An Ethnographic Study: Ineffective Management of a Social Enterprise

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Abstract : The assumption that social enterprises are empowering has strong theoretical support, but empirical verification is anecdotal at best. Social enterprises blend social goal with an enterprising idea and therefore in theory these enterprises should provide meaningful jobs that are empowering. Whether jobs created are meaningful, or whether these organizations are practicing social entrepreneurship remains unexplored key questions. This paper addresses these key questions through a comprehensive literature review and an ethnographical study of a Domiciliary Home Care Social Enterprise in the UK. The social entrepreneurs, management and 9 staff members were observed, interviewed and achieves were reviewed and analyzed. In this study, the social entrepreneur's vision was lost in transition during management change and the organization was only identified as a social enterprise by name. The organization that was set up to tackle lack of continuity in care and create a family of independent carers, was eventually closed down overnight and subjected to investigation by social services and the local council. Also, the ineffectiveness of the organization led to staff being stressed and without the support of the management to help rectify the issues; staff started displaying symptoms of burnout. Social enterprise managers should not only focus on profit maximization or generation, but should equally live up to the core tenets of the enterprise and effectively communicate and gain buy-in of all employees for any changes. Further, there ought to be an independent organization that regulates social enterprises to ensure that they are adhering to their social goals.

Keywords : ethnography, carer, social, enterprise