

**SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT****Muhammad Abdullahi**Department of Public Administration, University of Maiduguri, Borno-Nigeria
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Yobe-Nigeria. abubakarsadiqsallau@gmail.com; +2348038860419**Abstract**

This paper examines social entrepreneurship as a way of attaining sustainable community development. It specifically examines the practice of social entrepreneurship and how the idea gained popularity in recent discourse, as well as the focus of the idea as the use of business ventures in addressing social problems, promoting economic growth and enhancing community development. The paper adopted a conceptual review method to reveal that social entrepreneurship is a hybrid approach that emerge to transform communities with deliberate thoughts of social responsibility and has the potential of addressing social, economic and environmental challenges of communities including poverty, climate change, unemployment, education, healthcare, and security among others. Sustainable development requires a sustained social entrepreneurship that presents a holistic approach to community's growth and development. Social entrepreneurship is therefore a veritable tool for sustainable community development which every nation must aspire to promote, encourage and establish policies capable of enhancing it.

Keywords: Community Development, Social Change, Social Entrepreneurship, Sustainability

1.0 Introduction

The concept of social entrepreneurship is a relatively new concept, but the phenomenon is old in practice. It is gaining popularity in recent time. The concept however means different thing to different writers and professionals. Some writers exclusively consider social entrepreneurship as not-for-profit organizations starting for-profit ventures (Hood, 2005; Schamber, 2020; Peek, 2020). Others see the concept to mean anyone who starts a not-for-profit organization or business owners who integrate social responsibility into their operations (Dees, 1998; Ihejiamaizu & Udensi, 2017; Krizanova et al, 2018). In the context of this paper, social entrepreneurship is seen from the latter perspective, where social responsibility is emphasized in business ventures in order to address the social, economic, and environmental challenges of communities.

The two concepts “community development” and “social entrepreneurship” are among the principal subjects of discourse in the business world, academic community and national development planning throughout this century. Social entrepreneurship mainly

covers those solutions meant to preserve socio-cultural, economic, and environmental norms of communities. Social entrepreneurship approach comes from firms, individuals and groups that are the central part of the entrepreneurship system. Community development on the other hand mainly considers various processes where people prioritize developments based on the most critical action, with emphasis on the betterment of the life of people residing in a particular community. It is approached through multi-disciplinary and multi-faceted lenses including social entrepreneurship. The role played by social entrepreneurs can form significant part of community development, and can be used in sustaining development efforts in communities especially if it is tailored in the appropriate direction.

Despite the tremendous efforts from the government and non-governmental sectors to meet the growing needs of communities, these actors have failed to satisfactorily meet all the demands and aspirations of the global community due to various limitations in resources. According to Kickul and Lyons (2012), governments and non-governmental entities are in deficit of resources due to economic limitations and weak political will. Similarly, private sector based on free-market paradigm of Adam Smith's 'invisible-hand' is failing in its claim of serving all members of society due to high concentration in profit maximization. The private sector focus only where they could maximize the profit. The public sector never have resources to reach all the deprived ones. These has resulted in increased problems in societies. However, overcoming both private and public sectors' limitations, a hybrid approach of social entrepreneurship is currently emerging as a feasible alternative due to its amalgam characteristics (Kickul & Lyons, 2012).

The identification of a social problem and the utilization of entrepreneurial principles in an effort to systematically create and control a social enterprise capable of facilitating the attainment of a desired social change is therefore what is referred to as social entrepreneurship. The idea engages the ability to see 'problems' as 'opportunities' and then establish an initiative to make out the solutions to those problems.

This paper examines social entrepreneurship as a way of attaining sustainable community development. It specifically examines the practice of social entrepreneurship and how the idea gained popularity in recent discourse, as well as the focus of the idea as the use of business ventures in addressing social problems, promoting economic growth and enhancing community development.

2.0 Conceptual Issues

2.1 Social Entrepreneurship

Various scholars across the world have written on social entrepreneurship by providing numerous case studies and conceptual approaches (Dees, 1998; Hood, 2005; Light, 2010; Smith & Stevens, 2010; Krizanova et al, 2018; Schamber, 2020). Dees (2001) stated that though the concept of social entrepreneurship is emerging as a popular issue, it has different meanings to different people. Light (2010) concurred with Dees (2001) by asserting that there is still controversy on what the concept actually means. Where and when it should be used is still confusing. Smith and Stevens (2010) seem to agree

with Dees (2001) and Light (2010). It is the opinion of Smith and Stevens that while social entrepreneurship has captivated the interests of social researchers and community practitioners, the concept is still poorly defined and that its boundaries to other fields of study remain fuzzy. While to some, this may appear to be a problem, it is a unique opportunity for researchers from different fields and disciplines to challenge and rethink central concepts and assumptions (Mair & Marti, 2006).

The European Commission (2013) described social entrepreneurship as an approach to make impact on society and economy. The social entrepreneurship paradigm can help local communities to realize their unmet needs and improve the lives of the people through innovative ways. Botha (2009) citing Dees (1998) considered social entrepreneurship as driven by social entrepreneurs who play the role of change agents in the social sector. This they do by adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value). They recognize and pursue new opportunities to serve that mission. They also engage in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning, and act boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand. In addition, they exhibit a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created.

Social entrepreneurship refers to the recognition of a social problem and use of entrepreneurial principles to organize, create and manage a social venture to achieve a desired social change. It involves the ability to see ‘problems’ as ‘opportunities’ and then take the initiative to identify the solutions to those problems. Social entrepreneurship fosters wealth for society as a whole. It contributes to community development, supports environmental sustainability and produces social capital. Social entrepreneurs seek to serve the interest of the community by creating solutions that address societal needs and by engaging in sustainable livelihoods that benefit them and their communities. Given this understanding, it is benign to state that by pursuing innovation solutions to social problems, one is said to engage in the process of social entrepreneurship (Ihejiamaizu & Udensi, 2017) especially if those innovations are private sector driven with dual goals of generating profit and addressing specific community’s challenge.

The idea of social entrepreneurship has certain principles that guides social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurs apply management and business principles to solving social problems in communities, especially where governments or markets have failed, inadequately provides or where there are still unmet needs. Social entrepreneurs further emphasize the development of efficient, affordable and cost-effective solutions to community or societal challenges. The concept equally emphasizes on the sustainability of solutions.

2.2 Community Development

Community development is an organized effort to assemble resources that increases the capacity of the people living in particular community and improve the quality of their lives (Green & Haines, 2012). Most practitioners consider community development to be an ‘output’ as physical, social, economic enhancement of community. On the contrary, most academics view community development as a ‘process’ of community’s

skill to work cooperatively together and uplift the capacity to do so (Phillips and Pittman, 2009). However, the understanding of community development differs as the community in which we live in changes in course of time. The dynamic society and context we live in, defines community needs and they differ from place to place, from village to town, from rural to urban, and mountain to deserts.

Community development is a process where community members are supported by agencies to identify and take collective action on issues which are important to them. Community development empowers community members and creates stronger and more connected communities. Community development is a holistic approach grounded in principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination and collective action (Kenny, 2007). Community development considers community members to be experts of their lives and communities, and values community knowledge and wisdom. Community development programs are led by community members at every stage - from deciding on issues to selecting and implementing actions, and evaluation. Community development has an explicit focus on the redistribution of power to address the causes of inequality and disadvantage.

The role of community development is to support people and community groups to identify and articulate their needs and to take practical and collective action to address them. It works with communities of place, interest and identity, helping diverse and competing community voice to be heard. By addressing issues of social, economic and environmental concerns, it brings about change that is empowering, fair and inclusive.

3.0 Social Entrepreneurship and Community Development

There is no debate as to whether social entrepreneurs have a role to play in the development of any economy. The crux seems to be to what extent they add value to society. Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a contemporary issue in the social arena (Malunga et al, 2014). It is an idea well suited for this age (Dees, 2001). Dees (2001) also makes a call for entrepreneurial activities to spearhead the resolving of social issues, since many governmental and charitable efforts have failed to meet the existing social needs. Dees (2001) therefore makes a case for social entrepreneurs by highlighting that they fill the gap that has been left void by the ineffectiveness, inefficiency and the lack of sustainability from major institutions. While it may seem as though Dees has attached some nobility to the concept, Mair and Mati (2006) are also of the opinion that the concept catalyses social change and addresses important social needs in a way that is not dominated by direct financial benefit for an entrepreneur. This somewhat broadly indicates that social entrepreneurship signifies a business model for individuals and non-governmental organizations fulfilling social issues.

Social entrepreneurship involves entrepreneurial activities that are generally beneficial to the community and society. The role of social entrepreneurship in community development can be divided into three, which relate to the community's development. The three areas are highlighted as the social sector, the economic sector, and the environmental sector. The social entrepreneurship in the social sector can be in developing a better education curriculum sanitization, health care systems, and relational

wellbeing of individuals in the society (Khatiwada, 2014). The social entrepreneurship can also be focused on building personal skills for individuals through capacity building to training women that have volunteered in the health sector, leadership training, skills training in the health sector, and training on matters of family, sex, and sanitization in the community (Hakami, 2021).

In the economic sector, the social entrepreneurship can provide better ways to manage finances and how businesses can minimize costs and maximize profits. The social entrepreneurship can also offer more opportunities for the employment of people and the creation of wealth to society to reduce the level of poverty and raise living standards. The last part of social entrepreneurship's role in community development is the environment sector. Social entrepreneurship can innovate and create better ways to handle industrial wastes. Handling industrial wastes ensures that the community is kept free from pollution like noise, water pollution, and air pollution. When all roles are carried out efficiently, then the community can develop productively (Hakami, 2021).

Despite the tremendous efforts of public sectors (or non-profit organizations) and private sectors (for-profit) to meet the increasing gap between community needs and the performance, they have failed to meet the goal due to various limitations. Governments or non-profits are in deficits of resources due to economic limitation and weak political will, similarly, the private sector is failing in its claim of serving all members of society due to high concentration in profit maximization. This tendency has resulted in increasing problems in communities. However, to overcome both the private and public sector limitations, the hybrid approach of social entrepreneurship is currently emerging as a feasible alternative to community development (Ihejiamazu & Udensi, 2017).

Community development work is always confronted with a lack of resources. In the true spirit of social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurs are change agents who can associate with efforts to combine resources so as to exploit opportunities in search of new anti-poverty interventions that will impact on social and economic development. The discourse on social entrepreneurship and community development provides a framework for harnessing entrepreneurial and enterprise opportunities and creating transformative responses to challenges prevalent in communities and society. The relationship combines social entrepreneurship with community and social innovation, providing a basis for exploring capacity building and fostering positive change for organizations, communities and societies.

As a strategy for community development, social entrepreneurship provides a pathway for social entrepreneurs who work in communities to extend their focus on social programmes to include economic development activities and social development programmes. Entrepreneurial activity is seen as important for economic development through job creation, innovation, and its effect on welfare. Social entrepreneurship activity includes research on better medicines or the generation of a vaccine against a particular disease. Social entrepreneurship has helped educate adults, which has increased the number of educated people in society. An educated society contributes to the development of society using the knowledge which they have. The knowledge and

skills obtained are used in the generation of income and financial decisions that assist in the increase of the GDP and national per capita income.

4.0 Conclusion

There is no doubt, that social entrepreneurs have an important role to play in community development. They motivate change in communities by creating a new equilibrium in the communities and affecting many people through innovative ideas therefore addressing social issues. They are able to identify opportunities and devise ways of taking advantage of these opportunities. Social entrepreneurship can create opportunities for employment and income generation, especially amongst the youth. It provides the opportunity for an inclusive model for economic development through which vulnerable people can become empowered to have a voice in their own development and live with human dignity. As change agents, social entrepreneurs are well positioned to facilitate community development as an avenue to integrate social and economic development projects within their roles in community development. Social entrepreneurship fosters wealth for society as a whole, contributes to community development projects, supports environmental sustainability and produces social capital.

5.0 Recommendations

Encouraging social entrepreneurship in communities is necessary in creating solutions that provide community needs and providing sustainable livelihoods to populations that are in need. This paper recommends that governments and non-governmental sectors with interest in development should examine the impact that social entrepreneurs have in community development in order to ascertain their real impact. The result of such assessment should further inform policy decisions, legislative frameworks, and development planning.

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