

Book review of *Social entrepreneurship. A practical introduction* by R. L. Weaver

Bunmi Lawoyin

Abstract: Authored by Rasheda Weaver the book *Social entrepreneurship. A practical introduction* offers detailed information on designing, funding and launching a social enterprise. Weaver's teaching, research, and professional experience centres on entrepreneurship, social enterprise, and social entrepreneurship as a tool for community development. She developed this book from her research on the social, legal, and economic attributes of a hundred and fifteen social enterprises in the United States and current research on social enterprise and social entrepreneurship worldwide. This book publicizes multiple aspects of social entrepreneurship unavailable in academic journals. It provides a realistic picture of launching, designing, and running a social enterprise. It is highly recommendable for aspiring social entrepreneurs as it shares information on resource acquisition, marketing techniques, and the sustenance of a social enterprise.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, United States, social enterprise

JEL Codes: L31, M31, G51

Suggested citation:

Lawoyin, B. (2023). Book review of *Social entrepreneurship. A practical introduction* by R. L. Weaver. *Social Entrepreneurship Review*, 1, 93–96. <https://doi.org/10.15678/SER.2023.1.001>

1. Introduction

Several scholars argue that social entrepreneurship is an innovative and effective strategy for solving large-scale social problems. However, most academic journals still need to include the standard requirements for establishing and running a social enterprise. Authored by Rasheda Weaver, the founder and director of Weaver Social Enterprise Directory, a global social entrepreneurship training company based in the United States, the book *Social Entrepreneurship. A Practical Introduction* (2023; Routledge, 123 pp. \$45.95, ISBN 9781032129433) offers detailed information on designing, funding and launching a social enterprise. Weaver's teaching, research, and professional experience centres on entrepreneurship, social enterprise, and social entrepreneurship as a tool for community development. She developed this book from her research on the social, legal, and economic attributes of a hundred and fifteen social enterprises in the United States and current research on social enterprise and social entrepreneurship worldwide.

2. Chapter Summary

Weaver introduces this book by highlighting wicked social problems and how social enterprises can be viable instruments for combatting these problems. This book has twelve chapters in total. Chapter one defines social entrepreneurship as using commercial business techniques to generate revenue to combat social problems (p. 6) and a social enterprise as any organization that embraces social entrepreneurial practices. A social enterprise's unique features are the structural flexibility to combine social, economic, and sometimes environmental missions and the liberty to operate as a private, non-profit, or hybrid.

Chapter two uses a contextual perspective involving legal and institutional arrangements to enhance the reader's understanding of the emergence of social enterprises from a cross-national lens. Congruent with non-profit theories of development, specifically market/government failure theory, interdependence theory, and supply-side theory (Salamon & Anheier, 1998), the growth of a social enterprise ecosystem depends on the presence of government support (institutional support) or lack thereof and high human demand (institutional void), and social entrepreneurs' identification of social needs and opportunities to generate enough revenue to combat them (institutional sufficiency).

Chapter three outlines the significance of identifying, understanding, and assessing the needs of customers and beneficiaries. As a strategic intervention approach, Weaver encourages using entrepreneurial tools such as design thinking and empathy mapping as this allows for studying social problems in a community and developing empathetic solutions that match the needs of beneficiaries. Chapter four examines how a social enterprise may tap from various community resources to advance missions. Here, a community represents a place-based and issue-based setting, with the latter description involving individuals with similar interests in addressing a social concern.

Chapter five centres on multiple avenues through which a social enterprise can combat diverse, complex social concerns. A few examples include social hiring, social marketing, and social procurement. Chapter six offers start-up financing advice and provides a long list of financing options categorized as traditional and grassroots financing. Start-up social enterprises are encouraged to use bootstrapping techniques such as working from home or sharing office space to control and reduce operational costs and connect with social entrepreneurship networks to keep abreast of innovativeness. Chapter seven explores various social enterprise revenue and income streams. Additionally, it captures the funding variation between European and American social enterprises. While the former relies more on government funding for sustainability and growth, the latter depends more on sales for the same reasons.

Chapter eight uncovers the essence and components of social business planning. When designing a social business, the following themes are necessary considerations: vision and people, revenue modelling, marketing messaging, communication, customer discovery, and understanding. According to Weaver, a good business plan is inspirational, informative, adaptive, and valuable. Chapter nine outlines the benefits of a social enterprise conducting social impact assessment. Weaver posits that this exercise informs a social enterprise about its strengths and weaknesses, assists with adequate allocation of resources, enhances value proposition communication, and demonstrates success and progress to potential funders and investors.

Chapter ten identifies crucial determinants of a social enterprise's growth and increase in social impact as human capital acquisition, development, and retention. Value-based decision-

making is encouraged during paid and volunteer recruitment and stakeholder and community relationship building to avoid onboarding individuals and stakeholders incompatible with the organization's mission. Chapter eleven explores the challenges social enterprises encounter and success enablers. Weaver mentions professional networking, funding availability, and market acceptance as success indicators. At the same time, limited resources and the inability to retain talented employees are growth challenges. In instances where failure is inevitable, social entrepreneurs are encouraged to see such failures as opportunities to learn.

Finally, chapter twelve analyses the legal structure of social enterprises within the United States and the benefits and challenges of a social enterprise operating as private, non-profit, or hybrid. Hybrid social enterprises are the most advantageous as they can generate resources through commercial activities and donations. Despite legal variance, social enterprises are required by law to prioritize social missions over profits. Weaver ends her writing with inspiring words of encouragement for social entrepreneurs.

3. Strengths

First, it provides a general overview of operationalizing social entrepreneurship in an easy-to-digest writing style. The book provides opportunities for aspiring social entrepreneurs to weigh the feasibility of their plans and make necessary adjustments before launching a social enterprise. More so, a researcher can access practical social entrepreneurship information that is not easily accessible in academic journals. An example of such information is the financial requirements for launching a social enterprise. Second, it offers a cross-national perspective that extends its relevance beyond the United States in a contextual manner. Third, Weaver's transparency about social entrepreneurship is commendable, as most scholars only promote its positive aspects, making it seem like a flawless concept. Lastly, Weaver's choice of combining personal, professional, and research sealed any possible theory and practice gap criticism as readers can conceptualize social entrepreneurship multi-dimensionally.

4. Weaknesses

The book leaves unanswered questions on how informal minority-led non-profits can successfully adopt social entrepreneurship, as the content is most suited for highly professional social enterprises and less so for other categories. It omits contents on the type of local government institutional arrangements that can foster or deter the growth of social enterprises.

5. Conclusions

This book publicizes multiple aspects of social entrepreneurship unavailable in academic journals. It provides a realistic picture of launching, designing, and running a social enterprise. It is highly recommendable for aspiring social entrepreneurs as it shares information on resource acquisition, marketing techniques, and the sustenance of a social enterprise. Overall, the book is insightful and a must-read for individuals interested in pursuing social mission causes.

References

- Salamon, L. M., & Anheier, H. K. (1998). Social origins of civil society: Explaining the nonprofit sector cross-nationally. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 9, 213–248. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022058200985>
- Weaver, R. L. (2023). *Social Entrepreneurship: A Practical Introduction*. Routledge.

About Author/s

Bunmi Lawoyin*

Doctoral Student
School of Public Administration
Research Assistant
Service Learning Academy
University of Nebraska, Omaha
CPACS 142
6001 Dodge St. Omaha, NE 68182
e-mail: blawoyin@unomaha.edu
* Corresponding author.

Acknowledgements and Financial Disclosure

None reported.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Copyright and License



This article is published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

Published by Krakow University of Economics – Krakow, Poland



Ministry of Education and Science
Republic of Poland

The journal is co-financed in the years 2022-2024 by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Poland in the framework of the ministerial programme "Development of Scientific Journals" (RCN) on the basis of agreement no. RCN/SP/0391/2021/1 concluded on December 9, 2022 and being in force until December 8, 2024.