

Social Enterprise and Equity: Laughing In Stormy Weather

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SUMMARY: SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP, OFFER, AT THIS TIME, THE BEST AND PERHAPS THE ONLY REAL OPTION FOR SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IN JAMAICA AND THE CARIBBEAN.

1. Introduction

Based on the many economic and social challenges we need to induce our best self-reliance spirit. The global financial collapse over the next few years will impact pensioners, school leavers, youth and women. There will be no competitive value-creating economy but rather the burden of widespread debt forced on to the backs of future generations with each passing year. We are, bit by bit, losing the already inadequate degree of independence we had.

ONE OF THE CHANGES REQUIRED, ESPECIALLY IN CONSTRAINED ECONOMIC AND DEBT-RIDDEN CIRCUMSTANCES IS SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP!

2. The Case for Social Entrepreneurship and Equity

Social enterprise is about using a market-driven business model to address key social and environmental issues. The core principle should be that each person has the capacity to be an entrepreneur competitively creating value for self and for others. It is about looking out for what one can be productive in accomplishing, and which provides goods or services that, meet and exceed what people need and for which they crave (that is ethical), while at the same time offering services and products better than your competitors.

By creating value (goods and services), it is important to note that they are created for others who have unsatisfied wants, cravings and needs. In this way social equity is accomplished because you are improving the lives of others.

An *ethical* concern and *moral purpose* would be to competitively produce values which do *not* disable, create illegality, create immorality, make dysfunctional, harm, lead to self-destruction, and cause harm to the wider society. It is about producing goods and services enabling people -- their partners, families, friends and community to live abundant and happy lives in peace.

3. Social Enterprise, Social Entrepreneurship and Social Equity

There is a vital distinction between A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE and A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR. True Business, is the competitive development, production and marketing of values (goods and services) that benefit others. Productivity creates values; while Sacrifice always destroys values.

The primary measurement of success in a social enterprise is the extent of its social (or environmental) impact. Indeed, there is nothing anti-social or evil about making profits if you deliver goods and services which meet and exceed the expectations of your clients and customers! It is rapacious and wrong however when it exploits workers, clients and consumers and does not even meet their aspirations.

Making a profit, creating wealth, or serving the desires of customers may be part of the social entrepreneurship model but these are means to a social end, not the end in itself. Profit is not the sole or primary gauge of value creation; nor is customer satisfaction -- social impact is the primary measure in this model.

- Social entrepreneurs look for a long-term social return on investment, not merely a profitable return.
- Social entrepreneurs want more than a quick fix; they want to create lasting improvements.
- A social enterprise is to be able to attract non-commercial bank financial, technological and management support until the business has developed the wings necessary to fly into autonomy and self-reliance, having achieved its social purpose.
- The desirability of a social enterprise is that it is independent of the ever-changing priorities of government and domestic and international donor agencies/foundations. It must simply pursue the changes that are needed within a community.
- It is not a charity. It is a social development facilitation.
- Entrepreneurs (social and non-social) by serving new markets or creating new ways of doing things, they move the economy (and therefore, the society) forward. Not every, and not most, businesses are entrepreneurial!

4. More on Social Ethics and Social Equity

Social equity is not a concept which promotes taking from the rich, sacrificially, to distribute as charity (unproductively) to the poor. It is done on the basis that achieving social equity is the right action (according to human ethics) necessary for achieving prosperity for all and social peace and happiness for all.

People have mistakenly thought they were free to behave socially in whatever way they chose, producing a wide range of chaotic results instead. The responsibility of the "I" is clear as opposed to

blaming others and should seek the proper balance with the “WE” – creating value for oneself and others simultaneously. Lawbreakers of all ages are not being taught about their innate drive toward wrong action and how that drive influences what they think, say and do. They are not taught what they could do to suspend or over-turn that influence and release the wrong thinking that would stop their wrong behavior.

If that fundamental approach were widely implemented, penitentiaries would become places for penitence, as the word suggests, rather than places for incarceration and punishment. These days we clearly send people to prison not as punishment but more so for punishment.

With the same attitude, society’s behavioral chaos would be resolved as people adjusted their social behavior to the law of absolute right - just because it is right to be right and wrong to be wrong. In the process of “righting” their thinking, people become accountable, rational and productive.

Only human beings can choose to be honest or deceptive, objective or mystical, responsible or irresponsible, competent or incompetent, striving or lazy, productive or destructive, beneficial or harmful, or noble or evil. The choice between exerting effort, or defaulting to laziness, determines the course of all important human actions. True business is the competitive development, production and marketing of values that benefit others.

It has been corrupted of course to mean unrelenting exploitation in the name of profits. Any chosen action that purposefully benefits the human organism or society is morally good and right. Any chosen action that purposefully harms the human organism or society is morally bad and wrong. These two moral absolutes are essential for determining whether or not we will enjoy prosperity and include achieving genuine prosperity and happiness.

The social entrepreneurship approach is preferred because only truly competitive, free markets fully recognize the sovereignty of the individual and the right to his or her own body, life and earned property. The only way to retain growing prosperity and happiness is to remain independent, self-sufficient and commercially productive, *especially as one grows older*.

The issue may be put in the form of considering how does one get, for example, the street hustler to accept the discipline, honesty, the delivery and exceeding of value to clients/customers, in order to succeed, not merely as a business person, but as a social entrepreneur who can transform the context and culture which negatively shaped her/his development and generate instead lasting social change? The challenge is far from being a trivial one.

Social entrepreneurship intends to break away decisively from a paradigm that has been persistently repeated, to answer a very specific question: how are the poor in rural and inner city areas are to be persistently reached and sustained?

- Business, honestly and fairly practised, meeting people’s needs and exceeding their expectations for goods, services and amusement, is a high social good.
- By creatively and competitively producing values for self and for others, with this motivation, the business person is acting ethically and serving the wider social community (the social commons) in inestimable ways.

6. Conclusion

The informal/illegal sector is quite large throughout the Caribbean but it is however largely unproductive activity. Our challenge is to help make the productive ones, the social entrepreneurs, truly successful and profitable. It is when, ethically, a business practitioner deliberately breaks the law of social behavior to act rightly, in order to act wrongly, that s/he lies, cheats, becomes corrupt, bribes and extorts which lead inevitably to bad results and failure ensues.

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7. Selected Projects

These three projects listed below require some training and technical support initially. They are listed because there are several qualified apiarists in the Caribbean who understand what is needed to make these projects successful in the Caribbean weather and environmental conditions. No large area is required for establishing them. Expertise for Tropical Fish Raising can be provided by The Competitiveness Company as well as overseas marketing know-how and capacity to do so. Expertise for Training and Development can be provided by the Apiaries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture (and by Better Bee Supplies and Services Ltd). Aquaponics (the growing of vegetables, etc. using edible fish droppings) can be supported by The University of Technology (or by relevant videos which can be downloaded for a small price and shared).

1. Beekeeping
2. Tropical Fish raising for export market
3. Aquaponics

- I. Social Equity is accomplished by your success.
- II. Productivity, creates value and therefore is good and equitable; while
- III. Sacrifice always destroys values (and therefore is bad and inequitable).
- IV. There is nothing anti-social or evil about making profits if you meet and exceed expectations of your clients and customers.

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