

Faced with a food and energy crisis, how can society improve its well-being?

Abstract

The essay is discussing social entrepreneurship as a possible approach to society's well-being and furthermore, as an exclusive opportunity for young people to develop their skills and abilities and at the same time to contribute and make a positive change for their society. Young people are seen as the ones capable of making a difference and employing alternative approaches to solving difficult problems.

Some examples of successful initiatives are given as a proof that social entrepreneurship can support society's development and improve its well-being.

Changing world realities and new challenges emerging as a result of the extreme population growth and therefore altered consumption of natural resources have posed an even more serious dilemma to society. The threat of a world food and energy crisis needs to be addressed by the implementation of different tactics for improving the immediate environment of those who are mostly at risk. The severe problems in economic development have resulted in the malfunctioning of society as a whole and the emergence of great social disruptions. Young people from both developed countries and from Third World countries are the ones that are for real facing these challenges and have the responsibility, yet, amazing opportunity, to tackle the issues of social and environmental imbalance. It requires alternative approaches and commitment. Yet, it could be an exciting development opportunity that will engage various aspects of life and will help deal with employment issues, education and training, social development and well-being.

Social entrepreneurship is one of the most exciting prospects opening for young people. It is a new challenge, set in a competitive environment and at the same time provides solutions to some of the present severe problems that have somehow always been ignored by governments or failed to be solved. Social enterprise by one attempt for brief definition is "business with aims that are primarily social or environmental and whose surpluses are ploughed back into the business or community rather than for personal gain."¹ Being such, it creates numerous opportunities, open and beneficial exclusively to young people as they are the ones bringing the change and are expected to come up with bright ideas. Introducing new products and approaches which are innovative and at the same time bear strong message for social responsibility and awareness, young people can make the first steps to improving society's well being.

Bodies dealing with social enterprise are diverse: large-scale and well-known organizations and foundations such as the Skoll Foundations, Ashoka; small enterprises and even governmental structures like the UK Department for the Third Sector that has designed and is delivering a special programme for encouraging social entrepreneurship. Fields of work are varied – social issues like children education, women employment; training, environmental issues, regeneration and sustainability agenda. What is important is the impact social entrepreneurship has generated and the positive changes it has brought. One of its crucial aspects is that it is appealing to young people as the future generators of positive change. It explicitly empowers them with the skills and knowledge to be able to handle difficult solutions but also to raise their social awareness and participation. Social enterprise sharpens critical thinking skills, challenges

¹ www.makeyourmark.org.uk

the social responsibility, provokes searching for better professional realization, further training and development, questioning the environment and the adequacy of current social roles and responsibilities.

As such, social enterprise could be a very useful practical approach to tackling some of the severe problems that people face in their attempt to make the most of their life. One of the keys that social entrepreneurship presents is the chance to work on new products or services that can have a positive social or environmental impact. Being given an employment opportunity by working as social entrepreneurs, people gain invaluable insight to business as what they actually develop is very much business-orientated. This provides a solution of another big issue – finding employees that match the realities of the working environment or even better, starting something independent and elaborating on training, furthering skills and knowledge already acquired. Having socially orientated business people is extremely valuable as these people will make the necessary steps to support the further development.

Social entrepreneurship is very much needed in tackling environmental issues, building work-force capacity, training and giving equal opportunities. Possible means of tackling the problem include introducing different consumer ethics by stressing on the importance of recycling, delivering ethical office services, introducing outdoors solutions and services. There are some already existing products, for example the Shop Social Enterprise initiative by Social Enterprise London. This is the UK's only virtual market place exclusively for social enterprise, which enables social enterprises to inter trade and market their products and services to a wider audience. The range of products on offer is significant, yet, it leaves plenty of room for invention and offering more items, services and goods. This is an excellent opportunity for young people to give their creativity a try and come up with something to be offered on the market, apply business knowledge and approaches to generate impact and change. Designing environmentally friendly and orientated products and goods, their marketing and management can first be included in the training programs but then applied to business. Another feature can be advocating for the Waste Neutral approach. Developed within the Waste Neutral programme of the Eden project, the idea of the three Rs of reduce, re-use and recycle is complemented by a crucial fourth element – reinvest. To reinvest means to buy products made from recycled materials and Eden aims to buy as much as possible from recycled sources. When the weight of recycled materials bought in is equal to the weight of material sent away for recycling and disposal, Eden will have achieved Waste Neutral. This is a very simple approach that can be applied by multiple organizations. Further to addressing environmental topics, these can be amazing employment and training opportunities, particularly because social entrepreneurship has an excellent track record of engaging socially disadvantaged people.

Young people are yet to realize and ultimate their full potential and it is crucial that we receive the necessary support and advice from the responsible organizations and bodies. It is very much up to us how we change our environment. It takes volunteering, recruiting to a common cause and application of already existing means or working on our own approaches. It requires initiativeness, hard work and a great deal of courage to face the challenge of change.

Sources:

<http://www.makeyourmark.org.uk/>

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