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A Global Conceptual Framework for Social Entrepreneurship in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the growing need for a comprehensive framework to guide higher education institutions (HEI) in embedding social entrepreneurship into their curriculum and institutional practices. Although social entrepreneurship was defined as an important mechanism to support global challenges, yet many HEIs still do not have a systematic approach to integrate it in their program structure. Therefore, the aim of this study is to propose a global conception framework that will enhance the role of HEIs in nurturing future social entrepreneurship. This study will focus on key components such as curriculum design, institutional support, community engagement, process efficiency, digital transformation and data driven decision making. A comprehensive examination of existing models, theories and best practices in social entrepreneurship was conducted using qualitative research design. The framework builds on innovation theory, institutional theory and social capital theory to offer a holistic approach that can be adapted to diverse regional contexts. Through thematic analysis of relevant literature, the study identifies the strength and limitations of current models and highlight the need for an adaptable, applicable framework. The findings suggest that the proposed framework provides more comprehensive approach to social entrepreneurship education than existing models by integrating both technological advancement and practical community engagement strategies. The implication for HEIs include the potential to foster institutional innovation, enhance student learning outcomes and contribute to societal impact by equipping graduates with skills to address social issues. The challenges such as institutional resistance and financial constraints also being considered accompanying with strategies to manage these barriers. future research should focus on empirical testing of the framework across different regions to validate its effectiveness in diverse educational contexts.

Keywords— Social entrepreneurship, Global conceptual framework, Institutional support, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Community engagement

STRUCTURE OF THE ARTICLE

This article is organized as follows: the introduction outlines the significance of social entrepreneurship in higher education, highlights the research gap, and presents the study's objectives. The literature review examines existing models and frameworks while discussing the challenge social capacity theory emphasizes the importance of networks and relationships in fostering social entrepreneurship, s and opportunities associated with social entrepreneurship in HEIs. The methodology section details the research design and data collection processes employed to develop the proposed framework. Subsequently, the article presents the comprehensive global framework for integrating social entrepreneurship, emphasizing its key components and best practices for implementation. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the key findings, suggests avenues for



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future research, and underscores the importance of adopting the framework to strengthen HEIs' roles in fostering social entrepreneurship.

INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a vital force for addressing social, environmental and economic challenges across the globe. It involves the pursuit of innovative solutions that create social value while employing entrepreneurial strategies to achieve sustainability and scalability. Unlike traditional business ventures, social enterprises prioritize societal impact over profit maximization, making them essential in promoting inclusive growth and social equity (Bornstein & Davis,2019). Globally social entrepreneurship has garnered increase attention from policymakers, academicians and practitioners, as it provides a framework for tackling pressing issues such as poverty, inequality and environmental degradation (Santos,2012). The rise of social entrepreneurship in diverse sectors underscores its relevance in driving systematic change and fostering community empowerment (Zahra et al., 2009). This momentum further supported by international organizations such as the United Nations, which has recognised social entrepreneurship as a critical driver in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNDP, 2023).

Higher Education Institution (HEIs) are playing an increasingly pivotal role in cultivating the next generation of social entrepreneurs. As centres of knowledge, innovation and skill development, HEIs provide a fertile environment for students to explore social challenges and develop entrepreneurial solutions. Through specialized curriculum, incubators and partnership with communities and industries, HEIs are equipping students with the tool and mindsets needed to launch socially driven ventures (Ratten & Jones, 2021). This engagement is not limited to business school; interdisciplinary approaches are being adopted, encouraging students from diverse fields to engage in social entrepreneurship (Kickul & Lyons, 2020). Additionally, HEIs foster critical thinking, ethical leadership and a commitment to societal impact, essential qualities for aspiring social entrepreneurs (Kimmit & Munoz, 2022). The global shift toward experiential learning and community engagement further amplifies the role of HEIs in embedding social entrepreneurship into the academic experience, aligning with broader efforts to contribute to social innovation and the Sustainable Development Goals (Global University Network for Innovation, 2023).

The need for a global framework to guide HEIs in embedding social entrepreneurship into their curriculum and institutional practices has become increasingly urgent. While many HEIs are adopting initiatives to support social entrepreneurship, these efforts are of the fragmented and lack of cohesive strategies that ensure long term impact (Kummita, 2020). A comprehensive global framework would provide a unified approach, helping institutional to integrate social entrepreneurship systematically across disciplines and regions. Such a framework would not only standardize best practice but also allow for adaptability to local context, promoting exclusivity and innovation (Nicolopoulou, Karatas-Ozkan, Jansen, & Jermier, 2017). Moreover, with social entrepreneurship closely tied to global challenges such as poverty, inequality and sustainability, it is essential for HEIs worldwide to align their efforts with international goals, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, 2023).

The aim of developing a comprehensive global framework for integrating social entrepreneurship within higher education is to create a structured and cohesive approach to empowers HEIs to foster social innovation and entrepreneurial skills among students. This framework seeks to unify diverse initiatives and best practices across institutions worldwide, enabling a more systematic integration of social entrepreneurship into curriculum, research and community engagement activities. By establishing clear guidelines and measurable outcomes, the framework will facilitate collaboration among HEIs, policymakers and practitioners ensuring that educational program are responsive to societal needs and global challenges. Ultimately, this framework could aspire young generation to become socially responsible leaders equipped with the knowledge, skills and mindset necessary to drive impaction change in their communities and beyond, while contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Despite the increasing recognition of social entrepreneurship as a vital component in addressing pressing global challenges, there exists a notable research gap regarding it systematic integration into higher education



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curriculum and institutional practices. Many HEIs have initiated programs aimed at fostering social entrepreneurship; however, these efforts often lack of coordination and fail to adhere to cohesive framework that explicates best practices and guiding principles (Santos, 2012). Consequently, this study aims to address these gaps by developing a comprehensive framework that identifies the essential components for integrating social entrepreneurship within HEIs. The research objective includes investigating the challenges faced by institution in this integration process and proposing strategies to overcome these barriers, ultimately aligning the framework with global initiatives such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals to enhance

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing Models of Social Entrepreneurship in HEIs

its relevance in promoting social impact and sustainability.

The "Triple Helix" framework, propose by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (2000), emphasizes the collaborative relationships among universities, industry and government as a means to foster innovation and soial impact. This model has been notably successful in regions like Europe and North America, here strategic partnership has been shown to enhance educational outcomes and promote social entrepreneurship initiatives (Iqbal et al., 2018). The framework facilitates a dynamic interaction that not only drives innovation but also addresses societal challenges through collaborative efforts (Iqbal et al., 2018). In contrast, the "Social Enterprise Ecosystem" model, which is prevalent in regions such as Africa and Asia, focuses on the interconnectedness of various stakeholders, including NGOs, social enterprises and academic institutions. This model highlights the importance of community engagement and local ecosystem in shaping educational approaches to social entrepreneurship.

In addition, the understanding of the local ecosystem is crucial for the success of social enterprises, as it allows for tailored strategies that resonate with community needs (Prabawanti, 2023). Mulyaningsih (2021) further emphasized that educational frameworks must adapt to these local contexts to effectively nurture social entrepreneurship. The "Entrepreneurial University" model promotes a culture of innovation within higher education HEIs by integrating entrepreneurship education across various discipline. Institutions such as Stanford University and Babson College exemplify this approach, demonstrating how entrepreneurship education can be woven into the fabric of academic programs to foster the spirit of innovation (Matlay, 2009). Despite these advancements, challenges remain, including resource constraints, institutional resistance and a lack of standardized curriculum across different regions (Iqbal et al., 2018; Qin et al., 2022). Kummitha (2020) identifies these barriers as significant impediments to the effective implementation of social entrepreneurship education in HEIs, suggesting that a more unified approach is necessary to overcome these obstacles. The literature indicates a pressing need for a comprehensive global framework that synthesizes various models and approaches to enhance the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship education, equipping students with the skills necessary to address complex social issues and contribute to sustainable development. In conclusion, while various framework such as Triple Helix", "Social Enterprise Ecosystem" and "Entrepreneurial University" provide valuable insight into the dynamics of social entrepreneurship education, the ongoing challenges highlight the necessity for a cohesive strategy that integrates these models. This synthesis can potentially lead to more effective educational outcomes and stronger impact on social entrepreneurship initiatives globally.

Challenges and Opportunities

The literature on social entrepreneurship in higher education institutions (HEIs) reveals a complex interplay of barriers and opportunities that shape the adoption and integration of social entrepreneurship initiatives. One of the primary barriers identified is institutional resistance, often rooted in traditional academic structure that prioritize research and academic performance over entrepreneurial activities (Kummitha, 2020). This resistance can be compounded by a lack of awareness and understanding of social entrepreneurship among faculty and administrators, leading to inadequate support for developing relevant curriculum and programs (Ratten & Jones, 2021).



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Additional, financial constrains pose significant challenges, as many HEI's struggle to allocate resources for the development of social entrepreneurship initiatives (Roslan, Hamid, Ijab, Yusop and Norman (2020). However, these barriers coexist with numerous opportunities for HEIs to embrace social entrepreneurship. One significant opportunity arises from increasing demand for socially responsible leaders and entrepreneurs in the job market, which provides a compelling rationale for HEIs to incorporate social entrepreneurship into their curriculum. This need is echoed in the literature, where Zahra et al. (2014) highlight the importance of aligning educational offerings with market demands to prepare students for future roles in social entrepreneurship. Additionally, partnerships with local communities, NGOs and businesses offer avenues for collaborative learning and practical engagement, enriching the educational experience for students. Furthermore, the researcher emphasize that such collaborations not only enhance learning but also tribute to additional resources, foster a supportive learning environment and address socioeconomic barriers (Samuel & Kakungulu, 2024). The rise of digital technologies further enhances the potential for HEIs to reach wider audiences and facilitate innovative learning experiences that promote social entrepreneurship ("Analysis of the Role of International Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Development and Social Innovation", 2023). The study indicates that leveraging digital tools can create more engaging and accessible educational environments, allowing institutions to better prepare students for complexities of social entrepreneurship. This synthesis of literature indicates that while significant barriers, such as institutional resistance and resources constrains, exist, the opportunities for HEIs to lead in social entrepreneurship education are abundant. Strategic approaches that leverage existing resources and foster collaborative networks are essential to enhance their impact on societal challenges (Zhang, 2023)

Theoretical Foundations

The exploration of social entrepreneurship within education is grounded in several key theoretical frameworks. Innovation theory, as articulated by Schumpeter (1934), posits that social entrepreneurship fosters new solutions to social problems through creative approaches that challenge traditional practices (Sinwal et al., 2022). This theory underscores the role of educational institutions as incubators for innovation, where students are encouraged to develop and implement socially impactful ideas (Stephan & Uhlaner, 2010). Institutional theory, on the other hand, provides a framework for understanding how HEIs navigate their complex environments, characterized by established norms, values and regulations (Lukjanska et al., 2017). Tolbert et al (2011) highlight the challenges HEIs face in adopting social entrepreneurship initiatives, as they must align these efforts with existing institutional missions while responding to external pressures from stakeholders. Furthermore, social capacity theory emphasizes the importance of networks and relationships in fostering social entrepreneurship, illustrating how collaborations among HEIs, community organizations and businesses can enhance educational outcomes and social impact (Williams, 2007).

By synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, the literature suggests that social entrepreneurship in education is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by innovation dynamics, institutional contexts and relational networks. This synthesis provides a robust framework for understanding these complexities of integrating social entrepreneurship within HEIs, indicating the need for a strategic approach that leverages these theoretical insights to foster effectives educational practices and cultivate socially responsible leaders (Zahra et al., 2014).

Key Components of the Framework

The proposed global conceptual framework for integrating social entrepreneurship in higher education institutions (HEIs) is built upon several essential elements that collectively foster an environment conducive to social innovation and impact. Curriculum design is fundamental, emphasizing the need for interdisciplinary programs that incorporate theoretical and practical aspects of social entrepreneurship, equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to address societal challenges (Ratten, 20210). Institutional support plays a crucial role, encompassing administrative commitment, funding and resources dedicated to social entrepreneurship initiatives (Stephan, Uhlaner, & Strude, 2015; Sud, VanSandt, & Baugous, 2009). Furthermore, community engagement is essential for creating partnerships with local organizations and stakeholders, providing students with real-world experience and fostering a sense of social responsibility



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(Kisambira, Khadijah, & Ahmed Mm, 2024). Additionally, the framework emphasizes process efficiency, encouraging HEIs to streamline operations and reduce bureaucratic barriers that may hinder social entrepreneurship initiatives (Kummitha, 2020). Digital transformation is increasingly vital, as HEIs leverage technology to enhance learning experience, facilitate collaborations and expand access to resources (Kaputa, Loučanová, & Tejerina-Gaite, 2022). Finaly data-driven decision-making is emphasized to guide the strategic planning and evaluation of social entrepreneurship programs, enabling HEIs to assess their impact effectively and make informed adjustments to their initiatives (Santos, 2012).

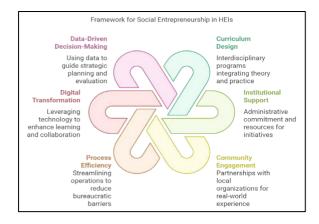


Figure 1 A Global Conception Framework for Social Entrepreneurship in Higher Education Institutions

METHODOLOGY

The primary aims of this study is to propose a global conceptual framework rather than testing or validating it empirically. This is an exploratory study using a comprehensive examination of existing literature focusing on model, theories and best practiced related to social entrepreneurship in Higher Education Institutions. The framework is built based on innovation theory, institutional theory and social capital theory, indicating a theoretical lens to guide this study.

Thematic analysis was used to organize and interpret the findings from the reviewed literature. First, the researcher examined studies on social entrepreneurship in higher education to identify important ideas. Next, key points were coded both from existing theories (innovation, institutional, and social capital theory). These codes were then grouped into main themes that align with the structure of the review. For example, Models of Social Entrepreneurship (Triple Helix, Social Enterprise Ecosystem, Entrepreneurial University), Challenges and Opportunities. Theoretical Foundations (innovation theory, institutional theory, social capital theory), and Key Framework Components (curriculum design, institutional support, community engagement, digital transformation, data-driven decision-making). The themes were refined to remove overlaps and ensure consistency. Finally, these themes were combined to develop a global conceptual framework that brings together the different models, barriers, opportunities, and theoretical insights into a unified understanding of social entrepreneurship in higher education.

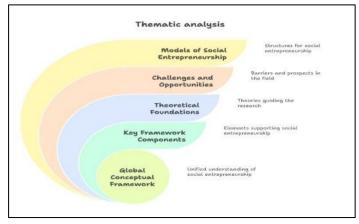


Figure 2 Thematic Analysis



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CONCLUSIONS

The study utilizes qualitative research with a literature review and thematic analysis approach, grounded in theoretical perspective to develop a global conceptual framework for integrating social entrepreneurship into HEIs. Future research is suggested to include empirical testing to validate the framework. In conclusion, while barriers to integrate social entrepreneurship into HEIs persist, the opportunity for innovation and collaboration are significant. By strategically addressing these challenges and leveraging theoretical frameworks, HEIs can enhance their role in social entrepreneurship education, ultimately contributing to sustainable development and social change across the globe.

Limitations

Despite its comprehensive approach, this study has several limitations. First, the framework is largely conceptual and has not yet been empirically tested across a wide range of HEIs. The generalizability of its components, particularly in regions with limited resources or institutional constraints, may vary. Additionally, while the study proposes strategies for overcoming barriers such as institutional resistance and financial constraints, further empirical research is needed to validate these solutions in diverse contexts. Finally, the reliance on existing literature means that emerging trends, particularly in post-pandemic education and technological advancements, may not be fully captured in the proposed framework.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should focus on the empirical validation of the proposed framework by conducting case studies across HEIs in different regions, exploring how institutions can adapt the framework to local contexts while maintaining its core principles. Quantitative and qualitative research method could be used to evaluate the impact of the framework on student learning outcomes, institutional innovation and community engagement. Additionally, researchers could investigate the long-term sustainability of social entrepreneurship initiatives within HEIs, assessing how institutional commitment and external partnership influence their success. Lastly, future studies could explore the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain and virtual reality in shaping the future of social entrepreneurship education, building on the digital transformation aspects of the framework. In conclusion, while this study provides a comprehensive framework for advancing social entrepreneurship in HEI, its fully potential will be realized through further empirical research and practical implementation, guiding institutions worldwide in cultivating he next generation of social innovators.

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