Guest Editorial: Special Issue on Social Entrepreneurship Education

5 authors, including:

Jill Kickul
New York University
163 PUBLICATIONS   **8,184** CITATIONS

Paulami Mitra
IESEG School of Management
10 PUBLICATIONS   **72** CITATIONS

Rasheda L. Weaver
Iona College
17 PUBLICATIONS   **109** CITATIONS

Christoph Winkler
Iona College
28 PUBLICATIONS   **564** CITATIONS

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:

Project   Mapping Social Enterprises In the United States View project

Project   Self-regulation and dealing with uncertainty: How to support entrepreneurs to better cope with uncertain decision-making View project

Guest Editorial: Special Issue on Social Entrepreneurship Education

Jill Kickul[1], Paulami Mitra[2], Rasheda L. Weaver[3] ⓘ, Jacqueline Orr[1], and Christoph Winkler[3] ⓘ

Abstract

Our key intention through this special issue in social entrepreneurship education is to capture the best practices in pedagogy and research within this growing field of social entrepreneurship and also to push boundaries and question the taken-for-granted assumptions in this discipline. Therefore, two contributions chosen for this issue advocate the importance of a service learning approach to enhance students' learning experience beyond the classroom. The other two contributions address the need to challenge assumptions of social entrepreneurship, thus improving students' practical and theoretical knowledge of the field.

Keywords

social entrepreneurship education, service learning, design thinking, experiential learning, dark side of social entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship involves the application of business practices in the pursuit of a social and/or environmental mission. Opportunities abound in the field of social

[1]Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA
[2]IESEG School of Management, Lille, France
[3]Hynes Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Iona College, New Rochelle, NY, USA

Corresponding Author:
Christoph Winkler, Hynes Endowed Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Iona College, 715 North Avenue, New Rochelle, NY 10803, USA.
Email: cwinkler@iona.edu

entrepreneurship for innovators to bring effective solutions to some of society's most pressing issues. As an emerging and rapidly changing business field, social entrepreneurship involves the practice of identifying, starting, and growing successful mission-driven for-profit and non-profit ventures, that is, organizations that strive to advance social change while also prioritizing financial sustainability. It brings the mindset, principles, strategies, tools, and techniques of entrepreneurship to the social sector, yielding innovative solutions to society's vexing problems: poverty, hunger, inadequate housing and homelessness, unemployment and underemployment, illiteracy, disease, environmental degradation, and the like.

In addition to finding creative solutions, the social entrepreneur of the future will also encourage stakeholders to take notice of these innovations and the impact they can have in driving long-term systematic change for broader social, political, cultural, and economic well-being. The interdisciplinary nature of social entrepreneurship has captured the imaginations of brilliant students across business, public administration, social work, and other fields around the world. This has led to the creation of hundreds of courses and programs of study to meet this burgeoning demand. These programs are witnessing a surge of social consciousness among students across all levels of higher education. As early as 2008, the Aspen Institute's Center for Business Education[1] survey indicates that our students are thinking more broadly about the primary responsibilities of a company, considering "creating value for the communities in which they operate" to be a primary business responsibility.

This special issue on Social Entrepreneurship Education invited scholarly contributions that introduce emerging theoretical frameworks as well as impactful learning innovations that will advance and interrogate current understanding and teaching practices of this evolving discipline. We contend that the field of social entrepreneurship education creates a unique opportunity to continually integrate, challenge, and debate many assumptions in an effort to develop cogent and unifying theoretical paradigms of "what" and "how" we teach the next cadre of aspiring social entrepreneurs. This special issue called for publishing scholarly work that focuses on several key topics and unanswered questions in the social entrepreneurship education field, including

(1) What are the social entrepreneurship frameworks being used in classrooms and how are they integrated within both curricular and co-curricular initiatives?
(2) In what ways are the pedagogical innovations used in more traditional, commercial entrepreneurship programs similar and different from those innovations used within a social entrepreneurship curriculum?
(3) As a field, how do social entrepreneurship educators assess their effectiveness in the classroom? What type of informal and formal methodologies and measures are used?
(4) What are the variety of models and frameworks that social entrepreneurship educators use to discuss and debate the multiple missions (social/economic/environmental) of a social enterprise?

(5) What scholarship of teaching and learning about sustainable business models exists (achieving financial sustainability, scaling impact, design thinking for social change, etc.)?

(6) How is action research used as a teaching tool to build socially responsible ecosystems?

Before choosing the articles for this special issue, we took note of the different articles published on social entrepreneurship education. Many of these academic works focused on pedagogic tools and models that aimed at enhancing the learning experience of students or by generating ideas on improving the syllabus or the theoretical understanding of social entrepreneurship (Kickul et al., 2012, 2018; Mitra et al., 2019; Pache & Chowdhury, 2012; Tracey & Philips, 2007). Our key intention through this issue was to not only capture the best practices in pedagogy and research within the growing field of social entrepreneurship education but also to push boundaries and question the taken-for-granted assumptions in this discipline. As a result, we chose four articles that addressed in settling our dilemma.

The first two articles in this special issue highlight the importance of experiential learning and design thinking in social entrepreneurship education. They advocate a service-learning approach by actively engaging the students with the local community or with local social entrepreneurs to enhance the students' learning experience beyond the boundaries of the classroom. Experiential learning is essential to social enterprise education as social enterprises are practical in nature (Weaver, 2020). These articles are followed by two other articles that focus on deepening students' knowledge and understanding of social entrepreneurship from a critical perspective approach.

Active Engagement of Students with the Local Community

The first article *Actively Engaging with Social Entrepreneurs: The Social Enterprise Audit* by Stephanie Fernhaber generates a step-by-step guide on how social entrepreneurship students can be engaged outside the classroom in a way that is structured and efficient and can be easily implemented by social entrepreneurship educators. Consequently, this article introduces a hybrid learning innovation that combines in-class learning with active engagement of students with the social entrepreneurship community over a period of 9 weeks. In this program, the beginning of each week kicks off with a foundational in-class training on theory and practical exercises on social entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, the course instructor conducts some background preparation by securing the commitment of local social ventures and then pairing up each student team with a social venture. At the end of each week, the students visit and gain more information about the venture, its objectives, vision, mission, and strategy. Students are also encouraged to apply the concepts they study in class along with critically analyzing the different aspects of the social venture. Finally, they are expected to design and frame a set of recommendations for the social venture. The course design also accommodates mid-term and end-of-semester exams, assignments, and reflection

papers. Through this learning innovation, social entrepreneurship educators benefit from being able to create a space for students to align and practically apply theoretical insights studied in class with a real-world scenario. Students also benefit from nurturing, experimenting, and cultivating their social entrepreneurial identity and social entrepreneurial self-efficacy in order to catalyze change in their future efforts.

The article *Learning Design Thinking: A Social Innovation JAM* by Geoffrey Graybeal and Michelle Ferrier leverages the principles of design thinking and vividly describes the objectives and activities of a 3-day workshop, called the social innovation jam. This workshop, which was originally hosted by a university in the southeastern United States, took a problem-solving methodological approach by inciting participants to define, design, and test prototypes of local solutions to address global challenges related to sustainable development. Participants, who were stakeholders across different sectors, such as students, entrepreneurs, designers, or policy advocates from the private and public sectors, were brought together in order to collaborate, innovate, design, and execute social impact ideas by addressing three Sustainable Development Goals framed by the United Nations. Through this event, the host university pronounced its entrepreneurial efforts, connected with several individual members, groups, and entities around its community, and allowed students to bring academic insights into the real world while they cemented their learnings by teaching others.

Critical Perspective on Social Entrepreneurship Education

Through the article titled *Integrating Social Entrepreneurship Literature through Teaching*, Angela Addae and Cheryl Ellenwood posit that social entrepreneurship education remains at its infancy. The course offerings of universities and educational institutions are varied, diverse, and multifaceted in nature. Social entrepreneurship educators rely on their networks and previous subjective experiences while struggling to develop syllabi, pedagogic materials, and teaching approaches toward theory or practical competences. These challenges are augmented by factors such as the rapidly emerging body of literature that crosses several academic disciplines, the continued growth of the social entrepreneurship sector, and the ambiguous and conflicting definitions of social enterprises across a spectrum of legal and financial structures. Through this article, the authors address this lack of cohesion and attempt to bridge this gap across the field. Their essay provides four key threshold concepts (conceptualization and formation, governance, resource access, and legitimacy and accountability), borrowed from the social entrepreneurship literature in order to provide students a broad, yet critical, understanding of the field. These four threshold concepts have been organized and linked to core practical competences that students are expected to acquire in order to execute social business strategies. Consequently, the authors represent a constructive criticism of experiential learning, project-based learning, and design-thinking approaches that are mostly promoted in social entrepreneurship curriculums or programs. Additionally, the authors advocate a holistic development of students by simultaneously highlighting the importance of incorporating theory-driven knowledge

along with practical insights in the classroom. The study encourages instructors to launch in-depth theoretical dialogues and debates with students to facilitate core competency development, to provide a solid foundation, and to generate mental models in order to frame theory-driven practical solutions to social problems. In the process, the authors recommend that instructors iteratively trigger theory-driven experiential learning experiences as well as experiential learning experiences that drive theoretical reflection.

Through the fourth article of this issue, named *Enhancing Social Entrepreneurship Education with Dark Side Theory to Frame Social Enterprises*, Craig Talmage and T. Alden Gassert aim to broaden, deepen, and stimulate critical thinking by providing a rubric, framework, and some possible classroom exercises to enhance students' understanding of dark-side theory within the context of social entrepreneurship. The authors highlight that social entrepreneurial narratives unequivocally support the idea of social enterprises as organizations that create innovative solutions through market-based activities that positively impact society. Social entrepreneurs are, thus, conceptualized as prosocial and heroic individuals that provide practical solutions to grand societal problems. However, through this study, the author advocates the need to engage in discussion about an alternative critical discussion on the role of dark side theory in entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. In order to execute such educational and pedagogic strategies, the article builds upon several examples, frameworks, and exercises that can evoke students to challenge and question social enterprises from a moral or ethical lens. Moreover, by interrogating the universally positive assumptions about social entrepreneurship, educators can push students to critically analyze and reflect upon the different theoretical and practical aspects of social entrepreneurship. Most importantly, by illuminating the myriad dynamics of social entrepreneurship, educators can deter social entrepreneurs or prospective social entrepreneurs from business failure, going to "the dark side," or doing harm in the communities they desire to help.

Conclusion

In the past 20 years, the academic field of social entrepreneurship has risen from obscurity into a respected discipline. We are encouraged by the growing nature of our field, and the increasing level of nuance in academic literature and empirical research on topics relevant to social entrepreneurship. The articles in this special issue add to the discourse in important ways, and our hope is that these contributions will impact both classroom learning and efforts across communities. We look forward with confidence to the progress that will be made in the understanding and application of social entrepreneurship in the years to come.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

ORCID iDs

Rasheda L. Weaver ⬤ https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9931-105X
Christoph Winkler ⬤ https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8174-8392

Note

1. Aspen Institute (2008). Where will they lead? 2008 MBA student attitudes about business and society. Washington, DC.

References

Kickul, J., Gundry, L., Mitra, P., & Berçot, L. (2018). "Designing with purpose: Advocating innovation, impact, sustainability, and scale in social entrepreneurship education". *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy*, *1*(2), 205-221.

Kickul, J., Janssen-Selvadurai, C., & Griffiths, M. D. (2012). "A blended value framework for educating the next cadre of social entrepreneurs". *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *11*(3), 479-493.

Mitra, P., Kickul, J., Gundry, L., & Orr, J. (2019). The rise of hybrids: A note for social entrepreneurship educators. *International Review of Entrepreneurship*, *17*(2), 107-126.

Pache, A., & Chowdhury, I. (2012). "Social entrepreneurs as institutionally embedded entrepreneurs: Toward a new model of social entrepreneurship education". *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *11*(3), 494-510.

Tracey, P., & Phillips, N. (2007). "The distinctive challenge of educating social entrepreneurs: A postscript and rejoinder to the special issue on entrepreneurship education". *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *6*(2), 264-271.

Weaver, R. L. (2020). *"Using experiential education to teach social enterprise and entrepreneurship: A teaching guide"*. Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action.