

Redefining social enterprise in the global world: study of China and India

Roopinder Oberoi, Ian G. Cook, Jamie P. Halsall, Michael Snowden and Pete Woodcock

Abstract

Purpose – *Social enterprise plays a pivotal role in helping people and communities. Since the global financial crisis of 2008, there has been an upsurge of social enterprise within a local, national and global context. The purpose of this paper is to explore the debates and issues presented by social enterprise in a very complex globalized world.*

Design/methodology/approach – *In this paper, the authors apply two geographical case studies: China and India. The purpose for selecting both China and India is their increasing economic super power on the global stage. It is argued that the concept of social enterprise within the geographical context of China and India is significant to their individual economies.*

Findings – *The concept of social enterprise within the geographical context of China and India is significant to their individual economies and as explored within the notion of “think global, act local” the conceptual debates of place, space and time enables people to take positive action and enable the development of healthy communities.*

Originality/value – *This paper contributes to the discussion around the definition of the nature of social enterprise and gives concrete examples of the contextually specific nature of the term.*

Keywords China, Globalization, India, Social enterprise, Communities

Paper type Case study

Roopinder Oberoi is based at the Department of Political Science, Delhi University, Delhi, India.

Ian G. Cook is based at the School of Humanities and Social Science, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK.

Jamie P. Halsall and Michael Snowden are both based at the School of Human and Health Sciences, University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, UK.

Pete Woodcock is based at University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, UK.

1. Introduction

Both the public and the academic debates surrounding social enterprises appear to suffer from a lack of agreement on basic definitions, and therefore demonstrate considerable confusion about what to include and what not to include when discussing social enterprise. Much of this confusion could be avoided with a more concise and focused definition of social enterprise, one that is contextually specific rather than vaguely universal. (Pestoff and Hulgard, 2016, p. 1744)

The notion appealed to above indicates that social enterprise as an idea generally lacks clear conceptual understanding within society. This lack of understanding in both the public and academic domain could be due, as Pestoff and Hulgard (2016, p. 1744), note, to the ‘contextually specific rather than vaguely universal’. Further to this, academic literature on the subject of social enterprise is seen to be broad ranging in the present social, political and cultural climate (Chan *et al.*, 2017; Galera and Borzaga, 2009). Currently in social and political policy circles there is much academic discourse written with regard to understanding the complex surroundings in which social enterprise lies (Oberoi *et al.*, 2018; Mauksch *et al.*, 2017; Szymanska and Jegers, 2016).

Social enterprises as a concept are seen as an organization that applies a business strategy. It is commonly recognized that social enterprises do not measure their success on profit but on the power to affect social change. According to Galvin and Iannotti (2015) social enterprise as a subject of study in the social science discipline is somewhat recent. The interest in social enterprise flourished as a result of the historical progression in the

Received 30 September 2018
Revised 9 April 2019
Accepted 7 May 2019

This paper was supported by a grant from the UK India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI). The authors are very grateful to the anonymous referees for their help in revising this paper. Finally, the authors are indebted to Stefanie El Madawi, their proofreader.