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KEY SUCCESS FACTORS FOR SCALING SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN SOUTH AFRICA*

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Abstract. Governments rely increasingly on social partners for assistance to deliver on UNESCO's sustainable development goals by 2030. However, community organisations are buckling under socio-economic hardship and a lack of donor funding during a global Covid-19 pandemic. Many social enterprises (SEs) are faced with the reality of cutting back or in some instances, completely shutting down their operations. An investigation of the literature revealed a high rate of early-stage business failure in South Africa. Hence our investigation into the key success factors that will aid SEs to scale and thrive in the hostile South African socio-political and economic climate. Using a qualitative, single case study approach underpinned by an interpretivist philosophy, this paper investigates the critical success factors for scaling SEs in South Africa. Three (3) semi-structured interviews, website content analysis and observations were used in the study to deliver data that was thematically analysed to come to the following results: SEs must express the ambition to scale, provide a best practice model, and have a social entrepreneurship orientation. Grassroots SEs must create access for local communities by focusing on three organisational dimensions, i.e., personal, operational, and strategic. Community partnerships are an overarching factor when considering scaling GSEs. By forming a social contract with communities, SEs allow them to take ownership of the interventions, increasing social impact. This paper adds to the existing knowledge regarding the critical success factors that enable the scaling of SEs in South Africa. It also creates a frame of reference for grassroots SEs in other developing countries.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship; youth development; positive youth development; socio-ecological theory; social enterprise ecosystem framework; scaling strategies; key success factors; grassroots social enterprises

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1. Introduction

Across the globe, social enterprises (SE) have been lauded as a critical intervention strategy in education, health, and social justice, which have been areas of increased concern in post-apartheid South Africa. In our case, the Tshwane School of Music is a social enterprise active in youth development by providing young people with access to opportunities and support as they develop into well-balanced adults.

Grassroots social enterprises (GSE) are best placed to intervene in community development due to their proximity to the issues at hand and the social capital generated by the support they enjoy amongst their communities (Van Oers, Boon, Moors 2018; Liang, Xu, 2018; Lang, Fink, 2019; Alkire et al., 2020). In practice, however, previously disadvantaged communities (PDCs) bear the brunt of a dysfunctional community model with an increase in gang-related activities and teenage pregnancies (Laldas, 2018), as well as youth unemployment (NYDA, 2019; Molefe, 2020). According to (Statistics SA 2021), the *Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS)* of the 3rd quarter of 2021 reported a youth unemployment rate of 66.5% for the age group 15-24 years old.

Grassroots organisations, by and large, take on the form of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or non-profit organisations (NPOs) and are primarily reliant on donor funding to stay afloat (Iwu et al., 2015). However, with the increasing need for aid funding across the globe and the effects of the global Covid-19 pandemic, NPOs are forced to reimagine their business models to ensure the maximum social impact for their constituencies (Ko, Liu 2021). Therefore, scaling social enterprises (SEs) is a necessary imperative, not just for the growth of the individual organisation but for the more significant social impact that is desperately needed in South African township communities (Fitzgerald, Shepherd 2018).

The rising need for social impact in the backdrop of South Africa's high business failure rate for SEs warrants this paper's examination of the critical success factors that would allow SEs to expand in a South African township context.

1.1 Problem statement

Several studies have uncovered the impact of social entrepreneurship on community development. However, an investigation of the literature revealed very little evidence of existing studies on how to scale SEs in South Africa's previously disadvantaged communities (PDCs). In the absence of a scientific study, SEs find it difficult, if not impossible, to bring their businesses to scale in an environment where their services are sorely needed. Elliot (2019) identifies SEs as a catalyst for breaking the poverty trap. In Elliot's analysis, SEs pick up the slack caused by an inability of governments and related agencies to address social and environmental challenges. He highlights the economic contribution made by SEs in the South African context. This vital role of SEs is echoed by Bozhikin, Macke and Folchini da Costa (2019), who recognise it as a key intervention to achieving sustainable development.

Fundamentally, social entrepreneurship focuses on creating impact through the social value generated by their entrepreneurial activities (Fowler, Coffey, Dixon-Fowler, 2019). Our view is that TSOM's business model could serve as a blueprint for other GSEs in South Africa. However, the government should demonstrate urgency and commitment by ensuring that SEs receive the necessary support and guidance to perform their important function in communities. This can be achieved by stimulating social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship ecosystems (Bozhikin Macke, Folchini da Costa, 2019). Broad agreement exists amongst scholars that upwards of 70% of small to micro and medium enterprises (SMMEs) fail within the first five to seven years in South Africa (Bushe, 2019). Dzomonda (2021) highlights how social enterprises are experiencing a plethora of struggles in South Africa, impeding their ability to achieve their social missions.

Governments increasingly depend on social partners to meet UNESCO's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. However, community organisations are crumbling amid a worldwide Covid-19 epidemic. Many SEs are forced to scale down or even shut down their activities. On the contrary, there is a need to expand the number of SEs in South Africa and scale these businesses for maximum impact. This paper aims to provide information that will assist all relevant stakeholders (Government, GSEs, funders, and communities) in understanding the critical success factors that enable GSE scaling in the South African context.

The literature review that follows explores the phenomena of social entrepreneurship, its application around the world, grassroots social enterprises, and various scaling strategies available to increase social impact. We also investigate specific models and theories that help us conceptualise our case study, i.e., UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals 2030, the Social Enterprise Ecosystem Framework, and Bronfenbrenner's Social-Ecological Model will provide the theoretical frame for our study.

2. Literature review

2.1 What is a social enterprise, and why is it important?

On the business model spectrum, social enterprises are located between traditional for-profit businesses and traditional charitable businesses (Ryder, Vogeley, 2017). Social enterprises create social value for their stakeholders, whereas traditional companies create economic value for their shareholders. Yusuf (2005) highlights that the social entrepreneur generates social value by reducing poverty, boosting social capital and creating environmental sustainability, thus, creating social impact. Some prominent features of SEs are their proximity to their markets and their socio-cultural embeddedness (Vlasov, Bonnedahl, Vincze, 2018). In other words, it is an ideal vehicle for delivering social value to the communities that it serves due to its accessibility.

2.2 The worldwide impact of social entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship is ideally positioned to address social ills left unresolved by governments and traditional charitable organisations in communities (Dees, 2001). Social entrepreneurship has the advancement of human well-being through social value creation at its core (Gupta et al., 2020). Gupta et al. highlight that SE as a phenomenon has enjoyed increased interest as an area of research and business activity during the 21st century. Scaling impact through innovation is key if organisations reach their social and environmental objectives (Jia, 2020).

According to Light (2011) there is an increased popularity in applying social entrepreneurship to the disciplines of education, health, and cultural settings. The impact of SEs is particularly pronounced when social entrepreneurs and disadvantaged communities form partnerships to address socio-economic challenges (Mair, Marti, 2006; Urban, 2008).

Brock and Ashoka (2008) warn of the difficulty of assessing social impact timely, reliable, and meaningful since the social impact is intrinsically linked to achieving a company's social mission.

The work of Prof. Muhammed Yunus and the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh (e.g. BBC News, 2011) is well documented in academic literature. The bank's unique approach of issuing small loans to the poor ensured that millions of lives were transformed on a global scale. Their interventions aim to improve the socio-economic conditions of the communities in which they operate (Martin, Osberg, 2007; Seelos, Mair, 2005).

Rawhouser, Cummings and Newbert (2019) raise a concern that the dearth of social impact assessment tools could hamper theoretical and empirical advancements in the social entrepreneurship field. In response, Arias and Arango-Botero (2019) propose a framework based on leadership training and predetermined instruments that could assist management in accurately measuring the impact of the social enterprise. On the other hand, Pärenson

(2011) recommends a comprehensive or “solid impact evaluation method” that could deliver credible empirical proof of SE’s impact.

The following section investigates how social entrepreneurship is conceptualised worldwide in various schools of thought.

2.2.1 SE in North America

2.2.1.1 The innovation school of thought

Bravo (2016) claims that the innovation school of thought prioritises innovation over revenue and scalability. Accordingly, the emphasis is on the individual entrepreneur innovatively addressing a social issue. In agreement Dees and Anderson (2006) view Ashoka Foundation’s Bill Draydon, as one of the leading proponents of this branch of social entrepreneurship, which is not dissimilar to commercial entrepreneurship and focuses on the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities.

2.2.1.2 The social enterprise school of thought

Nicholls (2008) points out that the primary focus of the social enterprise school of thought is earning an income while achieving a social mission is a secondary benefit. Another aim of this approach is that non-profit organisations (NPOs) increase effectiveness by using entrepreneurial strategies in their business processes. The funding mix for these types of organisations excludes grants and subsidies. Edward Skoot, the founder of ‘New Business Ventures for Non-profit Organisations’, is considered one of the foremost advocates of this type of SE as well as Jerr Boschee and Jed Emerson, who founded ‘The National Gathering of Social Entrepreneurs’.

2.2.2 SEs in Europe

2.2.2.1 The EMES approach

The Emergence of Social Enterprise in Europe Research Network developed this approach in 1996. This model sees a social enterprise consisting of a group of citizens having shared ownership of the organisation and being highly involved in the running of the enterprise. Community organisations such as associations, cooperatives, mutual organisations and foundations are more likely to adopt this type of social entrepreneurship because of the high level of autonomy it provides in decision making and responsibility. A significant difference between this form of SE and any other schools of thought is that the distribution of profits amongst shareholders is not prohibited.

2.2.2.2 The UK approach

When the labour party was in power in the 1990s, it implemented the ‘Social Enterprise Coalition’ as a unit in the Department of Trade and Industry. The reinvestment of the profits into the social enterprise is a significant feature of this style of social entrepreneurship. In 2006 however, the UK government placed all SE-related activities under the Ministry of the Third sector to have a more structured framework and encourage growth.

2.2.3 SEs in Asia

The work of one of the most popular social entrepreneurship practitioners, Prof. Muhammed Yunus and Grameen Bank, is well documented in the academic literature. Grameen bank has a strategy of issuing small, unsecured loans to the poor, which has impacted millions of lives. Benefits are derived by way of the improved socio-economic conditions in the communities where the bank operates (Martin, Osberg 2007; Seelos, Mair, 2005).

2.2.4 SEs in Africa

Visser (2011) bemoans the fact that SE is not contextualised in South Africa. This is in sharp contrast with the advances made in other continents where SE research is advanced. To understand the various stages of SE development, Visser developed three categories of economic development, i.e.: (1) Factor-driven economies with a low level of economic development and mainly primary sector production, (2) Efficiency-driven economies

with high levels of industrial development, a growing SMME sector fueled by the availability of capital and high economic activity and (3) Innovation economies that sees complex and well-developed services sector, driven by innovation. Visser (2011) views South Africa as an Efficiency-driven economy. In noticing the similarities in the various approaches, Dees and Anderson (2006) proposed convergence of the different schools of thought. However, it must be said that although differences exist, the aim of social entrepreneurship is united in its quest to create social value in the communities it serves.

2.3 Understanding the concept of Grassroots SE

According to Lin and de Kloet (2019), combining grassroots SE, institutional regulation, and the internet yielded positive impacts in rural China. In agreement, Sharma and Kumar (2019) found that developing countries stand to gain from grassroots innovations due to their proximity to local market demands. Sarkar (2018) posits a shift in our understanding of grassroots social entrepreneurs (GSE) from consumers and beneficiaries of aid to creators of socio-economic value amidst highly challenging market conditions. Popov, Veretennikova and Kozinskaya (2018) highlight how social entrepreneurs contribute to just and stable societies while addressing community needs by creating innovative market solutions. In addition, Popov, Veretennikova and Kozinskaya (2018) believe that an enabling institutional environment is critical for the success of GSE. Vlasov, Bonnedahl, and Vincze (2018) view socio-cultural embeddedness (adapting one's practices to fit into your locality) as essential for creating social capital for the GSE in the communities where they operate.

2.4 What is scaling a business, and why is it important

Every successful business reaches a point in its lifecycle where the market growth requires the entrepreneur to relinquish control and put systems in place to accommodate the increased demand (Gulati, Desantola, 2016). In the case of SEs, additional market forces are often at play, with community engagement and government partnerships contributing increasingly to bringing the business to scale (Palomares-Aguirre et al., 2018). Bocken, Fil and Prabhu (2016) agree that there is a dearth of information on how social businesses reach scale and proposed various strategies the SE can scale. In its most basic form, therefore, scaling implies growing your business without necessarily spending more money to accommodate the growth. In the context of SEs, scaling means creating more social value through ecosystem growth so that more beneficiaries can benefit from the collective social impact created by the various role-players in the ecosystem (Islam, 2020).

2.5 Scaling strategies

Scaling social impact can only occur after considering the specific stage of life that the social venture is in. Casanovas and Bruno (2013) identified two developmental stages in the lifecycle of social enterprises, i.e., social incubators and social accelerators. According to Casanovas and Bruno (2013:182), as depicted in Table 1, there are qualifying requirements an organisation must satisfy to be grouped in a specific stage.

Table 1. Common traits of social incubators and accelerators

REQUIREMENTS	SOCIAL INCUBATORS	SOCIAL ACCELERATORS
Company registered	No	Yes
Full time-employees	None or some	At least two
Years of experience	0-3	Three or more
RESOURCES		
Training	Entrepreneurial skills	Management skills
Mentoring	Focused on a business model and initial business plan	Focused on growth strategy
Networking	Other social entrepreneurs and the broader ecosystem	Other social ventures and broader ecosystem
Access to Funding	Grants or seed capital	Debt or equity

Source: Casanovas, Bruno (2013)

Moore, Riddell and Vocisano (2015) highlight four different scaling options that the enterprise should consider:

- (1) Scaling out strategy aims to reach more significant numbers by duplicating an existing program into other geographic territories. Principles are spread while remaining sensitive to the contextual realities of the new venture.
- (2) Scaling up increases the social impact through changing existing policies or laws. Lobbying and advocacy are one form of creating this more significant impact.
- (3) Scaling deep involves spreading big cultural ideas by creating learning communities and by investing in transformative learning.
- (4) Cross-cutting scaling seeks to access new resources, build networks and partnerships while broadening the problem frame.

Alvarado et al. (2017) developed a 6-Step scaling process which serves as a helpful guide for SEs who wish to embark on an impact scaling strategy depending on the developmental level of the company, i.e., 1) Develop a robust program design, 2) Ensure fidelity of implementation (is the program delivered as intended), 3) Produce indicators of positive outcomes, 4) Obtain evidence of positive program outcomes, 5) Replicate positive program outcomes with solid design, 6) Scale the program in the same or new contexts.

Ćwiklicki (2019:56) highlights a pre-condition that the existing model must first prove its viability for SEs to scale social impact. Ćwiklicki (2019) found that generating earnings, partnership building, staffing, communication and replication are the most important requirements for scaling SEs internationally. Stimulating market forces and lobbying activities were viewed as less significant factors in the scaling process.

2.4 Theories and Models used in this study

Three theories and models that illuminate our understanding of the prevailing discourse on sustainability, social ecology, and social enterprise ecosystems were identified. It serves as the basis of our conceptualisation of the phenomenon under study. For this purpose, we will investigate the UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2030), Socio-ecological Model (SEM), as well as the Social Enterprise Ecosystem Framework (SEEF).

2.4.1 UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2030)

At the 2015 UN General Assembly Meeting, 17 SDGs have adopted that focus on the economic, social and environmental dimensions of human development within the limitations of the finite resources at our disposal (Fonseca, Domingues, Dima, 2020). Individual countries adapted these broad principles into unique Millenium Development Plans to give substance, meaning, and specific targets to vague, ambitious ideas (Bali Swain, Yang-Wallentin, 2020). Our case study is based on a grassroots social enterprise that seeks to normalise South African township youth access.

2.4.1.1 Social enterprises and sustainability

Yusuf (2005) draws a link between environmental sustainability and the social impact created by SEs. In agreement, Prof. Muhammad Yunus and his colleague Hans Reitz, designed 7 principles of a social enterprise (Yunus, 2010) i.e., (1) reducing poverty and eliminating threats against people and society; (2) economic sustainability; (3) no dividend is payable; (4) profits are reinvested into businesses; (5) gender sensitivity and environmental sensitivity; (6) market-related wages and great work environment; (7) making the business a joyful experience. There are visible parallels between Yusuf's SE model and UNESCO's SDGs. In a World Economic Forum (WEF) article, Pearson and Mc Elwee (2021) applaud the value of the work done by Catalyst 2030, a social enterprise movement (network), in achieving the 17 SDGs across the globe during the current Covid – 19 pandemic. Governments and other stakeholders in the social justice space could quickly reach some of their SDG targets by partnering with SEs that can assist in achieving the UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

2.4.2 Socio-ecological Model (SEM)

Urie Bronfenbrenner is credited with developing a theoretical model for understanding human development in the 1970s. During the 1980s, it was formalised into what we know as Bronfenbrenner's SEM theory (Kilanowski, 2017). According to this model, human development occurs within a nested context (see Figure 1). The human being is at the nucleus of an ecological ecosystem made up of various systems.

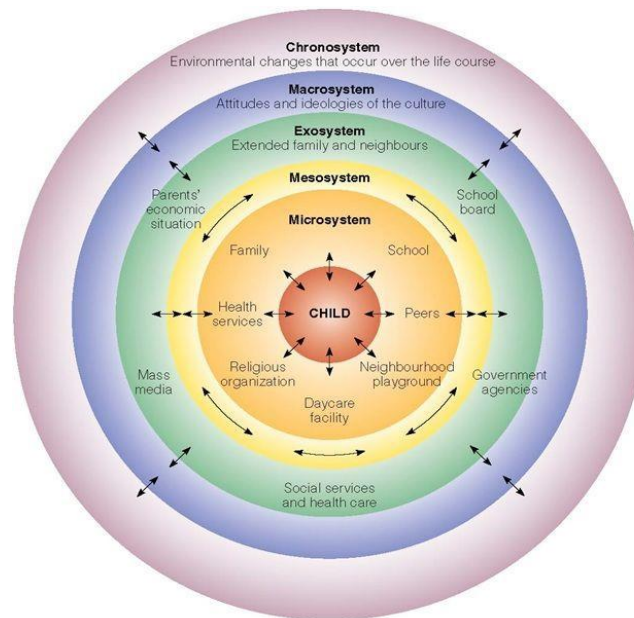


Figure 1. The Socio-Ecological Model (SEM)
Source: Adopted from Bronfenbrenner 1995:619-647

2.4.3 Social Enterprise Ecosystem Framework (SEEF)

According to a 2016 report, the Halcyon Organisation did a study to improve their understanding of the social enterprise ecosystem in the United States (Halcyon 2016). This study resulted in developing the four pillars of the Social Enterprise Ecosystem Framework, i.e., Funding, Quality of life, Human Capital and Regulation and Receptivity. We found this model helpful in analysing the data collected during our interview and content analysis process.

2.4.4 Conceptualising a grassroots SE working in youth development

Bronfenbrenner's SEM model is the basis of the conceptual framework of this paper. A typical South African township consists of the following social role-players within its Microsystem, i.e., Community organisations/Schools (TSOM), Family and Peers/Community members (See Figure 2). The symbiotic relationship between the various role-players in their immediate proximity is brought about by a progressively complex process of reciprocal interactions (Bronfenbrenner 1995). From the depiction, the youth take centre stage while the role-players act as facilitators or inhibitors of their development. Similarly, other beneficiaries will occupy the nucleus of the ecosystem, trying to enable or inhibit their growth through social impact.

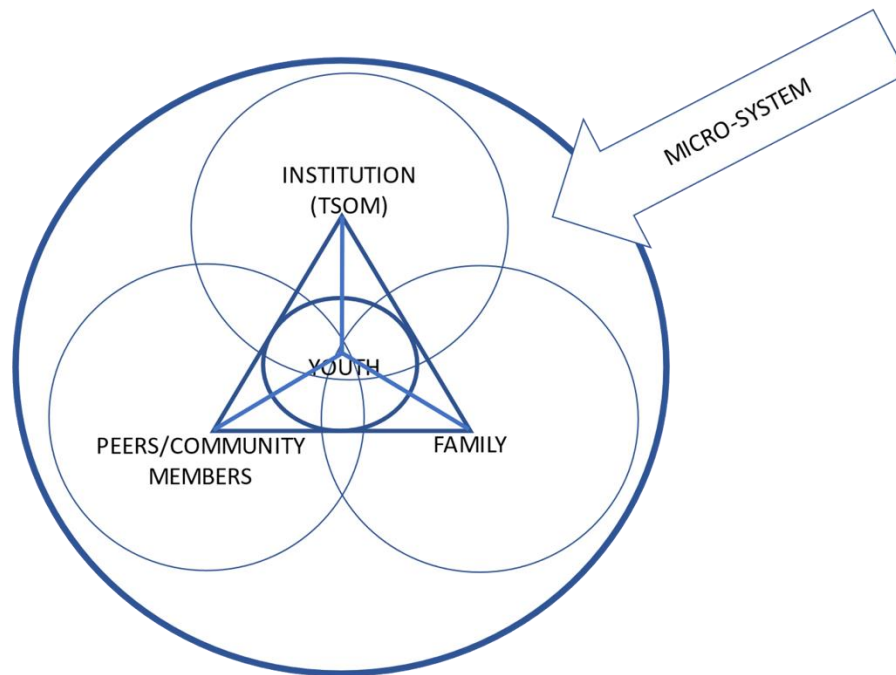


Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.. Conceptual framework of a GSE working in youth development
Source: Authors

The model suggests that the actual impact or social value lies in a community-based organisation's ability to satisfy the unmet needs left by the other role-players in its shared ecosystem.

Tavallaei and Abu Talib (2010) highlight that the role of theory in qualitative research is highly debated. Divergent opinions exist on the importance of theory underpinning methodology, as Kelly (2009) makes an argument argues. In contrast, Collins and Stockton (2018) warn that an over-reliance on theory could cause the researcher to miss emerging themes and findings emanating from the data.

2.4.5 Tshwane School of Music as a model social enterprise

Tshwane School of Music (TSOM) is a SE operating from its base in Eersterust. They run a music school with a mission of creating access to the impoverished youth that they serve. TSOM is exemplary in its effort to make a social pact with its community and is highly active in building corporate partners with private businesses and the government (Tshwane School of Music, 2021). What makes TSOM a candidate for replication as a SE blueprint is its compliance with all the requirements for scaling social impacts (Alvarado et al. (2017) bar one. That is the fact that they are only active in one locality.

During this inquiry, the researcher used a combination of three theories and models, i.e., the UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2030), Socio-ecological Model (SEM) as well as the Social Enterprise Ecosystem Framework (SEEF), to conceptualise the problem under study, draw conclusions and find solutions in the Analysis Matrix Framework (Table 2).

3. Research Methods

Research methodology is the researcher's beliefs in knowledge (epistemology) and reality (ontology) (Tobi, Kampen 2018). For this paper, the researcher collected data using a multi-method qualitative approach, capturing the views of youth workers regarding the critical success factors for scaling grassroots SEs.

3.1 Research design strategy

The researcher used Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill's (2007) 'research onion' to guide this paper's philosophical and methodological choices (De Oliveira Orth & Maçada, 2020). This systematic approach to developing a methodology is supported by Melnikovas (2018), especially for business studies research. This systematic approach to research design aims to increase the credibility and reliability of the study (Crotty 1998).

3.2 Research population, sampling technique, and sample size

Polit and Hungler (1999) assert that a population is all possible objects, subjects, or members meeting the criteria for inclusion in a study. In line with Polit and Hungler (1999), the eligibility criteria for inclusion in this study were the interviewee had to be a past or present staff member of the organisation, and the individual must have grassroots youth work experience.

A non-probability, a convenience sample was used as it is based on the qualities of interviewees who are proficient and well informed about the phenomenon of interest and what needs to be known (Bernard 2002; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). A convenience sample was ideal, as the researcher used readily accessible interviewees in the study (De Vos et al., 1998; LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1998).

A sample size of three youth workers who were previously or currently employed by the organisation was used to investigate various viewpoints. The relatively small sample size was due to the unavailability of staff and students to interview. The organisation was brutal to hit the Covid-19 restrictions and decided to lay off most of the team and close the organisation's doors until 2022 to benefit the children's health and safety.

3.3 Collection and analysis of the data

In agreement with Van Manen (1990) view, semi-structured open and closed-ended questions were used as it lends themselves to small samples. Specific details were gathered by asking critical questions supplemented by more general discussions to clarify and flow the panels (Gill et al. 2008). The researcher also used organisational documents and website information to corroborate interview responses. Silva (2008) advocates for this type of cross-validation, describing it as an inconspicuous way of inquiry. The organisational documents and website data provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of the phenomena by highlighting future projects, bringing new questions into the frame, and fact-checking interview responses (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher used a thematic analysis matrix to organise, summarise and interpret the data outlined by Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002). Petty, Thomson and Stew (2012) recommend this form of data organisation for the responses from the inquiry to provide meaning and logical flow to the concepts under discussion.

This paper's thematic analysis matrix (Table 2) summarises the findings and conclusions against three significant models and theories, i.e., Sustainable Development Goals 2030, the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM), and the Social Enterprise Ecosystem Framework. The matrix also highlights the three major themes emanating from the interviews conducted during the study.

Table 2. Analysis Framework Matrix

Analysis Framework Matrix						
Thematic Analysis		Analysis Model and Theories	Research Question	Aim	Summary of Findings	Conclusions
Theme 3: Scalable township social business model	1	Analysis Model and Theories	How can TSOM’s Model of Social Entrepreneurship be scaled to other previously disadvantaged communities?	To examine whether TSOM meets the requirements for scaling a social enterprise.	- For a social enterprise to scale its impact successfully in PDCs, it must satisfy three criteria: - The SE must express the ambition to scale, provide a model of best practice and have a social entrepreneurship orientation. - There is a great need for social entrepreneurial intervention in South African township communities. - Opportunities to scale come by way of government requests for innovative social solutions or pro-active by SE venturing out during the normal course of running their businesses. - A model of best practice for a township social enterprise must include amongst other things; individuals with social entrepreneurial characteristics, a well-resourced business as well customer-centric orientation to doing business. Most Importantly it needs a social contract with the community within which it hopes to operate.	From the literature, interview responses and website analysis, it is evident that TSOM meets the requirements to scale its business model to other communities. This will lighten the social burden on SEs which is in short supply in South African townships. An area of concern is the fact that funding remains a challenge to SEs which is represented by pillar 1 of SEEF (See SEEF Model). A list of 15 key success factors was identified amongst which entrepreneurial characteristics, organisational structural elements and business strategies were highlighted as the most critical elements for township social enterprises to be successful.
	2	Sustainable Development Goals 2030				
	3	Social Enterprise Ecosystem Framework				

Source: Authors

4. Results and discussion

This paper employed an Analysis Framework Matrix to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the data analysis process (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2021). Branchi, Fernández-Valdivielso and Matias (2014), Verdinelli and Scagnoli (2013), support this practice to organise, summarise, simplify, or transform data while providing a logical flow to the findings.

Table 2 provides a synopsis of the main findings and conclusions in line with the research question and aim analysed considering three theories and models, i.e., UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals 2030, the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM), and the Social Enterprise Ecosystem Framework. The central theme that emanates from our research is a scalable township social business model.

Considering the data gathered through the interviewing of three interviewees, the content analysis of the company documents and website data guided by a review of the literature, the researcher was able to answer the research question of this investigation of “How can TSOM's Model of Social Entrepreneurship be scaled to other previously disadvantaged communities?”.

a. Theme: Scalability of a township social business model

Three vital elements come into play when scaling social enterprises: (1) ambition to scale, (2) social entrepreneurship orientation and (3) a model of best practice.

Sub-themes:

1) Expressing the ambition to scale

Interviewee 2 expressed an ambition to scale by alluding that the SE has developed a workable business model. "I realised that fathering is an issue in our tribe (speaking about the community), and if I can come up with a model, that is why I started with my kids just at home, to start to play music ... I think now we have kind of developed a blueprint, we can scale". **Interviewee 2** confirmed his new appointment as chairperson of the Arts Forum for a new initiative by the City of Tshwane Municipality to encourage growth in the creative industries. The benefit of being acknowledged by your peers in this way "gives you some form of credibility for the work you have already done. By understanding the value of the creative industries' contributing to community development and social cohesion, the local government expressed a clear call for a partnership between themselves and grassroots creatives to help address the systemic problems experienced in many township communities.

During another exchange, **Interviewee 1** expressed that he is in the process of starting up his social enterprise. While explaining his point of difference, he mentioned: "I'm no longer part of Tshwane School of music, right? In the context of running the institution and all of that. I'm now building my own, let's call it clientele, our school. But with a specific focus. Tshwane School of Music had broad strokes, covering multiple disciplines, etc. Now, in my personal and private capacity, the niche has been made smaller". This expression of interest had the clear objective of focusing on specific interventions instead of catering to multiple disciplines.

2) Social entrepreneurship orientation

The significant difference between social and commercial businesses is that their primary aim is to achieve social change through the impact that they can generate. Therefore, it was vital for us to investigate the existence of this feature in the case under study.

To be socially orientated, self-knowledge is vital. **Interviewee 2** answered as follows: "I regard myself as a social entrepreneur, and this awareness also came about, as a result of the work that we were doing and are doing, but also as a trailblazer in the area of education and innovative models, more so to Kickstart to revitalise the township economy". Elaborating further on how the organisation came about, the interviewee said: "I could see immediately how I could be of use then and started to pilot all sorts of programmes from restorative justice to family group conferencing family preservation programmes. And those I'm talking about the last 25 years of my body of work". **Interviewee 2** highlighted the value of brand equity in creating a level of credibility and trustworthiness for the business by adding: "You treat it like a social enterprise or a social entrepreneurship space. You must understand what your brand is all about. So, you must be able to speak and to articulate what your brand is".

Interviewee 1, a senior staff member, explained: "In 2018, I studied social entrepreneurship through the Gordon Institute of business sciences based on TSOM's founders' influence to bring a different perspective ... Our core business was fathering first, and we use[d] music as a vehicle. Secondly, we used these platforms to speak into the lives of children. Just to tell you, the Tshwane School of Music was not just a music institution to teach people how to play an instrument but be fathers, and we were there to develop essential skills within individuals. So,

what is a success in this context? If a child can become a little more whole and more healed, then that is success". Success in this context relates to the impact that was made in the lives of the students who are part of the institution in our case.

Interviewee 2 felt the impact on a personal level while experiencing the positive impacts through their youth work intervention when he remarked; "Be so passionate about people development beyond yourself that when things start to manifest, where you can actually smell the change within the hearts of young people, and the pride and the sense of achievement, and you know, TSOM is like that and then gives me enough fuel to move forward".

"Using the vehicle of music to establish elements of confidence, Independence, and self-worth" was a key element experienced by **Interviewee 3**.

After establishing a clear ambition to scale and a social entrepreneurship orientation, the study investigated whether a model of best practice existed by asking interviewees to list 5 key characteristics of a successful grassroots SE.

3) A model of best practice

All interviewees agreed that the case under study was a replicable best practice model that other grassroots SEs could emulate. It was, however, pointed out by **Interviewee 3** that developing a successful SE takes a partnership between the organisation and the community it is trying to impact. Therefore, one cannot just copy and paste the existing model into another setting but rather co-design a solution with the communities in question.

Interviewee 1 gave the following answer about the "must have's" for a successful SE:

- i) "Number one, the individual needs a sense of self-achievement".
- ii) "Then, number two, you must be very adamant. You must be very driven by the thing you would want to pursue. So that in the NPO space in the social space, it is a challenge, and you must be robust, maybe adamant was not a word, but you must be robust".
- iii) "And then my next point is to have a passion for what you do for yourself to work with that passion for other people. It requires emotional intelligence more than normal".
- iv) "It is then to know the people you work with or the people you will engage just to know the people because the culture is important".
- v) "And then to remind yourself that you do not come with a solution, you are not the solution. The community offers the solution, you come alongside what that is, and you use a vehicle to speak into the need of the culture of the community".

Interviewee 1 focussed on entrepreneurial characteristics as a vital component of a model for successful SE.

Interviewee 2 focussed his response on the resources required by a successful SE:

- i) "The first thing I would want to look at would be a facility [talking about the option of full ownership or rental options of a building] for business activities".
- ii) "The second most important thing is that you need qualified, competent people".
- iii) "The third thing would be you need an extreme business case".
- iv) "Fourthly, I would say community buy-in".
- v) "Don't wait until you have money for the resource to start. (He explained that many things could be achieved while you are raising funds for the business). Funds are not unimportant; however, they should not be the driving force behind why you are in a social business. It should be to create social value".

On the other hand, **Interviewee 3** had a different take on what is essential for SE success.

"OK. The first one would be to identify the client and identify the client's needs, which involves a lot of research into the social ills.

- i) The second step would be to develop a strategy to address those needs and have an implementation strategy.
- ii) And thirdly would be to create access. In the form of obtaining cash as every programme requires funds to run or keep its doors open, and it's very crucial to receive funding for sustainability's sake.
- iii) OK, number four is information and openness. Clients must be informed as to what the programme is all about.
- iv) And lastly. To give feedback and evaluation are also prioritising to exceed the clients' expectations".

Interviewee 3 viewed customer-centricity and market orientation as essential for building a successful SE. His view is that identifying a target market, focusing on customer satisfaction and giving timeous customer feedback will ensure brand loyalty.

Grassroots SEs can function better if they take the following advice from the interviewees onboard: **Interviewee 1** explained that although models of best practice are helpful, SEs should guard against implementing a project without adapting it to be context-specific. "So, how can other institutions benefit from our story, as much as we can benefit from their story through dialogue, and through the record of the things that we have done the meaning of individuals of functions of achievements, etc. We cannot start another Tshwane School of Music in Cape Town; we can't because this is Tshwane School of Music".

Interviewee 2 had this to say to prospective SEs: "People must understand that to put a community-based programme of quality, like what we have done, we don't settle for anything less than the fullest. Because we believe our children deserve it, you know, without any entitlement, that I believe that if you have that kind of conviction. There's a saying in Afrikaans that says, jy moet hare op jou tande het (You must be tenacious or resilient)".

While **Interviewee 3** shared his endorsement of the model under study by stating: "I think that TSOM's business model is incredible, and I think it should be replicated to all townships ... Pointing to the nature of problems encountered by township youth".

The interviewer asked what would constitute key success factors for scaling grassroots SEs in the South African context. Accordingly, the interviewees' responses were summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Key features for social enterprise success

Key success factors for scaling a grassroots social enterprise		
Executive (Interviewee 2)	Manager (Interviewee 1)	Administrator (Interviewee 3)
Strategic Dimension	Personal Dimension	Business Operational Dimension
Availability of Infrastructure	Sense of achievement	Customer-centricity
Human resources (Create a winning TEAM)	Determination to succeed (Grid and Determination)	Clearly defined business strategy
Business case	Passion	What is your USP (Creating Access)
Financial resources	People's person	Feedback and evaluation
Community partnership	Community partnership	Community partnership

Source: Authors

Table 3 highlights the key success factors for scaling a grassroots social enterprise in a South African township context, identified as critical elements by the social entrepreneurs interviewed during this research project. All

three interviewees viewed community partnerships as essential for successfully implementing a grassroots SE solution in a South African context.

From the literature review, interviews and content analysis, we also found that entrepreneurial characteristics, resource deployment and sound business strategies are critical elements for grassroots SEs to achieve success.

Conclusions

Social entrepreneurship helps communities grow, and social businesses are part of an ecosystem of community stakeholders working together to enhance the communities they serve. Due to South Africa's Apartheid history, socio-economic inequality, and record-breaking unemployment rate, social businesses play an essential role. Social entrepreneurship helps communities grow. Social businesses are part of an ecosystem of community stakeholders working together to enhance the communities they serve. Social enterprises are critical in South Africa due to the country's Apartheid heritage, socio-economic disparity, and record-breaking unemployment rate. This paper examines the essential success factors for scaling a social enterprise model in a South African grassroots community context.

This single case study confirms the sterling work done by social enterprises in South African grassroots communities. It gave a first-hand experience of youth's various challenges as they mature into adulthood. Innovation and creative classroom strategies yield the desired results when engaging young people. The investigation proposes building partnerships as part of a strategy to scale impact through grassroots SEs. SEs and commercial entities encounter socio-economic factors and political factors that impact their ability to deliver on their mandates. As a result, global pandemics and wartime conditions make it difficult for SEs to do their work in marginalised communities.

The study highlights the resilience of township communities that somehow find a way to make things work in the face of extreme hardships. It also delivers on our aim of identifying the key success factors for scaling SEs after adapting it to local contextual realities.

This paper confirms that scaling should be contextually relevant as social problems and community development needs differ vastly from one community to the next. For this reason, partnerships between the SEs and their local communities were flagged as the most critical success factor in this study. In other words, contextual embeddedness is a major key factor for scaling social enterprises. These partnerships will ensure greater ownership while allowing communities to co-design and co-create the solutions that will benefit them.

Our findings confirm that the case study is a best practice model for grassroots SEs in South Africa. Implementing a cross-cutting scaling strategy will significantly impact acquiring alternative funding resources, building social networks/partnerships, and broadening the social frame.

5.2 Implications

This paper's primary aim was to examine the critical success factors for scaling a social enterprise model in a South African grassroots community context. The researchers thematically analysed the interview responses using an Analysis Framework Matrix using the following models, i.e., UNESCO SDG's, the social-ecological model, and the social enterprise ecosystem framework, to arrive at the findings that will have theoretical and stakeholder (SEs, Government, and Commercial Enterprises) implications.

5.2.1 Theoretical implications

This paper confirms the importance of organisational embeddedness in the community in line with Bronfenbrenner's SEM Theory which posits that society functions in an ecosystem of systems. The aim of

identifying key success factors for scaling GSE in a South African context was therefore achieved by providing a list of 15 critical success factors straddling three organisational dimensions, i.e., Personal, Business and Strategic Dimension.

5.2.2 Stakeholder Implications

- i) Social Enterprises should prioritise skills transfer to equip their beneficiaries for the world of work.
- ii) SEs should expose beneficiaries to cutting edge innovations to equip them for future opportunities.
- iii) SEs will have a better chance of survival if they use a varied funding mix, especially in global economic hardships. The organisation in our case study suffered cutbacks due to financial constraints.
- iv) SEs using a cross-cutting scaling strategy, i.e., scaling out, scaling up and scaling deep, will have a more significant impact.
- v) It is in the interest of governments to collaborate with social enterprises to normalise access to previously disadvantaged communities (PDCs).
- vi) SEs are an excellent vehicle to assist the government in addressing dysfunctionality in many communities in South Africa.
- vii) Commercial enterprises can improve their brand equity and long-term sustainability by partnering with credible SEs, while addressing the skills gap of youngsters hoping to enter the workplace.

5.3 Limitations of the study and future research

Our empirical inquiry was informed by in-depth interviews and observations with three interviewees, a website content analysis of one website, and a qualitative examination of organisational documents from one SE because this single case study is limited to one SE in one South African township and cannot be generalised.

This single case study leaves a lot of unanswered questions, and therefore a multiple case study could give a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon under investigation. This qualitative study is a data-rich perspective from the management and staff's perspective of the impact generated by the SE. Therefore, a mixed-method study, including the students' opinions, will go a long way in presenting the youth's voice on the matter.

Developing an impact assessment tool will prove helpful in assisting all role-players in the social enterprise space to monitor and evaluate the impacts of the various projects. An impact assessment tool could also facilitate funding opportunities for these grassroots SEs.

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