Title: Discovering the Social Entrepreneur: Opportunity Found for HRD!

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Discovering the Social Entrepreneur: Opportunity Found for HRD!

Social entrepreneurship is an emerging field. The literature reflects varying perspectives on the topic but offers little understanding on the experience of social entrepreneurship. Using van Manen’s (1997) approach to structuring human science research, I used hermeneutic phenomenology to answer the question, “What is it like to be a social entrepreneur?” A new definition of the work of a social entrepreneur was developed to assist in screening. Eleven social entrepreneurs participated in in-depth interviews sharing their thoughts, ideas, and feelings about the experience of social entrepreneurship. The texts were transcribed, analyzed, the results verified with the participants, and needed adjustments made. Three main theme categories were revealed: origins; living the life; and looking forward. Eight themes and 13 subthemes included: (a) personal experience and impactful events as preparation; awareness of community need, and need for change; self-knowledge; tolerance for risk and change, and action orientation (b) integration of business and social principles into structure; personal engagement; defining moments: demands and complexities of the role; relationship aspects; dealing with uncertainty and interaction with outside entities (c) leadership awareness; changing roles and sustainability. The insights provide opportunity for practice enhancements in leadership development in social entrepreneurship and new roles with philanthropy including the development of metrics on effectiveness and sustainability. Practice implications include opportunity for new models of community support, teaching of social entrepreneurship and greater involvement of HRD in both practice and leadership. There is opportunity to expand on the definition of social entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Social entrepreneur, Definition, Leadership Development

Social entrepreneurship is a growing phenomenon. A recent Internet search for the phrase ‘social entrepreneur’ produced over twenty-five million hits. While one commonly held perspective is that social entrepreneurs are committed to a large social change venture that exists only in the non-profit sector, a second includes for-profit entities created to develop a revenue stream that supports a social mission.

The work of social entrepreneurs is important for human resource development (HRD) because it affects individuals and organizations, the economy, quality of life issues, and career development choices. A need existed to understand the experience of those who are engaged in entrepreneurial activity for the ultimate good of others.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of what it is like to be a social entrepreneur. The findings of this study could inform theory and practice and also help educate future social entrepreneurs so they can more fully understand the process of becoming a social entrepreneur. This knowledge could also benefit the teaching of entrepreneurship, for those
students who want to explore social entrepreneurship as a career choice. The results could advance the knowledge in HRD to support the efforts of social entrepreneurs as leaders in their communities and workforce employers.

While there have been numerous definitions of social entrepreneurship in the past two decades, one of the most commonly held is from Dees (1998, 2001, 1) who described the work of social entrepreneurs, which “combines the passion of a social mission with an image of business-like discipline”. Austin et al., 2006, 2) described social entrepreneurship as an ‘innovative social value creating activity that can occur within or across non-profit, business or government sectors’. Zahra (2007) posited that there is a need to learn about the experience of entrepreneurs to be able to better understand its dimensions within the context of a specific experience.

The Research Question

The central research question was: What is it like to be a social entrepreneur? Additional questions that would help answer the question were: How do social entrepreneurs describe their everyday lived experience? How did they come to do this work? Asking these open-ended questions probed for additional information about the experience.

To answer this question, a hermeneutic phenomenological research study was conducted using in-depth individual interviews. Following the guidance of Van Manen (1997), this question required one to enter the lifeworld of the social entrepreneur to gain a deep and rich understanding of the experience. This paradigm fit my belief of how the world is experienced and shaped by the personal experiences of those who live it. In reflecting on my career and life work in health care and education, I have tried to think like an entrepreneur, seeking opportunity and change with a goal to deliver results via a service profession.

Pre-Analysis Literature Review

The literature review encompassed both entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship to define the phenomena. The search was abbreviated, consistent with phenomenology principles to minimize the influence of a detailed review on the outcome of the interviews. The search was conducted using ERIC, Business Source Premier, and journals of AHRD, the Academy of Management, and entrepreneurship and small business. No study was found that focused explicitly on the lived experience of social entrepreneurs.

The preliminary review found that literature for both entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship were closely linked. Noruzzi et al. (2010, 4) argued that ‘any definition of the term social entrepreneurship must start with the word entrepreneurship. The word social simply modifies entrepreneurship”. Mair and Marti (2006, 27) suggested that the concept of social entrepreneurship is still ‘poorly defined and its boundaries to other fields of study remain fuzzy’. Martin and Osborg (2006, 34) saw the ‘critical distinction between entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship lies in the value proposition itself’.
The results of the pre-study literature search found a broad discussion of social entrepreneurship, but a gap existed in describing what it was like to be a social entrepreneur. An extensive literature review was planned following analysis of the data to examine how the literature agreed or differed from the themes that emerged. This is consistent with phenomenological research to enable the researcher to maintain a neutral position in collecting and analyzing the data.

Methodology and Methods

To gain an understanding of the human experience of social entrepreneurs, I used hermeneutic phenomenology. Denzin and Lincoln (2008, 31) described how all research ‘is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher’s set of beliefs and feelings about the world, and how it should be studied’. Polkinghorne (2005) asserted that this deepens the understanding of the human experience because there is no objective reality because phenomenology asks, What is it like? in order to comprehend the experience as it is lived by those who experience it.

After obtaining IRB approval, I used purposive selection to identify individuals who met the definition of a social entrepreneur as noted by Dees (1998) and affirmed by Peredo (2006). A third screen was a new definition developed by the lead author for this study: “a social entrepreneur is committed to the design, development, and implementation of an enterprise, which, at its core, is the creation of value to benefit a specific social cause or mission.”

Prior to the interviews, I noted my assumptions and preconceptions and made a conscious effort to reflect on them prior to the interview. Eleven social entrepreneurs agreed to participate and also to be identified. I interviewed them, asking the question: What is it like to be a social entrepreneur? In addition to the key question, I followed with probing questions to learn more about their feelings and experiences. After the interviews were completed, the texts were transcribed. Reviewing the texts for themes initially proved to be challenging, because the participants had widely varying experiences as social entrepreneurs. Eventually, it became clear that participants spoke about their daily experiences, but also reflected on their starting points and thoughts about the future. This helped determine that a life-cycle, chronological approach to theme development was a workable framework to present what I understood to be the meaning of the participants’ experiences.

Assuring rigor in qualitative research is different from applying positivistic standards of reliability and validity to a study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified terms such as credibility, transferability, and dependability as more appropriate. An important step in the process was to obtain intersubjective agreement with the participants. Van Manen (1997) suggested that, once the themes are identified, they form the basis of follow-up conversations with the participants to verify that the description is what the experience is really like. Each participant was asked if the themes and sub-themes were compatible with their experience. The participants asked clarifying questions, made supporting comments and observations, and overall agreed with the themes. Adjustments were made, resulting in eight themes and 13 sub-themes.

Findings and Post Analysis Literature Review
This section combines the findings, represented by themes and sub-themes, and the literature associated with the themes.

Origins

**Theme 1 Personal Experience as Preparation**

This theme revealed the origins of social entrepreneurship in the participants, occurring during childhood, within their families of origin; or later in relationships with others; or as a result of their career choices, aspirations, or failures.

The literature supports that a variety of experiences served as preparation to shape the origins of social entrepreneurship. Haugh (2007, 173) described perceived opportunity arising from ‘personal experience, tacit knowledge, intuition, environmental forces, societal changes, or market failure’. Prabhu (1999) suggested that backgrounds of social entrepreneurs are varied and affected by events in their lives. Braun (2011) identified major themes common to social entrepreneurs: a crisis or event that triggered change; deeply rooted beliefs about themselves; and early childhood influences of parents. Dhesi (2010, 706) suggested that a disposition for social entrepreneurial activity ‘may be the manifestation of one’s own early socialization process—influence of family, peers and associations’.

**Hussein:**

Even people who have been in the United States for long time: it’s very difficult for them to understand that banks only finance people who don’t need the money. . . I felt the community was not getting what they need. . . I saw a need and that’s what I felt and left the bank to establish this organization.

Each of the social entrepreneurs in this study described their vision for change unique to their situation, and the importance of communicating their vision for the future. Krueger, Reilly, and Carsrud (2002) and Thompson (2002) recounted how social entrepreneurs make four key contributions, including establishing vision. While establishing the vision is important, the social entrepreneurs in this study also described the importance of communicating vision. Parkinson and Horwarth (2008) found that social entrepreneurs used language that suggested a pre-occupation with words that described social, local, and human concepts.

**Marnita:**

Everybody in my community always came in the back door and sat in my kitchen while I cooked . . . Something came back to me because I was always outside. I never wanted to make anyone feel unwelcome. . . When people like each other, when they feel they have some fluency in relationship, they had what they needed to kind of overcome the things that they don’t understand about each other. . .

**Theme 2: Self-knowledge**

Self-knowledge was expressed in comments often accompanied by a laugh or chuckle when participants described themselves, their affinity for or love of challenge. Segal, Borgia, and Schoenfield (2005) cited Bandura (1986), indicating that in entrepreneurship, self-efficacy or the confidence to accomplish what you set out to do develops through four processes, one of which is...
mastery gained by repeated performance accomplishments. Vasakarla (2010) found that social entrepreneurs gave importance to human values; took risks and decisions boldly; were optimistic and self-disciplined; and tolerated uncertainty.

Participants offered examples of risk-taking with uncertain outcomes. Shane, Locke, and Collins (2003) argued that a person's self-evaluation influence the likelihood that they will exploit any entrepreneurial opportunity. The participants valued an action orientation, describing examples of a general propensity toward action, taking charge, or making something happen. They also preferred independence.

Doug:
So I’m kind of a driven person you know, and I like the challenge. I like it when people say, hey, you can’t do that. And I say, yeah . . . so I like that and then I really try and figure out a creative way to overcome that particular challenge.

Jacquie:
Well just last year, the year of 2010, is probably one of my biggest risks. We had a goal of hitting a 1,000,000 [dollars] in revenue last year, and that would be 50% growth. And my accountant at the time said no, we’ve got to be reasonable, let’s do 15% growth. Well, I ignored my accountant and said that I’m going to spend, and were going do 1,000,000 [dollars] or we’re never going to get there . . . it was the smartest thing I ever did.

Marnita:
When a river gets too high, the big elephants, the bulls and mommas go into the water and stand shoulder to shoulder . . . they hold the river back for the little elephants to go behind. I want to be one of those momma elephants holding the river back. . . we need some momma elephants that are willing to stand in the river and not be swept away by craziness, not be swept away.

Living the Life
Theme 3 Structuring the entity

The participants described how they began to create a structure or process for the enterprise and integrated the need to be business-like in their operations. Guclu et al., (2002) argued for the importance of a comprehensive framework to fit the social entrepreneur that included a discernment of the desired social impact, a business model that incorporated how the entity will operate, and a viable resource strategy, all located within the operating environment. Dart (2004) found that revenue generation provided multiple benefits and provides opportunity to expand noting that many refer to business thinking as social enterprise with both social and business goals. He cited Emerson and Twersky (1996, 204) who referred to it as ‘the double bottom line’. The literature offered little evidence on exactly how this integration is considered and experienced by social entrepreneurs.

Barbara:
I approached this like a business as opposed to just coming up with a really great social idea. My social entrepreneurial business came about, but it always, always had a social tie to it. It wasn’t an afterthought . . . . We were really based on the cause . . . from the very beginning, from the get-go . . . we’ve created a model that brings money into our cause.
Mary:
We’re formed as a non-profit, but a non-profit is a state of mind. So we look for ways to generate money to accomplish our works.

Theme 4 Personal engagement
Participants gave examples of commitment, being re-invigorated by the work, pride at seeing what was being accomplished, and how this was an integral part of their life. They referred to the role of social entrepreneur as demanding, complex and dealing with uncertainty. The majority noted “defining moments” as acute awareness of the full scope of their efforts.

Barendson and Gardner (2004) reviewed the importance of personal engagement in social entrepreneurship, noting that it blurred the boundaries between the personal and the professional. Passion as an element of entrepreneurial activity was addressed by Cardon et al. (2009). Roberts and Woods (2005) cited the work of Handy (2002, 122) who said ‘passion is a word that cropped up in every interview, a passion for what they were doing, whether is it was starting a business, creating a theatre company or reviving a run-down community’ . . . In this study, passion was infrequently used, if at all. Participants shared terms such as commitment, dedication, and responsibility in describing a high level of engagement to their work.

When Corner and Ho (2010) explored how social entrepreneurship opportunities are recognized and exploited, they found that a fourth element called “spark” emerged as an insight, or moment of inspiration that engendered opportunity development. This finding was partially supported in this study, because social entrepreneurs described gradual processes of coming to recognize an opportunity. This finding, however, does not address the aha! moments of insight or clarity that were described by six participants, sometimes urging them to reinforce their work effort.

Tim:
You know, I love this work; I love the people here. . I truly feel like I married my skills, my aspirations, my hope and my subconscious in the things that I am not even aware of. They are all tied together by the work I am able to do.

Susan:
There’s a moment in which you realize this thing has the absolute potential of needing your whole life bad not turning out the way you want it to . . . and you have to do it anyway.

Theme 5 Role is demanding and complex
Entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship as demanding and complex work was well represented in the literature. Hoogendoorn, Pennings, and Turik (2009) showed that scarcity of resources was an important factor and cited the lack of capital in the research of Sharir and Lerner (2006). Mair and Marti (2009, 431) argued that the ‘process of making do . . . in the work of social entrepreneurs requires one to continuously make sense of the contradictions, ambiguities and gaps’.

Participants in this study described how relationships were affected by demands and complexity of the work. Boyd and Gumpert (1983, 19) affirmed this in a study of stress in small business owner/managers. The depth and range of difficulties encountered on a daily basis also
revealed a paradox, because entrepreneurs also experienced pleasure from the experience. He suggested a values conflict ‘because the respondents work hard to portray a positive and confident external presence’.

Social entrepreneurs served multiple roles in their organizations, facing competing demands of management, leadership and operations confirmed by Bird (1988). Prabhu (1999, 143) concurred, reviewing their role complexity that includes strategy planners, policy makers, and human resource experts. He argued they face ‘role conflicts between organizational and personal roles . . .’

Laurie:

In looking back, I think this Lone Ranger thing is sort of a problem. Typically in business, we tend to think we should surround ourselves with traditional business types. Where social entrepreneurs tend to think, there is not even a place for that yet. I should have surrounded myself with more . . . you have got to have place to get acknowledged, to get energized.

Theme 5 Interaction with outside entities
All of the participants shared experiences that described interactions with outside entities. They described importance of collaboration in partnerships and in efforts to gain financial support. Interactions or connections with outside entities also produced challenges such as differing goals, methods and structures with corporate, governmental and philanthropic communities.

The literature supports the importance of social capital in reference to social networks, networking, success factors, and opportunity recognition. Sharir and Lerner (2006) found that the entrepreneur’s social network had the most value because the process of mobilizing resources and the expertise involved gets others to allocate capital, labor, and effort to an enterprise that has an uncertain future. According to Burt (2000), the ability to make connections or bridges between groups that do not know each other can offer opportunity. Granovetter (1973) reported on the importance of strong and weak ties among and within these relationships. Weak ties can be important to integrate groups, and strong ties can be limiting with a balance of the two providing the most value, information, and a variety of information channels.

Networks played an important role in small organizations (Skinner et al., 2003). Their study of practices of micro-entrepreneurs [with fewer than five employees, often one or two] found that socially constructed networks and the internal sharing of knowledge are maintained by personal communication networks. While this study reviewed only males who were micro-entrepreneurs in the UK, it supported the experiences of entrepreneurs in this study. Within the venture capital market in the high-tech field, Shane and Cable (2002) found that social ties were important to gain seed capital and provide a method to overcome information asymmetry.

Participants reflected how some interactions with outside entities inserted challenges in their work and potential barriers to achieving their goals. The literature supports this finding in the area of challenges with philanthropy, recognition, and competition for resources. Among the
relationships that presented challenges for social entrepreneurs were those that had a grantee-grantor relationship. Heifetz, Kania, and Kramer (2004) argued that foundations need to move boldly past traditional approaches to support new social change ventures as partners. Kramer (2005, 1) also suggested that the growth of social entrepreneurial ventures created a need for a new perspective on program evaluation stating ‘Traditional foundations often develop theories of change or a logic model. They fund demonstration projects and use rigorous approaches to measure impact.’ In contrast, social entrepreneurs seek to drive rapid change, have an interest in scaling, and need capacity-building support to build strong organizations.

Social entrepreneurs face different kinds of competition for resources. Austen et al., (2006) described social entrepreneurs having to spend a larger portion of their time on fund-raising. Harris et al. (2009, 411) found that ‘non-profits and philanthropic start-ups are subject to intense competitive forces’ though different [forces] from conventional entrepreneurship.

Jacquie:
We’re partnering with one individual non-profit in each state where we sell our product. We’re going to do more of a partnership and maximize synergies, and be very strategic about how we can help that cause, and how they can help us. We’re really working on strategic partnerships right now.

Looking Forward
Theme 7 Leadership awareness
Two themes relate to aspects of looking forward. All of the social entrepreneurs shared experiences describing how they experienced and recognized their roles as leaders in their current role. They reviewed the changing nature of their roles, which at times was desirable and comfortable, sometimes planned and thoughtful, and at other times, uncomfortable. In one instance, a participant had just shut down her venture after nearly ten years, and the unexpected nature of that change was expressed in powerful language. A second theme reflected the participant perspectives on the importance of sustainability.

As social entrepreneurs, most had a role in founding the enterprise and several commented that the survival of the organization cannot be based only on the founder. They described a need to infuse the mission and commitment more broadly and identified a risk to the organization's future if this diffusion did not occur. Teams as a concept and organizational structure were expressed in a variety of ways and used terms of we as the key force of the organization. Others described the nature of teams as peripheral, or as a means to support their individual goals for the organization.

Mackenzie and Barnes (2007) reported underlying consensus on leadership approaches that are dependent on a sense of place or context. They cited Osborn et al., (2002, 93) ‘leadership is embedded in a context. One cannot separate the leader(s) from the context anymore that one can separate a flavor from the food’. The Center for Creative Leadership (Martin and Ernst, 2005) suggested that leadership actions range from individual activity carried out by people in positions of authority, to a collective activity carried out by groups of individuals, communities and organizations who share work. Schein (1995) found that in groups and organizations, someone takes a leadership role and serves a unique leadership function in the organization because they absorb anxiety and risk. The leader also integrates noneconomic assumptions and
values into the organization, and stimulates innovation. The most representative work of leadership in social entrepreneurship was a study of seven cases of successful social entrepreneurs by Alvord et al. (2004). They found great variety in the backgrounds of the entrepreneurs, noting in particular an ability to work with those who might be critical of the initiative and the ability to adapt and bridge differences.

Role changing, development of a team and the exit of the founder is a critical component of the entrepreneurial process. Hofer (1984, 6) discussed how organizations move from a one-person entrepreneurial style of management to a functionally organized team of professionals. The transition process is ‘slow because it involves organizational and personal learning and because it is necessary to preserve old strengths while developing new ones’. Schein (1995, 238) suggests the ‘ultimate dilemma for first generation founders with a strong founder generated culture, is how to make the transition to subsequent generations in such a manner that the organization remains adaptive . . . without destroying the cultural elements that have given it its uniqueness . . .’

Block and Rosenberg (2002) posited that non-profit organizations were held back because founders were skilled at vision and ideas rather than experience and skill in managing organizations. Stevens (2003) reported that, as the organizations evolved, the founders’ role and personal identify shifts. Gumpert and Boyd (2001) found that, in small organizations, there is little room at the top, and any additional resources were used to increase sales rather than recruit managerial talent. This made it difficult to fill in the lower levels, and the founders tended to centralize power in their own hands.

In summary, the literature reflects characteristics, attributes and behaviors of social entrepreneurs but there were few studies in the leadership disciplines or in HRD specifically focused on leadership entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. Participants offered:

Hussein:
So this idea is that leadership is not a position, it’s an activity . . . I feel that the founder, they have their own space, but we as founders, we have to be very careful think to not suck up the whole space for the staff, for the organization . . .

Mary:
We needed to make some significant shifts, and it meant I needed to engage in a different way and be the kind of manager I hadn’t been. So I got a coach, I re-aligned. . . Which means some people left. I’ve learned a lot about what it means to be a team, and I’ve learned a lot more about being leader and what that means.

Theme 8 Sustainability
Sustainability refers to the comments and concerns expressed on how the enterprise would be supported, carried forward or expanded. Participants shared their approaches to keeping the venture sustainable using a variety of business models; the need for metrics to accomplish this; and the need to keep evolving to find new ways to be sustainable. Support in the literature clarifies and describes the challenges.

Urban (2010, 136) suggested that the definition of sustainability is quite different for the not-for-profit sector. This balancing act suggested that ‘there may be a danger, considering that
the non-profit sector is becoming more business-like, that they may miss out on those audiences traditionally supportive of this sector’. In addition, social entrepreneurs have different founding identities (Simms and Robinson 2006), that of entrepreneur and social activist. Sustainability, posits Emerson (2006), needs the introduction of new investment vehicles and strategies to encourage foundations to invest their assets, with the goal of increasing social value.

Leadbeater (1997) described the constraints to sustainability, including the characteristics of the entrepreneurs themselves who prefer fewer processes, such as boards and committees; the challenge of succession; and the difficulty in scaling up. Conflicting perspectives of striving for sustainability vs. self-sufficiency were offered by Boschee and McClurg (2003, 3). While the non-profit sector has traditionally been ‘driven by a non-profit model that relied on a combination of philanthropy, government subsidy and volunteers’, none of the entrepreneurs in this study reported this differentiation. In contrast, they spoke of the need to be sustainable, efforts to be self-sufficient, and most referred to the need for earned income.

Metrics as part of sustainability mattered to social entrepreneurs in this study as they worried about it, and the literature spoke to it. They saw metrics as necessary measures to support sustainability. Dees (2008) argued that social impact is difficult to measure in a reliable, timely, and cost-effective way. Neck, Brush and Allen (2009, 18) considered the importance of performance metrics.

‘Double bottom line, triple bottom line, blended value and social return on investment [for emphasis] are all terms that have gained popularity over the last decade . . . yet there are no universal measures of social or environmental impact’. Financial metrics are important but social ventures need to ‘identify their own social metrics based on mission, industry and ideal impact.’

When social entrepreneurs shared their experiences about sustainability, they also talked about their need to adapt to change to remain sustainable. Light (2009, 22) shared, ‘old organizations can nurture social entrepreneurship. Creating a socially entrepreneurial organization within an existing structure is no doubt difficult . . . . if they reverse the bureaucratic effects of organizational aging’. The experience of looking forward for a social entrepreneur is reflected in the following:

Laurie:
We’ve come a long way in these (commercial) companies, but when it comes right down to it, at some level, the people in these companies first are not entrepreneurial at all. And so you’re up against that emotional mindset of person who’s not very visionary and in thinking ahead, happy with what they’re doing. So we always end up getting killed.

Barbara:
You know, now it’ 10 years later. I have these two stores, but I haven’t done any franchising yet, and that’s really the scalability of the model. . . . So you know that there’s this piece of me that is struggling with, what if I don’t fulfill that part of the dream? . . . I know that as of next year, having given away $1,000,000 in this community is a huge accomplishment, and I really feel good about that. But the vision is bigger than that. . . . I had a good exit strategy in the original plan, but it didn’t work out because of this inability to get this piece of the model really going.

Discussion
While these study findings cannot be generalized, they offer perspectives that can deepen the understanding of social entrepreneurs in terms of their origins, what it takes to live the life and how they think about the future. There is strong resonance described in the work of social entrepreneurs with aspects of the literature on commercial entrepreneurship in the areas of prior experience (Shane, 2000; Guclu, 2002) opportunity identification and alertness, (Kirzner 1985; 1997; Haugh 2007) intention, and self-efficacy, (Borgia et al., 2005; Bandura 1986; Bird 1988).

The experience of social entrepreneurs, however, offers strong distinction from commercial entrepreneurship literature in the importance of events or experiences of a social nature. The significance of the events for each entrepreneur seemed to propel the social entrepreneur to create a vision to make needed change in their community. This can be helpful information as individuals explore the role of social entrepreneur, and in the teaching of social entrepreneurship.

An unexpected finding was how infrequently the literature directly discussed the role of leadership in social entrepreneurs and how rarely, if at all, the participants made any reference to their role as non-profit leader. Overall, they saw themselves as entrepreneurs first as they described their actions, characteristics, and their goals.

The study found implications for practice. Because the role of the social entrepreneur is demanding and complex, appropriate, timely, accessible support systems could be developed in the community that include public and private educational institutions, philanthropy, and community development agencies. Social entrepreneurs can benefit from the knowledge of HRD practices but may not be aware of their applicability because HRD work is commonly associated with large organizations.

**Recommendations**

There is opportunity to learn more about leadership in social entrepreneurial ventures that could benefit organizations that support them. Both the literature and the shared experiences of social entrepreneurs in this study describe how the work often isolates them and leaves little time for relationships. A new model of support could be developed that acknowledges the time and work constraints of social entrepreneurs. Delivery for that support could be via public, community and private educational institutions, philanthropy, community development agencies, and the integration of social entrepreneurship into local organizations such as Chambers of Commerce. Social entrepreneurs would benefit from the knowledge of HRD practices but may not be aware of the applicability because these practices are commonly associated with large organizations.

The second recommendation for practice is related to philanthropy. Both the literature and the study participants suggested opportunities to develop new metrics to measure social impact and value. Partnerships between business schools and organizations that support social entrepreneurs could jointly develop those metrics to measure the benefits of social entrepreneurship to benefit funders, supporters and community members, and provide confidence of the value of their investments. There are many national and international organizations, such as the SKOLL foundation, Ashoka, and the micro-finance sector, that have a strategic and high level perspective who could develop new models of measurement.
For those who teach entrepreneurship, opportunities include learning more about social entrepreneurship for integration into the teaching of entrepreneurship. While this recommendation has limitations because the knowledge is from one study, it appears that social entrepreneurs come to this work not as a stated career goal, but often as the result of life, work experience, or impactful events. By increasing the knowledge base of those who study and teach entrepreneurship, this knowledge could be more broadly disseminated.

Finally, we offer some recommendations to HRD regarding the need for attention to the role of social entrepreneur, as HRD serves as teacher, human developer, and organizational change agent. Advancing human development is one of the missions of the field of HRD. Built on a multi-disciplinary platform, it is important to be responsive to the unique and changing challenges of HRD in order to create its own future (McLagan 1996). The HRD literature sources on social entrepreneurship are few and emanate primarily from the UK with most having come from fields outside of HRD. There is rich opportunity for an increasing focus in this area.

The study revealed opportunity for further research that might include the importance of previous business experience on social entrepreneurship; exploration on new models for philanthropic support; strategic policy implications; changes that would benefit the field; and the role of leadership in social entrepreneurship. The study also found that opportunity exists to expand on the definition of social entrepreneurship. All of these topics might be explored through similar or additional epistemologies, including surveys that might be generalized.

References


