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Two Day National Level Conference on “Entrepreneurial Leadership: Guiding Teams Towards Visionary Goals”

26th & 27th September 2025

Department of Management Studies, Potti Sriramulu Chalavadi Mallikarjuna Rao College of Technology (Autonomous), Vijayawada, India

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Entrepreneurial Leadership: Guiding Teams towards Visionary Goals

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ABSTRACT: Entrepreneurial leadership has emerged as a transformative approach that blends the innovative spirit of entrepreneurship with the guiding influence of leadership. When directed toward social change, entrepreneurial leadership seeks to generate sustainable solutions to complex societal challenges. This paper explores the theoretical underpinnings of entrepreneurial leadership, its application in driving social change, and the challenges faced by social entrepreneurs in diverse contexts. Drawing on global and Indian examples, the paper highlights how entrepreneurial leadership fosters innovation, mobilizes resources, and empowers communities, ultimately contributing to inclusive and sustainable development.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurial leadership, Social change, Social entrepreneurship, Innovation, Sustainable development, Leadership for social impact

I. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is characterized by rapid globalization, technological disruption, and persistent social inequalities. Traditional models of leadership and development have proven inadequate in addressing pressing challenges such as poverty, climate change, gender inequality, and access to education and healthcare. This has led to the rise of **entrepreneurial leadership for social change**, a paradigm that combines risk-taking, innovation, and opportunity recognition with empathy, vision, and a commitment to social impact.

Entrepreneurial leaders are not confined to the business sphere; they are catalysts for change in society, driving initiatives that challenge conventional systems and create inclusive opportunities. Their work aligns with global agendas, particularly the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial leadership combines elements of entrepreneurship (risk-taking, opportunity recognition, innovation) with leadership traits such as vision, influence, and people management. According to Gupta et al. (2004), it is “the ability to influence others to manage resources strategically in a dynamic environment.”

Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship has been defined as the process of pursuing innovative solutions to social problems. Dees (1998) emphasizes that social entrepreneurs are change agents in the social sector.

Leadership for Social Innovation

Leadership in the context of social innovation involves mobilizing communities and creating new relationships between markets, states, and civil society (Mulgan et al., 2007).

III. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Transformational Leadership Theory

Entrepreneurial leaders often embody transformational traits—particularly vision, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Effectuation Theory

Proposed by Sarasvathy (2001), effectuation suggests that successful entrepreneurs start with available means and iterate toward goals, making them more flexible in unpredictable social environments.

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Systems Leadership

Systems leadership encourages viewing problems holistically, building cross-sector partnerships, and empowering others to act—key traits in social change contexts (Senge et al., 2015).

IV. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR

We can gain additional insights by looking at social entrepreneurial leaders - their characteristics and motivations. Are these vastly different from those of economic entrepreneurial leaders? Our knowledge of social entrepreneurial leaders is inadequate. Impressionistic accounts give indications of the characteristics, motivations, initial actions and learning experiences of these leaders. But no large sample studies exist which can be used for generalisation and comparison. Few case accounts have the rich detail required to make adequate ideographic or content analytical studies. Yet broad hypothesis on social entrepreneurial leadership behaviour can be proposed, 5 drawing on case accounts and building on mainstream leadership literature. Economic entrepreneurial leadership behaviour is complex - requiring the generalist ability to juggle multiple activities and roles. The career is voluntary and requires intense involvement. These leaders have high emotional energy and drive as seen in the tenacity and persistence shown by them during adversity. They tend to experience their venture events as personal events (Bird, 1989). It can be hypothesised that these behaviours are also true for social entrepreneurial leaders. They too are involved in all aspects of their organisation, operating both in the "here and now" and in the long term, with rapid and flexible change in operational focus, without a change in strategic focus.

Motivations

What are the motivations of social entrepreneurial leaders? McClellandf s (1967) achievement motivation may not be high among social entrepreneurial leaders. Rather, the motivation to assuage a deep feeling of uneasiness with the status quo may be higher. Other possible motivations are altruism, need to be true to one's values and beliefs, need to match with one's self-concept, and need to be socially responsible. Swamy (1990) found in a case study of a social entrepreneurial leader the urge to fight injustice and the urge to experiment. They may share with economic entrepreneurial leaders a strong need to be in control of their environment. The task risk that social entrepreneurial leaders take maybe quite hfaji, with a high propensity and need to experiment, but the ability to take the risk may also be quite high, given that social experiments are conducted in good faith and both success and failures are rich learning experiences. Uncertainty tolerance is also likely to be higher among social entrepreneurial leaders. They may value the lifestyle, the respect from both the client group and society, and the success of their ventures.

Cultural and Societal Impact

Some communities are known to be culturally biased towards economic entrepreneurial leadership and actively promote it socially. Do similar patterns exist for social entrepreneurial leadership? Strong family influences may guide potential leaders towards social entrepreneurial leadership. Childhood experiences may force the choice of a sodal entrepreneurial career, possibly to make up for inaction by the parents or the community, or through the instilling of a deep sense of values by parents and teachers during childhood. Personal history and psychological build-up may further augment this. A related issue is the societal context that gives rise to social entrepreneurial leadership. Bird (1989) lists the elements of this conteA: economic, political and technical situation, the Zeitgeist or the spirit of the times, and the cultural context. These are the context variables which social entrepreneurial leaders work towards changing and which most economic entrepreneurial leaders work within.

Attributes of Entrepreneurial Leaders Driving Social Change

Attribute	Description	Example
Visionary Thinking	Ability to conceptualize long-term systemic change	Grameen Bank's goal to eradicate poverty
Empathy and Inclusivity	Deep understanding of marginalized voices	Youth-led organizations for climate justice
Resilience and Adaptability	Navigating political and financial volatility	NGOs operating in conflict zones

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Ethical Commitment	Balancing growth with values	Social enterprises refusing unethical funding
Innovative Mindset	Designing creative and scalable interventions	Low-cost healthcare innovations in India

Strategies for Scaling Social Impact

Social Franchising: Replicating models while preserving core mission (e.g., Vision Spring for eye care).

Public-Private Partnerships: Collaborating with governments for policy support.

Impact Investing: Leveraging financial markets for measurable social outcomes.

Digital Platforms: Using tech to increase reach (e.g., EdTech for rural education).

Community-Based Models: Empowering locals to take ownership of solutions.

V. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Leadership Education Reform

Embedding entrepreneurial and ethical leadership into education systems at secondary and tertiary levels can nurture future change makers.

Localizing Entrepreneurial Leadership

Solutions must emerge from within communities. Global models should adapt to local cultural, economic, and political contexts.

Feminist and De Colonial Approaches

Recognizing that traditional entrepreneurial leadership frameworks often exclude marginalized voices, new paradigms must be intersectional, inclusive, and justice-oriented.

Technology with a Human Face

Entrepreneurial leaders must not only leverage AI, block chain, and data but do so with a values-first lens—prioritizing accessibility, privacy, and fairness.

VI. CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurial leadership offers one of the most promising pathways toward achieving lasting social change. By combining innovation with purpose, and adaptability with ethical responsibility, entrepreneurial leaders can drive transformations that institutions alone cannot. For this leadership model to succeed, however, it must remain grounded in values, equity, and inclusive participation.

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