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SOCIAL? SUSTAINABLE? ENTREPRENEURSHIP? A FIRST LOOK AT MENTAL PROTOTYPING OF "SOCIAL" ENTREPRENEURSHIP (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

SOCIAL? SUSTAINABLE? ENTREPRENEURSHIP? A FIRST LOOK AT MENTAL PROTOTYPING OF “SOCIAL” ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Principal Topic

Entrepreneurship as a field continues to exhibit a breadth that is remarkable in its inclusiveness, even to a fault. Social entrepreneurship appears to be even more inclusive. As scholars, we argue this is a two-edged sword. The field may lack the focus of more established fields, yet the diversity of perspectives is also a golden opportunity to gain deep understanding of social entrepreneurship and associated cognitive processes. This suggests that we should (a) explore the differing mental models underlying differences in how one defines and operationalizes “social entrepreneurship” and (b) that in-depth analysis of social entrepreneurship pedagogy should be quite revealing. We are exploring how that diversity is reflected in significant differences in the mental models evinced by social entrepreneurship instructors. Why do different instructors deploy different methods?

Method

We analyze two data sets that address the mental models of social entrepreneurship instructors in a data base of “social entrepreneurship” syllabi and a large online survey of “social entrepreneurship” instructors from around the world. We content analyze 298 course syllabi using 71 categories. We also analyzed 269 responses from an online survey of social entrepreneurship instructors that explicitly addresses key elements of instructors’ mental models.

Results and Implications

This study reveals a highly detailed map of social entrepreneurship pedagogy globally. We identify clear linkages between the mental models of instructors and the formal content and instructional methods of their courses. We have clearly identified that genuine experiential exercises are critical to advancing students’ entrepreneurial thinking from a more novice mindset to a more expert mindset. Analysis shows that this approach has not been diffused much in social entrepreneurship classes. There were differences between courses labeled as “social” entrepreneurship versus “sustainable” entrepreneurship.

For researchers, it is a golden opportunity to explore how different pedagogical approaches affect the social entrepreneurial mindset. In sum, it appears that like the field of entrepreneurship, understanding how social entrepreneurs think will be both productive intellectually and valuable practically. A better understanding of how they learn to think that way will be an exciting, productive domain for the foreseeable future.

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