

## **COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION: NEW FRONTIER FOR FUTURE EDUCATION AND YUNUS SOCIAL BUSINESS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The concepts of 'sharing' Economy and Collaborative Consumption are gaining popularity in the business world because of internet based products and services. The widespread use and virtue of one of the extensions of collaborative consumption is collaborative education, which is discussed with some useful application. The main purpose is to show the existing and future potentialities of collaborative education, and how it would pave a pathway to effectively promote Yunus Social Business. Studies have shown the effectiveness and usefulness of present models of collaborative education and in order to further promote Yunus Social Business, collaborative education model is indeed holding the key. This claim was analyzed thoroughly through literature research and also through interviews. The paper suggested that the enrichment of the online portal – the Yunus and Youth tube (YYtube)– with the concepts of collaborative education will be an appealing and emerging platform from where Yunus Social Business can be taught to aspiring young minds of the future.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Collaborative Consumption, Collaborative Lifestyle, Collaborative Education, Yunus Social Business, Sharing Economy, Online Education

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent times, there has been substantial increase in the popularity of the concept of 'sharing' Economy. The concept has been prevailing in the economy form sharing a private jet to sharing luxurious holiday resorts/ apartments, to a concept sharing luxurious products or services. Because of higher price of luxurious assets, this concept of sharing or collaborative consumption provided opportunity to many customers to avail those products and services by sharing access and ownership (Wali et al., 2012). Recently, this concept has been brought into limelight in front of business world again by Rachel Botsman in TedTalks, and also by the book 'What's Mine is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption' (Botsman and Rogers, 2010).

Diverse array of products and services are gaining popularity for sharing day by day, starting from simple concept of cars, drilling machines, DVDs and Audio CDs from neighbors and others, through internet, in many websites all around the world (Wali et al., 2012). Eventually, this concept has started to spread in education arena as across the world 200 million young people leave school without the skills they need to prosper in life (UNESCO, 2012). This paper has highlighted some ongoing collaborative education models and proposed to develop similar models for the spread of Yunus Social Business concept.

The paper is divided into five parts. First of all, the paper critically reviews the existing literature on Collaborative Education, concepts of Yunus Social Business and how both the topics can be linked together. The next section deals with the data collection and analysis methodology used for the research. Following that, the paper looks into the way the concept of collaborative lifestyle can effectively be extended to the academic arena and give rise to the models of Collaborative Education. Then, the information gathered from the literature review and the interviews are gathered together to form a model

of collaborative learning for Yunus Social Business. Finally, the last section sums up the whole paper.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Collaborative Education and Learning Explained

The concept of collaborative education and learning enables students to be actively involved in the process and when they do so, they can better understand certain concepts or retain knowledge in their long-term memory (Nayan et al., 2010). Here, participants come together as a community to discover, learn and solve problems (Zhu et al., 2009). Numerous studies have been carried out on collaborative learning and many have shown that when students were given the opportunity to work collaboratively, they were able to perform better (Ocker & Yaverbaum, 2001), use advanced strategic thinking skills (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002) and gained many other benefits from it (Nayan et al., 2010).

A study by Nielsen, 2008 highlighted the usefulness of collaborative education in terms of sharing of information and two-way communication in classrooms and contexts that are miles apart. The study has also shown the usefulness of collaborative education while teaching subjects that require practical exposure (Nielsen, 2008). Another study outlines the barriers to the use of collaborative practices (Nayan et al, 2010) and focuses on the following- to examine university lecturers' preference for collaborative practices, to identify the types of the collaborative practices and to examine the reasons for collaboration. This study has found that majority of the respondents prefer to implement collaborative learning activities and believe that collaborative learning activities done in class and beyond the class promote learners' academic progress, interaction skills as well as encourage learners' intrinsic motivation. These activities also create the added dimension of practical exposure to the contexts of the lessons.

### Social Business

In recent times, the concept of social business has gained significant importance following the debut of Dr. Yunus, the winner of the 2006 Nobel Prize for Peace for his pioneering work in micro credit. One definition of social business is that it is a business owned and operated by a group of individuals, who are not driven by profit motive, but rather by the desire to maximize certain social benefits. Social business is an organization devoted to a social objective, not to make profits or dividends for the shareholders (Yunus et al., 2010). Hence, social business catalyzes social change and addresses social needs through innovative use and combination of resources (Mair and Marti, 2006).

The purpose is to develop a paradigm which provides future entrepreneurs an economic and social system where a world without poverty can be realized (Yunus, 2009). Social business elevates the social and economic positions of the under privileged (Yunus et al., 2010). It is designed to encompass the under privileged to equally participate in the market based economic activities. According to the pyramid of economic prosperity, very few business enterprises target the bottom of the pyramid because it comprises of people with limited or no purchasing power (Prahald and Hammond, 2002). However, the social business paradigm includes the bottom of the pyramid and addresses their needs (Yunus, 2009).

Although there have been models and frameworks explaining the concepts of Social Business, there have been a distinctive lack of means to teach Social Business concepts to the younger and eager minds (Yunus, 2009). The need for an effective mean of teaching Social Business has been challenge in the perspective of a normal academia as well (Yunus et al., 2010). According to Yunus, 2009, the core concept of social business requires the experiencing the social difficulties first hand and this requires more than formal classroom education.

### Linking Collaborative Education with Social Business

The work of Paavola et al., 2004 combines the recent models of knowledge creation by looking into the models of Nonaka and Tekuchi, Engestrom's model and Bereiter's model. The work suggested that any

model of knowledge creation should view knowledge creation as a social process, goes beyond propositional and conceptual knowledge and should encourage interaction through shared objects (Paavola et al., 2004). These requirements are very much required for any approaches to teach and create knowledge for Yunus Social Business, as the concept is highly relevant to the context described in the study.

Case study analysis of success stories of implementation of Collaborative Education approach showed that this approach has an edge over other approaches while teaching concepts which have a diverse viewpoint, and which require a thorough understanding of the concept and collaboratively working out a solution (Trentin, 2004). The study also showed collaborative education can be a good approach to contexts which are beyond the capacity of a classroom environment, where the participants are expected to develop metacognitive skills (Trentin, 2004). Similarly, collaborative education requires a greater degree of interaction and understanding among the teacher and the student (Summers et al., 2005). The task of the teacher/instructor is to establish the intersubjectivity: a basic understanding of the problem or issue before the problem is being faced by the learners.

The studies above give an idea on how collaborative education can be used as an effective approach to teach Yunus Social Business Concepts. It can be seen from the literature review section that there exists a gap in coming up with a proper method of teaching Social Business. The following sections of the paper will attempt to gather the distinctive advantages of teaching through Collaborative Education methods and the specific needs for teaching Social Business together.

## **DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

This paper was aimed to propose Collaborative Education as an approach to teach Yunus Social Business. So, the research was exploratory in nature, and the deductive reasoning approach was used (Denscombe, 1998). The data gathered was qualitative in nature, as the concept of teaching Yunus Social Business has not yet developed to the stage of collecting quantitative data and carrying out empirical analysis (Yunus, 2009).

The research was carried out in two steps. First, a thorough literature review was done in order to understand the advantages of Collaborative Education and how it applies to teaching Yunus Social Business. The review was also carried out to find out an appropriate model for teaching Yunus Social Business. Due to the fact that both the concepts are new, comparatively few relevant literatures could be found, and this has been one of the limitations of the study (Yunus *et al.*, 2010). As such, the information from the existing literature was critically reviewed in order to provide further direction for the research (Grbich, 2007).

The next step was to carry out interviews. First of all, experts in the field of Yunus Social Business were interviewed by the researchers in Bangladesh. These were in-depth interviews, where the findings of literature and the first stage was shared with the experts in order to obtain their opinion (Robson, 2002), and also to gain insight on the best approach to develop a model for teaching Yunus Social Business. Based on the outcome of these interviews, Focused Group Discussions were carried out in Bangladesh, France and UK, involving students, lecturers and practitioners of Social Business. The three layer FGD was carried out to give the research thoroughness and a 360 degree approach, analyzing the viewpoints of all those involved (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Finally the findings of the literature review, together with the findings from the interviews were used together to generate the model for teaching YUNUS SOCIAL BUSINESS through Collaborative Education.

## **COLLABORATIVE LIFESTYLE – PAVING THE PATH TO COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION**

The concept of collaborative lifestyle is the sharing of intellectual assets and skills over the economy. This form of sharing has very profound implication and applicability in the society and economy. In the advent of the 2020s, good portion of the world are connected through internet and availing the benefits of internet

services from every nooks and corners. The technological advancement lowered cost structure, investment and operating costs and collaborative business also started to take advantages out of it. As a result, more and more organizations started to come up with different array of products and services with the concept of collaborative consumption (Young, 2011; Shaheen *et al.*, 2012; Rachel and Botsman, 2010).

One in every five young people in developing countries needs second chance for education to gain skills for work (UNESCO, 2012). One of the factors for leaving education is that the cost of education has risen over times and some form of education has gone out of reach for certain groups of people. For example, let us consider the case for a young business executive or a regular student from a country where main language is not English, plans for a Master's degree from a good business school that requires GMAT score. The learner can get into some assistance courses that have professional teaching instructions for appearing GMAT examination but often it would be difficult to spare time on a regular basis for these courses, or it could be out of reach due to course fees. So what are the options? The answer can be simply provided by visiting the Khan Academy's website (Khan 2012), looking up for the GMAT preparation videos, and download a GMAT official preparation guide from the official GMAT website and practice at a time convenient for the learner. The learner will have the support at home and can avail the lecture at convenient time. Any student or learner can enjoy the same benefit from any part of the world.

In another case, a young executive or innovator wants to perform better by exhibiting good business awareness, passing up strong and stimulating new ideas. Although some of these qualities require practical experience, others require learning recent business practices that have been appreciated by the business world. Given workload, yet again, most of the time it is feasible. So what are the options to have all the new business updates in one platform? The innovator can log in to TedTalks website, look for themes in business that are relevant to areas of interest. Watching some of the videos that are given by very outstanding speakers and movers and shakers of the business world will help to get the desired edge in the concerned business sector.

Both these examples require further education. The easiest option is to log into websites dedicated in developing the skill base of the users through the sharing of skills of intellectuals who has accomplishment in their own fields. This is the concept of Collaborative Education – to have a portal where people can share their educational expertise. People with experience, knowledge and qualification will share learning with the people in need. It can be free, on payment basis or both. This will benefit those who will be sharing in terms of building up their network, profiles and images in the community. We have just introduced two websites as examples to collaborative education, but in effect there are many websites and portals around the world which act in the same way, may be not by sharing videos, but by information through text and presentation.

A similar example of one such platform is common among many university students, who use cloud computing facilities to share subject specific lectures and tutorials with students from other disciplines. The ease of access to these cloud storage websites (DropBox and Microsoft SkyDrive) makes this sharing and collaboration of education a very simple matter. Whenever a student needs to learn something specific which may not be directly related to the classes, need to do log into these sharing portals and look for the course materials that may help him or her learn the concept. Although sharing of lectures started in informal ways, today there have been emergences of websites providing interactive lectures by instructors in the World's best universities and also sponsored and controlled by them to maintain a very high quality of instruction.

Three such appropriate examples are Coursera, EDX and Udemy, all of which are sponsored by and instructions provided by the very top ranking universities of the world and it is free of cost. Everyone can log into these sites and look for particular courses to enrich own skill base. The future of the education will be in collaborative education of young aspiring individuals all around the world. They may also go through tests and exams that they need to learn conveniently and cost-effectively.

The collaborative education not only addresses the problem of cost of education but also has the added

advantage of convenience and distance learning. It is true that only the presentation files and the course materials are not good enough to recreate the classroom learning situation but with the help of multimedia, there are now interactive and noninteractive videos that are shared across internet which provide closest to classroom experience. This form of education is already being popularized by the websites already mentioned in this section along with the increase in popularity in AudioBooks and Podcasts from iTunes stores, which serve the very same purpose.

### **BUILDING A PLATFORM FOR COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION (CE) ON YUNUS SOCIAL BUSINESS (YSB)**

The concept of Yunus Social Business has gained popularity for solving a recurring problem in the society with the help of the daily operations of the business. Success is measured in terms of addressing the problem rather than maximizing profit. Investors will only get back the initial investment and profit would be reinvested for future expansion (Yunus, 2010). Yunus Social Business and collaborative consumption stem more or less from the same root – there are people in the economy with commodities who can and want to contribute services; there are people in the economy who are in need of those services (Yunus et al., 2010). Both these ideas lean heavily on the effective sharing of information and the use of a good information medium, notably the internet (Palmer et al., 2012). Given this similar core, the ‘sharing’ economy can be used as a new platform to promote Yunus Social Business.

It has been observed from experiences in teaching social businesses that the traditional classroom approach is effective to ignite the idea of the socially responsible business practices (Wali, 2012). The concept of Yunus social business is far more effective than other business concepts due to the fact that Social Business offers the growth of investments made by the concerned parties as well as aiding in the development of the society (McCann, 2011). Proper and effective means of teaching social business requires the exposure to the real scenarios of bottom of the pyramid people (BoP), and other highly underdeveloped areas to give the students/learners an idea of how social business can help in the development of the society and this is where the usefulness of collaborative education comes into play (Wali, 2012).

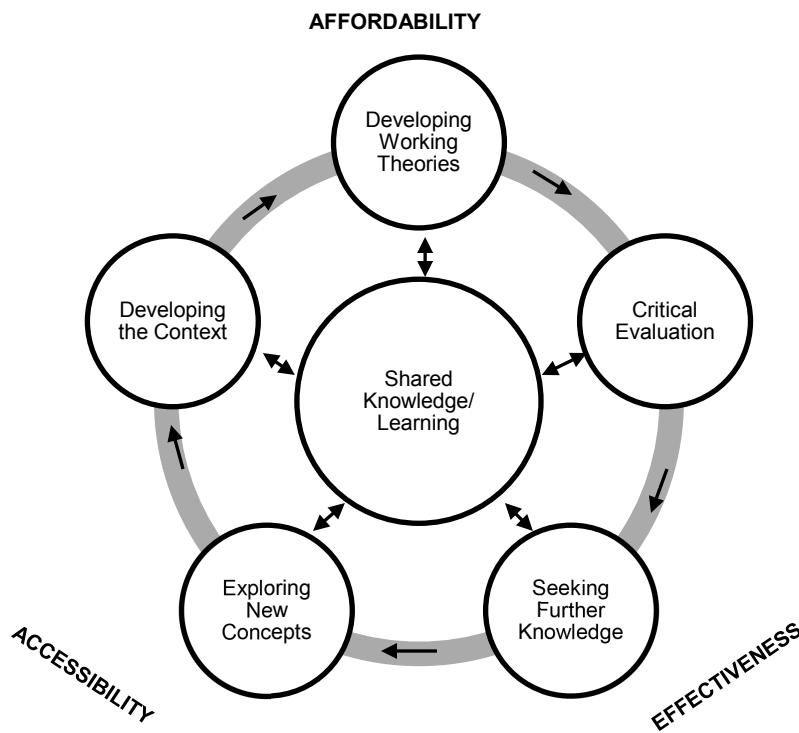
Although it may be possible for the students/learners in the underdeveloped countries to grasp the concept of Yunus Social Business, due to the ease of their exposure to the needs of the society and BoP people, it may be challenging for the students/learners of the highly developed countries to get a clear and interactive picture of the benefits that can be contributed by Yunus Social Business. Whereas, this segment can significantly contribute by thinking outside the box approach only if they can get the exposure of BoP society and market. They can develop social business in this arena by addressing social issues from that particular community. The model of ‘YY (Yunus & Youth) tube,’ can be a leading example in this arena. While YY tube gets access to talks of Professor Yunus in different events, they can make it available for all interested learners across the world to view those talks. Besides, some universities and institutions are offering courses on SB as well. However, those courses are not in reach of most of the learners. Apart for ‘YYtube’ website, online courses or lectures can be developed in collaboration with universities, academic institutions, above stated websites or even with some new websites.

Yunus Social Business is still at its introductory face. It requires involvement of experts, innovators and learners from different fields. Interactions among these groups will raise different queries and contexts. In order to address those queries, lots of research and experiments would be carried out that would lead to different working theories. At critical evaluation stage, experts, researchers and learners will search for possible solutions by deepening knowledge base on specific subjects. After that, if solution is found then the world will have new knowledge to share. Otherwise, a set of new working theories will be constructed to create another new favorable context for society (Borthick & Jones, 2000).

The model developed has three major factors to consider for implementation – affordability, accessibility and effectiveness. The courses and the modules will have customized pricing policy based on the financial and socio-economic background of the participants. The revenue from the higher income participant

groups will be used to subsidize the costs for lower income participant groups. The materials for the sessions will be available online, in online classrooms, having facilities for disabled participants, facilitating the involvement of guest lecturers and other experts globally. In terms of effectiveness of the model, there will be synchronous discussions for the sessions, web accessible forums to incorporate student feedback and the course assessments will be done online, with the detailed evaluation provided promptly online. This will reduce the requirement of physical presence for the participants as well (Lakkala, et. al., 2007).

Figure 1: Yunus Social Business Collaborative Learning Model



If we could build up an interactive internet based platform where the concepts Yunus Social Business will be explained by its pioneers as well as shown how those have been implemented and helped local population to develop, then not only the platform will give hands on exposure to students/learners who are interested in it but also will show the world the real effectiveness of Yunus Social Business. In addition, due to the fact that this platform is global, the knowledge, experiences and exposure can be shared at a global level. So, due to the practical nature of the Yunus Social Business education, the concept of collaborative education can help to create a very good platform for Yunus Social Business. One day, it might even possible that a collaborative education service is developed with the Yunus Social Business model where profit would be reinvested for further development. Premier fees would be charged to solvent collaborative education users to cross subsidize the cost of other users or educational institutions.

**CONCLUSION**

The aim of the paper was to explore the possibility of integrating the concepts of Collaborative Education to build up a model for teaching Yunus Social Business. The research was carried specifically based on the existing literature and on qualitative data from interviews and FGDs. Based on the discussions, this paper has proposed a new integration of the concept of collaborative consumption principles in education sector to show how it can be as effective as a form of collaborative education which will not only act in reducing

the cost of education through sharing but make it more interactive, interesting and convenient. The use of the collaborative education concept is developed to create platform for teaching Yunus Social Business. This paper only proposes the usefulness that can be gained in developing a platform for sharing the knowledge and experiences of Yunus Social Business to aid in the learning of its concepts. There are further research scopes in both evaluating this proposal and also in working to create a more detailed platform in line with this proposal.

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