

REAFFIRMING TRUST IN SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IN THE COVID-19 ERA: WAYS FORWARD

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Abstract

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COVID-19 has overwhelmed and stretched existing healthcare infrastructure in both developed and developing economies and pushed governmental response mechanisms to the brink. Globally, governments elicited the call for corporate support, asking social entrepreneurs and social business ventures to organise efforts to build voluntary support for the large-scale response needed during the sudden lockdown disruptions. By April 2020, 26.5 million jobs were lost in the US alone (Lambert, 2020), global stocks plummeted at least 25% and gross domestic product (GDP) contracted significantly for all countries. With reduced domestic demand for non-food goods, reduced foreign demand for US goods exports, supply-chain disruptions, and plant closures, the manufacturing sector saw a huge decline (Reinicke, 2020). Governments all over the world announced massive stimulus packages. The US has approved \$2 trillion financial support to combat the economic downturn so far (Emma & Scholtes, 2020) and EU finance ministers have recently approved €500 billion in stimulus measures (Riley, 2020). It is estimated that the global economy will grow at -3 percent in 2020. This article sheds light on the role of social enterprises in addressing the societal problems caused by COVID-19. The authors highlight the efforts of virtual and collaborative associations who seek to swiftly recognise issues and develop solutions, which create social value and alleviate the plights of suffering communities. This article sheds light on the role of social enterprises in addressing the societal problems caused by COVID-19. The authors highlight the efforts of virtual and collaborative associations who seek to swiftly recognise issues and develop solutions, which create social value and alleviate the plights of suffering communities. The authors place emphasis upon the role of the social entrepreneur in developing a way forward in these challenging times and present a contemporary conceptualisation of the social entrepreneur in the form of an “avatar” and the impact that this may have on social enterprise.

Keywords: COVID-19, Crisis, Trust, Values, Uncertainty, Social Enterprise

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade there has been a real concentration in the academic literature on the rise of social enterprise (Arantes, 2020; Halsall, Oberoi, &

Snowden, 2020; Oberoi, Halsall, & Snowden, 2019). This increased attention has been evident in a global context, as many governments across the world are shifting away from state-controlled, funded projects and moving towards a more social entrepreneurial approach.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the United Kingdom. An article in The Sunday Telegraph noted that social entrepreneurs will be urged “to apply to run public bodies” to create intellectual multiplicity in the civil service (Hope, 2020, p. 2). This approach is seen as a visionary public policy initiative that develops new ideas at the heart of central government. In many public policy circles, this is needed more than ever before due to the economic crisis that COVID-19 has created. Recently, the UK Telegraph journalist, Ross Clark, demanded that the UK government renew the Enterprise Allowance Scheme that was introduced in 2011. Clark (2020) argues that this scheme should be “turbocharged”, stating:

“[...] the economy which grows out of the Covid slump will be very different in many ways from the one which went into it. We have never needed new ideas quite so much. So why not subsidise people who have those ideas, rather than trying to prop up doomed industries?” (p. 19).

The narrative set out in the above paragraphs is the focus of this article. The authors will explore the role that social enterprise has played during the COVID-19 pandemic. Section 2 of this paper discusses trust during the COVID-19 crisis globally. Then, moving on from this, the authors investigate the response that social enterprise has had to the global health pandemic in Section 3. Section 4 presents a new conceptual idea: the *social entrepreneurial avatar*. It is this avatar model that provides a social entrepreneurial and modernistic approach to the development of skills and qualities in the workplace. Section 5 summarises their key points and highlight areas for future research agendas.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST IN TIMES OF CRISES

The International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2021) indicates that the world has entered a crisis equal to or worse than the 2008-2009 financial crisis. But, dealing with the organizational predicament that surfaces from health crises with international range are far more problematic than tackling the ones that originate from conventional financial crises. Furthermore, the current global pandemic is an unpredictable event that is beyond what is normally expected of a situation and has potentially severe consequences (Bogle & Sullivan, 2009). Times of crisis create both threats and opportunities for all sectors. A crisis can cause resource constraint, which demands that firms form associations promptly and/or discard old practices quickly. A crisis is a circumstance in which a significant, unanticipated, or unforeseen threat is posed to an organization’s survival, and to which an organization has little time and/or resources to react (Hermann, 1963).

The development of a particular theory cannot be isolated from its timeframe and its social embedding. Propositions upheld by a particular theory aim to explain specific phenomena and problems, and are, thus, deeply influenced by the values and norms governing that theory’s timeframe and place. During a crisis, among the main aspects that influence trust are the situational and contextual dynamics that blind the trade (Huang & Wilkinson, 2013). The trust phenomenon is at the heart of the social bond and is

often used as a common explanatory feature of the success of collective action. Trust tends to be understood in functionalist terms, as a peculiar social mechanism reducing uncertainty (Luhmann, 1979). Trust is an infinite process in a social setting. According to Fukuyama (1995):

“Trust depends on the recognition of norms and values commonly shared by the group, as well as the sacrifice or postponement of satisfying your needs for the benefit of the group. In the collective action field, trust is regarded as a safeguard to deliver optimal outcome — meaning the least expensive outcome — when facing collective action dilemmas, by replacing a constant risk calculus with a routine cooperation” (p. 25).

Furthermore, according to Hardin (2002), trust is nothing more than an encapsulation of private interests; he states: “I trust you because I think it is in your interest to take my interests in the relevant matter seriously in the following sense: you value the continuation of our relationship, and you therefore have your own interests in taking my interests into account” (p. 2).

One of the concerns is the call for speedy action due to time and resource limitations. In such circumstances, a person conducts himself differently than in an ordinary situation and rationalizes their decisions accordingly (Luhmann, 1979). Blomqvist (2002) suggests that since these extraordinary times amplify vagueness and difficulty, and require quick responses, the prerequisite of trust increases, but, simultaneously, the opportunity for trust-building dwindles. Again, Six, van Zimmeren, Popa, and Frison (2015) state:

“Trust, norms and networks are resources that permit one to go beyond the collective action dilemmas. If these resources are present, they will render the best outcomes (i.e., the least expensive) in situations of free riding, overexploitation of shared resources (tragedy of the commons), or myopic non-cooperation (prisoners’ dilemma). Communities with an important stock of social capital, in other words, with intense interconnectivity between its members, are better equipped to generate and sustain collective action” (p. 154).

The above can show the way to the configuration of “swift trust”. Moreover, swift trust forms hurriedly and is founded not on a tangible appraisal, but a trust proxy such as reputation (Blomqvist, 2002). In most cases, systems that are required to act under time restraint due to a particular situation will espouse swift trust (Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996). Luhmann (1979) thus puts forward a hypothesis that systems under stress or ambiguity necessitate trust as an input and not just an output and an apt attitude to sustain the vital mutual activities. These predicaments demand a definite approach that not only facilitates trust but also deals with any latent fear of the situation that may impinge on the liaison.

Knight (2009) clearly states that handling ambiguity is a typical undertaking for an entrepreneur. The break for entrepreneurship materializes when uncertainty present in the economic and social situation cannot be entirely translated into jeopardy: i.e., ambiguity cannot be quantified and, consequently, cannot be insured against. These circumstances of ambiguity also explicate why trust is intrinsic to any

entrepreneurial action. An entrepreneur needs to gain trust who cannot acquire complete information on what is being pioneered to the marketplace. Likewise, Möllering (2014) observes that “uncertainty, combined with a vulnerability, is a common prerequisite for trust to be germane [...] we are not merely discussing bounded rationality but about deep-seated, Knightian improbability which renders computation and calculation unattainable by characterization” (pp. 14–15).

Hence, even though, trust has been explored extensively, the notion of trust remains worthy of deeper investigation and further theoretical testing, especially in the present times of the pandemic. Trust is a critical component of our relationship with others; it forms a basis for not only social but also economic relations. Trust is necessarily linked to entrepreneurship because it is useful in conditions of uncertainty. Furthermore, delving into the role and responsibility of social enterprises, which incorporates trust, requires further attention. Social business or social enterprise implies association, and, in any successful relationship, trust is at the heart. Trust is critical to any venture, and trust is a habit we practice frequently, daily, and without even being conscious of it. Social enterprises that set out to accomplish both social and economic goals are the institutions that try to construct and build up new business models in the sectors where both state and market have fallen short of their responsibilities.

Ambiguity in entrepreneurship — and more particularly in social enterprise — is related to actors taking considered risks as they work through uncertain circumstances. Social enterprise studies assert that the dynamism of the social enterprise sector lies in its social capital (Drayton, 2005; Defourny, 2001). Another aspect inherent in the relationship between social enterprises and their community users is the forging of social capital. Putnam (2001) and Coleman (1990) give emphasis to this conception stating that trust holds networks of people together for universal good. Trust is constituent of all social exchange dealings and cooperative accomplishment.

According to Lane (1998), trust becomes imperative where “relationships contain one of a number of elements, including uncertainty arising from unforeseeable future contingencies, a degree of interdependence between agents, and the threat of opportunism” (p. 10). He argues that “trust bridges information uncertainty” (p. 7), meaning that in order to co-operate and work together on projects where there is a risk, participants often rely upon the trustful nature of their relationships with other organizations in the network. So, trust and confidence in these institutions play a fundamental role. Given that trust is a base for participation in information sharing and possibilities, it also advances dynamic effectiveness based on novelty, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Citizens typically judge social entrepreneurs by their intentions instead of judging them merely by the community effects brought about by their entrepreneurial activities. This poses a very pertinent challenge, as social entrepreneurs are habitually distinguished by a high level of trust, which comes from the special purpose they have in finding solutions for social problems. Trust, by its very nature, cannot be purely calculative.

3. SOCIAL ENTERPRISE'S RESPONSE DURING COVID-19

The world has altered in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the introduction of new social practices and ways of living (Alon, Farrell, & Li, 2020). The pandemic is challenging the ethos and edifice of the global liberal order, and the vulnerabilities of millions are out in the open. The gaps between the haves and have-nots have expanded, especially as COVID-19 has led to massive job losses, migration, and health service failures, etc. and people already on the brink have been pushed over. Far from being just a disruption, the pandemic is signalling the urgent need to reset economic, social, and political structures. Furthermore, the UN's Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to the COVID-19 Crisis warns that:

“The COVID-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis: it is affecting societies and economies at their core. While the impact of the pandemic will vary from country to country, it will most likely increase poverty and inequalities at a global scale, making achievement of SDGs even more urgent. Without urgent socio-economic responses global suffering will escalate, jeopardizing lives and livelihoods for years to come” (UNDP, 2020).

There is broad agreement that COVID-19 has initiated critical rethinking, even among the neoliberal supporters. By default, neoliberalism has no robust answers to the current global crisis. The future world order needs to ensure a more egalitarian distribution of resources.

While crises can have an overwhelming effect on the economy and society, they also unlock opportunities for deliberate restitution. Particularly, “crises — relax [...] the normal constraints around decision-making” (Bryson, 1981, p. 181), and thus, can manifest options to realize what used to be unthinkable or unfeasible. The study of causation and effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001) in new venture creation demonstrates that amplified environmental ambiguity is favourable for broadening joint ventures and innovation possibility, triggering out-of-the-box thinking. In particular, the authors in this paper show how firms start to seek out novel and unconventional ideas in response to crises, spreading out their measures toward other zones, and exploring innovative ways of doing business in the wake of uncertainty or widespread uncertainty.

Due to the nature of the COVID-19 crisis, there is still hesitation regarding how social enterprise will move forward to create social value. There is agreement that in order to fine-tune to the latest reality, more entrepreneurship is essential — principally social enterprises that focus on value co-creation. Innovation will have an important role to play in recovering from the aftermath of COVID-19; this would enable a valuable use of entrepreneurial passion aimed at alleviating the social insecurity caused by the pandemic, by showcasing the value that results from cooperation. Social entrepreneurship is primarily the art of leveraging resources to take benefit from marketplace opportunities to accomplish sustainable social change.

According to Bill Drayton, founder of Ashoka, social entrepreneurs build businesses that are distinguished by the fact that the value created accrues first and foremost to society as a whole,

rather than as private profit for individuals. As such, social entrepreneurs create pattern-breaking transformations in inequitable and unfair systems, whether through social enterprises or other social business models. Social enterprises, which operate at the nexus of business and social development, have been making their mark as agents of change in the niche markets and the base of the pyramid (BoP) communities they serve, by pushing the boundaries in the creation and deployment of innovative business solutions to targeted needs of low-income, vulnerable, and/or marginalized groups.

There is a range of social value co-creation practices, including commoditizing, customizing, documenting, empathizing, evangelizing, governing, justifying, and milestoneing (Grohs, Wieser, & Pristach, 2019). Social value creation provides a way to focus on how social objectives can be adopted within a business activity (Di Domenico, Haugh, & Tracey, 2010), thereby providing a bridge between traditional commercial entrepreneurship activities and those that take a more societal view to profit creation. Chesbrough (2020) advocates an opening up of the world economy based on social value co-creation in order to recover faster from the effects of COVID-19. Chesbrough's view complements Munshi's (2010), who suggests that, in global economies, there needs to be a combination of value creation, social innovation, and entrepreneurship. This multifaceted approach will enable entrepreneurship to be used as a way to enact social value creation in society (Korsgaard & Anderson, 2011).

Social enterprises are gaining ever-increasing interest and support from both the public and private sectors, and have been the target of myriad technical, policy, and financing interventions by various actors. So, because of their unique hybrid model, the social enterprise sector today includes new typologies of organizations and traditional third sector or NGO organizations re-fashioned by a novel entrepreneurial dynamic. In this respect, the social enterprise notion does not seek to substitute the concept of the non-profit sector or social economy; rather, they propose to conduit these two diverse concepts by focusing on new entrepreneurial dynamics of civic initiatives that pursue social aims. Moreover, as Ratten (2020) notes:

"Whether the globalization strategy of the past is still emphasized is yet to be seen or how these changes will occur will be interesting to watch. What is known is that a social entrepreneurship and value co-creation strategy needs to be used to alleviate the problems caused by COVID-19 in order to bring about positive change".

4. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURIAL AVATAR IN THE COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT

Drawing from the conceptual discussion presented in this paper, as illustrated by the UNDP (2020) and Ratten (2020), we are now at the point in time where change is needed, change that will provide a response to the demands of today's dynamic global society that is threatened by the global pandemic of COVID-19. Living with this pandemic

requires communities to be responsive and to strive towards developing sustainable solutions presented as a result of COVID-19. As emphasized by Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the current Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), stated at a briefing in June 2020 that social enterprise and social entrepreneurs are presented with a distinct challenge — enabling society to build a new "normal":

"The critical question that all countries will face in the coming months is how to live with this virus. That is the new normal [...]. Most people remain susceptible. The virus still has a lot of room to move. We all want this to be over. We all want to get on with our lives. But the hard reality is: this is not even close to being over. Although many countries have made some progress, globally, the pandemic is actually speeding up. We're all in this together, and we're all in this for the long haul. We will need even greater stores of resilience, patience, humility and generosity in the months ahead" (WHO, 2020).

This is a particularly mindful quote that resonates with a second (or even third) wave sweeping the globe (Grech & Cuschieri, 2020; Looi, 2020) with the potential to inflict further suffering and heartache, presenting and raising the stakes for an effective response by social enterprise and social entrepreneurs.

The value of the role of social enterprise in this global response cannot be overstated and was reaffirmed in September 2020 by the World Economic Forum in their report exploring the place of social enterprise and entrepreneurship in our contemporary global society:

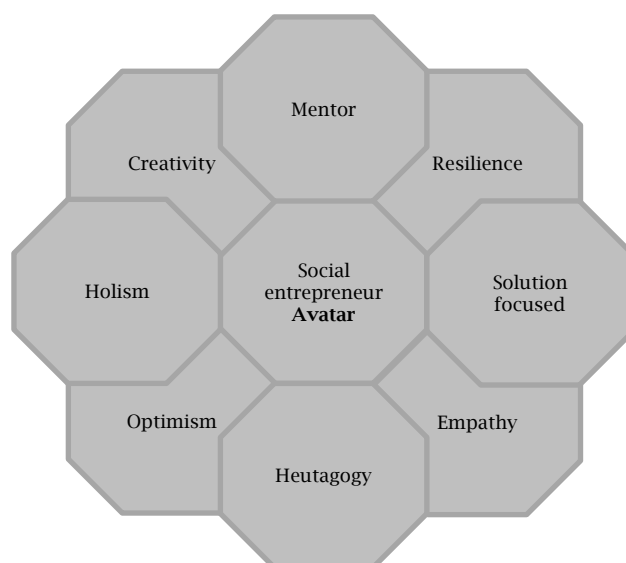
"For decades, social entrepreneurs have effectively reached and helped vulnerable populations and have served as the guardians of people and the planet. Often and increasingly, they:

1. Bring vital products and services to those on the fringes of society, while acting as first responders during a crisis.
2. Sustain jobs and social security, at a time when the effects of losing one's income can be particularly devastating.
3. Innovate to address the intractable social and environmental challenges society faces.
4. Champion the sustainable development agenda, calling for an inclusive and green economy and a reset of markets.
5. Empower and create agency among communities so they can develop and advance their own trajectories and solutions" (World Economic Forum, 2020, p. 8).

And encapsulated by the following: "The social entrepreneurs' track record and ingenuity to confront immediate problems on the ground are vital to the collective ability to weather the crisis today and shape a new tomorrow" (World Economic Forum, 2020, p. 8).

The value of the social entrepreneur cannot be overstated, however, as presented by the authors of this paper, we present a vision that illustrates a new conceptualisation of the social entrepreneur of 2020 in the form of a social avatar:

Figure 1. Social entrepreneur model



Source: Authors' elaboration.

The social entrepreneur avatar includes the development of eight key skills and qualities:

1. *Mentoring*. Mentoring is a dynamic, multi-faceted, and complex process and consequently is challenging (Garvey, Stokes, & Megginson, 2017; Snowden, 2019) to define. Garvey et al. (2017) suggest that securing a consensual definition across professions and contexts is unlikely to be achieved and both emphasize the importance of context: "Localized understanding is important and perhaps that the best that can be done in a social practice that has such variation of purpose, scope and application" (p. 21). However, this lack of clarity and consistency of the term creates confusion and to determine exactly what constitutes mentoring, and therefore its impact upon practice and personal development. None the less, it is possible when reviewing the available literature to identify a number of key features that are common to definitions presented in the literature and these can be encapsulated in the following: mentoring is generally conceptualised as a learning process in which helpful learning conversations take place within a nurturing and non-hierarchical relationship and sustained over a period of time. Typically, mentors are more "senior" (mentor) practitioners who offer support for a less experienced practitioner (mentee) with the aim of enhancing the mentee's experience, for example in this case Social enterprise.

Mentoring is an "intervention that supports those individuals with less experience within any given context in their personal, social and professional development" (Snowden & Halsall, 2017, p. 297), and an altruistic process that "enables the mentee to access the inside knowledge that the mentor has developed over their life course; distinctly, the mentor is able to translate reality and help the mentee inhabit their own patterns of reasoning, insight and the application of knowledge and skill" (Snowden, 2019, p. 123).

Distinctly, mentorship when successful enables the mentee to access the inside knowledge that the mentor has developed over their life course.

In particular, the mentor helps the mentee make sense of what they are experiencing, and to apply and acquire knowledge and skill (Snowden & Halsall, 2016). It is this access into the inside knowledge of the mentor that provides the real power of mentoring. However, to facilitate the transfer of experience, knowledge, and skills this in itself is a challenging and transformative process that requires key skills, qualities, and abilities. McSherry and Snowden (2019) highlight these when exploring mentorship within health and social care.

Drawing upon Darling's (1984) seminal work, McSherry and Snowden (2019) assert that there are four transferrable key characteristics that are essential in enabling a mentor to be effective within the practice, these are as follows:

- **Teacher-coach**: An individual who provides guidance on problems and who is able to teach, explain and prioritize and develop interpersonal skills. Such as the ability to communicate and interact well with people [would like to see this expanded — the coaching models explored especially in management literature and its impact on this particular model].
- **Feedback-giver**: This is someone who provides a lot of positive, constructive feedback, both when the practice was good and also when practice could be developed. Importantly here, the mentor must have the ability to examine and share their experience and knowledge in order to improve practice.
- **Standard-prodder**: This introduces the notion of quality and assurance in terms of standards and governance. To achieve this, the mentor must be clear about what was required within the context and be clear in their guidance and support enabling the mentee to achieve their aspirations and standards commensurate with excellence.
- **Eye opener**: The mentor must be able to "open eyes" to and encourage an interest in research and development and also enhance their knowledge and understanding of the nature and "politics" of the subject and disciple of social enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, McSherry and Snowden (2019), drawing upon Darwin (2004), propose that there are six key personality traits that should be desired in the mentor: trust, approachability, non-bias and non-judgmental, empathy, friendliness, and willingness.

The importance of willingness to perform the role of the mentor is very well (Moon, 2004; Clutterbuck, 2014; Garvey et al., 2017) documented and as Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, and DuBois (2008), report when exploring the failings of mentoring programmes identified that mentors' lack of availability and willingness to support mentees is the main contributory factor of failed mentorship. However, whilst willingness in structural terms is the factor presented in the literature; we, the authors of this paper, propose it is the willingness to share experiences, both successful and failed experiences with the mentee that are the crucial element of success. It is the honesty, approachability, empathy, and friendliness of the mentor that enables them to access the inside knowledge of their experiences that presents successful outcomes associated with mentoring. Consequently, mentee and mentor are able to reflect, share ideas, and share experiences both negative and positive. By utilising the inside knowledge (McSherry & Snowden, 2019) the mentor is "encouraging individuals to learn and share from their experiences both positive and negative in an open and transparent way" (p. 11).

The benefits of mentoring in the learning context are well documented, and illustrate that mentoring increases retention, career, and academic progression rates; enhances the performance of both the mentee and mentor, enhances learning satisfaction, curriculum knowledge understanding of feedback and confidence; reduces stress and anxiety; promotes a realist curriculum and improves employability (Snowden & Hardy, 2012; Gershenfeld, 2014; Collings, Swanson, & Watkins, 2016; Cornelius, Wood, & Lai, 2016; Snowden, 2019; Goodchild, 2019). Furthermore, it is increasingly become an established practice in many professions and has been seen to have made a significant impact upon organizational performance (Garvey et al., 2017) and especially within social enterprise organizations (Oberoi, Halsall, & Snowden, 2019, 2020). However, literature exploring the role of mentoring in social enterprise is sparse, comprising mainly anecdotal accounts of mentoring opportunities, there is a clear need for substantive research into this area, supported by Despite the obvious benefits, mentoring has, as Thomaz and Catalão-Lopes (2019) who assert, that despite its potential benefits, mentoring in social enterprise has largely been neglected.

The authors of this paper, and as highlighted elsewhere (Oberoi et al., 2019), cannot overstate the importance of mentoring and as such provides the key component of the "avatar" framework.

2. Holism. Holism is a concept that proposes that nature can only be considered as a part of a whole or the sum of its parts. For example, a holistic approach to a social enterprise would focus on the whole community and context. This would involve social, economic, political, psychological sociological, spiritual, physiological, cultural, and geographical factors in determining a response. A holistic social entrepreneur would be someone aware of the interconnectedness of the mind, body, spirit, social/cultural, emotions, relationships, context, community, and environment.

Jan Christian Smuts, the South African philosopher, in 1926 is considered to be the first person to coin the term "holism" and was an attempt to describe the tendency in nature to produce wholes from the ordered grouping of substructures or elements, where each part is dependent upon another (Smuts, 1998). However, the precise nature of, determines what constitutes "holistic" does to some extent, depend upon your discipline. For example, a molecular biologist may view holism as a multi-functioning cell; an astronomer of the universe and planets, or pedologists observing soil morphology spatial distribution of soil. Nonetheless it is the health professionals who have largely taken ownership of the terms linking this to both individual (interdependency of mind, body, soul, spirituality, and community) and community health (interdependency of individual, family, community, ecological, economic, and social health).

Within a social enterprise, holism means the social entrepreneur's ability to look, and assess diligently the context as a whole (Oberoi et al., 2020) examining and assessing all the features and factors affecting the issue. This must include social, economic, political, psychological sociological, spiritual, physiological, cultural, and geographical factors in determining an informed diligent, and holistic response. This will require knowledge and understanding of the processes affecting the issues and will demand a cross-disciplinary approach to planning, where the social entrepreneur will draw upon expertise across the disciplines where needed — reaffirming the value of the mentor who will have a key role in facilitation and reflection.

The value of a holistic approach to social enterprise and is emphasized by House (2016) suggesting that a skill key to developing a social enterprise is the ability of the social entrepreneur to view matters holistically.

3. Heutagogy. Heutagogy provides a different style of learning that challenges more traditional styles of learning and skill acquisition. The concept of heutagogy is developed from the study of self-determined learning and is becoming an increasingly popular approach to learning and skill development within the community sector.

The premise of heutagogy is that learning is based upon the needs and aspirations of the learner, where they have been enabled to develop their own subject interest and their personal philosophy based upon their learning needs. The heutagogical approach to learning is based upon self-determined learning and is mutually related to mentoring and holism. Heutagogy is underpinned by knowledge sharing but importantly, as Snowden and Halsall (2014) assert, it is a process that is learner or practitioner-centric and is based distinctly upon real-world experiences.

Blaschke (2012) suggests that a central theme in heutagogy is "double-loop learning". This enables the learner to "consider the problem and the resulting action and outcomes, in addition to reflecting upon the problem-solving process and how it influences the learner's own beliefs and actions" (p. 59) becoming more capable practitioners:

"When learners are competent, they demonstrate the acquisition of knowledge and skills; skills can be repeated and knowledge retrieved. When learners are

capable, skills and knowledge can be reproduced in unfamiliar situations. Capability is then the extension of one's own competence, and without competency there cannot be capability" (p. 60).

This approach to learning skills and knowledge has particular resonance within today's COVID world, as illustrated by Bhojrub, Hurley, Neilson, Ramsay, and Smith (2010) who argue that heutagogy enables a learning framework and best approach to use to enable skills and knowledge development in those learners and practitioners that work in ever-varied surroundings that are unpredictable and uncertain. This view is supported by Canning and Callan (2010) who assert that the heutagogical approach relies on reflective practice and enables stronger practical applications and learning within the real-world setting.

A heutagogical social entrepreneur is someone who is able to promote holism, self-worth, and capability and is able to draw upon multiple perceptions, intuition, and demonstrate the ability to conceptualize complex solutions successfully in a rapidly changing world.

4. Solution focused. Mezirow (2000) suggests that those people who are solution focused are those who look outside of the box, and towards solutions, rather than backward by perseverating on problems. A solution focused practitioner is a committed, engaged citizen who acknowledges that social enterprise requires leadership and transformation at individual, societal and cultural levels. Solution focused approaches to entrepreneurship are concerned with constructing holistic solutions rather than dwelling on problems, it is an approach that looks forwards, towards solutions and described as a transformative experience (Mezirow, 2000) and comprises three key dimensions:

1) **Assessing.** The entrepreneur acquires knowledge and understanding of the issue and community through active dialogue and comprehensive assessment of need including multiple sources of data collection — formal and informal. The entrepreneur gets to know and understand the community/group/issue and involves comprehensive data collection.

2) **Planning and collaboration.** In collaboration with the community group and stakeholders, the entrepreneur designs and constructs resolution strategies and initiative and further develops solutions to the issues and develops capacity-building strategies.

3) **Adaptation and engagement.** This stage is crucial for sustainability and involves the entrepreneur learner and community establishing a continuing process of dialogue and continuous assessment ensuring that knowledge skills and attributes crucial for success are continually revisited in a cyclical manner ensuring solutions remain relevant and congruent with expectations within the context (adapted from Snowden, 2017).

Solution focused practitioners demonstrate critical consciousness, collective identity, and develop sustainable strategies for successful change and demonstrate a mindset that thinks in terms of optimism and possibilities. In the context of social enterprise, the solutions focused entrepreneur is able to facilitate effective governance ensuring

enhanced efficacy, safety, quality, and services by ensuring social enterprise principles are met and risks are reduced and errors avoided.

5. Optimism. An optimistic entrepreneur (Crane & Crane, 2007) is an individual who fosters confidence and promotes success in challenging environments and contexts. They in their positive and "can do" outlook inspire others and are not averse to risk-taking and bold strategies to achieve success and have the ability to turn negative features or failings into success and promoting certainty where there has been uncertainty.

A key trait associated with an optimistic personality is their high level of self-efficacy and a belief in their ability to change their situation and the situation of others. Seligman (2008) suggests that through a process of supported training it is possible to learn to be optimistic. Seligman (2008) suggests that those who explain bad or negative experiences being caused by internal factors (themselves) and are likely to continue to happen in parts of life can be described as pessimistic, whereas those who adopt an optimistic outlook typically view negative events as a result of external factors (not themselves) and caused by specific and controllable causes. Crane and Crane (2007) also assert that optimistic entrepreneurs are more successful than pessimistic entrepreneurs when implementing change.

Seligman (2008) supports this suggesting that those individuals with an optimistic outlook have the power to enhance outcomes, and performance when presented with challenges. Consequently, the development of learning and coping strategies to promote optimistic thinking will increase the likelihood of entrepreneurial success and is therefore of paramount importance.

6. Resilience. Resilience in recent years has become somewhat of a "buzzword" and is seen to be generating more attention due to its potential impact upon human life and communities. Whilst there has been a distinct growth in articles exploring the notion of resilience, it is clear that there is a lack of uniformity and consensus when attempting to define the term. This as Grant and Kinman (2014) assert is a result of the likelihood of the complex nature of the concept and the multitude of contexts in which it has been applied. However, they do offer a general definition that is inherently linked to social enterprise in the current climate of COVID-19: "the ability to 'recover' from adversity, react appropriately, or 'bounce back' when life presents challenges" (p. 24).

A recent literature review by the authors of this paper found that there is a distinct paucity of literature and a dearth of material exploring the empirical basis of resilience and social entrepreneurs. This reflects the findings of Littlewood and Holt (2018) who comment that there is an irresponsible lack of research exploring the relationship between resilience and the development of a social entrepreneur. However, through the illustration of a number of case studies, they do allude to the potential association between resilience and success. This is important for the development of the social entrepreneur as Yeager and Dweck (2012), suggest that resilience can be learned, and does form the basis of much successful stress management and intervention strategies. The social entrepreneur will encounter

challenges and adversity; the ability to “recover” from adversity and to react appropriately, or as Grant and Kinman (2014) assert “bounce back” is a fundamental and desirable quality of the successful entrepreneur.

7. Empathy. Empathy is a powerful communication skill that is both teachable and learnable, despite this however characterised by a paucity of research especially within the context of social enterprise. Nonetheless, it can be described as the ability to understand another person’s experience from that person’s perspective.

This supports the view of Bacq and Alt (2018) who propose that empathy is a crucial attribute of the social entrepreneur in executing and planning successful change. This is a significant precursor to an altruistic motive and as Choi and Majumdar (2014) assert, social entrepreneurs are altruistic and virtuous when promoting social change. Furthermore empathic individuals demonstrate strong emotional and social intelligence and have the ability to form strong relationships and connections with others from a variety of contexts, cultures, and backgrounds. The ability of the social entrepreneur to empathize enables insight and intelligence forming successful bonds that promote sustainability and goal attainment.

8. Creativity. Social entrepreneurs, suggest Choi and Majumdar (2014), are individuals who are able to think outside the box and present both unconventional and conventional solutions to challenges. Linked to solution-focused thinking which in itself is creative they are able to conceptualise new ideas, solutions, and possibilities that others may not necessarily see or imagine. Whilst Gunn and Durkin (2010) propose that that creativity is an innate skill of the social entrepreneur, it is important to acknowledge Haynes (2020) who asserts, that creativity can be taught and developed as a skill within the varied context of social enterprise.

Humanity today faces an unprecedented challenge, a challenge to its fundamental existence and a challenge to everyday activities across the globe. A new normal is emerging and these new normal needs appropriate individuals to respond to the challenge presented, this must be actively encouraged and supported in the application of entrepreneurial approaches to the social challenges of COVID-19.

Oberoi et al. (2019, para 6) reaffirm this view and state that “The ingenuity that utilizes entrepreneurial proficiency and spirit to get to the bottom of social problems” whilst not new, is ahead of the conceptual construct, and is crucial to fulfilling the demands of the changing world.

Society today, to ensure equality and parity, demands the development of a new avatar who responds to the challenges of the day — an individual who is able to create social value by generating innovative solutions through a process of altruistic entrepreneurship. The proposed avatar provides the framework for skill and knowledge development for the social entrepreneur who is responsive to societal needs. We urge educators and organizations to adopt the framework when preparing entrepreneurs of today and we urge

researchers and research agencies to dedicate themselves to the development of the social enterprise agenda reflected by this avatar.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the importance of social enterprise in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is evident from this research paper that social enterprises have played an imperative role during this crisis. As has been noted, social enterprise organizations have acted as a linchpin between the state and local communities in many countries across the world. For example, it was stated recently at the Social Enterprise World Forum:

“Within communities, social enterprises are working to mitigate the impact of coronavirus. Some are scaling up with the assistance of their skilled and dedicated staff and volunteer teams, others are changing what they deliver and using innovative approaches” (Harvey, 2020).

Like local government and public health institutions, social enterprise organizations are on the frontline in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic; the global health crisis has forced organizations to do social practices differently, and the social enterprise sector has responded to these challenges very quickly. From a theoretical point of view, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced social and political scientists to rethink social value co-creation practices. The COVID-19 pandemic, in this sense, has compelled different stakeholders (e.g., governments, social entrepreneurs, scholars, and public policymakers) to be more innovative in the resolution of societal problems. Hence, the authors of this paper have made the following three recommendations:

1. Closer scrutiny of global institutions and governments regarding the powerful impact of what social enterprise organizations are doing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a lot of great work that has been undertaken by social enterprises in communities.

2. Further academic research into the management of crises, including, but not limited to financial crunches, global pandemics, and environmental disasters. There are great opportunities for researchers to engage in interdisciplinary research projects with different stakeholders.

3. An exploration of coaching and mentorship in staff development. In this paper, the authors have explored the opportunities highlighted by the social entrepreneurial avatar and how this could have a positive impact on wider society.

Effective governance is inherent within the emerging role of the social entrepreneur and social enterprise. Drawing upon McSherry and Snowden (2019), we close by offering a definition of social enterprise governance. We propose that social enterprise governance is a framework through which social enterprise organizations are accountable for continuously improving the quality of their service and safeguarding high standards of entrepreneurship care by creating an environment in which excellence in the social enterprise will flourish. The sustainability of social enterprise can be achieved by facilitating quality improvement(s) through raising the entrepreneurs’ and stakeholders’ awareness of their own accountability for excellence.

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