Researchers develop tool for measuring social entrepreneurship

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The field of social entrepreneurship is expanding globally and is beginning to define itself. A new study from the Naveen Jindal School of Management at UT Dallas seeks to provide a valid, reliable measure of the term.

Dr. Shawn Carraher, clinical professor of organizations, strategy and international management, was helping a student with a research project on social entrepreneurship a few years ago. In search of a measurement tool, they examined 210 of the most cited papers, journal articles and books on the topic.

Carraher could not find a standardized scale, so he created one, taking the definition of social entrepreneurship from the most cited paper on the topic, breaking it down into components, and converting it to an 11-part scale. In the new study, recently published in the *European Journal of International Management*, he tested the tool.

The study also finds differences between social and traditional entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurs pursue goals and objectives that relate to solving specific problems within the social economy. They are also more concerned with satisfying those societal needs than making money.

"In traditional entrepreneurship, you're trying to do something that will help a specific group of individuals, and ideally, it should bring compensation to the entrepreneur," Carraher said. "In social

entrepreneurship, you tend to look more at the general good than at the good of the entrepreneur.

"Some people say in social entrepreneurship, you don't have to worry about profits, but actually, if you don't pay attention to profits, even a social entrepreneurship organization will go out of business. You still need to focus on that."

According to the study, social entrepreneurship examines specific societal problems and addresses them through creative, innovative and social-specified activities. Its intention is not to directly solve problems but to spur other efforts at problem-solving by increasing awareness of the issue and linking organizations. Many nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations fall into this category.

In the study, the researchers evaluated samples of social entrepreneurs working for nongovernmental organizations and traditional entrepreneurs who own their own companies in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The authors concluded that the measurement tool is a valid instrument and reliable for future research in social entrepreneurship.

"It's one step closer to allowing a scientific study of social entrepreneurship," Carraher said. "In research of any discipline, if individuals keep using instruments that are only used in a single study, then they're not moving the scientific method forward. This is designed to move social entrepreneurship forward by providing a standardized instrument that individuals can use when seeking to measure social entrepreneurship."

Carraher said future research may involve examining personality factors or cultural differences and how they relate to an individual's propensity of becoming a social entrepreneur. He and co-author Dr. Dianne H.B. Welsh of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro are studying

social entrepreneurship and its various ethical dimensions.

Andrew Svilokos of the U.S. Army also is a co-author of the recent study.

Social Entrepreneurship Scale

This is the 11-part scale created by Dr. Shawn Carraher. To be a social entrepreneur, you are:

• Adopting a mission to create social value (not just private value).
• Recognizing new opportunities to serve your mission.
• Engaging in a process of continuous adaptation related to your mission.
• Acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand in the fulfillment of your mission.
• Relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve your mission.
• Caring deeply about the outcomes created by the fulfillment of your mission.
• Seeking to be a 'world changer' through the accomplishment of your mission.
• Adopting a mission to sustain social value (not just private value).
• Engaging in a process of continuous innovation related to your mission.
• Exhibiting a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served by your mission.
• Engaging in a process of continuous learning related to your mission.

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