

## The Perceived Impact of Consultancy Organisations and Social Enterprises: Converging and Diverging Discourses

**Authors :** Seda Muftugil-Yalcin

**Abstract :** With the proliferation of the number of social enterprises worldwide, there is now a whole ecosystem full of different organisational actors revolving around social enterprises. Impact hubs, incubation centers, and organisations (profit or non-profit) that offer consultancy services to social enterprises can be said to constitute one such cluster in the eco-system. These organisations offer a variety of services to social enterprises which desire to maximize their positive social impact. Especially with regards to impact measurement, there are numerous systems/guides/approaches/tools developed that claim to benefit social enterprises. Many organisations choose one of the existing tools and craft programs that help social enterprises to measure and to manage their social impacts. However, empirical evidence with regards to how the services of these consultancy organisations are precisely utilized on the field is scarce. This inevitably casts doubt on the impact of these organisations themselves. This research dwells on four case studies from the Netherlands and Turkey. In each country, two university-affiliated impact centers and two independent consultancy agencies that work with social entrepreneurs in the area of social impact measurement are closely examined. The overarching research question has been 'With regards to impact measurement, how do the founders/managers of these organisations perceive and make sense of their contribution to social enterprises and to the social entrepreneurship eco-system at large?' As for methodology, in-depth interviews were carried out with the managers/founders of these organisations and discourse analysis method has been used for data analysis together with grounded theory. The comparison between Turkey and Netherlands elucidate common denominators of impact measurement hype and discourses that are currently existing worldwide. In addition, it also reveals differing priorities of social enterprises in these different settings, which shape the expectations of social enterprises of consultancy organisations. Comparison between university affiliated impact hubs and independent consultancy organisations also give away important data about how different forms of consultancy organisations (in this case university based and independent) position themselves in relation to alike organisations with similar aims. The overall aim of the research is to reveal the contribution of the consultancy organisations that work with social enterprises to the social entrepreneurship field as perceived by them through a cross cultural study. The findings indicate that in both settings, the organisations that were claiming to bring positive social impact on the social entrepreneurship eco-system through their impact measurement trainings were themselves having a hard time in concretizing their own contributions; which indicated that these organisations were in need of a different impact measurement discourse than the ones they were championing.

**Keywords :** consultancy organisations, social entrepreneurship, social impact measurement, social impact discourse

**Conference Title :** ICSEI 2019 : International Conference on Social Enterprise and Innovation

**Conference Location :** Rome, Italy

**Conference Dates :** September 17-18, 2019