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ABSTRACT

This article reviews concepts of social innovation and some Japanese cases. Social innovation seeks to provide a broad perspective on innovation that is not only premised on technology, and offers much potential for tackling complex emerging social issues. Evidenced-based discourse on social innovations and a more detailed policy framework are urgently needed to enable positive changes in the society we live in.

KEYWORDS: Social innovation, Social aspects of innovation, Social capital, Japan.

JEL CLASSIFICATION: JEL Z0

1. INTRODUCTION

Many new social issues have emerged since the 1990s. These include problems related to social exclusion, the environment, education, and inner-city disparities. Globalization, decreasing birthrates and aging populations in many developed countries provide a backdrop for these issues, and huge efforts have been directed toward finding solutions. Social innovation has been suggested as one approach for managing these issues, especially in Europe and the United States.

The term “social innovation” has been widely discussed by scholars such as Mumford (2002), Mulgan (2007), and Phillips Jr., Deiglmeier, and Miller (2008) (see Table 1), who tried to clarify the concept of social innovation, using somewhat different interpretations. For example, Mumford thought of social innovation as the generation and implementation of new ideas regarding how people should organize interpersonal activities, or social interactions, to meet one or more common goals. Mulgan suggested that social innovations were social activities and services motivated by the goal of meeting social needs, and were predominantly developed and diffused through organizations whose primary purposes were social.1 According to Phillips Jr. et al. (2008), social innovation could create new, unprecedented approaches and processes for advancing social demands and issues.

Although there were several differences among their definitions and notions, they shared a common perspective on the social aspect of innovation. They tried to identify social issues and needs, and place them on the social agenda for resolution. Furthermore, they proposed “new” ideas and plans to

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1 Regarding the “social aspect” of social innovation, Mulgan (2007) argued that social innovation differentiated itself from business innovation, which is generally motivated by profit maximization, and is diffused through organizations that are primarily motivated by profit maximization. This was the main characteristic of social innovation for him.
address these issues and needs. They also pointed out the importance of realizing these ideas and plans by setting up institutes and organizations to initiate practical activities.

Table 1: Definitions of Social Innovation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Definitions of Social Innovation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mumford (2002)</td>
<td>The generation and implementation of new ideas regarding the organization of interpersonal activities or social interactions in order to meet one or more common goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulgan (2007)</td>
<td>The development and distribution of new ideas that serve the social objective in the form of new, revolutionary activities and services through organizations whose primary motive is to meet social needs.</td>
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It is noteworthy that social innovation has been applied to many areas, including political and governmental areas (such as new models of public health systems), commercial markets (open source software and organic foods), social movements (fair trade), academic areas (pedagogical models of childcare), and social enterprises (microcredit and magazines, such as “The Big Issue”) (Mulgan, 2007). One famous example of social innovation is the Grameen Bank, a microfinance banking system that provided unsecured credit at low interest to Bangladesh’s poor. Muhammad Yunus (2009), the founder of the Grameen Bank, who has received much favorable press coverage over the years, asserted that poverty has not been self-imposed, but rather, has been imposed by our institutionalized practices and policies toward poverty. He emphasized that we should redefine our established ideas, policies, and current practices to better combat poverty.

It will not be enough for us just to concentrate on the phenomena of issues or problems to be resolved in our society. We should call into account their root causes, if we really wish to resolve problems such as poverty. Yunus’ activities, and specifically setting up the Grameen Bank based on a new idea of microfinance, were not just about renting money to the poor, but were also about empowering poor people to tackle their living conditions—one of the fundamental social issues in poor countries.

In the following section, we examine the concept of social innovations from several perspectives, and consider whether or not this concept could be useful and/or provide an adequate approach for dealing with many modern issues and problems. First, to clarify the concept of innovation based on social innovation, we seek to shed light on the multiple dimensions of the concept of “innovation” itself, which has sometimes been very narrowly defined as technological advancements. We then review recent policy movements with regard to innovation. Next, we explore three themes that are interrelated with social innovation: the social aspect of social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and social capital. These themes have underpinned the concept of social innovation and contributed to expand it. Finally, we look at several examples of what could be called social innovation in the Japanese context.

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2 For his pioneering activities in microfinance, Muhammad Yunus, who is both the founder and president of the Grameen Bank, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.
2. INNOVATION CONCEPTS AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

The technological aspect of the concept of innovation has been emphasized in Japan. There have been several reasons for this limited focus. Among them, the most important is our way of thinking about something new that is to be created. It is easier to understand new technology than it is to understand new ideas and concepts that have the potential to change the world. It might be safer to limit our focus to technology, because new ideas have the potential to dramatically change societies and even revolutionize them, once they are accepted (Dosi, 1982).

As Schumpeter (1934) pointed out, the concept of innovation is not limited to the technological sphere, but encompasses much more than technology. Schumpeter considered entrepreneurship and innovation as being essential to economic development, and clearly distinguished between invention and innovation. In his view, production was generated through the combination of available/existing resources/goods and powers. He observed that one phenomenon that characterizes innovation is the discontinuous occurrence of “new combination[s] (neue Kombination),” through which radical new products and methods of production could be introduced. He listed five kinds of “new combinations.” The first was the introduction of an unknown/unfamiliar “new good,” or a good having a new quality, yet unknown to the consumer. The second was the development of a new method of production, the third was the opening of a new market, the fourth was the acquisition of a new source of supply of raw materials and intermediate goods/half-manufactured goods, and the fifth was the creation of a new organization.

Innovation reforms or revises to organizations and social systems, which had worked ineffectively, with prevailing technologies. For example, the Dutch East India Company, which was founded in 1602, evolved into a new organizational form, namely a corporation (as a business construct), in which innovation was institutionalized. In this sense, the innovative adaptations of business organizations into modern corporations was a driving force behind the industrial revolution in Europe, and was an institutional or social innovation, rather than a technological one.

Heiskala (2007) defined innovation as being comprised of the following three steps: first, an idea or action that is defined as “new” emerges; second, an idea or action that influences changes in social practices begins to take root; and third, an idea or action that has the effect of improving social and/or economic performance is implemented. The first step is based on the notion that if something is novel, it will be innovative. The most crucial aspect of this innovation, however, is that “novelty” be recognized in a particular context/environment. This type of innovation will have value only when it has been recognized as an innovation in a particular context. Therefore, even a well-known, well-established invention or finding that we have already recognized could foster “innovation,” if it were in a specific context/environment where it was recognized as novel (Swedberg, 1991).

Thinking about innovation as this way would offer a wide variety of perspectives/definitions of innovation. Several recent discussions in policy areas have shown that when viewed this way, its characteristics would be multi-dimensional and broader. For example, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) in the United Kingdom has tried to broaden the concept of innovation to the state/nation-wide level through discussions of policy directions on several matters. One crucial aspect of these discussions was not to restrict the definition of innovation to the given frameworks, but to change current perspectives (DIUS, 2008). Therefore, viewing innovation in a wider context has been crucial to the development of policies for promoting nation-wide innovation in the United Kingdom.

Traditionally, the United Kingdom has dealt with innovation in policy areas such as science and

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3 The concept of “innovation” has a long history, so the focus of this article is limited to the concept and the history of innovation that would be directly related to social innovations.

4 The DIUS merged with the Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR) in June 2009, to create the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS).
technology in ways similar to those used in Japan. More recently, the United Kingdom extended its focus and interests to include much broader concepts of innovation, which have sometimes been referred to as “hidden innovation.” Although this type of innovation has not been clearly recognized, it has been said that it should be used to inform policy to effect innovations in many fields (NESTA, 2007a), and so could be called “total innovation” (NESTA, 2008a, 2008b). Changing the concept of innovation to be more comprehensive will encourage the development of specific indicators for innovation in the United Kingdom, and so go beyond policy discourses about innovation (NESTA, 2008c).

Unlike Japan, the United Kingdom has tried to broaden the concept of innovation, specifically into policy areas that might lead to change or improve society. This occurred because the United Kingdom recognized that the environment in developed countries had changed, and that technology, which was the focus of private companies for example, had lost the potential to create innovations. It had become necessary, therefore, for mature countries to expand the concept of innovation to encompass the social sphere.

3. CONCEPTS RELATED TO SOCIAL INNOVATION

In this section, we examine three concepts that underpin social innovation. We begin by assessing the relevance of the social aspect of innovation. Next, we consider the notion of social entrepreneurship as the bearer of social innovation. Finally, we consider social capital as providing the context for social innovation.

3.1 Social Aspects of Innovation

Since the 1970s, several studies have given attention to the social aspects of innovation, although the mainstream has remained entrenched in its conviction of the importance of technology (Williams & Edge, 1996). The notion supporting the traditional concept is based on a “linear model,” in which the social changes made by technological innovations occur in a linear fashion. Moreover, this model supposed that innovation processes commence with basic researches, which are followed by applied research. The new technology that results is then diffused by the market, as a consequence of the innovation process.

On the other hand, some researchers have become interested in the social factors of innovation, and they have been known as advocates of “the social construction of technology.” According to their theory, it would not be necessary that technological developments be subject to the preceding linear model. Rather, innovation would be open to multiple directions (Pinch & Bijker, 1987). Both the creators and the beneficiaries of innovation are human beings, so innovation is not only a consequence of the outputs of technological factors, but also a result of the outcomes of social factors, including economic, political, and/or geological.

This way of thinking about innovation has emphasized that innovation would result from interactions between technology and society, and the interactions themselves would have the potential to be changed. Therefore, both society and technology would be equivalent. This notion of innovation is complicated in comparison to that preoccupied by technology, but it could be a reflection of the dynamic and complex processes that characterize innovation. Furthermore, it reminds us that any form of innovation cannot help but be characterized by social aspects.

A study area that has focused on the effects of the interactions between technology and society is that of innovation developments, introductions, and applications within a group of industries. Based on reviews of preceding studies, Mumford (2002) focused on contextual factors, and thought of them as creative and structural factors. He emphasized contextual factors as having an effect on the acceptance and implementation of new ideas, and suggested the following four hypotheses: First, social innovation needs to sophisticate ideas through information exchanges with others in a
communicative environment. Second, ideas must show their benefits clearly, and be able to be implemented at low cost within given systems. Third, the support of the elite must be acquired in accordance with that of existing support circles, and fourth, effective communication is necessary for the acceptance of innovation. Several research studies focusing on contextual aspects of innovation development and introduction have been undertaken, even in the Japanese context (Tanimoto, 2006; Tanimoto & Doi, 2007).

Some studies have focused on the crystallization of innovations through combinations of various existing technologies and resources in multistage processes. Research in this area has been interested in connectedness, or networks among factors. For example, it would be hard to imagine, in a modern complex society, that only one factor could stimulate innovation. As a result, several researchers have explored the possibility of openness in relation to innovations. For example, Chesbrough (2003) used International Business Machines Corporation and Proctor and Gamble to showcase the advantage of “open innovation,” in which alliances or networks of different companies could allow merging internal and external ideas to create innovations. Alliances and networks could also have an advantage in that a service or product would acquire de facto standards in a market, because many players would have been involved in the innovation process. Moreover, this type of innovation might have an impact on society as a result of the associated networking among various types of organizations, which would be different from the present so-called division of labor among companies.

The concept of this type of innovation has gradually been introduced into the discussion of industrial policies, in order to promote small and medium firms. At the same time, several studies have tried to assess the effectiveness of open innovation systems by reviewing cases about regional and public conditions, using industrial policies and industrial clusters. Doi (2005), for example, called the accumulation of networked conditions used by many types of organizations to create social innovations a cluster, and examined its effectiveness in terms of developing standards of creativity for new methods, social values for dealing with actual social problems, and the incubations needed for social enterprises and social businesses.

The most important point of this notion was to think of social factors as essential to invoking innovations. That is, social aspects were needed to create innovations. However, the concept of social innovation has a much broader focus in that it could put social phenomena on the agenda, where they could be tackled and generalized into more universal phenomena. Mainstream or ordinal concepts of innovation have only been dealing with subjects that technology should be able to overcome. Therefore, the main foci of mainstream innovation have been very specific issues that technology can address, and this type of innovation has indirect impacts on society, as a consequence of its technological successes. On the other hand, social issues and problems have to be understood in a much broader context, in which they can become part of universal social agendas, and to which society as a whole should react, and it becomes possible to find the means to tackle social agendas and their outcomes. In this sense, the pursuit of social innovation would have a direct impact on society.

3.2 Theory of Social Entrepreneurship

It has been said that the entrepreneur is the kind of actor likely to evoke innovation. In Japanese, it has been called “Kigyouka,” which sometimes has two meanings. One is business enterprise, and the other is entrepreneur. However, it would be hard to call everyone who started something new an entrepreneur, and moreover, the meaning of entrepreneurship would be trivialized if we were to label every business as entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs might have the potential to destroy existing regimes and create new values. In other words, entrepreneurs could initiate a revolution from which something new and valued could be created. In this sense, it is necessary to distinguish an “entrepreneur” from a “manager” who pursues efficiencies within existing structures.

Schumpeter (1934) proposed a wider definition of “entrepreneur,” which was not restricted to people who set up their own businesses and manage them, but included those who belonged to corporate
enterprises, such as corporate executives and engineers. Since the 1990s, some entrepreneurs have successfully demonstrated unprecedented solutions for emerging social problems and issues. These types of entrepreneurs are the so-called social entrepreneurs, who have become hugely popular (Bornstein, 2004). Moreover, as Christensen (1997) and Christensen and Raynor (2003) have shown, social entrepreneurs could embark on their businesses without relying on scarce resources, and create “disruptive innovation.” As a result, they could have a great social impact (Watanabe, 2009).

Several studies have focused on key players of social innovations, and specifically on their characteristics, abilities, competencies, and life histories. For example, Martin and Osberg (2007) compared a number of social entrepreneurs, and portrayed them as individuals who grasped business opportunities and brought results. Simonton (1984, 1999) analyzed the life histories of social entrepreneurs and showed that entrepreneurship was closely related to premature intellectual development, a peripheral family environment, and non-traditional training and experiences. Csikszentmihalyi (2000) argued that the characteristics of social entrepreneurs would come from interactions between individuals and society, and these interactions themselves could form the quality of, timing, and potential for innovation.

To some extent, social entrepreneurs have the ability to identify social issues as well as raise and move social agenda forward while engaging in business or organization activities. At the same time, it is necessary to pay attention to changing social contexts, in which social issues are reassessed. As such, social entrepreneurs are an important factor in social innovation. However, social issues are defined by changing contexts, in which innovation is embedded, and it would be problematic not to take this changing world into account when we think of social innovation.

3.3 Theory of Social Capital

The concept of social capital expanded rapidly in the late 1990s. According to Putnam (1995, 2000), who helped to raise the profile of this discourse, social capital pertains to the characteristics of social structure that enhance social productivity, such as “trust,” “norms,” and “networks” through the increase of social cooperative behavior. Therefore, social capital includes the human relationships surrounding an individual, such as certain social networks. In Japan, where there are numerous empirical studies on social capital (the National Life Bureau, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2003; Fujisawa, Hamano & Koyabu, 2007; Tatsuki, 2008; Fujisawa, Hamano & Takegawa, 2009; Fujisawa, Nagatomi, Ishida, & Iwasaki, 2010; Ishida, 2009; Nagatomi & Fujisawa, 2009), most results suggest that a prosperous/high social capital is favorable to many aspects of society’s social and economic spheres.

One line of study on social innovation has focused on the relationship between social capital and innovation. Landry, Amera, and Moktar (2002) investigated the degree to which social capital regulates innovation, and suggested that unless the governance of innovation could offer incentives not only for the success of research and development (R&D), but could also create incentive structures adequate to the social infrastructures of innovation, innovation could not be governed efficiently. The Institute of Policy Sciences in Japan (2008) assessed the activities of businesses related to regional R&D in Japan, and found that the more scholars have cooperated, the more innovation has occurred in the area of regional science and technology.

In the field of social capital theories, Putnam (2000) distinguishes between two frequently acknowledged concepts of social capital. “Bonding” social capital is characterized as (inward-looking) ties within similar organizations, and “bridging” social capital as outward-looking networks of different kinds of people and organizations. The former is regarded as more exclusive but with a stronger unity, the latter as more open but with lower levels of unity. Much current research

5 According to Watanabe (2009), typical examples of social entrepreneurs are Charles E. McJilton (CEO of Second Harvest Japan), Anshu K. Gupta (founder of GOONJ), and Kazuyoshi Fujita (president of Daichi Wo Mamoru Kai Co.).
states that “bridging” social capital is more likely to facilitate innovation than “bonding” social capital (Woolcock, 2000; Hämäläinen, 2007). Other studies have conducted empirical research on Japanese contexts and found that “bridging” social capital has a greater positive impact than “bonding,” for creativities in regional innovation (Nagatomi & Fujisawa, 2009; Fujisawa, Nagatomi, Ishida, & Iwasaki, 2010). These findings are in line with the concept of “open innovation,” in that the interactions and/or interconnecting ideas among stakeholders could enhance values as a consequence of their openness. An important emerging point about this approach to social innovation is how to approach it at a policy level (Schienstock & Hämäläinen, 2001; NESTA, 2007b).

A social issue or problem that is becoming more universal should be given attention from different perspectives. A specific agenda could be recognized as common to several different contexts, through any information flow or communication, such as bridging social capital. Therefore, it would be necessary for social innovation both to detect certain phenomena as social issues, and to generalize them as agenda items that need to be tackled in society. For the latter, social capital plays a very important role for evoking social innovation.

4. SOME EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL INNOVATION IN JAPAN

According to a report of the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (2009), the most common type of major organization active in the social innovation area in Japan is the nonprofit organization (NPO), at 46.7%, or about half of the market, followed by profit-making organizations (joint stock companies or limited liability companies) with 20.5% of the market.

NPOs play a crucial role in Japan’s social innovation activities and businesses. Omuro (2004) distinguished between three types of organizations that led social innovation in Japan: the first was a category of NPOs, most of whose benefits originated from business activities in the markets, the second type was profit-orientated businesses, whose missions were strongly social, and the third type was affiliated companies that were subsided by their controlling corporate parents to deliver special social missions. All three types of organizations were private, and therefore it has been said that Japan’s main players have voluntarily committed to leading social innovation activities.

There are many cases exemplifying social innovation in Japan. It would be of value to review several such cases and point out the characteristics that have allowed them to realize social innovation in a Japanese context. Each of these organizations share affinities, in that they have found generalities in each issue or problem, and tried to find social solutions to these issues or problems, even though their history, structure, background, business, and future direction are completely different (Table 2).

The NPO Hokkaido Green Fund commenced activities under the auspices of the Seikatsu Club Hokkaido (consumers’ cooperative society), and was established in July 1999. Since then, it has been committed to addressing awareness activities and providing information about natural energy. Through its activities, it established two companies—the Hokkaido Citizen’s Wind Power Co. Ltd., and the Natural Energy Citizen Fund Co. Ltd.—that support citizen-organized businesses maintaining wind force power generation systems in Hokkaido, Aomori, Akita, Chiba, and Ibaraki.

The Daichi Wo Mamoru Kai Co. Ltd. began its activities in the 1970s, when environmental pollution caused by agricultural chemicals such as pesticides were recognized as a social issue. Founded in 1975, and registered as Daichi Co. Ltd. in 1976, it was one of the first successful enterprises to establish a specific distribution system—the home delivery system—for selling organic products. In 2009 it was engaged with 2,500 registered farm producers, 91,000 registered customers, and five corporate members.

6 For more details of the NPO Hokkaido Green Fund, see Tanimoto (2009).
Table 2: Examples of social innovation in Japan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organization</th>
<th>Summary of Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NPO Hokkaido Green Fund (Sapporo City)</td>
<td>After setting out as an anti-nuclear energy movement, Hokkaido Green Fund has expanded its activities and focus into more broad area, such as natural energy. It founded the Citizen Wind Power (Co., Ltd.) and the Natural Energy Citizen Fund (Co., Ltd.) across Japan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daichi Wo Mamoru Kai, Co., Ltd. (Chiba City)</td>
<td>Daichi Wo Mamoru Kai is strongly committed to promoting organic farming and has opposed environmental pollution caused by agricultural chemicals. It has succeeded in commercial organic vegetable production, and offering home delivery systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Big Issue Japan (Osaka City)</td>
<td>A private company established “The Big Issue” in Japan following United Kingdom’s model. It has helped homeless people a certain degree of self-reliance by selling “The Big Issue” magazines by themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMRON Taiyo Home Co., Ltd. (Beppu City)</td>
<td>Founded by joint investments of OMRON Co., Ltd. and Taiyo Home (Japan Sun Industries) Social Welfare Corporation, OMRON Taiyo Home Co., Ltd. was established. Its objective is to create jobs for disabled people. Currently, this form has expanded with Honda Co., Ltd., and Mitsubishi Corporation Ltd.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Official documents and websites of the above organizations

The Big Issue Japan was the Japanese version of a social business founded in London in 1991. Its mission is not just supporting homeless people, but also helping them achieve independence. Its activities are more than just simple charitable activities, in that homeless people are given the opportunity to support themselves financially by selling “The Big Issue” magazine on the streets. This initiative was first developed in Osaka and Kyoto, and has now expanded to other cities, including Sapporo, Sendai, Funabashi, Yokohama, Nagoya, Kobe, Kyoto, Hiroshima, Fukuoka, and Kagoshima.

The OMRON Taiyo Home Co. Ltd. (Japan Sun Industries) is a unique private company founded in 1972 through the joint investments of a Japanese electric equipment manufacturer, OMRON Co. Ltd., and a Japanese social welfare corporation. It is based in Beppu City, Kyushu. Its main purpose is to create jobs for people with disabilities. People working at the OMRON Taiyo Home Co. Ltd. help to produce high quality industrial sockets, widely recognized as such in the industry, and are regarded as having contributed to factory automation. Taiyo Home Co. Ltd. (Japan Sun Industries) has developed other types of joint investments, and established other corporate organizations, such as Honda Taiyo Home Co. Ltd., and Mitsubishi Taiyo Home Co. Ltd., to expand employment opportunities for handicapped people.

These cases emerged with different themes and from different backgrounds, but they adopted the same approach, which was to focus not just on specific issues for specific people, but to approach these issues from a much broader perspective, from where they could be thought of as important social issues. Moreover, these organizations have tried to invent new approaches and form organizational structures that facilitate coping with these issues effectively. They have also tried to influence society “directly.” These objectives are comparable to those that motivated the founder of the Grameen Bank, Muhammad Yunus.

5. CONCLUSION

We have tried to clarify the concept of social innovation and put it into the Japanese context in this article. First the concept of innovation was reviewed, beginning with the original essential meanings of social “innovation.” It became clear that the notion of innovation had gradually evolved, and has been adapted not just to the fields of science and technology, but also to a much broader field. The foci of innovations have been crucial and might be useful for dramatically changing social and economic environments. Innovations have been thought of as offering ways for tackling many complicated issues and problems, in many areas of society. Therefore, a policy to promote innovation has had to
extend its reach beyond technological spheres to include infrastructures and/or systems needed to create and develop comprehensive social innovations at a national policy level.

Second three related notions of social innovation were reviewed: the social factor of innovation, the theory of social entrepreneurship, and the theory of social capital. Each was linked to some aspects of social innovation and its meanings and it would be useful to understand what social innovations could be. It would be important for this concept to emphasize social factors, including economic, political, and geological factors, as important elements for promoting innovations, in addition to the technological factors. The many factors involved would interact and create innovation as a result. The social aspects of innovation would broaden the notion of innovation to include more than technological advancements.

While social entrepreneurs tackling social issues is an important aspect of social innovation, social issues should be defined by the contexts in which the issues have been embedded, and not taking the contexts into account would lead to misunderstandings when thinking about social innovation. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge certain phenomena as social issues or problems, and to contextualize them as societal agenda items. Social capital will also play an important role in creating context for social innovation. That is, social capital could foster creative environments that encourage social innovation.

Finally, several case examples in Japan were shown to reflect the meaning of social innovation. These cases had different themes and backgrounds, but they were similar in that they did not focus just on specific issues, but also viewed issues in a much broader context. Moreover, these individuals tried to invent new approaches and form radical organizational structures that could cope with these issues effectively. They also tried to influence society “directly.” In this way, their approach is similar to that taken by the founder of the Grameen Bank, Muhammad Yunus.

As Mumford and Moerti (2003) and Mulgan (2006) pointed out, it would be hard to say that there have been enough researches about social innovation. The reason for the scarcity of social innovation researches is that there have been too many strategies and practical supports that promote innovation in the areas of business and technology, and, as a result, there have not been any comprehensive strategies focusing on social innovation itself (Mulgan, 2006). To tackle these problems, a policy such as that in place in the United Kingdom is needed. It involves forming a new policy gradually, emphasizing the comprehensiveness of innovation, and expanding the concept into many areas, and specifically policy areas, which used to be thought of only in regard to social welfare schemes.

It is anticipated that researches about social innovation will become more fertile in the future, both theoretically and empirically, because social issues and problems have become very complicated at the global level, and it will be difficult to solve them using traditional approaches and ideas. Therefore, we need to develop evidenced-based discourse about social innovations. More specifically, it will be necessary to create a more detailed framework for the Japanese policy context.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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