

Social Impact Investing: The Business Case for Social Impact Education

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There is a mature face of Corporate Social Responsibility. That face looks like: Innovation, Impact & Global Citizenship, and it is leaving CSR as an antiquated approach to the evolving changes in global business: "Gone are the days when a company set up shop in a community, paid its taxes, complied with the law, adhered to government regulations and nothing more," says Ryerson University professor Kernaghan Webb, founding director of the Institute for the Study of Corporate Social Responsibility.^[1]

Impact (Deloitte), Innovation (Hitachi) and Global Citizenship (Hewlett Packard) are examples of a bold emergent. This evolution is global, impactful and highly measured from the symbiotic purview of economic and social benefit. Why? "Measuring social progress guides us in translating economic gains into advancing social and environmental performance in ways that will unleash even greater economic success." As technology, human mobility, skills gap, resource scarcity and social issues transform the direction of global business, we cannot continue CSR as a "do good" quotient; we must now pursue and invest in impactful education as untapped possibilities. "Economic development is necessary but not sufficient for social progress. A country's overall level of development masks social and environmental strengths and challenges."^[2] And strategic business thinkers understand that we must now be able to analyze and critically envision those strengths and challenges as opportunities. Sixty-one of CEOs globally believe there are more growth opportunities today for their companies than three years ago. This signifies that "Successful organizations will be the ones who can adapt to these trends and discover how to treat them as opportunities." Businesses need to invest in social impact education.

Impactful Education

As national agendas have contributed to more funding opportunities that link qualifications and awards to graduate employment success, program differentiation, access and mobility, and skills-focus in burgeoning industries (such as STEM), we see education taking great strides to provide cutting-edge learning. Sixty percent of CEOs globally named "a skilled and adaptable workforce" as one of their top three priorities for the government of the country in which they are based ...only second to "an internationally competitive and efficient tax system" in terms of most mentions.^[3] This global focus on education has become an imperative for skills to meet not only the needs of our industries, but also the needs of our globe.

National education agendas rest on the economic landscape as a call for investment in responsive and new skills, as noted in the Canadian Council on Learning's *Post Secondary Education in Canada* document which states, "A time of economic challenge reinforces the imperative to invest energy and resources into human infrastructure in ways of assessing progress in PSE..." The 10 Most Important Works Skills^[4] of 2020 do not resemble the conventional taxonomy. They are (to name a few) *Design Mindset, Cognitive Overload Management, New Media Literacy, Novel & Adaptive Thinking, and Social Intelligence*. So, how are we developing these skills in education that businesses want?

In Justin Dennis' articles in Future Tech, he reports on *The Top 10 Emerging Technologies Changing the World*.^[5] We need to not only educate students on these emerging technologies, or for what purposes are those technologies being developed, but also a deeper reflection to ensure the mechanical engineers, the entrepreneurs or science majors foresee what next emergent innovations or skills will be needed and how global issues become a business case for social impact? "To be counted among the world's leaders, a company must do more than deliver innovative, market-leading products and services and generate exceptional value for its shareholders. It must also be an exemplary global citizen." (Hewlett Packard) Deloitte published in 2013, the Global Millennial Innovation Survey with one of its key findings that innovation is considered to be one of the top three "purposes" of business and just as important as profit. Technical higher education institutions have responded with innovative pedagogy, offerings, opportunities, research and its formative strategic alliances with business.

Strategic Partnerships

Trade, civil society and the market have long since influenced the path of strategic global business partnerships. Through globalization, international business has now seen an evolution from modest trade between nations, to more complex negotiations and requirements in resource rich countries, often termed developing, as they become high demand hosts for business -- and academic development. As such, "For those [NGOs] with a history of working with corporations, the nature of their relationship has been evolving: Traditional corporate social responsibility or financial engagements are giving way to more sophisticated, longer term partnerships."^[6] NGO's have become a powerful resource for businesses to navigate national laws, policy, culture and community. *We must educate for these partnerships, and business must see that they require talent that understands social impact.* The business case emerges from research that evidences social impact as investment criteria in potential global opportunities. Research conducted in May 2014 collaboratively by LGT Philanthropy, Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs, Quintessa Partners and University of St. Gallen Hub Sao Paul entitled *Mapping the Investment Impact Sector in Brazil* reported from its findings: "100 percent of the respondents (being 19 investors) reported that they chose their investment based on its social impact..." The growing corporate research on social impact as a factor in investment criteria demonstrates the changing perspective and role of global business.

This perspective in global business transforms the focus of business education and the awareness of opportunities for impactful strategic partnerships. Michael Porter writes a clear and succinct report entitled *The New Role of Business in Global Education*, which inspires how companies can create **shared value** by improving education while driving shareholder returns; the article

begins with his words: "Education presents an immense opportunity for companies to create shared value." Aligning curriculum and learning outcomes with workforce needs develops clear paths from education to employment. Intel (U.S.), challenged with finding STEM skills talent, invested \$100 million in STEM education nation-wide. Program initiatives such as Intel Math and Intel Teach provided specific curriculum and resources that developed 21st Century Skills from research and "based on its own workforce needs." ***Reaching the needs of business through education is a business investment that returns measurable impact.***

Globally, when we scan the disparity between unemployment and skills gaps, how can more businesses leverage this as a potential resource? Former Chancellor of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and member of The MasterCard Foundation Board of Directors, Dr. Phillip Clay says that, "There will be no more important issue in the world -- not energy, not oil, not water -- than that of talent." He is speaking of the untapped resources of human capacities for innovation and social impact. Seventy-one percent of CEOs globally are actively searching for talent in different geographies, industries, or demographic segments[7], which evidences a business case for investment and partnership in education. ***Tapping unconventional sources of talent needs to become a bigger business.*** The company SAP employs people with autism in technology-focused roles.[8] Direct investments for training programs to marginalized populations on specific skills, talent development and (dis)abilities can provide access to available and designable capacities. ***This calls for business to see the potential in talent that can be innovative and impactful.*** Additionally, addressing and affecting social change for our worlds' marginal groups are reflective and analytical skills recognized and developed through Global Citizenship initiatives in both education (ie: Centennial College[9]) and business (Hewlett Packard[10]). If we are now seeing simultaneous initiatives in both education and business, we have answered the question of who is responsible for investing in social impact education: both.

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