a similar note, also provides microcredit, and further develops programmes aimed at village development like making education available and cheap for the deprived and such.

Factors for Successful Social Enterprises

Vision and resilience are two very important characteristics of successful social entrepreneurs, and hence their enterprises (Thompson, Alvy and et al, 2000). Also, protagonists behind such organizations are usually high spirited, hardworking and strongly motivated. This is coupled with a particular sensibility of justice and social parity and responsibility.



Hence, social enterprises are often daring and thick-skinned to criticisms, necessitated for survival by the very nature of their existence. The strong ethical standpoint of equity and the value placed over the satisfaction of those involved with the activity is also a major contributing factor. This allows many enterprises to draw from much valuable resources free of financial cost. Moreover, the voluntary zeal is almost always more effective than any other work incentives.

The autonomy of the institutions for continued focus on the issue targeted without distractions also lends strength to successful instances of social institutions.

Innovation in working with poor and marginalized populations to identify capacities needed for self-help, and helping to build those capacities also seems to be a key factor behind successful institutions.

Successful institutions also form strong alliances and try to expand their outreach by capitalizing on the resources of the targeted or marginalized communities themselves. This allows for support from within to be boosted by external factors, leading to much propitious results.

Thus the factors for successful social enterprises include perseverance of the entrepreneurship, willingness in the society, legal framework, support by the governing bodies, types of organizations, continued commitment of time and money etc.

Contribution of Social Enterprises in Successful Social Transformation:

Social enterprises contribute towards building social capital. They also promote social equity and help distribute income and reduce parities.

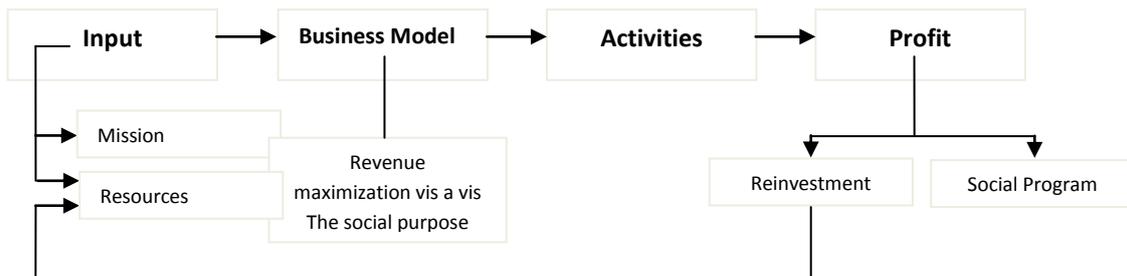
“The overall impact of these initiatives tends to be closely associated with the transformation leverage emphasized by their initial activities and by their form of innovation,” (Thompson, Alvy and et al). Social enterprises are powerful tools of instigating change in the very fabric of the society and create scope for permanent improvement for all. They build on the resources available in the affected areas and populations to grow and create wealth rather than insert foreign elements and try to settle them.

The previous chapter has discussed the overall idea of a social enterprise. It also mentioned the need of having such an enterprise for the development and uplifting of a society. Simultaneously, the idea of the global situation regarding this concept was also shared. The purpose of this paper is to outline a simple model for an insight into successful social enterprises to allow further development and help draw policy implications.

Table 1: The Difference between Private Business and Social Enterprise

	Private Business	Social Enterprise
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maximize profits, margins or share value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> create profits to meet social aims
Management and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> directive accountable to shareholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engaged or democratic accountable to shareholders
Business Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to maximize profits, earnings or market share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> service communities or customers, break even or generate surplus to meet social aims
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> least amount and pay to make a profit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> good working conditions employment & career paths may be a social aim
Legal Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> self employed company or partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> company limited by guarantee community interest company industrial & provident society
Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> by the shareholders or investors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> by the members – social ownership
Customer and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sensitive to needs to maximize sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accountable to stakeholders sensitive to needs to maximize sales
Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> private sector, funded from profits share value can increase or decrease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> private & public capped return on capital
Profits and surplus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to owners & shareholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase services or meet social aims

Fig. 1: Business Operation Model of a Social Enterprise



METHODOLOGY:

Research Strategy:

The study carefully analyzed existing research resources. Mainly secondary data was used, as the emphasis was on scholarly exposition into the social business model. Information was gathered from published reports and various other scholarly essays.



The methodology was also designed and based to follow contemporary and existing theoretical perspectives. The objective was to find the commonalities that are inherent to the basis of all social enterprises and their success all over the world. Thus, all points of inquiry were probed in a similar manner from resources that varied in source.

The attempt was to draw simplicity from the underlying depth of research already carried out in this field.

Limitations:

The lack of scope to collect first hand data and observe such institutions directly obviously mars the implications drawn in the study. However, the nature of the literature reviewed is sufficiently diverse to assuage most criticism.

DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL MODEL:

Difference between a traditional organization and a social enterprise: as mentioned by (Taylor & Haamenaho, 2005) can be identified and characterized on the following factors which are discussed in Table 1.

However, on the basis of this table, a model¹ has been developed to illustrate the business representation of a Social Enterprise.

The details of the model are specified below:

Input:

By input, the author aims to define any kind of resource which is used in the creation of any kind of any output for the purpose of the business. Thus, the input quality is vital to the production and the viability of its intended output. It can take various forms such as; physical, intellectual and financial etc.

MISSION Statement

A mission statement is used for defining the purpose of an organization's activities. Here, the mission statement is included in the input phase of the business model of a social enterprise as it is the primary intention behind the establishment of this type of organization which differs from traditional businesses mainly on the parameters of business ideology and its intended impact on social reforms. The use of under privileged or the targeted social class as an input in the business can also be seen as an interpretation of the mission.

¹ This is a new model proposed by the researcher of this article. It is based on the Table 1 which is the difference between a traditional organization and a social enterprise as mentioned by Taylor & Haamenaho, 2005



RESOURCES

The assets needed and used for the smooth operation of the organization so that it is able to work effectively. However, it is important to note here that these need to be utilized efficiently especially in the case of a social enterprise rather than a traditional business; as based on the amalgamation of these resources, the generated revenue will primarily be used for the social cause of the business, not just reinvesting in the business or using it for maximizing personal financial gain of the shareholders.

Business Model:

The rationale for establishing an organization is mainly to improve lives and work for the uplifting of the society. They are socially owned (“Social enterprise”, n.d.), inventing new approaches, and creating solutions to change society for the better (glossary of financial terms, n.d.). It aims to clarify the social business’s purpose of maximize earnings to allow a continued focus on the social problem intended and necessary funding for the societal impact.

Activities:

The operations carried out by the organization for the financial gains it intends to achieve can be classified into different categories such as marketing, Sales, finance, operations, Research and Development etc.

Profit:

The monetary gains realized as a result of the business activities will be diversified into two main directions.

REINVESTMENT Decision It is crucial to the business as it allows for the sustainability and continuation of the purpose of the business. It is in effect what fuels the growth, dispersion and impact of the activities of the business.

SOCIAL Program The primary goal of the business is to provide a direct resource for the betterment and development of the intended society. Parts of the proceeds of the social business have to be dedicated solely to that purpose.

FINDINGS:

- This is interesting to note that although the concept of a Social enterprise has proved to have a major significance in the progress and improvement of a lot of societal themes and issues, it however, was not a much researched topic until a few years ago (Mair & Noboa, 2003). After the success of an exemplary institution like Grameen Bank,



started by Dr. Yunus in Bangladesh, the idea of a social business gained popularity.

- In spite of all the attention this topic gets and the awareness of it in the modern business environment, a lot of people are not very sure about the basic concept and very frequently it is assumed that the idea behind such an enterprise is only to have a micro finance institution. Though this was how this concept started in the very beginning but now it is very diverse with the main purpose of strengthening and fortifying the society by executing different business ideas.
- The importance of developing a Social business has increased many folds especially in the young generation. A lot of young entrepreneurs are coming up with unique business ideas and plans which not only require less of capital but also, if executed, would guarantee in the successful but gradual improvement and/or eradicate the particular issue/ problem in hand.
- It is a very powerful idea which has the capacity to change systems. It can be further stated that they are unique in the sense that they have the ability to seep through the fabric of the society and change its core set of beliefs.
- To have more of social Businesses in a particular geographic proximity, the population of that location is empathetic, and sensitive to the problems of others in destitute. Empathy then leads to a drive for the eradication of the problem or improvement in the lives of the people who are otherwise not enjoying the best of the facilities.
- The idea of distribution of income in the “third sector’ is absolutely different from the capitalistic approach of business. In the capitalistic business arena, the main focus is on protecting the shareholder and maximizing their financial advantage. Here, in a social business, profit is considered as a means to sustain the business which has the philosophy of supporting a social cause and considers it as its primary responsibility. Thus, the flow of income is towards maximum people to give them support and facilities to develop themselves.
- Social businesses are managed and run independently without any influence from the public sector Borzaga, C. & J. Defourny, eds. (2001). The management is free to make decision it deems necessary to sustain the organization. Their main source of fund is not the public sector but it may vary from situation to situation. However, the social



entrepreneurs are free in their right and have the authority to start and terminate the business as per their will. Similarly they also have the right to make all the business decision such as reinvestment, profit margins etc.

- In the modern business world, one has to be really competitive to survive the challenges. It also means that the entrepreneurs, especially the social entrepreneurs need to come up with diverse, interesting and practical ideas for their business which have the potential to outrun the competitors thus benefitting them in not only reaping the profits but also helping them in their ultimate purpose of establishing a successful venture.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BANGLADESH:

The below mentioned recommendations can be applied generally in any part of the world, especially the literature at source was globally researched. However, as the main emphasis of this paper is to develop a Basic model of social business in the Bangladeshi context, the recommendations are intended to be applied in the local perspective.

- For a country like Bangladesh, it is of fundamental value if there are opportunities of working in this sector on public-private partnership basis resulting in speedy developmental activities. The role of public enterprises would not be to govern; rather they can help in training and providing necessary support to the aspiring social entrepreneurs. The main task of public sector would then to provide support and technical assistance if required.
- To increase the number of social businesses, a strong campaign for its awareness is necessary. This needs to be done in order for general people to understand not only the idea but also its benefits in the long run. The role of social businesses important for the uplifting of the society should be highlighted so that more people think of taking up this type of entrepreneurship.
- The existing entrepreneurs and businesses who are already contributing to the society should be recognized. This recognition effort would be done in part to identify these organizations which are focused on changing the lives of the people. The primary purpose of the recognition effort would be to further motivate them so that new business ideas can be generated as well as established businesses can also support and provide assistance to more people.



- Social Enterprise as a subject should be introduced in the curricula of the business schools so the young minds can grip the idea and can develop plans about their professional lives building on this concept.
- Research suggests that the employees working in social businesses are either volunteers or low paid. This is recommended that they should be paid as per the current market rate in order to attract the best talent which then can help in the advanced growth of the organization, thus this concept.
- There has to be a strong financial support system for enterprises in the social sector. It includes the availability of easy loans, flexible procedures and uncomplicated repayment procedures. Also the government is to provide a lenient tax structure for these organizations.
- A Research and Development setup is the necessity of the situation. The focal point of this arrangement is to generate reliable, safe and practical business ideas which are the need in the current scenario and their feasibility in the existing business arena of the country.
- A formal legal framework is required for the governance of such enterprises. These rules and regulations shall ensure the transparent and smooth operations of the enterprises. As mentioned before, these businesses enjoy full autonomy having the right to make crucial decisions without being answerable to any authority. This in one hand, leads to empowerment of these organizations, but can also generate unscrupulous and corrupt activities in absence of a legal support system.
- A strong emphasis is required on increasing the capacity of women entrepreneurs and to make them self reliant.

CONCLUSION:

The choice of initiatives for the development of the society can be varied depending upon the need and availability of resources. However, it is important to note that in any type of such effort, capacity building should be the centre focus rather than providing relief work to the deserving people.

There should be a systematic system of providing training to people for the purpose of self help and exterminate the behavior of dependency on government institutions only.



Also, the role of education cannot be ignored. An intensive initiative for establishing elementary education institutions is vital to the development of any nation. We also need to understand that these organizations can be effective simply because of their leadership.

A long term devotion and perseverance to the business idea is of crucial importance. A founder's strong belief in the initial concept, working for it in spite of initial difficulties and dedicating to the overall purpose it intends to serve to the society are the main inputs for the success of a social venture.

In the end, one need to remember that even if the idea of having a social enterprise is to ensure economic and social development and the main emphasis is not on profit maximization for the shareholders, still there is a need of an evaluation template to determine the profits and the actual impact. These matrices are also required to verify the actual impact on the lives of the people it intends to improve.

FUTURE RESEARCH AREA:

This research is focused on the Bangladesh's environment of business and to develop a simple operating model. However, further research can be conducted to expand this model such as by creating a standardized frame for individual industries depending on their type and nature of business and operating functions.

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