

## COMPETENCES NECESSARY FOR A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR: A CASE STUDY OF LATVIA

Aija SANNIKOVA , Velga VEVERE , Jelena TITKO 

*EKA University of Applied Sciences, Riga, Latvia*

Received 11 August 2023; accepted 16 October 2023

**Abstract.** Social entrepreneurship as a specific kind of business has been developing in Latvia since 2018, and it is a little researched field. Achieving the goals of social entrepreneurship is facilitated by several factors, including the competences of the social entrepreneur him/herself. The present research aims to identify the general basic knowledge, skills and competences necessary for a social entrepreneur in Latvia. The authors made a review of theoretical literature on the role of managerial competencies in social enterprises and analysed the results of surveys of social entrepreneurs and their institutional partners – university teaching personnel – conducted in Latvia. The research found that there were areas of general knowledge, skills and competences of social entrepreneurs that were rated as equally important by both groups surveyed, yet the social entrepreneurs gave more importance to competences related to business goals and opportunities. The present research makes a scientific contribution in two aspects: 1) the identified general competencies required for a social entrepreneur could serve as a basis for further research to measure the actual competencies of social entrepreneurs; 2) the research contributes to an institutional framework for the social entrepreneurship ecosystem by developing recommendations for cooperation partners – those involved in adult lifelong learning, incl. universities, for the development of competencies in social entrepreneurs.

**Keywords:** social entrepreneur, social entrepreneurship, knowledge, skills, competencies, survey.

**JEL Classification:** L3, J24.

### Introduction

Social entrepreneurship-related issues have been actively debated in the academia and at the government level (OECD, 2022; Ahmad & Bajwa, 2023; Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia, 2023), as well as certain supporting actions were conducted by the European Commission (European Commission, n.d.; OECD, n.d.; United Nations, n.d.) The interest to social entrepreneurship (SE) is explained by benefits it brings to the society well-being due to the fact that it “seeks to address social and environmental problems that are either neglected or ineffectively treated by the government and other commercial entities” (Maniam et al., 2018), “...social entrepreneurs are intended to drive societal transformations...” (Gandhi & Raina, 2018), it contributes “to encouraging entrepreneurial business opportunities” (Prasetyo & Kistanti, 2020), and it is “a tool for ensuring social security” (Terziev et al., 2020).

There are plenty of studies about the social entrepreneurship competencies (Guritno et al., 2019; Rossano

et al., 2023; Amini et al., 2018). However, most of them have a focus on specific target group or specific sector (Vazquez-Parra et al., 2021; Garcia-Gonzalez & Ramirez-Montoya, 2023). Besides, considering that different countries has own specifics of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem (European Commission, 2020a), national studies are more than welcomed.

Social enterprises emerged in Latvia in 2018 after the Social Enterprise Law was adopted (Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, 2017). In Latvia, according to the law, social enterprises are commercial enterprises whose legal form is a limited liability company. Social entrepreneurship in Latvia is at an early stage of development compared with that in other Baltic and European countries. During a five-year period in Latvia, a number of social entrepreneurship problems have been investigated, for instance, students’ perceptions of social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship and social inequality, integration of disabled persons in work, and others (Sannikova & Brante, 2018; Vevere et al., 2021; Titko et al., 2023; Licite-Kurbe & Sevcuna, 2023). However, the competencies of social

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [jelena.titko@eka.edu.lv](mailto:jelena.titko@eka.edu.lv)

entrepreneurs as a factor in the development of social enterprises have not been researched to date. Therefore, the research aims at identifying the general basic knowledge, skills and competences necessary for a social entrepreneur in Latvia.

To achieve the research goal, a survey among social entrepreneurs and university lecturers delivering business courses was conducted. The authors used their developed research instrument – questionnaire with 13 questions that could be grouped as a) respondent profile questions, b) questions to evaluate social entrepreneurship competences, c) statements about social entrepreneurship in Latvia, d) statements about drives for social entrepreneurship in Latvia, and e) company profile questions to answer only by representatives of social enterprises. Data processing was done applying such methods, as frequency analysis, ranking, Kruskal-Wallis H test.

## 1. Theoretical background

The mission of social enterprises is to solve social problems and it is as important as the company's business strategy (Austin et al., 2006; Dees, 2001). Social enterprises as an important element of the social ecosystem contribute to the socio-economic development of a region (Chee, 2004); therefore, an examination of the factors affecting their performance is important. Although there are research studies on various aspects of social enterprises (Drayton, 2011; Bacq & Janssen, 2011; Kim et al., 2020; Sannikova & Titko, 2021; Dees & Anderson, 2006; Vázquez-Parra et al., 2021), research on the competencies needed by social entrepreneurs is at the early stage of scientific research.

Research on the concept of a social entrepreneur and his/her social mission in society began relatively recently, after 1953 when H. Bowen in his book *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (Bowen, 1953) initiated the first significant discourse on business, corporate social responsibility and the new social business mission. J. A. Banks in his book *The Sociology of Social Movements* focuses on social movements and the administrative skills of social entrepreneurs (Banks, 1972). He believes that changes in the social sphere are promoted not only by social organizations but also by enthusiastic and innovative entrepreneurs.

The performance of social enterprises can be affected by exogenous and endogenous factors (European Union/OECD, 2016). The endogenous factors pertain to the competence of the company's management and their ability to assess resources, understand socio-economic development processes in regions and evaluate the company's opportunities to bring changes in the region. However, the role of social enterprises in society should be increased in order to create a sustainable impact, as stated by the European Union (European Union, 2020). It is important that social entrepreneurs themselves also develop their competences. Besides, there is a perception that a successful social entrepreneur often requires specific competencies.

Research on the competences of social entrepreneurs, which is one of the key factors in the performance and growth of companies (Guritno et al., 2019; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010), is at the centre of scientific discussion in practice (Orhei et al., 2015). This discussion begins with the exploration of the concept of competence. In modern management theory, the concept of competence primarily describes the patterns of behaviour and action that use current knowledge and skills to perform a specific task. Moreover, the concept of competence has a dual meaning: 1) it is the necessary knowledge, professional experience and understanding in a specific field or issue and the ability to use this knowledge and experience for a specific activity; 2) a set of powers and/or a sphere for which responsibility is assigned, considering the individual's education, abilities, knowledge and experience in the relevant field (LAS Terminology Commission, 2009). In certain fields of activity or sectors, the competences of managers and leading employees are part of employment contracts. More often, the competencies of managerial employees are classified into six areas of general competencies: 1) interpersonal effectiveness; 2) mentality and problem solving; 3) personal effectiveness; 4) task and process management; 5) organizational understanding and adoption of values; 6) managerial competencies (Vintisa, 2011). However, there is no single approach to specifying the competencies required for social entrepreneurs.

Research on social corporate entrepreneurship (SCE) also proves this. Although there is no unified approach to what SCE is, scientists associate it with social corporate responsibility, which is based not only on profit aspects, but also responsibility for employees, their competences and even the environment. SCE can be viewed as a process of developing advanced ways of managing and influencing companies, discovering and realizing the capabilities of individuals, and it also contains the concept of social entrepreneurship (Austin & Reficco, 2009; Hemingway, 2013). The latest studies pay attention to the connection of SCE with competence development and research (Davidavičienė & Davidavičius, 2022; Davidavičienė & Raudeliūnienė, 2021, 2022). However, in the scientific space, real practice is analyzed little, despite the need for cooperation between universities and the business environment, which is determined by the contradictions in the demand and supply of competences in the labor market. In order to solve this problem at least partially, universities should offer new models for the acquisition or development of competences. However, the problem is that the labor market demand for competences is not clearly defined, therefore the study process often focuses on special competences. This leads to the marginalization of general competences, which according to the authors is not correct, because it also affects the formation of entrepreneurial thinking, the management of management risks, etc. implementation of important areas in business. The existence of different competencies of employees is especially important for small business managers, but it

is equally important for the public and private sector as a whole, as is the field of SCE. SCE refers both to the personal characteristics and behavior of an individual, it can be characterized by the personal values of social entrepreneurs and refers to business results (Hemingway, 2013).

Developed social entrepreneurship can reduce the gap between higher education and society's demand by enriching programs of higher education institutions with new content. There is a need for cooperation between business and educational agents in achieving the goals of social entrepreneurship (Rickhoff-Fischer et al., 2021). But the question is how to practically achieve it? Stakeholder needs research and business research are one of the answers. In this regard, it is emphasized that a decisive role is given to innovative skills to obtain business-oriented solutions in various fields, incl. in the areas of current social, green economy, climate and environmental problems.

There is an opinion in the scientific community that for social entrepreneurs, it is important to: 1) know social problems and be able to turn them into business opportunities; 2) use a specific knowledge and participatory experience to implement change; 3) practically organize a business; 4) possess the gift of a good orator and the ability to be a good public speaker in order to motivate employees, partners and various organizations to support the implementation of social enterprise ideas; 5) possess the following personal features of character: creativity, perseverance and determination in solving social problems under the conditions of business instability. In contrast, practitioners emphasize that a social entrepreneur has essential skills in creativity, innovation, data analysis, project management and beneficiary-oriented business design (Rubio, 2016).

The competences of a social entrepreneur are viewed as a factor in the sustainability of the social enterprise. A successful social business, defined as a financially sustainable organization for solving a social problem, implies that a social entrepreneur has the necessary competencies (Yunus, 2009). Besides, there is a belief that successful social entrepreneurs have a common feature – a high level of social capital and a good reputation in society, which provides better access to markets (Baron & Markman, 2000). Considering that knowledge and skills, incl. social skills, are built (or improved) through education, the role of universities in the social entrepreneurship ecosystem increases.

A research study (Guritno et al., 2019), which is based on interviews, documents and other research methods of 29 social entrepreneurs, found that in addition to high social competences, knowledge and skills that contribute to achieving social and business goals are important: orientation towards achievement, perseverance, initiative, courage to take advantage of opportunities, networking skills, team leadership skills and the ability to solve problems creatively. The created competence model of social entrepreneurs consists of seven competence clusters: 1) Entrepreneurship: it consists of achievement orientation,

persistence of goals, ability to see and act, initiative; 2) Impact and Influence, including networking and influencing others; 3) Helping and Human Service – it is problem- and customer-oriented; 4) Managerial – it includes leadership, team management, support, collaboration and team motivation; 5) Personal Effectiveness as awareness of one's own mission and understanding of interests; 6) Technical and Professional Skills, incl. financial management skills; 7) Cognitive competence, which manifests itself in creative thinking.

However, the formal education received (university, college) does not fully ensure an individual's ability to perform work well and in a modern way, even if in the learning process was based on the build-up of competencies and the principles of such learning (Levine & Patrick, 2019). According to the European Commission (European Commission, 2020b), it is still necessary to build up basic competences by adapting training and further education training programmes to the rapidly changing markets. For the development of their competences, social entrepreneurs, similarly to specialists in other fields, need lifelong education, as it gives an opportunity to learn or improve certain competences (Yujuico, 2008). In this case, universities as cooperation partners for social enterprises play an important role (Worsham & Dees, 2012) to help achieve the personal goals of social entrepreneurs and meet society's needs for socio-economic changes. Besides, the role of technological competences and skills in human resource and risk management, as well as the role of knowledge of and skills in international and cross-cultural cooperation increase today (Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, 2010). Perhaps it is the changes in the market that have contributed to an increase in the need for knowledge and skills development specifically in the social enterprise segment (Sherman, 2011) in areas such as: 1) Leadership; 2) Optimism; 3) Purposefulness and persistence; 4) Endurance in the face of challenges and failures; 5) Creativity and innovation; 6) Empathy; 7) Emotional and social intelligence. The competencies needed for a social entrepreneur are influenced by the industry and the segment of economic activity; however, it is mainly relevant to business management and professional competencies (Amini et al., 2018; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010).

Theoretical research shows that there is no consensus on the knowledge, skills and competences needed by a social entrepreneur. Although management and business knowledge and skills could be acquired through formal higher education, it is the experience that builds up lasting competencies (Miller et al., 2012). However, the problem is that there is no guarantee that the competences acquired through higher education will be exactly what is needed in practice. Therefore, the present research examined successful national social entrepreneurs and the pattern of general competences that contribute to the success of social business and identified the opinions of university teaching personnel delivering business programmes on the pattern.

## 2. Methodology

The research conducted two surveys of: (1) social entrepreneurs (SE); (2) university teaching personnel delivering business programmes (UT). The basic questions included in a questionnaire were the same for both groups.

The questionnaire involved questions that can be grouped in five blocks:

1. Respondent profile questions (five questions about gender, residence place, age, educational level, and position (social entrepreneur / academic staff member/other))
2. Competences-related questions:
  - general competences,
  - business management competences,
  - market research and business model development competences,
  - networking competences,
3. Statements about social entrepreneurship in Latvia,
4. Statements about drives for social entrepreneurship in Latvia,
5. Company profile questions (only for social entrepreneurs).

The knowledge, skills and competences to be rated by respondents were selected based on an assessment of an expert group and only those that were rated as “important” or “very important” by at least three experts were included in the surveys. The expert group was composed of five individuals: social entrepreneurs, university teaching personnel delivering business programmes and members of the Social Enterprise Commission of the Ministry of Welfare of Latvia. Two aspects concerning social enterprises were proposed for rating by the expert group: obtaining the status of social enterprise; performance of social enterprises.

For the surveys, social entrepreneurs representing “successful” social enterprises were selected from the regions of Latvia, and a criterion was their financial reports for the year 2021 submitted in 2022. In Latvia, social enterprises annually submit their financial reports on the performance of tasks of social enterprises for the previous calendar year to the Social Enterprise Committee of the Ministry of Welfare. One of the authors of the present research is a member of this committee; therefore, the social enterprises to be included in the sample were identified using data from the reports. Contact information and other descriptive information on social enterprises are publicly available on the website of the Ministry of Welfare. The sample included 35 social enterprises whose performance of their annual tasks was rated very high (without objections) in all reporting positions. The survey of social entrepreneurs was conducted in the e-environment. Of the total, 33 questionnaires submitted were recognized as valid for data processing. The survey of social entrepreneurs involved: (1) owners of social enterprises; (2) board members of social enterprises; (3) leading specialists in social enterprises.

The exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling method was applied to select university teaching personnel delivering business programmes. The method

could be used if respondents are difficult to identify and are best found by means of referral networks. At the first level, two respondents (university teaching personnel delivering business programmes) were selected using accurate selection criteria, and each of them provided recommendations for the selection of the next two respondents etc. The selection criteria for the next respondents – teaching personnel – were simple: national university teaching personnel delivering business programmes, who were in some way related to social enterprises at the theoretical (courses), research or practical levels. Of course, it was important to identify the level of involvement, yet it was considered sufficient that the respondent him/herself admitted that he/has had some connection with a social enterprise. As a result, the authors managed to obtain data from 11 respondents. The authors believe that the reduced size of the sample of the teaching personnel group was the possible situation, which was determined by the fact that universities in Latvia were not yet a pronounced institutional partner for social enterprises.

Quantitative research methods were applied to analyse the survey data obtained – statistical analyses were performed to interpret the data collected from the respondents and identify similarities and differences in ratings between the respondent groups.

## 3. Results and discussion

The proportion of social enterprises surveyed roughly corresponded to the actual proportion of social enterprises in the regions of Latvia in December 2022 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of social enterprises by region of Latvia, % (source: Ministry of Welfare, 2023; authors' calculations)

Region	Social enterprises (December 2022) %	Survey data %
Riga region	51	48
Pieriga region	22	21
Vidzeme region	10	12
Kurzeme region	8	9
Zemgale region	6	6
Latgale region	3	3

The first area examined was the knowledge profile. The importance of six areas of knowledge was rated by both respondent groups: K/A – knowledge of the legal framework for social entrepreneurship; K/B – knowledge of support programmes and mechanisms for social entrepreneurship; K/C – knowledge of employee motivation theory; K/D – knowledge of decision-making theory; K/E – knowledge of labour law; K/F – knowledge of conflict management theory. The average ranks values of are presented in Figure 1. As shown in the figure, the average ranks differed between the respondent groups more in the areas of knowledge of K/C (motivation theory;  $df = 6.30$ ) and K/D (decision-making;  $df = 4.79$ ).



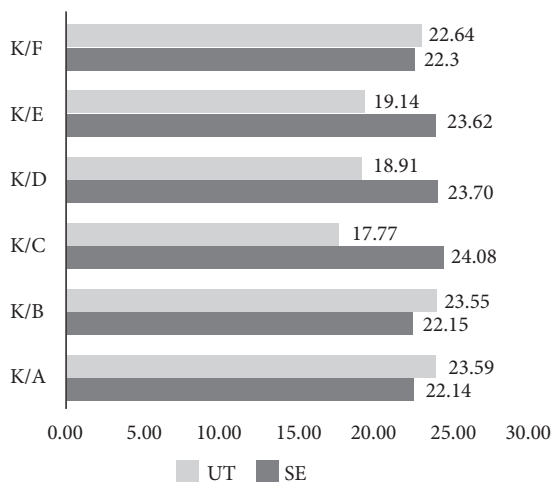


Figure 1. The average ranks of Latvian respondent groups for the assessment of the importance of knowledge areas (source: authors' calculations)

A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in ratings of knowledge areas between the group of social entrepreneurs and the group of university teaching personnel. The following hypotheses were put forward: (1) H0 – the average ratings by the respondent groups are similar; (2) H1 – the average ratings by the respondent groups are not similar. The Kruskal-Wallis test results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Kruskal-Wallis H test statistics for the ratings of knowledge areas (source: authors' calculations)

Statistic	Knowledge area					
	K/A	K/B	K/C	K/D	K/E	K/F
Kruskal-Wallis H	0.138	0.141	2.344	1.336	1.240	0.002
df	1	1	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig	0.711	0.707	0.126	0.248	0.265	0.966

The results showed that H0 should be accepted for all the areas of knowledge because  $p > p_0 = 0.05$ . Therefore, it could be concluded that the social entrepreneurs and university teaching personnel equally rated the importance of the mentioned areas of knowledge needed for the successful operation of social enterprises. Consequently, these areas of knowledge should be integrated into university business programmes as well as lifelong learning programmes for social enterprise managers or leading specialists.

The second area examined was the skills profile. The importance of four skill areas was rated by both respondent groups: S/A – ability to identify business opportunities; S/B – ability to turn social problems into business opportunities; S/C – ability to develop innovative solutions; S/D – decision making skills.

The calculations showed (Figure 2) that the social entrepreneurs gave more importance to the ability to identify

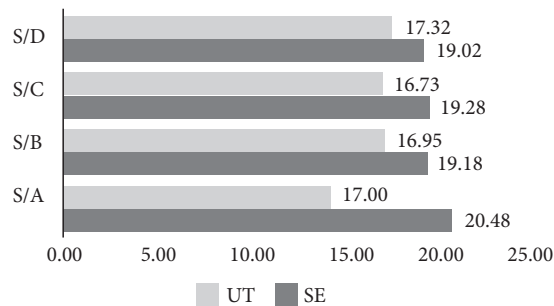


Figure 2. The average ranks of importance of skill areas by the respondent groups in Latvia (source: authors' calculations)

business opportunities (S/A) than the university teaching personnel ( $df = 6.48$ ). The Kruskal-Wallis H test confirmed that for the skill S/A (ability to identify business opportunities), the hypothesis H0 should be rejected and the hypothesis H1 accepted, as  $p < p_0 = 0.05$  (Table 3).

Table 3. Kruskal-Wallis H test statistics for the ratings of skills areas (source: authors' calculations)

	S/A	S/B	S/C	S/D
Kruskal-Wallis H	4.622	0.599	0.645	0.304
df	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig	0.032	0.439	0.422	0.581

Therefore, in practice, the skill of identifying business opportunities for social enterprises is of fundamental importance, and more attention should be paid to the build-up of this skill through training. This result could be explained by the importance of the business area to social enterprises to ensure the sustainability of the enterprises. However, the teaching personnel of universities, probably similarly to the public, focus on the importance of the social component of social enterprises. The other skills (S/B; S/C; S/D) were statistically the same for both respondent groups because  $p > p_0 = 0.05$ .

The third area examined was the competence profile. Both respondent groups rated the importance of three competence areas: C/A –work competences in team organization; C/B – competence in setting business goals; C/C – competencies in assigning individual and team responsibilities.

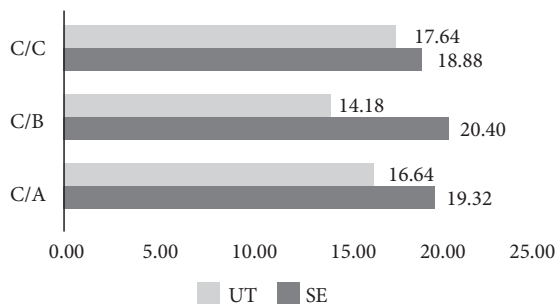


Figure 3. The average ranks of importance of competence areas by the respondent groups in Latvia (source: authors' calculations)

The calculations average ranks showed (Figure 3) that the social entrepreneurs rated C/B competences higher, i.e. competences in setting business goals ( $df = 6.22$ ). A Kruskal-Wallis H test was performed to determine whether the differences were statistically significant. The test results confirmed that for the competence C/B, the hypothesis H0 should be rejected and the hypothesis H1 should be accepted, since  $p < p_0 = 0.05$ , while the average ranges for the other competencies (C/A; C/C) were the same (hypothesis H0 should be accepted (Table 4)).

Table 4. Kruskal-Wallis H test statistics for the ratings of competence areas (source: authors' calculations)

	C/A	C/B	C/C
Kruskal-Wallis H	0.501	1.849	0.420
df	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig	0.479	0.017	0.517

A Kendall's tau\_b correlation test was performed to determine whether the ratings of the skill S/A and the competence C/B by the social entrepreneurs were influenced by the level of education and age of the respondents. The results showed that in the group of social entrepreneurs:

- as the level of education increased, the rating of importance of the skill S/A decreased; however, this correlation was weak and statistically insignificant ( $r = -0.287$ ;  $p = 0.076$ )
- as the level of education increased, the rating of importance of the competence C/B also decreased; however, this correlation was weak and statistically insignificant ( $r = -0.304$ ;  $p = 0.064$ );
- as the age increased, the rating of importance of the skill S/A increased; however, this correlation was weak and statistically insignificant ( $r = -0.287$ ;  $p = 0.076$ );
- as the age increased, the rating of importance of the competence C/B increased; however, this correlation was also statistically insignificant ( $r = -0.018$ ;  $p = 0.811$ ).

The study demonstrates that a successful social entrepreneur should possess a diverse range of general knowledge, skills, and competencies. These encompass a deep understanding of general theories and practical aspects of human resources management, familiarity with the regulatory framework, and proficiency in utilizing financial instruments that foster the growth and sustainability of social enterprises operating within the broader context of the social business ecosystem. The existence of these competencies lays the foundation for enhancing the social capital of the social entrepreneur that, in turn, was treated by Baron and Markman (2000) as characteristics of success.

However, business practices primarily focused on addressing significant societal issues and delivering goods and services to specific social groups, in many cases are based on the engagement of socially sensitive groups

within the workplace and creates special business environment conditions. With the “socially sensitive groups”, the authors mean former prisoners, persons with functional disorders, long-term unemployed, “silver” economies groups (persons of pre-working age, old-age pensioners).

Although it is recognized that the social capital of an entrepreneur contributes to the competitiveness of companies, in the case of social enterprises, this component has a special feature – it should help to successfully integrate the individuals of this socially “heavy” social group into the work environment, adapt the work environment, working conditions, type of work to them, as a result achieving the maximum possible work productivity. The authors believe that these specific circumstances determine the fact that the surveyed social entrepreneurs indicated the need to be familiar with employee motivation theories (Figure 1).

Working with personnel, especially from socially difficult groups, also requires a good knowledge of labor legislation and regulatory regulation, because in economic reality there are special conditions for support for these social groups (state support in the case of Latvia). There are also risks for low motivation and work skills of employees, poor work discipline and work ethic, insufficient health status to perform the work task. This, in turn, can pose significant risks to the company's productivity.

It is important for a social entrepreneur to manage these risks with personnel and business management tools, thus ensuring the company's competitiveness and viability. Although this knowledge is also recognized as important by university lecturers (Table 2), the authors believe that universities should also study the experience of social enterprises in working with target groups and personnel from these target groups, which would give a greater understanding of the needs of social entrepreneurs in the area of competencies. It would also allow increasing the role of universities in the social entrepreneurship ecosystem. In addition, the study confirms that social entrepreneurs are aware of the role of human resources as one of the production resources in the company's performance, and value the acquisition of human resources management knowledge (average ranks = 24.08) higher than knowledge of support programs (average ranks = 22.15) and, for example, innovative business solutions development skills (average rank = 19.28).

Our research results, as well as results from Guritno et al. (2019), confirm that business building and management competencies are important for social entrepreneurs. The authors discovered that the representatives of universities rated such skills, as “business opportunity identification skills” (Figure 2) and “competence in the realization of business goals” (Figure 2) lower than social entrepreneurs. This indicates the need to strengthen the orientation of study programs in building business competencies.

This conclusion also coincides with studies that indicate that business development is facilitated by the acquisition of business design skills and general competencies in entrepreneurship (Rubio, 2016; Amini et al., 2018).

Therefore, one of the most important aspects in the study process would be to create a connection with the real social business environment, which would simultaneously increase the professional experience of university lecturers.

## Conclusions

The aim of the present research was to identify the knowledge, skills and competencies important for social enterprise managers. The literature review done showed that there was no consensus among the scientific community about the knowledge, skills and competences needed by social entrepreneurs, which were researched from different aspects.

Several studies show that it is necessary to find out the needs of society within the framework of social corporate entrepreneurship, particularly within the context of contemporary business-university collaboration. The research carried out by the authors contributes to the knowledge of the needs of social enterprises and can reduce the gap between the competences trained by higher education institutions and society's demands. This study serves to enhance higher education institutions' perspectives on the role played by their program offerings in shaping overarching competences, while also establishing a tangible link with the exigencies of social entrepreneurs. As such, it provides a well-founded rationale for the formulation and advancement of program objectives.

The analysis of data from the surveys conducted by the authors in Latvia showed that:

- 1) there was no significant difference in ratings of the profile of general knowledge, skills and competences necessary for a successful social entrepreneur between the social entrepreneurs and the university teaching personnel delivering business programmes;
- 2) when designing higher education programmes in social entrepreneurship and holding lifelong learning activities for social entrepreneurs, the following should be considered:
  - the build-up of knowledge of: the legal framework for social entrepreneurship; support programmes and mechanisms for social entrepreneurship; employee motivation theory; decision-making theory; labour rights; conflict management theory;
  - the development of skills in the following areas: ability to identify business opportunities; ability to turn social problems into business opportunities; ability to develop innovative solutions; decision making skills. As regards this group of skills, more attention should be paid to the development of the ability to identify business opportunities, which was statistically significantly higher rated by the managers of social enterprises (Kruskal Wallis test results,  $p = 0.032 < 0.05$ );
  - the build-up of competences in: teamwork organization; setting business goals; assigning indi-

vidual and team responsibilities. As regards this group of competences, more attention should be paid to competence in setting business goals because it was statistically significantly higher rated by the group of university teaching personnel than the other respondent group (Kruskal Wallis test results,  $p = 0.017 < 0.05$ ).

The main limitation of the research is relatively small sample size. Further research should determine the needs and supply of general knowledge, skills and competencies required for successful social entrepreneurs, alongside supplementary competencies such as business acumen and networking prowess. These determinations should take into account various factors, including the economic scale of enterprises, nature of business activities, and geographical considerations. Such endeavors would consequently play a pivotal role in fostering the growth of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem within Latvia, particularly in the realm of synergies between higher education institutions and social enterprises.

## Author contributions

AS and VV – idea generation and research design; AS, VV, JT – theoretical background; AS and VV – data collection and data analysis; AS – results interpretation; JT – final version of the paper.

## Disclosure statement

Authors – Aija Sannikova, Velga Vevere and Jelena Titko – declare that we do not have any competing financial, professional, or personal interests from other parties.

## References

- Ahmad, S., & Bajwa, I. A. (2023). The role of social entrepreneurship in socio-economic development: A meta-analysis of the nascent field. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 15(1), 133–157. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-04-2021-0165>
- Amini, Z., Arasti, Z., & Bagheri, A. (2018). Identifying social entrepreneurship competencies of managers in social entrepreneurship organizations in healthcare sector. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, 8, Article 19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40497-018-0102-x>
- Austin, J. E., & Reficco, E. A. (2009). Corporate social entrepreneurship. *The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*, 11(4). <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1490345>
- Austin, J., Stevenson, H., & Wei-Skillern, J. (2006). Social and commercial entrepreneurship: Same, different or both? *Revisita de Administração*, 47(3). <https://doi.org/10.5700/rausp1055>
- Bacq, S., & Janssen, F. (2011). The multiple faces of social entrepreneurship: A review of definitional issues based on geographical and thematic criteria. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 23(5–6), 373–403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2011.577242>
- Banks, J. A. (1972). *The sociology of social movements*. Palgrave. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-01452-1\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-01452-1_4)



- Baron, R. A., & Markman G. D. (2000). Beyond social capital: How social skills can enhance entrepreneurs' success. *The Academy of Management Executive* (1993–2005), 14(1), 106–116. <https://doi.org/10.5465/ame.2000.2909843>
- Boven, H. (1953). *Social responsibilities of the businessman*. University of Iowa Faculty Connections. <https://uipress.uiowa.edu/books/social-responsibilities-businessman>
- Chee, Y. E. (2004). An ecological perspective on the valuation of ecosystem services. *Biological Conservation*, 120(4), 549–565. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2004.03.028>
- Davidavičienė, V., & Davidavičius, S. (2022, May 12–13). Corporate social entrepreneurship: Concept development trends. In *12th International Scientific Conference "Business and management 2022"* (pp. 650–656). Vilnius, Lithuania. Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. <https://doi.org/10.3846/bm.2022.879>
- Davidavičienė, V., & Raudeliūnienė, J. (2021). Corporate social entrepreneurship practice: Lithuanian case analysis. *Journal of System and Management Sciences*, 11(4), 218–231. <https://doi.org/10.33168/JSMS.2021.0411>
- Davidavičienė, V., & Raudeliūnienė, J. (2022). Corporate social entrepreneurship practice: Lithuanian case study in public and private organizations. *Journal of System and Management Sciences*, 12(2), 548–569. <https://doi.org/10.33168/JSMS.2022.0230>
- Dees, J. G. (2001). *The meaning of social entrepreneurship*. [https://centers.fuqua.duke.edu/case/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/03/Article\\_Deess\\_MeaningofSocialEntrepreneurship\\_2001.pdf](https://centers.fuqua.duke.edu/case/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/03/Article_Deess_MeaningofSocialEntrepreneurship_2001.pdf)
- Dees, J. G., & Anderson, B. (2006). Framing a theory of social entrepreneurship: Building on two schools of practice and thought. *Research on Social Entrepreneurship: Understanding and Contributing to an Emerging Field*, 1(3), 39–66. [https://centers.fuqua.duke.edu/case/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/02/BookChapter\\_Deess\\_FramingTheoryofSE\\_2006.pdf](https://centers.fuqua.duke.edu/case/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/02/BookChapter_Deess_FramingTheoryofSE_2006.pdf)
- Drayton, B. (2011). *Collaborative entrepreneurship: How social entrepreneurs have learned to tip the world by working in global teams*. Ashoka. [https://doi.org/10.1162/INOV\\_a\\_00068](https://doi.org/10.1162/INOV_a_00068)
- European Commission. (n.d.). *Social economy and inclusive entrepreneurship – social entrepreneurship*. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=952&intPageId=2914&langId=en>
- European Commission. (2020a). *Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe*. Publications Office of the European Union.
- European Commission. (2020b). *Education and training 2020. Highlights from the ET 2020 Working Groups 2018–2020*. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a1ffa181-8ac4-11eb-b85c-01aa75ed71a1>
- European Union/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2016). *Policy Brief on Scaling the Impact of Social Enterprises. Policies for social entrepreneurship*. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/53e3ccbd-9a83-11e6-9bca-01aa75ed71a1/lan-guage-en>
- European Union. (2020). *Social Enterprises and their Ecosystems in Europe* (Comparative Synthesis Report). <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8274&furtherPubs=yes>
- Garcia-Gonzalez, A., & Ramirez-Montoya, M. S. (2023). Social entrepreneurship competency in higher education: An analysis using mixed methods. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 14(1), 91–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19420676.2020.1823872>
- Gandhi, T., & Raina, R. (2018). Social entrepreneurship: The need, relevance, facets and constraints. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, 8, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40497-018-0094-6>
- Guritno, P. D., Suyono, H., & Sunarjo, S. (2019). Competency model of social entrepreneurs. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science* (2147–4478), 8(3), 94–110. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v8i3.256>
- Hemingway, Ch., A. (2013). Corporate social entrepreneurship. In S. O. Idowu, N. Capaldi, L. Zu, & A. Das Gupta (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of corporate social responsibility* (pp. 544–551). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8\\_363](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8_363)
- Kim, M. G., Lee, J., Roh, T., & Son, H. (2020). Social entrepreneurship education as an innovation hub for building an entrepreneurial ecosystem: The case of the KAIST social entrepreneurship MBA program. *Sustainability*, 12(22), Article 9736. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12229736>
- LAS Terminology Commission. (2009). On the understanding and use of the term *competence* in Latvian. LAS Terminology Commission Decision No.84. *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 9(84), 19/01/2010 (in Latvian). <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/203798-par-termina-ikompetencei-izpratni-un-lietosanu-latviesu-valoda>
- Levine, E., & Patrick, S. (2019). *What is competency based education?* <https://aurora-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/what-is-competency-based-education-an-updated-definition-web.pdf>
- Licite-Kurbe, L., & Sevcuna, L. (2023). Scenarios for the employment of people with disabilities by work integration social enterprises in Latvia. *Serbian Journal of Management*, 18(1), 133–152. <https://doi.org/10.5937/sjm18-43001>
- Maniam, B., Engel, J., & Subramanian, G. (2018). Examining the significance and impact of social entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Engineering & Technology*, 7(4.38), 818–824. <https://doi.org/10.14419/ijet.v7i4.38.27552>
- Miller, T., Wesley, C., & Williams, D. (2012). Educating the minds of caring hearts: Comparing the views of practitioners and educators on the importance of social entrepreneurship competencies. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 11, 349–352. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2011.0017>
- Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia. (2023). *Current affairs of social entrepreneurship* (December 2022) (in Latvian).
- Mitchelmore, S., & Rowley, J. (2010). Entrepreneurial competencies: A literature review and development agenda. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 16(2), 92–111. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13552551011026995>
- McClelland, D. C. (1973). Testing for competence rather than for "intelligence". *American Psychologist*, 28(1), 423–447. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0034092>
- OECD. (n.d.). *Social Entrepreneurship in Europe – An OECD-European Commission Project*. <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/social-entrepreneurship-oecd-ec.htm>
- OECD. (2022). Boosting social entrepreneurship and social enterprise development in Slovenia: In-depth policy review. In *OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Papers*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/184f1e07-en>
- Orhei, L. E., Nandram, S., & Vinke, J. (2015). Social entrepreneurship competence: Evidence from founders of social enterprises in Romania. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business (IJESB)*, 25(1). <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2015.068780>
- Prasetyo, P. E., & Kistanti, N. R. (2020). Role of social entrepreneurship in supporting business opportunities and entrepreneurship competitiveness. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 8(4), Article 1412. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2020.84090>



- Rickhoff-Fischer, I., Schank, Ch., & Ortland, A. (2021). Is corporate social entrepreneurship a (so far) missed opportunity for higher education institutions? Evidence from Germany. *Sustainability*, 13(24), Article 13965. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132413965>
- Rossano, S., Baaken, T., Orazbayeva, B., Baaken, M. C., Kiel, B., & Maas, G. J. P. (2023). Social entrepreneurship and its competences: Implications for higher education. In *Research anthology on approaches to social and sustainable entrepreneurship* (pp. 783–806). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-7593-5.ch040>
- Rubio, E. (2016). *4 Essential Skills for Social Entrepreneurs (and how to build them!)*. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/4-essential-skills-social-entrepreneurs-how-build-them-enrique-rubio>
- Saeima of the Republic of Latvia. (2017). *Social Enterprise Law*. <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=294484>
- Saeima of the Republic of Latvia. (2010). *Sustainable Development Strategy Latvia until 2030*. [https://www.varam.gov.lv/sites/varam/files/content/files/lias\\_2030\\_en.pdf](https://www.varam.gov.lv/sites/varam/files/content/files/lias_2030_en.pdf)
- Sannikova, & A., Brante, I. (2018). Development of social entrepreneurship in Latvia. *Business, Management and Education*, 16(1), 147–159. <https://doi.org/10.3846/bme.2018.2198>
- Sannikova, A., & Titko, J. (2021). Social entrepreneurship and social inequality: A case study of Latvia. In *Economic Science for Rural Development Conference Proceedings*, 55, 188–195. <https://doi.org/10.22616/ESRD.2021.55.019>
- Sherman, S. (2011). Teaching the key skills of successful social entrepreneurs. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/teaching\\_the\\_key\\_skills\\_of\\_successful\\_social\\_entrepreneurs#](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/teaching_the_key_skills_of_successful_social_entrepreneurs#)
- Terziev, V., Andreeva, O., Sukhoveeva, A., & Galina, P. (2020). The role of social entrepreneurship in ensuring the social security of the state. *International Journal of Economics and Business Administration*, VIII(4), 89–827. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3889393>
- Titko, J., Tambovceva, T., Atstaja, Dz., Lapinskaite, I., Solesvik, M., Svirina, A., & Uzule, K. (2023). Attitude towards sustainable entrepreneurship among students: Pilot study in Latvia and Lithuania. *TalTech Journal of European Studies*, 13(1)/(37), 107–132. <https://doi.org/10.2478/bjes-2023-0006>
- United Nations. (n.d.). *Entrepreneurs for social change*. <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/entrepreneurs-social-change>
- Vintisa, K. (2011). Competence dictionary. In *Creative technologies 10/3/2011*. <https://nevis.mk.gov.lv/Uploads/CompetenceDictionary.6310fce38bd842a3b5a769030b30042a.pdf>
- Vázquez-Parra, J. C., García-González, A., & Ramírez-Montoya, M. S. (2021). Social entrepreneurship competency: An approach by discipline and gender. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 13(5), 1357–1373. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-09-2020-0317>
- Vevere, V., Cerkovskis, E., & Sannikova, A. (2021). Social entrepreneurship intentions among business students in Latvia. *European Integration Studies*, 15(1), 251–259. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.eis.1.15.29111>
- Worsham, E. L., & Dees J. G. (2012). Reflections and insights on teaching social entrepreneurship: An interview with Greg Dees. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 11(3), 442–452. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2011.0024>
- Yujuico, E. (2008). Connecting the dots in social entrepreneurship through the capabilities approach. *Socio-Economic Review*, 6(3), 493–513. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwn003>
- Yunus, M. (2009). Creating a world without poverty: Social business and the future of capitalism. *Global Urban Development*, 4(2).