

THE SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR STRENGTHENING SOCIAL INNOVATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Lawrence Mpele Lekhanya, Durban University of Technology

ABSTRACT

The emphasis of this paper is to present an exploratory study on the support structures for strengthening social innovation in South Africa. The concept of social innovation is still an issue of concern in South Africa, however, the understanding and knowledge of it is sketchy among South African society. The study aimed to identify support structures available for social innovation development in South Africa, with empirical data collected from 224 participants living in Durban metropolitan areas. This research was quantitative in nature and a 5-point Likert-scaled survey questionnaire was used to collect data from selected areas. The findings of the research revealed not much support structures available for social innovation and further showed many of the participants remained neutral with regards to whether and what type of support structures exist for strengthening social innovation in South Africa. This research will benefit affiliated stakeholders and local nationals with an interest in this sector, as well as policymakers, by introducing a new understanding of social innovation and how it can improve the livelihood of South African people. The study was confined to Durban metropolitan areas only, followed a quantitative technique and small sample; all these factors limited the scope of the study and generalization of results should be used with care. Therefore, further research with a large sample is recommended.

Keywords: Social Innovation, Structures, South Africa, Strengthening, Sketchy, Support.

INTRODUCTION

Social Innovation (SI) has experienced rapid growth in the last decades, acknowledged by both scholars and policy makers (Adams and Hess, 2010). According to Mulgan (2006), SI refers to social need motivated innovative activities. Innovation is social to where, essentially, it is socially desirable, although it may not automatically be good (Howaldt & Schwarz, 2010) and fulfills a social need not apparent as appropriate to the market (Mulgan et al., 2007). Auerswald (2009) defined SI as a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than (the) private individual. Although the premise of SI has been given escalating attention in practitioner, political and academics, discourses, in recent years, there is no clear definition for the concept and to date it has different meanings (Choi & Majumdar, 2014). The concept of SI was born from the on-going traditional innovation theory debate and critique, with material and technological inventions as the theory's focus, along with the economic rationale of innovation and scientific knowledge (Bock, 2012). It highlights the need for society to be an environment influencing the use of innovations, their development and diffusion (Edquist, 2001), nonetheless, the risk bearing possibility of innovations as well as their opportunities for society must also be taken into consideration. According to Dobele (2015), almost all social problems are complicated, context-dependent, and cross-boundary and an organization or individual alone cannot effectively solve these problems. Therefore, SI is

becoming more important for economic growth; partly because some of the barriers (for example health and wealth inequalities, social exclusion, climate change, material poverty, or ageing population) can only be overcome with the help of SI, and partly due to increased demand for the kind of economic growth that develop instead of damaging human relationships and their well-being (Mulgan et al., 2006). With public budgets already overloaded by these challenges, as well as their impact on national government competitiveness and long-term economic growth, there is growing global recognition of the need for innovative and original approaches to meet current and future economic, social and environmental challenges.

Definition of SI

New products, services, models and practices that involve new social collaboration and meet social requirements are referred to as SI (Hart et al., 2014). As explained by Meldrum and Bonnici (2019), tension between a favourable innovation climate and extreme social challenges creates an environment where many innovation opportunities have an implicit social impact. In many ways, SI differs from business entrepreneurship with a social entrepreneur being someone who recognizes a social problem, then makes use of entrepreneurial principles to shape, design and manage a venture to facilitate social change (Roger et al., 2007). The way a system operates is reworked through SI, by contesting the basic governance processes that have a bearing on people's conduct, along with the distribution of resources and power (Lues, 2016). Another important SI characteristic is that of newness. SI can be broadly described as "the development of new concepts, strategies and tools that support groups in achieving the objective of improved well-being" (Dawson & Daniel, 2010) or new ways of doing things, especially new organizational devices, new regulations, new living arrangements that change the direction of social change, attain goals better than older practices, become institutionalized and prove to be worth imitating (Zapf, 1991).

Research Problem

Although SI has become highly popular among policymakers, its meaning remains vague and ambiguous (Grimm, 2013). While SI is not a novel idea, the instrumentalization of social processes to create better societies is a departure from past doctrine or as Franz et al. (2012) stated, it is the intentionality of SI that distinguishes it from mere social change. Part of the difficulty in defining SI is that it has the potential to meet serious social needs, as well as making use of new social processes for product and service delivery. SI is receiving increasing consideration as a viable alternative for solving social problems by policy makers, scholars and the man-on-the-street in recent years (Choi, 2018). SI has the capacity to offer solutions to an assortment of current societal problems that have not been solved by either classic government policy tools or market solutions (Murray et al., 2008). SI has not reached its full potential due to various inherent implementation process challenges (Aarons et al., 2011). This is, in some cases, attributed to their being too expensive, or not wanted, or merely due to not being good enough, when compared to current replacements. However, as far as taking ideas from inception and development, to social impact, concerns have been raised regarding there being more basic barriers. While SI impacts have been shown as not easy to measure, or to quantify financially, it is further argued that there is inherent risk to SI, with unpredictable and uncertain outcomes, which makes it difficult to form SI support coalitions. Moreover, organizational cultures are highlighted as stifling creativity and risk-taking, thus limiting the quality and number of

emergent SI. Others still point to the lack of adequate mechanisms to promote, adapt and grow SI. However, in order to support the spread of SI it is necessary to better understand what the influencing factors are. Therefore, this part of the research paper focuses on factors that influence SI in SA.

Research Objectives

1. To assess existing SI support structures in SA.
2. To examine the effectiveness of those support mechanisms available for SI in SA.
3. To identify and discuss factors affecting those SI support structures in SA.

Social Innovation Concept

The SI concept is also employed to research management structures and to explore new forms of client relations (Denning & Dunham, 2010). From a sociological perspective, SI has been investigated with regard to its significance in changing social practices and structures and therefore, leading to social evolution and resultant changes (Jürgen & Michael, 2016). When conceptualizing SI there is difficulty in transferring its common meaning, usually linked to science and technological cases (Ionescu, 2015).

Many new social issues have emerged since the 1990s, such as problems that are associated with social exclusion, education, the environment, and disparities of the inner-city. In many developed countries, decreasing birth rates and aging populations, provide a setting for these issues, as does globalization, and finding solutions has seen huge efforts as a result. SI has been proposed as one approach with which to manage these issues, specifically in the United States and Europe (Fujisawa et al., 2015). Nonetheless, with SI growth has, there is some displeasure with what we know innovation to be and being able to deliver outcomes that are just and sustainable. Moreover, SI is also extremely ambiguous as a concept, creating doubt as to it offering any real alternatives or improvements (Ziegler, 2017).

SI creates changes in (human) structure and organization (Simms, 2006), with subsequent improved living standards and the promotion of human resource development (Mahdjoubi, 1997). SI is the guided change process, preferably supported by all involved and affected human beings that create significant change in existing action structures and conditions in the social system based on ethical value judgements, contents and programmes (Maelicke, 1987). It can be concluded that the concept of SI includes not only the element of novelty, but it is also due to the introduction of changes. The scale of change can be distinguished from micro to macro level changes (Bulut et al., 2013; Khutrakun, 2013). For example, a micro aspect would be having a worthwhile job, whereas macro aspects examples would be environmental issues and political stability (Pol & Ville, 2009). SI must create value for the entire community. People who engage in a SI process do not intend to accrue benefits for themselves; rather, they attempt to create valuable SI for the whole community, making it possible for all to acquire such a benefit. When it comes to SI, there is no financial loss or gain (Khutrakun, 2013). SI basically creates value due to it changing people's belief, so they behave in a better manner. Phills et al. (2008) defined SI as a novel, more effective and sustainable, social problem solution with the created value primarily accruing to the entire society. It can be concluded that sustainability and effectiveness are important elements for SI, which should be social motive based (Khutrakun, 2013). SI is about satisfying basic needs and social relations changes within empowering social processes; it is about people and organisations, affected by lack of quality daily living and services or

dispossession, disempowered by authorities decision-making or a lack of rights, and who are involved in movements and agencies that favour SI (Moulaert & Nussbaumer, 2005).

The Importance of Social Innovation

Management researchers have also increasingly focused on the importance of SI as a good investment for firms because it allows access to new markets and offers business opportunities in social and environmental areas (Herrera, 2016). The increasing social inequality that has affected the lives of billions of human beings all over the world requires constant search for alternatives that may generate changes in this reality. In this context, SI has surfaced as a theme that queries policies and structures unable, to date, to do away with repeated problems, for example, global epidemics, and changes that impact hunger, weather and social inequality (Murray et al., 2010; Bignetti, 2011). As a result, SI is perceived as a manner in which to solve social problems (Cajaiba Santana, 2014; Moulaert et al., 2005), based on a new form of Economics that uses current logics elements linked to other elements whose objective is to contribute to social welfare (Bignetti, 2011). It deals with changes in the social context wherein new social systems and institutions are created in a logic that moves from the individual to the collective (Bruno et al., 2007).

Addressing the social challenges that South Africa (SA) faces depends on the success of SI so that it becomes vital for the energy and resources invested in it to continue to grow (Meldrum & Bonnici, 2019).

Social challenges are being solved in new ways by the contribution of SA, as more and more people grasp the possibilities in a widened innovation perspective, making use of society's existing innovation potential and power. An increasing number of good examples of SI are seen to develop from new types of collaborations that frequently span sectorial boundaries and creating value for organizations, society as a whole and for individuals. It has become a matter of fact today that SI requires taking responsibility (Social Innovation Summit: Making it big, 2018).

Social Innovation Support Mechanisms

Governments can support of social innovators by governments can be achieved through the facilitation of networking events that will bring an assorted range of contributors together (2.4). Often, innovation happens as a dialogue function between a variety of perceptions, and with the resources and power of government, it is one of the institutions that can make this happen. Organizations are given support by some policy makers, which allow the sharing of across border ideas, bringing social innovators together to share ideas. Should they wish to succeed, innovators and policy makers have to engage with citizens, however, this must be well designed engagement (2.8) (Boelman et al., 2014).

Social Innovation Attitude

In the last decade, SI's key role of providing answers to intricate and interdependent societal challenges has been an important issue in both literature and political discourse (Sandu1 & Anghel2, 2016). Should the consumer have a clear understanding and knowledge, with regards to the social enterprises, it follows there would be an increase in their level of awareness; this could, possibly, advance promising social enterprise product attitudes (Farhana, 2017). Positive predictors of Social entrepreneurial intentions are positively predicted by orientation of SI, a

social entrepreneurship attitude, subjective norms and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Judith et al., 2017).

Social Innovation Performance

Social entrepreneurial passion can have a positive influence on SI performance by means of the creative capacity to generate solutions (Wai Wai Ko, 2019). According to Weerawardena and colleagues, a social enterprise that outpaces its SI competition has the ability to distinguish itself in the marketplace and attain long-term sustainability (Weerawardena et al., 2010; Weerawardena & Mort, 2012). SI is currently described as a significant factor in the quality of life of a society, in addition to it being an essential component of organizational strategies (Dossa & Kaeufer, 2014).

Social Innovation Capability

When it comes to social innovation and the capability approach, discussions allude to the approach having become known as a critique of traditional conceptions and measurements of economic development, making it surprising that in capability approach research, innovation without 'social' as the qualifier does not seem to be prominent (Capriati, 2013; Bajmócy & Gébert, 2014; Hartmann, 2014). Not only is innovation widely considered an important economic development driver, it emphasises entrepreneurs, organizations that are innovative, networks and clusters that appear to fit well, at first sight, with the agency focus of the capability approach and the creating of capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011). Regardless of why there is such relative innovation neglect, social innovation might be a more suitable point of departure for reflections on novelty and social change in the 20th century.

Grice et al. (2012) defined SI as a new solution (product, service, model, process, etc.) that simultaneously meets a social need (more effectively than existing solutions) and leads to new or improved capabilities and relationships and better use of assets and resources that may enhance society's capacity to act. In developing countries, many social enterprises are not capable of efficiently managing all their programmes, placing organizational sustainability in jeopardy. The results show a significant relationship exists between SI and organisational learning capabilities of knowledge conversion, risk management, organisational dialogue and participative decision-making. A critical reading of human resource management (HRM) literature located limited published material on the comprehension of organizational determinants of social enterprises and the manner in which these may play a part in and add to higher social innovativeness levels (Urban & Gufforini, 2017).

Factors Affecting Scope of Social Innovation

Factors at individual, organizational and environmental levels influence SI (Damanpour, 1991, 1996; Damanpour & Schneider, 2006). A meaningful and valid scrutiny of SI factors consequently has to consider these three analysis levels. SI factors associated with the external environment are categorised in line with PEST analysis, while organization related factors are linked to managerial dynamic capability levers, which guide the detection and classification of organizational level factors that influence innovation. SI influencing factors linked to individuals within the organization are associated with the abilities and attitudes of employees.

Factors at the External Environmental Level

Factors at the external environmental level is Various macro-level factors are affected by SI. A PEST analysis of the factors determining the development of SI in an external environment is performed in the research paper. Legal and political factors comprise legislation in favor of SI, and legal recognition of SI public discourse, as well as policy agendas and policy coordination. It should be emphasized that, at times, state practices and structures may hinder, rather than help approaches that are innovative (Glänzel et al., 2013).

Economic Factors

Economic factors indicate the availability of external SI funds (Dufour et al., 2014; Hubert et al., 2011). Social innovators normally require capital with no return or very low expectations, due to their income situations often not allowing for generating profits. It takes time to develop SI, often more so than in the development of technological/business innovations. What is therefore required is capital with long-term prospects. However, Mulgan et al. (2007) find a lack of incentives for potential SI supporters, such as public agencies and foundations.

Hubert et al. (2011) conducted studies in Latvia and provided the following reasons why funding SI is difficult: SI tends to be bottom-up, is promoted by non-traditional business organizations, is problematic in the measurement of its impact.....starts from a limited size.....not perceived as self-sustainable/replicable.....lack of recognition of the social dimension in innovation-related funding schemes and programmes. These reasons were found to explain the lack of funding for SI.

Social and Cultural Factors

Insufficient information on SI, leads to a lack of data and measurement, while courses on SI are also lacking in universities. Hubert et al. (2011) offered the following explanations in explanation: no clear definition of the SI concept exists, SI's impact is difficult to quantify, are compounded by an insufficient culture and not enough ex-post evaluation tools for projects that are SI associated while SI players and boundaries of are ill defined.

Digital technology has the potential to be a powerful existing SI support, a new SI enabler and a transformer of the underlying SI governance and framework conditions. Governments and policy makers and ought to support the underpinning infrastructure and frameworks of the digital technology role in SI (2.10) (Young Foundation, 2015).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was undertaken in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, with questionnaires distributed to the general public in the Durban metropolitan area, while a literature review was conducted and employed in the formulation of questions for the collection of empirical data. A 3-point Likert scaled questionnaire was employed as measurement instrument for this research and a response timeframe of two months allowed for respondents to complete the questionnaire, with later data analysis performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and findings presented in Tables 1-8.

Research Area	Statement	Response (likert scale)
Structural support	There is enough structural support for social innovation	Alternative response: Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree
N.G.Policy	National government policy provides good social innovation support	Alternative response: Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree
Public support	There is good public support for social innovation	Alternative response: Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree
Business support	Business managers provide support for social Innovation	Alternative response: Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree
Financial support	Financial support is available for social innovation in SA	Alternative response: Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree

Findings

The study was conducted in the Durban metropolitan areas of the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The number of participants totalled 224 for this study and all delivered questionnaires were completed and returned. The following results (Table 2) were discovered after data analysis, as illustrated, with the table below demonstrating that 68 respondents disagreed, with 42 indicating neutral, while at the same time, 114 agreed with the statement that There is enough structural SI support.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	68	30.1	30.4	30.4
	Neutral	42	18.6	18.8	49.1
	Agree	114	50.4	50.9	100
	Total	224	99.1	100	
Missing	System	2	0.9		
Total		226	100		

The Table 3 below, depicting responses to the statement that 'National government policy provides good SI support', shows 106 respondents that disagreed, 57 respondents remained neutral, while 61 respondents agreed with the statement.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	106	46.9	47.3	47.3
	Neutral	57	25.2	25.4	72.8
	Agree	61	27	27.2	100
	Total	224	99.1	100	
Missing	System	2	0.9		
Total		226	100		

The Table 4 below illustrates that 116 respondents disagreed, 71 were neutral and 37 respondents agreed with the statement there is good public support for SI.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	116	51.3	51.8	51.8
	Neutral	71	31.4	31.7	83.5
	Agree	37	16.4	16.5	100
	Total	224	99.1	100	
Missing	System	2	0.9		
Total		226	100		

Disagreement is indicated in the Table 5 below by 137 respondents, while 50 were neutral and 37 agreed with the statement 'Business managers provide support for SI'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	137	60.6	61.2	61.2
	Neutral	50	22.1	22.3	83.5
	Agree	37	16.4	16.5	100
	Total	224	99.1	100	
Missing	System	2	0.9		
Total		226	100		

The below Tables 6-8 shows that 162 respondents disagreed, while 41 of the respondents were neutral and 21 of the respondents agreed with the statement 'Financial support is available for SI in SA'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	162	71.7	72.3	72.3
	Neutral	41	18.1	18.3	90.6
	Agree	21	9.3	9.4	100
	Total	224	99.1	100	
Missing	System	2	0.9		
Total		226	100		

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
structural	224	1	3	2.2054	0.87965
policy	224	1	3	1.7991	0.84163
public	224	1	3	1.6473	0.74911
Business	224	1	3	1.5536	0.76163
Financial	224	1	3	1.3705	0.6501
Valid N (listwise)	224				

		structural	policy	public	Business	Financial
structural	Pearson Correlation	1	0.837**	0.784**	0.660**	0.517**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0	0	0
	N	224	224	224	224	224
Policy	Pearson Correlation	0.837**	1	0.904**	0.860**	0.809**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0	0	0
	N	224	224	224	224	224
Public	Pearson Correlation	0.784**	0.904**	1	0.925**	0.804**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0		0	0
	N	224	224	224	224	224
Business	Pearson Correlation	0.660**	0.860**	0.925**	1	0.861**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0		0
	N	224	224	224	224	224
Financial	Pearson Correlation	0.517**	0.809**	0.804**	0.861**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0	
	N	224	224	224	224	224

Implications

The implications of this survey include issues relevant to the theory and practice of SI. The implications for SI theory lie in the fact that, in order to identify a better support structure and strategies to improve SI, understanding of relevant theories is needed to identify those that can assist to promote and unlock SI. New SI concepts and theories should be proposed and implemented to grow SI. All stakeholders should, in addition, have knowledge of theories and practical methods affecting SI uptake in SA. Therefore, the main contribution of this study is on providing new theories, strategies and practices that can aid in developing SI.

The implication for SI practice on the practical side rests in the findings of this study, which clearly indicate that, due to the lack of awareness and clear understanding of SI in the majority of SA society, the result is poor societal support and lack of structural support for SI in SA. Therefore, these limit SI uptake in the country.

CONCLUSIONS

On-going SI academic research and evaluation is vital to “understanding what works and what does not, as organizations venture to offer solutions to social and environmental problems” (Social innovation research, 2019). With most respondents indicating agreement that support structures do exist, the study revealed that support strategies are perceived as the main challenge facing the sector in the country. With SI popularity and uptake in SA on the rise, the importance and benefits of SI have to be clearly understood by the broader South African society, with all support required for SI also well known. Local communities should be made aware of SI and its implications and be encouraged to support it, as this will encourage trust, while addressing issues of representation and legitimacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aim was to determine what support structures are available for SI in SA and the impact these have in the development of SI. However, the study recommends that more awareness and marketing promotions should be done about SI. This will assist in building a broader understanding and knowledge among the general public regarding the concepts. Government and policymakers must make work of putting SI into perspective, while all stakeholders in the field of entrepreneurship and social development should participate in SI activities and provide much needed support.

Recommendations for Further Research

With a supportive network consisting of trust, knowledge exchange and collaboration perceived as the basis of SI, the funds needed for innovative ideas to actually be put into practice should, therefore, consist of expanded and varied funding streams. This network and funding thus need to feature in future research, which should explore whether and in what manner SI support is nurtured to bring innovators in from the formal economy outskirts, along with new avenues for funding, for instance, the provision of public contracts through procurement, innovation checks, social banking, and funding tools for new prototypes and ideas. SA's own Discovery Bank, launched on 1st August 2019, is described by its new deputy CEO, Francois Groepe (former SA Reserve Bank deputy governor), as the world's first behavioural bank, and is an indicator that the country's financial services landscape is undergoing significant structural changes (Business Day 2 August, 2019), with an examination of these changes recommended. Moreover, participation in SI can be facilitated with various techniques and technologies, which should be examined to determine those best suited to the SA environment, consequently enabling people to interact through stimulation, as well as visually and verbally, with scrutiny of government engagement of the public to assist in shaping what they do, creating a culture of openness to new and innovative ideas and ways of operating.

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