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Innovations In Innovation: Developing A Coherent Discipline - Examples From Social Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

Social entrepreneurship is an emerging academic field generating a rapidly expanding literature on a growing range of topics. While the early stage of its development was nourished by many of the rich ideas developed within the "conventional" entrepreneurship literature, this is beginning to change as the community-based and societal entrepreneurship landscape has become a more fundamental part of the collection of entrepreneurship practices. Challenges still remain in forging effective and close relationships between academics, community groups and practitioners. This paper considers the way that the social entrepreneurship community, as a collective of academics and practitioners, is beginning to address this tension.

1 Introduction

This paper will focus on an area of research which though covering much of the nonprofit terrain, is enclosed by slightly different boundaries, that of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship is no longer just a topic within business studies but is in many ways emerging as a new field in its own right. Academic research in social entrepreneurship has attracted a wide range of researchers from an array of other disciplines, bringing with them a variety of models, methods and theories with which to investigate and explain entrepreneurship phenomena. Indeed, academic who specialise in social entrepreneurship research come from a wide variety of perspectives and backgrounds, some of whom have been entrepreneurs, policy makers, or engaged in other forms of entrepreneurship practice. The way social entrepreneurship is investigated by academics, while reflecting some of this diversity, has been limited in its scope by a range of factors related to its status as an emerging discipline. The article addresses some of the reasons likely to explain this phenomenon and how it is changing.

Social entrepreneurship was chosen because it poses a variety of questions concerning research strategies and the relationship between academics and practitioners. Some academics argue that it is a branch of entrepreneurship, which should use the models, theory and techniques developed by mainstream commercial entrepreneurship research, and imitate its field building approach by directing its attention to achieving research outputs of the type research assessments rate highly (Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern 2006). The article instead argues that among the strengths of recent social entrepreneurship research has been the way that some scholars and practitioners have made effective use of its position as a new area of research to develop an open debate concerning new approaches to research, and illustrate the way effective engagement between academics and practitioners is able to contribute to the objectives of field building while serving entrepreneurial practices (Steyaert and Hjorth 2006; Mair and Marti 2006).

2 The "social" of social entrepreneurship

The emergence of entrepreneurship as an academic field or discipline has been analysed by a growing number of commentators (see, for example Gartner 1985; Low and MacMillan 1988; Shane and Venkataraman 2000; Phan 2004; Murphy, Liao and Welsch 2006; Cornelius, Landstrom, and Persson 2006, Reader and Watkins 2006; Zahra 2007). The majority of such evaluations focus primarily, if not exclusively, on the commercial and wealth creating aspects of entrepreneurship. The reason for this tendency is very clear: this relatively narrow focus has accumulated a large literature and more academic analysis than all other entrepreneurship research combined, and this material, as identified as the mainstream, is therefore assumed to be the best place to begin when examining entrepreneurship as a concept. Another feature of this literature is that the individuals publishing their ideas on the topic tend to be university-based academics. This feature is also explicable: academics have a great deal of expertise in different methods, theories and perspectives with which to enable them to analyse data, address problems or develop models that generalise beyond a case in ways that practitioners, even with greater expertise and knowledge, may not have; disseminating ideas is also a central feature of academic practice (see Rynes, Bartunek and Daft 2001: 340-341). In this way, the research literature on entrepreneurship and the issue of field building or developing a discipline, generally begins with a discussion of the emergence and growth of entrepreneurship in the commercial sector, the importance of innovation in exploring opportunities in commercial markets and a discussion of the way academics and/or business managers as different classes of analysis, have tried to make sense of these practices (see, though, Stevenson and Jarillo 1990: 22-23). This implies that to understand entrepreneurship as a series of practices or as an academic field, requires an understanding of narrowly focussed commercial entrepreneurship theories and practices, representing a restricted section of the entrepreneurship terrain. Instead, this article argues that social entrepreneurship is the broader superset, with a range of attributes potentially able to provide a new research paradigm, one derived from exploring the interdependencies of practitioners and academics.

The recent growth in social entrepreneurship as a practice and as a research theme provides an opportunity and some examples with which to present this new research paradigm. This article is not an attempt to reverse the conventional commercial/social entrepreneurship hierarchy, nor does it accept that "the goal is to indicate how entrepreneurship might become social" (Steyaert and Hjorth 2006: 3) nor to shoehorn the concept into existing sociological frameworks (Mair and Marti 2006: 40-42). Instead it begins with the assumption that the "social" is not a confining context or domain, but a way of connecting the elements that are needed for innovation to take place: entrepreneurship is a social practice with or without the social prefix; however, with the social prefix, entrepreneurship can include social change, social theory and social relationships as part of its core research programme.

Before detailing why the position of social entrepreneurship enables it to become the source of innovative concepts and practices for academics and practitioners, it is necessary to analyse the way disciplinary structures, which have served the academic community well in supporting remarkable advances in knowledge production, are also responsible for directing research practices away from potentially enlightening engagement. Contrasting the field building approach of the more established commercial entrepreneurship with that of the social variety will illustrate why developing an alternative field building paradigm is both timely and important.

The literature on the development and evolution of academic disciplines is relatively small, partly because discipline development is not a key problematic of any specific academic discipline. Nevertheless, there are a number of key texts that engage with the process of field-building and discipline development as their central theme (see for example Kuhn 1970; Whitley 1984; Abbott 2001; Becher and Trowler 2001). While these texts present in-depth descriptions of how different types of fields and disciplines have emerged and the factors and pressures shaping this process, a theme this paper will shortly address, many of the descriptions have been treated as though they were prescriptive models or indictors of disciplinary status (see, for example Banville and Landry 1989: 55-56) and some of the descriptions have been interpreted as applying to topics, themes and fields very different in scope than those studies in the literature (Coyner 1983; Craig 1999). Furthermore, discussions of field-building and discipline development in areas as diverse as organisational studies, communications, education studies and marketing (see for example Metzger 1987; Craig 1999; Bridges 2006) use as indicators, targets or measures to support a claim to disciplinary status, the same features Kuhn describes in identifying routine scientific practice – the proliferation of publications, journals, conferences, funding opportunities and the growth of the field's academic community (see in particular Becher and Trowler 2001: 75-95). It does not follow that by imitating the routine scientific practices of one discipline, helps to turn a topic into a full discipline, any more than adding the suffix "ology" to a topic makes it a science. Clarifying this point – and Kuhn's observation – will be crucial in understanding why benchmarking new fields to established disciplines is likely to be counterproductive.

Using the term "normal science," Kuhn describes the research approach used by established scientific disciplines. A discipline develops a paradigm and canon with which to shape the problems for the community of research practitioners to address, demarcating the discipline and drawing in individuals to act as advocates. These advocates and followers are then transformed into a research community, a profession or a discipline as the paradigm that binds them together becomes accepted and gains credibility. This occurs, Kuhn argues, through the formation of journals, societies or specialist groups, which develop the discipline through articles that are directed to their colleagues who accept the paradigm. Normal science is thus a description of the puzzle-solving aspect of scientific research once the research boundaries have been agreed upon. The absence of any real novelty and the scarcity of new concepts developed addressing the foundations, methods, and theories that form a discipline's paradigm, were observed by Kuhn to be a strong indication of a maturing scientific discipline.

If normal science is, as Kuhn suggests, an indication of maturity and professionalism within an established scientific discipline, this does not mean that imitating such a strategy is appropriate or desirable for other fields of research. Indeed, according to Richard Daft and Arie Lewin, in the absence of a normal science approach, researchers and academics have a degree of flexibility which can be more conducive to producing important research findings, but once a paradigm is in position, researchers are trained to rigidly conform to its conventions:

> The boundaries of a paradigm can put the field in an intellectual straitjacket. Research may be generated at a fast pace, but contributions will typically defend the extant point of view, and are unlikely to lead to fundamental new insight. (Daft and Lewin 1990: 2)

The danger, then, is that in pursuit of rapid growth, a field or discipline, by focussing on normal science indicators, could direct research towards inappropriate or secondary issues. This is because the rewards process for academics encourage journal articlelength "slight modification on existing work" outputs, conference "positioning" papers, near-repetition of outputs by researchers, framing projects in accordance with existing research council priorities, overspecialising and marginalising other categories of knowledge, hierarchical (and politically invested) setting of priorities and discourses, and compliance with established conceptual paradigms. There is also evidence to suggest that academic fads, particularly in the social sciences are often the consequence of output-target driven research (see Thrift 1999). The growth in scholarly grey literature and the appearance of ground breaking studies in many areas of research indicate that no intellectual straitjacket is entirely binding, even if the constraints they present are particularly difficult to challenge without the credibility that a track record in research invested in the existing paradigm provides. Nevertheless, credibility to challenge the paradigm will often only be afforded to those who have most to lose by challenging it, while younger academics, a likely source for fresh ideas, know that an academic career depends upon meeting such targets and designed their research accordingly.

The field of entrepreneurship illustrates the appeal of the normal science approach to discipline development and some potential costs. Recent literature examining entrepreneurship scholarship argue that the field is quickly developing a normal science approach to research: by stabilising its topic areas and excluding others, developing into a more exclusively academic community, dominated by a core group of leading authors, and demonstrating a greater specialisation of research (see Cornelelius, Landstom and Persson 2006: 395 and Reader and Watkins 2006: 426-427). While these features, as measured by normal science metrics, have been taken as indicative of the success of mainstream entrepreneurship research strategies, and yet such success seems to coincide with cliques, citation clustering and narrow hegemonic interests that seem to have excluded potential intellectual allies (see Reader and Watkins 2006: 430-432). Such cliques and research clusters indicate less engagement with novel research approaches, greater methodological conformity, and an intellectual distance from non-academic practitioners. This further implies a reduced potential to be innovate in conceptualising the research problematic (Welsch and Maltarich 2004: 60), less willingness to engage with the complex realities from which entrepreneurship emerges (Steyaert and Hjorth 2006: 1-3), and greater readiness to imitate research patterns with perceived successful outcomes, irrespective of their appropriateness (Zahra 2007: 446). Such convergence can quickly lead to research stagnation, as the following observation notes:

> Each August, we (academics) come to talk with each other; during the rest of the year we read each others' papers in our journals and write our own papers so that we may, in turn, have an audience the following August: an incestuous, closed loop. (Hambrick, 1994: 13)

Yet entrepreneurship as a social practice reflects an intellectual landscape where ideas, creativity and innovation are most prized by the practitioners that academics study and form the very subject of research; however, the pragmatic and business oriented side of entrepreneurship might take the research restraints to be a fair price for rapid progress in expanding its rigorous research literature. The meaning of the social prefix of social entrepreneurship is thus of crucial importance. If it taken to imply that social entrepreneurship is a sub-discipline, or topic area of (mainstream commercial) entrepreneurship then it is tied to the research output of the wider discipline, a strategy which has been suggested in recent academic papers (see, for example Thompson, Alvy and Lees 2000; Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern 2006). Social entrepreneurship researchers, though, generally take the social prefix to signify an emphasis on wider objectives and considerations rather than implying a more confined subcategory that feeds from the models, methods and research approach of the more mainstream discipline. Indeed, the pluralism of methods, theories and approaches that social entrepreneurship can afford in the context of a more inclusive research group would seem better equipped to produce innovative ways of understanding the process and practice of entrepreneurship than those approaches that score well when measured by normal science metrics, as I will illustrate in section three. Mainstream commercial entrepreneurship research offer useful resources to social entrepreneurship, but the social prefix means that key social practices of innovation and entrepreneurship can be explored in more sociologically-oriented research but without becoming a branch of sociology. Positioning an emerging field in terms of an existing literature or framework has the danger that the distinctive features of the new field can be lost if the new field merely replicates or imitates the existing research structure. The research restraints which enable rapid progress are therefore being rejected by social entrepreneurship for a different type of advancement in the field, and there are many examples of how researchers are resisting the temptation to imitate. The Daft and Lewin argue that one way to resist this is for researchers to try to extend the conceptual framework with which research is developed as a part of the field building project. They prescribe three strategies, which in turn are able to feed into conventional research practices.

Firstly they emphasise the need to undertake research with a design orientation. By this they refer to research which is both descriptive and prescriptive, examining enough data to develop a theoretical narrative able to relate key variables into a coherent and convincing way, one willing to engage with competing concepts while striving “for relevance and for new insights” (Daft and Lewin 1990: 4). On this they conclude:

> The important point for individual scholars, however, is to take on design problems as a path to organizational insights that will ultimately produce new theory valuable to the field of organization studies as well as to practitioners (Daft and Lewin 1990: 5)

Secondly, they express the need to focus on equivocal problems. By this Daft and Lewin refer to problems which reflect multiple or conflicting interpretation of events:

> The approach we are advocating can be described as symbol creation research, which is in contrast to symbol communication research [for which] the meaning of concepts has already been agreed on and is relatively clear. Symbolic creation research, on the other hands, involves the creation of new grammar, new variables, and new definitions, thus spawning new paradigms (Daft and Lewin 1990: 5)

Finally, they suggest that following heretical research methods is a way of loosening the negative restrictions they associate with normal science. Such methods, they argue, are important in that they are able to gain organisational insights and alter the research method mix and that if the goal of research is to generate new knowledge, "then outlier research…can be the source of interesting problems and important design implications" (Daft and Lewin 1990: 6). They discuss case studies as such a method and conclude:

> Building theory on the basis of in-depth understanding of a few cases is different from the traditional theory-testing goal of statistical rigor, parsimony and generalizability. However, this type of research can provide the genesis for new theory that may spawn further research that uses traditional methods (Daft and Lewin 1990: 6)

This paper argues that social entrepreneurship research has shown itself to be receptive to these types of suggestion. Using examples from recent research, the article will illustrate that social entrepreneurship studies are, as Mair and Marti argue, ideally situated to develop a new field building approach:

> We believe that social entrepreneurship deserves considerable attention as a field of research. It has enormous potential to inform and enhance the field of entrepreneurship, as it provides an excellent opportunity to challenge and rethink central concepts and assumptions (Mair and Marti 2006: 42)

This requires, though, that the social prefix functions as a force to make such investigations more inclined to follow knowledge transfer objectives as part of its research agenda, instead of focusing exclusively on traditional normal science indicators. The following section will provide some examples of this refocusing.

3 Social Entrepreneurship Practices

The previous section concluded that the prefix “social” gives social entrepreneurship research a special status on the basis that it contains all the features of mainstream commercial entrepreneurship, but its landscape includes a wider variety of organisational types, networks and individuals, each of which is striving to make an impact undertaking innovation with a social purpose or developing social processes of innovation. This landscape offers social entrepreneurship researchers a powerful resource for engaging in collaboration, and developing case studies, reflective essays, and inductive theory building, research most likely to resonate with practitioners. This section will illustrate ways in which these resources are being capitalised on by social entrepreneurship research and that Daft and Lewin’s three principal suggestions for extending the conceptual framework for developing research, supported by Rynes, Bartunek and Daft’s call to explore the "full range of knowledge creation techniques" (Rynes, Bartunek and Daft (2001:349), are already a part of its research agenda. This section will briefly illustrate this with two examples; the first example examines some of the key processes that ground entrepreneurship locally, while the second examines the way social entrepreneurial campaigns have used iconic images and iconic individuals to create resonances with their objectives to sell products, raise awareness and leverage resource reallocation. The two research projects were chosen as merely representative of the different ways social entrepreneurship research contribute to new knowledge creation. They also demonstrate that social entrepreneurship has a willingness to develop theoretical narratives, tackle problems which reflect multiple and conflicting interpretation, and use research methods which, in other fields, might be considered heretical. Additionally, they use academic frameworks to contribute knowledge of direct use to practitioners, frameworks which can in each case be modified to apply to (wholly) commercial entrepreneurship contexts.

The first example, Monica Lindgren and Johann Packendorff's study of RockParty, addresses the tension of maintaining the flexibility of innovation while seeking legitimacy for the innovator. The research illustrates the way both design orientation and symbolic creation, two features identified as non-normal science strategies by Daft and Lewin, can be developed within a relatively simple case study.

RockParty is a music club employing 44 local people which, with the help of a network of volunteers, organises concerts, festivals and events in the town of Hultsfred, Sweden. Lindgren and Packendorff (2006) use the (often conflicting) narratives constructed by interviewees to describe the dynamics of participation in RockParty's various social entrepreneurship processes. The research focuses, in particular, on examining the emergence of ideas, problems, and perceived obstacles in the collective experience of coordinating Hultsfred rock festival, a for-profit festival attracting tens of thousand of visitors to the region. The research was intended to reconceptualise social entrepreneurship practices as boundary work i.e. show examples of when boundaries, demarcations, and other divisions between fields of knowledge are produced, shaped, promoted and critiqued such that the delineations have great importance for the individuals concerned. Lindgren and Packendorff describe their research as an examination of how social entrepreneurship action can be embedded in local history and tradition while at the same time as it creates tensions and challenges the very boundaries of ideology and action that such local history produces:

> the net process is a complex web of reciprocal interactions between culturally embedded actors closely connected to each other…something 'in becoming', a movement in which pluralism and emancipation from structures are consequences (Lindgren and Packendorff 2006: 211)

The research does not, though, limit itself to describing the interactions of participants but concludes by drawing out from the range of narratives related to the Hultsfred festival, Rock Party and the local community, a list of the successful and unsuccessful appropriations of values and practices, for example:

> The question of deviation is central to the actors' conceptions of themselves in relation to society. They cherish their own self-image as deviators as a kind of prerequisite for their success, that is the entrepreneurial processes imply a co-construction of both the content of the process and its relation to context (Lindgren and Packendorff 2006: 224)

Lindgren and Packendorff use these examples of success and failure in order to identify the boundaries which are being constructed and to make recommendations to new entrepreneurship-driven organisations in addressing the complexity, heterogeneity and history dependence of the boundaries they identify within the narratives the research observe/construct. The conclusions of the research, while derived from specifically social entrepreneurship research, raise the type of identity issues and tensions that apply equally to exclusively profit-driven entrepreneurial organisations that act as a source of new practices cross appropriated into communities, an area under researched in the mainstream literature.

The second example is a comparative case study of two campaigns, Jubilee 2000 and Make Poverty History, both of which are examples of social entrepreneurship and social campaigns (see Holt 2006; Haynes 2007). The research analyses the use of "iconic" imagery and individuals, social networks, and entrepreneurship practices in building a social campaign directed towards innovative methods of selling branded products as part of a larger awareness raising initiative. The research, developed by Douglas Holt and Paul Haynes in 2005 and 2006, used ethnographic interviews with a wide range of campaign leaders, newly converted activists and sympathetic but non-active supporters of the two campaigns. The research used in-depth analysis of the interview data supported by an interpretive reading of the images used throughout the campaigns to examine how branding and social movement concepts were used in building each campaign. Each campaign had identifiable social entrepreneurship characteristics – they developed ways of selling products such as wristbands, scarves, badges, books and DVDs, they developed services which were sold or "exchanged" for awareness-raising opportunities, developed new social entrepreneurship organisations (Product Red; One; JubileeSouth etc) and developed methods to leverage billions of dollars from decision making bodies, such as G8, the world trade organisation, the united nations and individual governments in debt relief, aid, and changes in the terms of trade.

The research specifically focussed on the autobiography of the interviewees to detect features which would explain why specific images and messages resonate with some individuals, while they have no resonance or emotional impact on other people with otherwise similar values. Lifestyle choices, consumer culture and the interpretation of icon mythologies by the interviewees were a key part of analysing how a campaign image or message resonates with the different perspectives held by interviewees and in developing interpretive theory to explain these differences. The research, then, is an example of theory-building from an in-depth analysis of outlier cases, one which develops a prescriptive dimension derived from grounded theory emergent from detailed description of the two cases. Finally, the research can be seen as tackling the problem of identifying reasons for social entrepreneurship branding success and failure derived from a new paradigm for social entrepreneurship, social movement campaigns, *and* branding, i.e. rethinking the brand as a socio-cultural entity, while rejecting cognitive, emotional and viral branding models for promoting social entrepreneurship campaigns. The research concludes that commercial entrepreneurial campaigns without any social objectives can develop similar strategies of personalising, and developing ritual action to evoke, the brand's myth. In this way, the means by which a social movement's brand is able to build a following can be applied to the promotion of mainstream commercial entrepreneurial goods and services (see Holt 2006; Haynes 2007).

These two studies are representative of the way social entrepreneurship research has resisted taking a normal science approach and the importance of developing studies which engage with practitioners and address problems practitioners themselves identify as important. In addition, they also reflect the type of issues that researchers can learn from in developing their academic field. The issues that confront social entrepreneurs, as illustrated in the two case studies – working with multiple bottom lines/objectives, building partnerships with diverse stakeholders, enrolling advocates, identifying and developing innovations, contestable/changing goals, developing expert knowledge – are the same type of issues that confront field building academics and are likely to be the conditions of shared experience on the basis of which engagement can be expanded. While not unique to social entrepreneurship, these features are a key to explain why, combined with other features, it is able to find a field building approach that emphasises different qualities and features than those associated with a normal science approach.

The characteristics of social entrepreneurship which make it a landscape for the research freedoms, illustrated by the two case studies, make it an excellent candidate for building further on collaboration opportunities between academics and practitioners. Mair and Marti allude to the possibility that social movement tactics could be applied to social entrepreneurship (Mair and Marti 2006: 41) and, indeed, a number of academics have examined academic disciplines in relation to some features of social movement theory (see for example Harty and Shove 2004; Rojas 2006; Johnston 2006; Steyaert and Hjorth 2006). These possibilities, though, need to be elaborated further in order to describe why they might be paradigm altering and the reflexive nature of the two case studies outlined helps to illustrate this. Conceptualising field building as a type of social movement is appropriate for social entrepreneurship, as drawing academics and practitioners together would provide additional capabilities able to address issues which are essentially shared across the whole territory, an issue which is less relevant for traditional disciplines. Detailing why such an academic social movement might work in practice for social entrepreneurship on the basis of existing pressures is crucial if such possibilities are to be critically evaluated. Using Becher and Trowler's way of classifying the intellectual landscape, it becomes clearer why a social movements approach for furthering social entrepreneurship research and development can be an effective counterpoint to the normal science approach to field building.

Becher and Trowler, using an extensive amount of empirical data gathered in twelve disciplines, argue that social and institutional characteristics of knowledge communities, which they characterise as tribes, impact on the epistemological properties of the knowledge they produce (Becher and Trowler 2001). They describe the relationship between disciplinary tribes using a range of geographical metaphors: disciplines are domains, specialities are fields, new ideas are frontiers or territories, which are separated along cognitive (hard/soft and pure/applied) and social (convergent/divergent and urban/rural) axes, with (moveable) boundaries separating these domains. In analysing university culture, they argue that disciplinary status identity can be influenced by the way universities are funded, how faculties and departments are structured or how the budgets of funding councils are planned; however, in addition to these factors, they also state that the community active in contributing to an area of research also contributes to setting the disciplinary boundaries. Enrolling new practitioners and developing a cycle of research reproduction, reinforce these boundaries and help in constituting the discipline as a credible body of knowledge. Becher and Trowler's analysis therefore indicates that academic movements, in the form of knowledge communities, have indeed made an impact on the disciplinary structures. In addition, they suggest that the nature of the community determines the field building strategy. Close-knit communities, clustered in close communication, with demarcated problems centred on few topics and quick solutions, which Becher and Trowler term "urban" (Becher and Trowler 2001: 106-108) tend to field build through limited means. The most significant of these is by developing a profile based on disseminated research findings in a small number of journals, concentrated into specialist articles with shared terminology, models, methods and conceptions, which the community applies to their problem solving agenda. Leading mainstream commercial entrepreneurship academics seem to conceptualise their discipline in this way (see Shane and Venkataraman 2000: 217) Alternatively, those in dispersed communities, with multiple topics, comprised of problems which are less delineated (i.e. "rural scenarios") tend to set aside time for discussing definitions, justifying the research as relevant and explaining the key concepts and assumptions to those beyond an immediately identifiable research community, disseminating information in inclusive ways, which also reflect its wider scope. The strategies adopted under urban scenarios seem to fit very closely with Kuhn's notion of normal science. This would make sense for exactly the type of disciplines which Kuhn was exclusively interested, i.e. in Becher and Trowler's terms, pure and applied hard science, centred on the converging and urban typology. Social entrepreneurship, though, fits the softer side of the disciplinary landscape and thus the strategies outlined under rural scenarios seem entirely appropriate, in terms of Becher and Trowler's analysis. Therefore continuing with a strategy based on a "rural" conception of field building, centred on the "soft" side of the academic landscape gives more coherence to an academic movement based on inclusion and directed towards analysing types of practice.

In additional to its position on the intellectual landscape, there is another important characteristic which makes social entrepreneurship unusual, and potentially paradigm changing. It simultaneously has the features of an undeveloped and intellectually flexible field of research, while benefiting from the advocacy, sponsorship and drive of powerful practitioners able to champion the type of knowledge transfer which is already engaging senior academics and leading practitioners in ways that resemble a movement, even amongst elite research institutions. Indeed, the second of the two research projects outlined was conceived and undertaken at Oxford's Skoll Centre, a research centre which employs more practitioners than academics. Furthermore, the findings were first disseminated to the Skoll World Forum, an academic conference which attracts hundreds of practitioners, many of whom present their work to a mixed audience of academics and practitioners. The importance of powerful entrepreneurs turned social entrepreneurs is still an emerging factor in the development of academic research, and unlike mainstream entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurs and their institutions and foundations have as their mission to work towards collectively addressing exigent problems, with academics perceived as having a practical role:

> We must be humble and mindful in our actions and words. We seek and heed the counsel of outside voices. (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation 1999)

4 Conclusions

Justification for claims over research territory and, by implication, claims to disciplinary status, are typically measured by their exponents, in journal articles, conferences, research council funding, processing graduate students quickly and departments or centres. Such measures are easy to quantify as research outputs and/or demonstrate the strength of a research community and, through peer review, they preserve minimum standards. As indicators or measures, they give and important indication of the investment in specific ideas, methods and topics, equated with the values of a group of academics and related bodies. Researchers and academics must continue to strive to disseminate ideas in academic journals, teach specialist courses, bid for research funding and organise specialist conferences, as this builds effective relationships between academics, both in social entrepreneurship and in related fields. This must not, though be at the expense of reducing the scope and significance of the research. In addition, a departmental emphasis upon publication in academic journals as the measure of value is likely to reduce the amount of time academics spend engaging with practitioners and reduce the relevance of research outputs to a practitioner audience, with interaction tending to be more instrumental or strategic. Measures, indicators and incentives are important in maintaining standards in academia, though the way in which indicators are sometimes being used as instruments is, as Daft and Lewin indicate, often counterproductive. Research assessment exercises, such as the RAE in the UK, provide useful data, but as determinants of objectives they have been criticised for limiting opportunities for practitioner-oriented, and inter disciplinary-oriented, researchers, lack of long term strategic planning, the likelihood of creative researchers opting out of academia all together, among other criticisms (see Elton 2000: 280-281). The consequence is that with fewer intermediaries and with younger researchers guided away from such practitioner engagement, the gap between academics and practitioners is in many cases widened, when the benefits of narrowing the gap would seem to be of mutual benefit. As Elton notes: “academic traditionalism in research…has discouraged new developments and interdisciplinary research, and have isolated researchers from practitioners” (Elton 2000: 279).

A normal science strategy may help in producing solid agreement on how to get an abundance of answers, acquire support to do so, and avenues for disseminating them, but at a tremendous cost in exactly the areas that academic research should be contributing to knowledge, i.e. in identifying key problems and developing applications in practice, while developing and investigating new concepts and theories, which in turn enable the complex landscape to be more effectively explained.

Such a divorce from practitioners and overemphasis on normal science measures can have serious consequences in developing appropriate outputs for practitioners or developing useful, creative and stimulating debates, as Gareth Morgan argues:

> The control systems developed by journals and university departments alike exert a confining if well-meaning hold on the jugular of scholarship, which threatens to strangle the development of new possibilities. (Morgan 1990: 29)

The alternative to this strong grip is not to internalise the stranglehold, but as in the case of some strands of social entrepreneurship, to work closely and carefully with entrepreneurs to develop meaningful and thorough cases which explore their actual practices, as the RockParty and Jubilee 2000/Make Poverty History cases illustrate. Further, there is the need to ensure engagement with the experience and knowledge of practitioners feeds into the research itself, as seems to be a fundamental strategy in some of the key social entrepreneurship research networks, as outlined in recent collections of articles and case studies by researchers and practitioners (see Young 2006; O’Connor 2006).

By building on the existing inclusiveness that social entrepreneurship has so far managed to retain, rather than transferring and applying mainstream commercial entrepreneurship models and methods en mass, social entrepreneurship can innovate in developing methods, models and theories which themselves can form the basis of mutual benefit to both the commercial oriented and social oriented research patterns.

Building a strong and inclusive academic movement, one which can thrive on developing and implementing a pluralist, and no less rigorous, research agenda, strengthens its potential for collaboration in which both orientation types can benefit, in much the same way as the importance of the mutual benefits between nonprofits and commercial businesses has enabled numerous cases of effective and beneficial engagement (Korngold 2005). A social movement approach, then, in contrast with the normal science approach, is a collective, inclusive and emergent process, unfolding an agenda that resonates with the group's interests and concerns. Understanding the entrepreneurship phenomenon in its myriad forms requires asking research questions which policy makers, the nonprofit sector *and* academics benefit from answering; however, without greater engagement, some of the more innovative features of social entrepreneurship will remain under researched.

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