

The social entrepreneur. A brief characterization

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Abstract

In recent decades, research on social entrepreneurship has been increasing due to a new formula for business but now endowed a social purpose. Thus, a social entrepreneur is a person able to transform the surrounding environment at long term through innovative projects with social benefit. The objective of this research is to identify some elements and basic characteristics of the social entrepreneur profile, to understand what makes a difference between a conventional or economic entrepreneur and a social entrepreneur to generate social value from their actions, changing their environment in positive way. This paper presents a brief description about the social entrepreneurial profile based on demographic and psychological characteristics is performed. Some empirical profiles of social entrepreneurs in the world are mentioned and it concludes with some elements that help to understand its characterization.

Entrepreneur, Social , Characterization, Profile

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Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is an issue that has gained relevance over the last few decades. One of the causes is that countries have been impacted by various crises (economic, political and social), which have led to the generation of new business models, whose main objective, besides generating profits, is to provide an effective method to reduce Day-to-day problems that arise within society, such as caring for the environment, improving education or health services, concern about unemployment, migration, lack of financial opportunities, and so on. In this way the social entrepreneur is born as a key figure in the face of these new challenges.

The person responsible for generating and promoting well-being within his or her social environment is the social entrepreneur, capable of generating sustainable projects and with the ability to get out of the ordinary, finding innovative solutions to social problems, for which he is considered as one of the main promoters of change.

Social entrepreneurs are regularly identified in the same line of study as conventional or economic entrepreneurs. However, although they share some similar characteristics, the social entrepreneur seeks to differentiate himself through the method of action he undertakes and the impact he will have on society. It surrounds it.

The objective of this research is to identify some elements and basic characteristics of the profile of the social entrepreneur, to understand what makes a different actor to the conventional or economic entrepreneur. The scope of this research is descriptive and is based on a documentary review of primary and secondary sources of information.

Thus, the first section defines the concept of social entrepreneur; In the second, the analysis of the characteristics with which it is based on some empirical research is carried out; And the third section mentions some of the artifacts that allow social entrepreneurs to interact to transform their environment; Finally, it concludes with some elements that help its characterization.

Social entrepreneur

According to the definition of Guzman & Trujillo (2008), social entrepreneurship is "a specific type of enterprise that seeks solutions to social problems through the construction, evaluation and pursuit of opportunities that allow the generation of sustainable social value, achieving equilibria New and stable in relation to social conditions, through direct action carried out by non-profit organizations, companies or government agencies "(p.110). Thus, the person who launches these projects is the social entrepreneur.

There is a great diversity of definitions about the term social entrepreneur, which derives from the complexity and multidimensionality of its essence.

Concepts such as innovation, persistence, will, commitment, change, value, social utility, inclusion, altruism among others, are those highlighted and shared by different authors about the aforementioned term (Bornestein & Davis, 2012; Kliksberg, 2011).

Other experts in the subject consider certain attitudes in the entrepreneurs, which allow them the development in the physical environment to be able to put into practice their ideas and projects.

Such attitudes (especially those in which several authors converge) are persistence to change, social vocation, active participation, ingenuity, positive attitude, among others (Dancin, Dancin & Tracey, 2011, Austin et al., 2006; Mitchell, Busenitz, Bird, Gaglio, McMullen, Morse, & Smith, 2007). Thus, we find that the social vocation (among the attitudes mentioned and others that can be added) is what distinguishes the social entrepreneur from traditional entrepreneurs.

Another characteristic of the social entrepreneur is that he / she is able to create value from social innovation (Kramer, 2005; Dancin, Dancin & Tracey, 2011; Austin et al., 2006; Mitchell, Busenitz, Bird, Marie Gaglio, McMullen, Morse, And Smith, 2007; Tracey, Phillips & Jarvis, 2011), so their ability to imagine and create is essential.

The social entrepreneur is a generator of change and well-being. However, it must be taken into account that this social actor is part of a set of characteristics that identify both demographic (which can be considered easy to identify: age, sex, education, place of origin, occupation, etc.) as (Which are difficult to appreciate: values, behaviors and attitudes towards the conception of the environment that surrounds them) and distinguish it from the entrepreneur we commonly call economic (to refer to one who only seeks a profit for his own benefit). As mentioned, the literature highlights a great variety of definitions regarding the social entrepreneur; however, it is possible to rescue four key dimensions: the individual characteristics of the entrepreneur (Light, 2009, Mort et al., 2003); The surrounding environment (Tracey et al., 2011); The methodology, processes and resources it uses (Dancin, Dancin & Tracey, 2011); And the mission or rationale that guides their actions (Peredo & McLean, 2006, Dancin, Dancin & Tracey, 2011).

Thus, the social entrepreneur can be considered as a searcher and retain those elements that allow him to culminate ideas and have the expected impact within society. The social entrepreneur moves between these elements and molds them according to their needs. That is why its involvement in different arenas such as political, economic and social within which it seeks resources, identifies or creates opportunities, generates networks and innovates.

Given the complexity of univocally defining the social entrepreneur, Astrid Fischel (2013) considers that it is necessary to renew the concept of implementing initiatives that innovate to generate social benefits to focus on community involvement in the search for alternative solutions to problems and challenges, relying on Knowledge and resources. In this way we find in this new vision of analysis that community involvement is essential for the social entrepreneur to be strengthened.

We consider relevant to provide some examples of social entrepreneurs that in practice have achieved the permanence in time of great projects that have even been applauded worldwide.

The main reference is with Muhamad Yunus, renowned social entrepreneur and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 thanks to his Gramen Bank project, a pioneering project of its kind, developed in Bangladesh in the 1980s, hometown Of Yunus, in which microcredits were granted to poor people to start a business without guarantees, only with group guarantees, that is, there was a joint responsibility between several members of the same community.

The results of this project were overwhelming. Today it has more than 8 million borrowers in Bangladesh and lends more than \$ 100 million a month, money that comes directly from payments from other borrowers. According to Yunus, success was based on boosting development from below, which has replicated this model in more than 80 countries.

Another example of recognized social entrepreneurs is William Drayton, leader of the Ashoka Foundation, founded in 1980 to support entrepreneurs with social causes with economic resources, professional support and access to global networks. Currently this foundation has presence in 70 countries, with Mexico being the second country in Latin America where it opened an office in 1987.

For Ashoka (2015), a social entrepreneur is "an individual who unceasingly conceives and pursues a new idea for solving social problems on a grand scale. Social entrepreneurs have an impact in changing the systems that are behind the problem and have five main qualities: new ideas, social impact, creativity, entrepreneurial career and ethical fiber "(p.6).

In this last definition we find an additional element to the previously discussed that is the ethical fiber, referring to the search of the common good.

We also find the case of Jeff Skoll, creator of the Skoll Foundation in 1999 whose mission is to contribute to the large-scale improvement of society's living conditions by supporting social entrepreneurs defined as "agents of change in society: Creators of innovations that disturb the status quo and transform our world into a better one. "

The Foundation has been working for several years and its current president Sally Osberg co-authored with Roger Martin the book "Getting beyond Better: How Social Entrepreneurship Works" introduces new concepts in the slang of social entrepreneurship based on their practical experience in foundation. Justice and social balance are new terms that help to understand the equation. Social entrepreneurs act on systems apparently balanced but unfair in essence, they are able to break them down and regain homeostasis but in fairer conditions.

Only in 2009 the Skoll Foundation granted funding to social entrepreneurs for more than 20 million dollars, thus encouraging and meeting the needs of specific sectors.

As we can see, there are different examples of the business model followed in a social enterprise and, above all, a great diversity of social causes, from poverty, education, art, culture, natural resources, leisure, etc. We consider the three examples brought to the fore as very important, as they reflect how the potential of social entrepreneurship is enhanced, ie, they are examples in which they have not only attacked a specific problem, but also have been able to encourage and develop skills in other social entrepreneurs around the world.

The profile of the social entrepreneur

We start with the profile of the social entrepreneur, referring to profile as the set of characteristics or qualities that allow us to distinguish someone or something from others. In this way, the set of values and attitudes that social entrepreneurs reflect are the characteristics that identify them but also also differentiate them from economic entrepreneurs.

In the literary search to define the characteristics of the social entrepreneur, we find that most of the characteristics that are used to describe the social entrepreneur are the same that can describe the traditional entrepreneur. In this way, it seems that the profile between one and another entrepreneur is merged as one, here the difference makes the social value that adds to their actions, and their impact.

The characteristics of the entrepreneur generally are: ambition, ingenuity, strategy, ability to be guided by a mission, orientation to look for results, empathy, continuous process of innovation, leadership, efficiency, passion, competitiveness, among others (Fischel, 2013; Sanchis & Melián 2010; Massetti, 2008). Although the characteristics may be applicable to any entrepreneur, the point of inflection in which the two paradigms of the entrepreneur are distanced is found in the empathy that is generated with the environment that surrounds it and that provides the elements that according to Sanchis & Melián (2010) create the bonds in which the entrepreneur develops in different arenas such as political, economic and social.

It should be noted that social entrepreneurs find social value within each of the above mentioned characteristics (Urbano, Toledano & Soriano, 2010; Zadek & Thak, 1997). That is to say, that the difference between the conventional or economic entrepreneur to the social entrepreneur is that the passion is directed towards making positive changes in the surrounding environment allowing to lead in a democratic way, and under those same values, a project with social benefit. Thus, the ability to get involved and diagnose problems in different areas, such as the environment, education, health or unemployment, allow you to be competitive with other types of entrepreneurs.

As far as the practical perspective, next we will address some statistical data about the profile of the social entrepreneur. We will be based primarily on the reports of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), which in 2009 made a special report dedicated to the collection of data about entrepreneurship with a social character, taking into account for the study to different countries around the world.

In this study we analyzed data such as average age, sex, education and the global participation of social entrepreneurs by region. These characteristics, although they do not differentiate the social entrepreneur from the traditional entrepreneur, recognize the social value that these entrepreneurs have managed to gather and that for years had remained in the same line of studies of the traditional entrepreneur.

In 2009, according to the GEM, the characteristics of social entrepreneurs show that among the eight regions surveyed (Southeast Asia, Western Europe and Eastern Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Latin America, Africa, The Caribbean and the United States) were participating in social entrepreneurship, a greater number of men compared to women, there was up to 1.4% difference between both genders, and in the case of the United States the rate of Social Entrepreneurial Activity is almost equivalent between men (4.23%) and women (4.08%), since the figures show only tenths of a percentage difference. The region with the highest average for men of entrepreneurship is that of the Caribbean, since the two countries covered by the study of the GEM, Dominican Republic and Jamaica, have rates of entrepreneurial activity of 3.79% and 3.70% respectively and one Average of 3.75%. This region also has the highest average for social entrepreneurs with 2.32%.

As for the age range of the adult population, with the exception of the United States (6.68%) and Eastern Europe, which have a majority of social entrepreneurs between 18 and 24 years of age; For the rest of the countries of the different regions, the rate of social entrepreneurship is found in people between 25 and 44 years of age. The age range allows you to visualize how people are motivated once they have a better knowledge of their environment (or even more economic stability).

This can be linked to the rate of entrepreneurship by the academic level of the entrepreneurs. For example, in the United States the rate of entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 24 is related to the level of studies that entrepreneurs have in order to start creating companies with social value, so that the participation of social entrepreneurs is concentrated Mainly in a post-preparatory level, while for other regions, such as Western Europe and the Caribbean, whose average age to undertake is between 25 and 44 years, a higher level of education is observed with respect to the other regions, With studies and post-graduate experience.

Now what is important to emphasize as a characteristic is the participation in this type of enterprise as a way of subsisting or to promote self-employment and decrease unemployment within society.

In another study called "(Redefining) Succes in a Changing World" in 2014, countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Mexico, Brazil, China and South Africa were evaluated. The results show data very similar to those found by the GEM in 2009. For example, until the year 2014 social entrepreneurs were mostly men (59%) compared to women (41%), and ages Mostly ranged from 35 to 54 (46%) and 18 to 34 (39%).

In the case of Mexico, according to the characteristics of the GEM (2010), it is revealing that the statistics are not very different from those of the United States, since in our country, of the total of social entrepreneurs, 62% To 38% of women involved in this same activity. The age ranges are between 18-34 years (42%) and 35-54 years (43%).

This reflects an interest on the part of the young population (at university ages, usually) on social issues and the problems that occur in their environments and their increasing need to find the right solutions, since the same report shows that The potential impact sought by social entrepreneurs is focused within the country.

The research carried out by the GEM in 2009 was a pioneer in its type, analyzed more than one hundred thousand social entrepreneurs in 49 different countries, and although the results are not considered statistically representative, since less than 2% of the world population carries out activities of Social enterprise, does mean a watershed for global research on this phenomenon.

As we can see, there is much difference between the demographic and psychological characteristics of social entrepreneurs throughout the world; In addition to the fact that the social objects of their enterprises are far from each other.

It is not surprising that the level of development between countries determines the type of projects being developed. For example, in low-developed countries, the basic needs are pressing, but not in developed countries, who seek to attack other types of needs rather than self-realization.

Artifacts of the social entrepreneur

Although the profile refers to the qualities that differentiate social entrepreneurs from conventional entrepreneurs, the artifacts become the fundamental line through which entrepreneurs begin to work on projects and focus social work within their communities.

The artifacts of the social entrepreneur become an indivisible part of their profile, since the latter allow the development of the entrepreneur and the first are the work tools and lines of action to make the social project a real enterprise.

For Dees, Emerson & Economy (2002) the artifacts become part of the tools that allow the entrepreneurs to generate a vision of service towards what surrounds them. Thus, a strategic vision of service allows us to focus on the objectives towards which social projects will be strengthened and these can be distinguished in two "demographic" groups such as those that allow us to identify basic features such as age, education, etc.; And those "psychological" that allow us to visualize more imperceptible features in the people around us, such as likes, fears, etc. (Dees, Emerson & Economy, 2002, p.5).

Both the demographic and the psychological are essential in the entrepreneur, since they condition the characteristics that will allow him to function and create a value equation alongside his strategic allies (beneficiaries, volunteers, donors, etcetera).

Different areas, such as politics, economics and society, become part of the important elements in which an entrepreneur seeks goals and ends related to projects that capture social value. Therefore, the entrepreneur becomes the business link between different areas sharing the stage democratically with other actors.

However, it is necessary to emphasize that the artifacts are not limited to areas of action or processes of development or project management, nowadays the growing positioning of information and communication technologies (ICT) has become indispensable and necessary in the framework of Scope and projection of social entrepreneurs, becoming tools allows us to generate virtual links of collaboration.

Morales, Ariza & Muñiz (2012) describe that the generation of social bonds allows and facilitates the financing of projects, through social investment funds, or collective funding or crowdfunding.

These links are born of virtual (worldwide) networks of contacts that facilitate remote interaction and allow access to finance to become more accessible (Morales, Ariza & Muñiz, 2012).

In conventional studies of entrepreneurship, this characteristic is called social networks, that is to say, the links that the entrepreneur has with other actors and even institutions, which serve as allies to carry out his entrepreneurship.

The social entrepreneur is one who achieves the prosperity and development of people's capacities and also of their environment and resources, achieving a positive and lasting change in the surrounding environment.

The functioning is possible when the entrepreneur's artifacts are put into action and are merged with their psychological and demographic characteristics, in an environment with an identified opportunity and with people who believe and who voluntarily support the cause.

Final annotations

In analyzing this issue, we realized that although studies about social entrepreneurs have intensified in the last two decades as part of a culture of social inclusion and common welfare, empirical studies that measure social entrepreneurship and their impact on the countries are very scarce, so the use of the concept of the economic entrepreneur is often not discriminated against the social entrepreneur, so it is common to include as a single concept even though the objective is different one.

Also, the definitions found vary depending on the region and the country in which this type of entrepreneurs are developed. Nonetheless, there are certain features that allow us to discern the differences between a conventional and a social entrepreneur, showing the former as a person who seeks to generate permanent and lasting change in relation to the problems that occur around the nucleus in which he lives.

Say, of their social environment, for the benefit of the community.

The characteristics presented throughout this document allow to differentiate entrepreneurs in terms of their qualities and behavior within society.

Social entrepreneurs regularly tend to assimilate the same characteristics as conventional entrepreneurs, but these characteristics do not become exclusively the social entrepreneur's own, but the latter generalizes them and transmits them within a community so that they can generate value within society and can contribute to the development of the same.

For this reason, it is considered that the social entrepreneur becomes a generator of well-being and promoter of tools for the application of social development, whereas the characteristics that allow the identification of the profile of the traditional entrepreneur show a tendency to focus the economic growth in benefit of the individual and not of the community.

If we refer to the demographic profile and according to the study GEM (2009), the social entrepreneur usually is usually man, and compared to the economic entrepreneurs, starts at an earlier age and also has a higher level of education.

As for the artifacts, these become the indispensable means with which the entrepreneurs have to crystallize their work. These artifacts allow you to generate social capital through innovation to realize actions and achieve change. As for the traditional entrepreneur, he tries to find the political-economic relations that allow him to operate according to the legislation of the place where he is to generate his own value through the creation of goods and services that society needs but which do not necessarily help her to develop.

On the contrary, the social entrepreneur makes that political-economic-social connection in which he seeks not only the individual benefit, but also the spiritual self-realization through the impulse to the development of his environment. It should not be forgotten that social entrepreneurs are those capable of detecting opportunities as well as creating them. Being a social entrepreneur does not mean fighting the generation of economic profits, but these are not the end in itself, but the means to solve different social problems, looking above all, the development of the community and the people who In it they dwell.

The achievement of social entrepreneurship is not a utopia, however the current context forces us to rethink the ways of intervening, for example creating organizations for greater durability and impact of entrepreneurship; Seeking strategic alliances with all sectors, including government and business; And forming entrepreneurs with social consciousness from the initial education. There are many challenges to understanding social entrepreneurship, and especially to that actor capable of bringing them to reality, an outstanding task is the realization of empirical research at the local level to inquire about this phenomenon located in a concrete reality.

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