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The Education and Development of the Social Entrepreneurs in the Municipality of Thessaloniki

Vasileiadou Polymnia

(Department of Efficiency, Organization, IT and Transparency, Ministry of Education, Greece)

Abstract: The thesis investigated the views of social entrepreneurs regarding the education and their development in the municipality of Thessaloniki. As individual targets of the research can be defined the following: A) To investigate the educational necessities of the social entrepreneurs as they themselves perceive them, B) To evaluate the training the social entrepreneurs receive today, C) To inspect which form of training the social entrepreneurs consider more suitable for them. The research has been conducted at the Social Collaborative Enterprises of Thessaloniki's Municipality. The overview of the research questions demonstrated the necessity that the social entrepreneurs feel to be educated, wish to go through social entrepreneurial training and are estimated positively their educational experiences and collaboration by the 1/3 of the social entrepreneurs with the networks of Social and Solidarity Economy. Moreover, the social entrepreneurs consider the professional education and the non-formal or informal training as more suitable for them.

Key words: professional training, social entrepreneur, social entrepreneurial education

1. Introduction

In spite of the fact that social entrepreneurship is a subject of academic research for almost twenty (20) years, it does not manifest itself frequently in entrepreneurship magazines (Short et al., 2009).

In this aspect, the preparation of a thesis about the education and the development of the social entrepreneurs in Greece is regarded as interesting, since it can lead to the profound inspection of those factors that are essential for its continuation. This process requires time availability and systematic support on behalf of the Government in order to bring out the expected results.

There is no global and clear definition for the term of social entrepreneurship (Γιάτσε, 2020; Ξυδερή, 2017; Shin, 2018), despite many researchers have attempted to describe it (Brock & Steiner, 2009). According to Dees and Anderson (2006), the term of social entrepreneurship is an emerging field/form of entrepreneurship with research gaps and limited empirical data.

The most common notions for the definitions social entrepreneurship are: social problems/necessities, opportunity recognition, scalability, resource acquisition, sustainable enterprise model are not restricted by resources and rely on the results (Brock & Steiner, 2009).

The social enterpreneurship includes non-profit enterprises, social enterprises, initiatives of social content,

Vasileiadou Polymnia, Ph.D., Deputy Head of the Department of Efficiency, Organization, IT and Transparency, Ministry of Education, Greece; research areas/interests: adult education. E-mail: vasiliadoupoly@gmail.com.

social and corporate responsibility and social innovation (Light & Wagner, 2005).

Alves (2015) collected thirteen (13) different definitions from renowned organizations or authors to describe the term of the social entrepreneur. All the social entrepreneurs according to Kirby and Ibrahim (2011), foreshadow the change and according to Defourny and Nyssens (2010), Pache and Chowdhury (2012) are regarded as symbols of social shift and social value.

Wu et al. (2013) contends that in terms of business they are virtuous, for Shin (2018) they promote innovation and according to Γιάτσε (2020) the social purpose is considered for them focal motive, they have social awareness and act as successful people contributing to the change of the social profile, making it more collective.

Furthermore, according to Brock and Steiner (2009), social entrepreneurs create opportunities and according to Shin (2018) they hold the keys for the success or the failure of social entrepreneurship. According to Olympic Training and Consulting Ltd. (2016), it is required to recognize, take advantage of market opportunities and use its mechanisms. According to Tracey and Philips (2007), they develop products and services for social purposes and according to Pache and Chowdhury (2012), they act in a much different way from traditional entrepreneurs.

The social entrepreneurs fall into a category called as "chief race" (Light & Wagner, 2005; Pache Chowdhury, 2012), they must be experienced and ready to take advantage of the opportunities (Wu et al., 2013) and develop leadership skills (McNally et al., 2020).

In Greece, social entrepreneurs have the opportunity to get an education through the academic and research institutions (Βαρβαρούσης κ.ά., 2017; ΕΕΤΑΑ, 2021).

Support centers of the Social and Solidarity Economy: a) offer advice for the candidate social entrepreneurs, b) support the foundation and development of other agencies Social and Solidarity Economy, c) cooperate with the competent agencies in an effective way, d) inform the potential and subsistent social entrepreneurs in the field of Social and Solidarity Economy about administrative procedures e) with targeted actions they publish and inform about issues Social and Solidarity Economy, f) they support the preparation of future business plans g) they support the preparation of a business plan. The professional training in various issues is considered the most appropriate sort of education (Olympic Training and Consulting Ltd., 2016; Terziev & Arabska, 2017), especially in the non typical or informal field of business learning (Nicklaus, 2011).

Preferable educational programs are those which focus on the basic principles, the institutional framework, the development of the social business models, the estimation of the social impact and the basic administrative and networking principles ($K\dot{\omega}\sigma\tau\alpha s$, 2019). Social entrepreneurs prefer the conventional and educational methods so as to learn the basic principles of the social entrepreneurship, the institutional framework, financial data, leadership and sales, whereas in terms of the internship they prefer more contemporary and dynamic techniques such as case studies, experiential learning etc. ($K\dot{\omega}\sigma\tau\alpha s$, 2019; Johnson κ . $\dot{\alpha}$., 2015; Tantawy κ . $\dot{\alpha}$., 2017). Anwar and Abdullah (2021) contend that the teaching of the social entrepreneurship and sustainability through experiential learning is more effective than the conventional method through lecture.

Moreover, social entrepreneurs need experienced and qualified staff willing to de trained in the affairs of business planning, the competitiveness of the provided services and products, the creation of relationships and alliances with other social partners in local and national level, knowledge acquisition and assessment competences of the initiatives, bank system exit due to their uncertain sustainability (Olympic Training and Consulting Ltd., 2016), funding, legal framework, counseling in the issues of strategic management, subsidized programs, access to the markets and business orientation. Therefore, it is primarily necessary the specialized training through

professional training/professional training centers and secondarily the typical — through the secondary education, vocational schools and colleges- and informal learning and training in the workplace (Terziev & Arabska, 2017).

2. Objects

Objective purpose of the thesis was the viewpoint inquiry of the social entrepreneurs in terms of their education and development in the municipality of Thessaloniki.

In particular, as individual targets of the research had been defined the following: to be investigated the educational necessities of the social entrepreneurs, as they are perceived by them, the evaluation of the training the social entrepreneurs get today and to be verified which form of training the social entrepreneurs consider more suitable for them.

The research questions which were inquired in relation to the research objectives were:

Research question 1: Which are the educational necessities of the contemporary social entrepreneurs?

Research question 2: How the provided education of the social entrepreneurs is estimated?

Research question 3: Which educational form of the social entrepreneurs is considered more suitable?

3. Research Methods

Qualitative research method has been selected, which is considered more suitable, since it agrees with the compatibility in other cases ($\Lambda \acute{a}\lambda\lambda\alpha\varsigma$, $\chi.\eta$,) and the recognition of the lost piece of the complete or partly unknown (Nassazi, 2013).

The difficulty to be generalized the findings of the qualitative research was coped with its selection to be inspected the viewpoints of the social entrepreneurs concerning their education and development in the whole regional unit of Thessaloniki. In this way, the generalization of the research conclusions became possible at least in the whole municipality.

The unstructured interview which was selected as concentration technique of the factual material is interactive (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017), it has a long story in the qualitative research of the social sciences (Frost et al., 2019), it is considered one of the overview methods in social research (Cohen & Manion, 1994) and by means of it viewpoints, experiences, emotions, perceptions, beliefs and motives are inspected (Galanis, 2018). The technique of the unstructured interview is an open condition (Cohen & Manion, 1994), with flexibility (Adhadi & Anozie, 2017) and freedom (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Γιαννάκη, 2019).

The used tool was a synthesis of already used tools and piloted by interview of two (2) social entrepreneurs of Social Cooperative Enterprises. After the probationary research, it was decided the interviews to be conducted, due to the pandemic, in three (3) ways: one-on-one meetings, via Skype and contact via phone. Twenty one (21) interviews were conducted in total.

For the purposes of the research Social Cooperative Enterprises of the Thesssaloniki's Municipality were selected since: a) they are among the most active agencies Social and Solidarity Economy of the country, b) several such agencies operate compared to the rest of municipalities and c) they represent at great extent the image of Social and Solidarity Economy nationwide.

One hundred thirty (130) Social Cooperative Enterprises of Collective and Social Benefit (article 14 of the Law 4430/2016) exist in the municipality of Thessaloniki. Finally, twenty one Social and Collective Enterprises were selected that are present online and an interview was conducted (percentage 42.8%).

4. Findings and Discussion

The main findings that emerged from the interviews of the social entrepreneurs in the Social Collaborative Enterprises are shown below:

- Social Collaborative Enterprises, that were founded by the implementation of both laws (2011 and 2016), are represented: ten (10) were founded from 2012 until 2016 and eleven (11) from 2017 until 2020:
- there is a slight lead of women over men [twelve (12) women and nine (9) men];
- the 1/3 of the social entrepreneurs [seven (7) persons are 40–50 years old], eight (8) are 50–60 years old and six (6) are 25–39 years old;
- fourteen (14) out of twenty one (21) have finished the higher education [two (2) titled M.Sc. related to their activity in the Social and Collective Enterprises];
- there is a need in the great majority of the social entrepreneurs of specialized training in the social entrepreneurship;
- sixteen (16) out of twenty one (21) persons-the highest-selected the legal framework of social entrepreneurship as the most important knowledge/skill and the decision-making process as dominant trend is regarded the wish for social entrepreneurial training;
- fifteen (15) out of twenty one (21) social entrepreneurs consider important the social entrepreneurial models for the starting of the social entrepreneurship, whereas thirteen (13) out of twenty one (21) regard as important: a) the recognition of the social needs and entrepreneurial opportunities and b) the financial management and accounting;
- the skills that turn up more in this question are: cooperation, team, communication and businesses,
- eleven (11) social entrepreneurs replied YES and ten (10) replied NO (concerning the attendance of a social entrepreneurial training program),
- the social entrepreneurs collaborated or received information from the accountant, ERGANI and other Social and Collective Enterprises
- Social and Solidarity Economy networks are of various sorts and many forms, the responses vary regarding the educational benefits from the networks,
- same number, namely twelve (12) out of twenty one (21) select the professional education and the non typical or informal training,
- eleven (11) to fifteen (15) persons out of twenty one (21) had the open discussions as a choice of educational techniques, the entrepreneurial simulations, the self-education, the case studies and the experiential practices,
- social entrepreneurs wish as educational program content: entrepreneurial plans, financial aids/funding/finance planning, laws/legislation, strategic thinking, good practices from other Social and Collective Enterprises,
- thirteen (13) out of twenty one (21) prefer the case studies/project and the experiential practices as educational techniques,
- ten (10) out of twenty one (21) choose laboratories and seminars and
- eleven (11) out of twenty one (21) prefer a part-time of educational/training form.

For the answers to the research questions, the following are observed:

As far as the first research question is concerned a) the necessity of specialized training in the social entrepreneurship and the wish for social entrepreneurial training exist in the great majority of social entrepreneurs and b) whoever wants to engage in social entrepreneurship, it is important to have knowledge/skills about the economics, laws, decision-making, businesses, strategic thinking, social needs.

Pache and Chowdhury (2012) contend that future entrepreneurs is required to have managerial knowledge (reported by the social entrepreneurs), knowledge of finding sustainable solutions to social problems (not particularly highlighted by the research as they were irrelevant to the topic), knowledge about specific social opportunities and projects (reported, but not as the most important), which will enable them to start and manage an organization and "snatch" new opportunities in the marketplace. It is important for aspirant social entrepreneurs to know the various forms and the special features of the social entrepreneurs (what Social and Collective Enterprises mean, how they work). Additionally, it is important to develop the skills, attitudes and behaviors of the social entrepreneurs. According to Alves (2015), future entrepreneurs are aided to take advantage of the opportunities and initiate new projects. According to Light and Wagner (2005), the entrepreneurial behaviors can be taught (not highlighted by the research), but they are considered important, according to the statements of the social entrepreneurs, the entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and models.

Kώστας (2019) and Johnson et al. (2015) contend — and highlighted by the research as well — that social entrepreneurs prefer the basic principles of the social entrepreneurship for theoretical units, the institutional and legal framework, the finance/funding, while for practical units they prefer the case studies, experiential learning and market research. Whereas for Olympic Training and Consulting Ltd., 2016; Terziev & Arabska 2017, the entrepreneurial planning, market analysis, participation in sponsored programs, access to the markets and strategic planning are considered appropriate for the training of the social entrepreneurs. Strategic thinking has been given as an answer by few social entrepreneur participants.

Kostas (2019) regarded the diagnosis of social needs, entrepreneurial plan preparation, effective staffing and leadership, market analysis and social marketing as the most important skills (only the marketing was stated by the research's social entrepreneurs).

The power of new technologies is not supported by the research's social entrepreneurs (with one exception), while their significance is particularly highlighted by Olympic Training and Consulting Ltd (2016).

Regarding the second research question, the majority of the social entrepreneurs has attended a social entrepreneurial education/training program, it estimates positively the program and it has been benefited by the cooperation with the $K.A.\Lambda.O$ networks, other similar programs, the accountant, ERGANI and the creation of relationships with other Social and Collective Enterprises.

Networking, which is highlighted in the bibliography (Υπουργείο Εργασίας και Κοινωνικών Ασφαλίσεων, 2020), is an issue that concerns the social entrepreneurs and should be further inspected. The significance, that for the social entrepreneurs the networks have, was highlighted, since they consider that they can be a good source of information, experience and ideas creation as well. The participation in networks might be the alternative of participation in training programs. Namely, since it is difficult for them to be trained or it does not exist educational institutions that know the operation's object, they rather prefer to take part in the networks. It does not exist "their own" formal agency which will undertake either on its own or in cooperation with the Ministry's pertinent services or with certified agencies for their training. The significance of Support Services Κ.Α.Λ.Ο. is highlighted by research and bibliography at the same time (ΕΕΤΑΑ 2021, Υπουργείο Εργασίας και Κοινωνικών Ασφαλίσεων, 2020). The Support Centers Κ.Α.Λ.Ο. are indeed a good counseling source which should be

established and not get closed because European funding has ended. It is besides "part" of a Social and Collective Enterprise and IN THE Municipality of Thessaloniki four (4) Social and Collective Enterprises have initiated — a fifth is expected to be founded- thanks to the Municipality's K.A.Λ.O. Support Center. The advantage of Support Centers is double: they are incorporated in a Social and Collective Enterprise which knows the administrative processes and its aim is to assist the potential social entrepreneurs in the administrative processes they are about to deal with.

As far as the third research question is concerned, the professional education and the non-typical or informal training with entrepreneurial simulations is considered the most suitable form of education/training as well as the open discussions, case studies and the experiential exercises through laboratories and part-time seminars.

In the aftermath, some basic researches are discussed in relation to the research questions. The research verifies the pertinent researches to a great extent.

Nassazi (2013) contend that the interest of the social entrepreneurs for the informal learning is regarded as dominant compared to the formal learning and that is confirmed by the research. Furthermore, the fact that the professional education belongs, bibliographically supported (Nicklaus, 2011), to the adult informal education, enhances the institution of non-typical or informal learning and "excuse" the preference of the research's social entrepreneurs to be education specialized as Pache & Chowdhury (2012) contend it depends on the requirements and the needs of the social entrepreneurship. The experiential exercises far outweigh the lectures as (Anwar and Abdullah 2021; Tracey & Philips 2007; Wu et al., 2013) and the inquired persons state. The content of an educational program is of great importance for the social entrepreneurs since, as it is confirmed by the research as well, concerns the problem solving, communication matters, planning, strategic thinking and the decision-making process. The research's interviews confirm Kostas's statements (2019) when they report that an educational program is more preferable it emphasizes networking, the entrepreneurial models, the legal issues, management and organization principles, programming and marketing. Another aspect which was pointed out in the interviews and it is stated by Olympic Training and Consulting Ltd. (2016) is the support the local authorities are looking for, the universities (Βαρβαρούσης κ. ά., 2017; Brock & Steiner, 2009; EETAA, 2021; Olympic Training and Consulting Ltd., 2016), the collaborations they wish to establish with the Church, the Municipality and generally with the social agencies. They consider that they are both an opportunity for each other they should take advantage of it. They wish to be educated by scientists and not by unspecialized staff. They do not have time to waste. The suggestion for integration of the social entrepreneurship in the school textbooks by two persons is not regarded as bad or utopian. It is rather imperative to be inculcated the entrepreneurial spirit in the kid's mentality and then they will be free to choose which "career path" they will follow.

For Bαρβαρούση κ. ά. (2017) and for the inquired persons of the research, different educational/training programs interest those who are at the early stages of the entrepreneurship, those who have already become a household name and those who wish for further development, as it happens in United Kingdom, India and Canada. There is no use for someone who has already started his business to be taught what he should do, he has done it — with or without hardships and support. The same applies to what it is required for someone to know at the outset of his/her social entrepreneurship. The bibliography is not confirmed by the interviews in the matter of the sort of the courses and the form of education/training. It is remarkable that the same number of persons wish to be trained during the work and through short-term programs (even though the question was different).

The research of 2021 confirms the registry data of 2014, which means that many members of Social and Collective Enterprises high educational qualifications (higher education graduates, with Master Degrees).

It would be useful in the future to conduct a comparative study with Social and Collective Enterprises nationwide in order to verify the importance of education/training in the development of the social entrepreneurs. Future research projects might lead to similar or different findings. In addition, the contribution of volunteers to the operation of Social and Collective Enterprises would be worthwhile whether they are trained/educated as the rest of the members and finally whether they wish to qualify for the next stage and become members of the Social and Collective Enterprises.

5. Conclusion

Education-training of the social entrepreneurs and the human resources of Social and Collective Enterprises is a matter of great importance. The development of human capital in social economy can significantly contribute to the conversion of the Third Sector into a dynamic and competitive landmark of economic development and social cohesion.

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