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# Introducing a Conceptual Framework for the Strategic Classification of State-Sponsored Social Entrepreneurship: A Conceptual Study

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Scholars of social entrepreneurship have yet to propose a classification of strategies employed by states to promote SE. The paper's aim is to introduce a conceptual framework for state-sponsored SEs to fill this gap. Such a necessity rises out of the strategic study of the states' role in the promotion of SE intra- and extraterritorially. The paper not only propose strategic mix for the formulation of state-sponsored SE, but also presented a conceptual framework based on the tendency of states toward four orientations of internationalism, internalism, governmentalism and volunteerism for pursuing SE in a macro-scale. Finally, four comprehensive SE strategies namely Opened Door Strategy, Closed Door Strategy, Global Citizen Strategy and Country Citizen Strategy based on the four orientations were proposed. The theoretical implication of the framework is in its contribution to the classification of governmentally promoted SE for a more clarified study and teaching of SEs in the academic context. Its practical implication is in its application as a guideline for sound formulation of SE strategies by public organisations in the public and third sector contexts.

**Keywords**: social entrepreneurship (SE), strategy, strategic classification, state-sponsored social





# INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship could potentially have strategic impacts, and must not be neglected by economically developed states. The Presidential Summit of April 26, and 27, 2010, held in Washington, DC, at the Ronald Reagan Building with the strategic focus on entrepreneurship is one of the examples of state consciousness towards entrepreneurship. Moreover, the existence of a governmental body or ministry for pursuing social affairs such as social security or fulfilling social needs effectively in any governments, logically justifies the necessity of having locally or nationally customised social entrepreneurship (SE) strategies by the governments. Setting aside the controversy that how government which inevitably must be run by bureaucracy could be entrepreneurial, governments all around the world are getting familiar with the power of entrepreneurship for running their states. When these governments release statistics on the number of job opportunities provided for their nations or number of social problems tackled by innovative measures, they are inevitably talking about the fruits of the entrepreneurship tree. SE, which could be defined as 'a socially mission-oriented innovation which seeks beneficial transformative social change by creativity and recognition of social opportunities in any sectors' (Forouharfar, Rowshan & Salarzehi, 2018) has a capacity to be looked as a strategic tool in the toolbox of governments for the promotion of public welfare. Social entrepreneurs as the communal change makers (Adetu, 2014; Drayton, 2002; Dees, Emerson & Economy, 2002) have the capability of contributing states to promote socially benefiting initiatives and enterprises under a well-defined state strategy. However, public SE strategies still do not have any overall strategic framework so as to be classified and understood within. To compensate this research gap, the following research question is posed:

What literature-supported variables should be included in a conceptual framework for the taxonomy of large-scale SE strategies?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Not only strategic entrepreneurship is still 'an emerging concept' (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2017) but also social entrepreneurship is a phenomenon 'in the stage of conceptualisation' (Sekliuckiene & Kisielius, 2015). This situation adds to the perplexity and ambiguity of what strategic SE concept means. Yet, numerous attempts were made from 'conceptual understanding' of SE itself (Choi & Majumdar, 2014, p.363) to the conceptualisation of social entrepreneurs' behavioural characteristics (Weerawardena & Mort, 2006). Mort, Weerawardena and Carnegie (2003) 'conceptualises social entrepreneurship as a multidimensional construct involving the expression of entrepreneurially virtuous behaviour to achieve the social mission, a coherent unity of purpose and action in the face of moral complexity, the ability to recognise social value-creating opportunities and key decisionmaking characteristics of innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking.' Few however, have ever set forth to conceptualise strategic SE, thus a research gap that calls for strenuous efforts to be filled. Chandra, Jiang and Wang (2016) believe despite the burgeoning research on social entrepreneurship (SE), SE strategies remain poorly understood.

According to Dharani (2014) 'conceptualisation is the formation of an abstract principle in the mind of a researcher in order to answer the question under observation, basing it upon the available evidence.' By reviewing SE strategic literature we frequently face concepts such as social value making (Nicholls, 2006), social innovation (Mulgan, 2006), strategic social impact (Rawhouser, Cummings & Newbert, 2019); social mission (Forouharfar, 2018); volunteerism (Gandhi & Raina, 2018); impact scaling (Dees, 2008), etc. Therefore, any literature-based conceptualisation of strategic SE should be constructed upon the extraction of the most unanimous and frequent concepts in this realm. Although, numerous researchers have tried to conceptualise various strategic manifestations of entrepreneurship, e.g. from 'developing a conceptual framework of strategic entrepreneurship' itself (Luke, Kearins & Verreynne, 2011) to 'conceptualising corporate entrepreneurship strategy' (Ireland, Covin & Kuratko, 2009), the realm of strategic SE is under-conceptualised. Thus, one of the attempts in the conceptualisation of strategic SE was Customised SE Strategy, which intends the sustainable development of any country via customised and tailored SE practices, based on the priorities of each country's social problems (Rowshan & Forouharfar, 2014).

On the other hand, in strategic approach to SE, two levels are identifiable: a macro-level and a micro-level. According to Nicholls (2009), these arenas of SE embrace a vast spectrum from a macro interference to compensate the gaps in 'institutional voids' (e.g. BRAC and Grameen Bank) or micro customised technical solutions to local communities (e.g. Kickstart's East Africa low-priced marketing of water pumps). Concerning the macro-level, SE has the capability of a social movement or a strong force behind 'societal cognitive frames' which are in 'sub-optimal' (or below satisfactory) circumstances and makes a satisfactory change by generating innovation on 'macro-political level' (Zald & Davis, 2005; Zald, 2000).

According to Forouharfar (2018), SE in the public sector is on a macro level. Governments have regulatory and policy-making roles and they could have a facilitating role for SE, as well. In other words, they pave the way for the not-for-profits, NGOs, social enterprises, benevolent entrepreneurs, etc. to play in the playground field which is beaten and prepared by the governments. Therefore, two types of strategies could be seen in SE. One type is the macro-strategies, which are applied by the governments and the other are the micro-strategies used by the operational social entrepreneurs.

Replication strategies and Scaling strategies are two major classes of SE strategies (Tracey & Jarvis, 2007; Bloom & Smith, 2010). Replication is 'the process by which a cell or DNA makes an exact copy of itself' (Longman Dictionary, 2007). In the strategic SE, it is letting the other SE to exactly copy the successful approach and techniques of a recognised example of SE. Scaling in strategic SE focuses on the amplification of the impact of SE, i.e. increasing the SE impact to be as equal as the social problem in degree and magnitude (Dees, 2008), and to be certain that a great number of people will receive the social services (Ahlert *et al.*, 2008). Reviewing the literature on SE strategies (e.g. Manton, 2005; Volkmann, Tokarski & Ernst, 2012; Dees, Anderson & Wei-Skillern, 2004; Grieco, 2015; London & Hart, 2011) the strategies would fall within one of the following:

- (1) Dissemination Strategy
- (2) Social Affiliation Strategies
- (3) Social Joint Venture Strategy
- (4)Social Licensing Strategy
- (5) Social Franchise Strategy

- (6) Social Price-Differentiation Strategy
- (7) Social Cross-Subsidisation Strategy
- (8) Social Microfinance Strategy
- (9) Base-of-the-Pyramid Strategy

For the strategic implementation of the abovementioned SE strategies on the large-scale perspective (i.e. countrywide impact), governments have a key role. Shockley and Frank (2011) believe: '...little or no social change resulting from social entrepreneurship could have become 'large-scale' without the enabling institutions, resources, and policies of government, even ones with reputations for inefficiency or corruption.' While discussing 'government as problem solver', Dees (2007) truly accentuates that, 'it has become clear that large-scale, top-down government programmes have serious drawbacks.' Yet, governments should set national SE strategies and avoid propensity of socialist governments that is too much intervention in SE affairs. Volunteerism is a recurring occurrence in strategic SE since 'social enterprises often rely upon volunteers to serve key functions, such as board members, to help with fundraising or to provide professional services, or as staff to deliver their services on the ground' (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2012). Moreover, a resource-based view in strategic management; hence strategic SE, looks inwards or internally, but too much insistence on strategic resource-based view would potentially lead to halo effect in strategic SE. Zander and Zander (2005) asserts, "Extensions of the resourcebased view suggest that the inward-looking perspective has produced an overly narrow understanding of how firms may generate rents and secure long-term growth." Concerning SE, Cheah, Amran and Yahya (2019) believe internal oriented resources (i.e., entrepreneurial orientation, social salience and business planning) under the moderating effect of 'socio-economic context' could influence the social performance and financial achievement of social enterprises. In contrary, instead of looking inwardly, some countries benefit from international SE organisations (Forouharfar, 2018) and 'international for-profit social entrepreneurs' (Marshall, 2011). Usually governments has close cooperation with the UN, UNHCR, UNESCO, UNDP, GEM, ECOSOC, World Bank, World Economic Forum, and world renown SE organisations such as Ashoka, Schwab, Skoll, for the promotion of SE intra- or inter-states, i.e. locally or globally. These international SE organisations usually have a strategic usage of bricolage in order to mobilise their resources in the target countries (Desa, 2012).

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This paper is a non-empirical study of large-scale SE strategies in order to introduce a conceptual framework for the classification and study of state-sponsored SE strategies. As a conceptual paper the research intends to go 'beyond summarising recent research, [...] provide an integration of literatures, offer an integrated framework, provide value added, and highlight directions for future inquiry. [...] not expected to offer empirical data' (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015). Thus, by reviewing the highly cited Google Scholar-indexed literature on SE strategies, the study seeks integration of SE large-scale strategy literature in a conceptual framework. Hence, the integration to the authors means unification and consolidation of the largescale SE in a logically literature-supported framework to provide conceptual value addition for the future classification and accordingly discussion of state-sponsored SE. Moreover, according to Whetten (1989) a conceptual paper should be judged and formed based on seven criteria: (a) what's new? (b) so what? (c) why so? (d) well done? (e) done well? (f) why now? (g) who cares? Hence, (a) the newness lies in the taxonomy of large-scale SE strategies; (b) it introduces a framework for the strategic classification of macro-scale SE; (c) the underlying logic is filling the current research gap in strategic SE studies; (d) the completeness of the conceptualised framework rests in its reliance on relevant highly-cited literature; (e) the paper is shaped gradually based on a methodological flowchart presented in Figure 1; (f) the timeliness and need to such a study lies in coordinating SE researches with facts on the ground, since 'a literature review of research on social entrepreneurship reveals that academics and practitioners seem to be operating in separate spheres' (Hand, 2016) and finally (g) the paper potentially not only contributes to the state policy makers in the matters relevant to SE, but also makes a linkage between SE and public administration, that is the type of SE strategies which could be applied in the realm of public administration.

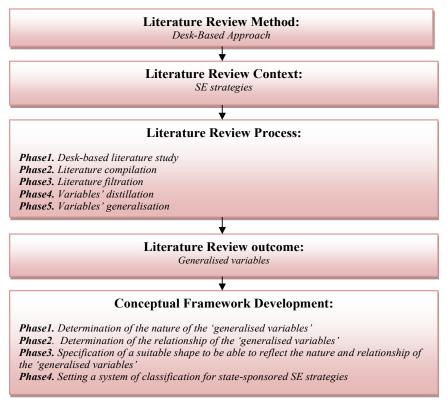


Figure 1: Methodological Flowchart of the Research

According to the research methodological flowchart; presented above in Figure 1, and based on the research question, which calls for a comprehensive study of the literature, the methodological approach is desk-based. Therefore, the research data are secondary non-empirical data. The research question determined the literature context; hence, SE strategies. In the next stage, the literature on SE strategies was reviewed in five phases:

# Phase 1: Desk-Based Literature Study

The source for the selection of the relevant literature was Google Scholar because of its ease of access, comprehensiveness, and searching SE literature based on the literature context in this study.

# **Phase 2: Literature Compilation**

Compilation of nearly all SE strategies' variables.

#### **Phase 3: Literature Filtration**

Filtration of the literature variables based on their relevance to strategic SE.

# Phase 4: Variables' Distillation

Extracting the essential variable, which would potentially contribute the promotion of state-sponsored SE.

#### Phase 5: Variables' Generalisation

Generalisation of the extracted state-sponsoring SE variables presented in the following:

- (1) governmentalism;
- (2) volunteerism;
- (3) internationalism; and
- (4) internalism.

Table 1: Literature Review Method, Context, Process and Results

Literature Review				
Method	Context	Process		Final
		Phase	Purpose	Results
Desk-Based Approach	SE strategies	Phase 1: Desk-based literature study	Acquisition of secondary data	Four generalised large-scale
		Phase 2: Literature compilation	Compilation of SE literature	variables for strategic SE
		Phase 3: Literature liltration	Filtration of the literature variables based on their relevance to strategic SE	
		Phase 4: Variables' distillation	Extraction of the strategic and state-sponsoring SE variables	
		Phase 5: Variables' generalisation	Generalisation of the extracted state- sponsoring SE variables	

(Source: Authors' own work)

Later, the conceptual framework was developed based on the nature of the 'generalised variables', which stand at the opposite extremes. Table 2 has summarised the complete literature review process to reach the research 'generalised variables'.

**Table 2: Research Literature Review Process** 

Literature Review Process			
Phases	Explanations	Derived Concepts	Reviewed Literature
Phase 1: Desk-based literature study	Led to the second phase's concepts	1. Social value 2. Social innovation 3. Social opportunity seeking 4. Social change 5. Social welfare 6. Social results 7. Strategic social impacts 8. Social mission 9. Social volunteerism 10.Governmental social intervention 11. International social cooperation 12. Internally-oriented social services	The following Google Scholar highly-cited SE literature.
Phase 2: Literature compilation	SE literature compilation	Social value	Nicholls, 2006; Dees, 1998b; Hibbert, Hogg & Quinn, 2002; Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skiller, 2012; Alvord et al., 2004; Mort, Weerawardena & Carnegie, 2002; Sarasvathy & Wicks, 2003; Peredo & McLean, 2006; Anderson & Dees, 2002; Townsend & Hart, 2008.

la	
Social innovation	van der Have
	& Rubalcaba,
	2016; Mulgan,
	2006; Nicholls &
	Murdock, 2011;
	Phillips <i>et al</i> .,
	2015; Dawson
	& Daniel, 2010;
	Goldsmith,
	2010; Franz,
	Hochgerner &
	Howaldt, 2012;
	Maclean, Harvey
	& Gordon,
	2013; Westley
	& Antadze,
	2010; Nicholls &
	Murdock , 2012;
	Tapsell & Woods,
	2010; Tapsell, &
	Woods, 2008;
	Lisetchi & Brancu,
	2014; Chalmers,
	2013.

Social opportunity seeking	González, Husted & Aigner, 2017; Żur,2015; Christianse, 1997; Ferreira, 2002; Timmons& Spinelli, 2003; Rwigema& Venter, 2004; Kuratko& Hodgetts, 1995; Berthon, McHulbert & Pitt 2004; Mair & Marti, 2006; Zahra et al., 2008; Thompson, Alvy& Lees, 2000; Perrini, Vurro & Costanzo, 2010; Guclu,Dees & Anderson, 2002.
Social change	Nicholls & Cho, 2006; Prabhu, 999; Hoffman, Badiane & Haigh, 2010; Choi & Gray, 2008; Cohen & Winn, 2007; Waddock & Post, 1991; Stryjan, 2006; Picot 2012.
Social welfare	Bugg-Levine, Kogut & Kulatilaka, 2012; Scheuerle, Schües & Richter, 2013; Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004; Battilana et al., 2012; Haigh & Hoffman, 2012

	Social results	Dees, 1998a, 1998b; Thake & Zadek, 1997; Emerson & Twersky, 1986.
	Strategic social impacts	Rawhouser, Cummings & Newbert, 2019; Ormiston & Seymour, 2011; Dees, Anderson & Wei-Skillern, 2004; El Ebrashi, 2013; Bacq et al., 2015; Bacq & Eddleston, 2018; Jiao, 2011; Bloom & Chatterji, 2009; Westley & Antadze, 2010.
	Social mission	Brouard, Hebb & Madill, 2008; Lasprogata & Cotton, 2003.
	Social volunteerism	Adams, 2009; Greblikaite, Sroka & Grants, 2015; Gandhi & Raina, 2018; Volkmann, Goia & Hadad, 2018; Forouharfar, 2018; Austin, Stevenson & Wei- Skillern, 2012; Weisbrod, 1977
	Governmental social intervention	Auvinet & Lloret, 2015; Adams,2009; Hervieux, Gedajlovic &Turcotte, 2010; Zietlow, 2002

		International social cooperation	Galera & Borzaga, 2009; Nicholls, 2008; Munoz, 2010; Kerlin, 2006; Kerlin,2010; Forouharfar,2018; Huda et al., 2019; Zahra, Newey & Li, 2014; Davis, 2016.
		Internally-oriented social services	Cheah, Amran &Yahya, 2019; Forouharfar, 2018; Gras & Lumpkin, 2012.
Phase 3: Literature	SE Literature filtration	1. Social volunteerism	
filtration	based on relevance to strategic SE	Governmental social intervention	
		3. International social cooperation	
		4. Internally-oriented social services	
		5. Social mission	
		6. Strategic social impact	
Phase 4: Variables'	SE Literature distillation based	Social volunteerism	
distillation	on state- sponsoring variables	Governmental social intervention	
		3.International social cooperation	
		4. Internally-oriented social services	

Phase 5:	SE Variables'	1. Volunteerism	
Variables' generalisation	generalisation based on	2. Governmentalism	
generalieuren	their strategic	3. Internationalism	
orientations	orientations	4. Internalism	

(Source: Authors' own work)

Since governmentalism/volunteerism and internationalism/internalism ori entations have contrary natures, then they stand at either extreme that is logically they must have inverse or negative correlative relationship. For example, by the increase in one of the extremes there should be a decrease in the other. Therefore, the generalised variables must have logically inverse correlation, which could be presented on a coordinate axis system (Table 3).

**Table 3: Research Conceptual Framework Development Components** 

Conceptual Framework Development			
Variables	Nature Relationship Form (Visualisation		
1. Governmentalism	Contrary	Logically inverse	Coordinate Axis
2. Volunteerism		correlation	System
3. Internationalism	Contrary	Logically inverse	
4. Internalism		correlation	

(Source: Authors' own work)

In the final stage, based on the constructed conceptual framework and its variables, four classes of SE strategies, which could be applied by governments were proposed.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Looking strategically at SE, two arenas could be assumed before it: a macro arena and a micro one (Figure 2). The macro-level orientation is outward since governments usually set some strategies for the promotion of SE not to be implemented by themselves but via SE organisations (SEO); in contrary, the micro-level orientation is inward, since SEOs set strategies for their own application and enforcement based on their predefined social

mission(s) and vision(s). Moreover, the states pursuing SE deal with the macro-level of SE with its necessities.



Figure 2: Strategic Views toward SE

(Source: Authors' own work)

On the other hand, each government could benefit from a strategic mix for formulating its state-sponsored SE. The SE strategic mix could be consisting of three items: (1) governmental strategic positioning toward SE; (2) possible SE strategies and (3) intended results (Table 4). By different mixing of these three items, the governments can customise their appropriate kind of SE strategy setting. For example in case of scaling strategy, by the strategic mix, a government can set an aggressive scaling strategy, a defensive scaling strategy, a proactive scaling strategy, a cooperative scaling strategy, a cooperative scaling strategy, and a co-optative scaling strategy based on the conditions of the target community and its external and internal environments (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). Choosing different items from the strategic mix metaphorically acts as a dimmer. The governments can increase or decrease the social impact of the set strategy accordingly.

Table 4: Proposed Strategic Mix for State-Sponsored SE

Governmental strategic positioning toward SE	SE Strategies	Intended Results
Aggressive	Scaling Strategy	Either
	Replication Strategy	Scaling-up
Defensive	Dissemination Strategy	or Replication
	Social Affiliation Strategies	·
Proactive	Social Joint Venture Strategy	
	Social Licensing Strategy	
Cooperative	Social Franchise Strategy	Simultaneous
	Social Price- Differentiation Strategy	Scaling-up and Replication
Competitive	Social Cross- Subsidisation Strategy	replication
	Social Microfinance Strategy	
Co-optative	Base-of-the-Pyramid Strategy	

(Source: Authors' own work)

While an SE strategy is going to be implemented at the macro-level, which must inevitably be formulated by government officials, fours variables must be taken into consideration:

- (1) Degree of internationalism, i.e. how much the government intends to rely on international social organisations to implement its strategies.
- (2) Degree of internalism, i.e. how much the government intends to rely on national organisations, resources and capabilities for the SE strategy implementation.
- (3) Degree of governmentalism, i.e. how much the government intends to interfere and meddle with the SE implementation?
- (4) Degree of volunteerism, i.e. how much the government lets the NGOs, SEOs and volunteers to do the job.

Answers to the above-mentioned questions would guide the governments to choose an appropriate strategic mix. The interplay of these four two by two contrary in nature variables, would logically in a conceptual

framework, appear as direct opposites, i.e. logically they must have inverse or negative correlative relationship, thus four classes of state-promoted SE are possible (Figure 3).

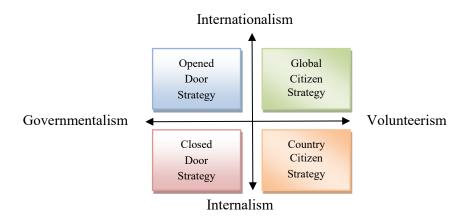


Figure 3: Classification of State-Sponsored SE Strategies

If a state pursues SE by close cooperation between the government and international organisations to answer social problems, it is a state-sponsored SE strategy which could be called 'Opened Door Strategy'. Such a state tries to compensate its weak points and benefiting from international resources by some of the SE strategies, which are discussed previously, such as social licensing strategy, social franchising strategy and social joint venture strategy. In 'Opened Door Strategy' the social licensor, franchiser and partner is a foreign organisation, social entrepreneur or even a foreign government/state. Based on the proposed strategic mix in Table 4, the government pursing 'Opened Door Strategy' would choose a cooperative positioning in relation to the international and foreign partners.

The second class of state-sponsored strategies could be called 'Closed Door Strategy'. If a government completely or partially limits any volunteer activity by NGOs, national and international social entrepreneurs and organisations and on the other hand, tries to have a tight monopoly on any SE activities, it pursues a strategy based on governmentalist and internalist orientations. Such a state is not eager to accept any cooperation, or if it accepts, it is from a limited number of internal SE practitioners. The

positioning of the government is mostly aggressive and in some cases, a defensive one since it does not trust national and international partners. Since the government looks at the international organisations as its rivals, it could sometime show competitive positioning too. States with 'Closed Door Strategy' potentially could apply social microfinance strategy and show socialism/communism propensities toward SE.

The third quadrant, which is the most optimal state strategy for the promotion of SE, is 'Global Citizen Strategy'. Government in this strategy functions as SE regulator and facilitator. It tries not to interfere overly in SE activities and trust the national and international SE organisations and social entrepreneurs. Moreover, it respects volunteering activities and accepts NGOs as its partners and contributors not its rivals. Based on' the proposed strategic mix in Table 4, these states would choose a cooperative positioning in dealing with active social entrepreneurs and in some cases proactive in dealing with future or emerging social problems. The proactive positioning of the government provides opportunities for scientific counselling with the SE experts and accepting their criticisms. Additionally, these states usually chooses one or several of scaling strategy, replication strategy, dissemination strategy and affiliation strategies to promote, scale up and replicate SE.

The last quadrant is 'Country Citizen Strategy'. The state accepts Volunteerism but within and from the internal social entrepreneurs and SEOs. The state's positioning toward SE promotion is defensive and in some cases by aggressive measures limit the activity of international social entrepreneurs. Moreover, such strategies inevitably relies heavily on the national resources for the promotion of SE. Social price-differentiation strategy, social cross-subsidisation strategy, social microfinance strategy and base-of-the-pyramid strategy could be classified within this quadrant with two conditions, first if the government only accepts volunteering from internal resources and second if it limits its interference with their activities as much as possible.

# CONCLUSION

The paper proposed and introduced a classification framework for statesponsored SE strategies based on four large-scale orientations in dealing with macro-level SE within states. These orientations consisted of internationalism versus internalism, and governmentalism versus volunteerism. Furthermore, a matrix for the possible combination of state-sponsored SE based on three issues of 'governmental strategic positioning toward SE', 'SE strategies' and 'intended results' for scaling and/or replication of SE or its social impact was proposed. The strategic mix contributes governments in setting customised and localised SE to be as effective and tailored to the communities need as possible. Additionally, the classification framework not only will facilitate the clarification and classification of governments' orientation toward SE, but also potentially would lead to a framework for teaching of state-promoted SE strategies in the academic context. Finally, the current paper present a conceptual framework for future researchers in the realm of strategic SE. Especially; it would be fruitful if an empirical research can be carried out to shed light on the nature and inverse correlation of the variables in the conceptual framework.

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