
Preface

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Entrepreneurship is an important source of wealth and job creation in the economy. It often results in innovative ideas that challenge existing processes and procedures (Audretsch and Link, 2011). The proverbial ‘thinking outside the box’ often associated with entrepreneurship can lead people to explore opportunities outside the scope of traditional approaches and geographies. In particular, social entrepreneurship often takes the form of initiatives linking local and global resources to provide solutions to social problems. Because of its nature, social entrepreneurship is capable of driving the global movements and flows of workers, products and services that affect economic activity, social welfare and quality of life (Alvord et al., 2004).

Social entrepreneurs play an important role in attempting to solve challenging social issues (e.g., improving quality of life and encouraging economic development). Social entrepreneurs often look for the best ways to satisfy social needs. Therefore, they must use resources, human capital and social capital creatively and innovatively (Evans and Tzavara, 2012).

Since the onset of the current global economic crisis, many governments have been forced to cut public grants and spending. Such cuts have had a devastating impact on knowledge-intensive business services, and entrepreneurship may have a new and even

more important role in helping to reinvigorate economic markets (Thornton et al., 2011). In some ways, entrepreneurs are catalysts – economic agents – that supply these public services, reducing the burden on governmental agencies that are no longer able to maintain traditionally high levels of funding for social programs. In fact, the solutions for supporting social services may look very different as entrepreneurs continue to shape the landscape, both locally and globally (Flammer, 2013). To reflect the great need for new, promising ideas on the topic of social entrepreneurship, we have deliberately opted for a broad mix of contributions.

The contribution by Carraher, Welsh and Svilokos discusses the ‘Validation of a measure of social entrepreneurship’. In today’s society, the role of social entrepreneurship is rapidly growing in both non-profit and for-profit businesses. However, although social entrepreneurship is progressing globally, the literature lacks a standardised measure of this phenomenon. The authors use a sample of social entrepreneurs and general entrepreneurs to test an 11-item measure of social entrepreneurship and thereby examine the reliability and validity of a new social entrepreneurship measure.

The next contribution by Grimmer, Miles and Grimmer explores ‘The performance advantage of business planning for small and social retail enterprise in an economically disadvantaged region’. The purpose of this paper is to explore the interrelationship between the level of planning undertaken in small and social retail enterprises – either organised as for-profit or as social enterprises – and the ability of these organisations to accumulate and deploy resources, with sales turnover as a measure of economic performance.

The following contribution is by Spais and Beheshti and is entitled ‘The evolution of social marketing and social entrepreneurship education in business and management schools: conceptions, misconceptions and trends’. This study examines how social marketing and social entrepreneurship courses have evolved over the last ten academic years (2004/05–2014/15) and envisages what the future holds for such courses.

The contribution by Ben Letaifa analyses ‘How social entrepreneurship emerges, develops and internationalises during political and economic transitions’. Using longitudinal analysis, this study describes how social entrepreneurship emerges and develops. The study presents analysis of qualitative data and aids scholars’ comprehension of how social value is created and how social entrepreneurs mobilise an ecosystem with a range of actors.

In their research, Mas-Tur and Bolufer explore ‘Different innovation policies for different types of innovative companies? Social implications’. Young innovative companies (YICs) have an innovative potential that makes them key drivers of economic growth and social development, yet the literature on innovation and entrepreneurship policy has yet to deepen its analysis of YICs. To fill this gap in the literature, this study provides empirical evidence of the special features of YICs versus the full scope of innovative firms, within the context of innovation policy and social entrepreneurship.

The final contribution, by Castro and Cepeda, addresses ‘Social capital, absorptive capacity and entrepreneurial behaviour in an international context’. The research builds on the idea that a deeper understanding of the processes whereby social capital affects learning is necessary to encourage knowledge acquisition and exploitation and understand how this affects the entrepreneurial orientation (EO) of the focal actor, furthering its international expansion. The issue of social capital acquires special

relevance in the internationalisation process. The managerial implications of the study will help managers to recognise that future market opportunities emanate largely from IORs.

From a global perspective, social entrepreneurs transform communities across political and national boundaries. Social entrepreneurs create ways to connect international resources, navigating across cultures, policy contexts, economic conditions and political situations that vary from region to region (Carrasco-Monteagudo and Buendía-Martínez, 2013). Given the existence of such regional differences, social entrepreneurs that operate on a global scale must innovate across the spectrum of society and innovation processes. Furthermore, they must devise strategies that will ultimately resolve major challenges and thereby improve the quality of life for very diverse sets of people in a range of social contexts (Godar et al., 2005).

The current special issue represents an important contribution to research findings in the field of social entrepreneurship. This special issue will stimulate research in this topic and will lead to a better understanding and modelling of global knowledge.

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