

Social Innovation

Unit 4: Who is a Social Innovator?

This unit is focused on understanding and knowing the qualities and traits of a social innovator. We will further discuss about the tools and techniques required to become a social innovator.

Therefore, the objectives of this unit is

- To learn about the qualities and traits of a social innovator

- To learn about the tools and techniques required to become a social innovator

- To be able to develop these qualities and traits as an individual and within a community

- To be able to use the tools and techniques to develop oneself into a social innovator.

A very simple approach to understand the meaning of social innovator is to decode the term itself. A social innovator is someone who is working on a socially innovative idea. A social innovator is also someone who acts as change agent. Social innovators are also leaders and transformers.

Some of the qualities that a social innovator has are perseverance (to fail and stand up again), empathy, observant and are open to critics. Further, a social innovator is also optimistic, is able to adapt to a VUCA environment and believes in iteration and re iteration.

A good social innovator is also willing to collaborate, can cooperate and is a good listener. As a social innovator, it is also important to be flexible, have a growth mindset and curious.

This leads us to a critical point and that is to understand whether we are a social innovator or not. A social innovator therefore is someone

- who has a social objective in mind
- Can think in the long term
- Believes in making a positive impact and
- Aware about the issues (wicked problems).

Since, social innovation is a catalyst for development, growth and creation of positive impact in the society and social innovators are individuals or organizations that help bring positive change in the society. Social innovators are also those individuals or organizations who understand the concept and have the mentality.

To understand the approaches to developing social innovators we can look at it from two different approaches. Social identity approach that revolves around social identity theory is an interactionist social psychological theory of the role of self - conception and associated cognitive processes and social beliefs in group processes and intergroup relations (Hogg, M.A., 2016).

Social Efficacy approach discusses four approaches namely Mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997).

Regarding the tools for social innovators we will discuss mainly about collective impact initiative (https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact), the business model, the value proposition canvas and non - profit, for - profit or hybrid organization.

Collective impact initiative talks about a common agenda, a shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, ongoing communication, and an independent backbone organization.

The business models that exist today are a simplified version of business plans from earlier. We will discuss further in the upcoming sessions. Similarly, we will also discuss further about the value proposition canvas in the upcoming sessions.

In terms of categorizing an organization, it can either be non-profit, for-profit, or hybrid organization. A non-profit organization structure is based on making no profits at all; the net revenue goes back to the society. The for-profit structure of an organization's sole purpose is to make profit, i.e., income is more than the expenses incurred. As for a hybrid organization, it takes the concept of non-profit and for-profit to make an impact in the society and also increase net income of the firm.

At this juncture, we can see that the concept of social innovation and social innovator is easy to understand but very difficult to implement. This is also the case because social innovation has no borders and boundaries and is an integral part of the human cycle.

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