

Integrating Community Enterprise Into Higher Education and CVET - Insights and Impacts from Social Entrepreneurship Training

Received: 04.03.2025

Available online: 30.03.2025

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the primary aspects of the need for education and awareness about the subject of social entrepreneurship, and more especially the activities of community-led businesses. The Burgas Free University conducted research and training on the innovative topic of community enterprise development. As part of this research and training, a blended learning educational programme and associated teaching and learning resources were developed for higher education institutions, accrediting agencies, and social entrepreneurs and innovators. The study investigates several approaches and standards that might be used to evaluate the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship training. An evaluation of the effect of a course on social entrepreneurship that was taught at BSU between the years 2022 and 2024 is offered here. The course

was held over the time discussed. The findings of the study shed light on the significance of training organisations for social entrepreneurs in Bulgaria, as well as the organisational capacity of these organisations to bring about genuine social transformations. A community enterprise is an organisation that is owned and managed by the community, and its mission and vision are centred on serving individuals from a defined geographical area (primarily disadvantaged locations) and/or communities of interest (primarily marginalised groups in society). This definition was provided by the community. This distinguishes community entrepreneurs as a separate category within the larger social enterprise sector. Community enterprises not only engage in business for the aim of promoting social causes, but they also reinvest any gains in ways that have the potential to benefit a specific community.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship, Community-based enterprises, Continuing vocational education and training, Education and training

JEL: I25, I26, L31

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I. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is of utmost importance in modern education as it tackles social issues and provides students with the essential skills and attitudes needed in the 21st century. There are many significant reasons why social entrepreneurship has importance in the current educational environment. It promotes the engagement of students in identifying and tackling social problems by using creative and original solutions. This technique fosters creativity and cultivates critical thinking.

In addition, the unconventional approach of promoting community-sponsored entrepreneurship within the context of higher education courses is a noteworthy innovation. It is of the utmost importance for higher education institutions to do research on the subject of community entrepreneurship, and they should do so in collaboration with the community and the volunteer sector. Students and other key stakeholders should be educated on the manner in which community-owned businesses may enable community-led local development. This is of equal importance.

The primary goals were to discover and reflect on instances of successful community enterprises that have been successful in the past, as well as to establish the crucial success characteristics that contributed to their success. To improve students' knowledge, skills, and abilities related to community-led local development and community-owned businesses, as well as to create a framework that is both empowering and consultative in order to get communities to become "enterprising," create a course curriculum and teaching and learning materials that can focus on the following topics: community enterprise models and methods; leadership, human resources, and operational management in

community business; governance and legal entity frameworks; and finance.

The primary activities that were carried out include the following: the analysis of national reports on the subject of Community Enterprise; the design, development, and accreditation of a blended learning programme; the description of the design, development, and maintenance of a learning repository (moodle); and the development and testing of educational materials and resources for the Certificate in Community Enterprise through Learning, Teaching, and Training. Among the activities that are included in that research are the following: the recruitment of students and the delivery of the blended learning accredited programme; the development of student monitoring, evaluation, and assessment instruments; and the compilation of student and staff feedback through an Evaluation Report; and the incorporation of key deliverables into higher education programmes that are offered by project partner consortia.

Due to its specific elements, such as the integration of business and social goals, practical experience and applied science, a focus on social change and sustainability, and an interdisciplinary approach, education in the field of social entrepreneurship has its own unique distinguishing characteristics that set it apart from other educational programmes. In the context of the rising significance of social entrepreneurship in Bulgaria, it is vital to evaluate the effect of training organisations that assist the formation and growth of social businesses in order to get knowledge of the influence that these organisations have on society and the economy. Due to the complexity of the societal changes that social entrepreneurship education attempts to accomplish, it may be difficult to evaluate

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the effect that societal Entrepreneurship Education has. However, it is possible to use a variety of methods and approaches to evaluate the effect. Some examples of these include measuring the trainees' or students' acquired knowledge and the development of their skills in the field of social entrepreneurship, evaluating the connections and networks they have created during the training, evaluating the social effect of projects and initiatives that have been implemented as a result of the training, and monitoring the career development of the course. The criteria for this assessment cover a variety of characteristics of their success and effectiveness, including the number of participants, the quality of the training that was offered, the number of social businesses that were founded, the influence that they had on the community, as well as their financial and social success. A substantial amount of information on the influence that the trainings have had on social entrepreneurship in Bulgaria may be gleaned from the study of the findings of the impact assessment of the trainings. Not only does it make it possible to see significant patterns and achievements, but it also provides a chance to get an understanding of how trainings may be enhanced and optimised in order to have greater effect and success in the future.

II. Review of the literature on the topic

Social entrepreneurship is still relatively new and not well known as an area of scientific research. This is due to the fact that social entrepreneurship is an extremely dynamic concept and theoretical interpretations are subject to change. In addition, scholars involved in social entrepreneurship continue to unify the definition.

At the heart of the definitional debate is the dilemma of whether social entrepreneurship is

an application of commercial entrepreneurship in the social sector or rather a specialized individual field that deserves a separate in-depth analysis. Of course, there are countless definitions belonging to different authors.

The concept of social entrepreneurship encompasses both the creation of new social enterprises and the addressing of social needs within existing commercial or governmental organizations. Mort, Weerawardena, and Carnegie (2003) highlight its multidimensional and ethical nature, emphasizing that it involves entrepreneurial virtuous behavior aimed at achieving a social mission, characterized by innovation, proactivity, and risk-taking. Mair and Martí (2006) propose a comprehensive definition, viewing social entrepreneurship as a process that creates value by combining resources in novel ways to exploit opportunities that generate social value, drive social change, or meet social needs. Importantly, this process can occur within new organizations or established ones, where it is referred to as social intrapreneurship, akin to intrapreneurship in the business sector.

Some scholars (Martin, R. L., & Osberg, S., 2007) argue that social entrepreneurship is loosely defined and has become a big tent that accommodates all kinds of socially beneficial activities. What distinguishes social entrepreneurship is its focus on social needs. However, some social entrepreneurship researchers argue that since the concepts of innovation and profitability are recurrent in the definition of entrepreneurship, any definition of social entrepreneurship should include both terms. It is clear that sustainable development, including improvements in the natural environment and in the social and economic domains, is needed in both 'rich' countries and poor ones (Diesendorf, 1999). However, many studies (Pandey, Mukherjee, & Kumar, 2009;

Dale & Sparkes, 2011; Ashoka, n.d.) attest to the contribution of social entrepreneurs to achieving the goal of sustainable development, especially in the context of poor countries (Seelos & Mair, 2005a). They contribute to sustainable development by creating innovative organizations and new models for delivering products and services that respond directly to the social needs underlying the Sustainable Development Goals (ibid.), and social entrepreneurship has the potential to address social problems, reduce inequality and poverty and also address environmental challenges (UN, 2017).

Scholars view a social enterprise (SE) as an enterprise with a purpose that helps a large number of people in a positive way and while doing so may or may not earn a surplus (Sriram, 2011). For the purposes of this chapter, an organization established by a social entrepreneur to create social change and social impact is referred to as a "social enterprise". However, it is important to emphasize here that unlike traditional entrepreneurs, the motivation of social entrepreneurs is not to create an organization, but to create a certain path so that participants can alleviate a complex social problem (Dorado, 2006). So they may or may not create an organization because creating social change is the most important goal for them. From the perspective of the social entrepreneurship value creation model, social activism is also a form of social entrepreneurship. Martin and Osberg (2007) mention that "social activists may or may not create ventures or organizations to advance the changes they seek."

The economic dimension of social entrepreneurship is a means to an end, which is social value. Regardless of country and governance mechanisms, the definition of

social entrepreneurship should include the following four elements:

- Addressing a specific social need;
- Be focused on the creation of social value;
- Emphasize social impact; and
- May involve a combination of philanthropic, market-oriented, and hybrid mechanisms.

1. Community-based enterprises

Community-based enterprises are a unique form of entrepreneurship that is deeply rooted in the cultural and social foundations of local communities (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). These enterprises are typically driven by the collective efforts of the community to address their economic and social needs, effectively transforming the community itself into an entrepreneur and an enterprise.

The defining characteristics of community-based enterprises include their focus on sustainable local development, their integration of natural and social capital alongside economic considerations, and their ability to generate positive spillover effects that benefit the broader community (Gupta et al., 2020). Social enterprises, which blend the pursuit of public social goods with market-aligned tools and techniques, share some similarities with community-based enterprises in their boundary-spanning nature and their intent to create producer surplus by addressing social and environmental challenges.

Community-based enterprises and social enterprises play a critical role in promoting inclusive and sustainable economic and social development, particularly in underserved and marginalized populations. Given that 75% of the world's poor live in rural areas, community-based enterprises offer a promising strategy for empowering these populations and fostering local-level progress.

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By tapping into the existing social and cultural capital of communities, these enterprises can generate positive externalities that benefit the entire community, such as job creation, environmental protection, and the provision of essential goods and services.

Overall, community-based enterprises and social enterprises represent a novel and impactful approach to entrepreneurship, one that prioritizes the creation of social and environmental value alongside economic considerations.

Community-led enterprises are a remarkable model of economic and social development that has gained significant attention in recent years. These non-profit organizations are at the forefront of driving local economic initiatives from the bottom-up, challenging the traditional top-down approach to decision-making (Squazzoni, 2008).

At their core, community-led enterprises are rooted in the unique cultural, natural, and social capital of the communities they serve (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). They transform the community itself into an entrepreneur and an enterprise, seamlessly integrating economic considerations with the preservation of local resources and the enhancement of quality of life (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006).

One of the key characteristics of community-led enterprises is their ability to mobilize community assets and connect internal and external resources (Squazzoni, 2008). They serve as a bridge between the private, public, and community sectors, synthesizing diverse visions, expertise, and methods to foster social capital and promote collective action (Squazzoni, 2008).

In developing countries, where 75% of the world's poor reside in rural areas, community-led enterprises have emerged as a promising strategy for sustainable local development

(Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). By empowering local stakeholders to participate in decision-making and fostering a sense of "community ownership," these enterprises have the potential to address pressing issues such as inequality, social exclusion, and resource depletion (Wahid et al., 2017).

Despite the potential of community-led enterprises, they often face significant barriers to their empowerment and growth. The findings of a study conducted in Pakistan (Wahid et al., 2017) highlight the challenges faced by these organizations, including capacity-building constraints, limited access to resources, and a lack of policy support.

To address these barriers, policymakers and development practitioners must recognize the value of community-led enterprises and actively support their growth. As Chrisman et al. (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006) suggest, the integration of community culture, natural and social capital into economic considerations can transform the way we approach local development, leading to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes.

Community-based enterprises (CBEs) are businesses or organizations that are owned, managed, and controlled by community members. These enterprises aim to improve the economic and social well-being of the community by creating jobs, generating income, and providing goods and services. Here are some general principles to keep in mind when establishing or operating a CBE:

Community participation: Community participation is essential to the success of a CBE. The community should be involved in all aspects of the enterprise, including planning, management, and decision-making.

Community-based enterprises (CBEs) are businesses that are owned and managed by members of a particular community.

Community participation in CBEs is crucial for the success of these businesses, as it ensures that they are responsive to the needs and aspirations of the community. Here are some ways in which community participation can be fostered in CBEs: a) **Involving community members in decision-making:** Community members should be involved in the decision-making process of the CBE, including the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. This can be achieved through community meetings, consultations, and feedback mechanisms. b) **Empowering community members:** CBEs should provide training and capacity-building opportunities to community members, to enable them to participate fully in the enterprise. This could include training on business management, financial literacy, and leadership skills. c) **Providing meaningful incentives:** CBEs should offer meaningful incentives to community members who participate in the enterprise. This could include profit-sharing arrangements, access to credit, or preferential treatment when purchasing products or services from the enterprise. d) **Building trust:** CBEs should build trust with the community by being transparent in their operations, communicating regularly with community members, and addressing any concerns or grievances in a timely and effective manner. e) **Fostering a sense of ownership:** CBEs should foster a sense of ownership among community members by involving them in the branding and marketing of the enterprise, and by ensuring that the enterprise reflects the values and aspirations of the community.

Overall, community participation is key to the success of CBEs. By involving community members in decision-making, empowering them, providing meaningful incentives,

building trust, and fostering a sense of ownership, CBEs can create a sustainable business that benefits both the enterprise and the community.

2. Higher education institutions and continuous vocational education and training programs

Higher education institutions and continuous vocational education and training programs play a vital role in shaping the future workforce and addressing the evolving skill demands of the modern economy. Continuous learning and skill development have become essential for individuals to remain competitive and adaptable in a rapidly changing job market. (Kasman et al., 2018). Dentchev (Dentchev, 2023) mentions there are several other initiatives, both directly and indirectly related to universities supporting social enterprises. For example, New York University has established the Reynolds Program in Social Entrepreneurship, which attracts students from various faculties and provides funding, training, and support for student-led social enterprises. Similarly, Stanford University has created the Impact Fund within its Graduate School of Business, where students invest in early-stage ventures with social and environmental impacts.

The integration of higher education and continuous vocational education and training is a crucial aspect of preparing individuals for sustainable career paths. By aligning educational curricula and training programs with the needs of industries and employers, higher education institutions can ensure that graduates possess the necessary knowledge, competencies, and practical skills to thrive in their chosen professions.

This integration also benefits employers by providing them with a pool of talented

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and qualified individuals who can contribute to organizational productivity and meet the demands for specialized skills. Effective integration of higher education and continuous vocational education and training requires a comprehensive and strategic approach. Higher education institutions need to establish strong communication systems and collaborative partnerships with industry stakeholders to ensure that their programs are responsive to market needs and workplace requirements.

Furthermore, the quality of communication between students and educators is essential for the success of educational programs. As the role of the educator evolves from a mere source of knowledge to a partner and facilitator, the ability to engage in meaningful dialogue and foster mutual understanding becomes crucial for enhancing the learning experience and preparing students for the workforce (Petrychenko et al., 2023).

Continuous vocational education and training plays a vital role in addressing the skills gap and bridging the divide between education and employment. By providing opportunities for upskilling and reskilling, these programs can help individuals adapt to changing job requirements and maintain their relevance in the labor market (Rizwan et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the integration of higher education and continuous vocational education and training is crucial for developing a highly skilled and adaptable workforce, addressing the needs of employers, and fostering sustainable career paths for individuals.

People's ability to continue their education is essential to the growth of the economy, the advancement of society, and their own personal development. In light of the fact that labour markets and manufacturing systems are experiencing rapid transformations in the

majority of industrialised countries, this is especially relevant at this time.

The most important factors that have led to these transitions are the expansion of the human population and the development of new technologies. As a result of changes in population, the labour force as a whole is beginning to decrease. As technology continues to advance, it is realistic to assume that the structure of production, processes, and services will transform to become more knowledge-intensive. This is something that can be anticipated. Consequently, a great number of nations are already struggling with shortages of trained labour force, a situation that is expected to get much worse over the course of the following years 3. Therefore, both CVET (continuous vocational education and training) and lifelong learning are becoming increasingly relevant from the views of individuals, institutions, and society in order to face these difficulties 4 (Buslei et al., 2018, p. 6).

Continuing vocational education and training (CVET) not only makes it more likely that an individual will be able to find meaningful employment, but it also provides individuals the flexibility to take initiative in the labour market. The capacity of CVET to ease institutional worries over a shortage of competent labour is a significant advantage. It is more probable that employees would feel involved in the firm and their employment if they are qualified in line with the requirements of the organisation. In order to accommodate the aforementioned adjustments, continuing vocational education and training (CVET) is increasingly becoming an essential component of staff development in a great number of firms. CVET not only preserves the amount of the labour force but also the quality of that workforce, and it also increases the opportunities

for individuals to engage in society. When it comes to the educational practices or interventions that are taking place in workplaces, there is a vast diversity of them, and the terminology that is used to describe these practices or interventions is diverse and often inconsistent. Within the context of learning in the workplace, the concept of direction is often used (for instance, Billett 2014). It is possible for people to get advantages from being coached, tutored, or mentored in a number of different ways; nonetheless, the underlying objective of these partnerships is to provide assistance for the professional development and learning of individuals, as well as to encourage them to continue their education. Although the concepts of guiding, coaching, tutoring, and mentoring are essentially unique from one another, it may be difficult to differentiate between them. This is despite the fact that these phrases have fundamentally different meanings. (Wisker and colleagues, 2013).

3. The concept of Community-based Vocational Education and Training

The concept of Community-based Vocational Education and Training has gained considerable attention in recent years as a means of fostering sustainable economic development within local communities. Vocational education and training has traditionally been viewed as a pathway for providing individuals with the practical skills and knowledge required for specific occupations, often at a sub-professional level (Shrestha, 2016). However, the challenges faced by industry in finding adequately skilled workers highlight the need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to vocational training that aligns with the needs of the local community (Shrestha, 2016).

One of the key features of CVET is the emphasis on competency-based education and training, which focuses on the development of specific skills and abilities rather than solely on the acquisition of knowledge (Rahman et al., 2014). This approach is particularly relevant in the context of community-based enterprises, where the ability to apply practical skills in a real-world setting is of paramount importance. By incorporating authentic assessment methods that evaluate the learner's ability to demonstrate mastery of these competencies, CVET programs can better prepare individuals for the demands of the job market. Learning in the Internet age is characterized by its accessibility, since it is accessible online and can be accessed from distant areas at any time. Additionally, it offers the opportunity to acquire a vast amount of knowledge (Sterev, N., Stoyanova T., Kopeva D., 2017). Students acquire knowledge via the use of diverse educational materials, including visual representations, pictures, simulated experiments, visual aids, audio recordings of literary passages, historical manuscripts, and narrated and captioned movies (Sterev, N., Nencheva, V., 2021). According to Iliev, the main focus is on evaluating the existing state of the student performance evaluation system, promoting and making known effective methods used by instructors, exploring new possibilities for enhancing the student evaluation system by incorporating successful practices from top educational institutions worldwide, and ultimately, fostering greater student involvement in the learning process (Iliev, Sterev et al., 2014).

The survey by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2014 highlights several critical issues in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs. Here are the key points:

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- **Lack of Industry Coordination:** TVET programs are not aligned with industry and job market needs. There is a significant disconnect between training providers and the labor market, leading to outdated and irrelevant training programs.
- **Inadequate Training Programs:** Training providers often do not design job-oriented programs and lack industry-experienced instructors. The curricula are rigid and not updated regularly to meet the changing needs of the labor market.
- **Centralized Decision Making:** The centralized management system hinders the timely introduction of new programs or revisions of existing ones, making it difficult to respond to local human resource needs.
- **Lack of Trained Instructors:** There is a shortage of trained instructors, and many have little pedagogical training or industry experience. Opportunities for instructor training are limited, and the supply of instructors has not kept pace with the expansion of institutions, especially in the private sector.
- **Undefined Career Paths:** Career paths for instructors in some VET institutions are not clearly defined. There is a lack of continuous professional development and in-service training for instructors.
- **Contract-Based Instructors:** Many instructors are employed on a contract basis, which affects their motivation and the quality of training delivery.
- **Supply-Driven Training:** Training provision is largely supply-driven, based on available budgets, staff, and equipment, rather than the changing demands of the labor market.

- **Inadequate Practical Training:** Instructors often lack practical skills and industry experience, leading to a focus on theoretical sessions. This results in graduates who are not adequately skilled for the job market.
- **Class Size and Resources:** The class sizes and training resources do not match, making it difficult for instructors to engage all learners effectively during practical activities.

1. Possible Interventions

- **Improved Coordination:** Better understanding and coordination between VET training providers and the labor market are crucial. Involving industry experts in curriculum development and seeking professional development opportunities can help bridge the gap.
- **Competency-Based Training (CBT):** CBT focuses on what learners can do in the workplace after completing the training program. It emphasizes competencies linked to workforce needs defined by the industry. CBT allows learners to learn at their own pace using various media and methods.
- **Curriculum Development:** A good CBT curriculum should be designed based on market needs, with duties and tasks of occupations analyzed and identified with subject matter experts. Timely revision of the curricula is essential to keep up with changing technology and labor market demands.
- **Professional Development:** Continuous professional development and in-service training for instructors are necessary to address deficiencies in qualifications and skills. Policies and regulations should be established to

ensure ongoing training and upgrading of skills.

- **Motivation and Quality:** Addressing the issue of contract-based employment for instructors can help improve their motivation and the quality of training delivery.

By addressing these issues and implementing the suggested interventions, CVET programs can become more effective and aligned with industry needs, ultimately improving the employability of graduates.

Community-Based Enterprises in VET Programs: Case Studies and Implications. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CVET) programs have increasingly integrated community-based enterprises to address local needs, promote sustainable development, and provide practical skills to students. This paper examines several case studies that highlight the effectiveness of such initiatives.

Mushroom Cultivation in Nigeria: A notable example of a community-based enterprise within TVET programs is the mushroom cultivation project in Nigeria. This initiative involves TVET students engaging in the cultivation of mushrooms, providing them with practical agricultural skills and promoting entrepreneurship. The project has led to increased job opportunities and improved livelihoods within the community (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014).

Bottle Recycling in Nigeria: Another significant case from Nigeria involves TVET students participating in a bottle recycling project. This initiative addresses environmental issues while offering students hands-on experience in recycling processes. The project has fostered a sense of responsibility and innovation among students, contributing

to sustainable community development (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014).

Community-Based Tourism in the Philippines: In the Philippines, TVET programs have successfully integrated community-based tourism projects. Students receive training in hospitality, tour guiding, and local cultural preservation. This approach not only enhances students' skills but also boosts local tourism and economic growth, benefiting the entire community (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014).

Handicraft Production in India: CVET institutions in India have collaborated with local artisans to develop handicraft production enterprises. Students learn traditional crafts while incorporating modern techniques, resulting in the creation of marketable products. This initiative preserves cultural heritage and provides economic opportunities for both students and the community (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014).

Agricultural Cooperatives in Kenya: In Kenya, CVET programs have supported the formation of agricultural cooperatives. Students receive training in modern farming techniques, cooperative management, and marketing. These cooperatives have improved food security and income levels for community members, demonstrating the impact of TVET on rural development (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014).

Implications for CVET Programs: These case studies illustrate the potential of community-based enterprises to enhance the effectiveness of TVET programs. By aligning training with local needs and industry demands, TVET institutions can provide students with relevant skills and promote sustainable development. The integration of community-based projects fosters a sense of responsibility and innovation among students,

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preparing them for successful careers and contributing to the overall well-being of their communities.

III. Conceptual framework and methodology

The study of the social entrepreneurship program developed for a pilot course at Burgas Free University focused on evaluating its impact on participants through a structured survey. The study's objective is to assess participants' overall satisfaction with the program, to evaluate the development of their skills and knowledge in the field of social entrepreneurship, and to investigate the program's impact on participants' social conscience and commitment. Furthermore, the research seeks to investigate the actual application of acquired knowledge and the establishment of social companies.

1. The main research questions

The main research questions include the evaluation of overall satisfaction with the

program, the degree of development of skills and knowledge, the impact of the program on social awareness and engagement, and the implementation of practical skills in social projects. Data were collected through a survey containing multiple-choice questions rated on a Likert scale. The sample of participants included those who successfully completed the program, and there were 11 responders, limiting the generalizability of the findings. To assess survey reliability and validity, data are analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and internal consistency measurement using Cronbach's alpha. The research technique consists of creating the survey, collecting replies, evaluating the data, and interpreting the results.

The study has several limitations, such as a small sample size and the possibility of response subjectivity, but it gives useful information for program evaluation and potential areas for development.

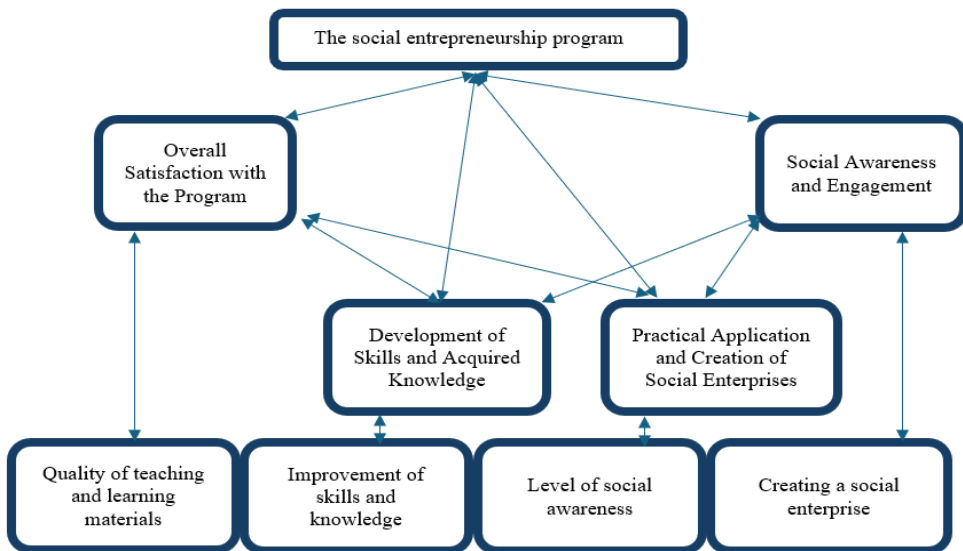


Figure 1. The conceptual framework

2. The conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is divided into four categories: overall program satisfaction, skill and knowledge development, social awareness and engagement, and practical application and social enterprise formation. Questions in the first category examine the following two hypotheses: Hypothesis 1: Participants who rank the quality of teaching and learning materials highly are also satisfied with the program; Hypothesis 2: Participants who are very satisfied with the program are more inclined to promote it to others. The second set of questions assessed the amount to which the program assisted participants in developing new abilities and increasing their knowledge in the subject of social entrepreneurship, as well as the areas in which the program improved skill levels. The questions of the third category test two hypotheses: Hypothesis 3: The social entrepreneurship program increases participants' social awareness and commitment, and Hypothesis 4: Participants who are more aware of social issues are more likely to engage in social initiatives. The questions of the fourth category aim to measure the degree of practical application of what was learned and the creation of social enterprises by the participants. Visually, the conceptual framework can be represented by a diagram (Fig. 1) showing the relationships between these categories and how each category affects the main objective of the program.

In the case of the Social Entrepreneurship Program survey, assessment of internal consistency includes analysis of the following aspects: relevance of questions to survey objectives, consistency of questions within categories, and potential weaknesses in consistency. The survey demonstrated good

internal consistency within the main question categories. Questions are consistent with survey objectives and provide consistent information for program evaluation. Although the survey covers diverse aspects, a weakness in the periodicity of assessments can be observed. For example, some questions are asked on a 5-point Likert scale, while others use different formats, which can cause problems when analyzing the results. To assess the internal consistency of the survey, we use Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, which is a statistical tool used to assess survey reliability by examining the extent to which survey questions are interrelated and measure the same concept. In this case, the obtained value is $\alpha = 0.8$, which indicates good internal consistency.

3. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the pilot course program and its impact on participants: Results from survey

Based on the conceptual framework presented above, survey results are analyzed to assess the effectiveness of the program and its impact on participants. Participants' satisfaction with the program is directly related to their assessment of the quality of the teaching and the materials used. The program should provide practical and theoretical knowledge that is applicable in the real world of social entrepreneurship. One component in the framework focuses on how the program helps participants develop new skills and acquire new knowledge. The acquired skills and knowledge also influence the social awareness and engagement of the participants. The program should increase participants' understanding of social problems and challenges. Increased social awareness often leads to higher social engagement. The

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program should prepare participants to start and manage their own social enterprises. This component is directly related to the development of skills and acquired knowledge, as well as the level of social awareness and engagement. By analyzing the results in the context of this conceptual framework, we can identify how the different aspects of the program interact and contribute to the achievement of the objectives, as well as make informed conclusions and recommendations for future improvements.

3.1. Hypotheses for Total Satisfaction

Spearman's coefficient was used to assess the correlation between responses to questions about satisfaction with the program (question 1.1) and ratings of the quality of teaching and materials (question 2.1). The obtained result $r_s = 0.949$ is extremely high and highlights the importance of the quality of teaching and the materials provided for the overall satisfaction of the participants. The association between the two variables would be considered statistically significant ($p = 0.00001$). It confirms Hypothesis 1. The program team can use this data to focus on improving training methods and resources, which can lead to even higher satisfaction among participants.

The association between the two variables, ratings of overall satisfaction (question 1.1) and willingness to recommend the program (question 2.2), would be considered statistically significant since $p = 0.00001$. The obtained result $r_s = 0.998$ is extremely high and in confirmation of Hypothesis 2.

3.2. Assessing the amount to which the program developed new abilities and increasing knowledge

A large percentage of participants (75%) thought that the training had significantly

improved their entrepreneurship skills, with 25% rating it "very much" and 50% rating it "a great deal". The most advanced skills are project management (66.7%), marketing and communications (66.7%), and teamwork (66.7%). Leadership skills are also listed as advanced (33.3%). Opinions about increasing knowledge of social entrepreneurship are evenly distributed between four possible ratings: 25% believe that the program has increased their knowledge to a very large extent, 25% to a large extent, 25% to a moderate extent, and 25% to a small extent. The topics of identifying social problems (33.3%), developing social projects (33.3%) and sustainable development (33.3%) were the most useful for the participants (Fig. 2).

The diagram in Fig. 3 presents the results of the question: To what extent did the program help you develop the following skills: Identifying Social Problems, Development of social projects, Teamwork and Communication skills. 50% of participants indicated that the program helped them "a lot" in identifying social problems, while 50% felt that the program did not help them or helped them a little. A high percentage of participants (75%) are satisfied with the program's ability to build abilities for establishing social projects. Responses to teamwork were fairly evenly distributed across each category. Participants had mixed opinions regarding the impact of the program on their communication skills, with 50% feeling that the program helped them "a lot" or "extremely much", while the remaining 50% were not so satisfied. Adding more practical exercises and case studies can increase the effectiveness of the program in developing social problem identification and communication skills.

Which topics or areas of social entrepreneurship have been most useful to you? (You can choose more than one answer)

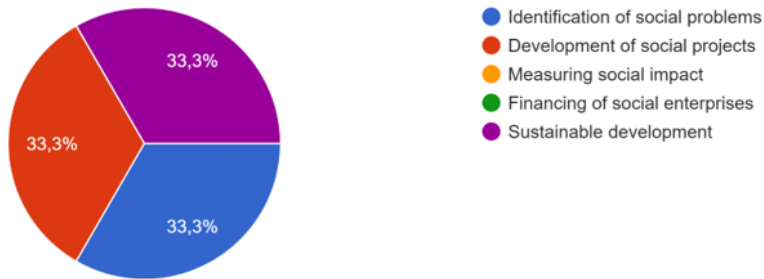


Figure 2. Evaluation of usefulness of program topics

To what extent did the programme help you develop the following skills?

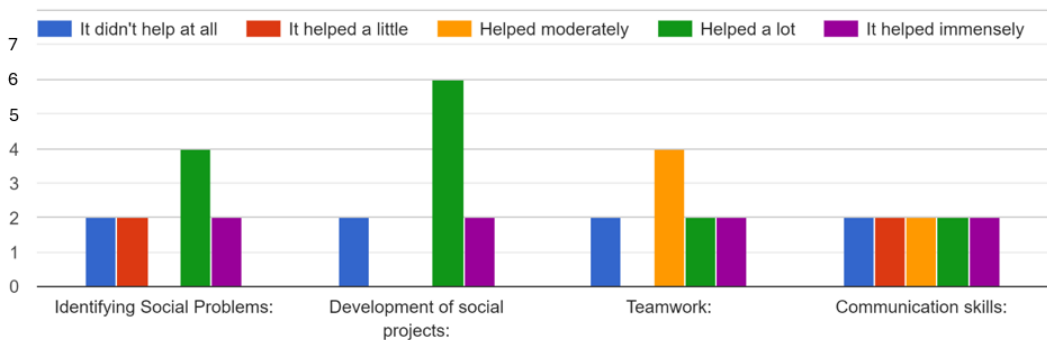


Figure 3. Skills development through the program

3.3. Hypotheses for Social Awareness and Engagement

Spearman's coefficient assessing the correlation between ratings of social awareness (question 5.1) and the degree of social engagement (question 5.2) was $r_s = 0.63246$. This value indicates a moderately strong positive correlation between ratings of social awareness and degree of social engagement. Since $p = 0.00856$ is below the 0.05 significance level, we can conclude that the correlation is statistically significant. This means that there is a very small chance that this correlation is due to chance. The social entrepreneurship

program appears to be effective in achieving its goals by increasing the social awareness and commitment of participants. The results support the need to include content that enhances social awareness as a means of increasing social engagement, as well as confirming Hypothesis 3.

The results of the question "What specific actions or initiatives have you taken as a result of your participation in the program?" emphasize the importance of the social entrepreneurship program and provide evidence of the successful application of the acquired knowledge and skills in the practical

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actions and initiatives of the participants. Nearly two-thirds of participants reported participating in volunteer projects after completing the program. This shows that the program has been successful in motivating participants to engage in activities that actively help social causes and challenges. Participation in voluntary projects is also an indicator of the application of acquired skills and awareness in real social contexts. About one-third of participants have started a social enterprise after completing the program. This is a significant result that highlights the success of the program in providing knowledge and skills necessary for entrepreneurial activity. The main objective of the program was to prepare participants to create social enterprises, and this result confirms that the program has fulfilled part of this objective. Almost a third of the participants have joined social campaigns. This shows that the program has been effective in promoting active social engagement and participation in campaigns that combat specific social problems. Involvement in social campaigns demonstrates the ability of participants to apply their knowledge to campaigns that aim to raise public awareness and social change. About two-thirds of the participants have started researching social issues. This indicates that the program has increased participants' interest in advanced research on social issues. Researching social problems is a key step towards understanding and solving these problems through innovation and entrepreneurship.

Participants demonstrate a high level of understanding of major social issues in their community after participating in the program. Most of them rated with "completely agree" and "agree" the statement "I want to contribute to solving social problems" as a consequence

of their participation in the program. The program succeeds in raising their awareness of social issues, which is key to motivating socially engaged behavior. All participants strongly agree with the statement "I want to contribute to solving social problems," which is an excellent indicator of the effectiveness of the program in promoting socially engaged behavior. Evaluations of the statement "The program motivates me to participate in social initiatives" vary. The difference between them shows that the program did not equally succeed in motivating all participants. The program probably needs improvements in this direction.

The correlation between understanding of social issues and participation in social projects after completing the program ($r_s = 0.68313$) is moderate to strongly positive: $p = 0.00354 < 0.05$, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant. This correlation is an important indicator of the effectiveness of the social entrepreneurship program and shows that it not only provides theoretical knowledge but also promotes its practical application in real social projects.

Based on the results described above, we can conclude that Hypothesis 4 is supported by the data.

3.4. Evaluation of participation in practical initiatives after completion of the social entrepreneurship program

Participants had different experiences in applying what they learned. One third of them were able to apply their knowledge to a very large extent, another third to a large extent, and the remaining third to a small extent. The absence of responses in the "moderately" and "very little" categories may indicate that the program had a significant, albeit varying in scope, effect on participants. Half

of the participants have engaged in social entrepreneurship, either by creating a new enterprise or by participating in an existing one. Despite the successful examples, there is variation in the degree of applicability of the learning, indicating the need for an individualized approach and additional support for some participants. The analysis shows that the program needs to be improved to motivate more participants to apply what they have learned in real projects. This may include more practically oriented modules and examples, as well as additional workshops and practical assignments. To increase the number of participants who create social enterprises, additional resources and mentorship may be offered after the program is completed.

Limitations of the study

The study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. The first main limitation is the small sample size, which includes only 11 participants, limiting the ability to generalize the findings to a broader population. This sample size does not allow for statistically significant conclusions that reflect the actual impact of the program on different socio-economic groups. The study relies on online surveys, which introduces the potential for subjectivity in participants' responses, as their interpretation of the program may be influenced by personal biases and perceptions.

Another limitation is the short-term nature of data collection, which does not allow for tracking the long-term effects of the program on participants. The lack of follow-up research at later stages after the program's completion hinders the evaluation of the real-world application of the knowledge gained in different social contexts. Furthermore, differences in the geographical and socio-economic context

of participants may also affect the results, as these contexts are not sufficiently diverse in the current study. Therefore, the conclusions cannot be generalized across all social and economic settings.

Case Diversification in Future Research

In future research, a broader range of cases will be included, covering different geographical and socio-economic contexts. In addition to the current examples, cases from other regions with diverse socio-economic characteristics will be incorporated. This will provide a richer and more diverse perspective on the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship programs and allow for the investigation of how specific contexts influence the impact of the training on participants. Specifically, cases from less developed regions or emerging economies will be included, which will enable the analysis of challenges and opportunities that differ from those in more developed social and economic contexts. These additional cases will allow us to expand the scope of the research and draw more universal conclusions, while also clarifying the specific factors that may influence the applicability of social entrepreneurship education in various settings.

This diversification of cases will enrich the analysis, increase the relevance of the findings in the context of different socio-economic conditions, and provide new opportunities for optimizing social entrepreneurship programs tailored to the needs and realities of various regions and communities.

Discussion and Conclusions

The platform enables students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world challenges, promoting a practical learning experience that is both immersive and influential.

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Students acquire the ability to effectively manage projects, engage in teamwork, and cooperate with others from various backgrounds, so improving their leadership and interpersonal aptitudes.

Through engagement in social entrepreneurship initiatives, students acquire essential business acumen including strategic planning, financial management, marketing, and operations. Social entrepreneurship education fosters a connection between students and their communities, encouraging a strong feeling of social responsibility and active participation in civic affairs.

It fosters a robust moral structure, encouraging students to contemplate the societal and ecological consequences of their acts and business choices. Graduates who possess expertise in social entrepreneurship distinguish themselves in the labour market because of their hands-on abilities, inventive thinking, and dedication to creating positive social change.

The ever-changing nature of social entrepreneurship equips students with the ability to adjust to different positions and sectors, rendering them adaptable and resilient professionals. Social entrepreneurship ventures often correspond with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), tackling concerns such as poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability.

Social entrepreneurship's emphasis on sustainable solutions leads to enduring societal benefits and fosters a culture of sustainability in education, resulting in a long-term impact. Social entrepreneurship cultivates a milieu of perpetual learning, motivating students to consistently pursue knowledge, innovate, and enhance their influence on society. It facilitates personal advancement by encouraging pupils

to go beyond their comfort zones, embrace risks, and derive lessons from setbacks.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the conducted research and the analysis of the results:

The program is successful in developing key entrepreneurial skills, but there is a need for improvement in increasing the knowledge of social entrepreneurship.

The program is effective in providing participants with the knowledge and skills to create social enterprises, but the degree of implementation is variable. This indicates a need for more personalized support and resources after program completion.

The program is successful in increasing the social awareness and commitment of the participants, as confirmed by the correlation between the understanding of social problems and participation in social projects. However, the program may need additional efforts to better motivate participants to participate in social initiatives.

From the analysis of the results, some inconsistencies can be noted.

- Although participants were extremely satisfied and willing to recommend the program, only half of them indicated that they had started a social enterprise after completing the program. This may mean that while overall satisfaction is high, the actual degree of application of learning and subsequent social engagement is less impressive. Differences in the degree of social engagement after program completion highlight the need for a better understanding of the factors that motivate or hinder social engagement. What are the barriers and challenges that participants face, and how can the program address these challenges more effectively?

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- Half of the participants felt that the program helped a lot in identifying social problems, while the other half felt that the help was little or negligible. This indicates a divergence in program effectiveness with respect to specific skills, which may be the result of differences in teaching approaches or insufficient adaptation of the program to the needs of participants.
- While most participants reported a high level of desire to contribute to solving social problems and understood the underlying social problems in their communities, assessments of the program's motivation to engage in social initiatives were mixed. This raises the question of whether an existing methodology is optimal or whether new pedagogical strategies need to be introduced to meet the diverse needs of participants.

The research provides new data and evidence on the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship programs by analyzing how different aspects of the program affect participants. It supports existing hypotheses regarding the relationships between social awareness and engagement, as well as between learning quality and program satisfaction. The results of the study provide concrete guidance to developers of social entrepreneurship programs to optimize training strategies and create more effective programs. They can lead to an update of social entrepreneurship curricula and programs, with a focus on the identified weaknesses and successful practices identified in the study.

Future Plans for Continuing the Research / Future Work

Based on the results of the present study, the next stages of the research will focus on an in-depth analysis of the long-term impact of the social entrepreneurship program on participants. The primary emphasis will be on tracking their professional development, social engagement, and the sustainability of the social enterprises they have established.

A longitudinal study is planned, incorporating follow-up surveys and interviews at different time intervals (e.g., six months, one year, and three years after program completion). This will allow for an analysis of the practical application of the acquired knowledge and skills, as well as the factors that facilitate or hinder their utilization in practice.

Another key aspect of future research will be the application of qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and case studies, which will provide a more detailed understanding of participants' individual experiences, the challenges they have faced, and the ways in which they have successfully applied their learning in real-world settings.

To identify best practices and models that can be adapted to different educational and social contexts, an international comparison of results will be conducted through an analysis of similar programs across various universities and countries.

Future research will aim not only to validate the findings of the present study but also to provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which social entrepreneurship education contributes to the development of sustainable social change.

Acknowledgments:

Attitude of Bulgarian Entrepreneurs and Managers towards Continuing Vocational Education and Training of Organization's Human Resources (ABECVET), contract KP-06-H65/12, funded by the Bulgarian National Science Fund (BNSF).

"Circular Approaches in the Built Environment (CABE)" project, under the DUT 2023 call, and contract KP-06- D002/4, funded by the Bulgarian National Science Fund (BNSF).

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