Meaningful work at the bottom of the pyramid: Perspectives on social value creation in social entrepreneurship

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2nd Symposium on Meaningful Work
Auckland, New Zealand | 1 - 2 December, 2016
Social entrepreneurship (SE) is a process or behavior that is manifested in a business model which explicitly responds to social needs by taking advantage of opportunities to address social problems, effectively utilise limited resources, create and deliver social value, and manage risk in a manner that is innovative, proactive, creative, adaptive, participative, persevering, and inclusive.

(Lorenzo, thesis, 2015)
Social Value Creation defines Social Entrepreneurship
The Primary Stakeholder is the object of the mission

Social Value Creation

Social Mission

Primary Stakeholder
Primary Stakeholder Engagement (PSE) is the space within which work occurs at the bottom of the pyramid in SE. PSE is where SVC is created and delivered to PS – worker.
Primary stakeholders as workers

- Contractual, seasonal, permanent engagement
- Employees, suppliers, contractors
- Formal or informal engagement
- Compensated through regular wages, on piece-rate, or per project
- Compensation is below minimum wage and below the living wage
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“Meaningful work is shown to be not about one life purpose or one worthwhile pursuit. It consists of a combination of meanings... such as social contribution and self-esteem, caring relationships, and the ability to show one’s true self (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009, p. 502).”

“Work that is purposeful and significant (Michaelson, Pratt, Grant, & Dunn, 2014).”

“... work as particularly significant and holding... positive meaning for individuals (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010, p. 95).”
Poverty and meaningful work

• Economic reward becomes more salient when workers have inadequate income (Brief et al., 1995; Brief & Nord, 1990a; Jahoda, 1982; O’Brien, 1986, as cited in Rosso et al., 2010).

• Employees who have greater financial need give more focus on the economic reward of work than other employees (Rosso et al., 2010).

• Poverty is a situation which can constrain meaning to be experienced in work (Leana, 2007; Leana, Stiehl, & Mittal, 2009; Mischel, 1977, as cited in Rosso et al., 2010).
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Spontaneous Pathways to Meaningful Work (MFW):

1. Developing and becoming self
2. Unity with others
3. Expressing full potential
4. Serving others

(Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009)
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Developing and Becoming Self

“...we learned how to communicate with others. In the past, we did not have confidence but right now we have...slight..”

Unity with others

“It felt good to share what I know.”

“I also share with others what I have learned so that they learn... and we become bigger.”

“We are not just happy because of financial but because of camaraderie with the bosses, with my co-weavers.”

“I help others and they also help me.”
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Expressing full potential

- “I have learned to control my spending... because I have worked hard for it...”

- “I am receiving payment for my work and also training... even training to talk to people... so I am here... able to talk to you.”

Serving others

- “It felt good to help others.”

- “... just give and not ask anything in return.”
The pursuit of meaningful work is a human need

workers as valuers

objective valuing  subjective attachment

worthy objects

Participate in purposeful, worthwhile activities  Structure orientations, judgements, actions

freedom  autonomy  dignity

(Yeoman, 2013)
What makes it all worthwhile

Confidence and self-esteem

“... going to other communities and talking to others like us about how we do things here... it makes me feel good…”

“I could not talk to other people before... I had nothing to say. But now I am even being interviewed!”

“... being around the volunteers ... the foreigners makes us feel more confident.”
What makes it all worthwhile

**Wellbeing of the community**

“ We are able to teach other women in the community how to weave so that they have something to do and they are making money – even if it is a small amount. It can help.”

“Because of the training we sometimes have here, the youth in the community do not spend their time idly ... getting into trouble or drugs.”
What makes it all worthwhile

Self-sufficiency

“If we are able make this (cooperative store) work with more members, then we do not have to go to the city to get what we need ... transportation is not always available and is expensive... a lot of us here cannot afford it.”

“We cannot always rely on the government to give us what we need.”
What makes it all worthwhile

**Wellbeing of the family**

“I can now help my husband. He is a tricycle driver. He used to be the only one who had work.”

“.... I sometimes have a little extra money to buy my children some treats.”
Workers as equal co-authorities in value creation

(status) 

social context 

equal co-authorities 

(capability)

(Yeoman, 2013)
Workers as equal co-authorities in value creation

A status and a capability

- Status - That they consider themselves as having “the entitlement to speak and be heard” (Yeoman, 2013, p. 248)

- Status - That they consider themselves as entitled to engage with others to co-create values.

- Capability to engage in objective valuing and subjective attachment to worthy objects

Social context and structure

- Workers must be situated in social contexts that affirm their status as co-authorities.

- The social organisation must structure work for meaningfulness.

(Yeoman, 2013)
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How does meaningful work relate to social value creation at the bottom of the pyramid in social entrepreneurship?

How does it manifest?

How does it emerge?

How does it flourish?
More questions

• Considering the worker’s low power position in the social enterprise organisation and in society, how do they continue to affirm and maintain their status as equal co-authorities in value creation?

• How must work be structured at the bottom of the pyramid in order to address the human need for meaningful work?

• What opportunities must the social enterprise organisation provide to address the primary stakeholder-worker’s need for meaningful work?
Calls for further research

• The meaning of meaningful work across economic conditions (Michaelson et. al., 2014)

• Universal job characteristics of meaningful work across economic conditions (Michaelson et. al., 2014)

• Economic responsibilities as a factor that influences attitudes about the importance of meaningful work (Michaelson et. al., 2014)

• Values and meaningful work outside the Western worldview (Rosso et. al., 2010)

• Values and meaningful work beyond the workplace (Rosso et. al., 2010)

• The processes involved in social value creation (Wilson & Post, 2011)
References


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Thank you
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