SOCIAL FRANCHISING AND SUPPLEMENTARY TUTORING: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF FACILITATORS' PERCEPTIONS

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--Abstract—

Franchising, a business concept that originated in the United States of America (USA), is a system of doing business via contracts through which the franchiser shares a system of knowledge, intellectual property and trade secrets in return for fees and royalties. Social franchising, on the other hand, utilises the same principles and format to achieve social benefits. Social franchising has been associated with, among others, the health services and education. Health services such as Marie Stopes International make use of social franchising to increase their services by engaging existing private providers to deliver high quality sexual reproductive health services in underserved areas. In education, social franchising can be seen as a quick fix to national problems regarding education. The purpose of this study was to qualitatively analyse facilitators' perceptions of social franchising in education through the provision of supplementary lessons and its potential to improve students' performance. The sample of the study comprised facilitators actively involved in the facilitation of lessons to supplement existing knowledge/impart new learning methodologies in mathematics, science and languages for school-going learners. An interview schedule was developed and participants were interviewed at the site of delivery during the period when students were on recess. From a content analysis of the transcripts of the interviews four themes, namely, *challenges*, *opportunities*, *motivation* and *sustainability* emerged. It is recommended that there should be greater parental as well as university involvement in the provision of supplementary tuition for learners. Existing schools with adequate resources should also be considered as possible venues for supplementary tuition.

Keywords: social franchising, education, students, qualitative
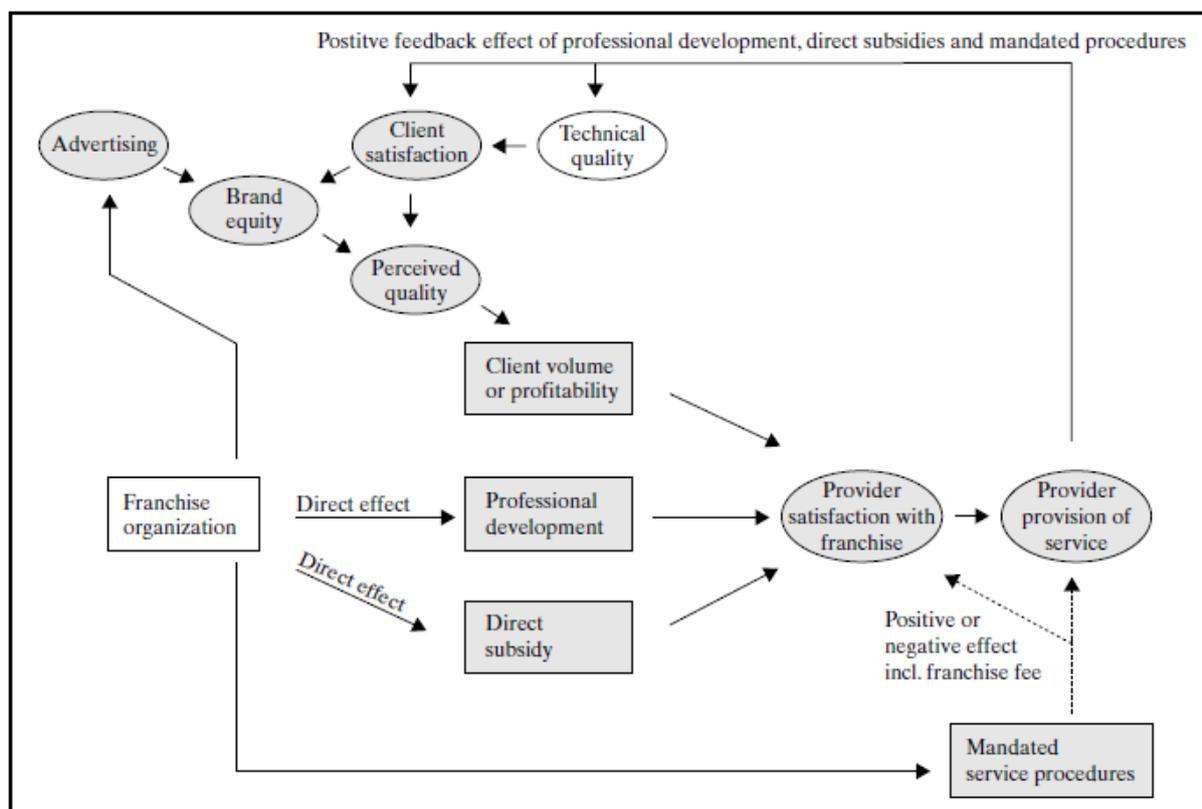
JEL Code: L84

1 INTRODUCTION

Franchising is a business concept that originated in the United States of America (USA) in the 1850s when Singer and Company first sold exclusive territories to its sewing machine salesmen (Vernon, 2003; Herman, 1997) and in Europe as early as 1929 (Sanghavi, 1998), the aim being the generation of profit through the use of a brand name and a business idea that was tested and successfully applied for by a person called a franchisee who, at the payment of a franchise fee, gets the right to copy the idea and generate an income. The franchisee must adhere to the standards set by the franchisor and is eligible to get support and training from the franchisor. A widely accepted definition of franchising (Stanworth, Price, Porter, Swabe & Gold, 1995) comprises a contractual relationship in which the franchisor supplies an overall 'blueprint' to the franchisee according to which the franchisee must market the product or service. Franchising is thus the transfer of tried and tested knowledge and experience from one successful enterprise to other similar enterprises to enable them to

become successful by using the methods of the first enterprise, the franchisor. Franchising may be viewed as a "quick fix" to solve many of the problems that independent entrepreneurs young and old encounter on their way to expected/anticipated success which, in most cases, end in closure of the business venture and personal disaster because of the investment and self-esteem loss. The reason being the value of trading a well-known brand product or service.

In the context of social franchising the term 'social' is hardly associated with the generation of profit. To link the terms 'social' and 'franchising' together and call it social franchising, aspects such as good business practices (not exclusively for generating a profit) and the social benefits associated with the franchise should be included (du Toit, 2014). Social franchising can thus be defined as the application of business-format franchising to achieve social benefits (Alon, 2014). In social franchising the tried and tested method that works for the traditional franchises are extended to social franchisees at a much lower cost, mostly to enable them to focus on the social purpose of the franchise while ensuring that it is a viable business to enable survival. Du Toit (2014) indicated that the interest in social franchising is gaining momentum as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and social aid programmes are considering franchising as a mechanism to deliver services and products that have social goals.

The attributes of a social franchise, produced by Montagu (2002), is shown in Figure 1. Emphasis of the model is on the importance of the feedback (client satisfaction) effect of service quality on provider motivation.

Figure 1: Model of social franchising

Source: Montagu 2002: 128.

Health and clinical social franchising is an approach to building networks of private healthcare workers (franchisees) that are equipped with knowledge, training and supplies needed to deliver health services with an assurance of a minimum quality standard. Health services such as Marie Stopes International are making use of social franchising to increase their services by engaging existing private providers to deliver high quality sexual reproductive health services in underserved areas.

Although social franchising is mostly associated with the health industry there are social franchises in education, which assist in the building of networks and the know-how needed to deliver assistance to learners, especially in Grade 12, who need a good pass mark in subjects such as mathematics and science for acceptance into a tertiary institution. Some initiatives such as the Shine Centre Model start to identify children needing support at an early age and take them from the classrooms during school mornings for a period up to two years to assist them in various subjects with the help of volunteers (Weissenberg, 2009). Social franchising is not a well-known or commonly used term in South Africa.

1.1   Social franchising and education

Social franchising in the context of this study involves franchising projects in education for Grade 12 learners to supplement knowledge learnt in mainstream schooling, especially (but not limited to) subjects such as mathematics and science where huge shortages in skilled educators exist (Magano, 2014). The objective is to better equip them for tertiary education or to enable them to become more employable immediately after matriculation.

Given the high cost of acquiring traditional franchises, social franchises associated with education are often funded or sponsored by large businesses as part of their community engagement. Some well-known examples which have the elements illustrated the Social Franchise Model (Figure 1) are Promaths in partnership with Kutlwanong, an Investec initiative (Manchidi, 2017) and the Murray Trust (Weissenberg, 2009), which provide assistance to learners to improve their Grade 12 results.

2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

 Supplementary tutoring, which in the context of this study refers to additional teaching of the content taught in the mainstream school, has become a major industry in some societies (Bray & Kwak, 2003). While anecdotal evidence exists that it is beneficial to learners in that it helps improve their performance, it also has financial and social implications. Supplementary tutoring is not cheap – it can result in a financial drain in many households. The high cost involved in supplementary tutoring makes it accessible to only those who are able to afford it. However, supplementary tutoring is accessible to a wider group of learners through social franchising in education. While many tutors see supplementary tutoring as a source of additional income, it is the only source of income for those tutors in sponsored programmes through social franchising. Supplementary tutoring through social franchising is a neglected area of research. Although the number of learners receiving supplementary tuition exceeds 50 percent, according to a study of forty-one countries (Baker, Akiba, LeTendre & Wiseman, 2001), very little is known regarding its influence on tutors and learners and how it is perceived, particularly in the South African context (Coetzee, 2008). The purpose of this study is therefore to address this void by analysing the perceptions of tutors who provide supplementary tutoring through social franchises associated with education. In this study, the ArcelorMittal Science Centre Sebokeng (AMSCS) programme, which is an AcelorMittal sponsored initiative, is used as a case study.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research approach

A literature study on social franchising was undertaken. Thereafter, a qualitative research approach was utilised to collect primary data on tutors' perceptions of social franchising and education. This approach was used because it permits the phenomenon being researched to unfold naturally (Patton, 2001) in their natural settings (Mello & Flint, 2009), thereby allowing for the collection of rich information.

3.2 Sample

The respondents in this study were seven (N=7) purposively selected tutors of extra classes for secondary school learners. Of the tutors who were approached, six (n=6) agreed to participate in the study. A pre-requisite to be selected to participate in the study was at least three years' experience in the programme as well as a formal qualification to teach. All facilitators conducted their classes at the ArcelorMittal Science Centre in Sebokeng in the Gauteng province of South Africa.

3.3 Instrument and procedure

An interview schedule, which is a widely used instrument for qualitative inquiry, was developed to conduct semi-structured interviews with the identified sample. Prior to conducting the interviews, the interview schedule was pre-tested with an experienced researcher who had an excellent knowledge of social franchising and supplementary tutoring. Based on his advice, minor changes in the order of the questions were made. The primary researcher made the appointments with the tutors a week before the interviews. Interviews, which lasted approximately 40 minutes, were conducted at the venues where the classes were taught after the class sessions. In order to ensure standardisation, all interviews were conducted by the primary researcher who posed the same questions to the respondents in the same order that they appeared in the interview schedule. Where clarity was required on respondents' responses, probing questions were asked. The interviewer exercised flexibility by not interrupting respondents as they gave an account of their experiences regarding social franchising. This approach allowed for the collection of richer data as well as ensuring that stronger rapport was built between interviewer and respondent (Vazou, Ntoumanis & Duda, 2005). All interviews were audiotaped with the permission of the interviewees. Data saturation was reached at the sixth interview. The contents of the audiotapes were then transcribed verbatim.

3.4 Data analysis

Qualitative content analysis, a process designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretation (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2005) was used to analyse the data. During this process the researcher(s) scrutinise and compare the data. In this study it involved listening, reading, rereading and summarising the initial data independently by both researchers through an interactive and recursive process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Recurring words and phrases were identified and placed into categories which were assigned descriptive titles. After each researcher had analysed the data independently, their notes were compared and similarities and differences regarding the emergent themes were discussed until inter-researcher consensus was reached.

3.5   Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the study was requested from the higher management of the ArcelorMittal Science Centre Sebokeng, South Africa. Permission was granted on the condition that a copy of the research results be made available to the management prior to any of the results being published. This condition was adhered to. Permission was also obtained from the respondents to interview them. They were assured that they would remain anonymous at all times and their input would remain confidential.

4   TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness of data implies the findings are credible, transferable and dependable. Rubin and Babbie (2010) posit that the primary concern when evaluating a qualitative study should be the extent to which the study can take steps to maximise objectivity and minimise bias. In this study the overarching concept of trustworthiness was addressed in two ways. Firstly, member validation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yoshida & James, 2011) was used to ascertain the accuracy of the data captured during the interviews. Transcripts of their interviews were sent to two respondents who participated in the study to verify the accuracy of the captured data. Their feedback indicated that the capturing of the data was indeed accurate. Secondly, the audio recordings, transcripts and themes were sent to the researcher who pre-tested the interview schedule. The researcher was requested to comment on the findings of the study. Consensus on the content of the transcripts and the themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews was established among the three researchers.

5   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The description and interpretation of the data are closely linked with many qualitative studies (Surujlal, 2013). Therefore, to avoid repetition of explanations (Gustafsson, Hassmén, Kenttä & Johansson, 2008), the findings of the study and the discussion are integrated.

5.1   Sample characteristics

Four males and two females participated in the study. All participants had facilitating experience ranging from 4 to 11 years. Four participants were in possession of a bachelors' degree, one had an advanced certificate in education and the other a higher diploma in education.

5.2   Themes

Emanating from the content analysis of the transcripts, four themes, namely, *challenges*, *opportunities*, *motivation* and *sustainability* were identified. The themes, operational definitions and excerpts from the interviews are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Themes, operational definition and excerpts

Theme	Operational definition	Excerpts from interviews (participant number)
Challenges	Challenges, in the context of this study, refers to hurdles or constraints associated with the provision of supplementary classes.	*The challenges I think it's the economy - so there is less money available for the project* (1) *The challenges that I face is when we go out to schools some time we do go out to school to help and that is a challenge, the environment is a challenge, the discipline is a challenge, going out to schools is definitely a challenge* (1) *… at school they are getting food, they are fed at school, and when they come here, we don't provide food, so for other kids that has been a problem* (2) *Only challenge is the fear of the future we don't know after some time whether our jobs will safer* (2) *Mostly it is funding because most of our programs they need a lot of money in order to support many schools* (5)
Opportunities	This theme refers to opportunities to circumstances which enable greater involvement and expansion of the programme. It also refers to the opportunities for learners	*We had quite a number of distinctions and those learners got bursaries from Mittal - to study - some of them went to be VUT some of them are at Wits and when they come back they will make a huge difference to their families* (1) *…. very nice buildings and facilities the you have got here, the facilities are nice* (2) *Lots of learners is getting bursaries that are attending here, that means that they are changing their life* (4) *Partnership they, institutions that are funding they should work together and they should come to a set of funding a project, under the same institution for instance let say here in the Vaal we have companies like CWI, we've got SASOL* (5)
Motivation	This theme refers to the willingness, determination or desire of students to participate in the programme	*They are so eager to learn they are disciplined they work the whole time their attitude is just positive. It is lovely to work with them* (1) *Yeah, they are willing to learn when they are here, well behaved yeah.* (2) *Most of the learners they are happy to get the opportunity like this* (4) They get bursaries and whatever and it looked like they are able to motivate the learners that comes here (5)
Sustainability	This theme refers to the ability of the sponsors (Mittal) to maintain and continue the programme over an extended period of time	*So for it to be sustainable, I think we need more than one funder, the challenge we have right now we are only funded by Mittal and if they run out of money I mean what is going to happen* (2) *Not at the moment, as I said, it's not going to be sustainable if I we have to go out to schools* (3) *The programs sustainability depends on the success of Arcelor Mittal financial* (5)

5.3   Challenges

Three challenges, namely, programme challenges, learner challenges and tutor challenges emerged from the analysis of the data. The challenges associated with the programme were funding for its sustainability and the limited number of tutors available to provide their services in the programme. This finding is supported by Coetzee (2008) who commented that there were too few qualified teachers in mathematics. The author also commented that too little time was available in the school timetable for additional periods. As a result, students who could afford it opted for supplementary tuition. Challenges experienced by learners were associated with the poor communities they came from. As the learning centre was away from their schools where they were given a meal for the day, they were not provided meals or refreshments at the learning centre. Another challenge that learners encountered was that the programme clashed with the mainstream classroom timetable. The challenges that facilitators experienced was that instead of supplementing what was already taught at school, they often found themselves teaching some of the sections which were already taught in the mainstream school. In some instances, tutors were required to go to the schools and teach there. As these schools were in remote areas and were under-resourced, especially in terms of laboratory facilities, some of the lessons could not be completed.

5.4   Opportunities

Participants perceived that there were many opportunities associated with the programme. The conducive learning environment, increased resources and smaller class numbers compared to overcrowded and under-resourced classes in the rural areas contributed to a higher success rate among learners. This finding echoes the sentiments of Bray and Kwo (2013) who opined that the programme enabled learners who lagged behind to improve, and those who were performing well to maintain their level of performance. Furthermore, incentives in the form of bursaries for further studies provided by the sponsor motivated learners to work harder and perform better. This provides the opportunity for expansion of the programme through attracting more learners as well as facilitators. Participants expressed that the success of the programme has resulted in increased demand by principals to extend the AMSCS programme to their schools. Coetzee (2008) points out that supplementary tuition is normally provided to individuals or small groups, unlike mainstream classes, which have large numbers of learners. This provides attendees of supplementary tuition the opportunity to interact more closely with the tutors, thereby increasing their chances of improved performance in their chosen subject. In some instances, the increased amount of time spent on a subject increases learners' depth of understanding of the subject thereby improving their achievement levels (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011).

5.5   Motivation

This theme refers to the willingness, determination or desire by both learners as well as facilitators to participate in the programme. Participants indicated that they were highly motivated because of the facilities, resources and support they receive from the sponsor. They perceived that the foregoing reasons were also applicable for the learners' high motivation. Facilitators perceived that the positive attitudes of students contributed to their excellent attendance of the programme. Participants, however, also expressed that that their level of motivation would be higher if more incentives were provided. This would also attract more facilitators and assist in the expansion of the programme. Previous studies (e.g. Fredricks,

Blumefield & Paris, 2004; Willms, 2003), however, suggest that improved performance as a result of supplementary tuition contribute to higher levels of motivation among the learners.

5.6 Sustainability

A concern expressed by five of the participants was associated with the sustainability of the programme. Most of the tutors opined that the programme may not be sustainable over a long period because it had only one sponsor and was dependent on the financial success of this sponsor. This implies that market factors are also likely to influence the sustainability of the programme. There was no assurance that the programme would continue in subsequent years. Participants opined that the current sponsor should provide assurance regarding the continuation of the programme. The uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the programme has important implications. Firstly, it would lead to the job insecurity of the tutors, resulting in them looking for more secure positions. The programme could thus lose competent tutors. Secondly, if the programme is not sustainable, the company could opt to discontinue it and decide to embark on other community-centred programmes.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study provide evidence that the AMSCS programme is beneficial to the learners who attend it. There are, however, challenges associated with the sustainability of the programme. The introduction of new role players such as other corporate organisations in the area as well as the two universities could contribute greatly to the longevity of the programme.

Participants were of the view that there should be greater parental involvement in the programme. When probing questions were asked regarding in what form the involvement would be, participants were evasive. They also recommended that there should be greater involvement by the two universities in the area. Universities could provide information on the qualifications they offer and what the entrance requirements are. Rather than start a new centre with new infrastructure, sponsoring organisations should consider adding to the existing resources in some schools and using their venues after school hours.

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