UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FROM TRIBAL ENTREPRENEURS' PERSPECTIVE AND THEIR STRUGGLES

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ABSTRACT

There was less entrepreneurial culture in the tribal community other than minimal transaction or barter system and social entrepreneurship is considered a recently emerging term that is slowly gaining momentum. The study aims to understand the concept of social entrepreneurship from the tribal perspective and also study the various challenges faced by entrepreneurs. Social enterprises exist to bridge the gap that the markets have left behind and meet the needs that the government is not able to provide. In doing that, lack of entrepreneurial tradition, financial constraint, development disparity, and lack of knowledge and innovation are found to be major challenges that are hampering the entrepreneurs of the Ukhrul District. Despite that, many entrepreneurs have proved that there is opportunity in every adversity, a solution to every problem, and are addressing the social issues with the limited resources available. Every individual and stakeholder needs to engage in bringing a broader social, economic and political change and sustainable development in society.

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***Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneurship, Tribal Entrepreneurs, Ukhrul.*

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Introduction
Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurs are people who try to bring society more into the balance between the haves and the have-nots, the large and the small, and the local and the global (Thomson, 2010). Social entrepreneurs create social enterprises which are organizations that fundamentally seek a business solution to social problems. They may emerge from different backgrounds; may be young or not so young; educated or not educated at all; may be male or female. They instigate social change and development (Prasain 2006). They create and enhance equity to ensure sustainable development by creating opportunities for marginalized people by working towards community development, a sustainable environment, and poverty alleviation, in the areas of health, education, etc. "Social enterprises are organizations that are driven by a social mission, aims and objectives, that have adopted an economic business model to achieve their social aims" (Crossan et al., 2004). Markets have not been able to meet many basic needs of the poor, they are not able to deliver good education, provide nutritious foods, and health facilities, and extend financial services to the millions of unbanked people. Millions go hungry every day, poverty rates are increasing. The most pressing needs of the individual are affordable food, access to health care, financial inclusion, education and information, transportation facilities, etc. and that's where social entrepreneurs come to bridge the gap. They may come from a variety of educational backgrounds, family occupations, age groups, and work experiences, and can be of any race, gender, class, region, religion, and nationality. They serve the poor with income-generating activities, help villagers launch micro franchise businesses, and protect the poor from illnesses, crop failures, natural disasters, etc. (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). Santos (2015) seeks an understanding of social entrepreneurship beyond 'social mission', and 'social purpose' and beyond the comparison of

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economics as this has been too often used and generalized. The organization's focus and intended goal needs to be viewed properly and stressed to see whether it is aimed predominantly at value creation or value capture. The former creates a strong and important impact on society while the latter is more of appropriating a substantial portion of the value created with the aim of making a profit. The central goal and approach are to seek sustainable solutions rather than sustainable advantages and to develop solutions based on the logic of empowerment rather than the logic of control.

The Context

Ukhrul District is one of the hill districts of Manipur where the tribal people mostly the Tangkhul tribe resides and their livelihood mostly depends on agricultural activities. "The early Tangkhul village state was economically self-sufficient; most of the needs of the numerous villages were produced in the village itself" (Shimray, 2001). But now it is a dependent society where almost everything that is needed in daily life is being imported. The world is developing fast but there is a rapid rise in unemployment and less development is taking place in the district. In the past, the socio-economic life of the Tangkhul has been based on the mutual sharing of goods and generosity; history has not much to say about entrepreneurship or business. They do not give much importance to exploring the potentiality of their resources to generate wealth in the economy. But in today's market-driven world, the importance to hold and control one's own resources from exploitation is realized (Kashung, 2011). Social entrepreneurship is a process where people addresses the most pressing social problems such as unemployment, financial exclusion, poverty, hunger, human right abuses, environmental destruction, etc. for a sustainable society. It is an emerging term being used in this generation and the trend is growing and gaining momentum. Dissatisfaction with the relative inability of the public and private sectors to deal with society's problems helps to explain why social entrepreneurship represents an attractive option and is at such a high level of popularity in this particular era (Kickul & Lyons, 2012). Social entrepreneurs have gone beyond the traditional boundaries or barriers and have started building an entrepreneurial society as the need has been realized. People find them unreasonable and crazy as they could not understand the visions of the entrepreneurs. How and why some entrepreneurs are defined as social entrepreneurs? What characteristics do they have that there is a difference between business enterprises and social enterprises? What do they do and what are their struggles? Questions are endless and sometimes there are no direct and crystal clear answers to it.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the concept of social entrepreneurship from a tribal context.
- To study the major challenges faced by entrepreneurs.

Methodology

Qualitative research was adopted because the researcher wanted an in-depth understanding of the concept of social entrepreneurship in the context of the Tangkhul community, and also to study the challenges faced by the entrepreneurs. Phenomenological research was used to get deep and common meanings as experienced by the entrepreneurs, to present holistic insights into the subject under study. The population for this study was the social entrepreneurs based in Ukhrul Manipur. For every interview, appointments were taken first, and then, the respondents were met in their workplace which enriched the data collection as the researcher could observe the setting too. The observation was an important technique used where the respondents and their enterprises were observed which serves as a complementary purpose in understanding more about the subject under the study. The audio recording was taken in all the interviews with prior permission and later the transcription was used in the research. The researcher used the snowball sampling method by firstly interviewing the well-known entrepreneurs of the district and from them, recommendations as to who could be interviewed further were taken. The criteria are that person who had started his/her own enterprise employing people with the motive of solving social problems and who is knowledgeable of the environment by having more than five years of experience. The process of interviewing continued until the saturation point was reached which was after twelve interviews. The respondent was working in different fields such as microfinance, handicrafts, agricultural products, hospitality, and various other manufacturing and service sector. The semi-structured interview schedule was used where the researcher starts off with the interview guide prepared but stays flexible enough to shift in order to have a natural flow of conversation and also diverge from the actual plan when there come up interesting issues during the interview. The idea is to open up and let them express themselves on their own term, and at their own pace. Themes were brought out from the findings and verbatim were used in the study.

Findings and Discussion

How Social Entrepreneurship is Understood?

"Lots of people are yet to buy or understand the concept of social entrepreneurship in our community," said one of the participants. He further mentioned that it is achievable only by involving social organizations such as the church, village council, and other traditional social institutions, sensitizing people about the goals, and making them understand that it is part of nation-building. Social entrepreneurship can be regarded as an essentially contested concept and a universal definition that would be accepted among contestant parties is hardly possible (Choi & Majumdar, 2014). "I was living a very decent living working in the corporate sector but then monetary benefit was not my primary concern. My passion and commitment were to create an enterprise and impact society" said another respondent. An ordinary entrepreneur may only focus on business and enterprises but a social entrepreneur will balance between enterprise setup and community concern, need, and community development. Getting into entrepreneurship to make money without the inner drive which is passion will not be a successful one (Bansal, 2008). Social entrepreneurs are practical and very powerful because they do with interest and conviction. Patikar & Kaurinta in Prasain (2006) also mentions that not all businesses set up their social enterprise. Social entrepreneurs' motives of profit-making are less and are more focused on finding ways while others see chaos, bring innovation to an existing system, and challenge traditional boundaries by addressing social problems with the little resources available. "Local entrepreneurs are catalysts for broader development that can have positive ripple effects for families, communities, and the country. In most societies, local enterprises are primarily responsible for economic sustenance within the community" said one of the respondents. Another one had a similar point by saying that "Entrepreneurs are catalysts of economic and social change in the country". One participant said that "We are filling up the gap that the government has created". In today's world, many social challenges exist that governments are unable to provide solutions to it and in such cases, social entrepreneurs are often considered the key player (Bennani & Radi, 2018). Another mentioned that "Entrepreneurs are not ordinary people but they are always innovative, efficient, effective and versatile in addressing social need."

Challenges

Developmental Disparity

In comparison to the districts in the valley, the hill districts are far behind in terms of industries, power supply, financial services, transportation, connectivity, utility services, and every other field. There is a wide gap between the valley which is mostly occupied by the dominant group called Meitei and the hills are occupied by the tribal people and Ukhrul is among the backward hill districts. Sharma (2019) agreed that there is a huge disparity between hills and valleys when it comes to living standards and overall development. Marginalization leads to socio-political and economic unrest. One respondent mentioned that "while in Imphal valley, there are more than 20 ATMs and banks in one locality alone, there is only a handful in the whole district of Ukhrul and therefore banking needs are still not been able to be addressed". Another one mentioned that "the Manipur government has not shown interest in supporting and uplifting the tribal entrepreneur and particularly to social entrepreneurs. Therefore we have to look beyond them". Some participants voiced out that, though Government has resources to finance, the politics are such that they are not willing to fund tribal entrepreneurs and in that way, the entrepreneurs did not have much hope for them. All the entrepreneurs agreed that there is irregular power supply, lack of water supply and utility services, bad communication services such as postal, internet etc. bad road connectivity, no good skill development training institute, a huge shortage of staff in concerned government departments, good schemes and programs but no proper implementation, no specific and proper policy for entrepreneurship development in Hill areas. With all those challenges, the entrepreneurs are suffering much more than any other entrepreneurs.

Lack of Entrepreneurial Tradition and Support

The whole community of Tangkhul did not possess entrepreneurial traditions. The young potential, first-generation entrepreneurs have not seen their elders taking up any major entrepreneurial activities and that makes it difficult for them to plunge in. Social entrepreneurs generally face strong opposition from their parents, and society and are often discouraged. Sometimes one's own family or close ones would fail to understand what the social entrepreneurs would love to do, what they want to do, and are doing. Many people are yet to understand the concept of social entrepreneurship which is a stumbling block for entrepreneurs. There is always a suspicion in all the innovative ideas that comes up and is considered too risky. The step of getting any kind of support takes a very long time; those who initiate such ideas are mocked when they fail in their initial stage. Though there are many roadblocks for

an entrepreneur, once a business starts on the road to success only, people will flock in and starts appreciating (Mubasir, 2014). But slowly with great efforts and some role models, entrepreneurs are turning a society where there were no entrepreneurial traditions to becoming an entrepreneurial society. "With a change like globalization, deregulation, open competition and technological changes taking place, our society needs to become an entrepreneur society to become self-sufficient" (Prasian, 2006).

Financial Constraint

One of the most important challenges that entrepreneurs faced is inadequate working capital and the unavailability of loans from banks and financial institutions. The financial institutions are found, not willing to give funds for a new idea as they could not see the future aspects of the innovative ideas that the entrepreneurs are bringing up. It hampered in establishing and developing an enterprise and also in upscaling. One participant mentioned that "I tried applying for loans but the banks in the district were never willing to give which is a drawback for an entrepreneur to grow his or her enterprise". Another participant mentioned that the "Government of India have taken up various steps and promoted social policies to bring financial inclusion, but even today Ukhrul is a home to 76% of the unbanked population unable to have proper access to conventional banks". It is not possible to bring social economic development without access to finance. The banks are not playing their roles and the corrupt government is always a hindrance for social entrepreneurs to growth. The government start-up programs which give support to the entrepreneurs benefitted only a handful out of thousands of entrepreneurs from the district. For these reasons, many enterprises prefer to raise money from families, friends, NGOs, and investors though it is very hard to receive financial help as there are no angel investors, business competition, etc. Only a few privileged people get funding from NGOs, government, and financial institutions which helps them in setting up the enterprise and upscaling it.

Lack of Knowledge and Innovation

One entrepreneur admitted that "I, myself as a student, as a young person, young man has grown up without being guided by anybody. There are many young potential people who do not know what is available and ended up being deprived". Therefore, giving a sense of direction, awareness, support, and sense of purpose is considered to be very important. Another respondent said that "Our society still hasn't learned the tricks of business; they don't have patience and are not good in management". Building trust and partnership are considered important roles in transactions and it requires a lot of years to build that and it requires patience and perseverance. While the major concerns for many entrepreneurs are capital investment few committed social entrepreneurs disagree with that. One participant said, "People always look for capital or funding to start a business but I felt that the idea is more important, when your concept is good there will be always someone to buy it." Another shared similar thought by saying, "I would rather say that the biggest challenge for anyone of us is about proving yourself, that you are someone whom others can invest, you are someone whom people can count or have confidence in you. The investment will just come". You can start with zero capital; if you have capital, that's great, if you don't doesn't mean you can't start (Bansal, 2008). It shows that with great ideas and passion, people to support will support you with your innovative ideas.   To be an entrepreneur or to run an enterprise needs a lot of effort and commitment. Social entrepreneurs are found to be coming from different spheres of life and not from the entrepreneur background. Many do not have experience in writing project proposals and are not good enough at planning and executing. They are not aware of the outside world of entrepreneurship where there are collaborations and networking among various entrepreneurs/enterprises, and stakeholders which will strengthen their work. They do not know where to and how to get funds though they want. "I'm not a trained entrepreneur and I don't have that formal qualification or training but it's because of passion, vision, commitment altogether that has led me this far," said one of the participants. Advancement in age, maturity, and experience enriches one in many aspects. Another group mentioned that they lack so much information about various schemes and they do not know how to avail it. "There is no organized and scientific system in place to provide labor market information in terms of supply-demand position in the labor market to guide the labor force and the employers" (Sanghi & Srija, 2014). Many social enterprises still depend on sponsors, donors, government as they could not manage the enterprise itself. Sustainability and staying self-sufficient are the need of the hour.

Conclusion

The concept of social entrepreneurship is an evolving one. Some argue that the concept or phenomena of social entrepreneurship are not new, stressing that there were entrepreneurs for ages though we did not label them. There are no crystal-clear definitions on what is social entrepreneurship,

social enterprises, and who are social entrepreneurs as it differs between people and the environment. But it is basically associated with economic development and bringing social impact by keeping the concern of environment and sustainability. Entrepreneurs are facing many barriers such as a lack of entrepreneurial tradition, business support, social acceptance, access to financing or loans, government support, developmental disparity, etc. With all these challenges, it demands support from all the community members, from the political leader to bureaucrats to social leaders to ordinary people. In the last few years, there have been a lot of changes have taken place, and there seems to be a wave of confidence starting to spread wide. The Tangkhul community has started witnessing young entrepreneurs who are playing a great role in bringing economic development, addressing so many social issues, and becoming role models for many young people. The pace and progress of entrepreneurship development in Ukhrul district may be lacking behind but still, it is on the positive side as it is gaining momentum. A positive environment can create a condition for the growth of entrepreneurship. But the environment alone is not sufficient to induce a person to take up entrepreneurial activity unless he/she is capable and committed. As the people start to support, and the field of social entrepreneurship continues to mature, Tangkhuls will be witnessing more social entrepreneurs who will utilize the resources available with innovations, addressing various social problems. One should be prepared to take the journey together as entrepreneurship development will address the community's desire of living a self-reliant life and a sustainable future.

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