

## **Social Entrepreneurship as a New Vector for Business Education of the EAEU Countries**

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**Abstract:** The development and implementation of new educational programs for social entrepreneurs is one of the latest and most promising directions in the field of business education in the territory of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). This research aims to study this issue. Social entrepreneurship is related to the creation of social values, the formation of social well-being, and the solution of socially significant problems. It becomes an essential mechanism in achieving sustainable social and economic development of the global economy. The importance of social entrepreneurship development is evidenced by its support from public institutions, government, and educational establishments. The methodological basis includes historical, dialectical, and hermeneutic methods. Applying these methods allowed the authors to correlate the essential characteristics and forms of manifestation of social entrepreneurship and highlight the problems and prospects of development. The authors reveal that social entrepreneurship education is an actively developing area of education. Universities and the academic community play a fundamental role in this. Educational programs and courses on social entrepreneurship are developed, specialized chairs are opened, and seminars and conferences are held. The analysis of the content of educational programs has shown that it depends primarily on their distinctive characteristics, namely, for whom the program is designed, by whom it is provided, and in what form it is implemented. For the EAEU countries, this direction is a new trend in the educational services market; it requires the formation of an educational ecosystem.

**Keywords:** Social entrepreneurship • Social problems • Educational process • Higher education institutions • Social enterprise program

**JEL codes:** L26 • L31 • L32 • L33

The current challenges and transformations occurring in today's global economy have shown the fragility of the global economy. Above all, they have exacerbated existing socio-economic

problems. These processes have made the tasks aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and introducing and complying with the ESG principles even more urgent. This is evidenced by the objectives of priority national projects and national strategies for sustainable development set by the EAEU countries. The business community also demonstrates its socially responsible behavior and actively participates in assisting and solving emerging problems. More companies are considering their sustainability and introducing ESG principles into their corporate governance practices.

However, experience shows that the solution to emerging global problems requires new alternative approaches, different from traditional ones, based on the cooperation of different institutions of society and the development of a sense of social responsibility in society. Social entrepreneurship meets these needs. It aims to create social values, build social well-being, and solve socially significant problems. It becomes an important mechanism in solving these problems, developing the strategy of corporate governance based on the introduction of ESG principles, and achieving the economy's sustainable socio-economic development.

The importance of developing social entrepreneurship is evidenced by the support for the sector (Cagarman, 2020; Volkmann, 2018). The educational environment is an equally important support factor (Cinar, 2019; García-González, 2019; Kadol, 2020). The process of educating and equipping the necessary skills and competencies is just as important as providing financial resources.

In this regard, the educational programs in the field of social entrepreneurship are a new vector of business education in the territory of the Eurasian Economic Union.

## **Materials and Method**

The methodological basis of the research includes historical, dialectical, and hermeneutic methods, which involve a scientific interpretation of economic phenomena. These methods made it possible to correlate the essential characteristics and forms of social entrepreneurship and highlight the problems and prospects of development.

The analysis of the works of K. Alter (2007), J. Austin, G. Stevenson, and J. Way-Skillern (2012), T. Callavo (2018), and M. J. Mayr and I. Marty (2017) showed that there are different approaches to defining social entrepreneurship.

K. Alter (2007), K. Cagarman, J. Kratzer, and K. Osbelt (2020), and M. J. Mayr and I. Marty (2017) note distinctive features of social entrepreneurship. R. Cinar (2019), J. Defourny and M. Nyssens (2012), and C. Volkmann, S. I. Goia, and S. Hadad (2018) highlight the main features of social entrepreneurship and their characteristics.

Some aspects of the development of social entrepreneurship in the EAEU countries have been touched upon by A. V. Barkov (2012), Yu. E. Blagov and Yu. N. Arai (2010), N. Kadol (2020), S. O. Kalendzhyan (2021), K. I. Kraenkova and E. V. Vankevich (2018) and M. V. Vishnyakova (2017).

Several studies discussed the role of the educational component in the development of social entrepreneurship. P. Benneworth and J. Cunha (2015) and A. García-González and M. S. Ramírez-Montoya (2019) emphasize the importance of participation of universities in the

development of social entrepreneurship and note the need to develop new educational programs and train specialists in social entrepreneurship.

The empirical and informational base of the research was composed of statistical and analytical data from state statistics services and regulatory legal acts concerning the regulation of entrepreneurial activity and non-profit organizations' activities.

The analysis of research has shown that social entrepreneurship is a relatively new phenomenon for EAEU countries. Social entrepreneurship education is also a new trend in the market of educational services in these countries. In this regard, there is a certain lack of research. For the EAEU countries, this direction is a new trend in the market of educational services and needs the formation of an educational ecosystem.

## **Results**

Social entrepreneurship is a relatively new phenomenon for the EAEU countries. Its sphere is relatively small compared to the EU countries, where this sector has been actively developing over the last 20 years (Kadol, 2020). The analysis of the development of this sector confirms these trends. This analysis shows that the main number of organizations belonging to social entrepreneurship (82%) were established over the last 20 years. Half of these organizations have been established in the last five years (European Commission, 2020). Their activities are primarily related to creating social values, building social well-being, and solving socially significant problems. Additionally, social entrepreneurship in the EU actively participates in achieving SDGs and promotes the introduction of ESG principles in corporate governance practices.

The share of the subjects of the sector of social entrepreneurship in the total number of employment in the EU countries is 8%. About 2 million economic entities of the EU belong to the social entrepreneurship sector (European Commission, 2020). For comparison, there are about 8000 social enterprises registered on the territory of the Russian Federation as of the beginning of 2023.

The lack of a common understanding of social entrepreneurship and legitimization issues make it challenging to identify the development of social entrepreneurship (Alter, 2007; Barkov, 2012; Callavo, 2018). Nevertheless, social entrepreneurship is gaining momentum and developing in the EAEU countries (Blagov & Arai, 2010). The development of social entrepreneurship in the EAEU countries is due to the emergence of a community of people who demonstrate an active civic position and are guided mainly by altruistic motivation when creating such business entities (Kadol, 2020; Kraenkova, 2018).

The importance of the functioning and development of social entrepreneurship is evidenced by its support from public authorities, especially in the Russian Federation. First, the concept of social entrepreneurship was legitimized at the legislative level of the Russian Federation. Second, special financial measures were developed to support and stimulate the development of the social entrepreneurship sector. These include the provision of subsidies, soft loans, and grant support, which is envisaged in the national project "Small and medium entrepreneurship."

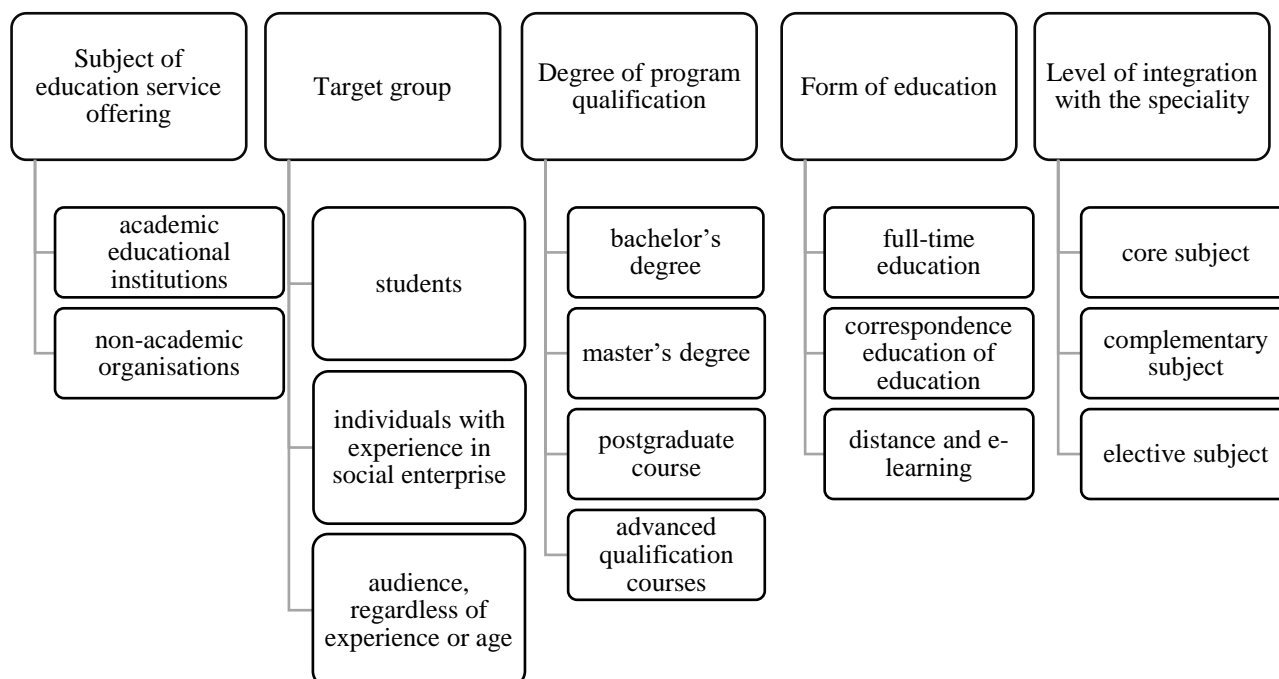
Educational support is another important and significant mechanism for supporting and developing social entrepreneurship (Kalendzhyan, 2021). After all, the process of training social entrepreneurs and equipping them with the necessary skills and competencies is just as important as providing financial resources.

Staffing is one of the challenges that companies face and that arise when implementing socially oriented projects.

The formation of the educational process in the field of socially responsible entrepreneurship is a new trend in the educational services market in EAEU countries. This trend is certainly promising. After all, an increase in the number of qualified social entrepreneurs will positively affect the efficiency of organizational structures in this sector.

International experience shows that training in social entrepreneurship is an actively developing area of education. Various courses on social entrepreneurship are translated into full-fledged training programs, specialized departments are opened, and various seminars and conferences are held (Benneworth & Cunha, 2015). The main flagships in the field of educational programs are Harvard Business School, Stanford University Graduate School of Business, Centre for the Promotion of Social Entrepreneurship at Fuqua School of Business of Duke University, Yale School of Management, Oxford University Business School, and the University of Geneva.

The available educational programs can be differentiated according to various criteria, the subject of the educational provision, the target group, and the degree of program qualification (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1**

Differentiation of educational programs in the field of social entrepreneurship.

*Source* Compiled by the authors

## **Discussion**

Social entrepreneurship education is provided by academic institutions and non-academic organizations. Depending on this, the content of the educational programs and the list of subjects to be studied differs. Educational programs provided by non-academic organizations are short-term and aim to develop competencies in targeted narrow fields of knowledge. The curricula of academic institutions are fundamental and aim to cover a wide range of disciplines in various fields. For example, bachelor's and master's programs include a core part, which involves the study of compulsory subjects, and an optional part, which focuses on specialized disciplines.

If we consider the experience of the Russian Federation, the development of educational programs was primarily initiated and associated with the development of activities of the Foundation of Regional Social Programs "Our Future." In 2014, the Social Entrepreneurship Lab was established by the Foundation "Our Future" (Kalendzhyan, 2021). As part of the laboratory's activities, schools of social entrepreneurship and sectoral courses are held, which allow novice entrepreneurs to get acquainted with creating and implementing a social business project and identify the specifics of its conduct in a particular industry.

The laboratory continuously hosts distance learning seminars to improve the competencies of entrepreneurs and prepare social entrepreneurship trainers and teachers. After the training, the trainers and teachers can be issued with professional development certificates, enabling them to organize social enterprise schools independently in the regions.

Additional professional development educational programs are implemented in the Russian Federation. Such programs are implemented by the Tyumen State Oil and Gas University, Volgograd State University, and Kazan Federal University, together with the Entrepreneurship Support Fund of the Republic of Tatarstan and the Centre for Social Innovation of the Republic of Tatarstan.

The experience of implementing educational programs in the field of social entrepreneurship at Moscow State University is of interest. For example, the Higher School of Management and Innovation has developed a training program "Management in Social Entrepreneurship" for social entrepreneurs.

Educational programs in social entrepreneurship are also developed at the Plekhanov Russian University of Economics. For example, the discipline "Management of Social Entrepreneurship" is included in the curriculum of the master's program.

The Higher School of Corporate Management of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration deserves special attention because it has developed a bachelor's degree program "Commerce and Socially Responsible Entrepreneurship." It is the first program in Russia as a tertiary degree program in this field.

This program is designed to review and integrate the world's best practices. The program's content is in no way inferior to the programs of leading foreign universities and meets the required standards. To prepare bachelor's degree program "Commerce and Socially Responsible Entrepreneurship," the curriculum includes basic and major disciplines, as well

as elective courses. The proposed program is practice-oriented and has been developed in cooperation with business representatives. Starting from the first year of study, students will get acquainted with the activities of socially responsible business enterprises and social enterprises and participate in conferences and master classes of leading specialists in the area of social entrepreneurship. Such forms of teaching as analysis of business situations and cases, business games, workshops, trainings, practice-oriented projects in small groups and group teams, and other active methods are applied in teaching the profile disciplines.

In the Republic of Belarus, this field is developing slower compared to Russia (Kadol, 2020; Vishnyakova, 2017). Educational programs and trainings in this country are implemented by non-academic organizations, namely by public associations. For example, educational programs are offered by such public associations as “Healthy Choice,” “Centre for Social Innovation,” the non-profit organization “ODB Brussels,” and the School of Social Entrepreneurship “Good Impact” (Kadol, 2020). As a rule, the educational programs are short-term and irregular. They aim to increase the general level of knowledge about entrepreneurship and are oriented to a wide range of the target audience.

The educational programs include training sessions, master classes, and exchanges with representatives of socially-oriented businesses.

As far as academic organizations are concerned, there are hardly any educational programs in the field of social entrepreneurship. Only selected issues and topics related to social entrepreneurship are studied within the framework of certain subject curricula.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of experience in developing educational programs in the field of social entrepreneurship has shown that social entrepreneurship education is an actively developing area of education in the EU and the USA. Universities and the academic community play a fundamental role in this. The analysis of the content of educational programs has shown that it depends primarily on the subject providing the educational program, the target audience, and the form of implementation.

The development of educational programs in the field of social entrepreneurship is a new trend in the market of educational services of the EAEU countries. It needs to form an educational ecosystem. The issue of training qualified professionals and social entrepreneurs is necessary and timely. Specialists in this field should possess a wide range of competencies to solve important business problems while considering environmental and social impact. Their growth will contribute to the development and effective operation of social entrepreneurship entities.

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