Putting Social Emergence in: A Linkage between Individual and Society in Social Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

This paper offers a social emergence perspective on social entrepreneurship. In recent years, interests in social entrepreneurship have proceeded. Much of the interests are from management scholars, at the same time, researchers from the third sector also do some contributions. As Peredo and McLean (2006) mentioned, both social and entrepreneurship dimensions must be taken into account. What is the different between researchers from different background when they think of ‘social entrepreneurship’?

There are some angles on definition of social entrepreneurship. For instance, Peredo and McLean (2006) proposed that social entrepreneurship is a concept which is exercised where some people aim to create social value, and pursue that goal through combination of recognizing and exploiting opportunities to create this value. Meanwhile, the entrepreneurs are characterized by innovation-empolying, risk-tolerating and declining to accept limitations in available resources (2006: 56). From this angle, individuals with intentions for some social value might take action to entrepreneurship.

Mair and Martí (2006) else proposed, social entrepreneurship can be defined as a process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs. From this angle, to catalyze social change and/or address social needs guide the direction of entrepreneurial process.

To be compared, two angles suggest different approach. One approach is more methodological individualism. The enterprising agents driven by some motivation would take action into entrepreneurship to carry out social value. The other approach put entrepreneurial process in the center, and the direction of process – helping forward social change and/or addressing social needs is vital as well. Certainly, there is something convergent in implications. Therefore, the place we tend to put social emergence in the discussion of social entrepreneurship is exposed.

The concept of social emergence has emerged form recent developments in computer science and sociological theory. The central notion of social emergence is: societies are complex dynamical systems, and the best way to understand how successive symbolic interactions among autonomous individuals result in the emergence of collective phenomena is by linking multiple levels of analysis – individuals, interactions, and groups, that is, the concept of emergence. (Sawyer 2005: 21-22)

In this paper, we tend to develop a framework which can give us the picture of how the social entrepreneurship has effectuated the missions and carries the visions out. By the framework, two cases of non-profit organizations would be illustrated based upon the concept of social emergence.
When individuals’ motive forces derived from social needs encounter the constraint power of social structures, what would be happened? Can we figure the dynamics and the mechanism of social entrepreneurship out? Putting social emergence in the study of social entrepreneurship might give some insights for the link of individual-society debate.

References

