

# The Modern Educational Paradigm in India: Integrating Social Entrepreneurship into Higher Education

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**Abstract:** **Background:** Social entrepreneurship education (SEE) is gaining global prominence as a mechanism for developing competencies to address complex social challenges. Despite urgent socioeconomic needs, SEE in India remains fragmented and marginalised in higher education curricula.

**Research objectives:** This article examines competencies required for social entrepreneurship; the role of society in nurturing these competencies; factors influencing SEE; benefits of SEE at economic, social, and environmental levels; and required reforms in pedagogy, curriculum, and policy in the Indian higher education context.

**Research design and methods:** Qualitative content analysis (QCA) of 70 peer-reviewed sources and the application of an inductive approach guided by the study objectives.

**Results:** We identified five interconnected competency clusters: psychological, cognitive, functional, social, and meta. Society operates as an ecosystem enabler across four roles. Influencing factors are organised at external-environmental, organisational, individual, and contextual levels. Nine pedagogical approaches and five curricular components were synthesised, with six policy recommendations anchored in NEP 2020.

**Conclusions:** Effective embedding of SEE in Indian higher education requires simultaneous reform in pedagogy, curriculum, and policy. NEP 2020 provides a relevant enabling framework, but significant implementation gaps remain to be addressed, particularly in faculty capacity and institutional resources.

**Keywords:** social entrepreneurship education, competencies, role of society, factors, teaching methods and curriculum, governmental policies

**JEL Codes:** L31, L26, I23, I21

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## Introduction

Social entrepreneurship remains a relatively modern, complicated phenomenon, which drew great attention in the last twenty years in the fields of science, public politics, education, and business (Öztürk, 2010; Silva & Poza, 2017). Despite not being a novel idea, social entrepreneurship grew more significant in the modern era given its capacity to address social problems and improve people's lives (Sandler, 2010). Economists and policymakers identify social entrepreneurship as one of the most important elements in promoting moral and equi-

table economic growth. Social entrepreneurship education (SEE) provides an essential tool for addressing social concerns when government and market cannot. In order to address societal issues, social entrepreneurs and social enterprises develop creative and unique solutions for unresolved societal issues, placing the production of social value at the centre of their goals (Sekliuckiene & Kisielius, 2015). The way, people or organisations challenge conventional wisdom and introduce novel concepts to society through social entrepreneurship continues to pique the curiosity of academics, researchers, and politicians (Ramadani et al., 2022). An individual who employs innovative and unique concepts and solutions to address societal issues counts as a social entrepreneur (SE). These businesspeople take great pride in using their innovative ideas, bravery, and actions to create positive changes. SEs acknowledge that their acts affect the world and that this method helps them connect with their life's purpose. SE's ability to address social and national concerns is another reason why it gains attraction (Ramadani et al., 2022). Following this growth, the academic topic of social entrepreneurship rapidly gains prominence and popularity because of the recognised need for qualified individuals to solve social problems. Education on social entrepreneurship now serves as a potent instrument for shaping young people's attitudes, skills, and mindsets, all of which prove critical for fostering long-term economic progress (Rosendahl Huber et al., 2014).

According to Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, social business denotes a company that operates for social reasons. Since the company originates with the intention of achieving social benefits, all profits flow entirely to these causes. Since social business aims to address social issues by commercial means, such as developing and marketing goods and services, it diverges sharply from non-profit organisations and profit-making businesses (Yunus & Weber, 2010). In contrast, the UK government defines social enterprise thus, 'a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.'

Social entrepreneurship offers a single solution for multiple problems, such as social, economic, healthcare, and environmental issues (Ab Wahid et al., 2024). The National Education Policy of India 2020 envisions India as a *Vishwaguru*, meaning 'World Teacher,' by transforming India as a global knowledge superpower. Therefore, the country must make advancements in manifold fields such as technology, economy and industry, education, social affairs, and international relations through proper social entrepreneurship education. Nonetheless, social entrepreneurship instruction at higher education institutions helps people grow as individuals. It also equips them to devise creative answers to societal (Amundam, 2019) and environmental issues (Lucas & Gillespie, 2012), since this phase best inculcates knowledge, skills, positive attitudes, and a psychological entrepreneurship mindset, which arguably forms the prerequisite for social entrepreneurship.

### ***Social Entrepreneurship in Higher Education***

In higher education, social entrepreneurship education grows increasingly popular as a way to foster future social entrepreneurs and create innovative solutions to address societal issues (Roslan et al., 2022). Among its many advantages are the development of entrepreneurship, empathy, and creativity as well as the encouragement of sustainable economic growth (Dobele, 2016). However, problems hamper its implementation including curriculum design, financial constraints, a shortage of trained teachers, and unsupportive surroundings. Stronger university-industry partnerships, better financing options, and expanded awareness

campaigns must overcome these challenges (Roslan et al., 2022). Particularly, higher education earns wide acknowledgement worldwide for its role in fostering social entrepreneurship mindset among the youth (Apostolakis, 2011). By inculcating critical qualities among the students including creativity, empathy, and entrepreneurial abilities, social entrepreneurship education at higher education institutions critically enables people to address societal concerns through innovative solutions (Brock & Steiner, 2009). Through various educational programmes especially focused on social entrepreneurship, students can cultivate a mindset and skill set suited to creative problem-solving for both economic sustainability and social impact (Tracey & Phillips, 2007). Such education fosters not only self-sufficiency and rational thinking among the students, but also enhances the capacity and motivation to start society-oriented businesses by incorporating real-world experiences, teamwork, and interdisciplinary methods (Brock & Steiner, 2009).

### ***Social Entrepreneurship Education in the Indian Context***

India holds a population exceeding 1.2 billion, ranking second only to China (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, 2011). Due to the rapid population expansion in India, a tremendous need arises to meet social and environmental demands with limited resources (Ray & Ray, 2011). The population explosion introduces many societal challenges that grow increasingly prevalent in India, including poverty, healthcare systems, education, a lack of job opportunities, sanitation and hygiene, water, and environmental challenges (Kumar, 2021). To address these social issues, social entrepreneurs combine their entrepreneurial abilities with their social mission. Indian social entrepreneurship endeavours serve to provide opportunity and essential amenities, such as healthcare, education, and sanitation, to the less fortunate members of society (Satpal, 2023). Due to cultural variety and instability, social enterprises prove highly beneficial in India (Bornstein, 2007). In order to resolve the aforementioned issues, increased public responsibility, public spending, technical adjustments and socially conscious persons must work together to build civil society (Filmer, 2004) or individually establish a social enterprise to address these issues in an economical manner (Mair & Noboa, 2006). For this reason, professional social entrepreneurial education and training prove necessary to produce skilled social entrepreneurs.

But, if we focus on the Indian context, social entrepreneurship education received no specific recognition and due importance (Kumar, 2021), resulting in a great ignorance of this field in Indian higher education institutions. Rote memorisation still pervades educational institutions without proper understanding, application-based education, inquiry-based education, and critical thinking (Dagar & Yadav, 2016). Therefore, Indian students often lack competencies that successful social entrepreneurs need due to systemic gaps in pedagogy, curriculum design, and exposure to real-world problem-solving contexts. India's dominant education model remains largely exam-oriented, prioritising rote learning over critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative skills which anchor social entrepreneurship (Al Issa et al., 2024). Social entrepreneurship requires essential abilities, such as empathy, opportunity recognition in social contexts, and interdisciplinary problem-solving, which emphasise theoretical knowledge over experiential learning. However, traditional classrooms rarely cultivate these elements. Moreover, limited integration of service-learning, field engagement, and community-based projects reduces students' capacity to understand grassroots social issues and develop sustainable solutions (Mair & Noboa, 2006).

Many other critical factors abound, including lack of institutional support, governmental and societal support, and ecosystem exposure. Many students in Indian institutions obtain minimal access to mentorship, incubation centres, or networks that foster innovation for social impact. Cultural factors also intervene, as career preferences are often skewed toward stable, high-income professions rather than risk-oriented social ventures (Agarwal & Lenka, 2018). Additionally, inadequate emphasis on entrepreneurial education at earlier stages of schooling limits the development of initiative, leadership, and resilience, traits that social entrepreneurs require. Consequently, without structured opportunities to build these competencies through practice-oriented, socially embedded learning environments, students stay underprepared to engage effectively in social entrepreneurship. Furthermore, society's positive attitude also forms a prerequisite for future generations to undertake social entrepreneurship education courses at the university level (Saputra et al., 2023). Indian society lacks motivational attitudes and welcoming behaviour for social entrepreneurship education compared to Western and European countries.

Therefore, structured curriculum, trained teachers, institutional support, societal support, conducive environment and government policy prove necessary for inculcating the required competencies among Indian students. The higher education sector, particularly in India, serves as an important means of promoting a social entrepreneurship mindset among India's youth. At present, many Indian institutions provide specialised post-graduate and Diploma courses on SEE, such as the Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS), the first Indian higher education institution to start an academic curriculum on social entrepreneurship, a two-year full-time postgraduate course, namely MA in Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship. This course specifically targets students who believe that social initiatives can make a social impact and train them to tackle the micro-level issues such as education, livelihood, health, energy, and environment via innovation and entrepreneurial action. In addition, there operate many other AICTE-approved institutions, such as Deshpande Education Trust, Karnataka University, Ambedkar University, SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management, Azim Premji University, Indira Gandhi Open University, and the Center for Entrepreneurship Development (Kumar, 2021). However, SEE courses should begin at an earlier stage, like bachelor level and government should bring some policy framework to attract students at large, as India faces serious unemployment issues where overall 3.1% unemployment persists among 15+ years youth and educated unemployment persists, with a 11.2% rate for graduates (MoSPI, 2026). Indian industry largely deplores the quality of graduates produced by higher educational institutions, particularly due to their lack of appropriate employability skills. Despite operating one of the world's largest education systems, India still struggles with the employability of its educated workforce. Ironically, the issue extends beyond the uneducated or untrained; even highly educated individuals frequently fall short of the expected standards, which also enlarges the unemployment crisis (Khare, 2014; Unni, 2016; Malik & Venkatraman, 2017).

Following the above development, all Indian institutions should master recent development in the field of social entrepreneurship. Institutions must reshape the academic programmes to train the students to meet the need of the country in this technological revolutionary period. Despite growing national interest, research shows that social entrepreneurship education (SEE) in the Indian higher education context stays largely conceptual and fragmented, with significant empirical and context-specific gaps (Kumar, 2021; Shahid & Alarifi, 2021; Prakasam, 2025). A rigorous discussion of how to transform current educational programmes into socially efficient ones remains essential. Therefore, this review addresses the gap by synthesising the exist-

ing body of knowledge while highlighting areas: competencies and role of society needed to be a successful social entrepreneur; factors that influence social entrepreneurship; the benefits of social entrepreneurship education and what changes in the teaching methods; curricula, governmental programmes, and policies for an effective social entrepreneurship education in Indian higher institutions.

## Objectives

1. To discuss the competencies and role of society needed to be a successful social entrepreneur.
2. To identify the factors that influence Social Entrepreneurship.
3. To explore the benefits of social entrepreneurship education at the economic, social, and environmental levels of the country.
4. To suggest what changes in the teaching methods, curriculum, and governmental programmes and policies can make higher education a genuine social entrepreneurship education.

## Methodology

This study applies qualitative content analysis (QCA) to the existing literature to explore the integration of social entrepreneurship education (SEE) into higher education institutions in India. The QCA particularly suits systematic examination of and interpreting available textual data from academic sources to identify patterns, categories, and themes related to complex social phenomena (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Given the exploratory nature of the research and the absence of a single dominant pre-existing framework tailored to the Indian higher education context, an inductive QCA approach predominated, supplemented by elements of a directed approach where relevant established concepts (e.g., competencies from García-González et al., 2020; factors from Almeida & Sousa-Filho, 2023) guided initial coding.

The analysis followed a structured, iterative process phases, as outlined by Elo and Kyngäs (2008): preparation, organising, and reporting. Repeated cycles recurred throughout of coding, comparison, and refinement to enhance trustworthiness and depth.

## Preparation Phase

### *Formulating Objectives and Research Questions*

The study's four objective framed the analysis: competencies and role of society; influencing factors; benefits at economic, social, and environmental levels; required changes in teaching methods, curriculum, and governmental policies. We refined these into analytical questions, such as 'What competencies are emphasised across sources?' and 'How do contextual factors in India shape SEE implementation?'

### *Search Strategy and Data Collection*

A comprehensive search spanned major academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, Semantic Scholar, Elicit. Keywords and combinations included 'social entrepreneurship education,' 'competencies for social entrepreneurship,' 'role of society in social entrepreneurship education,' 'social entrepreneurship in higher education,' 'factors

influencing social entrepreneurship education,' 'teaching methods for social entrepreneurship education,' 'curriculum for social entrepreneurship education,' and 'governmental programmes & policies for promoting social entrepreneurship education.' Searches covered only peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, scoping/systematic reviews, and high-quality reports published primarily from 2000 onward to capture contemporary developments.

### ***Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria***

Sources qualified if they addressed SEE competencies, societal roles, influencing factors, benefits, teaching methods/curricula, or policy implications in higher education contexts. Exclusions removed non-academic sources, purely commercial entrepreneurship studies without a social focus, pre 2000 published and outdated works unless foundational. The search initially retrieved roughly 150 sources; after screening for relevance and quality, 70 core documents constituted the primary dataset. We removed duplicates and low-relevance items. We present findings thematically, organised around the study's objectives.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Competencies Needed for Social Entrepreneurship***

A social entrepreneur can be considered someone who is dedicated to a creative idea, opinion or initiative that tackles a social issue in their community and works to ensure that it is sustainable over time (Nicholls, 2008). Social entrepreneurs are a particular subset of business-people who prioritize societal impact and exhibit particular traits (Sastre-Castillo et al., 2015), which necessitates defining their entrepreneurial competencies. Change agents for sustainability are another name for social entrepreneurs, a subset of sustainable entrepreneurs who employ entrepreneurial methods to address societal and ecological issues (Hockerts, 2017; Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). Ultimately, social entrepreneurship entails sustainable enterprises, which require effective management of human, financial, and even temporal resources to balance social equity, economic prosperity, and environmental integrity (Meyer & Gauthier, 2013). This idea appears to place the entrepreneur's dedication and social obligation above everything else. Therefore, various competencies are needed to become a successful social entrepreneur. It is often acknowledged that business performance, development, and success are determined by entrepreneurial competencies (Guritno et al., 2019). Various research conducted on entrepreneurship competencies indicated that it directly or may indirectly influence the performance of the business (Sánchez, 2012; Gerli et al., 2011; Man et al., 2008; Pepple & Enuoh, 2020). Despite the fact that authors like Shapovalov et al. (2019) highlight the significance of an entrepreneur's societal outlook as a distinguishing characteristic, they believe that nobody can overlook the importance of having the skills required to identify, create, and nurture opportunities, skills that are common to other (Sanabria & Espitia, 2021; Cruz-Sandoval et al., 2022). Scholars are curious about how these SEs are driven to effectively address various challenging social issues and how their competencies affect their entrepreneurial endeavors within the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Undoubtedly, this industry is becoming increasingly popular among businesses. Entrepreneurs must follow the tripartite extreme mark i.e., planet, people, and profit (3P's), because of the societal benefit ingrained in this sector. Social reasons demand compassion, empathy, kindness, morals, and ethics, as well as the capacity for independent decision-making, persuasion, and effective communication. Both today and in the near future, these attributes will be necessary. For long-term growth, researchers are seeking the capabilities needed to become

sustainable SEs (Dickel & Eckardt, 2021; Edwards, 2021). Therefore, it can be said that to achieve strong company performance, new entrepreneurs need to enhance their capabilities (Guritno et al., 2019). There is currently a dearth of empirical research on social entrepreneur competencies despite the fact that numerous conceptual studies on social entrepreneurs highlight the traits mentioned above. Concretely speaking, research studies like that of Sáenz (2015) highlight the significance of all entrepreneurs possessing personal qualities like goal-setting, innovation, creativity, and time management. Their research was carried out in academic institutions that offered social entrepreneurship-focused curricula. The social qualities include leadership, teamwork, communication, and organization. Critical thinking, ethical sense, and empathy are ethical qualities, whereas developmental features include autonomy, tenacity, self-assurance, and responsibility. Miller et al. (2012) conducted a survey on 150 social entrepreneurs, and discovered that the top five capabilities were the following: effective team building, capital/financial management, problem-solving abilities, the capacity to lead and develop people, and the capacity to connect with suppliers, consumers, and other stakeholders. Cognitive Competence, Functional Competence, Social Competence, and Meta Competence are the four dimensions of the interrelated multidimensional model, according to Orhei et al. (2015).

Velasco et al. (2019) identify three elements of social entrepreneurship: systemic, interpersonal, and instrumental characteristics (Vázquez-Parra et al., 2021). According to Portuguese Castro et al. (2018), social entrepreneurship competency should weigh one's enthusiasm for entrepreneurship, orientation towards sustainability, capacity to see possibilities, and behaviours and attitudes (Cruz-Sandoval et al., 2022).

In the framework described by García-González et al. (2020), social entrepreneurship competency divides into five sub-competencies, each associated with specific indicators. Table 1 details this breakdown.

**Table 1. Five Sub-competencies of Social Entrepreneurship Competency**

Sub-Competency	Meaning	Indicators
Personal Aspects	Focused on individual traits, values, and emotional factors that shape the social entrepreneur's mindset.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Motivation</li> <li>2. Understanding others</li> <li>3. Perseverance</li> <li>4. Communication</li> <li>5. Persuasion</li> </ol>
Leadership	Guiding and inspiring others toward achieving a social mission.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People management</li> <li>2. Time management</li> <li>3. Collaborative work</li> </ol>
Social Innovation	Finding innovative, more sustainable, and efficient solutions to societal issues is known as social innovation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identification of New Opportunities in Response to Social/Environmental Problems</li> <li>2. Learning and Adaptability</li> <li>3. Generation of Creative Ideas</li> <li>4. Tolerance of Uncertainty and Ambiguity</li> <li>5. Social Involvement</li> <li>6. Evaluation of Ideas, Results, and Impacts on the Environment and People</li> <li>7. Management of Limited Resources and Risk Models in Social Organizations</li> </ol>

Sub-Competency	Meaning	Indicators
Social Value	Centres on creating and maximizing value for society through entrepreneurial activities.	1. Empathy for the Unmet Needs of Others 2. Ethical Code and Sense of Ethics 3. Sustainability Orientation and Ecological Behavior 4. Entrepreneurial Passion and Identity
Entrepreneurial Management	Entrepreneurial management emphasizes the operational and business skills necessary to run a social enterprise effectively.	1. Foundations for Value Creation in Social Organizations 2. Financing and Administration 3. Strategic Development

Source: own elaboration.

These sub-competencies, along with their 22 related indicators, provide a holistic approach to assessing and developing social entrepreneurship skills in individuals and organisations.

After reviewing the above studies, we found that the following competencies should be nurtured among Indian students to make them true entrepreneurs.

### **1. Psychological Competencies**

Psychological competencies denote the skills, abilities, traits, and capacities that enable individuals to navigate personal, social, environmental, and professional challenges effectively (Nicholls, 2008). They empower individuals to navigate complex environmental issues, drive innovation, and foster sustainable changes. These competencies include empathy, resilience, innovative thinking, vision, emotional intelligence, leadership qualities, adaptability, flexibility, and self-motivation.

### **2. Cognitive Competencies**

Cognitive competencies denote the mental processes and skills needed to understand, evaluate, plan and solve complex challenges. These competencies encompass critical thinking, reasoning, memory, and attention. According to Anderson (2010), cognitive competencies underpin information processing, solving problems, and making decisions effectively. In social entrepreneurship context, cognitive competencies include opportunity recognition, creative and innovative thinking, critical thinking, analysis, systems thinking, strategic planning, visioning, problem-solving skills, learning agility, decision-making ability, cultural and contextual intelligence. These cognitive competencies prove essential to solving complex social and environmental issues in Indian context. As Indian higher educational institutions largely follow traditional teaching methods, the time has come for a paradigm shift in their methods of instructions to nurture these cognitive competencies.

### **3. Functional Competencies**

Functional competencies denote the practical skills necessary for implementing strategies, managing operations, and achieving sustainable impact (Miller et al., 2012). For social entrepreneurs, these competencies bridge vision and execution.

### **4. Social Competencies**

Social competencies denote the interpersonal skills and relational abilities necessary for building trust, fostering collaboration, and mobilising communities (Orhei et al., 2015). These competencies let social entrepreneurs engage with diverse stakeholders and drive collective action effectively. It includes empathy, communication skills, relationship building and trust-

worthiness, collaboration and teamwork, cultural competence, conflict resolution, mediation skills, advocacy, influence, emotional intelligence, networking skills, and stakeholder engagement.

### **5. Meta-competencies**

Meta-competencies denote overarching capabilities that enable individuals to adapt, learn, and grow in the face of complex and evolving challenges (Orhei et al., 2015). For social entrepreneurs, these competencies furnish the flexibility and self-awareness needed to navigate dynamic environments and drive sustainable impact, including: adaptability, flexibility, learning agility, systems thinking, self-awareness, visionary thinking, ethical and reflective thinking, emotional regulation, curiosity, openness, interdisciplinary thinking, resilience and perseverance.

The competencies above prove necessary to critically analyse the social, environmental, healthcare and educational issues prevalent in India and bring some innovative ideas to address these issues. India remains a vast country with a diverse population with different needs and problems. These competencies can help solve diverse emerging challenges with unique and creative society-oriented solutions. Indian educators should nurture these competencies with the help of trained teachers and by making necessary changes in the SEE curriculum.

### **Role of Society in Social Entrepreneurship Education**

Society shapes the success and direction of social entrepreneurship education. For instance, societal networks and foundations provide critical funding and mentorship, letting students gain practical experience (Brock & Steiner, 2009). Additionally, societal values that promote empathy and innovation encourage students to pursue entrepreneurship focused on social change (Brock & Steiner, 2009). Furthermore, educational institutions often align their social entrepreneurship programmes with societal needs, ensuring students stand ready to address pressing challenges (Tracey & Phillips, 2007). Society's role in promoting social entrepreneurship education proves critical as it helps to create an environment where social entrepreneurship can flourish. Society fills multiple roles here, from providing support systems and fostering a culture of innovation and empathy to aligning educational institutions with societal needs and challenges. Therefore, society, in this context, can play an encouraging role in the following ways.

#### **1. Creating a Supportive Ecosystem**

Society advances social entrepreneurship education by creating a supportive ecosystem through networks, welcoming attitudes, helping collectively in various initiatives, raising hands in funding opportunities, guiding, and mentorship. Therefore, society must cultivate a supportive environment, so that students become motivated to pursue SEE (Brock & Steiner, 2009).

#### **2. Fostering a Culture of Innovation and Empathy**

Societal values and norms, such as welcoming new ideas, innovations and organising a stage, markedly shape the positive entrepreneurial mindset among the youths, especially in terms of encouraging empathy and innovation. When a community's values systems celebrate creative, innovative solutions to social problems, it motivates students to pursue social entrepreneurship education. Society's active promotion of social entrepreneurship education

as a viable career path or area of study helps normalise creating businesses for social good, beyond profit motives (Brock & Steiner, 2009).

### **3. *Aligning Education with Social Needs***

Society can directly shape the curriculum of social entrepreneurship education by reflecting the emerging social needs and challenges in the modern technological era, which schools and universities weave into their programmes to train the students on various entrepreneurial education in order to come up with various creative solutions and solve the problem of country's growing unemployment (Hassan et al., 2022; García-González & Ramírez-Montoya, 2021).

### **4. *Becoming a Responsible Stakeholder in the Institution's Entrepreneurship Education***

Society can proactively shape the entrepreneurial ecosystem by providing mentorship, resources, and real-world experiences to the entrepreneurship education ecosystem within educational institutions (Brock & Steiner, 2009). As responsible stakeholders, they not only participate in curriculum development but also ensure that the entrepreneurial education aligns with both societal needs and the institution's mission.

### ***Factors Influencing Social Entrepreneurship Education***

Almeida and Milton Sousa-Filho (2023) studied the factors shaping social entrepreneurship education to conclude that individual characteristics that shape a person's inclination to engage in social entrepreneurship include empathy, moral duty, self-efficacy, perceived social support, and past experience. Almeida and Milton Sousa-Filho (2023) further reported that organizational factors that define the organization's intent to engage in social entrepreneurship, including mentors and social networks, are significant. It is also reported in their study that contextual factors that define the intent to engage in social entrepreneurship, including political, economic, social, and technological, are significant. The focus and applicability of social entrepreneurship education in society are frequently influenced by the surrounding social environment, which includes prevailing social challenges, political structure, availability of resources, social attitudes, and community needs. Educational programs that are in line with local needs and problems typically have a greater effect on their usefulness (Zahra et al., 2009). The market opportunities for socially conscious businesses might encourage educators and students to seek relevant social entrepreneurship education based on viable and significant projects.

It is noteworthy to discuss the role of technology in social entrepreneurship education that gives access to resources, enhances collaboration, and fosters innovation. It enables students to use digital tools and innovations to develop scalable social impact solutions, and technological access may expand the scope of social entrepreneurship education (Phills et al., 2008). By removing financial and geographic constraints, technologies like online learning platforms make social entrepreneurship education more widely accessible.

Further, factors can be categorized as individual, social, and environmental factors that influence entrepreneurship behavior. The social factor evaluates family background, personal background, career stages (Alstete, 2002; Green et al., 2001), environmental growth, and early life experiences (Gibb, 1993). How a student approaches and applies social entrepreneurship principles in the real world after completing formal education can be influenced by their prior knowledge, particularly in areas like business, social sciences, and environmental studies (Robinson, 2006). At the individual level, strong leadership and critical interpersonal skills are required for successful social entrepreneurship ventures, which influence a student's ability to

mobilize resources and build teams for social projects at the grassroots level aimed at a particular cause (Dacin et al., 2011). The environmental factors model examines the contextual factors such as reduction of tax, wealth value, timing of opportunities in the stages of career, indirect benefits, the impact of market conditions (Alstete, 2002), social upheaval, supportive social and economic culture (Green et al., 2001).

Personal, social, and institutional factors could be the leading factors in creating a conducive environment to encourage students to take social entrepreneurship as a future career option (Swain & Patoju, 2022). Rashid et al. (2018) concluded after conducting a study on the students of Malaysia that, prior experience, empathy, and self-efficacy are important personal factors that could affect social entrepreneurial intentions. Social factors can significantly impact the creation of intentions for social entrepreneurship education. Cultural norms may have a significant impact on how social entrepreneurship initiatives are designed and motivated in educational institutions. Views on social entrepreneurship are influenced by the cultural context. Social entrepreneurship education is more likely to be accepted and supported in societies that place high importance on social responsibility and community welfare (Steyaert & Katz, 2004). For instance, although individualistic civilizations may place more value on individual leadership and creativity, collectivist societies place more focus on community-oriented endeavors. Therefore, teachers need to modify their methods to take these cultural factors into account (Smith & Stevens, 2010). In social entrepreneurship education, community participation and robust social networks are essential to foster the mindset for social entrepreneurship among the students. These networks make it easier for everyone to share resources, collaborate, and mentor, all of which are critical to community-based initiatives and students' experiential learning. The cooperative atmosphere in society and the institutions required for prosperous social companies which are frequently modeled via networking inside educational programs (Austin et al., 2012). Universities and other educational institutions in India may support and can do the needful in the growth of social entrepreneurship education programs by allocating resources, including infrastructure, finance, and faculty knowledge base (Tracey & Phillips, 2007). Hands-on, experiential learning, need-based activities and critical way of thinking in social entrepreneurship education must be offered by institutions with robust support systems. Educational institutions can also enhance their collaboration and partnerships with NGOs, corporate sectors, and government sectors that can provide students with hands-on, practical experience and access to real-world society-based issues, strengthening the impact of social entrepreneurship education (Mair & Marti, 2006) on a large scale, which leads to a prosperous society. Socioeconomic conditions, which are also important social factors, such as unemployment and income inequality, directly impact the need for social entrepreneurship education in the country. Public financing, financial incentives, and supportive government regulations may all help to advance social entrepreneurship education and make it more sustainable and accessible (Seelos & Mair, 2005). Educational institutions may be encouraged to invest in social entrepreneurship programs by policies that offer tax advantages or financing for social companies (Austin et al., 2012). Educational programs can seriously concentrate on tackling and preventing urgent social concerns like poverty or access to healthcare and education in areas with more economic suffering through proper social entrepreneurship education (Santos, 2012). Education programs can be influenced by laws and regulations running in the country that encourage a social entrepreneurship mindset. For example, nations with laws supporting social entrepreneurs through grants, tax exemptions, or legal status can easily promote social entrepreneurship mindset through proper educational programs (Defourny &

Nyssens, 2017). The way social entrepreneurship is taught to students can also be influenced by the design of more extensive educational programs. By offering actual, real-world problem-solving experiences, social entrepreneurship education tends to thrive in systems that support interdisciplinary learning, problem-based learning (PBL), and hands-on training (Kickul & Lyons, 2020). Therefore, it's very important for Indian higher institutions to make wise choices of curriculum, environment and teaching methods that give students the opportunity to engage in experiential learning, fieldwork, and interdisciplinary approaches in order to prepare students to take social entrepreneurship as a career (Smith & Woodworth, 2012). In sum, the factors fall into the following categories.

### ***1. Factors at the External Environmental Level***

**Government Policy and Support.** To promote innovation and address societal issues, governments must support social entrepreneurship education centres by developing frameworks, allocating funds, tax reduction and cultivating collaborations (Seelos & Mair, 2005; Defourny & Nyssens, 2017).

**Societal Norms and Cultural Beliefs.** Societal norms and cultural beliefs heavily shape social entrepreneurship education, which shape how individuals perceive social issues, innovation, and community responsibility. For example, in societies that emphasise gender equality, women may gain more opportunities to participate in social entrepreneurship education. Grasping these cultural differences proves essential for promoting effective social entrepreneurship education worldwide (Fleck et al., 2021; Austin et al., 2012).

**Economic Conditions.** Because economic conditions affect funding prospects, resource availability, and the overall market environment in which social ventures operate, they crucially shape social entrepreneurship education. Therefore, awareness of the national economy proves crucial to enabling social entrepreneurs to modify their tactics in a variety of financial situations (Seelos & Mair, 2005).

### ***2. Factors at the Organisational Level***

**Institutional Support and Resources.** For social entrepreneurship education to be successful, institutional support and resources prove essential, as they provide access to networks, infrastructure, funding, and mentorship (Tracey & Phillips, 2007).

**Collaboration with External Organisations.** To expose students to real-world opportunities and challenges, social entrepreneurship education at Indian institutions must collaborate with external organisations. Collaborations with government agencies, social entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes offer financial support, practical experience, and mentorship (Mair & Marti, 2006).

**Curriculum and Pedagogical Approach.** Indian universities should include theory and practice in their social entrepreneurship curricula and pedagogical approaches, emphasising sustainability, innovation, and social impact (Mair & Marti, 2006).

### ***3. Factors at the Individual Level***

**Personal Motivation and Passion.** Personal motivation and passion drive social entrepreneurship education, inspiring students to pursue ventures that address social challenges. Therefore, SEE's curriculum must sustain the motivational level of the students (Almeida & Milton Sousa-Filho, 2023).

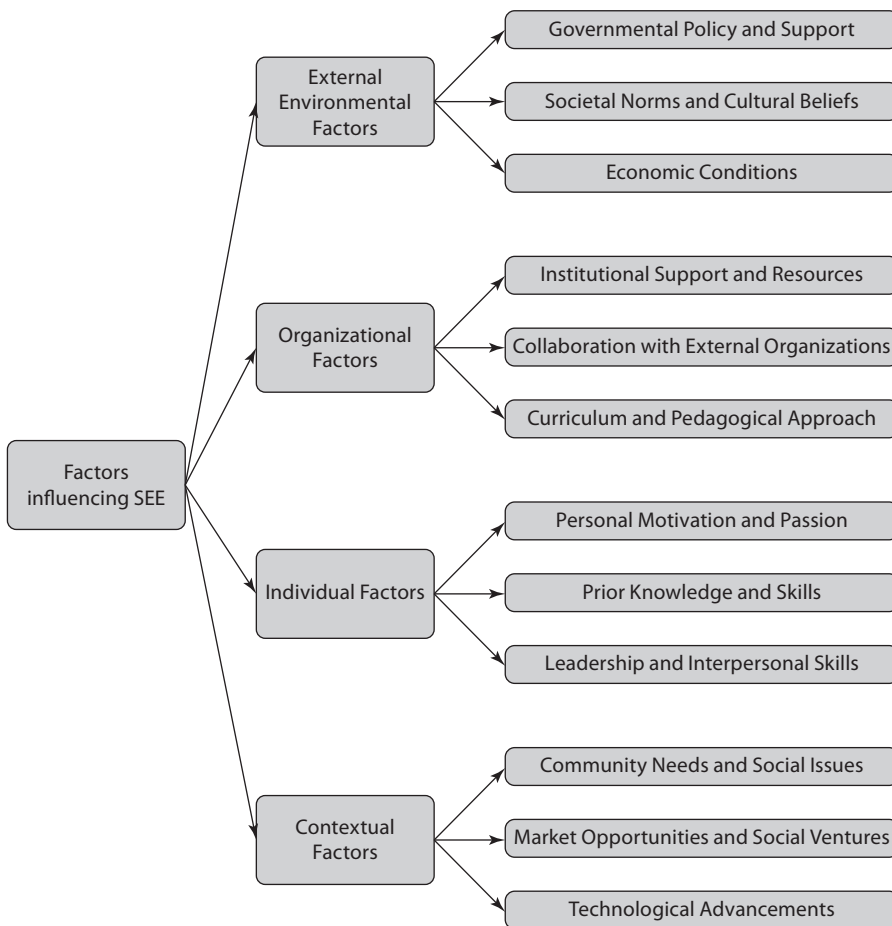
**Prior Knowledge and Skills.** Social entrepreneurship demands prior knowledge and abilities in business, social sciences, and problem-solving. Thus, institutions must offer foundational

SEE courses early of education to provide the necessary knowledge and skills to the students required for SE (Almeida & Milton Sousa-Filho, 2023; Rashid et al., 2018).

**Leadership and Interpersonal Skills.** Leadership and interpersonal skills prove essential in social entrepreneurship since they let students manage and lead teams, form alliances, and motivate change. Aspiring business owners can harness these abilities to promote teamwork and motivate group efforts to achieve social impact (Dacin et al., 2011).

#### 4. Factors at the Contextual Level

**Community Needs and Social Issues.** Understanding social concerns and community needs proves essential for neo social entrepreneurs. Students can tailor their endeavours to make a significant difference by examining regional issues such as poverty, educational disparities, and environmental sustainability (Zahra et al., 2009).



**Figure 1. Factors Influencing Social Entrepreneurship Education (SEE) at External Environmental, Organizational, Individual, and Contextual Levels**

Source: own elaboration.

**Market Opportunities for Social Ventures.** Students must learn to spot new trends, evaluate unmet market needs, and leverage innovation to develop scalable goods and services. Aspiring business owners can create projects that prove not only financially feasible but also support long-term sustainability and constructive social change by grasping market dynamics, customer behaviour, and the potential social impact (Dees, 1998).

**Technological Advancements.** Students must learn to strengthen social endeavours by leveraging technologies such as data analytics, internet platforms, and sustainable energy sources. Grasping these technologies lets neo-entrepreneurs sustain their competitiveness in a changing market while increasing impact, optimising resource allocation, and developing sustainable solutions (Phills et al., 2008).

### ***Benefits of Social Entrepreneurship Education***

Social entrepreneurship implements innovative ideas using the available resources in the nearby areas to address societal problems, challenges and needs (Mair & Marti, 2006), benefiting society at various levels, including economic, social, and environmental (Santos, 2012; Zahra et al., 2009). Social entrepreneurship education equips students with the necessary skills, experiences, and knowledge to innovate with new and unique ideas and create businesses prioritising society over profit, fostering solutions that target systemic issues of society (Bacq & Janssen, 2011). By inculcating collaborative problem-solving skills, decision-making power, and promoting sustainable business practices, social entrepreneurship education empowers students to tackle poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation in society (Zahra et al., 2009). Therefore, we elaborate the benefits at three levels.

#### ***1. Benefits at the Economic Level***

Social entrepreneurship education drives economic development primarily through three mechanisms: employment creation in underserved regions, economic diversification across health, education, and environmental sectors, and the attraction of social impact investment. By enabling students to launch viable social ventures, SEE also reduces income inequality and reduces pressure on public expenditure by filling gaps in service provision (Santos, 2012; Zahra et al., 2009; Bornstein & Davis, 2010).

#### ***2. Benefits at the Social Level***

At the social level, SEE cultivates civic engagement, community empowerment, and social cohesion by enabling individuals to identify and address systemic challenges. It promotes inclusion and equity, particularly for marginalised populations, and enhances access to essential services – healthcare, education, sanitation – through scalable social ventures (Haugh, 2007; Kickul & Lyons, 2020; Seelos & Mair, 2005).

#### ***3. Benefits at the Environmental Level***

Social entrepreneurship education advances sustainable development by training students to consider environmental impacts in venture design. Graduates build enterprises tackling waste management, renewable energy, and resource conservation, contributing to India's climate resilience and its commitments under the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Muñoz & Dimov, 2015; Bacq & Alt, 2018).

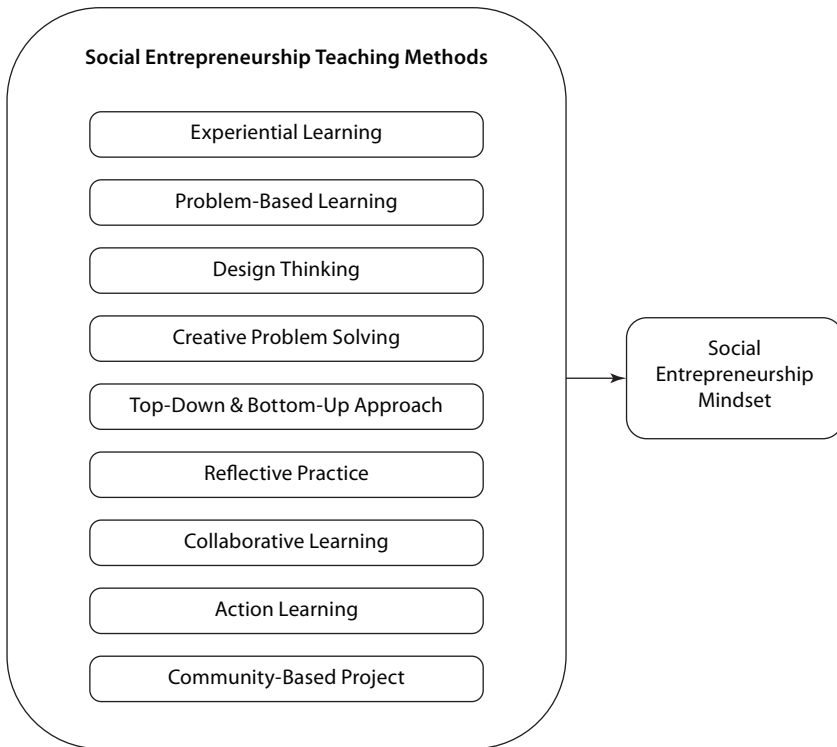
### Teaching Methods for Social Entrepreneurship Education at the University Level

As discussed above, Indian educational institutions cling to traditional teaching methods, in which students stay passive recipients of knowledge and rarely participate actively in the teaching-learning process. This approach stays largely exam-oriented, focusing heavily on memorisation while neglecting critical reflection, creativity, and learning by doing. As a result, students often cannot pursue SEE effectively. To address this gap, teachers require rigorous training to deliver social entrepreneurship education effectively at the university level. Fortunately, educators and researchers already mapped several innovative methods that faculty members can readily adopt in India. The literature suggests the following methods for developing social entrepreneur mindset among the students (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Teaching Methods for Social Entrepreneurship Education**

Method	Core principle	Application in SEE (India)	Key references
Experiential Learning	Learning through direct experience, reflection, and application (Kolb's four-stage cycle).	Students work directly with NGOs or social enterprises, then reflect on outcomes. Fosters empathy and problem-solving.	Kolb & Kolb (2005); Brock & Steiner (2009)
Problem-Based Learning	Real-world problems drive learning; students identify knowledge gaps and research solutions collaboratively.	Multidisciplinary case analysis of Indian social challenges (e.g., sanitation, rural health). Develops critical thinking and teamwork.	Hmelo-Silver (2004); Smith & Woodworth (2012)
Design Thinking	Human-centred, empathy-driven innovation following five stages: empathise, define, ideate, prototype, test.	Students map community needs and prototype low-cost solutions; rapid feedback loops.	Liedtka et al. (2017); Gonen (2020)
Creative Problem-Solving	Structured divergent–convergent thinking to generate and evaluate multiple solutions.	Brainstorming workshops; group ideation on social challenges; selecting viable interventions.	Treffinger et al. (2023)
Top-Down & Bottom-Up Approach	Top-down: expert-guided frameworks and case studies. Bottom-up: grassroots community immersion and participatory co-design.	Combining expert lectures with field immersion; students toggle between both modes in the same course.	Freeman et al. (2019); Zahra et al. (2009)
Reflective Practice	Structured self-assessment connecting theory to experience; builds emotional intelligence and ethical awareness.	Reflective journals, peer debriefs, mentorship-guided reflection with experienced social entrepreneurs.	Kolb (2014); Tikkamäki et al. (2016)
Collaborative Learning	Peer-to-peer knowledge exchange; group projects developing interpersonal and consensus-building skills.	Cross-disciplinary team projects on real social issues; peer feedback sessions.	Porkodi et al. (2023)
Action Learning	Cycles of action, reflection, and group inquiry on live social problems with community partners.	Action learning sets working with local NGOs; iterative do–reflect–improve cycles.	Marquardt (2011)
Community-Based Projects	Students engage as equal co-design partners with community members on locally defined challenges.	Semester-long placements with community organisations; co-creation of scalable solutions.	Wiek et al. (2015)

Source: own elaboration.



**Figure 2. Social Entrepreneurship Teaching Methods**

Source: own elaboration.

Based on extensive literature review, the nine strategies above may prove the most effective in instilling in pupils the necessary competencies, knowledge and experiences to foster a social entrepreneurial mindset. University teachers can deploy these pedagogical strategies to foster social entrepreneurship in order to meet future demands of the nation.

### ***Curriculum Needed for Social Entrepreneurship Education in India***

Institutions should frame an appropriate, all-round social entrepreneurship curriculum in all higher education institutions and universities in India, combining foundational knowledge, skill-building, experiential learning, and ethical training. Becoming a genuine social entrepreneur demands a unique skill set, blending business acumen with social awareness, ethical responsibility, and the ability to innovate in complex social contexts. Indian higher education institutions can offer a comprehensive curriculum that includes theory, practice, and community engagement to prepare students to address societal challenges with sustainable and impactful solutions (Kickul & Lyons, 2020). Therefore, the following components must be considered while framing the curriculum.

#### ***1. Core Theory and Foundation Courses***

A balanced curriculum in social entrepreneurship education must begin with foundational courses that cover the key principles and frameworks guiding it. Core curriculum in social

entrepreneurship education should include social impact theory, sustainability, systems thinking, and the principles of social justice, since these concepts equip students with the mindset and knowledge necessary for effective social innovation (Dees, 2018).

## ***2. Skill-building in Business and Innovation***

Courses in this area should cover strategic planning, financial management, marketing, and impact measurement, necessary for running enterprises effectively. Courses such as 'Business Planning for Social Entrepreneurs,' 'Finance and Funding for Social Ventures,' and 'Marketing for Social Impact' equip students with practical skills in resource management, scaling, and financial sustainability (see, e.g., Smith & Darko, 2014, who highlight skills and capacity gaps in these areas among social enterprises).

## ***3. Experiential Learning and Community Engagement***

It includes internships, field projects, and community-based partnerships, letting students apply their learning in real-world contexts. According to Marquardt (2011), experiential learning fosters resilience, adaptability, and empathy among SE students as they learn to navigate the problems and complexities of society.

## ***4. Ethical and Reflective Practices***

Institutions should develop a social entrepreneurship curriculum that emphasises ethical training and reflective practices among students, as social entrepreneurs often work in challenging environments where ethical considerations are important. Courses focused on ethics and social responsibility teach students how to navigate dilemmas and make decisions that respect and uplift the communities they serve (Elkington & Hartigan, 2008).

## ***5. Cross-Disciplinary and Collaborative Learning***

Social entrepreneurship education remains interdisciplinary. Thus, a balanced curriculum should incorporate cross-disciplinary courses and collaborative projects with students from various fields like environmental science, public health, engineering, and sociology (Halsall et al., 2022; Porkodi et al., 2023).

Therefore, the components above together familiarise students with social entrepreneurship, equipping them to take initiatives that generate sustainable and positive change. Such curricula provide both theoretical and practical understanding, fostering social entrepreneurs both knowledgeable and empathetic, capable of designing effective and ethical solutions to social issues in the country (Kickul & Lyons, 2020; Marquardt, 2011). Thus, Indian higher education institutions should consider these components when developing the SEE curriculum. As these components will help to inculcate the above discussed competencies required for students to become successful social entrepreneurs.

## ***Changes Needed for a True Social Entrepreneurship Education in India***

To better align higher education in India with social entrepreneurship principles, government programmes and policies must change in several ways. Key schemes include the Skill India Scheme (training course), Startup India (tax/compliance benefits), Stand-Up India (loans for SC/ST/women), PMMY-Mudra Yojana (collateral-free credit), and SVEP (rural enterprises). These programmes bridge social gaps while enabling sustainable business models. But, still following potential policy shifts are required.

### **1. Integrate Social Entrepreneurship Into Curricula**

The Indian government should work with educational institutions across the country to include social entrepreneurship as a core component in higher education curricula. This approach can help institutions cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset, positive attitudes and prepare students to address social problems through innovative ideas and solutions (Saputra et al., 2023).

### **2. Establish Funding and Mentorship Programmes**

To support aspiring social entrepreneurs, the Indian government can build targeted funding opportunities and mentorship programmes for student-initiated social ventures. A 'Social Entrepreneurship Grant Program,' similar to start-up initiatives can be launched, providing grants to students to develop unique, innovative, and sustainable ideas to effectively and efficiently address social challenges. Mentorship programmes can connect students with experienced social entrepreneurs who can guide them through the entire process. Financial support and mentorship from government and other organisations prove necessary to reduce the risk of new social ventures and enhance their chances of success (Waddock & Post, 1991).

### **3. Develop Incubation Centres With a Social Focus**

The government must develop programmes and policies to encourage Indian universities to establish incubation centres focused specifically on social ventures. These centres can supply essential resources, including workspace, mentorship, technical support, and connections to investors, for student-driven social startups.

### **4. Promote Community Engagement Through Service-Learning Programmes**

Incorporating service-learning programmes can strengthen students' social responsibility, achieved by adding service-learning programmes in the curriculum. These programmes supply valuable field experience and insights into social issues, thereby enriching the learning process. Studies demonstrate that experiential learning promotes stronger social responsibility and empathy among students (Kiely, 2005).

### **5. Create Partnerships With Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)**

To offer students exposure to social entrepreneurship, policies should encourage and support partnerships between educational institutions and social enterprises (NGOs) (Mair & Marti, 2006). These partnerships would let students develop essential skills required for successful social entrepreneurs while contributing to societal welfare.

### **6. Establish Recognition and Rewards Programmes for Social Entrepreneurship**

Finally, policies should recognise and reward students and institutions making meaningful contributions to society through innovations, thereby further motivating students to engage in social entrepreneurship. National-level awards, such as the National Startup Awards, could be introduced in specific categories for social impact projects from student-led teams, similar to the current awards for technological innovations, thereby creating a culture that values social impact. Such recognition of students' initiative and innovations can inspire and motivate students to engage in social entrepreneurship, creating a competitive yet collaborative environment to tackle pressing societal issues.

## Conclusion

This study systematically examined the integration of social entrepreneurship education (SEE) into higher education in India through a structured qualitative content analysis of the literature. The results clearly showed that effectively embedding SEE requires nurturing five interconnected competency clusters, such as psychological, cognitive, functional, social, and meta, among the students. To nurture these competencies, society can also act by providing a conducive environment required for successful social entrepreneurs. Students spend much time in society, so society can provide the necessary opportunities for young minds to pursue social ventures, where they can apply their theoretical knowledge to real-world problems. Multi-level factors shape these competencies and societal contributions operating at individual, organisational, contextual, and policy levels, where the National Education Policy for India 2020 provides a promising enabling framework, but implementation gaps (such as faculty capacity and resource constraints) continue to limit impact across most Indian higher education institutions. Successfully embedded in Indian higher education, SEE generates substantial benefits through diverse social entrepreneurial initiatives at the economic (job creation, innovation, inclusive growth), social (empowerment, equity, access), and environmental (sustainability, stewardship) levels, directly addressing India's complex challenges, advancing national aspirations of becoming *Vishwaguru*, and creating sustainable development.

Taken together, these elements compose a coherent India-centric ecosystem model in which competencies develop within supportive societal and institutional environments, moderated by contextual factors, and enabled through pedagogical and policy reforms. This synthesis exceeds general literature by explicitly connecting international frameworks to the realities of Indian higher education, highlighting both persistent gaps and opportunities like pioneering programmes at TISS and innovation cells.

Therefore, this article offers a clear, actionable roadmap for educators, institutions, and policymakers to transform Indian higher education into a genuine platform for social entrepreneurship education, equipping a new generation of students to create sustainable social impact alongside economic value. Future empirical research evaluating SEE implementation and outcomes across a wider sample of Indian HEIs would further sharpen this framework.

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R.M.: conceptualization; R.M.: writing, original draft preparation, R.M., S.J.: writing, review and editing, S.J.: supervision.

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The authors made very limited use of Chat GPT and Grok to assist with language editing, translation, finding relevant studies, enhance clarity and readability, grammatical corrections and text refinement. All AI-generated suggestions were reviewed, edited, and verified by the authors, who take full responsibility for the content. No AI tools were used for data analysis, interpretation, or the generation of original ideas.

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