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JACQUELINE McADAM

A Case Study of Social Entrepreneurism: A Model of Practice – Hakuna Matata Imports and Accessories

Abstract

This case study connects my personal history, professional practice, and work experience in Africa, to the field of social entrepreneurship. Socially based business or entrepreneurship has defined organizational systems, and practices that challenge some of our traditional business models. My business model for Hakuna Matata Imports and Accessories is a response to a feeling of hopelessness in face of despair in many parts of Africa. This article illustrates the link between the personal and professional, and aligns my values to the field of social entrepreneurship. This article provides the opportunity to “flesh out” and affirm the values that govern my business, and critically examine the model.

I Introduction

This article is an opportunity to reflect upon and consolidate some of the experiences that have culminated in the creation of Hakuna Matata Imports and Accessories (HMIA). HMIA is a socially based business embedded in theories of social entrepreneurship. My personal sense of justice, professional practice and education, coupled with time living and working in Africa provides the impetus for my businesses organizational structure. I begin by discussing the contextual influences that have shaped me. I expand on my time in Africa through short vignettes to facilitate an understanding of the reflec-

tive process. Theories that have allowed me to place my values within a global context are noted, and the field of social entrepreneurship is explained. A brief discussion of the historical factors that have influenced the field of social entrepreneurship is provided, and a differentiation is made between “giving” models and those that create partnerships. Hakuna Matata’s business model is then explained and contextualized within the field of social entrepreneurship. The values behind my business model challenge materialism at the expense of human capital, and invite the reader to examine their role in the systems that perpetuate poverty and the degradation of human potential on the continent of Africa.

2 Personal History: Social Justice, Development, Leaving a Legacy

The journey of self is rooted in our contextual histories, and the experience that shape our values. My social actions are rooted within my family of origin. I grew up in a socially minded family in which a global consciousness was nurtured. For instance, my brother and I were some of the first children to accompany their parents on a placement with the Canadian University Services Overseas (CUSO) to West Africa. Core values of social justice coupled with my awareness of global issues resulted in a desire to work internationally. My professional expertise is in the field of Child and Youth Care, with a specialization in adolescent development, and the challenges of those in extremely difficult circumstances. My career began as a practitioner with street involved and vulnerable adolescence in Victoria, B.C., Canada. In the early 90’s, I began working in international development with children and youth. The following vignette illustrates the type of work I did, and the evolving conflict with “self” that has shaped the formation of my business.

In 1991, I volunteered with Canadian Crossroads in Nairobi, Kenya. In partnership with a Nairobi based NGO, the Maji Mazuri Center, I helped facilitate programs for children and youth raised in the Mathare Valley. The Mathare Valley is considered one of the world’s largest urban shums.

Houses are made of cardboard, scraps of plastic and other discarded debris. There are no toilets. Walking between the houses, I have to avoid stepping on human waste. Female-headed-households dominate the surroundings. A desperate situation of poverty results in a cycle of prostitution and the selling of illegal beer. Secondary results include numerous unexpected pregnancies that equate to women having as many as eleven children, with an average of seven. Maji Mazuri has helped these women, and their children develop more appropriate and less hazardous means of generating income, through the development of cooperatives and life skills based educational programs (Personal Experience, 1991).

At the end of the placement I returned to the University of Victoria to start my first Masters. Initially inspired, six weeks into the program, I was ready to drop out and return to Kenya. What a privilege it was to discuss deconstruction theory and post-modernism in the confines of this elitist structure. What was I doing here? How could increasing my place of class and privilege help the women and children I had been working with in Kenya? Would my involvement in higher education decrease the systemic barriers that contribute to the increasing number of urban poor in the developing world? “I resolved my internal conflict by committing myself to use my place of privilege to not only enhance my life, but to enhance the lives of many more than myself” (McAdam-Crisp 2004). This conviction continues to inform my practice, and influence the social values upon which my business is formed.

My M.A. in Policy and Practice in the Field of Child and Youth Care involved the development, implementation, and evaluation of a program for marginalized youth in partnership with the Maji Mazuri Centre. This program was innovative as it recognized and validated the entrepreneurship of the informal urban economy, and mentored and coached both employers and youth to develop skills. Strengthening the informal urban economy and linking this to enhance the potential for vulnerable youth is a foundational element of my present business model, because it is a fundamental need for the future development of Africa. This was affirmed through my

work with vulnerable youth in Rwanda in the aftermath of the genocide between 1995 and 1998. The most relevant to my present business initiative was a country wide evaluation that reviewed business opportunities and employment training programs for vulnerable youth throughout Rwanda. While in Ethiopia I continued to work with children and youth at risk. My Ph.D. dissertation explored coping, adaptation, and resilience for youth from nine different war zones in Africa. My aim was to better understand the practices that are needed to enhance the potential of vulnerable youth on the continent of Africa. As a result my business model incorporates a give back component to enhance the employment potential for vulnerable youth.

I initially thought working in the field of international development would affirm my understanding of social justice, but internal conflicts were often the response to the larger international structures within which I worked. The field of international development is riddled with ethical dilemmas. The following vignette demonstrates why I was influenced to form partnerships as opposed to working through large scale organizations.

One of my first memories of the ethical dilemmas of development was in Nairobi in 1991, and later in Rwanda in 1995. The war had just broken out in Somalia and aid workers were being evacuated to Kenya. A number of the development agencies had been located in Somalia for years, and had an invested interest in returning. However returning was not so easy. In both Somalia and Rwanda missions were accompanied by an increase in donor support, resulting in the proliferation of UN agencies, such as UNICEF, UND, along with Non-governmental Agencies, such as, OXFAM, Save the Children, and Care. Each agency lobbying for a part in the emergency and bidding on the same resources. Prior to the emergency a large house could be rented in the Somalia, capital of Mogadishu, for less than \$ 500 US. This same house was rented for over \$ 2,000 US in the aftermath of the conflict, as UN and NGOs personal sought to gain a presence. This also increases the prices of the local economy as expatriates, who are frequently paid in US dollars, are able to afford more. In fact expatriates are frequently required to pay in US dollars. This phenomenon

further depletes the local economy and the livelihood of the local civilian. In Rwanda the number of international organizations increased by three fold in the aftermath of the genocide as organizations sought to expand their programs (Personal experience, 1991 and 1995).

Defining structures that can elevate poverty and address the economic impact of international development projects is a precarious balance. The funds created to alleviate suffering by the North or Developed World often change the economic circumstance of those in the developing world, especially in situation of war. Equally funds from the Developed World can be given with little knowledge of the needs of those who are receiving the funds. The African struggle has been financially supported by the very rich to those working in grass roots initiatives in the form of “aid”, relief funds, and charities. In Wangari Maathai’s book, *The Challenge for Africa* (Maathai 2009), she states, “It is always inspiring to watch famous or wealthy people stretch out their hands to help the poor” (p.64), but later adds, “while sufficient funding is important—for instance, to purchase bed nets—in my experience development success isn’t only about money, if it were, Africa would have solved many of its problems years ago” (p.65). My recent trip to Kenya in 2012, reminds me of the continual challenge of the outstretched hand with a lack of understanding of what they are grasping.

While at the guest house I got talking to a woman who had come to Nairobi to implement a health program. Her organization had a well-designed one week training that was designed to help health practitioners address preventable diseases. They had support from the Kenyan government to implement this program, but the whole experience has been frustrating, in fact, the last week of the training nobody showed up. I asked if they had buy-in from those attending the workshop. She responded by telling me that they had been told to come by their government ministries, and upon arrival had asked for some kind of compensation. She was shocked and understood this as a lack of gratitude. I then explained that a per-diem was standard protocol. For instance, when I worked with the UN, and

went on mission I received a per-diem. This covered my meals and incidentals while on mission. I commented that what they were asking for was not unreasonable, but because this organization had never worked in Kenya before they were unaware of the protocol. She then told me that they had refused to compensate these people, but instead had provided them with a gift. The frustration of this woman was very real, but so is the frustration and apathy of the African people as they continue to be subjected to programs and practice of which they have not been consulted.

My business model builds upon my professional practice working in Africa, my connection with a grass roots organization in Nairobi for the past 23 years, my knowledge of community development, and belief in cooperative partnerships for defining how funds must be allocated. Theories of power and oppression in accordance with my academic background in human development and organizational systems have influenced my practice, and the formation of my business model.

Practice to Theory

The above stories are snap shots of my experience, and they help illustrate my values that govern my professional practice and business. Each aspect of my business is rooted in a social value that is informed by a multitude of teachings. *Training for Transformation*, written by Hope and Timel (1984) and based on the work of Paulo Freire, provides a brief synopsis of key principles that shape my business practices.

No education is ever neutral: it is either designed to maintain the status quo or help people develop the critical thinking to enhance their human potential.

Relevance: Individuals will act on issues upon which they have strong feelings...emotions motivate people to act.

Problem posing: issues are identified with those whom you are working with ... as opposed to an imposed agenda.

Dialogue: a place of trust is created where genuine dialogue can take place, and a safe place to learn is created.

Reflection and action: This involves thinking about your perceptions and actions and having the humility and courage to change.

Transformation: This is a key part of the process and the momentum for social change.

My conviction to adhere to these practices is reinforced by the theoretical work of scholars, such as, Graham Hancock's *Lords of Poverty* (1993), and Susan George's of *How the Other Half Dies: The real reason for world hunger* (1986) in which she states "'Development' has been the password for imposing a new kind of dependency, for enriching the already rich world and for shaping other societies to meet its commercial and political needs" (p.17). These sentiments are further expanded upon by David Lamb in *The Africans* (1987) which provides a jaded account of the future of Africa not dissimilar to many who become disheartened with the multitude of challenges this continent faces. Robert Kaplan (2000) in *The Coming Anarchy* epitomizes these sentiments ten years later. In *Making Globalization Work* (2007) Joseph Stiglitz invites and demands of the reader to find new ways of defining our global economy by supporting fair trade initiatives, and partnerships. These thoughts are aligned with the evolving field of social entrepreneurship within which my business has its theoretical roots.

3 Social Entrepreneurism

Entrepreneurship is the act of undertaking business innovation for financial gain. A child's lemonade stand is an act of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneur ventures do not always have to be unique, but many are. The person who coined the idea of the "pet rock" in the late 80's would be defined as an entrepreneur. Social entrepreneurship is different, and the individuals involved are different. As defined by Bornstein and Davis (2010) in *Social Entrepreneurship: What everyone*

needs to know, “Social entrepreneurship is a process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problems, such as poverty, illness, illiteracy, environmental destruction, human rights abuses and corruption, in order to make life better for many” (p. 1). This definition mirrors my thoughts upon returning from Kenya to start my M.A., and reinforces the strong sense of social justice that social entrepreneurs embrace.

Bornstein’s (2007) provides the following six qualities of successful social entrepreneurs, which are summarized here to more fully understand the individual in this field.

They are individuals who have a:

1. Willingness to self-correct: open to feedback and, open to the dynamic nature of the creative process.
2. Willingness to share credit for the development of the organization: this is affirmed within the principles of community development and participatory research ... it takes many more to create and sustain a vision.
3. Willingness to break free from established structures: there is a creative nature that is not bound by traditional models but seeks to think outside of the box.
4. Willingness to cross Disciplinary Boundaries: there is a multi-disciplinary approach that weaves together theories of business, organizational and human development, anthropology, and international development.
5. Willingness to work quietly: there is a quiet determination ... an innate drive that supersedes a claim to fame.
6. Strong ethical Impetus: a sense of personal and professional integrity that links the personal with the professional.

Socially based businesses seek to transform our global economy and create a more just and equitable world, however, they continue to be in the minority. Although the insertion of these ideas in the business community might be new the reaction of the development community to some of the injustice they see in the field, and a desire to overcome a sense of helplessness and global poverty is not new. Social entrepreneurs were the forerunners to the fair-trade movement

and the idea of ethical buying. My business model is expanded upon in the following section.

4 A Case Study: Principles of Practice Hakuna Matata Imports and Accessories

Hakuna Matata was incorporated in April, 2012 but has evolved out of many years of working with those on the margins and in the field of international development in Africa. The business grew out of my desire to create a socially based businesses that promotes relationships of compassion, equality and social consciousness. Hakuna Matata builds upon the values of businesses, such as Traidcrafts (Adams 1989) and Ten Thousand Village (Ten Thousand Villages 2012), but is unique in its relational marketing and strong educational component. Additionally the foundation of these two businesses is based on Christianity. My model is not rooted in religious principles to avoid favoring one group at the exclusion of another.

Hakuna Matata Imports and Accessories (HMIA) is a socially based business with a specific focus on Africa which supports small business development globally in Nairobi, Kenya, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and locally in Victoria B.C., Canada. HMIA markets operate through an educational medium to help others understand the needs of Africa, the importance of supporting small business development, and the need for international development models that support partnerships, as opposed to those that often create dependencies. This business impacts a number of social structures that leave a legacy beyond the traditional business model. The three overall goals of this business include:

- Partnerships with small businesses to increase their marketability, sales, and the sustainability of their business in Africa (Nairobi and Addis Ababa) and Canada (Victoria, B.C.).
- HMIA provides an educational platform to increase awareness and understanding about the continent of Africa.
- HMIA donates funds and skills to support the economic development of youth who struggle to gain employment in Nairobi, Kenya.

Each of these goals are managed and overseen within an organizational and financial structure that supports the values of this socially based business.

4.1 Partnerships with Small Business

HMIA partners with small business artisans to help them build their business, and markets and sells their goods. This partnership provides a social aspect that differs from a more traditional business model. Traditional business models buy wholesale and sell retail. Relationships are often formed between the wholesaler and the buyer, but the traditional business model does not build the capacity of the wholesaler. If the wholesale fails the buyer finds another wholesaler. My business model works with the wholesalers to build their capacity and decrease their dependence on one buyer. Furthermore, it increases the social capital of both partners, and recognizes the dynamic nature of this relationship as an asset to the businesses development.

On my initial trip to Kenya, and Ethiopia in April, 2012 I identified five core artisans in Nairobi, and three in Ethiopia. Of those in Nairobi, two were referred to me, and the other three I acquired through viewing their work and building a rapport. The idea of a business relationship that was much more like a partnership was not introduced until my second trip to Nairobi, in November 2012. I returned to work on the partnership aspect of my business, create a stronger rapport with those I buy from, and share the vision behind my business model. I also acquired two new artisans. My objective is to define eight to ten core artisans in Nairobi. I have interviewed five artisans to understand their business history, present circumstances, and aspirations for the future. These interviews will be analyzed to define resources to support and build the capacity of the artisan in Nairobi. Resource information will then be used to create a video to share information with partners and others working in the informal economy. I have chosen to use video because it cut across written language barriers, and does not rely on equipment, such as a computer. This process builds rapport, and helps us both to define a working partnership.

My connection with those in Addis Abba, Ethiopia is a little different. For instance, I buy silk scarves from Sabahar, a Fair Trade organization that was initiated by someone I knew while living in Ethiopia in 2002. Sabahar is a larger small business that employs one hundred people. I support this business venture based on the social ethics that guides the work of the founder Kathy Marshal, and because they are still in their infancy regarding their international market. Building the capacity of those I work with is one of my business objectives, consequently helping to promote another socially based business. I also sell leather bags that are produced by another socially based business founded by a former colleague, Hirut Tefferi, whom I had met when I lived in Ethiopia. The challenges of obtaining grants to fund social programs led her to start a leather bag business to support a home for women who have been traumatized or abused. The values enshrined in her business align with mine, and so selling her products fits. My relationships with these two businesses is different but they both adhere to the ethical principles upon which I am building my business.

Hakuna Matata markets operate from Africa to support the development of the weak economic base. The informal employment sector in Kenya and Ethiopia is fragile and helping local entrepreneurs build their capacity is essential. Many of my suppliers cannot communicate by email. This creates a barrier to a broader marketing base. It was a small undertaking, but helping one of my merchants get a Gmail account meant he was more accessible. Here in Victoria, B.C., Canada, I buy from entrepreneurs who are making under \$30,000 to help them build their business. This has been done to recognize the need to support the fragile nature of the local small business economy, many of whom are often defined as the working poor.

4.2 Educational Awareness

I have incorporated an educational component to increase the general population's awareness of the international development, and specifically those pertaining to Africa. Knowledge creation and

knowledge dissemination are vital aspects of any social movement. Social entrepreneurship is changing the world, but the general population is still quite unaware of the systemic structures that influence and sustain global poverty. For example, traditional businesses do not usually incorporate an educational component so there is no transparency; buying happens behind closed doors, the wholesaler is invisible, known only to the retailer not the customer. It is in the last twenty years that education about the production of products, such as carpets made by children has become common knowledge. Working in the field of international development I am frequently preaching to the converted. Selling jewelry and accessories allows me to expand my market to the world of consumers that only superficially understands the issues. My model uses a business forum to increase awareness about the social issues that impact the artisans I partner with, and those supported through the “give-back” component of my business. Education also helps increase consumers’ awareness about the ethics of buying, and enhances the progress of the Fair Trade movement

HMIA uses parties as a way to build the collective group, sell jewelry and provide education. Each jewelry party comes with a presentation where I share my work experience with children and youth in Africa, and provide the rationale for the development of Hakuna Matata. The educational component is strengthened through the use of social media tools, i.e. email marketing, facebook, and my website blog. I provide a monthly newsletter to highlight various aspects of the business, and build my collective group. I have a facebook business page where I post educational videos, images of the jewelry and accessories, and the work we are doing with the project in Kenya. For example, at a HMIA party in September the host’s eighteen year-old daughter Helena was in attendance. The next day Helena asked me if she could come on my next trip, and volunteer with Maji Mazuri. In November 2012 I took my twelve year old daughter Rachel and Helena to Kenya with me. Both were required to develop presentations to showcase their experience to their peers. Helen was also tasked to write four blog posts as a means of reflect-

ing on her experience, and increasing the awareness of others. Photos of the relationships and activities Rachel and Helena formed with those at Maji Mazuri were also posted on the facebook business. The following note illustrates the resulting social impact.

“Your daughter Rachel made the number 1 spot on my Top Ten list for the year with her ability to influence my actions. I must admit this is big even if she might not realize it herself. I was hoping to get your permission to repost her photo on my own facebook page with that wonderful smile, as she helped out on your trip to Africa with all the school kids. It made me stop with wonderment and redirected my gift giving this season for all my grandchildren to Plan Canada. I know it is just a small step but it would not have happened if I did not see Rachel’s smiling face on facebook.”

Although financial gain is a part of any business the above quote provides evidence that my business is also having a social impact. I realize that it is only a beginning, but I find it encouraging. Bi-weekly blogs also increase my businesses educational outreach. They include educational information, stories of my time in Africa, and quizzes to determine the knowledge base of my collective group. Two quizzes have been launched and completed by 42 people with an average score of 55%. Using the results of the quizzes to define my blog posts allows me to increase the knowledge base of those in my collective group. It is my hope that by increasing the general populations awareness of the needs of Africa models of international development can improve, issues of cultural diversity can be more clearly understood, and models of community based partnership enhanced.

4.3 Donating Funds and Skills

A “give-back” or donation is part of my business model. Although many more businesses are “giving-back” few businesses have this embedded in their organizational structure, and the number of busi-

ness that actually create partnerships with those they give back to are in the minority. The global social movement has been assumed by many businesses, but it is often used as a marketing strategy and lacks the substances embedded in the principles of social entrepreneurship or fair trade. For instance, many mainstream businesses such as, the Body Shop, Starbucks, and Lulu Lemon have a giving component. Some even buy from those in the developing world, but they do not seek to address the economic structures that continue to create many global inequalities. The giving component of these organizations is admirable and money is important for social programs, but giving that perpetuates models of dependence is a self-serving model that primarily benefits the North. My intent is not to unfairly criticize these companies but to illuminate the emotional hooks that are used to sell products that might lack substance, and to encourage more consumers and businesses to embrace the principles of social entrepreneurship.

Funds and skills are important, but funds without the knowledge of where they are going and how they are making a difference are futile. Building schools is important, but if there are no trained teachers, and students cannot afford to buy school supplies the building is merely a building. The partnership and the longevity of the relationship I have with the Maji Mazuri Center allows me to share my skills in the area of organizational systems, evaluation, and accountability. Donating to tangible, measurable projects also means I can discuss the donation component of my model with integrity.

Helping youth is one of the focuses of my business particularly because of the increasing population of youth on the continent of Africa. Youth, are a large part of the population in Africa and they have been referred to as the “youth bulge” (Cincotta, Engelman et al. 2003). The youth bulge, combined with high unemployment, rapid urbanization, and lack of educational opportunities, has been linked to civil conflict and political instability. Addressing the needs of youth and helping them define a sense of self within the work force is of paramount importance.

Donations include a 10% give-back from each purchase. Additionally the import component, i.e. products sold that originate from Kenya and Ethiopia, has an earning ceiling of \$30,000. This means I will only earn \$30,000 after expenses from this aspect of the business at which time anything above this amount will be donated back to support youth through the Maji Mazuri Center in Nairobi. I earn additional money from sales on the products from the local artists, and from the Art for Africa component of this business (please see website for details). Finances received from local artists support my work to market, sell, and build their capacity. The revenue is divided according to a 60/40 split with 60% going to support a local business of which they assume half of the 10% donation. For example, the local business receives 55%, I receive 35%, and 10% is donated. Requiring local artisans to donate a portion of their profits means that they too assume the social values upon which my business is based.

4.4 Summary

These three main business principles are managed and overseen within an organizational and financial structure that supports the values of this socially based business. I work to keep my expenses low to increase my ability to reach my financial ceiling of \$30,000 for myself, and increase the funds to support youth through the Maji Mazuri Center. For instance, I stay in low budget hostels when in Kenya, and often travel using airport. Funding to start this business was borrowed, and needs to be paid back through profits from the business. Paying this loan means that it will take more time to reach the \$30,000 ceiling, and, provide a greater amount of funding for youth. I am presently seeking funding to pay down this business loan, and support additional business expenses through organizations, such as Changemakers, Echoing Green, corporate funding, and affiliate marketing. I have also inserted a donation button on my website as a means of eliciting support and funding. I have defined a \$30,000 ceiling for this aspect of the business, because it is a salary that aligns me with those who I partner with in Nairobi. As I stated

previously, enhancing my own place of privilege at the expense of others doing the same is just not who I am. The development of Hakuna Matata allows me to live out my passion, travel with a purpose to Africa, and continue to live in a way that creates the integrity I need to feel my time on this earth has purpose.

5 Conclusion

Hakuna Matata's three overall goals align themselves with the field of social entrepreneurship in four ways: first, building social capital with other individuals not just myself; second, addressing real life social problems of the growing number of youth in Africa; third, tackling the growing problem of the urban poor; and four, addressing the challenges of the informal urban economy. In addition, my business supports the development of partnerships with community based projects in regards to the sharing of funds and skills. Funding will be donated through a collaborative agreement in which myself, the partner organization, and youth will help define the best ways to use the funds.

My life experience has provided the opportunities to take a leap of faith on this new business venture. I am moving out of my comfort zone on a number of different levels, and opening up my world to align myself with like-minded individuals who are interested in enhancing the lives of others. Writing this article allowed me to find a sense of belonging within the field of social entrepreneurship, and affirmed my business structure that supports my values. I am in the first year of developing my business and I feel inspired and driven to move forward, encouraged by the support I have received, and work of others who are paving the way.

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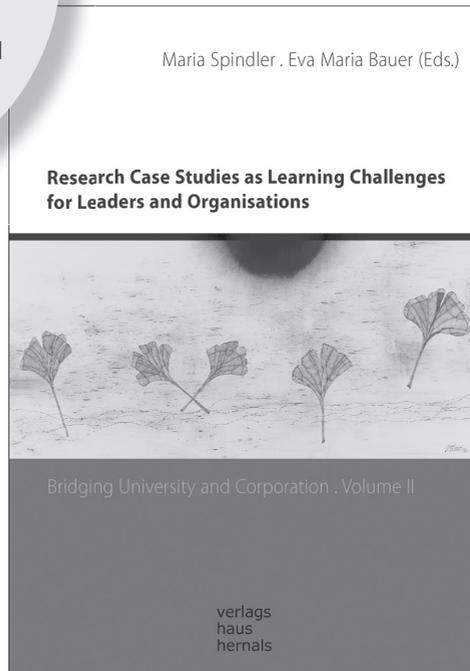
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