Practices of Defining the Notion of Social Entrepreneurship

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Abstract: The paper presents the results of an interdisciplinary comparative analysis of modern research practices concerning social entrepreneurship in Russian and foreign traditions in order to establish the specifics of defining the notion of social entrepreneurship in interdisciplinary discourse. The analytical basis of the study comprised the fundamental provisions and concepts of open innovation and human capital, the theory of public goods, the theoretical provisions concerning the structure and substance of social action, corporate social responsibility, the concept of uneven innovation activity, the principles of social partnership, social viability and complementarity. The research problems were solved using the methods of systems, structural and functional, institutional, comparative and content analyses. The selection of analysed papers was conducted in the databases of the analytical information platform Web of Science, the National Scientific Citation Database Russian Science Citation Index, the Scopus abstract base, the databases of academic networks ResearchGate, Academia.edu, etc. The paper indicates that Russian and foreign discourses address the problem of social entrepreneurship primarily in the context of economic, managerial, sociological, psychological and pedagogical research practices. It observes differentiation in the approaches to the conceptualisation and definition of the notion of social entrepreneurship under the applicable subject axiomatics and methodology and identifies the specifics of defining the notion of social entrepreneurship in interdisciplinary discourse. The research results make the foundation for further development of the methodology of definitions in the area of social entrepreneurship and serve to ensure consistency in the respective subject field and its relevance to the complex nature of social entrepreneurship as a phenomenon calling to be addressed from systemic and interdisciplinary positions.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneur, social good, comparative analysis, interdisciplinary analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship as a factor of social change helping to counter acute social problems, including social inequality, illiteracy, poverty, etc., becomes a crucial resource of socioeconomic development and wellbeing, as pointed out by Russian and foreign researchers, such as Baranova N.V. [1], M. Batalina, A. Moskovskaya, L. Taradina [2], M.N. Konyagina and M. Krasnopevtseva [3], A. Moskvina and D. Dolzhikova [4], S. Bansal, I. Garg and G.D. Sharma [5], P. Bento, M. Jacquinet and R. Albuquerque [6], E. Muralidharan and S. Pathak [7] and others. Meanwhile, social entrepreneurship is a relatively novel subject for scholarly thought and conceptualisation.

The large diversity of social initiatives and the complex nature of social entrepreneurship as a phenomenon emerging at the intersection of economic and social life shape the interdisciplinary profile of the problem domain and conceptual framework of social entrepreneurship, which is clear from the appearance of such terms as "philantropreneur", "engaged philanthropist", "social investor", "social angel", etc.

The terminological polysemy and contextual variation, multiple and diverse approaches in studies concerning the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship indicate a preparadigmatic stage of scholarly knowledge of social entrepreneurship, according to A. Forouharfar, S. Rowshan and H. Salarzehi [8]. The vague contours of the notion of social entrepreneurship and the related term used in the context of nearly any type of socially useful activities causes the fragmentation of the subject domain of social entrepreneurship and hinders the institutionalisation of social entrepreneurship as a phenomenon, as O.B. Ponomarev [9], A. Chepurenko [10] and others indicate.

This underlies the active academic debate over the scholarly legitimation of studies of social entrepreneurship amid the uncertainty of the subject status as either a separate scientific direction or a constituent of traditional disciplinary domains, such as economics, sociology, etc. This lends relevance to the problem of determining the boundaries of the subject domain of social entrepreneurship, which is the topic of discussion considered by V.V. Zhokhova [11], M.K. Baymuhasheva and R.K. Sabirova [12], A. Chepurenko [10], A. Forouharfar, S. Rowshan and H. Salarzehi [8, 13], D. Kelly [14].

In this context, research is warranted into modern practices of defining social entrepreneurship ensuring the relevance of the subject domain to the complex nature of social entrepreneurship as a phenomenon.

The purpose of the research is to identify the specifics of defining the notion of social entrepreneurship in the interdisciplinary discourse on the basis of the interdisciplinary comparative analysis of modern research practices in social entrepreneurship in Russian and foreign traditions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The problems of social entrepreneurship are addressed in papers by both Russian and foreign researchers. M.N. Konyagina and M. Krasnopevtseva [3].

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Researchers N.V. Baranova [1], A.A. Moskovskaya, A.A. Berendyaev, A.Yu. Moskvina [19], F. Guo, B. Zou, J. Guo et al. [20], V.S. Hodgkin [21], D. Littlewood, D. Holt [16] indicate that social entrepreneurship ensures the attainment of economic and social objectives in their mutual interaction.

The studies of the personality of social entrepreneurs have pointed out their strong moral principles, leadership qualities, perseverance and commitment in achieving their objectives. Researchers of entrepreneurial practices in different activity domains frame the definition of entrepreneurship as a type of proactive behaviour generating, as a result, ideas, goods or institutions. In the context of their research of entrepreneurship, scholars S. Bansal, I. Garg and G.D. Sharma [5], V.S. Hodgkin [21], D. Kelly [14], E. Muralidharan and S. Pathak [7] deliberate on the extremely important aptitude of an entrepreneur to identify new chances and realise them by attracting the missing resources.

The phenomenon of an innovative entrepreneur is related to a special type showing proactive behaviour and an attitude to the future as a design object, capable of becoming an agent of change. It is worth noting that modern researchers describing the ability to identify, create and exploit opportunities as a key ability of a social entrepreneur are clearly leveraging the classic propositions of H. Stevenson and P.F. Drucker. The ability to discover, create and utilise opportunities is also described as fundamental in modern papers by M.A. Makarchenko, A.A. Antonov [22], H.M. Neck, A.C. Corbett [23], G.K.S. Nimeshi [17].

Reasoning concerning social good, social value creation as a primary mission of social entrepreneurship is prevalent in most studies by modern authors, e.g. N.V. Baranova [1], A.A. Moskovskaya, A.A. Berendyaev, A.Yu. Moskvina [19], S. Bansal, I. Garg and G.D. Sharma [5], P. Bento, M. Jacquinet and R. Albuquerque [6], E. Muralidharan and S. Pathak [7], D. Kelly [14]. The study by Russian researchers M. Batalina, A. Moskovskaya, L. Taradina [2] sponsored by the Regional Public Foundation "Our Future" suggests a conclusion generally consistent with the established research tradition.

The authors develop the notion of social entrepreneurship, engaging the well-established notions of the scholarly discourse of the social and entrepreneurial domain, such as "social issues", "innovation", "resource combination" and "social good", thus enriching the traditional semantics of the definition.

Social and traditional types of entrepreneurship are not a dichotomy: they appear in different positions along the same continuum. The above, in particular, serves as substantiation for applying the methodology of traditional commercial entrepreneurship studies in papers V.S. Hodgkin [21], D. Kelly [14], A. Rey-Martí, A. Mohedano-Suñes, V. Simón-Moya [24].

The difference in approaches to interpreting the substance of the phenomenon and developing the related notions of entrepreneurship in the traditional sense and social entrepreneurship is determined by the semantic specifics of the generated value (good). A traditional entrepreneur generates market value described in terms of profit and income, while a social entrepreneur envisages and generates value expressed in terms of social good for the disadvantaged and/or least prosperous members of the society lacking resources to independently attain such good, as well as for the society as a whole, as D. Bjärsholm [25], V.S. Hodgkin [21], D. Kelly [14] and others point.

As long as socially-oriented entrepreneurial behaviour is put within a broader social and cultural context, studies of the phenomenon should take into account contextual factors. That said, studies of the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship and the definition of the related notion should emphasise proper attribution of properties related to the contextual factors among its substantive features (N. Ivashchenko and N. Bulygina [15], D. Littlewood, D. Holt [16], Á.G. Moreno, L.L. Muñoz, R.P. Morote [26], E. Muralidharan, S. Pathak [7], T. Peterson, K.A. Schenker [27], H. Utomo, S. Priyanto, L. Suharti, G. Sasonko [18]).

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

A. General description

The methodological base of the study comprises primarily the interdisciplinary (A.L. Zhuravlev, V.A. Mazilov, T.D. Martsinkovskaya and others) and systems approaches (V.P. Bespalko, N.V. Kuzmina, L.I. Novikova, B.F. Lomov, T. Parsons, R. Merton and others) to the analysis of modern research practices in defining the notion of social entrepreneurship, which is due to the complex nature of the analysed phenomenon and the set tasks requiring such interdisciplinary and systemic positions. The application of the social viability principle shaped the socially important profile of the interdisciplinary comparative analysis of modern research practices in defining the notion of social entrepreneurship. The complementarity principle secured connection between the general and specific, concrete and abstract, subjective and objective in social phenomena. The methods of this research included general theoretic methods (abstraction and specification, comparison, induction and deduction, analogy, etc.). General scientific methods of systems, structural and functional, institutional, comparative and content analyses, generalisation and systematisation of research literature, legislation, public Internet sources and regulations were used as well.

The theoretical base of the research centers on the fundamental propositions and concepts of human capital (G. Becker, B. Weisbrod, J. Weiss, J. Mincer, L. Thurow, T. Schultz, M. Fisher and others), the theory of public goods, the theories of T. Parsons (on the structure of social action) and M. Weber (on the substance of social action), the theories of corporate social responsibility (A. Carroll, M. Porter, M. Kramer and others), J. Schumpeter's concept of uneven innovation, the principles (ideas) of social partnership (R. Knaack, W. Albeda, P. Drucker, R. Fisher, U. Ury and others), the concept of open innovation (H. Chesbrough, J. West, S. Gallagher and others).
B. Algorithm


The selection of analysed papers was conducted in the National Scientific Citation Database Russian Science Citation Index, databases of the analytical information platform Web of Science, the Scopus abstract base, the databases of academic networks ResearchGate, Academia.edu, etc.

IV. RESULT ANALYSIS

The conducted interdisciplinary comparative analysis of the selection of modern research papers concerned with the issues of social entrepreneurship found that both Russian and foreign academic discourses approach the problem of social entrepreneurship primarily in the context of economic, managerial, sociological, psychological and pedagogical research practices.

The approaches to the conceptualisation and definition of the notion of social entrepreneurship are differentiated under the applicable subject axiomatics and methodology. The aspects of defining the notion of social entrepreneurship in the interdisciplinary discourse reflect the specifics of the axiomatics, problem and subject domains and scholarly traditions of research practices involved.

The analysis of modern approaches to interpreting the notion of social entrepreneurship found that the notions of social and traditional types of entrepreneurship are not viewed as a dichotomy: they appear in different positions along the same continuum. The above, in particular, is used by D. Kelly [14], G.K.S. Nimeshi [17], M.S. Satar, N. Saqib [28] as the foundation for applying the methodology of traditional commercial entrepreneurship in studies concerned with social entrepreneurship. P. Bento, M. Jacquinet, R. Albuquerque [6], V.S. Hodgkin [21], D. Kelly [14] link the main difference between the definitions of entrepreneurship in the traditional sense and that of social entrepreneurship to the specifics of the envisaged and generated value (good).

As part of the comparative analysis of modern approaches to the conceptualisation and definition of the notion of social entrepreneurship, the aspects of subject-specific discourse practices were studied and a corpus of frequent keywords forming the lexical base of social entrepreneurship in various scholarly traditions was established. Typical features in the definition of social entrepreneurship were identified for each research domain, reflecting the specifics of the subject, problem domains, research traditions and priorities.

Thus, apart from the widely adopted references used across the range of the discursive research practices, namely, "social entrepreneurship", "social entrepreneur" and "social enterprise", the economic social entrepreneurship discourse features the following frequent keywords typical for its specific substance: economic activity, economic operation, owner, value creation, asset transfer, high/low productivity, innovative behaviour, self-organisation, etc., as pointed out in Yu.N. Arai [29], M.A. Makarchenko, A.A. Antonov [22], T.S. Shipunova, S.Yu. Kazantseva [30], P. Bento, M. Jacquinet, R. Albuquerque [6], N. Ivashchenko and N. Bulygina [15], T. Lunkyna, A. Ivanenko [31], A. Rey-Martí, A. Mohedano-Suánes, V. Simón-Moya [24].

Thus, the approaches to identifying and defining the substance of social entrepreneurship in the economic research context uniformly draw on the vocabulary from the subject domain of economic operation.

The comparative analysis of approaches to defining the notion of a social entrepreneur in the economic discourse helped to establish framework definitions for the notions of social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneur. Thus, a social entrepreneur is framed as a self-organising agent of economic activity. Social entrepreneurship is framed as a special type of economic operation based on the innovative behaviour of the agent; as a process of value creation through operations with assets ensuring increased productivity. Importantly, the main substantial feature of social entrepreneurship in this research context is specifically the innovative aspect, innovative behaviour of a social entrepreneur.

The thesaurus of sociological research of social entrepreneurship shows visible subject-specific features: sociology of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship as a social phenomenon, vulnerable segments of population, work integration social enterprises, social structure, social discourse, social capital, sociology of business, civic initiative, entrepreneurial class, social identity, etc., making the context for the analysis, conceptualisation and definition of the notion of social entrepreneurship in papers by T. Golob, M. Makarovich [32], A. Moskvina and D. Dolzhikova [4], S. Bansal, I. Garg, G.D. Sharma [5], D. Bjärsholm [25], P. Erpf, M. Ripper, M. Castignetti [33], F. Guo, B. Zou, J. Guo et al. [20], N. Ivashchenko and N. Bulygina [15], D. Kelly [14], E. Muralidharan, S. Pathak [7], T. Peterson and K.A. Schenker [27], M.S. Satar, N. Saqib [28], H. Utomo, S. Priyanto, L. Suharti, G. Sasongko [18].

The educational (pedagogical) social entrepreneurial discourse also comprises notions typical for the subject and problem domains of the education (pedagogical) research practice: training for social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial education, social entrepreneurship in education, social entrepreneurship competences, academic entrepreneurship, education start-up, entrepreneurial university, etc., addressed by T.L. Chernysheva [34], P. Bento, M. Jacquinet, R. Albuquerque [6], F. Guo, B.
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Remarkably, in their core, most modern approaches to interpreting the notion of social entrepreneurship, formed around subject-specific vocabulary, are found to engage the classic definition of social entrepreneurship proposed by J.G. Dees modified to various extents by researchers based on the concepts of traditional entrepreneurship, best practices and social mission and purpose. The classic ideas of J.G. Dees and A. Guclu concerning the substance of social entrepreneur remain relevant, forming the semantic core of modern interpretations of a social entrepreneur as an agent of positive change in the institutional, social and economic spheres. A remarkable point here is that modern researchers describing the ability to identify, create and exploit opportunities as a key ability of a social entrepreneur are clearly leveraging the classic propositions of H. Stevenson and P.F. Drucker concerning the specific entrepreneurial mindset focused on the identification of opportunities, whether or not resources are currently available. Therefore, the established research approaches to defining the notion of social entrepreneurship shaped in the subject domains of economics, management, sociology and education (pedagogy) correspond to the existing directions of studies of social entrepreneurship. That said, the intersections of the above subject domains are of particular interest for modern researchers proposing respective terminology to describe them, particularly, the notion of "business social entrepreneur" (M. Batalina, A. Moskovskaya, L. Taradina [2], T. Golob, M. Makarovich [32], V.S. Hodgkin [21] and others).

The conducted research into the modern practice of defining social entrepreneurship showed that there is no uniform approach to defining social entrepreneurship in the domains of social sciences and humanities. Both Russian and foreign academic discourses address the problem of social entrepreneurship in the context of economic, managerial, sociological, psychological and pedagogical (education) practices, each leveraging specific research approaches within the framework of applicable subject axiomatics and methodology, research traditions and priorities.

The research into current Russian and foreign practices, within which the analysis of approaches to defining the notion of social entrepreneurship is conducted, showed that the established variety should be classified in accordance with the existing directions of studies of social entrepreneurship.

Generally, admitting the existing aspects in defining the notion of social entrepreneurship within the subject-specific research practices, one should note that the diversity of modern approaches reflects the idea that the economic and social performance make equally important elements of the social entrepreneurial strategy and ideally, economic performance is subordinate to social performance. The substance of the notion of social entrepreneurship incorporates such major structures as the mission of social good creation, the identification, discovery and utilisation of new opportunities in the scarce resource environment, innovation, social strategies, economic activity generating social goods.

V. CONCLUSION

The results of the conducted interdisciplinary comparative analysis of modern research practices in social entrepreneurship in Russian and foreign traditions pave the way for further development of a methodology for the conceptualisation and definition of social entrepreneurship. The complex and non-uniform nature of social entrepreneurship as a phenomenon, requiring multidisciplinary and systemic studies amid the growing diversity of social initiatives, sets up the outline and logic of further research.

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