Abstract

Social entrepreneurship (SE), as an extension of social work (SW) practice and research in an innovative and entrepreneurial way, has emerged as an alternative solution to disabilities in both SE and SW fields. Despite the promise of SE to address the problems faced by people with disabilities (PODs) via work-integrated SEs, we do not know what SEs actually do and whether and how their approaches may be similar to or different from contemporary SW practices. Importantly, we do not know if the SE model generates better outcomes compared to the conventional SW approach, and if so, how. To address these gaps, I will draw on the theory of social development and social role valorization theory. This proposed dissertation will first conduct a systematic literature review to deepen understanding the conceptual overlaps and differences between SE’s social work practices and the conventional SW practice in supporting people with disabilities. Secondly, the study will employ a qualitative inductive approach to understand how SE and SW have been helping the disabled people and in what way(s) they may be similar or different and then identify how the SE’s approach may inform SW research and practices. In the third study, longitudinal studies will be conducted to assess the efficacy of SE interventions compared to traditional social work practices from the clients/beneficiaries’ perspective, and fourthly, a quantitative survey will be used to test factors that influence the efficacy of SE interventions versus SW practices. Overall, this research will contribute to a new understanding of how SE and SW are actually supporting PODs using a comparative approach and will contribute to the SE’s social value creation concepts and SW literature. The findings help social workers and social entrepreneurs design and implement more effective interventions in supporting PODs. Also, the mixed-method approach used in this dissertation will overcome some limitations of a single study design and therefore provide more comprehensive answers to the research questions.