



# ROLE OF HEIs IN PROMOTING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP - A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO KOLKATA, WEST BENGAL

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## ABSTRACT

*Social entrepreneurship is receiving a lot of attention due to its growing importance as a powerful tool to address challenging societal issues, while fostering economic development worldwide. In this context, the role of higher education institutions in promoting social entrepreneurship has emerged as a significant area of study. In West Bengal, higher education plays a crucial role in encouraging social entrepreneurship by cultivating a culture of innovation, equipping aspiring entrepreneurs with the resources and skills they need to succeed, as well as offering a platform for confronting the socio-economic problems. Higher education institutions in West Bengal can integrate social entrepreneurship courses and modules into their curricula. These programs will develop an ecosystem which will encourage students to understand the dynamics of social issues and create innovative solutions to combine business principles with societal impact. In West Bengal, Kolkata is the key pioneer in the creation of the contemporary educational system ((Invest in West Bengal, n.d.). Hence the present study intends to explore the role of higher education in promoting social entrepreneurship with respect to the Kolkata district of West Bengal. To achieve the objectives of the research work, 124 students enrolled under Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Kolkata are surveyed. Statistical test such as Kruskal-Wallis test and factor analysis has been conducted to understand the various factors that affecting the contribution of higher education institutions in promoting social entrepreneurship among the students in Kolkata.*

**KEYWORDS:** Social Entrepreneurship, Higher Education, Ecosystem, Primary Survey.

## I. BACKGROUND

Social entrepreneurship is receiving a lot of attention due to its growing importance as a powerful tool to address numerous challenging societal issues, while fostering economic development worldwide. India is a country of diversified population in terms of gender, cultural, social class, and economic status etc. Despite of the fact that the country has made significant progress in recent years, with increasing access to education, healthcare, and technologies etc., but numerous social and environmental issues including poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, and environmental degradation are still persisting today.

India is likely to miss the deadline for 50 percent of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators including major concerns (Dubey, 2023). In this context, social entrepreneurs have a significant role to play and social entrepreneurship has gained as an important mechanism to address those challenges by generating sustainable solutions. Social entrepreneurship refers to the practice of using innovative, sustainable, and business-oriented approaches to confront the socio-economic problems. In order to bring constructive social change, social entrepreneurs focus on creating sustainable impact solutions that go beyond traditional philanthropy or charity which have a positive impact on society as well as on the environment.

Due to its potential to develop innovative solutions for crucial socio-economic issues, the intersection between higher education and social entrepreneurship has drawn a lot of

attention in recent years. Kolkata offers a unique context for exploring the role of higher education in promoting social entrepreneurship. In the present study, the researchers intend to analyse the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in promoting and fostering social entrepreneurship among the students in Kolkata.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The prevailing state of relevant policies & recent Social entrepreneurship policy developments revealed that there are negligible concerns for entrepreneurship policy framework in majority of developing countries including India (Satar, 2016). In the context of the Asia-Pacific countries (APAC), there are some major factors like economical, contextual, institutional, social etc. that requires further investigation which are having potential to make APAC nations future ready social entrepreneurship (Sengupta et al., 2017). Apart from that, an entrepreneur's perception, risk taking ability, gender, social networking etc. influences the intention to build social entrepreneurship (Banerjee et. al., 2022).

The start-up ecosystem in building social entrepreneurship plays a crucial role by availing various R&D facilities, infrastructural resources and also conducting numerous accelerator programmes that have been instrumental in strengthening connections (Cheah et. al., 2019). In order to address the needs of the society at large, social innovation comes forward to generate new business plans or ideas and through Social entrepreneurship, innovations take place which



can lead to a large-scale social change with different kinds of governmental intervention (Shokley et. al., 2011).

### III. RESEARCH GAP

On the basis of extensive review of literature, it is witnessed that several studies have been conducted on the importance of social entrepreneurship. But very few research works have been done in the context of role of higher education in fostering social entrepreneurship and no such seminal work is evident with respect to West Bengal. Hence, the researchers identified the area as a major research gap.

### IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following are the research objectives based on the research gap:

1. To analyse the variation in perception regarding role of higher education in promoting social entrepreneurship among students with respect to educational level, type of institution and academic stream.
2. To explore the factors responsible for creating social entrepreneurship ecosystem by the higher education institutions in Kolkata.

### V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. Is there any variation in perception regarding role of higher education in promoting social entrepreneurship among students with respect to educational level, type of institution and academic stream?
2. Does there exist any factors responsible for creating social entrepreneurship ecosystem by the higher education institutions in Kolkata?

### VI. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Based on the research questions, the following research hypothesis are formulated:

1. H<sub>1</sub>: There is no variation in perception regarding role of higher education in promoting social entrepreneurship among students with respect to educational level, type of institution and academic stream.
2. H<sub>2</sub>: The null hypothesis states that there are no latent underlying structures and that all variables load equally.

### VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is exploratory as well as empirical in nature and is based on primary data. A structured questionnaire has been framed based on several literatures. The questionnaire contains questions with respect to demographic profile of the respondents as well as five-point Likert scale is used to measure the perception of the respondents. The survey is conducted in the district of Kolkata in West Bengal. The responses are collected from 124 students from different higher education institutions through google form and direct interviews using convenient sampling technique. SPSS software has been used for analysing the data collected from the primary survey. Cronbach's Alpha is used to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Simple percentages, bar chart, pie charts and frequency tables have been used to present and interpret the

data. To empirically analyse the survey data collected and to validate the above mentioned hypothesis based on the research objectives, Kruskal - Wallis test and Principal Component Analysis (PCA) are conducted.

### VIII. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In the present study, the researchers have collected 124 responses from the district of Kolkata, West Bengal. The analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the survey are presented here.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.945	15

Source: Compiled by the researchers through SPSS 26

To test the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha has been used. The Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.945, which is more than 0.90 and considered to be excellent.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no variation in perception regarding role of higher education in promoting social entrepreneurship among students with respect to educational level, type of institution and academic stream.

Role of higher education institutions in promoting and fostering social entrepreneurship			
Test Statistics	Educational Level	Type of Institution	Academic Stream
Kruskal-Wallis H	3.732	4.761	4.411
df	2	1	2
Asymp. Sig.	.155	.029	.023
Decision	Accept	Reject	Reject

Source: Compiled by the researchers through SPSS 26

From the above table, it is seen that the role of higher education institutions in promoting and fostering social entrepreneurship does not vary with respect to educational level but varies in terms of type of institution and academic stream of the respondents. The possible reason behind the acceptance of null hypothesis with respect to educational level could be due to the underlying fact that the institutions are taking initiatives regarding social entrepreneurship irrespective of their educational level. The higher education institutions are intended to include entrepreneurship development in the course curriculum, whether it is graduation or post-graduation course. Various awareness programs like workshops, seminars, professional meets, etc. are organised by the institutions for all educational levels.

On the other hand, there exist variation in their perception with respect to type of institution could be due to that private institutions are taking more frequent initiatives regarding social entrepreneurship, including entrepreneurship development in the course curriculum, using ecosystem framework, etc. as compare to government institutions. Moreover, private educational institutions are often having more flexibility and autonomy in funding and curriculum designing. Non-government institutions might have better networking opportunities due to their connections with private sector



organisations, Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs), and social entrepreneurs. Private institutions might be quicker to respond to changing societal needs and trends, while government institutions might have more established structures and processes that take longer to adapt.

Lastly, it is also evident that there exists variation in perception of the respondents in terms of their academic stream as awareness of social entrepreneurship varies among academic streams, with business and management students being more likely to encounter information about it. Business schools often offer dedicated courses and resources due to its alignment with sustainability and corporate responsibility. The extent of

awareness depends on curriculum, faculty expertise, and institutional culture, but interdisciplinary approaches are emerging. Commerce students' exposure to topics like innovative business models contributes to their awareness, along with encountering real-world examples. Their entrepreneurial mind set further makes them receptive to ideas of innovation and impact. Nevertheless, efforts to raise awareness should span all academic streams, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration for a broader understanding of social impact across fields.

**Hypothesis 2:** The null hypothesis states that there are no latent underlying structures and that all variables load equally.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.			.927
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1384.611	
	df	105	
	Sig.	.000	

Source: Compiled by the researchers through SPSS 26

In the present research work, the KMO statistic value is 0.927 which is more than 0.9 and is considered to be excellent, and hence PCA can be undertaken. The calculated Bartlett's test

value is 0.000 which signifies that the correlation matrix is not identity matrix, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, the PCA can be undertaken.

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
You believe that higher education Institutions can encourage students to develop innovative solutions to major societal and environmental issues through social entrepreneurship	.859	.217		.248
There is a need of specific interdisciplinary collaborations or partnerships that higher education institutions should engage into enhance the promotion of social entrepreneurship.		.234	.834	.244
You believe higher education institutions should be involved in promoting and fostering social entrepreneurship	.834	.344		.108
Integrating social entrepreneurship into the curriculum of various disciplines can enhance your understanding of its principles and practices	.171	.286	.730	.356
You are aware of the term "Social Entrepreneurship"	.629	.475	.266	-.133
Your Institution arranges for 'Entrepreneur-Student Meetup & Visit' programs	.161	.822	.156	.300
You are aware of the initiatives taken by your institution to promote social entrepreneurship among their students	.305	.723	.354	.147
Your Institution organizes seminars/workshops/specific courses on "Social Entrepreneurship"	.311	.661	.305	.324
You have participated in any social entrepreneurship-related courses, workshops, or programs during your higher education	.222	.488	.659	
Your Institution educates you about "Social Entrepreneurship"	.647	.213	.390	.361
In your experience, you believe that your institution is adequately equipped to teach and mentor students in the complexities of social entrepreneurship	.403	.235	.537	.498
Your course-curriculum includes the concept of "Social Entrepreneurship"	.220	.310	.808	.216
Your Institution have Incubation Centre (Entrepreneurship Development Cell)	.146	.428	.264	.625
You believe that the concept of social entrepreneurship aligns well with the traditional academic structures of higher education	.239	.198	.260	.804
Your institution contributes to creating a supportive ecosystem where social entrepreneurs can learn from each other, share experiences, and collaborate on projects	.417	.541		.562
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.				

Source: Compiled by the researchers through SPSS 26

The first component has four variables which are (a) Encouragement for development of innovative solutions to major societal and environmental issues (with loading .834), (b) Involvement of institutions in promoting and fostering social entrepreneurship (with loading .866), (c) Generating Awareness about the term social entrepreneurship (with loading .629), and (d) Role of institutions in educating social entrepreneurship (with loading .647). The first component

clearly shows the 'Perceptiveness' factor indicating the role of higher education in creating awareness regarding social entrepreneurship among students.

The second component has three variables which are (a) Arrangement for 'Entrepreneur-Student Meetup & Visit' programs (with loading .822), (b) Awareness of the students regarding initiatives taken by your institution to promote social



entrepreneurship (with loading .723), and (c) Organization seminars/workshops/specific courses on "Social Entrepreneurship" (with loading .661). The second component depicts the 'Initiatives' factor representing the role of higher education in taking various initiatives for promoting social entrepreneurship among students.

The third component has five variables which are (a) Need of specific interdisciplinary collaborations or partnerships (with loading .834), (b) Integration of social entrepreneurship into the curriculum of various disciplines (with loading .730), (c) Participation in social entrepreneurship-related courses, workshops, or programs (with loading .629), (d) Ability to teach and mentor students in the complexities of social entrepreneurship (with loading .537) and (e) Course-curriculum

contains the concept of "Social Entrepreneurship (with loading .808). The third component clearly reflects the 'Course-curriculum' factor representing the role of higher education in the integration of social entrepreneurship into the Course-curriculum.

The fourth component has three variables which are (a) Availability of Incubation Centre (with loading .625), (b) Alignment of social entrepreneurship with the traditional academic structures of higher education (with loading .804), and (c) Creation of Supportive Ecosystem (with loading .562). The fourth component reflects the 'Ecosystem' factor representing the role of higher education in creating supportive Ecosystem to foster the growth of social entrepreneurship.

Table 5. Summary Results of PCA

Factor Component	Naming the Components	Included Variables
Component 1	Perceptiveness	1. Generating awareness in promoting and fostering social entrepreneurship 2. Educating about social entrepreneurship 3. Development of innovative solutions
Component 2	Initiatives	1. Informing students about the initiatives 2. 'Entrepreneur-Student Meetup & Visit' programs 3. Organising seminars, workshops, specific courses, etc.
Component 3	Course-curriculum	1. Integrating social entrepreneurship into the course-curriculum 2. Equipped to teach and mentor students 3. interdisciplinary collaborations or partnerships
Component 4	Ecosystem	1. Availability of Incubation Centre 2. Alignment of social entrepreneurship with the traditional academic structures of higher education 3. Creation of Supportive Ecosystem

Source: Compiled by the researchers through SPSS 26

The above table depicts the four significant components that includes Perceptiveness, Initiatives, Course-curriculum and Ecosystem that defines the role of HEIs in promoting social entrepreneurship among students as derived by the PCA. Firstly, perceptiveness entails the institution's awareness of the societal impact of social entrepreneurship. HEIs need to recognize and understand the evolving needs of society, identifying social issues, and acknowledging students' potential for positive change. Secondly, initiatives involve proactive efforts and programs, such as workshops, seminars, and dedicated centres, that provide resources and support for social entrepreneurial ventures. Thirdly, course-curriculum integration is crucial, requiring HEIs to incorporate social entrepreneurship-related content into academic programs, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the principles and practices involved. Lastly, the ecosystem encompasses the broader environment that supports social entrepreneurship within and beyond the institution, including collaborations with external partners, mentorship programs, and community engagement, creating a holistic approach to cultivating a culture of social innovation among students.

IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the present study, the researcher focused to empirically understand and analyse the role of HEIs in promoting and

fostering social entrepreneurship in the district of Kolkata. From the analysis it is evident that higher education institutions acquiring resources to assist social entrepreneurship by creating an ecosystem among the students. Irrespective of the educational level, it is seen that the HEIs are taking various initiatives like including entrepreneurship development in the course-curriculum, arranging for workshops and seminars, professional meet-ups etc. to develop the concept of social entrepreneurship. Besides that, the survey results also highlighted that as compare to government institutions, non-government institutions are having more flexibility and autonomy to adopt the concept social entrepreneurship by taking more frequent initiatives. Moreover, non-government institutions are quicker to respond to changing societal needs and trends by availing better structures and processes.

The present study also reveals that; awareness of social entrepreneurship can indeed vary based on the academic stream of the students. The extent of awareness in each academic stream can depend on the curriculum, faculty expertise, institutional culture, and the evolving trends within each field. However, interdisciplinary approaches are becoming more common, allowing students to explore the intersections of their chosen academic streams with social entrepreneurship. Students studying business and management disciplines, such as entrepreneurship, management, and business administration,



are more likely to encounter information about social entrepreneurship. In this light, Commerce students often study subjects related to business management, marketing, and economics, which could include discussions about innovative business models like social entrepreneurship to encounter more real-world examples of social enterprises and successful social entrepreneurs in their coursework. These topics might be more directly related to social entrepreneurship than some subjects in science or arts streams.

In the wake of the National Education Policy, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India are under increasing pressure to redefine their role in the economy by actively fostering entrepreneurship and small business development. Embracing a pivotal role, HEIs should prioritize cultivating an entrepreneurial spirit among students, making entrepreneurship education an integral part of the curriculum for all disciplines. Beyond university-level initiatives, HEIs should extend their focus to primary schools, aligning educational efforts with local development needs. A crucial element is government support for these endeavours, ensuring holistic education and facilitating the establishment of entrepreneurial ventures. By raising awareness of social entrepreneurship across academic disciplines, HEIs can encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, fostering a comprehensive understanding of how diverse fields contribute to social impact and economic development.

## X. REFERENCES

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