**How can social entrepreneurship contribute to society?**

Introduction

Before introducing what we mean by social entrepreneurship, let’s define who is a social entrepreneur. There are many ways in which a social entrepreneur has been defined, but nevertheless, a common agreement exists. Munoz (13) defines a social entrepreneur as an individual who takes his/her time, spirit, and energy to build better communities as opposed to personal businesses for personal gain. On the same note, Bornstein (11) also defines a social entrepreneur as someone who looks to the world, recognize a problem then uses the principles of entrepreneurship to organize, build and manage such a venture to realize positive social change. A critical look at these two definitions simply shows more or less the same thing. It is the only approach that differs. Generally speaking, a social entrepreneur is an individual who is set out to bring positive change in the society through the various programs he has decided to undertake. A social entrepreneur is different from a normal entrepreneur in that whereas a normal entrepreneur calculates his success in term of how much profit he has made, a social entrepreneur calculates his success in terms of how much social returns he has achieved. So then what is social entrepreneurship?

Social entrepreneurship is simply the collective work of social entrepreneurs. When done within a country’s borders it is referred to as social entrepreneurship whereas when done outside a country’s borders it is called international social entrepreneurship Bornstein (12). Some of the world's most recognized social entrepreneurs include the following:

Raul Oscar Abasolo: he operates in Chile and is mostly involved with alleviating youth poverty.

Rafael Alvarez: he is the founder of Genesys works in America that is involved in expanding youth horizons after high school and college.

Istvan Aba-Horvath: this Hungarian based social entrepreneur involved with promoting child education in his backyard.

Manish Sankila: based in India and also involved with empowering the youth towards self-employment for the better of their future life. Manish strongly believes that when the youth have empowered the rest of the society is also empowered because they form not only the majority but also the future of a society.

History of the term social entrepreneurship can be traced back to 1950s and 60s when it first appeared in print literature. This continued to 1980s and 90s with the works of people like Bill Drayton. Bill together with Charles Leadbeater popularized the social movement in Europe, USA and some parts of Asia. They were joined by Michael Young in their endeavors. In fact, Harvard professor Daniel Bell describes Michael as “'the world's most successful entrepreneur of social enterprises.' This was undoubtedly due to his immense work in building about 60 social institutions worldwide (Munoz, 21). The famous among them include a school of social entrepreneurs that has branches in Australia, UK, and Canada.

In the contemporary world, whenever the term social entrepreneurship is mentioned, people like Muhammad Yunus come into our mind. He is the founder and proprietor of Grameen Bank and Nobel peace laureate of 2006. Yunus is most recognized for his revolutionary method of making it possible for the world's poorest people to access credit from banks. Thus he saw a social problem and came up with a strategy to assist his people while at the same time making profits. To some extent also in the contemporary world social entrepreneurship has evolved into organizations like foundations, NGO’s, social enterprise and etc. generally social entrepreneurship remains relevant and appreciated by many societies today as it was in the last century.

How social entrepreneurship can contribute to society

The benefits that social entrepreneurship can bring to society are immense and can not be overemphasized if the case of Nobel laureate Yunus is anything to go by. It has demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that is a strong change agent in societies. Below are some of the contributions that social entrepreneurship can bring to society as supported by (Munoz, 101).

Charitable institutions

Donations

Welfare program

New products

Sponsorship

Government advisors

Starting with charitable institutions, it can be said that most social entrepreneurs set up institutions that target to improve the living standards of the downtrodden. Such institutions include schools, hospitals, vocational training institutions and etc. All this is meant to serve the societies they are operating in. this is an immense contribution to societies, especially where poverty levels are high.

On the same note, social entrepreneurs have been known to contribute to society in terms of direct donations they give for various purposes. All these are just aimed at improving the living standards of the less privileged people in society. For instance, an entrepreneur like Istvan Aba-Horvath in Hungary donates a lot of funds towards promoting the education of Gypsy children. Therefore this is a great contribution that social enterprises have towards societies in which they are operating (Munoz, 12).

Welfare programs are yet another contribution that social entrepreneurship has to societies. Each and every society has its own unique welfare programs that are aimed at improving the lives of all people. Social entrepreneurship contributes to such programs through funding such organizations, empowering communities or even providing the welfares by themselves. Such welfares programs include helping the disabled, taking care of orphans, feeding the elderly among others.

Social enterprises have earned themselves the tag of being the most innovative and in touch with society’s most pressing needs. Due to this, they are able to come up with new products and services that are aimed at addressing the society’s challenges. This is a very great achievement as far as contributions of social enterprises are concerned. The great philosophers once said that necessity is the mother of inventions and this has been demonstrated by man’s endeavor to survive on this planet called earth.

Social entrepreneurship has also demonstrated that it can contribute to the society through sponsorships. Such arrangements are common in educational circles where an entrepreneur can sponsor individuals who have excelled in their academics but are not able to continue with their academic dreams due to their financial inability. In fact, there are some social enterprises that have set up foundations and trust funds specifically for this purpose. This is a great way to bring about social quality by empowering individuals using knowledge (Muhammad, 52).

Finally, we can say that social enterprises have contributed to society through advising the governments on various issues that affect the society. This is because they have close contact with the people on the ground. A good example is that case in Brazil where a social enterprise devised a model of treating and managing people living with HIV/Aids that was adopted by the government on a national scale. What started as a small experiment on a local level became something of national importance. Social enterprises have also been closely working with governments on various social issues affecting societies worldwide.

It is important to note here that whereas I have tried to explore the contributions of social enterprises on society, this is not exhaustive. There are many other contributions that are indirect but equally important. For example, we can say that through empowering individuals to fend for themselves, they bring about the reduced crime rate in society. Thus providing security to society though in an indirect manner. Thus this is a crucial part of society that should not be overlooked at all costs (social entrepreneurship website).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that social enterprises remain to be a positive force, change agent and above all an empowerment tool. Social enterprises remain the most effective way to come up with leading-edge innovations to meet society’s most challenging needs. The fact that social entrepreneurship emanates from the grass root level should not make it be overlooked as a panacea. This is because it works within the frameworks of the economy and society. Therefore it deserves special attention from policymakers, entrepreneurs, scholars and academic theorists. This is very vital to all countries of the world especially those facing a high incidence of abject poverty.

Social entrepreneurship should not be looked as fighting the governments and other stakeholders in the provision of services and goods that societies need, but rather they should be seen as contributing to the already existing efforts for the betterment of society in general. Therefore all the government needs are to regulate them so as to work within the prevailing framework in the most efficient way possible. Wherever possible there is no harm to work hand in hand, after all, we are all serving the same society.

Works cited

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