

A Study Of The Development Environment Of Social Entrepreneurship In Private Vocational Education Institutions In Northeastern Thailand

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Abstract

This study aimed to: 1) assess the goodness-of-fit of an indicator model of social entrepreneurship within private vocational education institutions in Northeastern Thailand from a development environment perspective, and 2) examine the current conditions, desired states, and institutional needs that influence social entrepreneurship growth. The development environment was conceptualized through key dimensions including institutional support, community engagement, resource availability, and policy context. A sample of 131 private vocational education institutions was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan formula with 95% confidence and 5% margin of error. Data were collected via a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using basic statistics, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and literature review to contextualize findings within the broader developmental ecosystem. Findings identified four primary components of social entrepreneurship—Social Mission, Social Innovation, Social Value, and Social Transformation—demonstrating strong model fit ($\chi^2/df = 1.284$, RMSEA = 0.030, CFI = 0.995).

The assessment of the developmental environment showed that Social Mission, aligned with environmental stewardship and societal impact, was the highest priority area: Social Mission (PNI_{Modified} = 0.72), followed by Social Innovation (PNI_{Modified} = 0.70), Social Transformation (PNI_{Modified} = 0.56), and Social Value (PNI_{Modified} = 0.51), respectively. These results highlight critical environmental factors—such as supportive policies and stakeholder collaboration—that underpin the successful cultivation of social entrepreneurship in these institutions.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, private vocational education institutions, development environment, Northeastern Thailand

1. INTRODUCTION

With a national emphasis on developing a high-performance workforce aligned with the needs of key industrial sectors, Thailand aims to foster future employment opportunities and cultivate intelligent entrepreneurs capable of creating and applying technologies and innovations for effective national development (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2020). This strategic vision reflects a critical element of the development environment—namely, supportive government policy and institutional frameworks—that provide the foundation for workforce and entrepreneurial growth. Government policy has also prioritized vocational education as a key mechanism to produce quality labor, particularly in response to the growing demand for middle-skilled workers across various industries. These policies nurture an enabling environment by promoting relevant skills development and innovation ecosystems that empower learners. In addition to preparing students for employment, vocational education increasingly emphasizes entrepreneurship—equipping learners with the capacity to use innovation and technology to create their own businesses and generate income independently, which forms an essential component of the resource availability and human capital development aspects of the broader development environment.

However, contemporary social challenges have become more complex and severe, imposing new demands on the development environment within which vocational institutions operate. Thailand's workforce development is undergoing significant structural transformations, including an aging society that reduces labor supply, rapid advancements in innovation and artificial intelligence, and a growing trend toward personalized, interest-driven learning. These dynamics highlight the importance of adaptive community engagement and responsive institutional support within the development environment to maintain relevance and resilience. Compounding these issues is the decline in labor productivity following the COVID-19

pandemic, which has raised concerns about workforce quality and the potential limitations on economic expansion. Such challenges underscore the critical role of policy innovation and multi-stakeholder collaboration to mitigate risks and sustain development efforts. Additionally, shifts in societal behaviors and ways of life have been influenced by global economic recession since 2019, triggering intense business competition often disregarding social consequences and exposing the inability of government agencies to single-handedly address these multifaceted issues, thereby emphasizing the necessity of cultivating enabling environments that foster social innovation and collective impact.

As a result, the concept of social entrepreneurship has gained momentum as a viable approach to solving complex social problems within this multifaceted development environment. Beyond financial profits, social entrepreneurship generates social and environmental value by integrating entrepreneurial innovation, operational efficiency, and a strong commitment to public service. This approach reflects the interplay of various environmental factors—such as institutional support, resource mobilization, and community networks—that collectively empower entrepreneurs to merge the mindset of a business innovator with that of a social developer. According to Ekkapaitoon (2011), social entrepreneurs not only possess business acumen to manage organizations successfully but are also driven by a deep concern for social problems, employing their enterprises as tools to fulfill both economic and social missions simultaneously. This dual focus is central to fostering sustainable development environments where social enterprise can effectively address emerging societal challenges.

In Thailand, social entrepreneurship is not a new concept. Rather, it represents an adaptation of cooperative economic models and royal development initiatives, applied to both for-profit and nonprofit sectors. These practices are guided by ethical principles and emphasize sustainable social development. For example, social enterprises initiated by public benefit organizations, such as the Doi Tung Development Project under the Mae Fah Luang Foundation, aim to sustainably enhance social, economic, and environmental conditions. Their mission includes improving the quality of life for the people of Doi Tung by creating local employment opportunities, promoting agriculture, handicrafts, and product development, and encouraging cultural and environmental preservation. These organizations have also expanded their business operations to achieve long-term sustainability.

The integration of social entrepreneurship into the mission of private vocational education institutions offers a compelling pathway for enhancing institutional quality. It positions vocational schools as hubs for learning, entrepreneurship, and innovation at the community level. Through community-based management by local actors who understand specific contexts and challenges, these institutions can effectively address social, health, and environmental issues. In doing so, they foster the creation of tangible social value and meaningful community transformation.

Therefore, the development of social entrepreneurship within private vocational education institutions in Northeastern Thailand aims to generate tangible benefits for communities, society, and the environment. These institutions are expected to engage in environmentally friendly production and services, reinvest profits into local development, promote innovation for social advancement, and cultivate entrepreneurs who uphold ethical principles and good governance. Furthermore, by fostering collaboration and building networks, these institutions can become central community platforms—producing graduates who possess both practical occupational skills and a strong moral and ethical consciousness to contribute to the sustainable development of their communities and environment.

2. Research Objectives

- 1) To examine the construct validity and consistency of the social entrepreneurship indicator model in private vocational education institutions in Northeastern Thailand, considering development environment factors such as institutional support, resources, and community engagement.
- 2) To assess the current and desired conditions, along with essential needs, and access to innovation resources impact their ability to develop and sustain social entrepreneurship.

3. Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study establishes its conceptual framework based on a synthesis of relevant theories and previous research. The framework was developed by integrating perspectives from the works of Dees (1998), Mort et al. (2002), Lasprogata and Cotton (2003), Alvord et al. (2004), Austin et al. (2006), Peredo and McLean

(2006), Perrini and Vurro (2006), Mair and Marti (2006), Martin and Osberg (2007), Tracey and Jarvis (2007), Brouard et al. (2008), Gandy (2012), Jackson (2014), Amir Forouharfar, Seyed Aligholi Rowshan and Habibollah Salarzahi (2018), Hossain and Sayem (2019), and the United Nations (2020), along with Thai researchers such as Nitthana Thanitthanakorn (2010), Phawana Khemarath (2011), Saranyiga Thiamboonkit (2016), King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (2017), Ampol Chayomchai (2017), Nalinarat Rakkusol (2018), and Jitsuda Limkriangkrai (2022).

These sources were synthesized and adapted to the context of social entrepreneurship in private vocational education institutions in Northeastern Thailand. The resulting framework serves as a foundational model that articulates a clear conceptual pathway for this study. The research conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1.



3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed a quantitative methodology, divided into two phases:

Phase 1:

A quantitative study aimed at examining the construct validity and consistency of the indicator model of social entrepreneurship in private vocational education institutions in Northeastern Thailand with empirical data.

Population and Sample:

The population consisted of 198 private vocational education institutions in Northeastern Thailand. The sample included 131 institutions, selected using multi-stage sampling. The sample size was determined based on the recommendation of Hair et al. (2010), using a rule of thumb of approximately 10 participants per parameter in confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). With 43 parameters identified, the required sample size was 430 respondents. Multi-stage sampling was applied using cluster random sampling by location, followed by simple random sampling.

Respondents:

Data were collected from 393 individuals, including 131 school administrators, 131 teachers, and 131 teachers responsible for entrepreneurship incubation centers or those teaching business and entrepreneurship subjects.

Research Instrument:

A five-point Likert-scale questionnaire was used. The overall reliability of the instrument, measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, was 0.967.

Data Collection:

The questionnaire was distributed via postal mail and email. Each included a QR code that respondents scanned to complete the survey via Google Forms. Responses were checked for completeness before proceeding with statistical analysis.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative analysis in Phase 1 involved:

1. confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the consistency of the structural model and determine the factor loadings of observed variables with empirical data.
2. model fit evaluation and potential model adjustment to meet the fit criteria following the frameworks of Nongluk Wiratchai (2005) and Prakritiya Thaksino (2016). Model fit was tested using Chi-Square Statistics and other indices.

Phase 2:

This phase explored the current and desired conditions of social entrepreneurship in private vocational education institutions in Northeastern Thailand.

A total of 131 private vocational schools under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission, Ministry of Education, were surveyed. Each institution was asked to complete three questionnaires: one from an administrator, one from a teacher responsible for an entrepreneurship incubation center or entrepreneurship/business subject, and one from a general teacher.

The analysis focused on four components of social entrepreneurship:

1. Social Mission
2. Social Innovation
3. Social Value
4. Social Transformation

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results of the Confirmatory Analysis of the Social Entrepreneurship Indicator Model in Private Vocational Education Institutions in Northeastern Thailand

4.1.1 Pearson Correlation, KMO, and Bartlett's Test

The analysis of relationships among 12 social entrepreneurship indicators in private vocational education institutions in Northeastern Thailand revealed that all indicators were positively correlated with each other at a statistically significant level of 0.01. Pearson correlation coefficients ranged from 0.575 to 0.781.

Preliminary tests prior to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) was 0.954, which is close to 1.0, indicating excellent suitability for factor analysis (Supamas Angsuchoti, 2011). The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a chi-square value of 3573.850 with statistical significance at less than 0.01. These results confirmed the adequacy of the data for further factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010).

4.1.2 Model Fit of the Social Entrepreneurship Indicator Structure

The structural validity of the social entrepreneurship model was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The goodness-of-fit indices conformed to the criteria established by Prakritiya Thaksino (2016). The model demonstrated a good fit with empirical data as follows : $\chi^2 = 55.586$, $df = 43$, $\chi^2/df = 1.284$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0944$, $RMSEA = 0.030$, $SRMR = 0.020$, $CFI = 0.995$, $TLI = 0.992$.

These results indicate that the measurement model of social entrepreneurship aligns well with the empirical data, as presented in Table X and Figure 1.

Table 1 Goodness-of-Fit Indices of the Social Entrepreneurship Model for Private Vocational Education Institutions in Northeastern Thailand

Fit Index	Criterion	Analysis Result	Evaluation result
χ^2 - Test	Non-significant $P > 0.05$	$\chi^2 = 55.586$, $df = 43$, $P\text{-value} = 0.0944$	Pass

χ^2 / df	< 2.00	1.284	Good fit
RMSEA	≤ 0.05	0.030	Good fit
SRMR	≤ 0.08	0.020	Good fit
CFI	≥ 0.95	0.995	Good fit
TLI	≥ 0.95	0.992	Good fit

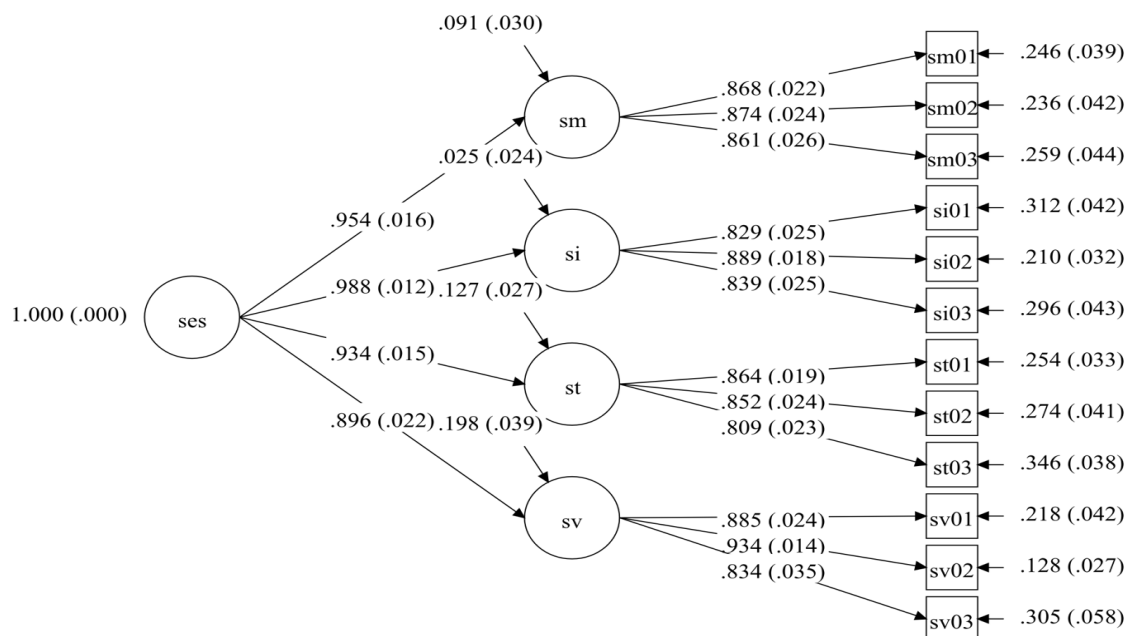


Figure 2 Measurement Model of Components and Indicators of Social Entrepreneurship in Private Vocational Education Institutions in Northeastern Thailand

4.2 Results of the Study on the Current and Desired Conditions of Social Entrepreneurship in Private Vocational Education Institutions in Northeastern Thailand

The analysis of the current and desired conditions of social entrepreneurship in private vocational education institutions in Northeastern Thailand revealed that social entrepreneurship consists of four main components: social mission, social innovation, social value, and social transformation. These components serve as the foundation for understanding the institutions' present capabilities and their future aspirations toward creating social impact. Details are presented in Table 1.

Table 2 Current Conditions, Desired Conditions, and Priority Needs for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship Organizations in Private Vocational Education Institutions in Northeastern Thailand

Social Entrepreneurship	Current Condition		Desired Condition		PNI		Analysis Result	Rank
	(\bar{x})	(S.D.)	(\bar{x})	(S.D.)	PNI	Group		
Social Mission (sm)	2.84	0.55	4.89	0.29	0.72	High	weakness	1

Social Innovation (si)	2.89	0.47	4.89	0.32	0.70	High	weakness	2
Social Transformation (st)	2.94	0.53	4.61	0.61	0.56	High	weakness	3
Social Value (sv)	3.16	0.51	4.77	0.54	0.51	High	weakness	4
Overall averages	2.96	0.52	4.79	0.44	0.62			

Based on Table 2, the analysis of the current conditions, desired conditions, and priority needs for the development of social entrepreneurship in private vocational education institutions in Northeastern Thailand reveals the following findings. Among the current conditions, the highest mean score was in the area of social value ($x = 3.16$), while the lowest was in social mission ($x = 2.84$). For the desired conditions, the highest mean scores were found in both social mission and social innovation ($x = 4.89$), while the lowest was in social transformation ($x = 4.61$).

Regarding the priority needs, the most critical areas were social mission ($PNI_{\text{Modified}} = 0.72$) and social innovation ($PNI_{\text{Modified}} = 0.70$), which were identified as weaknesses. In contrast, social value ($PNI_{\text{Modified}} = 0.51$) and social transformation ($PNI_{\text{Modified}} = 0.56$) were considered strengths.

The prominence of social mission as the most needed area may be attributed to its role in setting organizational goals and guiding efforts toward generating positive social impact. This includes addressing social problems, promoting equity, improving quality of life, and advancing social sustainability. These elements are essential strategic directions that significantly influence the success of social entrepreneurship initiatives. This finding aligns with Phanom Khleechaya (2009), who emphasized that successful implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) requires that social responsibility be explicitly integrated into an organization's mission, translated into policy, and operationalized through strategic planning that leverages organizational capabilities to create socially beneficial activities.

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

his study examined the social entrepreneurship model of private vocational education institutions in Northeastern Thailand using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The results showed that the measurement model exhibited a good fit with the empirical data, meeting the standard criteria for model validity. This indicates that the construct of social entrepreneurship—comprising social mission, social innovation, social transformation, and social value—is statistically supported and theoretically grounded within the institutional context studied.

In terms of priority needs, the findings revealed that the most critical area was the social mission, followed by social innovation, social transformation, and social value, respectively. This ranking reflects the varying degrees of urgency among institutions in developing competencies and structural capacity across these dimensions.

DISCUSSION:

The alignment between the empirical data and the theoretical model supports prior frameworks by Dees (1998), Martin and Osberg (2007), and Mort et al. (2002), who defined social entrepreneurship as a dynamic process driven by a mission to create and sustain social value through innovation and organizational resilience. The fact that **social mission** emerged as the most urgent need suggests that many vocational institutions have yet to clearly articulate or operationalize their purpose in addressing complex social issues such as inequality, sustainability, and access to opportunity. This supports Ekkapaitoon (2011), who noted that mission clarity is fundamental to successful social entrepreneurship, as it drives both strategic direction and organizational identity.

The need for **social innovation** as the second priority highlights the institutions' recognition that conventional approaches are insufficient in solving emerging community challenges. Innovation in this

context does not only refer to technology but also includes novel pedagogies, partnerships, and program designs that respond to local contexts. This aligns with Schumpeter's theory of innovation, which emphasizes the entrepreneur as a change agent who introduces new combinations of resources to generate value.

Social transformation being ranked third underscores the desire for more tangible, systemic change—yet it may also indicate challenges in sustaining momentum or scaling localized efforts. Finally, **social value**, although ranked fourth in priority need, remains a core outcome of the process and is reflective of long-term impact.

Together, these findings emphasize that while the model of social entrepreneurship is conceptually and statistically sound, its implementation in private vocational education institutions requires targeted development strategies, particularly in mission formulation and innovative practices. Building capacity in these dimensions can enhance the institutions' ability to act as drivers of community-based development and as incubators of ethical, impact-oriented entrepreneurs.

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