Evaluation of University-Based Platforms in Support of Social Entrepreneurship

Sosyal Girişimlerin Gelişmesini Destekleyen Üniversite Platformlarının Değerlendirilmesi

Burçin Hatipoğlu ⓘD

Visiting Fellow, University of New South of Wales, Sydney, Australia

Özet

Araştırmanın amacı Türkiye'deki iki farklı üniversitede uygulanan dışarıya açık sosyal girişimcilik programlarının yürütme süreçlerini ve sonuçlarını değerlendirmektir. Her iki girişim de kendi başlarına başardıklarından daha fazlasını elde etmek için birden fazla ortakla stratejik olarak bir araya gelmiştir. Bu araştırmada programların çalışma prensiplerini incelemek amacı ile "ortaklarla etkileşim, sosyal problemlerin niteliği ve program çıktıları" değişken olarak kullanılmıştır. Veri toplama süreçleri; web tabanlı verilerin toplanması, katılımcı gözlemleme, program ortakları ve yararlanıcılarla ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve saha ziyaretini içermiştir. Sosyal girişimcilik ekosisteminin genişlediği ancak ölçek büyütme projeleri için olan destek programlarının azlığı ve sosyal yatırımcıların eksikliği belirlenmiştir. Bulgular, iki programın ortaklık geliştirmekte, fonlamada, içerikte ve çıktılarda farklılıklar sergilediğini göstermektedir. Ekosistemdeki karşılanmamış ihtiyaçları belirlemek, platformların güçlü yanlarını tanımlayabilmek ve tamamlayıcı kaynaklara sahip ortaklarla eşleşmek, iki platformun geliştirdikleri etkili stratejiler olarak bulunmuştur. Çalışma, üniversitelerin konumlarını tam olarak etkin kullanmadıklarını; sosyal girişimcilik programlarını öğretim ve araştırma ile bütünleştirerek ve belirleyecekleri sosyal sorunlara odaklanarak ekosistemin gelişmesine daha fazla katkıda bulunabileceklerini vurgulamıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Girişimci ekosistemi, sektörler arası sosyal ortaklık, sosyal girişimcilik, Türkiye, yükseköğretim.

Abstract

The study reports on the operationalization of social entrepreneurship programs that are implemented by two university-based platforms in Turkey. Both initiatives have strategically come together with multiple partners (e.g., for-profit and nonprofit businesses and local governmental agencies) in order to achieve more than what they can accomplish on their own. Resource sharing with the partners, nature of social problems, and program outputs and outcomes were used for exploring the working principles of the two programs. The data collection included secondary data, participant observations, semi-structured interviews with program partners and beneficiaries, and a site visit. The social entrepreneurship ecosystem in the given context was found to be growing yet with gaps in support systems for scale-up projects and impact investing. The findings suggest that the two programs varied in their partnership arrangements, funding, scope, and outputs consistent with their program goals. Identifying the unmet needs in the ecosystem, knowing the platforms' strengths and capabilities, and matching with partners that have complementary resources are found to be effective strategies of the platforms. The study argues that universities are not fully utilizing their vital position to contribute to the improvements of the ecosystem, and more can be achieved by integrating the programs with teaching and research and increasing their specialization in various social issues (e.g., gender equality).

Keywords: Cross-sector social partnerships, entrepreneurial ecosystem, higher education, social entrepreneurship, Turkey.

The purpose of the study is to explore the value creation of social entrepreneurship programs that are implemented by two university-based platforms in Turkey during the years 2016–2018. As a concept, social entrepreneurship has taken different meanings over time, and it is still evolving. Innovative and social value-creating organizations are broadly described as social entrepreneurial organizations (SEO) in the literature (Al Taji & Bengo, 2019; Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006; Capella-Peris, Gil-Gómez, Martí-Puig, & Ruíz-Bernardo, 2020). SEOs are part of the

social economy that also comprises cooperatives, mutual societies and associations, and foundations. Among the common attributes of the social organizations are the primacy of the individual and social objectives over the capital, the reinvestment of surpluses, social innovation, and democratic governance (Monzón & Chaves, 2017, p. 22). Increasingly social economy enterprises and organizations are seen as drivers of economic and social development. In the European Union (EU) alone, the social economy provides 13.6 million paid jobs that cover 6.3% of the working population (Monzón &

Chaves, 2017, p. 67). The social economy continues its growth almost in every sector of the economy, attracting growing attention from policymakers, investors, researchers, and educators.

In tandem with the rising importance of the social economy, the academic work that investigates the phenomenon is also expanding (e.g., social enterprises and NGOs). A systematic review of the literature on social entrepreneurship and social innovation (Phillips, Lee, Ghobadian, O'Regan, & James, 2015) has shown that the most common themes explored are the role of the entrepreneur (Lehner & Kansikas, 2012); networks and systems (Edwards-Schachter, Matti, & Alcántara, 2012); the formation and development of cross-sectoral partnerships (Selsky & Parker, 2005); and the role of institutions (Harrisson, Chaari, & Comeau-Vallée, 2012). Policymakers, leaders, and scholars agree that entrepreneurial ecosystem development is instrumental in boosting entrepreneurship (Roundy, 2017). A social entrepreneurial ecosystem includes "a community of practitioners and institutions jointly addressing social issues, helping to shape society and innovation" (Phillips et al., 2015, p. 452). It is observed that the process of entrepreneurship and the system feed each other, and for the complex ecosystem of entrepreneurship to work in harmony, coordination and collaboration among the actors is important (Neck, Meyer, Cohen, & Corbett, 2004). Self-sustaining entrepreneurial ecosystems share some common elements, which are "conducive policy, markets, capital, human skills, culture, and supports" (Isenberg, 2011, p. 6).

Universities, particularly research-oriented ones, are viewed as part of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and are considered to be essential for bolstering entrepreneurship (Neck et al., 2004). Higher education equips future entrepreneurs with the necessary skills, knowledge, and networks and, as a result, contributes to the labor force with enabled human capital for entrepreneurship (Isenberg, 2011). Not surprisingly, entrepreneurship education is one of the fastest-growing fields in the adult education and training sector (Durán-Sánchez, Del Río, Álvarez-García, & García-Vélez, 2019). In addition to their educative roles, universities, as the knowledge-generating institutions and neutral spaces, can bring together key partners to work together for innovation and foster the development of the ecosystem (Cengiz, 2014). For example, in Belgium Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) formed a platform in support of social entrepreneurs (VUB, 2020); in Australia, three universities came together to form a center for social impact and to support both entrepreneurs and research (CSI, 2020); and in the UK the Social Enterprise Network brought together Plymouth University, City Council and the local SEOs with the aim of supporting SOE development in the region (Plymouth Social Enterprise, 2020). Overall, universities engage in multiple programs and partnerships in order to contribute to entrepreneurship development. Thus, to facilitate further research and better describe the ways in which universities can position themselves within the entrepreneurship ecosystem, it is of the essence to explore the current programs on social entrepreneurship.

This research recognizes the significance of an enabling *entrepreneurial ecosystem* that holds a variety of organizations and enterprises within the social economy with complex interlinkages between them (Bloom & Dees, 2008); and argues that universities, as contributors to knowledge and innovation, are in a vital position for fostering the necessary enabling environment for social entrepreneurship development. Therefore, the study aims to explore *how universities create value for supporting social entrepreneurship development in the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Turkey*. Based on the review of the literature, resource sharing with the program partners (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012), nature of social problems (Seelos, Mair, Battilana, & Dacin, 2011), and the program outcomes and outputs (Van Tulder, Seitanidi, Crane, & Brammer, 2016) are utilized as variables in order to explore *value creation processes* for internal and external stakeholders. By examining two university-based programs, this study targets to add on to the social entrepreneurship education and development literature (Apostolakis, 2011). The qualitative inquiry relies on both secondary data and primary data. Participatory observations during social entrepreneurship events, semi-structured interviews with program managers and beneficiaries, and a site visit to an SEO constitute the primary data collection.

Background to the Study

Social Entrepreneurial Organizations (SEOs)

Entrepreneurs are people who discover, define, and act upon opportunities in the market (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, & Shulman, 2009). A social entrepreneur is a specific type of entrepreneur that has social goals besides profit-making. All entrepreneurs, including the social ones, take risks; are proactive and independent (Zahra et al., 2009). Different than a traditional entrepreneur, the social entrepreneur identifies and fills an unmet need in society. Managing SEOs is challenging since they are operating with "a double bottom line"; furthering a social mission while attaining financial returns at the same time (NESsT, 2018).

The social problems that are discovered and addressed by SEOs can be diverse. Zahra and his colleagues identify 3 typologies from the literature. According to the authors, these

social problems can be grouped as (*i*) small scale, local in scope and episodic in nature, (*ii*) small to large scale, local to international scope, and an ongoing need and (*iii*) very large scale, national to international scale and require an order change (Zahra et al., 2009). The local *embeddedness* of social entrepreneurs is suggested to have benefits for the SEOs. When social entrepreneurs are part of the local structure and networks, then they gain a better understanding of the local issues and can have access to and build on local resources (Seelos et al., 2011). As SEOs discover local opportunities, they can find solutions to small-scale local problems and serve their communities using locally available resources (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016). The attractiveness of the ecosystem will increase if SEOs solve social problems. As a result, new social entrepreneurs will enter the system, causing an enlargement in the system (Roundy, 2017). Overall, newly forming ecosystems can benefit from SEOs that are anchored in the local context, and that discover and exploit local social opportunities before addressing larger-scale global problems.

The Social Mission of Universities

Universities are knowledge-intensive organizations, where teaching and research take place. Through these activities, they contribute to economic growth, and their role is even more critical in knowledge-intensive entrepreneurial economies (Link & Sarala, 2019). Over time, the growing expectations from universities to address global challenges (e.g., climate change) have led them to reconsider their role within their communities (Goddard, 2017). As a result, universities have overtaken a third mission in which they contribute to the economic and social development by supporting innovation and entrepreneurial development (Markuerkiaga, Caiazza, Igartua, & Errasti, 2016; Van Tulder et al., 2016). Universities' relationship with the external environment is not only through educating the future workforce but also providing advanced technologies and systems (Thomsen, Muurlink, & Best, 2018). They play a part in the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem through displaying leadership and advancing infrastructure, technology, talent, and culture of innovation (Huang-Saad, Duval-Couetil, & Park, 2018). Knowledge spillovers created by the activities of the universities can benefit the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem as well as the individual stakeholders of the system (e.g. students, academic staff, businesses, and catalyzers) (Apostolakis, 2011; Belitski & Heron, 2017).

Atakan and Eker (2007) describe a *socially responsible university* as the one that tackles the social needs of its local communities by utilizing its corporate assets and knowledge. Driven by a social mission, these universities have a moral obligation towards their communities (Paunescu & Cantaragiu, 2013). Goddard (2017) suggests integrating research and teaching with society while keeping a soft boundary between the internal systems and the external environment. Holding a strong sense of place, a *civic university* firstly contributes to the city where it is founded, and then to the broader world (Goddard, 2017). A civic university's engagement with society is institution-wide, with the aim of having an impact beyond academia. While differing in names, all of the above definitions recommend universities to take a leading role in social innovation and bring together government, business and civil society around common goals.

In order to contribute to social innovation and entrepreneurship, various methods are utilized by universities. They can make changes to their curricula by adding business ethics, corporate social responsibility (CSR), or social entrepreneurship courses (Atakan & Eker, 2007). They can also enhance students' knowledge and engagement through direct involvement with grassroots projects (Cetindamar & Hopkins, 2008). Further, they can try real-world, experiential learning methods through university institutions like living laboratories, entrepreneurship centers, technology transfer offices (TTOs), business incubators, clubs and networking organizations (Thomsen et al., 2018). These types of activities will benefit future social entrepreneurs to question and comprehend the challenges of combining multiple logics of social entrepreneurship (social welfare logic, commercial logic, and public sector logic) for creating social impact (Pache & Chowdhury, 2012). The programs can support innovators (student and academia), and at the same time, attract partners from the external environment (British Council, 2016).

Social Entrepreneurship in Turkey

In Turkey, philanthropic activities can be historically traced back to the Ottoman *waqf* system (foundation), which were mainly charity organizations that would help the needy in times of hardship (Karğın, Aktaş, & Gökbunar, 2018). On the other hand, social entrepreneurship as a term is relatively new for modern-day Turkey, and the global fuzziness in the definition is even more evident here. In Europe, six countries (Belgium, Spain, Greece, Portugal, France, and Romania) out of the 28 have already passed social economy laws (Monzón & Chaves, 2017); and various forms of social organizations, like the community interest companies in the UK, can be found. On the other hand, social entrepreneurship as a form of organization is not recognized by the Turkish legal system. Therefore, we witness other types of organizations (e.g., foundations, nonprofit

associations, and for-profit cooperatives) that operate with a social mission (Ersen, Kaya, & Meydanoğlu, 2010). Numerous for-profit companies aim to further their social goals while making commercial gains. Some of the earlier examples are *Gençtur*, which provides youth exchange and volunteer programs aiming for the social and cultural development of the youth (established in 1979), and *B-Fit Sports* and *Healthy Living* Centers for Women which offer sports activities for women, aiming at empowering them through entrepreneurship (established in 2006). Some more recent examples include *Dem Good Café*, which supports the hearing impaired by employing them in the café shop and encourages the use of sign language by providing training to the public, and *Bebemoss*, which sells handmade organic knitted toys made by the disadvantaged women and aims at economically empowering these women.

The lack of legal recognition creates various hurdles for the ecosystem. Foundations, nonprofit associations, cooperatives, and companies are subject to different financial regulations (e.g., taxes), and they report to different public institutions (Ersen et al., 2010). Banks (e.g., *Şekerbank*) provide micro-credits to small businesses and angel investors (e.g., *Galata Angel Investors*), and venture capital firms are investing in start-up companies (e.g., *Endeavour Catalyst*). However, social impact investing is absent from the country. Only recently, a social investment firm NESsT (2018) has been invited by KUSIF Koç University Social Impact Forum to give seminars on impact investing. Moreover, besides the financial difficulties encountered by SEOs, the fragmented system also lowers the visibility of the social impact created by the sector (Ersen et al., 2010).

Despite many contextual challenges, the ecosystem that encompasses different forms of social entrepreneurs, catalyzers, financial institutions, universities, and international organizations has gradually grown over the last years. For example, TUSEV (Third sector foundation for Turkey) that was instituted in 1993 aims to improve the legal, fiscal, and operations infrastructure of the third sector in Turkey (TUSEV, 2020). *Ashoka* fellowship program is supporting social entrepreneurs since 2000 in Turkey, and a local office in Istanbul operates since 2014 (Ashoka, 2020). *Mikado Consulting*, a B-Corp itself, guides social responsibility and social entrepreneurship (Mikado Consulting, 2020). These and other institutions offer various traditional entrepreneurship training programs and hold competitions that also support social entrepreneurs. Most of the programs, however, aim to create awareness in young entrepreneurs and guide them in the initial stages of their start-ups. As entrepreneurship education is absent from middle and high school curricula, we observe many courses (both by high-

er education institutions and professional organizations) aimed for young adults in the country (Karğın et al., 2018).

Universities stand on the outer edge of the ecosystem (*see* the ecosystem map provided by IMECE, 2018), and there are only a handful of universities (out of 206 universities in Turkey) that are founded in large cities actively involved in SEOs. For example, Istanbul Bilgi university offers business ethics and CSR courses, civic involvement projects, social service clubs, and provides educational support for the local community (Atakan & Eker, 2007). Sabancı University (Istanbul) makes it compulsory to take civic involvement projects for every student (Cetindamar & Hopkins, 2008). Özyeğin University Entrepreneurship Center (Istanbul) offers awareness seminars on the topic (Ersen et al., 2010). Yaşar University from Izmir and Middle East Technical University (METU) from Ankara are two other active universities in the ecosystem (IMECE, 2018).

Cross-Sector Social Partnerships (CSSPs)

Multi-sector partnerships are growingly seen as a solution for solving global sustainability challenges (Roundy, 2017), United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encourage partnerships to be built at the global, regional, national and local level (United Nations, 2016). CSSPs are formed when partners come together "explicitly to address social issues and causes that actively engage the partners on an ongoing basis" (Selsky & Parker, 2005, p. 850). The European Commission suggests a Quadruple Helix Model, involving government, university, business, and civil society for the co-creation of social change (Goddard, 2017).

Contribution of involved parties is vital for social innovation because when local authorities, public service organizations, charities, and social enterprises come together around a social mission, they can achieve more than what they can accomplish on their own (Cinar, 2019; Goddard, 2017). The sharing of their heterogeneous resources and capabilities will improve the value of the results (Dentoni, Bitzer, & Pascucci, 2016). As such, organizational fit and resource complementarity among partners are essential for success (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). The more partners get involved in the partnership, the more they will share their distinct knowledge and skills for social innovation. A global report by the British Council investigated the partnerships formed by higher education institutions for social entrepreneurship development (British Council, 2016). The investigators found that three in every four universities engaged in partnerships, and the highest benefits were for the universities and their students. Despite a high level of engagement, there was still a need for an increased level of

knowledge in order to understand how these partnerships work and impact assessment methodologies for evaluating the value of these partnerships for students, communities, and communities.

Method

The study applies a multiple case study methodology. The two cases that were chosen for this study allow an in-depth study of the phenomenon that is the operationalization and value creation of social entrepreneurship support programs, and also enable to make cautious causal inferences about the contextual and institutional factors. The convenience sampling provided ease of access since both programs are offered in Turkey; the author had prior contact with the program coordinators and was able to attend the program events. The data collection period (2017–2018) was timely, as the first program (IRSECP) was coming to a conclusion, and the second program (SoGIP) had recently been completed (SoGİP, 2018).

University-Based Platforms and their Programs on Social Entrepreneurship

The first program is by KUSIF Social Impact Forum, which was founded in 2012 by Koç University in Istanbul. KUSIF was established to generate Turkish resources on social impact measurement and create collaborative networks among civil society, public and private entities. In May 2016, with the partnership of the UniCredit Foundation and Vehbi Koç Foundation, KUSIF launched the "Change with Business" program for advancing the knowledge and skills of social entrepreneurs, engaging the financial sector, and developing a supportive ecosystem (KUSIF, 2017). This program later evolved into the "Investment Ready Social Enterprises Certificate Program" (IRSECP) and partnered with the *Ashoka Turkey* office and *Mikado Consulting*. KUSIF has received funding from the EU for supporting 12 social entrepreneurship projects in 2017 and 2018.

The second program is run by Boğaziçi University Businesspeople Alumni Association (BRM). The nonprofit organization aims to support inclusive businesses and social enterprises. BRM implemented a social entrepreneurship support program for university students named SoGİP during the 2016–2017 period, which was sponsored by the *Istanbul Development Agency* (ISTKA). They have partnered with the businesses, experts, the Ashoka Turkey office, and the Boğaziçi University Lifelong Learning Center (BUYEM). During the project, 600 students benefited from awareness-raising activities, 150 students received training, and 32 project ideas were developed.

Variables of the Study

The study aims to explore and evaluate the internal and external value creation processes of two university-based platforms. Cinar (2019) notes the challenges in measuring the social impact of SE programs that are supported by higher education institutions. Cinar's (2019) research found that in the absence of an accepted methodology for measuring these impacts, universities utilize quantifiable indicator sets, which causes them to support initiatives with commercial objectives rather than those with social objectives. Guided by the research aim, three qualitative variables are utilized to explore the operationalization of the programs. Next, the variables, definitions, and the reasons for utilizing these variables are explained.

Universities engage in various types of partnerships for supporting social entrepreneurship (British Council, 2016). It is of importance to report on what type of value is created (internal and external) and who benefits from these programs through these partnerships. Both platforms that are investigated in this research have partnered with external organizations (e.g., for-profit and nonprofit businesses and local governmental agencies) in order to achieve more than what they can accomplish on their own. These were temporary arrangements with partners around a common social goal. Resource sharing among partners is suggested to contribute to the co-creation of value in the literature (*see* Section CSSPs). Hence, resource sharing (resource directionality) is the first variable of the study, which is explained by using three dimensions; *partner engagement*, defined as the involvement in activity planning and delivery from low to high; *partner interactions*, defined as the frequency of the direct contacts from infrequent to intensive; and *scope of activities*, defined as the range of activities involved from narrow to broad (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Dentoni et al., 2016).

The second variable of the study is the nature of social problems. The literature recommends that when an ecosystem is at its early development stages, it can benefit from SEOs that are anchored in the local context that discover and exploit local social opportunities. As a result, other entrepreneurs and investors are attracted to the system (Roundy, 2017). The embeddedness is a process in which the SEO understands the local rules, builds the trust of the communities, gains access to the local resources, and creates value (Seelos et al., 2011). Thus, the nature of social problems relates to the embeddedness of the SEO in the local cultures, evaluated by the type of social problems it addresses (e.g., local, regional, national or international).

The last variable is the program efficiency and effectiveness. According to Van Tulder et al. (2016), program outputs and outcomes show a program's efficiency and immediate changes

in the beneficiaries caused by the activities of the program. The authors define *partnership efficiency* as the internal value-added, which is observed in the outputs (operational performance and immediate effects) and outcomes (tactical performance and intermediate effects) of the program. *Partnership effectiveness* involves the longer-term impacts of the program that should be measured at the level of the partners, stakeholders, and the system (Van Tulder et al., 2016, p. 10).

Data Collection

The secondary data was collected from program websites and utilized for describing the social entrepreneurship ecosystem. The primary data collection consisted of participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and a site visit. The author participated in the final project presentations of IRSECP (February 15th, 2018), and took detailed notes and pictures. The detailed notes included information on the nature of the social problems addressed and the outcomes achieved by each SEO. These notes, together with the secondary data, were used in constructing the interview guidelines for each program. The triangulation of data from different sources aimed at satisfying Lincoln and Guba's (1985) *credibility* criterion (internal reliability). Please *see* ▮▮ Table 1 for the results.

The author interviewed the program managers from the two university-based platforms (face to face and telephone) and Ashoka Turkey office manager (telephone) using the interview guidelines. These semi-structured interviews lasted between 45 minutes to an hour and were transcribed following the interviews. The general aim of the interviews was to attain a broad understanding of the operationalization principles of the programs, and in specific to follow the types of program activities administered and implemented. Additionally, data was collected from a sample of the managers of the social entrepreneurship projects that were supported by the two platforms. In particular, information about the outputs of their projects was collected during these interviews.

Data Analysis

The analysis procedure applied the guidelines for applied thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). Based on this approach, the structural coding process was used in analyzing the data. Categories were formed based on the research question, and the variables of the study and the data about each case were coded separately (Guest et al., 2011). Information on the operationalization of each program was gathered in a table with details and first analyzed by a case-oriented approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This approach means that each case was studied in-depth, and a case report was written highlighting the themes relevant to the research question. These thick descriptions of each case program aimed at satisfying the *transferability* (external validity) criterion of research, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Subsequently, a variables-oriented strategy was applied to data analysis, in which themes that cut across the two cases were gathered and examined (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To maintain Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of *dependability* (reliability) and *confirmability* (objectivity), these two sets of workbooks, together with a table, assured an audit trail.

Next, the findings of the study first present the within-case analysis for each platform, describing the programs, the cross-sector partnerships formed, the social entrepreneurship projects supported, and the outputs. The cross-case analysis is discussed in the last section by evaluating the similarities and differences in approaches to social entrepreneurship support.

Results

Investment Ready Social Enterprises Certificate Program (IRSECP)

KUSIF Social Impact Forum, by Koç University, followed the *Investment Ready Social Enterprises Certificate Program* (IRSECP) during the 2017–2018 period. KUSIF conducted an entrepreneurial ecosystem needs analysis before starting their program on social entrepreneurship. The existence of support programs for start-ups and university students (e.g., Impact Hub) in the ecosystem has led KUSIF to identify the need of the ecosystem as *training and mentoring of the established SEOs*. As a result, the IRSECP program was mainly designed for SEOs (for-profit business, cooperative and nonprofit business) that aimed to scale up their enterprises (▮▮ Table 1). The call for taking part in the program received over 50 applications, of which twelve were chosen to be supported during the 2017–2018 period. The program involved seven modules of training that were offered between the months of June and December 2017. The training topics included social impact management, strategy and business model development, financial sustainability, branding and positioning strategies, human resource management, networking and communications and social financing, and impact investment. These modules of training aim to support SEOs for scaling up their projects by improving their managerial capabilities. Writing and presenting business plans and eventually attracting interested impact investors were also among the program goals for the partners of the program.

Level of resource sharing by partners: The more partners share their valuable resources and capabilities with the program, the better it is for the beneficiaries. An important partner involved in the IRSECP was the Ashoka Turkey office. In examining the *partner engagement* (low-high), we understand Ashoka

Turkey was active in the decision-making processes of the program and shared knowledge-based resources in the partnership. In terms of *scope of activities*, Ashoka Turkey developed the project selection criteria for SEOs to be supported, was involved in the selection processes, developed content, conducted a needs analysis, and provided training. In terms of *partner interactions* (infrequent-intensive), Ashoka Turkey was involved through the development, implementation, and evaluation phases. Overall, Ashoka's engagement level was found to be high, interaction level intensive, and involvement to be in a broad spectrum of activities. The partnership has benefited from Ashoka Turkey's longtime experience and in-depth knowledge of social entrepreneurship for delivering value to the SEOs.

Nature of social goals: The nature of their social mission (e.g., local, national, or international) was not a selection criterion for the supported SEOs. As a result, a variety of social goals were addressed by the entrepreneurs supported by the IRSECP (■ Table 1). However, the study notes that the SEO missions gathered around three main themes: quality of life improvements for the disabled and at-risk people (Projects 01, 02, 04, 05 and 06), economic and social empowerment of the disadvantaged groups (Projects 04, 06, 08, 10), and awareness-raising about sustainability (Projects 03 and 09). Even though the IRSECP represents a small sample of projects, these results highlight some of the important local social issues in the country.

Outputs and outcomes of the program: As for the results of the program, ten social entrepreneurship businesses continued the training modules from beginning to the end, and nine of these (Project 06 was not ready for presenting)

made their final presentations for demonstrating their progress (■ Table 1). The jury members, including the partners of the program and experts, provided feedback on SEO presentations and chose the projects to be further supported. Except for projects 06 and 10, 8 of the presented projects were sponsored to take additional training abroad in 2018. Additionally, projects 02, 05, 08, and 09 were further supported for the year 2018 through more specific consulting and mentoring activities.

The training provided during the program were found to be highly productive by the participants. Between each training module, ample time was left for trainees to complete the tasks assigned by the trainers. For instance, the members of the social cooperative (Project 08) took turns in attending different modules of the training and disseminated their new knowledge to other members after each module. Moreover, the topics of the training modules were found to be relevant for the SEOs, as the modules covered their specific needs and encouraged them to reevaluate how they managed the commercial aspects of their businesses.

Most of the social entrepreneurs were observed to be very enthusiastic, and they tended to prioritize social goals over commercial gains. This observation is not surprising as many of the entrepreneurs have backgrounds in civil society work. Consequently, KUSIF's decision to provide more financial management and marketing training was proven to be right. Thus, final presentations demonstrated that there is room for growth for some of the SEOs before meeting with impact investors.

■ **Table 1.** IRSECP beneficiaries.

Project number	Name of the social entrepreneurship organization	Social issue
01	Nature Academy	Nature-based activities for the attention-disordered children
02	Dreams Kitchen	Social inclusion of disabled people through work activities
03	Supporting Organization for Recycling Electronic Waste	Preservation of the environment
04	Unimpeded Career	Online job portal for the disabled
05	We Care	Games and toys designed for at-risk children
06	Small Projects Istanbul	Social and economic integration of Syrian people into the country
07	SOGLab- Social Entrepreneurship Laboratory	Supporting social entrepreneurship projects of governments, universities, and businesses
08	Harmoni Women Cooperative	Women empowerment through producing and selling hand made products
09	Sustainable Living TV	Awareness-raising about sustainability through film festivals and online channel
10	From My Master	Preservation of culture through promoting local craftsmen

SoGIP

Boğaziçi University Businesspeople Alumni Association (BRM) followed the SoGIP program in 2017. The main aim of SoGIP was to raise awareness about social entrepreneurship among university students. During the program, awareness-raising seminars were held at several universities in Istanbul, in which 600 students attended. The call for participation in the training programs was open to all university students, and during the selection process, the program managers selected those students who could commit to the completion of the training modules. One hundred fifty students benefited from these training modules, which included an introduction to social entrepreneurship, traditional entrepreneurship, project workshop, mentoring, webinars, and networking activities.

Level of resource sharing by partners: SoGIP, reaching out to its extensive network, invited businesspeople and experts to take part in the training modules. Additionally, a local municipality and local and international businesses (e.g., P&G and ETI Holding) worked together with the student groups in project development. Ashoka Turkey office also took part in the SoGIP program. The partnership with Ashoka Turkey involved content development and short-term mentoring activities. Ashoka Turkey was involved in several steps of the program, with little power over decision making. Therefore, Ashoka's engagement level was found to be low, interaction level infrequent, and involvement to be in a narrow spectrum of activities.

Nature of social goals: Each partnering organization and business (Eti Holding, P&G, Beşiktaş Municipality, Interbank Card Service of Turkey) had identified a social issue for working together with the students. As a result, the social issues addressed by the project ideas were in line with the core business of the partnering organizations. For example, students that worked together with ETI Holding (food production) developed a project idea based on healthy living for women. The students that worked together with Besiktas municipality developed a project idea on new services for the disadvantaged and worked on how to mitigate natural disaster and earthquake risks.

Outputs and outcomes of the program: The students who have taken part in the training modules state that they had no prior knowledge about social entrepreneurship and they vocalize their motivations for joining SoGIP as "self- development, learning and identifying significant social issues" (video recordings of students, BRM 2018). For those students who had no prior experience, SoGIP was effective in creating awareness about the pressing local social problems and showed ways of identifying these issues. SoGIP equipped these students with

project development and networking skills as well. Some more experienced students had taken part in the training modules. In our interview, a female student shared her experience as *"I have taken prior social entrepreneurship training from various institutions. Together with a couple of friends, whom I have met through these events, we have formed a social entrepreneurship project, and we are planning to operationalize it soon. Our project is about providing human resource solutions to local SEOs. Continuing to learn and to network is part of the social entrepreneurship process for me"*. According to the interviewee, meeting with the experts and networking opportunities were the most valuable aspects of the program. Overall, there were a total of 32 project ideas developed during the training modules; however, none of them were put into action after the program's conclusion.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research explored the operationalization of two social entrepreneurship programs through analyzing their partnership dynamics, nature of the social problems, and outcomes of their programs. In utilizing the *entrepreneurial ecosystem approach*, the research confirms the vital position of universities for ecosystem development (MacDonald, Clarke, Huang, & Seitanidi, 2019). The research suggests three important ways in which universities can take a more strategic position; (*i*) contribute with knowledge and innovation, (*ii*) bring together multiple partners (business, government, civil society) around a social goal, and (*iii*) seed and feed entrepreneurs through social entrepreneurship programs. Based on the study results, suggestions are made for universities in order for them to use their position and resources more strategically in order to foster their entrepreneurial ecosystem.

KUSIF and BRM have both achieved their goals of contributing to the entrepreneurial ecosystem development by developing partnerships with universities, government agencies, and businesses. However, both university-based platforms varied in their partnership arrangements, funding, scope, and outputs (■ Table 2). This finding confirms prior research (Apostolakis, 2011), pointing to the differences among universities in their approaches to social entrepreneurship development. Nevertheless, the two programs also had some common operationalization elements that lead to the effective implementation of their programs. These shared strategies for social improvement programs through partnerships were: *identifying the unmet needs in the ecosystem* (Seelos et al., 2011), *knowing the platforms' strengths and capabilities, and matching with partners that have complementary resources* (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Fındık, Akdeve, & Osmanbaşoğlu, 2020; MacDonald et al., 2019).

■■ **Table 2.** Comparison of the university-based social entrepreneurship programs.

Variables / Programs	IRSECP	SoGIP
Purpose	Training and mentoring of the established SEOs for scaling up	Awareness-raising among university students
Partnership (major)	Ashoka Turkey	Ashoka Turkey Businesses and Municipality

Resource sharing with partners
  Engagement
  Interaction
  Scope of activities
	
	High
	Intensive
	Broad
		
		Low
		Infrequent
		Narrow

Nature of social problems (local, regional, national or international)	A variety of local social goals that are dependent on the mission of the SOE	A variety of local social goals that are dependent on the core business and social goals of the partnering institution
Outputs and outcomes	12 SEOs received seven modules of training; 4 projects were chosen to be further supported before seeking external investment	600 students attended awareness meetings, 150 students attended training modules and workshops, 32 project ideas were generated

KUSIF has worked towards filling the gap in support programs for scale-up projects and benefited from the longtime international experience and in-depth knowledge of ASHOKA. The future success of these SEOs will have the potential to attract other social entrepreneurs, support organizations, and impact investors into the ecosystem (Roundy, 2017; Seelos et al., 2011), reinforcing KUSIF's external value creation. On the other hand, BRM targeted potential young social entrepreneurs, and with an extended alumni network, it reached out to experts and corporations for partnering up with the program. And the beneficiaries of the SoGIP program have responded positively to the methods employed. Thus, SoGIP increased awareness among the university students for ongoing social problems, and also provided them with tools for tackling these issues. However, the awareness did not necessarily turn into the action of originating new SEOs. The lack of funding and time and lack of place-based belonging among students (Cinar, 2019) can be some of many explanations for this result. Nevertheless, the potential entry of these students into the ecosystem will increase the quantity and diversity of entrepreneurs, causing a positive contribution to SoGIP's external value creation.

University-based platforms have the potential to create both internal and external value. In order for knowledge created by university-based platforms to extend to a broader audience, collaboration with academia and integration of the programs to teaching is found to be beneficial, as recommended by prior studies (Belitski & Heron, 2017). KUSIF, as a standing forum at Koç University, offers social entrepreneurship themed courses, which suggests that knowledge learned from IRSECP is going to benefit both teaching and research at the university

(internal value), as well as ensure dissemination of knowledge. Thus, it is recommended that social entrepreneurship programs are planned and implemented in cooperation with academia, and more integrated with teaching and research at the university (internal value creation).

This research defends that in newly developing social entrepreneurial ecosystems, focusing on local social issues have particular benefits for ecosystem development. The projects sponsored in both programs have addressed significant local social issues. In the IRSECP program, the social issues gathered around three major themes, and in the SoGIP program, the partnering organizations and enterprises have chosen the relevant social problems. The program managers noted that each sector has different needs for expertise (e.g., Project 02, food sector vs. project 09, media), which requires employing numerous experts at the same time, making it costly and challenging to coordinate. Thus, focusing on one social issue, and bringing together experts, businesses, and NGOs around the same issue can benefit the programs by increased specialization. In universities, entrepreneurship centers can determine critical local issues and create themed groups (e.g., women entrepreneurship) for support.

Both programs started with a more extensive set of social entrepreneurs; however, they ended up with a smaller set that received more in-depth and intense support. Some of the SEOs have stopped attending the training or did not complete the program. However, some were keen to continue learning by looking into other programs or continue networking by presenting their work at relevant outlets (e.g., IRSECP program project 08, and the female entrepreneur of SoGIP). Based on these findings, *commitment to the cause* and *openness to a continuous learning*

experience emerge as essential criteria for social entrepreneurs. These two criteria can also be used for the selection of potential social entrepreneurs by the funding organizations.

This research reported on the short-term effects of the university-based programs. Entrepreneurial development is an immediate output of the system, which should be taken as an early indicator of advancement toward solving social problems. Research that takes a longitudinal approach can shed light on the longer-term effects of these programs and may demonstrate value creation for the larger society. For further research, it will be worthy to explore (1) the effectiveness of other support mechanisms that can be offered by university-based platforms, (2) ways of capturing knowledge, and (3) ways of integrating these programs into experiential learning.

References

Al Taji, F. N. A., & Bengo, I. (2019). The distinctive managerial challenges of hybrid organizations: Which skills are required? *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, *10*(3), 328–345.

Apostolakis, C. (2011). The role of higher education in enhancing social entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, *1*(2), 124–137.

Ashoka (2020). *About Ashoka*. Retrieved from https://www.ashoka.org/tr/country/turkey (November 1, 2020).

Atakan, M. S., & Eker, T. (2007). Corporate identity of a socially responsible university – a case from the Turkish higher education sector. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *76*(1), 55–68.

Austin, J., Stevenson, H., & Wei-Skillern, J. (2006). Social and commercial entrepreneurship: same, different, or both? *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *30*(1), 1–22.

Austin, J. E., & Seitanidi, M. M. (2012). Collaborative value creation: A review of partnering between nonprofits and businesses: Part I. Value creation spectrum and collaboration stages. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *41*(5), 726–758.

Belitski, M., & Heron, K. (2017). Expanding entrepreneurship education ecosystems. *Journal of Management Development*, *36*(2), 163–177.

Bloom, P. N., & Dees, G. (2008). Cultivate your ecosystem. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, *6*(1), 47–53.

British Council (2016). *Social enterprise in a global context: The role of higher education institutions*. Retrieved from https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/social_enterprise_in_a_global_context_-_the_role_of_heis_british_council_0.pdf (June 15, 2020).

Capella-Peris, C., Gil-Gómez, J., Martí-Puig, M., & Ruíz-Bernardo, P. (2020). Development and validation of a scale to assess social entrepreneurship competency in higher education. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, *11*(1), 23–39.

Cengiz, E. (2014). Assessments on university-industry cooperation. [Article in Turkish] *Yükseköğretim Dergisi*, *4*(1), 1–8.

Cetindamar, D., & Hopkins, T. (2008). Enhancing students' responsibility towards society through civic involvement projects. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *45*(4), 401–410.

Cinar, R. (2019). Delving into social entrepreneurship in universities: is it legitimate yet? *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, *6*(1), 217–232.

CSI (2020). *Centre for social impact*. Retrieved from https://www.csi.edu.au/ (November 21, 2020).

Dentoni, D., Bitzer, V., & Pascucci, S. (2016). Cross-sector partnerships and the co-creation of dynamic capabilities for stakeholder orientation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *135*(1), 35–53.

Durán-Sánchez, A., Del Río, M. d. l. C., Álvarez-García, J., & García-Vélez, D. F. (2019). Mapping of scientific coverage on education for entrepreneurship in higher education. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, *13*(1/2), 84–104.

Edwards-Schachter, M. E., Matti, C. E., & Alcántara, E. (2012). Fostering quality of life through social innovation: A living lab methodology study case. *Review of Policy Research*, *29*(6), 672–692.

Ersen, T., Kaya, D., & Meydanoğlu, Z. (2010). *Social entrepreneurship and need analysis of Turkey report*. [Text in Turkish] Retrieved from http://www.sosyalgirisim.org (November 1, 2020).

Fındık, D., Akdeve, E., & Osmanbaşoğlu, G. K. (2020). Interconnected areas of research: Collaborations in social innovation. In Ç. Doğru (Ed.), *Leadership styles, innovation, and social entrepreneurship in the era of digitalization* (pp. 190–211). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Goddard, J. (2017). The strategic positioning of cities in 21st century challenges: The civic university and the city. In F. X. Grau, J. Goddard, B. L. Hall, E. Hazelkorn, & R. Tandon (Eds.), *Higher education in the world 6. Towards a socially responsible university: balancing the global with the local* (pp. 115–127). Girona: Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI).

Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2011). *Applied thematic analysis*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Harrisson, D., Chaari, N., & Comeau-Vallée, M. (2012). Intersectoral alliance and social innovation: When corporations meet civil society. *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*, *83*(1), 1–24.

Huang-Saad, A., Duval-Couetil, N., & Park, J. (2018). Technology and talent: capturing the role of universities in regional entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, *12*(2), 92–116.

IMECE (2018). *Social innovation ecosystem in Turkey 2018*. Retrieved from https://graphcommons.com/graphs/033fcd07-d1e3-4669-a0b0-425dc6c1289f?auto=true (August 1, 2020).

Isenberg, D. (2011). *The entrepreneurship ecosystem strategy as a new paradigm for economy policy: Principles for cultivating entrepreneurship*. Babson Park, MA: Babson Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Project, Babson College.

Karğın, M., Aktaş, H., & Gökbunar, R. (2018). Social entrepreneurship in universities: Opportunities and suggestions. [Article in Turkish]

Yönetim ve Ekonomi: Celal Bayar Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi, 25(1), 155–170.

Kimbu, A. N., & Ngoasong, M. Z. (2016). Women as vectors of social entrepreneurship. *Annals of Tourism Research, 60*, 63–79.

KUSIF (2017). *Investment Ready Social Enterprises Certificate Program.* Retrieved from https://kusif.ku.edu.tr/content/investment-ready-social-enterprises-certificate-program (September 1, 2020).

Lehner, O. M., & Kansikas, J. (2012). Opportunity recognition in social entrepreneurship: A thematic meta analysis. *The Journal of Entrepreneurship, 21*(1), 25–58.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Link, A. N., & Sarala, R. M. (2019). Advancing conceptualisation of university entrepreneurial ecosystems: The role of knowledge-intensive entrepreneurial firms. *International Small Business Journal, 37*(3), 289–310.

MacDonald, A., Clarke, A., Huang, L., & Seitanidi, M. (2019). Partner strategic capabilities for capturing value from sustainability-focused multi-stakeholder partnerships. *Sustainability, 11*(3), 557.

Markuerkiaga, L., Caiazza, R., Igartua, J. I., & Errasti, N. (2016). Factors fostering students' spin-off firm formation. *Journal of Management Development, 35*(6), 814–846.

Mikado Consulting (2020). *Who are we?* Retrieved from http://www.mikadoconsulting.com/en/sayfa/9/biz-kimiz?# (November 1, 2020).

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Monzón, J. L., & Chaves, R. (2017). *Recent evolutions of the social economy in the European Union.* Brussels: European Economic and Social Committee, CIRIEC.

Neck, H. M., Meyer, G. D., Cohen, B., & Corbett, A. C. (2004). An entrepreneurial system view of new venture creation. *Journal of Small Business Management, 42*(2), 190–208.

NESsT (2018). *What is a social enterprise?* Retrieved from https://www.nesst.org/social-enterprise (November 1, 2020).

Pache, A.-C., & Chowdhury, I. (2012). Social entrepreneurs as institutionally embedded entrepreneurs: Toward a new model of social entrepreneurship education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 11*(3), 494–510.

Paunescu, C., & Cantaragiu, R. (2013). The social role of university entrepreneurship. In C. Paunescu, & R. Cantaragiu (Eds.), *Strategic role of tertiary education and technologies for sustainable competitive advantage* (pp. 103–119). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Phillips, W., Lee, H., Ghobadian, A., O'Regan, N., & James, P. (2015). Social innovation and social entrepreneurship: A systematic review. *Group & Organization Management, 40*(3), 428–461.

Plymouth Social Enterprise (2020). *Social enterprise city.* Retrieved from https://plymsocent.org.uk/about-us/social-enterprise-city/ (March 1, 2020).

Roundy, P. T. (2017). Social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ecosystems. *International Journal of Social Economics, 44*(9), 1252–1267.

Seelos, C., Mair, J., Battilana, J., & Dacin, M. T. (2011). The embeddedness of social entrepreneurship: Understanding variation across local communities. In C. Marquis, M. Lounsbury, & R. Greenwood (Eds.), *Communities and organizations: Research in the sociology of organizations* (Vol. 33, pp. 333–363). Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Selsky, J. W., & Parker, B. (2005). Cross-sector partnerships to address social issues: Challenges to theory and practice. *Journal of Management, 31*(6), 849–873.

SoGIP (2018). *About SoGiP.* Retrieved from https://www.sogip.org/hakkinda (November 11, 2020).

Thomsen, B., Muurlink, O., & Best, T. (2018). The political ecology of university-based social entrepreneurship ecosystems. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy, 12*(2).

TUSEV (2020). *Our objectives.* Retrieved from https://www.tusev.org.tr/en/about-us/our-objectives (June 25, 2020).

United Nations (2016). *Sustainable development goals.* Retrieved from http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/ (March 1, 2020).

Van Tulder, R., Seitanidi, M. M., Crane, A., & Brammer, S. (2016). Enhancing the impact of cross-sector partnerships. *Journal of Business Ethics, 135*(1), 1–17.

VUB (2020). *A platform in support of social entrepreneurs.* Retrieved from https://platform.vubsocialentrepreneurship.com/ (June 15, 2020).

Zahra, S. A., Gedajlovic, E., Neubaum, D. O., & Shulman, J. M. (2009). A typology of social entrepreneurs: Motives, search processes and ethical challenges. *Journal of Business Venturing, 24*(5), 519–532.