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# GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE NEXUS FOR DEVELOPING THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SECTOR IN INDIA

#### Mir Shahid Satar & Gowsia Bashir

Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, University of Kashmir (South Campus),

Jammu & Kashmir, India

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The evidence supporting the role of entrepreneurship & innovation in economic wealth creation, employment generation, social & economic renewal are increasing across nations. Accordingly, entrepreneurship policy has emerged as the focus of public policies in the majority of the countries in the recent past.

Social entrepreneurship (S-ENT) as a dual form of entrepreneurship is crystallizing as an innovative discipline to address regional and national level issues worldwide. Globally, the Governments of both developed and developing countries are increasingly recognizing that their support of social entrepreneurial efforts can fetch significant benefits for society at large.

While India is regarded as hot-bed for S-ENT activities, there is however, lack of unified national guidelines on the role of Government in supporting S-ENT. The present paper represents a pioneering attempt to explore the optimal forms of Government involvement, system necessities & other policy recommendations for enhancing the level of social entrepreneurial activity within India. The study finds that while there is the significant shift in the policy orientation of GOI, there are no concerns for a consolidated policy framework for S-ENT in India. Accordingly, the paper formulates the pertinent suggestions on the role of Government in S-ENT development within India.

KEYWORDS: S-ENT, Government, Policy, SEs, India

#### INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a strong economic force in the recent years. Consequently, the studies analyzing the significance of entrepreneurship in economic growth are emerging continuously across nations (Audretsch & Thurik, 2001a, 2001b; Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2002; Reynolds et al., 1999a; Wennekers & Thurik, 1999). In developing economies like India, entrepreneurship index has been found to positively impact the per capita income (Awasthi, Kashyap, & Yagnik, 2006). Consequently, in order to enhance the level of entrepreneurial activities, governments of various developing countries (e-g India) are shifting their focus to more entrepreneurship and innovation -driven strategies (Audretsch & Thurik, 2001; European Commission, 1998; Minniti, 2008).

S-ENT has emerged as an innovative social business model worldwide (Alex, 2006; Alvord *et al.*, 2004; Korosec & Berman, 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2006; Satar and John, 2016; Thompson, 2002; Young, 2001). Although, entrepreneurial activities with a social concern can be traced back in the history but the S-ENT as an innovative

model for social problem solving has recently emerged (Chell, 2007; Dees *et al.*, 2002; Mair & Marti, 2006; Robinson *et al.*, 2009; Peredo & McLean, 2006). The literature mostly demonstrates the use of innovative approaches by the individuals to solve the social needs (Grenier, 2003), often through non-profit organizations, but also through the for-profit sector as well (Alex, 2006). While dealing with complex social issues, the S-ENT fosters social innovation and consequently stimulates ideas for some socially acceptable and sustained business strategies and enterprise forms (Sullivan *et al.*, 2003). Unlike the traditional top-down approach of development, social enterprises (SEs) represent a paradigm shift by leading a renewed bottom-up approach of development. Obviously, their beneficiaries are constituted of poor and the marginalized people, the choices of whom become the central reference points in the SEs planning and decision making. S-ENT is accordingly receiving significant attention from both scholars as well as practitioners globally (see Alvord et al., 2004; Peredo & McLean, 2006; Korosec & Berman, 2006; Thompson, 2002; Dees & Elias, 1998).

While the concept of S-ENT vis-à-vis SEs is vividly marked with fragmentary scant literature, conceptual ambiguity and disparity in the lines of its practice (Hill *et al.*, 2010; Satar & John, 2016; Short *et al.*, 2009), the evidence supporting the role of S-ENT in fostering the socio-economic development of nations are evolving continuously.

While S-ENT offers an exceptional opportunity to create businesses that are economically viable, scalable and job -creating (Harding R, 2004), the policy development for S-ENT is at an embryonic stage. There have been little or no policy framework concerns for S-ENT across the globe. Although, there has been a significant increase in the efforts towards addressing the policy issues of S-ENT in many developed countries (US, UK), however more remains to be done. Moreover, there have been little or no such concerns in the majority of developing countries including India. While as the Governments in both developed & developing countries are now increasingly concerned about the role of S-ENT in addressing the pertinent social problems & achieving other sustainable development goals, the need for the development of constructive policy framework is tremendous. The present paper represents a modest attempt by exploring the relevant suggestions and guidelines for an inclusive government intervention in S-ENT development in India.

## Literature Review

### **Social Entrepreneurship**

While as literature has argued S-ENT to be as a process to change the world (Chell, 2007), others view S-ENT in a more mechanistic way as essentially a process of "identifying, evaluating and exploiting opportunities aiming at social value creation by means of commercial, market-based activities," (Roberts &Woods, 2005; Bacq & Janssen, 2011). Some others have emphasized the innovative use and the combination of resources to drive social transformation (Mair & Mart´1, 2006; Peredo &McLean, 2006). Similarly, Dees *et al.*, (2002), has divided the S-ENT into three dynamic processes i-e; i) Initiation of entrepreneurial team and establishment of organization ii) process of forming organizational structure iii) process of internal decision making.

There is a substantial growth of literature supporting the multiple dimensional nature of S-ENT. An increasing number of authors consider S-ENT as based on multi-dimensional constructs (Alex, 2000; Sullivan et al., 2003; Mair & Marti, 2006; Certo & Miller, 2008; Austin, et al., 2006; Korsec & Berman, 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2006; Zahra et al., 2008). Sullivan et al., (2003) contended S-ENT as a process that leads to the establishment of new SEs and the continued innovation in the existing ones.

However irrespective of the variegated nature of expressions, S-ENT "bridges an important gap in the business and social action" (Roberts & Woods, 2005).

## **Social Enterprises (SEs)**

The debate on SEs was being translated into the academics recently (Johnson, 2000). Rebecca Harding, (2004) in her book, "Social Enterprise, the new economic engine" describes "the meaning of social enterprise potentially covers everything from not-for-profit organizations, through charities and foundations to cooperative and mutual societies". Thus, SEs have been found to operate in diverse sectors with diverse organizational structures. Therefore, in context of developing regions, there are comparatively greater challenges to their growth (Bornstein, 2004).

There is a considerable convergence of thoughts about SEs as "businesses based around values that place emphasis directly on meeting social needs than building shareholder value" (Social Enterprise London, 2000). The concept of social enterprise enclaves a broad spectrum of organizations, ranging from pure non-profit organizations engaged in a social mission supporting commercial activity to for-profit ones operating some socially beneficial activities (Kerlin, 2006). Thus, such socially inclined organizations can take the form of either non-profit or for-profit enterprises depending upon the perceived benefits of each form and the legal environment of the country in which the social entrepreneur operates. As per Satar and John, (2016), SEs are "the organizations established principally for a SVC mission, and pursue sustained market-driven strategies to achieve social objectives. In doing so, they adopt organization structure favoring the achievement of social goals". They depend on different kinds of support actors like entrepreneurs, civil society, academicians, state actors, funders or incubators etc. for their establishment & subsequent management. SEs requires different kinds of support depending on their core activity, the stage of development as well as their internal capacities. Hence, putting in place a conducive policy environment for SEs turns to be critical for enabling SEs to realize their potential of not only creating jobs but also of addressing a range of social & economic issues for a more inclusive & cohesive growth of communities.

Unlike the traditional top-down approach of development, SEs represents a paradigm shift by leading a renewed bottom-up approach of development. The simultaneous pursuing of both the financial and social goals often creates tension while taking the strategic operational decisions of the enterprise (Tracey & Jarvis, 2007; Boschee, 2006). Thus, SEs unlike commercial enterprises, have to managing bottom line which necessitates a careful balance when striving to build and maintain competitive advantages. Failure to a maintain balance between the social and economic objectives often threatens the organizational sustainability (Rubin & Stankiewicz, 2001). Therefore, maintaining an appropriate balance between social impact and financial viability is a critical aspect of social enterprise management.

There is significant convergence over the thought of SEs as adopting some financially sustainable strategies to realize unique social aims and combat a range of societal problems. The social aims they pursue and the social problems they solve can range from substantial alleviation of poverty, unemployment, deprivation, social exclusion, inequalities in health care services, corruption, high incidences of crime, inequalities in wealth distribution, drug abuse, constellation of education, economic, political, cultural problems, environment regeneration and any undesirable outcome which can 'stuck' a society becomes the target of social enterprise's activities.

#### Social Enterprises in India

Indian markets have been and are continuously witnessing an ample number of entrepreneurial activities with some social purpose. Such activities carrying seeds of social development are being established and managed in diverse geographical contexts and organizational forms.

Here we propose that while there is mounting number of social issues prevailing in Indian markets, they simultaneously offer some powerful opportunities for social enterprise efforts to spur up. However, the policies pertinent to the creation, sustenance, and management of SEs are yet to be crafted. Therefore, they have marginally been receiving the attention of researchers and policymakers. Surprisingly, the majority of the Indian social entrepreneurial efforts stay with meager results. They go unorganized and unnoticed by dint of poor support and recognition they are getting from multiple agents. They stay with financial difficulty on a self-employed scale.

#### A Review of Policy Development for S-ENT in India

S-ENT has recently attracted policy attention in many European and non-European countries, for example, the European countries started with "Social Business Initiative" in order to provide legal identification to SEs. The provision of appropriate legal structures has been an important breakthrough for many stakeholders of S-ENT business in such countries.

Within India, the policies concerns for S-ENT are manifested indirectly through policies framed for the management of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. For instance, "India Inclusive Innovation Fund-III" by the "National Innovation Council", have been framed to foster social innovation within Indian SME's. Likewise, the "State Innovation Councils" (like, "Bihar Innovation Forum" by Bihar Government in collaboration with World-Bank), and "Sectorial Innovation Councils" have been outlined to address developmental issues. Further, the S-ENT and innovation- driven enterprises have received emphasis in the Government's twelve 5<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2012/ 2017). The firms adopting national developmental goals are thus expected to receive significant priority in national policy agendas (GIZ, 2012). These programs will enable the eligible firms to access capital through Government grants, subsidized loans etc. Since, the majority of for-profit SEs in India fall into this categorization (initial outlay below \$2 million; ADB report, 2012), they are accordingly projected to stand as most benefited from this policy.

The policy concerns for S-ENT is further evident through various policy debates undertaken by GOI recently. For instance, the recent initiative like "separate Ministry formation for Skill development and Entrepreneurship", National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship- 2015 (Planning Commission, 2013). While such policy initiatives carry chief objectives of attaining global competitiveness through national skill development mission, they contain specific agendas for S-ENT development as well. Further, such policy concerns aim at promotion and encouragement of grass-roots innovation via collaboration and integration with relevant groups of existing organizations like National Innovation Foundation, technological innovation hubs, and, a research ecosystem within India etc. Remarkably, in order to promote awareness of S-ENT as the career option, such policy concerns include starting the courses on S-ENT in higher education. Further, various funding schemes like social venture fund (to extend credit to S-ENT), and promotion and consolidation of patents regarding innovative entrepreneurial ideas etc. have been suitably framed.

Unlike traditional entrepreneurship development approaches (e-g; MSME Policy, Manufacturing Policy, Competition Policy, National Design Policy, Science, and Technology Policy, and Industrial Policy etc.), the current policy shifts represent an important break. Nevertheless, the current policy initiatives still tend to be fragmented, disjoint and are devoid of a holistic framework for S-ENT in India.

Moreover, unlike many other countries, India has limited options in terms of options for the legal identification of SEs. Typically, Indian SEs can adopt either non-profit, for-profit or hybrid legal structures only (Satar, 2016).

#### **Existing Institutional Support to Social Entrepreneurship Promotion in India**

There have been many entrepreneurship promotion strategies and programs from multiple entrepreneurship sensitive institutions like SIDBI, NABARD; capacity building through academic institutions e-g; Entrepreneurship Development Institutions- EDI"s etc. Again, these institutional support policies have a limited role in the direct promotion of S-ENT; however, they have implications for the functioning of regional SEs in India.

Further, the recent time has witnessed support for SE sector from a few numbers of institutions (e-g; Indian industry bodies, CII). Remarkably, there have been significant new initiatives from private players in terms of supporting the development of SE ecosystem within India (GIZ, 2012). Consequently, the Indian central and state Governments have rightly engaged the private sector in resolving various national developmental issues (e-g; public-private-partnership (PPP) model for delivery of emergency health services in many states).

A number of agencies and other 'impact investors' with an interest in supporting firms with social and environmental missions are entering the Indian S-ENT landscape (e-g; The Millennium Alliance – USAID, GIZ Small and Growing Social Businesses support, and FICCI, DFID-SIDBI Partnership- ADB report, 2012). Besides Government and impact investors, a growing number of business incubators, donor agencies, and other S-ENT facilitators have manifested profound interest in Indian SE landscape (Satar, 2016). Consequently, Government is enabled to supply the 'impactful capital' or encourage the investment by those interested in S-ENT returns. In this direction, the recent intervention of floating a national policy for separately recognizing and regulating the "Social Venture Funds" by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)has been phenomenal in addressing resource constrained environment of SEs in India (under SEBI-AIF, Regulations, 2012).

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The paper seeks to explore the policy areas concerning the moderately contested field of S-ENT. The paper responds to the recent S-ENT policy development of India and attempts to addresses the need for policy development for S-ENT sector.

#### METHODOLOGY APPROACH

The researcher analyzed various existing entrepreneurship support policies of different countries, and thereby examined their implications for the S-ENT context. Thorough investigation of Indian social S-ENT landscape and the recent policy concerns of GOI, the paper syntheses pertinent implications for S-ENT development in India.

#### **Government Policy and Programs**

Through critical analysis of literature, it can be argued that the Government can play a crucial role in supporting the creation of a national S-ENT ecosystem in a country. Accordingly, the Government's role can be regarded as a broad-based enabler to mobilize the required players in this ecosystem. Since, Government has an exclusive control over 'doing business indicators' like enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency, measures of regulations for starting a business, getting electricity, registering property, dealing with construction permits, accessing credit, paying taxes, protecting investors, and trading across borders etc. (World Bank, 2013), it can principally determine the ease with which the businesses are established, managed within a country.

The Government of India plays a critical role in the development of SE within India. The various policies and regulations framed by the GOI are directly or indirectly affecting the social enterprise sector. There has been an increase in interest of Indian Central and State Governments in engaging the private sector in addressing some of the national developmental issues. This interest is manifested in the form of Government's involvement in shaping the policies concerning management of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) within India (*Business Standard*, March 7, 2011, "Rs. 1000-cr innovation fund in three months"). Although, it doesn't affect the SE sector directly but it duly impacts the functioning of regional SE's. There have been certain national policies (in the form of public-private partnerships) for fostering social innovation like 'India Inclusive Innovation Fund-IIIF' run by the 'National Innovation Council'. The 'National Innovation Council' has gone a step ahead by establishing 'State Innovation Councils' (e-g; Bihar Innovation Forum sponsored by Bihar Government in collaboration with World Bank). Furthermore, there are certain councils like 'Sectoral Innovation Councils' which although not specifically focused on social innovation but they do support the innovations meant to address any important national development issue.

Further, GOI through various institutions (especially financial e-g; SIDBI, NABARD; capacity building through Academic institutions e-g; Entrepreneurship Development Institutions- EDI's) strives to empower entrepreneurship by shaping the enabling policies, programs & attitudes towards MSME's and civil society. However, it has a role although small in supporting the functioning of regional SE's. Further, a certain number of institutions (e-g; Indian industry bodies, CII) have emerged as enabling the SE sector through various activities related to S-ENT.

Government policy can be regarded as having a crucial role to play in terms of stated policy priorities as well as arranging supportive SE's environment. The enabling Government policies at the local, state as well as at national level would encourage, incentivize and support social entrepreneurs as well as foster social innovation within the SE sector.

Financial support has been identified as the major hurdle, the Indian SE's face in the way of their progress (Allen et al. 2012). Here, the Government can play an important role by supplying the "impactful" capital or by encouraging the investment by those interested in SE returns. A recent innovative move of 'Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in floating a national policy for separately recognizing and regulating the "Social Venture Funds" within India. Such policy interventions are hopeful to greatly impact the SE development within the nation.

Further, the Government can engage in SE development process by providing the contexts through which the support can flow. For example, under social enterprise promotion act of South Korean Government, the South Korean SE's are provided with Government support like "Administrative Management Support (funds for business consulting, accounting programs, and hiring certain accounting and marketing professionals); Financial Support (funds for salaries and

insurance for employees for certain jobs up to a certain amount), tax support (reduction in corporate and income taxes as well as the ability to receive certain donations), and Social Entrepreneur Fostering Support' (S-ENT classes at the MBA level at universities and graduate schools).

Social entrepreneurs have been identified as tackling the problems that the Government has not been able to solve. In this context, the Government can typically play an effective role by successfully collaborating with SE sector. The Government can work as a strategic partner to SE sector in addressing the intractable social problems. However, the intersection of policy and SE field has to be established on some sound governing mechanisms. In this regard, there has been recent evidence from UK Government's 'social impact bond'. The 'social impact bond' utilized by ''Social Finance- a UK based firm' depicts how Government can serve as a strategic partner in utilizing private investment for the social issues.

The evidence of favorable Government intervention in the development of SE across nations are emerging globally. The nexus between enabling Government policies and S-ENT albeit in nascent stages of development and analysis; seems to be a symbiotic relation. Some recent studies have demonstrated the positive role played by the Government in augmenting the SE development. For example; in a study to determine the critical success factors of South Korean SE's, Yong K T et. el. (2014) found Government assistance as moderating effects of S-ENT in terms of their social and economic output. Further, in an analysis of critical success factors of 300 SE's operative in different settings in Poland, Wronka M. (2013) found 'enabling legal/regulatory environment' as one of the critical success factors for SE's under consideration. The author further stresses that the legal/regulatory area must be given due concern in the policy formulation in order to favor the SE's success.

With a system perspective of SE sector, the Government's role could be thought of as a 'support enabler' force. At one end of the continuum will be the range of different SEs functional in different sectors and at different stages of growth while at another end would be a range of support organizations providing both financial as well as non-financial support to SE growth and development. Thus, allowing the SE's to grow, innovate as well as to collaborate across regions.

#### **DISCUSSIONS**

Social entrepreneurs differ from commercial entrepreneurs on the grounds that it associates the economic activity with the social objectives (Rymsza, 2005). Furthermore, social entrepreneurs have been found to operate in diverse sectors (health, education, agriculture, energy etc.). They deliver different kinds of products or services especially targeting the marginalized or poor sections of the societies. Such market segments have majorly been identified as either un-served or underserved at large.

SE business models lie across the continuum of for-profit to not-for-profit ventures. The former can fund its operations through private sector income while as the later depend upon grants, charities and other sorts of financial aids. Yet, other forms of SE's have been identified as adopting a hybrid model. They combine non-profit activities with certain profit-making areas. However, the profit doesn't constitute the main purpose of such ventures (Bornstein 2004; Dees, 2002; OECD, 1999). The access to finance has been recognized as critical for the subsequent flourishing of SE's. However, social entrepreneurs confront more challenges in accessing the resources than their commercial counterparts (Austin et. el., 2006). Further, SE's have been projected as competing for the resources in future with their commercial

counterparts. Keeping in consideration the resource constrained environments of SE's; the Government support finds an immense importance in accessing and mobilizing the resources from different sources.

Further, SEs gauge success in terms of the social impacts which are too intricate to measure. Thus, while these features are regarded as distinct, they concurrently pose different challenges to the social entrepreneurs at each stage of SE business life. Accordingly, SEs requires different kinds of support depending on their core activity, the stage of development as well as their internal capacities. On the way to progress, the required SE support can range from financial to non-financial support.

Recently, there have been some attempts in the way of mapping the Indian SE landscape. For example, Intellecap, IIT-M and GIZ (an international development agency) have surveyed the support system for SE's in India. The survey's noted the main sectors, legal status, types of support, incubator and impact investment landscape and challenges facing enterprises along their growth path from idea generation to growth to scale up (in terms of access to both financial and non-financial support). Thus, SEs cannot operate in isolation. They depend on different kinds of support actors like entrepreneurs, civil society, academicians, state actors, funders or incubators etc. for their establishment and subsequent management. An enabling Government can thus play a vital role in providing multi-aspect assistance to different kinds of SE's, operating across different sectors and at different stages of SE business life. Thus Government policy can serve as an enabling actor in terms of stated policy priorities as well as existing programs.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

The evidences of favorable Government intervention in the development of SE across nations are emerging globally. The Government of India plays a critical role in the development of SE within India. The various policies and regulations framed by the GOI are directly or indirectly affecting the social enterprise sector. There has been an increase in interest of Indian Central and State Governments in engaging the private sector in addressing some of the national developmental issues. This interest is manifested in the form of Government's involvement in shaping the policies concerning management of MSMEs within India (Business Standard, March 7, 2011, "Rs. 1000-cr innovation fund in three months"). Although, it doesn't affect the SE sector directly but it duly impacts the functioning of regional SE's.

Further, supporting the S-ENT sector as a public policy domain would enable the Government to meet the employment needs as well as other economic & social challenges in a more efficient, effective & sustainable way. The policy support for creation & management of SEs would improve the Government's public spending as well as will lessen their dependence on the traditional public or private sector (OECD, 2013).

The focal point with regard to policy development should be that the Government shall adopt a systemic approach for capacity building & scale-up of SEs to contribute more effectively to sustainable growth & development of the economy. Thus the present research was undertaken with the aim to initiate further policy dialogues & thus to support the endeavor of an S-ENT development in India.

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The contribution of SEs can be increased by enabling Government policies at the local, state as well as at national level. The focus of these policies should be on SE development process through: encouraging, incentivizing and supporting social entrepreneurs as well as fostering social innovation within the SE sector, providing an enabling environment in which S-ENT can flourish, improve the legal status, fiscal and regulatory frame works of SEs, provide contexts through which the support can flow, improve financing, business development, market access, services, training as well as supporting further research in the sector. The focal point with regard to policy development should be that the Government shall adopt a systemic approach to capacity building and scale-up of SEs to contribute more effectively to sustainable growth and development of the economy.

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