

**WEIFORWARD & Global WEP
Women's Entrepreneurship Policy Roundtable Series
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Women and Social Entrepreneurship: Opportunity and Policy

Moderator: Professor Christine Woods, University of Auckland Business School, Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Panel Members:

Professor Josephine Barraket, Melbourne Social Equity Institute, University of Melbourne, Australia.

Dr Kiri Dell, University of Auckland Business School, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Dr Persephone de Magdalene, University of Auckland Business School, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Discussant:

Professor Colette Henry Dundalk Institute of Technology, Ireland.

Dr Persephone de Magdalene:

Your Doctoral and subsequent research interests lie with the experiences of women social entrepreneurs. What do you consider to be the key issues facing women social entrepreneurs?

Women social entrepreneurs (WSEs) face many of the same problems that mainstream women entrepreneurs face e.g. Issues around legitimacy and support associated with the masculine norm of entrepreneurship; Managing a business alongside (usually inequitable) unpaid domestic and caring work. Accessing appropriate, local, high quality, affordable business support and training etc.

They also face the same issues faced by other social entrepreneurs which, depending on their business model, might include: Managing the dual, and often conflicting demands, of a double/triple bottom line. Legitimacy threats that emerge from both their gendered lack of fit for masculinised entrepreneurial activities alongside the legitimacy threats associated with the feminised, social side of their work; The first issues (gendered lack of fit) can play-out in the form of reduced credibility, assumptions of lack of experience/naivety, conscious and unconscious bias in business-related interactions; The second issue (gendered associated with the social) is premised upon the extension of unpaid, low-skilled, unvalued domestic labour into the marketplace, alongside the association of socially-focused work with (unpaid, amateur/non-professional) charitable work

Dr Persephone de Magdalene:

The UK was at the global forefront of social enterprise-focused policy during the late 1990s, but you rarely hear Ministers, MPs or policy makers mention social enterprise anymore. What happened, and what lessons can be drawn from what was good, and not so good, around the UK experience of governmental policymaking for social enterprise?

Background: The New Labour government in the UK (1994-2010) pursued a neoliberal economic policy approach, which demanded (amongst other things) decreased public sector spending, and

increased privatisation. Narratives were created that decried the bureaucratic inefficiencies of centralised public service provision, and social enterprise emerged as a significant tool in the government's efforts to make privatisation of public services more palatable to the voters who had brought them to power. As the most expensive public service, the National Health Service was specifically targeted for reform.

What happened? The New Labour government considered social enterprise to be the 'friendly face' of privatisation (particularly within healthcare services) and offered a solution to the regeneration of areas suffering from entrenched socio-economic deprivation. Alongside the narratives of public service inefficiencies, emerged narratives around the redemptive capacity of social enterprise (the so-called 'grand narrative') to increase efficiency, responsiveness, and local relevance. It invested in the development of resources to support social enterprises to engage in public procurement activities.

The result: The result of the significant and sustained investment into the social enterprise sector was a proliferation of social enterprise establishment and the development of a robust and localised support eco-system. However, while some success was achieved with social enterprise spin-outs, the majority of the healthcare workforce were unwilling to risk job security, generous pension provision benefits, and regular, reliable work in the NHS for the risks and demands of self-employment. As a result of a change of government, funding for the social enterprise eco-system dried-up.

Conclusions: Social enterprise works least well when co-opted in service to a political agenda. It works best when: Policy supports the development of a level playing field for public procurement (ensuring that the procurement decisions are not simply rubber-stamping of ongoing corporate provision or based on cost-savings where social enterprises cannot compete with massive international organisations);

Where social entrepreneurs are provided with support in the same way that mainstream entrepreneurs are by providers who understand the challenges and peculiarities of social enterprise e.g. the challenges associated with managing a double/triple bottom line business, potential issues (including conflicts of interest) around involving service users in governance etc.;

Where policy responds to the identified needs of the sector, where sector membership organisations are independent of government, and where diversity and plurality of needs within the sector are acknowledged; networks and collaborations amongst and between social entrepreneurs (domestically and internationally) are actively supported to help facilitate the creation of enhanced impact; and, where gender- and decolonisation lenses within policy making represent business as usual.

Professor Jo Barraket:

As Australia's leading academic in the social economy field what do you consider to be the most challenging and pressing issues relating to social entrepreneurship and gender?

First, I'd say from an academic perspective – with few exceptions – the need for research and writing on the issues. There has been limited scholarly attention given to the gendered

dimensions of social entrepreneurship and its effects, despite this being a growing area of attention in mainstream entrepreneurship studies.

We need to unpack what we think SE is to answer the question comprehensively – eg SE as earned income for not for profits; SE as social innovation; SE as privatised welfare services delivery.

Within welfare and NFP models particularly, empirical data from Australia and Britain show women better represented in leadership and management than in mainstream business. This is not fully reflected in governance and ownership. Women social entrepreneurs' access to capital is unequal, mirroring gender disparities in entrepreneurship generally.

If we view SE as simply the neoliberalisation of welfare (which is not all it is), we can question whether women's better representation in SE is a win or not for gender equity. Other perspectives, raise the question of whether different gender (and cultural) values brought to SE open up new possibilities for more inclusive and diverse – indeed, better – economies

Dr Kiri Dell:

As an Indigenous/Māori entrepreneurship scholar, could you explain the ways in which the Western concept of social entrepreneurship is similar and dissimilar to the ways in which entrepreneurship is both conceived and enacted from a Te Ao Māori perspective?

If we look at what Māori Social Entrepreneurs are engaged in it can be categorized into four activities:

- Activities and communities work with treasures that are so special and need protection and worked with in a way to ensure they will be around for many generations and cared for example our biodiversity, our land and our language. These are all treasures
- Activities that leave legacies we see Māori entrepreneurs involved in work that have intergenerational impacts, looking forward and to the future.
- Activities that enhance whanau or Communities. Communities that are very socially orientated
- Activities which reverse the effects of colonization, addressing healing from the devastating impacts of colonization.

We have Masculine heroes popping up in Māori communities and we too are at risk of being seduced by them.

Dr Kiri Dell:

Māori have a long history of entrepreneurial behaviours and innovative practices. Within Western scholarship, entrepreneurship is often theorised as a mechanism for women's empowerment. Does entrepreneurship represent a vehicle for the similar empowerment of wāhine Māori and, if so, in what ways does entrepreneurship support the mana of Māori, beyond the purely financial?

We have a term that's used a lot in New Zealand, called Mana wāhine, a term used widely, mana is a type of power authority or influence. There is a type of power and authority associated with being a woman. Māori women are portrayed as being dignified and important so we don't need

entrepreneurship for such status. My mother was recently interviewed, and she was quoted as saying A powerful woman is 'someone who knows what's in front, behind, what is on either side above and below. She knows herself wherever she goes. So, in Māori society she is a person who knows herself.

Professor Jo Barraket:

You mentioned that women as social entrepreneurs remain under-researched. What is the situation with research focused on 'beyond binary' identified social entrepreneurs?

Even more limited at this stage. While there is reasonable representation in business mission on gender inclusive employment, services and products within SE, we know virtually nothing about trans and nonbinary social entrepreneurs' experiences. The structure of social enterprise movements in different world regions differs, but I would say in the Australian context, the movement is only just starting to purposefully consider its diversity, inclusion and belonging dynamics.

Final question to each panelist, addressing policy.

Dr Persephone de Magdalene:

Thinking about the positive lessons learned, what do you think are the key areas that policymakers should focus on particularly regarding gender and social entrepreneurship?

- a) Women continue to shoulder a deeply inequitable burden of unpaid domestic labour and caring, which constrains their ability to devote time, effort and energy to their work in the way that men can. Therefore, policy intervention around structural inequalities should be a key focus: Provision of affordable, high-quality, local childcare; Universal extended, paid maternity leave/shared parental leave; Flexible working arrangements as standard;
- b) Training for school-age students and business owners/managers/Directors around gender stereotyping, conscious and unconscious bias, shared parenting (as opposed to mother mothering and father babysitting!), the benefits of accommodating parents of (young) children e.g. enhanced loyalty, productivity, employee wellbeing etc., actively challenging the (masculinised), Elon Musk-style toxic 'hustle culture'; promotion of the benefits of collective worker action through unionisation.
- c) In terms of targeted, gender aware support (applies to social entrepreneurs generally, also): Development of a network of gender aware, EDI-trained support professionals able to deliver inclusive, non-discriminatory support; Provision of locally based, accessible professional development support and training opportunities for women wanting to explore social entrepreneurship as a potential career path/pivot; Access to mentoring support for nascent social entrepreneurs; Provision of start-up grants to help women manage the financial risk of self-employment;
- d) Supported development of local, regional, national and international networks of social entrepreneurs with hybrid access to events (individual and via regional hubs);

- e) Provision of lobbying channels to government for the social enterprise sector, in all its diversity, so it can achieve equal status and influence as mainstream enterprise (likely with a totally different agenda).

Professor Jo Barraket:

What would you like to see happening in the policy landscape to best serve the women and non-binary identified social entrepreneurs?

Noting there are clear differences across jurisdictions in support for SE generally, I would like to see all jurisdictions recognising the potential of SE and diverse economic forms more generally to contribute to just and sustainable economic transitions (see OECD recent statement on the social economy). Where policy is specifically focused on social entrepreneurs, it would be useful for a gender lens to be applied, particularly in relation to social finance, regulation of business forms, public procurement and market stimulation activities. None of these matters, though, if gender equity is not an underlying commitment of governments. Equity in educational opportunities, welfare state models that support transitions in and out of work and reduce the burden on women of unpaid care, and gender equity in pay structures and business governance are all critical.

Dr Kiri Dell:

What policy initiatives would you like to see enacted to better support and enable Indigenous/Māori entrepreneurship and especially wāhine Māori entrepreneurs in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Endorsing what my fellow presenters have suggested, I want to make two points and bring things back to our bodies. In Māori we have whare tangata which refers to the womb. Whare means house and tangata means person, it holds people. So because women have whare tangata, so it shapes the way we are in the world, the way we behave, the decisions we make are completely impacted by our bodies. I wanted to bring the discussion back to the that.

Secondly, in addition to what Persephone and Jo suggested, I think in Māori we also need Trauma informed entrepreneurship. As we try to activate entrepreneurship within our communities we are inevitably faced with trauma responses manifested as sabotage, blocking or stopping, all these reactions that come as a result of trauma.

SUMMATION

Professor Colette Henry summed up the session saying it offered some great insights:

- Social entrepreneurship is one label that covers a huge diversity of activities which are focused on systems change are typically through collaboration. The systems change work is the key and mostly unrealized.
- We heard from Persephone, about the masculinization of entrepreneurship, issues around legitimacy and issues surrounding childcare. Added to that women, in SE face challenges of the double and triple bottom line and all the additional reporting that goes with SE. Jo suggested lack of investigation and theorization around women social entrepreneurs leading to a lack of understanding of challenges.



- SE globally isn't given enough priority from Govt. Notion of care economy across the world and what exactly does this mean. Is this a good or bad thing? Are we having women solve problems which Govt ought to?
- Kiri offered some super examples of the different SE which Māori women are involved in and how we need to be wary of the masculine norms.
- Policy interventions highlighted included; more flexible childcare, flexible working and more EDI training. SE needs to be given more priority from Govt. and better representation of diverse women in policy making. Kiri highlighted that women are different and our bodies are different and this impacts on our decision making.