

## Enterprises and Social Impact: A Review of the Changing Landscape

**Authors :** Suzhou Wei, Isobel Cunningham, Laura Bradley McCauley

**Abstract :** Social enterprises play a significant role in resolving social issues in the modern world. In contrast to traditional commercial businesses, their main goal is to address social concerns rather than primarily maximize profits. This phenomenon in entrepreneurship is presenting new opportunities and different operating models and resulting in modified approaches to measure success beyond traditional market share and margins. This paper explores social enterprises to clarify their roles and approaches in addressing grand challenges related to social issues. In doing so, it analyses the key differences between traditional business and social enterprises, such as their operating model and value proposition, to understand their contributions to society. The research presented in this paper responds to calls for research to better understand social enterprises and entrepreneurship but also to explore the dynamics between profit-driven and socially-oriented entities to deliver mutual benefits. This paper, which examines the features of commercial business, suggests their primary focus is profit generation, economic growth and innovation. Beyond the chase of profit, it highlights the critical role of innovation typical of successful businesses. This, in turn, promotes economic growth, creates job opportunities and makes a major positive impact on people's lives. In contrast, the motivations upon which social enterprises are founded relate to a commitment to address social problems rather than maximizing profits. These entities combine entrepreneurial principles with commitments to deliver social impact and grand challenge changes, creating a distinctive category within the broader enterprise and entrepreneurship landscape. The motivations for establishing a social enterprise are diverse, such as encompassing personal fulfillment, a genuine desire to contribute to society and a focus on achieving impactful accomplishments. The paper also discusses the collaboration between commercial businesses and social enterprises, which is viewed as a strategic approach to addressing grand challenges more comprehensively and effectively. Finally, this paper highlights the evolving and diverse expectations placed on all businesses to actively contribute to society beyond profit-making. We conclude that there is an unrealized and underdeveloped potential for collaboration between commercial businesses and social enterprises to produce greater and long-lasting social impacts. Overall, the aim of this research is to encourage more investigation of the complex relationship between economic and social objectives and contributions through a better understanding of how and why businesses might address social issues. Ultimately, the paper positions itself as a tool for understanding the evolving landscape of business engagement with social issues and advocates for collaborative efforts to achieve sustainable and impactful outcomes.

**Keywords :** business, social enterprises, collaboration, social issues, motivations

**Conference Title :** ICSE 2024 : International Conference on Social Entrepreneurship

**Conference Location :** London, United Kingdom

**Conference Dates :** September 19-20, 2024