



Evaluating Key Tenets of Soapbox Model

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Abstract

This report was concerned with explaining and evaluating key tenets of the Soapbox model. The Soapbox model and platform is focused on highlighting the responsibility and capability of empowered individuals and inspired communities to create value, addressing societal challenges through collective betterment strategies. A mixed-methodology research approach was utilised, and secondary data was collected through desk-top research and a synthesis of peer-reviewed social research and social psychology journal articles. This was examined to establish support or critiques of the model. The conclusion drawn from theoretical findings and empirical cases studies indicated that while there were limitations to the model, the promising benefits of the Soapbox model and Soapbox platform significantly outpaced these. As this report was an introductory critical analysis of the Soapbox model, there is a strong prompt for continued and comprehensive research into the core tenets of the Soapbox model and platform.

Methodology

In this report, an integration of conceptual and empirical research methodology was

adopted to explain and evaluate the key tenets of the Soapbox model. The research design was intentionally chosen on the premise that a singular approach would not be effective in capturing the depth and breadth of high-quality data and information required to best evaluate a complex model (Almalki 2016). The complexity of the model results from the several key ideologies it is constituted of, which are interconnected and go beyond simplistic linear causal linkages (Kerlin 2012; Avelino et al. 2019). To therefore build a foundational, holistic understanding of the model, the report firstly drew on conceptual academic positions relating to a broad range of key ideas: (1) the free market, the welfare state and power-relations among actors leading to a gap in individual fulfilment, (2) role of building citizen capability, empowerment, and community development, (3) social innovation and market competition. A synthesis of these notions from social research and social psychology literature was used to construct and evaluate a conceptual understanding of the principal claims of the Soapbox Model. Subsequently, the report explored the conceptual framework against empirically based qualitative case

studies to have evidence-based support in the model's evaluation. This research approach therefore advances understanding of the Soapbox model and its key tenets in a simple manner while allowing quality evaluation to occur.

Secondary data was collected through desk-top research. The limitation of this data collection method was that the data analyzed was not collected specifically for this research inquiry, therefore not all information obtained from secondary sources could be equally reliable or valid (Stewart and Kamins 1993). Consequently, there was a focus on greater precision and accuracy in gathering high-quality data and evaluating information according to its reliability and validity (Emanuelson and Egenvall 2014; Trinh 2018).

Conceptual Analysis

This conceptual analysis is focused on broadly exploring and linking key ideas of the Soapbox model: (1) the free market, the welfare state and power-relations among actors leading to a gap in individual fulfilment, (2) role of building citizen capability, empowerment, and community development, (3) social innovation and market competition.

There has been a rise in academic discourse across Australia and globally about the limitations of a top-down approach as an effective solution for dealing with societal changes. The top-down approach is defined as an approach where higher-level stakeholders and actors (the state) are responsible for decisions that are filtered down to lower-level stakeholders (local communities and individuals). In response to power-

dynamics exerted by broader socio-political and market forces upon individuals and local communities, our current society has been recognised as leaving individuals disempowered in taking responsibility for transformative social change and collective action for the betterment of themselves and society. There has been a significant change from focusing on the welfare state and multinational corporations as ke actors to the role of building local and sustainable self-reliance amongst citizens (Coast et al. 2008).

The criticisms of a top-down approach interlinked with the impacts of the free market upon consumers has propelled the notion of creating social value from a bottom-up approach for emotional fulfillment. Within the current context of a free market, the commodification of goods and services has affected consumer behaviour in a cycle of 'fulfilment' through purchases in the market. On a broader level, market ideas of 'efficiency, productivity and competition' have influenced the delivery of services and programs where even the creation of social value is linked to market performance.

The Soapbox Model therefore argues the need for individual actions and values to be aligned in order to avoid discomfort and live with greater purpose and meaning. Using competition amongst the free market, a bottom-up community development approach can create innovative and transformative change, empowering individuals and communities alike. A bottom-up approach can be defined as increasing the capabilities, opportunities, and skills of stakeholders

from a grass-roots level to enact changes within society (Avelino et al. 2019).

The approach supports the well-renowned Capability Approach developed by Amartya Sen in 1982 as a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements for the design of proposals about societal change (Jacobson and Chang 2019). The capability approach is linked to a SOC (Societal Change) Model that prioritises meeting an individual's 'high-order' need of creating social value through the development of capabilities in order to create meaningful change. This concept links strongly to the Soapbox model's core tenets. Criticism of the bottom-up approach has also noted that such frameworks often ignore the power-relations amongst larger actors, and the significance of their contribution in the development of capabilities and provision of resources. Likewise, it was noted that whilst community development could provide new opportunities, it could also cause new vulnerabilities, or sometimes be just as ineffectual in empowering individuals (Ansari et al. 2012).

Empirical Analysis

The case study examined to provide an empirical analysis of the claims of the Soapbox model was a research study conducted on global entrepreneurship competitions as potential incubators for innovations in global health. Findings indicated and supported by literature suggest that competitions have the intangible benefits of inspiring competitors to start businesses and giving them the confidence to innovate (Huster et al. 2017,

p. 251). Competitors preferred the opportunity to collaborate with a team and gained positive value from mentorship and capacity building capabilities that were provided throughout the entrepreneurship competition. The positive results of the case study correlate to the theoretical underpinnings of the Soapbox model.

Discussion

The conceptual research indicates that key ideas of the Soapbox model are largely supported by academic positions among social research and social psychology literature. The empirical case study supported this, with promising findings that can advance consideration into the practical implications and operationalizing of the model.

A core distinction of the Soapbox model from the conceptual research and empirical study was that the model had non-linear causal linkages among its key tenets. This model adopted both a top-down and bottom-up approach, indicating the model was context sensitive to the power-relations of larger actors: the state, multi-national corporations, etc. While the model had greater weighting towards the development of communities, the model demonstrated a reconceptualization of a community-centred approach to recognition of the broader systemic factors (e.g. role of competition within the free-market).

This research report was an introductory critical analysis of the Soapbox model; therefore, limitations were noted. Firstly, this research report did not give equal weighting to each tenet within the

Soapbox model. Secondly, the depth of evaluation into the model was impacted by research constraints of word count and time. Despite the limitations of this analysis regarding the Soapbox model, the research findings indicate positive factors about key concepts of the model. There is motivation for more in-depth analysis and exploration into the Soapbox model.

Conclusion

To conclude, this report explored and evaluated key tenets of the Soapbox model. Analysis was conducted through secondary-data collection, and an integration of both conceptual and empirical research.

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