

A Discussion of Best Practice in Social Entrepreneurship and Non-profit Practice

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Trends Shaping Contemporary Best Practice**

The Reflective Practitioner

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INTRODUCTION

Human driven catastrophes concern me. They are without question changing the landscape of the humanitarian demands of the 21st Century and the international community may or may not be in a position to deal with them. Increased violence and human suffering in our post-September 11 world is evident as my government pursues a practical battle for the spread of democracy and capitalism, not to mention the ideological war against the “evil doers.” These activities not only increase the nature of social needs, but also the quantity of social problems communities and global citizens face. All of these frightening occurrences concern me.

However, my greatest distress lies with the more than 246 million children engaged in child labor, including those bound by slavery-like conditions. We as a global community should all be taken aback by the mere fact that an alarming proportion of our world’s future leaders are falling through the cracks of human dignity. If not our future leaders, they are still brothers, sisters, cousins, and at a base, human beings. US Senator Tom Harkin suggests that these children are at-risk of becoming the ‘terrorists of the future’ (Romano & Morris, 2004).

In the midst of the overwhelming odds against providing these children with basic human rights, such as freedom from exploitation and access to education, I see tremendous opportunities for social entrepreneurs in the non-profit community and non-profit organizations to address the most difficult challenges these children face: lack of basic necessities, discrimination, and indifference (not to mention the myriad of other multidimensional elements that cause, enflame and reinforce child labor). Currents and trends leading to best practices in the child labor paradigm may (or may not) provide solutions. However, this work is not an exhaustive account of best practices within the child labor eradication industry.

Rather, the purpose of this paper is to define and reflect critically on the extent to which currents, trends and best practice in Social Entrepreneurship and Non-Profit Practice serve as a platform to pursue the “best interests of the child¹”, the necessary supporting legislation and, more importantly, the ideal that drives the protection of children worldwide. This paper discusses currents and trends leading to best practice, as well as several guidelines for best practice within Social Entrepreneurship (SE) and Non-Profit Practice (NPP). What this work reveals is that as SE and NPP is predicated on ideals that are negatively affected by rigid guidelines and static features of best practice. I demonstrate this by illuminating how one example of so called ‘best practice’ is actually counterproductive to effective action in Non-Profit Practice. Through a child-trafficking intervention case I undertook over a period of twelve months, I expose that what is in the

¹ The “best interest of the child” is the fundamental philosophy that underscores The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), the most rapidly and widely adopted convention in the history of the United Nations. It is the silver bullet of child protection policy if there ever was one.

best interest of the field of Non-Profit Practice, as determined by external stakeholders, actually took precedence over what was in the best interest of the child.

My analysis throughout this work is based on practice-led research, particularly reflective practice, within an emerging research paradigm, performative-research, as articulated by Haseman (2006). My aim in taking this analytical approach reveals another critical element to this work: by addressing the mismatch between best practices that appear to be static (for example, rational models and policies) and the realities practitioners face daily – realities such as “instability, uncertainty, complexity, value conflict and uniqueness within practice,” I argue best practice evolves in reflective practice. This mismatch dilemma is a central argument in Donald Schon’s *The Crisis of Confidence in Professional Knowledge* (Schon, 1983). This analysis is addressed by focusing on one key best practice in SE and NPP respectively: advocacy in the former, and fiduciary responsibility in the latter. By revealing the net utility and weaknesses in systematic and static approaches to best practices within a Social Entrepreneurship and Non-Profit Practice, and contrasting them with my experiences as C.E.O., and my personal narrative² as a social entrepreneur, I argue that best practice is only “good practice,” when it has been placed under the microscope and on the operating table in the daily processes constituting practice—which is fluid rather than static—by practitioners themselves. In conclusion, my practice-led research reveals the only static quality of best practice: the defined set of ideals which practitioners continually gravitate towards and seek to attain in their daily practice. In other words, while best practice is fluid, ideals themselves regulate our actions as practitioners.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Key Features of Social Entrepreneurship

Before currents and trends in social entrepreneurship are touched upon, it is important to understand the practice’s key features. In this work SE is broadly defined by the actions and purpose of the field’s practitioners who are individuals with innovative solutions to society’s most pressing social problems. They do not leave major social issues and societal needs to the business or government sectors; social entrepreneurs find what is not working and solve the problem by challenging and changing the system, embedding and spreading the new solution, and invigorating communities to take new leaps towards social good (Ashoka, 2006).

At a base, social entrepreneurs recognize a social problem (local or international) and then organize, create, and manage the venture by using entrepreneurial methodology

² Harvard Professor Jerome Bruner defines “narrative” as stories comprised of a specific time, event, a set of values and beliefs all of which are culturally relative (with few exceptions i.e. some universals). Narratives are the way in which we create meaning and interpret our individual realities he would argue. (Bruner, 1990)

and innovation in an effort to create positive social change. At first glance, it may appear to be a top-down process in essence. However, social entrepreneurs at grass-roots levels are joining forces to solve complex human problems, with co-operation playing a key role. The emphasis on Social Returns on Investment is what sets social entrepreneurs apart from the mainstream business entrepreneurs. According to Three Sigma, a leading consultancy and coaching firm for non-profit executives, social entrepreneurs are unique within non-profit practice:

The social entrepreneur is significantly different than the caregiver, volunteer, or nonprofit administrator. Social entrepreneurs significantly reform or revolutionize their industries. They seek to provide real social improvements to their beneficiaries and communities by reducing social needs rather than just meeting them. They seek to create systemic change and sustainable improvement. ("Social Entrepreneurship," 2002).

This position is also reflected in Banks' work, *The Sociology of Social Movements*³ and solidified today by modern day pioneers of social entrepreneurship, as well as active practitioners in the field, including Rosebeth Kanter, Charles Leadbeter and Bill Drayton.

Currents and Trends in SE

One could logically argue currents and trends lead to best practice. Currents and trends also help to illuminate the unconscious and tacit knowledge that manifests to how and why the notion of 'best' is applicable to a particular practice. As with any suggestion and application of the word 'best,' it is critical (and practical) to assess the serious implications of best practice. So what are they, how do we know they are 'best', and should we be concerned about their impacts in their respective fields? In order to address these questions, let us first examine several currents and trends in SE.

A specialist in the field and author of *Currents and Trends in Social Entrepreneurship*, Anne Burgoyne, reveals the key to best practice in contemporary social entrepreneurship. She articulates greater emphasis on advocacy focused organizations and the nurturing of advocates themselves (Burgoyne, 2007). In this instance, advocacy based organization and advocates themselves become the medium in which ideals are brought to the forefront of SE. Advocates ideally expose us to notions of a 'greater good' and social justice mantra.

Another trend in social entrepreneurship is that foundations are willing to help and support entrepreneurs if you have a solid and innovative idea. Ashoka, which operates out of Virginia, is a prime example. Leading *Innovators for the Public*, the hub of Social Entrepreneurship information that fosters the growth of emerging social entrepreneurs, Ashoka facilitates international competitions to generate new ideas and to foster global leadership growth sector wide ("Ashoka: Innovators for the Public," 2007). Universities are also supporting social entrepreneurship and emerging practitioners. Similar support, mentorship and extensive funding exist for other exceptional social

³ Banks uses the term to describe Robert Owen (Banks, 1972)

enterprise projects in programs like Yale's annual National Business Plan Completion for profit making ventures in Non-Profit Practice ("Yale School of Management," 2002), and Columbian University's Global Social Venture Competition ("Columbia University " 2003). These programs have several common requirements for submission, subsequently revealing best practice.

Best Practice in SE

The types of projects that actually receive funding and awards through foundations and universities yield current best practice in the field. This includes projects with sustainable features; programs that draw on local community resources (especially human); projects that employ technology integration such as open-source utilization for effective project management; and on cross-organizational, cross-country, multi-cultural collaboration in order to have significant international impact.

These key features represent significant currents and trends shaping best practice in the field. These are the means shaping Burgoyne's advocates as well as the types of ventures advocacy organizations are seeking to implement. What is more, many of these currents and trends and best practices provide a framework for challenging universally accepted, best practice policies. I particularly see the international collaborative aspect of social entrepreneurship as a key trend. Coined by Greenpeace, the concept of "Act local, think global" is evolving in Social Entrepreneurship to "act global, be global, collaborate globally and pay attention to all things global!" All of these trends are underscored by innovation which results in entrepreneurial creativity—trends leading to best practices that are defining and re-defining the field of Social Entrepreneurship.

NON-PROFIT PRACTICE

Key Features of NPP

Guiding the social entrepreneur's passion for social change are the standards and laws in Non-Profit Practice. For the purpose of this work, NPP is broadly defined. Non-Profit Practice encompasses a broad range of social enterprise based organizations engaging in charitable and philanthropic activities. These activities generally seek to increase the health and well being of people, animals and the environment in tangible ways. Non-profit organizations (NPOs), also called non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the international community, exist to support public issues for noncommercial purposes. Distinguishable from their for-profit cousins, NPOs/NGOs do not exist to generate a profit for shareholders, although many organizations produce money through earned income strategies designed to sustain business activity — a trend within the field ("Social Enterprise Alliance," 2005). The difference is that funds generated by NPOs are redirected back into the organization to build capacity and achieve their mission. NPOs/NGOs are often called the Third Sector, guided by what John Elkington, co-

founder of SustainAbility, refers to as a triple-bottom-line agenda (an accounting technique which transcends traditional financial frameworks, and which includes environmental and social performance indicators rather than simply financial performance). Of course now we have progressed to a quadruple-bottom line, where environmental sensibilities are also becoming paramount in the field of socially responsible business.

Another key feature of NPOs is that they receive special tax status in which the organization does not pay income tax, and contributions are tax-deductible on corporate and individual filings (United States Internal Revenue Service, 2007). All of these functionalities of NPOs help to shape and inform best practices within the wider industry.

Currents and Trends in NPP

At the forefront of contemporary NPP currents and trends is the call by internal and external NPP stakeholders to strengthen accountability and operational capacity. Good governance itself becomes a hierarchical ideal guiding practice. Accountability, for example, becomes the foundation and framework enabling Burgoyne's advocates, if you like, to proceed down an ethical path in terms an organization's operational context. In recent years, it has been deemed that the Third Sector take on many attributes of their for-profit cousins:

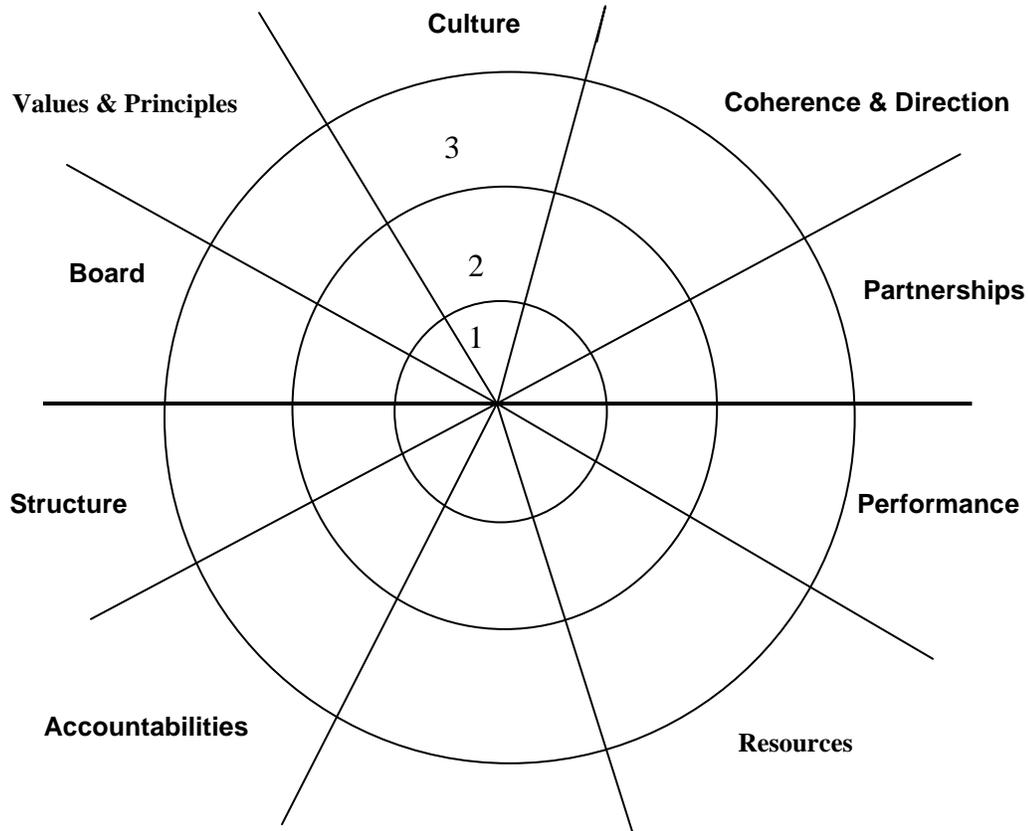
The nonprofit "corporation" is ascendant. Not altogether a bad thing, the corporatization of the nonprofit sector has reduced wishful thinking [some see social enterprise as soft, without rigorous management] as a force in delivering services to the community (Glasrud, 2003).

At face value, prescribing remedies to achieve high standards of accountability seems logical. But what happens when static, rational models of good governance conflict with ideals driving non-profit practitioners (and Social Entrepreneurs) to secure the best interest of the child? This proposition will be grappled with later in the work, but let us first take a look at one static model of good governance found within the corporate framework.

In 2002, the U.S. Congress enacted the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX) to address some of the weaknesses in the governance of public companies ("The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002," 2007). (Enron anyone!) This act aims at setting the stage for best practice in terms of governance and management processes sector wide. Corporations (or at least corporate management processes) and governmental regulatory policies are creating contemporary best practice parameters within Non-Profit Practice.

In line with this corporate logic, independent organizations are scrutinizing best practice within the field by creating performance management evaluation tools. For example, Australia's AFCID's Development Advisory Committee last year created an organizational assessment methodology to enable both large and small organizations to evaluate organizational strengths and areas within practice needing improvement. Listed

below ("Organisational Effectiveness: An Assessment Tool," 2006) are several key areas, each maintaining unique currents and trends leading best practice. The tool itself is best practice because it seeks to hold NPOs accountable in terms of efficiency and performance.



The Radar, et. al

This diagram reveals the trend to not only evaluate, but to justify (driven by AFCID's strategic logic) NPP organizational outcomes. Nonprofit organizations are increasingly being pressed to measure and report their outcomes and impact regularly to funders and other constituents.

Best Practice in NPP

Best practice, then, is revealed in the context of accountability, fiscal management, organizational structural capacity and key performance indicators (KIPs). The Sarbanes-Oxley act, in terms of good governance, for example, reveals best practice. Evaluating and re-evaluating "how" a non-profit operates is best practice. Making non-profit organizations accountable and transparent to donors, government and other constituents are all best practice. And, by revealing best practice in the context of fiscal management generally speaking, NPOs' accountability, in terms of efficiency and performance, yields internal and external credibility, arguably situating organizations in a better position to

provide more services and more products to beneficiary targets. By default, management and organizational efficiency become best practices. Logically, these best practices also satisfy the increasing requirements and expectations donors and foundations seek for their investments in social enterprise. These trends are critical if one is aware of the massive global need in relation to limited human and financial resources and stark competition to obtain them.

IMPLICATIONS AND ANALYSIS OF BEST PRACTICE IN SE AND NPP

Implications and Analysis of Best Practice in Social Entrepreneurship

As stated previously, the notion of ‘Best’ practices, as with any suggestion and application of the world ‘best,’ has serious implications. So what are they, how do we know they are ‘best’, and should we be concerned about their impacts in their respective fields? To answer this question, it is important to note what and who is shaping the currents and trends yielding best practice in the fields.

In terms of Social Entrepreneurship, literature suggests that the field, as a concept and methodology, did not begin to take off until the late 1980s and early 1990s. Given the brevity of its existence (in relation to the practice of map-making which dates back thousands of years and has been scrutinized by a variety of disciplines, i.e. science, religion and the like), social entrepreneurship has not endured the rigor of time and scrutiny from other related fields of practice. Presently, best practices are seemingly limited to only a few perspectives. They emerge from those who pioneered the industry, individuals wanting into the industry, or those wishing to fund the industry, such as foundations and blue chip universities. The motivation embraced by these key individual stakeholders is an inherent need to “serve” those falling through the cracks of social justice. SE Practitioners themselves seek to transcend social problems, to harmonize them if you like.

At face value, concepts like social change, reducing social needs and innovation, appear reverent. These concepts are themselves best practice within the field currently ("Ashoka: Innovators for the Public," 2007; "Swab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship," 2007). However, these concepts are clearly influenced and underscored by acute values and narrow worldviews, which is not to say they are negative things. They could yield very serious consequences, however, given the eclectic nature of people worldwide and their own individual, narrow, social, political and economic sensibilities. For example, concepts such as social change and innovation are driven by motivators and value structures which demand caution by those seeking change. (Colonization, anyone?) Having duly noted these concerns, I do not feel Social Entrepreneurship, nor the field’s practitioners, have a hidden agenda —social, political or otherwise. The field is simply seeking to marry effective and innovative business

strategies to achieve positive social metamorphosis. SE seeks to unite people in a common good (not necessarily a utopia, but free from unnecessary suffering and oppression), particularly by addressing the needs of those lacking choices and means. This lack, when rectified, will lead to dignity in civil society. Social Entrepreneurs' increasing commitment to developing countries sheds light on this point.

Implications and Analysis of Best Practice in Non-Profit Practice

Unlike Social Entrepreneurship, Non-Profit Practice has deep roots that define its special place in social enterprise. The myriad of features constituting best practice within the field come from a melting-pot of stakeholders cultivated through years of experience and shifts in community needs. The stakeholders are business, donors, government, boards, beneficiaries and other pertinent constituents.

One way to pinpoint where best practice is emerging in the new millennium within NPOs is best understood in terms of assessing a particular feature of practice. For example, external motivators such as the notion of “giving”, (commonly associated with charity and philanthropy) heavily impact NPP. Giving itself is evolving, at least in terms of its core definition. For Professor Robert Bermer of Ohio State, tax incentives are shaping the “...business of benevolence,” and American philanthropy in general. Giving is actually being defined by what is “given” back to the donor in return. The scenario is simple, I give money and I get a tax break. This is somewhat different, say, to the notion of giving during the Great Depression or the giving of alms as outlined in the Old Testament in which charity (I don't like that word by the way) was given freely. Men and women seemed to engage in the right of passage of giving for the sake of human and spiritual welfare. As you can imagine, these distinct forms of giving reveal an array of implications in terms of how best practice is understood. The context reveals divergent utilities of best practice predicated on ideological and pragmatic tensions.

Another factor to include in the understanding of best practice is the mere fact that individual donors, corporations and governments are willing to support charitable, organizational missions in the first place. With their support, financial or otherwise, comes specific responsibilities, ethical considerations and governance parameters that ultimately benchmark currents and trends leading to best practices within Non-Profit Practice. Accountability, governance and judiciary responsibility underscore best practice, while donors, governmental bodies and for-profit corporate practice shape *how* best practice is to be understood (and evaluated for that matter). These forces also impact (intentionally and unintentionally) ideals driving NPP and practitioners themselves.

BEST PRACTICE (AS PRACTICE)

Advocacy

Burgoyne, Ashoka and foundations shaping best practice in SE reveal that best practice is situated in the realm of ideals (and ideals are fluid at best). Social entrepreneurs themselves act as practitioners engaged in a quest for a greater good mantra underscoring this point. In contrast, currents and trends in NPP are clearly in the realm of governance/practical/fiscal, defined by static qualities. The distinction between fluid and static notions of best practice take us back to one of the key purposes of this work.

Early on it was suggested the intention of this article is to define and reflect critically on the extent to which the currents and trends yielding best practice in Social Entrepreneurship and Non-Profit Practice serve as a platform in order to pursue the “best interests of the child”, the legislation and, more importantly, the ideals that drives the protection of children worldwide, particularly the protection of child laborers. To this end, the discussion digs deeper in terms of best practice within the fields. Best practice as a concept is more easily understood by deconstructing a particular practice and the features associated with that practice, the features that proponents are arguing that are “best” about it. This entails moving from abstraction to everyday reality. To do this, the practice must be placed in a particular context, in a narrative that exposes the emerging utility of that practice. Let us take Burgoyne’s suggestion that the call for advocates is shaping the modern discourse of Social Entrepreneurship and juxtapose it with the best interests of the child philosophy. In light of the field’s commitment to positive social change, could social entrepreneur advocates be in a special position to support the 246 million child laborers⁴, 70 percent of whom are working in hazardous conditions? (Unicef, 2006).

Recall that a major assumption of Burgoyne’s argument is that there is a current need for advocates or a reverent voice for those suffering. But why advocates? Why advocacy-based organizations? Why are foundations and major universities investing in these organizations? What do they do and see that others in social enterprise, government, and for-profit business do not? How are advocates situated to act in the “best interest of the child”? Could they even be in a position to enhance best practice as a discourse?

To open up one possible reply to this question, I am reminded of a conversation I had with ARC Federation Fellow, John Hartley, during his recent presentation of emerging trends within the Creative Industries at Queensland University of Technology in Australia. He views development as progress which has decreased net-poverty, historically speaking (oversimplifying his argument to make a point here). Burgoyne may or may not agree with Hartley’s position. I suspect that Paul Farmer, author of *Pathologies of Power* (2003), and this year’s Noble Peace Prize winner, Muhammad Yunis, would not. These conflicting schools of thought (Hartleyism v. Farmerism/Yunism) is critical in terms of the call for advocates and advocacy practice

⁴Child labor is defined by the ILO as hazardous work which is exploitative and mentally and physically debilitating by those under the age of 18, This is distinguishable from ‘child’s work’ which is not necessarily physically or psychologically detrimental to the child (Caldwell, 2006)

within social enterprise, especially if one looks to the debate about how nation states are ceding ground to bigger forces under globalization (if you believe that argument).

So who is keeping watch over what is happening where? Why would a Third World country, where the majority of child laborers reside, care about the conditions under which its product X is being produced, especially if it was making a dent in its debt repayments to, among others, the World Bank? Wouldn't child labor help a country, rather than hinder it?

Child labor advocates are clearly needed to offset and to deal with the lopsided, discriminating and inequitable systems and power structures that create, sustain and enable social injustice and child labor, whether it is within a neighborhood or international trade and commerce. Philosopher Michael Foucault explores these power relationships by examining 'reverse discourse' or 'counter discourses' and uses personal experiences as counterpoint to the prevailing or powerful discourses surrounding beliefs, values, ethics, and morality (Foucault, 1982). All of these aforementioned multi-dimensional issues create child labor⁵. Foucault's theoretical arguments have a pragmatic value as well, and are illustrated by evoking the context of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO sets and enforces international legislation for trade (and trade liberalization), but they have clearly stated they will not allow the way a product was made — for example, via the use of child labor or from debt bondage — to affect its distribution worldwide (Holm et al., 2005). Naomi Klein calls this the product vs. process ethic (Klien, 1999). This begs the question: Who will ensure children have access to dignity when poverty and power structures and economic models overlook them?

Advocates are an ethical voice in a world that is warring for oil, wealth, and ideological supremacy, rather than ensuring that citizens and children worldwide have access to core human rights. Advocates are therefore serving as emerging solutions to these challenges in the field for logical reasons. Now, more than ever, it appears advocates are needed for positive social change. The call for advocates situated as a best practice follows a clear logic model of moral reciprocity and power relationship accountability. Advocates become the very thing social justice seeks, reverence. However, advocates themselves do not operate freely, and most social enterprise organizations are rarely “a one person show.” Social entrepreneurs are organized within a very specific discourse guided by principles, laws, and responsibilities which contribute to the discussion of best practices within the field of Non-Profit Practice.

Fiduciary Responsibility

⁵ In a recent presentation I made with several colleagues we explored the relations between different organizations such as the UN, ILO and WTO regarding their regulations about child labor. Although these governance models promote social justice and set minimum international labor standards they possess no legal authority in terms of enforcement within sovereign nations. By using Mexico, Guatemala and Tajikistan as examples we further explored how state as well as regional regulations often conflict with global regulations. We also illustrate progress, shortcomings, and other unique challenges facing these countries and child laborers more generally. Pay particular attention to the section 2 for trade and regulation issues. (Holm, Higdon, Caldwell, & Usmanova, 2005)

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX) is a good place to shed light on wide impacts the act has in terms of how we understand best practice in NPP. Recall, the key aim of the act is to address some of the weaknesses in the governance of public companies, thus setting the stage for best practice in terms of governance and management processes sector wide. The act seeks to hold non-profit organizations accountable. While this appears logical to donors and to the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and perhaps for-profit corporations for that matter, as a non-profit practitioner, I view this as potentially problematic. To underscore this point, one must ask a specific question: Who benefits?

Let us look at the Act itself. Non-profit fiduciary duties parallel obligations imposed on the officers and directors of public corporations. Although the Act does not extend to not-for-profit organizations (NPO) directly, it clearly benchmarks the new standards by which corporate governance is judged for all entities with a public responsibility. While the Act itself is only applicable to public corporations, all individuals serving in a fiduciary capacity in a corporate entity are subject to certain common law duties (*Report to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, U.S. Senate, 2006*). These are:

1. The Duty of Care
2. The Duty of Loyalty

When applied to the non-profit sector, these common law duties provide the backbone for much of the state and federal regulation of NPOs and the ethos governing NPO boards of directors.

Obviously the IRS benefits, as the Act tightens tax structure as well as the cost of monitoring tax related activity. The burden of monitoring costs is now absorbed by non-profit organizations. Corporations indirectly benefit as they could potentially be seen as somehow superior to NPOs, at least in terms of business savyness, which increases their “high status” and utility in the community. Privatization logic anyone? Donors also benefit, with better nightly sleep and the knowledge that their money is going into a grass-roots non-profit organization that operates with the efficiency of a large corporation, such as IBM (I am playing devil’s advocate to illustrate the point).

But what about the NPOs themselves? How do they benefit? What about their missions? And what about the beneficiary population? How do they benefit? How are the ideals that drive NPOs taken into consideration? Is a top-down approach to an organization with limited funds and resources sustainable, or practical for that matter? To provide some answers to my original question and concerns about who benefits, let me, as a practitioner in the field, share a true story.

Nearly a year and a half ago I initiated an international child trafficking fact-finding mission to secure information about, as well as the location and wellbeing of, a young Vietnamese girl who had fallen victim to transnational criminal elements, as a direct repercussion of poverty. I learned of this child through my Vietnamese hairdresser while I was attending university in Michigan. As it were, I was researching child labor at that point in my academic career. A sense of urgency came over me after learning of this

child's horrendous plight. She was one of the children that my heart was drawn to in books I was reading as a researcher. She *is* modern day child slavery.

Over the course of six months I developed an action plan, fundraising plan, and a general strategic plan, organized student volunteers and called upon leaders and organizations within the non-profit sector to support this effort – essentially, to combat modern day slavery of the worst kind.

There is an array of disappointing results surrounding my efforts, three of which are important to the discussion of best practice within Non-Profit Practice:

- My former university (an NPO by design) stated they could not allow me to do a fundraiser on campus on the child's behalf because they had no policies in place for this type of social enterprise activity (i.e. no volunteer liability or understanding of tax law in this instance).
- UNICEF Australia, seemingly the largest international child protection agency in Australia, stated they could not support my efforts because the plans to secure the status and well-being of the child victim did not fit their current guidelines or policy.
- A wine company committed to donating product for our fundraiser, withdrew the support because their accountant warned of negative repercussions due to the lack of university support (i.e. no tax break).

Somehow this child victim of modern day slavery was also victimized by corporate management policies and government regulations, who focused on what could not be done rather than on what could. Policies were interpreted as static rather than reverent ideal(s) that drive Non-Profit Practice. Whether due to policy or lack of holistic, systematic approach to problem resolution, non-profit organizations - specifically situated to help child trafficking victims - denied their support, and moreover, donors did not give. The reason? The bottom-line for securing a child's freedom in this instance were the unintended negative consequences of static policy— policy which constitutes contemporary best practice within the Third Sector. What went wrong? And, why do donors perceive that they should receive something for giving? Why are tax laws supreme? Why does good governance policy cripple the means for concerned citizens to generate funds for a child-trafficking victim? Why does volunteer liability and tax laws have the power to make a university and UNICEF inflexible?

Chris Argyris (1993) discusses the danger of policies which render organizations inflexible, and their employees overly rigid (or too nervous to challenge the policies), For Argyris:

Some of these organizations (often government) have so many policies and guidelines for tried and tested behavior and outcomes, that no-one would dare go outside those "rules" for fear of being penalized.

Unicef Australia and the university were cautious about how the government would interpret their fundraising activities and acted out of fear. In terms of this being a best practice, in this case, policy was not good at all in terms of the best interest of the child. The feedback became the message. The potential positive utility of this best practice (in terms of the Sarbanes Oxley Act) within the social enterprise sector, failed. What made this policy do so? What became “un-best” about this best practice?

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AS BEST PRACTICE

When I use aspects of Donald Shon’s reflective practice techniques to assess best practice as a social entrepreneur and CEO of Good Deeds International, I see best practice emerging out of my ability to help GDI staff and volunteers achieve our organizational mission, our ideals; that is, the programs, services and goods (both literally and philosophically) created to foster social change and to support those needing it most, child laborers. Our fundamental ideal is to act in the best interest of the child. Although good management and fiduciary responsibility (Sarbanes-Oxley for example) are interdependent with Non-Profit Practice, I do not see them as being vertically integrated with organizational missions which, at the core, define the very essences of NPOs’ and GDI’s existence. As a social entrepreneur, I view Non-Profit Practice hierarchically and for very logical reasons (notwithstanding my own assumptions and values, of course).

Picture if you will NPOs as mountains in Colorado, USA. NPOs’ missions would be the peaks, while corporate and government policy would ideally be the snow covering the mountains. The earth orbits, seasons change, and the snows come and go. As the climate around the mountain warms up and the snow begins to melt, so would the policies that skew NPOs’ vision to achieve their missions, to climb to their peaks. Policies should not be allowed to dull the reverence that comes from gazing at a mountain peak, and the associated values that are attached to “the best interest of the child.” However, given the resurgence of corporate policy due to some bad-apples such as Enron, NPOs and more importantly, those reaping (or seemingly not) the benefits of service such as the child-trafficking victim, seem to be caught in a blizzard.

As a practitioner reflexively looking back at the results of the child-trafficking plan, I feel more questions can illustrate the point of best practice failure. Does anyone think for a moment that the thugs that sold this child into a life of exploitation and slavery considered tax liability? What about the theories - of human rights, for example - which created local and international child protection agencies such as UNICEF to begin with? Was it not to protect children from harm, to offer them opportunities that restored dignity, and to do what is in their best interest?

I am sure this is what the Roosevelt’s meant when they were pushing a human rights-based agenda upon the creation of the United Nations Charter after World War II. Yet, theoretical and pragmatic considerations aside, when determining the processes that govern how vulnerable children’s needs should be met, we abandon *the best interest of*

the child to the best interest of policy. Even when it comes to child slavery. Perhaps it is an oversimplification, but I would suggest that it appears that what is best for the government and for business (their view of best practice for NPOs) becomes the very thing that reinforces child exploitation (albeit unintentionally in this case).

Clearly, this story illuminates a mismatch of a systematically constructed best practice in the non-profit sector. The emerging governance policies setting the stage for best practice appear ill-equipped to deal with the realities of actual non-profit work which is situated amongst instability, uncertainty, complexity, value conflict and uniqueness within practice (Schon, 1983). Best practice would be better understood in the context of fluid realities and the varying contexts in which they evolve. Best practices are good when they are shaped by the narratives of non-profit practice itself. In an effort to meet the complex environmental and humanitarian challenges of the 21st Century, the suffering of child laborers, the trend for Social Entrepreneurship as a practice to seek more advocates clearly reveals best practice.

Advocates are in a position to challenge the other best practices (philosophically and pragmatically) in the Third Sector that seem to be keeping non-profit practitioners from doing their job. Reflexively, looking back at the child trafficking experience reveals the net utility: weaknesses of systematic approaches, and rigid policy expectation that have little bearing on the complexity of situational human problems. As a practice-led researcher, “learning by doing” reveals a best practice in itself.

As a society that values human life and dignity, we must rekindle the passion of why we give Non-Profit Practice high-status in communities in the first place. We must evaluate ideals against policy (and vice versa). We must examine why we allow non-profit practitioners and social entrepreneurs to endeavour to create and to implement missions that seek, amongst other things, to act in “the best interest of the child,” especially when considering best practice as a discourse, let alone from a rational point of view. We would also benefit from asking the question, is giving truly giving when I expect something in return? And, if so, what are the relative implications?

Best practice would ideally free the children, our minds, and our actions from policies and logic that do not take into account the needs of those we aim to serve, including children, the handicapped and the elderly, our rainforests, whales and the like. One could conclude that best practices within Social Entrepreneurship and Non-Profit Practice are not, nor should they be, universal as a general rule. How can they be if we lose sight of why SE and NPP exist in the first place? I stress here that best practices within social enterprise are ultimately benchmarked within the practice by practitioners engaging in rigorous practice. External considerations such as policy and regulations should strengthen these efforts, rather than deteriorate them.

For example, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act has some positive qualities which, when used in the proper context, actually achieve the intended results. A current trend seen in the industry which enables best practice qualities of Sarbanes-Oxley, is the revitalization of NPO boards. A nonprofit organization cannot get far without its mission or its board –

its heart and its soul - as Paula Gavin, CEO of the YMCA of Greater New York reminds us:

While staff members can move your organization [with laws regulating it], they cannot fulfill the mission without board members who believe that their role is key to: (1) policy and planning, (2) community outreach, and (3) fundraising, fundraising, fundraising... [Organizations must] Define the Board's Role: Fashion a Workable Board Structure: Set Expectations for Board Members (Gavin, 1997).

In effect, board members themselves become advocates for best practices. They are advocates for social change, but also for effective management, reducing the wishful thinking Bruce Gladrun is concerned about. Broadly speaking, this trend is not necessarily new; NPOs have always relied heavily on board members as organizational anchors. Having noted this, the difference now, as say to ten years ago, is for social entrepreneurs and non-profit practitioners to recruit board members with not only deep pockets and a passion for the organizational mission, but also with business management skills and financial planning expertise that create blue-chip companies.

The non-profit sector may indeed be pushing towards an increase in advocates within the profession of Social Entrepreneurship. Emerging entrepreneurs would gain a leg up in social enterprise by possessing a more holistic understanding of the needs and skills social entrepreneurs should possess in order to be more effective in achieving their missions. The sheer strength of modern power structures such as the WTO and the World Bank (which enflame child labor in many instances) demands that advocates possess not only passion and ideals, but business savyness and acute critical thinking skills. Clearly, foundations funding new social entrepreneurial ideas are motivated by these facts. Management skills enhancement attempts to satisfy donor expectations, governmental regulations and the power structures which intentionally and unintentionally add to the propagation of child labor, as demonstrated previously. Furthermore, by possessing a wide-variety of skills and knowledge-based expertise, as practitioners, we will increase our ability to challenge the multidimensional elements enflaming child labor today (any social enterprise practice for that matter), and consequently, will be in a better position to pursue “the best interest of the child”.

One of the founders of contemporary SE offers some additional words of wisdom on this issue of advocates. Bill Drayton, recently nominated by the Centre for Public Leadership at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government (in collaboration with US News and World Report) as one of America's 25 Best Leaders (Pritha, 2007) emphasizes the practical call for an increase in advocates at all levels of Non-Profit Practice, regardless of managerial expertise or business knowledge. Drayton views us all as having the potential to become a specific type of advocate — what he calls ‘Changemakers’ within social entrepreneurship. Drayton suggests that:

“...societies’ capacity to adapt and change intelligently and constructively and building the necessary underlying collaborative architecture, is the world’s most critical opportunity now... The most important contribution any of us can make now is not to

solve any particular problem, no matter how urgent energy or environment or financial regulation is. What we must do now is increase the proportion of humans who know that they can cause change (Drayton, 2006)."

Drayton is speaking of agents of change, sometimes called "key multipliers" in their communities, who act from the bottom-up. I think his words highlight the general theme I have tried to convey in this discussion regarding best practice. I see his call for advocates in the wider context of the aim of this paper. And, I only realize this now as I reread my own words and reflect on what I have written and why. Let me repeat Drayton's specific thought that led to my own revelation here and now:

What we must do now is increase the proportion of humans who know that they can cause change.

At first glimpse, Drayton's words may seem to make my concluding remarks repetitive. However, his point is unique. What he is saying is that we need a variety of men, women and children to help us define best practices and to set the currents and trends that shape them, not simply social entrepreneurs and Non-profit practitioners. In my own experiences as a non-profit practitioner, there is no doubt that we have special keys to the vault, that I/we are sitting on the "peak." I often think, how could for-profit corporations and governments (some of which create and reinforce child labor) provide insight into best practices within the fields of social entrepreneurship and non-profit practice? Is this not contradictory, or at a minimum hypocritical? However, as I re-read my own words here and synthesize my argument, (as well as consciously acknowledging my own biases generated from the lack of support I received from the child-trafficking case), I began to see why governments and for-profit corporations are actually in a position to add to the best practice discussion.

In the case of non-profit organizations, in particular, business and governmental efforts combine to actually strengthen the legitimacy of non-profit practice as a profession. That is one positive way to view Sabarnes-Oxley. Businesses and governments become advocates in their own right in the quest for the greater good. They possess skills and expertise that many of us in Non-Profit Practice could learn from. If we, in social enterprise, recognize this and take the benefits they do have to offer, then we have a great chance of impacting those whom we aim to serve.

On the other side of that coin, what I can and do bring to the discussion of best practice is the trend embraced by Generation Xers (I am thirty-one years old) and directly influenced by my role as a practice led-researcher and non-profit practitioner. The trend I mention here is the relentless pursuit of the "ideal"- rather than a bottom-line, static policy or other inhibitor - to achieve a greater good.) We are seeking to make this world a more beautiful place for children – and, of course, in selfish ways, for myself. Our values and our ideals transcend bottom-line agendas. Social enterprise and its practitioners, both young and old, increase the legitimacy of passion within the non-profit matrix, something that for-profit business and governments cannot do, at least when it comes to supporting missions that compete with their own. Again, reverent ideals, rather than bottom-line

agendas, reign supreme. Whether corporations or non-profit practitioners, each discourse supports our understanding of best practice. Of course, there are the multitudes of others who create new realms of best practice in their own way, all significantly underscoring the fluidity of best practice as a discourse. This co-collaboration of currents and trends shaping best practice enables the transcendence of a static concept of best practice such as posited by the Sabarnes-Oxley Act. Best practice should be considered as fluid, while ideals such as human rights and acting in the best interest of the child remain static.

CONCLUSION

This paper has revealed currents and trends leading to best practice in SE and NPP. It has discussed how Social Entrepreneurship, and institutions such as Ashoka and Yale, are supporting the field by nurturing the ‘greater good’ mantra and ideals embraced by SE practitioners. This can be seen by the call for an increase in advocates and advocacy based organizations to tackle tough social problems using innovative and creative methods. Best practice, as a general rule, is subsequently predicated on a foundation of ideals by practitioners (and respective support/funding systems). In terms of Non-Profit Practice, external stakeholders such as donors and governments are driving currents and trends which are ultimately leading to best practice in the field. Not only are these external stakeholder calling for more accountability, they are providing tools from which to do so ; that is, Australia’s AFCID’s Development Advisory Committee assessment methodology and the USA’s Sabarnes-Oxley Act. External NPP stakeholders are also redefining the notion of giving. Whether it be a tax deduction or greater governance, these best practices, donors and governments seem to argue, should be an ingrained feature of NPP. These respective tools of accountability, and reciprocity in terms of giving, enable both large and small organizations to evaluate NPP’s organizational strengths and areas within practice needing improvement and regulation.

What this work reveals is tension in terms of the application of best practice in SE and NPP to the realities practitioners (and beneficiary constituents) face. I have demonstrated that by showing that SE and NPPs are predicated on ideals that are negatively affected by rigid guidelines and static features constituting best practice. Through the lack of support I received for the child-trafficking intervention case I undertook over a period of twelve months, I revealed that what is in the best interest of the field of Non-Profit Practice, as determined by external stakeholders, actually took precedence over what was in the best interest of the child herself. So called fiduciary and “giving” ‘best practice’ actually became counterproductive to effective action in Non-Profit Practice. It hindered my ability to be an effective advocate to act in the best interests of the child.

Using performative-research techniques - such as reflective practice - as a NPP practitioner, this work has also revealed additional strengths and weaknesses of what is considered best practice within SE and NPP. I have augured reflective practice is in and of itself best practice. Reflective practice has enabled myself as a social entrepreneur and non-profit practitioner to engage and reengage my own understanding of the types of

questions needed to be raised in order to justify and strengthen how best practice can better be understood. I have argued that best practice is only “good practice,” when it (including my own actions and understanding as a practitioner) has been placed under the microscope and on the operating table in the daily processes constituting practice — which is fluid rather than static— by practitioners themselves/ourselves

In conclusion, my practice-led research reveals the only static quality of best practice: that is to say, the defined set of ideals which practitioners continually gravitate towards and seek to attain in their daily practice. These ideals yielding best practice would ideally free the children, our minds, and our actions from policies and logic that do not take into account the needs of those we aim to serve. External considerations such as policy and regulations should/must strengthen these efforts, rather than weaken them. In other words, donors’, governments’, for-profit businesses’ need for enhanced governance and static policy should become secondary to ideals (and thus fluid by default).

Why? Simple: the world needs Bill Drayton’s ‘key multipliers’ and *Changmokers* to attend to human and people-made catastrophes that should be concerning us all. These catastrophes are without question changing the landscape of the humanitarian demands of the 21st Century. Darfur, Chechnya, Somalia, East Timor, USA, Afghanistan, Iraq HIV/Aids, Poverty, Human Trafficking, Child Trafficking, Oppression, Racial Discrimination, Religious Radicalism, Human Rights Erosion, Social Justice Deterioration, Osama Bin Laden, George W. Bush, and Global Warming all denote an increase in violence and human suffering. These facts not only increase the nature of social needs, but also the quantity of social problems communities and global citizens face. They, all in their unique context, constitute the need to further the reverent cause of Social Entrepreneurship and Non-Profit-Practice in general. To reduce relative global chaos, do we embrace policy or do we embrace ideals? While policies and governance serve a utility, policies and governance often enflame the deterioration of dignity for the world’s most vulnerable. A tremendous number of the 246 million child labourers are situated in the context of static policy such as international free trade, trade liberalization and the Global War on Terror. On the other hand, perhaps you see ideals as gas on the global fire of chaos. Ideals also lead to increased global tension - just ask the Christian, Jewish and Islamic Radicals in Gaza.

Yet, I cannot help but to think ideals should take precedent over policy. Call me ethically old fashioned. I am not the only one. At the end of the work day, even policy makers themselves seem to feel this way in the international community. The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* of 1989 is the most widely adopted piece of international legislation in human history. Why? As a general rule, the ideal that children deserve special care and protection from harm and exploitation unites diverse worldviews, eclectic moral sensibilities and conflicting policies (and ideologies) in ways that an actual policy cannot. It is the ideal of human dignity that unites us, the need for policy - not the other way around.

In the case of child labor, our ideals and policies led by those ideals, let us not forget the children themselves, or those we aim to serve in our Non-Profit Practice or

social entrepreneurial endeavor (and why not clients and community in the for-profit sector?). As practitioners, and people that share ideals such as human dignity, it may actually become necessary to assess the microscope itself. Why are we only looking at a mountain, snow and a peak? Of course we see the children, but what about their families? Their communities? Their cities? Their “developing” countries (which sounds a bit elitist to me: as if they would somehow fail to “develop” if Uncle Sam, or other practitioners didn’t step in)? What about the lives of those suffering unnecessarily due to a policy driven avalanche? How have we included them in the conversation of best practice? What would the child-trafficking victim think if she was told the story of how her life was valued? What do you think?

Best practices in Social Entrepreneurship, Non-Profit Practice and child labor eradication can be revealed more appropriately when we open our values and our sub-conscious motivations to the world views, values, and motivations of others; and to their interpretations of best practice. It is often the simplest ideas that are overlooked when dealing with the complexity of human problems.

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