

EMPRENDEVERDE: A CASE STUDY ON TRANSITION FROM BUSINESS INNOVATION TO SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Abstract: *Social entrepreneurship has evolved in its design and implementation. The objective of this work is to present an innovative proposal that has benefited young rural entrepreneurs, through the business model called „Emprendeverde social marketer“, conceived and implemented by Minuto de Dios University Corporation UNIMINUTO and its extension unit, the Scientific Park of Social innovation (known by the Spanish acronym PCIS). Its purpose has been to support entrepreneurs with the generation of their first customer and business enhancement strategies. Social entrepreneurship is assumed theoretically, as an activity developed by a person or organization to solve social problems through Innovation and the development of business strategies in order to achieve Self-sustainability and the generation of social value. The research methodology is an exploratory case study. The results show that Empreverde, which is in its fifth year of existence, has evolved from problem assessment exercises, to the development of different business models and the possibility of becoming a spin off. During this period, it has supported the ideation and creation of 70 rural enterprises, 40 of them are still in operation and 30 have disappeared. These outcomes raise the need to re-direct its strategy, define gaps and action plans, particularly in social marketing, through networks (nodes, links and quantitative indicators), to enable it to scale up its services at the national and regional level, consolidating a strong and sustainable organization for the benefit of the most vulnerable populations in the agricultural sector.*

Keywords: *Innovation, Social entrepreneurship, green business.*

1. Innovation as the engine of the economic system

The process of change is inherent into the human history; the human being has travel among different types of socio-cultural structures, political institutions and modes of production. With the advent of the industrial age and the development of economic science, the change begins to be conceived as an exogenous force to the economic system, and whose effects take the form of improvements in productivity [Montoya, C., 2012].

Since the eighteenth-century Adam Smith and David Ricardo, realized that through the division of labor, the workforce acquires new degrees of specialization, which lead to identify possible improvements, and the development of specific machines or tools that would allow to produce the same things, with a smaller amount of resources [Formichella, 2005].

Two centuries later, this sum of capabilities would be called *technological change* by Robert Solow [1957]. However, the first important economist to develop the concept of innovation was Joseph Schumpeter, succeeding in establishing in 1939 the difference



between invention and innovation. He understood the invention as that product or process that is born in a scientific or technical field, and remains in that environment, that is, pure or basic science. On the other hand, he related innovation to a change of economic and social nature that spreads itself to the social sphere, in the form of a product or service [Medina & Espinosa, 1994].

Within the classical economy, service and goods production requires three factors: land, work, and capital. In its perspective, the economy growth is equivalent to an increase in production, and in order to get that growth, the increase in the available factors is the only condition. However, Schumpeter goes one step further, as he establishes that economic development is a constant evolving process, which is result of innovation waves [Olaya, 2008]. Schumpeter conceived the term innovation as a structural change, a „mutation” inside the economic system, one leap that dynamizes the production trends. Now that the change has its origins inside the system, it is not more an external force like classical economists believed.

Following this logic, innovation emerges from the adoption and adaption of new technologies, that enable entrepreneurs to face competition and new markets in more efficient ways; as a result, innovation is a process of creative destruction; it means that old models of production, consumption and organization are replaced by new process, products and business relations [Montoya, 2012]. In the words of Schumpeter:

„The fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumers’ goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization that capitalist enterprise creates”. Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy [1943, p.83].

This brings up that innovation is the driving force behind capitalism. In the fourth edition of his book called Theory of economic development, published in 1912, Schumpeter states the term innovation, and explains the ways in which innovation determines the social organization of production.

In other words, the transit by the different stages of development, known as modes of production, obeys to the appearance of new artefacts, that induce new ways of combining the production factors, manifesting a continue economic evolution. For example, the leap from mercantilism to capitalism, is explained thanks to the adoption of new technologies (i.e. steam), new goods (i.e automobiles), new methods of productions (supply chains), new markets (globalization), new materials (rubber, petroleum), and new organizations of the industries (multinational corporations). In consequence, the adoption of the technological change implies renewed social relationships, where power, propriety and control transited from land and precious metals tenure to capital possession. Concluding in simple terms innovation is „the ability to produce other things, or the same, but using different methods“ [Schumpeter, 1967. p. 76].

In the mid twentieth century Professor Peter Drucker, philosopher of business management, wrote the first reference to the „knowledge” factor in the year 1959, introducing the term „knowledge worker”. Drucker states that knowledge economy emerged when a radical change took place in human history, this change meant a transition from knowledge applied to the being towards knowledge applied to the doing [Montoushi, 2000].

Accordingly, the knowledge worker is the person who applies ideas, concepts, and information to job in more intensive way that hand operated or physical force. This approach led to the recognition that there is a stock of personal and organizational knowledge, which influences how to combine and use available production factors. This, in turn, allowed contemporary economists to consider a new way of expressing the production

function as $Q = f(W, L, K, Co)^1$ where Co indicates the set of knowledge that contributes in obtaining the product (Q) [Drucker, 1993].

This new perspective allows us to understand that the most important role between the unfolding of economic changes corresponds to the advances in scientific and technological knowledge, because this knowledge becomes in a stock of capabilities, from which innovation takes its momentum. All in all, justified that two more factors were added to the production factors of classical economy, namely human knowledge and technology [Rozenwurcel & Bezchinsky, 2007]. The concept of "knowledge society" appears with Peter Drucker [1969]. However, it is only in the last decade of the 20th century that the knowledge economy begins to be considered as a new field of study [Sther, 1994; Castells, 1996; Mansell, 1998] whose main objective is to analyze the flow of resources towards production, distribution and use of knowledge -which can take the form of artifacts, patents, or information.

The Oslo manual defines the term innovation as „the use of knowledge and organizational capacity for the introduction of a new, or significantly improved, product (good or service), a process, a new marketing method or a new organizational method, in the internal practices of a company, organization, or human group“ [Cámara Madrid, 2004]. On the other hand, technology is defined as „the organized set of scientific and empirical knowledge, which can take the form of useful artifacts, which facilitate processes of production, commercialization and use of goods and services.“ Restrepo [2001]. Nowadays, the terms of innovation management and technological management are often used interchangeably. Innovation management was born as a response to globalization processes, whose presence motivates organizations to reconsider their strategies seeking to improve their processes, competitiveness and in some cases their social impact [Angel, 2015].

Even more important for the case study presented below is the concept of non-technological innovations, established in the second version of the Oslo Manual, and which can be of three types [OECD, 1996, p.439]: i. Implementation of advanced management techniques, ii. Introduction or significant change of new organizational structures, iii. Implementation of new or improved strategic orientations.

2. The innovation in Uniminuto University

Innovation, as defined in the Oslo Manual, refers to a concept that goes beyond research and development, and whose main purpose is put a new product or service in the market. But it also has a reference to more intangible aspects such as new forms of organization and new forms of commercialization of companies, complemented with the dissemination and social appropriation of the new solutions. According to the Green Paper of the Innovation of the European Commission [1995], it states that innovation is considered as a synonym of producing, assimilating and successfully exploiting a novelty, in the economic and social spheres, in order to provide unprecedented solutions to the problems and to find an answer to the needs of people and society [Sleiman et al., 2016].

In this sense, a classical conception of innovation focused only on technical or scientific finding is associated with increasing inequality, while concepts such as inclusive innovation can be linked to its reduction [Cozzens et al., 2007]. Inequality, is problematic as much in normative terms as for long-term social and economic development, because it represents an obstacle to the fair access to capacities and opportunities [Stiglitz, 2012]. Hence, international organizations and national governments, companies and the academic sector are more committed to this type of approach, thus expanding the number of

¹ W=Work; L=Land; K=Capital; Co= Knowledge



initiatives globally and locally. This is precisely the same perspective assumed by Uniminuto University: innovation must be social, for that reason this institution focuses in supporting initiatives of social innovation and social entrepreneurship.

UNIMINUTO, is a university with headquarters in Bogotá, Colombia, founded in 1990 by the priest Rafael García Herreros, its substantive work consists on teaching and on the processes of social projection, together with research activities, which are a support and a complement function to all its missional goals. Uniminuto has presence all over the country covering 36 municipalities, many of this with vulnerable population who lives below poverty line and have suffered the violence of 50 years of internal armed conflict. The institution's purpose is aimed at promoting social inclusion with a clear focus on action, and supporting the development of its 124.000 students, guiding their professionalization, generating a direct impact on the welfare of the communities. On the other hand, the Scientific Park of Social Innovation – PCIS, is the innovation branch of UNIMINUTO, „which bases its foundation and actions on four general aspects: The missionary commission, the UNIMINUTO Organization of God, OMD, as a social enterprise, the regionalization of UNIMINUTO and the practices of social innovation existing in UNIMINUTO“[Arias, 2016].

In this context, was designed and implemented the project called „Emprendeverde social marketer“. This project addresses the challenge of creating opportunities for economic development in the Department of Cundinamarca-Colombia, through the promotion of green businesses. In order to get it, Uniminuto becomes in the first client and advisor for the new entrepreneurs. A green business refers to a specific entrepreneurship that is done with a good or a service that is elaborated under following standars: a) Those are green processes: Minimize the use of energy and water, they prevent environmental pollution (soil, air, water) and minimize the generation of waste; and b) Green inputs: Manufactured or obtained from nature, through green processes [Pacheco, González & Ramírez, M; 2013].

3. Innovation focused on social entrepreneurship

Social Entrepreneurship has become an expression of innovation, probably since the last three decades; nevertheless, theories surrounding the subject and its nature are still scarce [UNIMINUTO, 2016]. We could also think that some real experiences of social entrepreneurship have been achieved, without any theoretical definition as in the case of *Emprendeverde*. However, the social entrepreneurship's goal has been always to improve the economic conditions of a part of society over time, in a sustainable and strong way.

If we plan to define social entrepreneurship theoretically, we may try to focus on the definitions of traditional entrepreneurship in the sense that it refers to an initiative, albeit social entrepreneurship has specific characteristics that mainly address the significant benefits for society. On the other hand, it is very likely that it is a term associated with social innovation, in the sense of generating social and economic value that can be developed through resource channeling for the achievement of a social objective. Social entrepreneurship is disinterested and does not intend to generate economic surpluses; instead, the benefits of this entrepreneurship category are based on the growth of the social economy of a community.

According to Say [1841], the traditional entrepreneur creates any product on his own account, on his own risks and benefits; social entrepreneurs develop solutions in a disinterested manner, without pursuing utility, which is also described as the notion of searching for shared benefits as opposed to the satisfaction of traditional private interests supported by the capitalist economy and individualistic societies.

Nevertheless, for this document, it is important to define and characterize social entrepreneurship from its essence and philosophy. Furnier [2011], states that the academic research of the Sekn Network² proposes a definition of social value creation, citing Gutierrez and Lobo [2006]: „*The search for social improvement by eliminating the barriers that prevent social inclusion, assistance to temporarily weakened or voiceless populations, and mitigation of the negative externalities of economic activity*“. This definition leads us to think that social entrepreneurship „sees“ at the longer term, working for the sustainability of organizations, opposing to the destruction of value from a capitalist point of view and determining the economic rationality of the creation of social value, inspired by social entrepreneurship.

Bornstein [2004], defines entrepreneurship as a transforming force of society, in which the social entrepreneur must have attributes of a leader: to be able to self-criticize; share success to create synergies; extract from their environment to respond efficiently to identified problems, with a broad and comprehensive vision that allows innovation; reuse available resources; have the ability to create and a high degree of ethics.

In a research document published by the Central University, Fournier [2011] refers to social innovation as a strategy implemented by organizations in the social entrepreneurship sector, building unique and specific models that contribute to resolve social problems. They propose three key points of relationship between social organization and social innovation: 1) Their competences 2) their alliances and 3) knowledge of the environment.

In other words Martin and Osberg [2017] define social entrepreneurship in three components: The first identifies a stable scenario, but intrinsically unfair that causes the exclusion, marginalization or suffering of humanity. The second identifies an opportunity in the unfair equilibrium and develops a proposal of social value; and finally, the third one forges a new and stable scenario.

In order to determine what should be understood by social entrepreneurship for the purposes of this work, it is based on the „Essay of clarifications and definitions of the related concepts of social Enterprise, social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship“ by François Brouard and Sophie Laviret [ALAFEC, 2014] whereby they analyze various definitions of social entrepreneurship, social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. The following definitions stand out:

- „Social entrepreneurship does not refer to starting a business or making it more commercial. It refers to finding new and better ways to create social value“ [Dees, 2002].
- „Social entrepreneurship is the art of simultaneously pursuing a financial return and a social return on investment“ [Institute for Social Entrepreneurs, 2002].
- „Social entrepreneurship is the process of applying the principles of business and entrepreneurship to social problems.“ [Cochran, 2007].

In order for social entrepreneurship to succeed, the social entrepreneur is required, it is a person who puts into practice ideas whose purpose is to solve present problems in society. Its incentive is not merely economic, although there is also the idea of social entrepreneurship as a mixture of innovative ideas that seek social change and a certain economic benefit in order to implement it.

Therefore, the solidarity-based economy is constituted by a set of individuals arranged into associations, foundations, mutual organizations and cooperatives, for which the general interest prevails over the individual one, promoting decisions and actions that must be taken in a democratic and participative way. Labor prevails over capital in solidarity-based economy. This kind of economy does not belong to the public sector or to the sphere of the capitalist economy [Economic Zone, 2013], it belongs to the solution of problems that

² Social Exclusion Knowledge Network



affect society in different ways, which can be classified as: education, housing, health, environment, among others; this is how the economic and sustainable development of a society can be achieved.

4. Empreverde an innovative and strategic model of social entrepreneurship

The commercialization of goods and services at the early stage of an enterprise represents one of the main obstacles for their growth and continuity, according to Allmad [2013] 98% of the projects in the world fail due to lack of clients. Furthermore, according to Block and Sander cited by Fuentelsaz and González [2015] in the absence of job opportunities, entrepreneurs are forced to make the decision to start off and become self-employed; these are defined by the authors as „entrepreneurs of lower quality“, with lower costs of opportunity, profitability, job creation, (in most cases the only employee is the same entrepreneur), with meager results at the economic level and with higher failure rate.

In this context, UNIMINUTO, has among its purposes the following³:

- To provide a learning space where the student can to analyze, understand and interpretate a reality or a specific problem, making contributions from their professional knowledge and forward transforming social problems into opportunities.
- To integrate theory and practice in a real context, where the student's professional competences are developed and promoted in a creative way. This is possible thanks to the praxeological approach, that states that a reality must be observed, judged, and transformed using creative actions based on participatory principles.
- To create opportunities for the students to know and get into specific market niches, according to the field of knowledge, and the nature of their projects.
- To provide new products and services to society by students who are characterized for their comprehensive education based on ethics, social responsibility and citizenship.

In coherence with these purposes, the PCIS began its work at the end of 2012 with a business model called “Empreverde social marketer”, with the goal of promoting the inclusion of rural and urban entrepreneurship in the market at an early stage, and in this order to improve entrepreneur’s quality of life, strengthen their social, environmental and economic capacities and add value to their regions.

The chronology of the most important milestones of Empreverde, are highlighted in Table 1, for the period 2012 - 2018.

Table 1. Timeline: Main milestones in the development of Empreverde

YEAR	MILESTONES
2012	Identification of the problems with the rural communities of Guavio, Cundinamarca, Colombia.
2013	Development of the initial purchase model for entrepreneurs.
2014	Inclusion of entrepreneurs as UNIMINUTO suppliers, bran registration.
2015	Model development Empreverde Stores, marketing pilot study with external customers.
2016	Design and train students in the Sustainable Business Models for Entrepreneurs course.
2017	Development of service lines. (Acceleration, Education, Store, Marketing)
2018	Design and Development of a Spin off

Source. Own elaboration

³ UNIMINUTO propósitos básicos <http://www.uniminuto.edu/web/llanos/propositos-basicos1>.

2012. Empreverde emerges as a product of a research financed by Colciencias⁴, in which the PCIS together with some communities propose a solution to replace the high rate of commercial intermediation in the products, which increase the cost for the client and decrease the income for the producer.

2013. Development of the purchase model for entrepreneurs to facilitate the commercialization of their products.

2014. UNIMINUTO issues a rector resolution with the objective of supporting the purchase of products and services from entrepreneurs affiliated to Empreverde.

2015. Given the legal limitations of UNIMINUTO as a nonprofit organization, it developed a concession model, which empower the students for the commercialization of products into owned stores of the Institution at Soacha and Girardot municipalities.

2016. The need to provide entrepreneurs with greater tools and management concepts of a business was identified. Therefore, PCIS designed and implemented a certified course called Sustainable Business Models for Entrepreneurs, that accounts now four cohorts.

2017. Service lines are developed: Acceleration, Education, Store and Marketing, detailed in Table 2 of this document.

2018. Given the need for greater resources and scaling up the model, is considered the relevance of a strategic change of the organization towards the design and implementation of a Spin Off, this process is currently in developing.

4.1. Methodological design of support for entrepreneurs

The methodology implemented by Empreverde focuses on accompanying the entrepreneur and it is called „Empreverde Case Management“, adapted from ideation and business generation tools known as Design Thinking, Lean Startup and Psychosocial Monitoring.

In case management, a follow-up is carried out focused on the growth in sales of entrepreneurs, early validation of the market, search for customers, generation of social and environmental value. The Empreverde team performs a weekly follow-up of the entrepreneurships and at the end of the session tasks are assigned to both the entrepreneur and the advisor who during the week searches for information to generate more value to the proposal. The counseling cycle consists of four weekly sessions with the following topics. i) customers, ii) marketing, iii) social value iv) environmental value

4.2. Results along time

Currently, Empreverde is present in 20 of the 116 municipalities in the department of Cundinamarca. Its value proposition has been a solution to the problems of commercialization of rural goods and services through the purchase of the first invoice which is supported by UNIMINUTO, with fair trade criteria that enables the generation of social network, strengthening the development in the different territories and promoting the care of the environment, starting with the first sell and invoicing of entrepreneurs [Velásquez, C, Pacheco, J. 2017].

⁴ COLCIENCIAS: The Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation is the entity in charge of promoting public policies to promote science, technology and innovation in Colombia.



Table 2. Service lines of Empreverde social marketer

No	Service Line	Target
1	Acceleration	Provide commercial impulse to entrepreneurs by supporting the first purchase of goods and services certified under social, environmental and economic standards.
2	Store	Connecting entrepreneurs with end customers from the promotion of fair trade.
3	Education	Strengthen capacities of management, entrepreneurship and social innovation
4	Marketing	Acting as intermediaries with parameters of fair trade in the sale of products and services developed by entrepreneurs to companies.

Source. Own elaboration

In its five (5) years of existence, Empreverde has supported the ideation and creation of 70 rural enterprises, 40 of which still exist and 30 of them which have disappeared. These experiences led the organization to develop strategies to face this mortality in four strategic lines, implemented in 2016, as detailed in Table 2.

UNIMINUTO has supported entrepreneurs, with purchases over US \$ 258 thousand, increasing the value of US \$ 5,668 in 2013 to US \$ 81,506 in 2017, as shown in Table 2.

Table 3. Purchases made by UNIMINUTO to entrepreneurs in the line of acceleration of Empreverde (us \$)⁵

LINEAS	AÑO						TOTAL
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
Foods	5.668	24.633	24.667	22.752	19.963	15.087	112.770
Catering Services			31.049	26.990	18.864		76.903
Handicrafts		2.926	373	1.990	2.601		7.890
Empreverde Stores				4.753	40.077	13.530	58.360
Services		2.118	438				2.557
TOTAL YEAR	5.668	29.677	56.527	56.484	81.506	28.617	258.480

Source. Own elaboration

4. Conclusions

Empreverde has promoted the growth of entrepreneurs through the purchase of products and services including them as suppliers of UNIMINUTO. Through this purchase action, entrepreneurs have a client that allows them to grow and generate value in their regions. Among the products that have a higher demand are the food and catering services due to the dynamics of UNIMINUTO. The Case Management accompaniment methodology allows entrepreneurs to grow steadily over time by identifying strategies in the short and medium term together with the advice of the Empreverde team.

At present, Empreverde is designing and implementing a strategic redirection, aimed to understand and close the gaps to become a university spin-off and be able to extend its scope, becoming into a sustainable and long lasting organization for the benefit of the entrepreneur communities that are part of the most vulnerable sectors of Colombia. This purpose involves the following phases:

⁵ TRM (\$/1 US). 2013: \$1926,83; 2014 \$2.392; 2015 \$3.149; 2016 \$ 3.071; 2017 \$ 2.984; 2018 \$3.000

- Make a diagnosis of the experiences and learnings developed during the first four years of Empreverde's existence.
- Define possible futures in a changing and post-conflict environment in Colombia.
- Define the gaps, strategy and action plans to turn Empreverde into a spinoff.

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