

The potential of social entrepreneurship: Applying abstract ideas to real-world situations

The purpose of this brief is to talk about how complex abstract ideas can impact real-world situations. It especially focuses on unique types of employment and rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Self-employment is a way to support oneself financially in non-traditional ways. It has helped many disadvantaged people get more money and advance in society. Entrepreneurship is when someone starts a business that brings a new product or skill into the world and they also want to make money. Social entrepreneurship is a type of entrepreneurship where the owner wants to make money, brings a new product or skill into the world, and wants to create social change.

Self-employment and entrepreneurship for people with disabilities can:

- Be empowering
- Be a source of self-determination and self-sufficiency
- Help reduce poverty and employ more people with disabilities

People with IDD do not have the same opportunities for self-employment or entrepreneurship because of discrimination and barriers.

- Disability employment programs don't usually encourage entrepreneurship
- Entrepreneurship programs are not always welcoming to people with disabilities
- People with disabilities are not usually given the training needed to start a business

Although there is more support for social entrepreneurs with disabilities than ever before, these programs often do not consider the unique employment needs for people with IDD. It is important to make sure social entrepreneurship programs for people with IDD are not just focusing on skills training because these programs usually reduce choices and segregate people. Instead, they should be focusing on helping social entrepreneurs with disabilities make social change. Social entrepreneurship needs to be done *by* people with disabilities, not done *for* them.

Citizenship is when someone has rights and equality in a country. Everyone should have the equal rights of citizenship but they do not because of discrimination, negative attitudes, and barriers. When people do not have citizenship it is harder for them to be equal.

The way citizenship is understood can impact the services and opportunities people with disabilities have. It can also impact the ways programs support social entrepreneurs with disabilities. The current economic system in the United States also might motivate organizations to provide employment services that will make the organization the most money rather than services that promote change, such as social entrepreneurship.

Caldwell, K., Parker Harris, S., & Renko, M. (2012). The Potential of Social Entrepreneurship: Conceptual Tools for Applying Theory to Policy and Practice. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 50(6), 505-518.



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