Exploring social entrepreneurship education from a Web-based pedagogical perspective

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

Article history:
Available online 28 September 2012

Keywords:
Social entrepreneurship education
Web-based content analysis

A B S T R A C T

As Internet has evolved itself as a powerful media for communication, and with the proliferation of Internet contents and survey methodologies, Internet-based researches such as Web-based surveys are common today. The World-Wide Web presents researchers with a powerful tool for the collection of data and the Web-based survey provided us with an efficient and valid method to code the data compared with costs associated with conventional surveying methods. Whereas many research studies use quantitative methodology for Web-based survey; this study employed a Web-based content analysis method to the theme how social entrepreneurship was taught in business school. On the basis of the Beyond Grey Pinstripes (BGP) Global 100 List: 2009–2010 of business schools, with an emphasis on environmental, social, and ethical complexities, we analyzed the contents of social entrepreneurship education, teaching methods, professional specialties of the teachers, and grading of the curricula. The results show that the courses offered by most of these business schools had the required social entrepreneurship characteristics. The arrangement of their programs and their teaching methods, which followed the principle of learning by doing, not only enabled the students to balance theory and practice, but also supported the students in creating social enterprises.

1. Introduction

Survey researchers have been using various modes and methods, such as mail, telephone, and e-mail, to collect data. As the number of Internet users in the world are rapid growth every year, the system of interlinked, hypertext documents known as the World Wide Web has grown to be the main content delivery system on the Internet; HTML documents contained text, links, and graphics, Web pages have united sound, animations, and video; they have incorporated user-interface, user content, and user–user interactivity features (Herring, 2010). Since the multi characteristics of Internet, Web surveys as a new mode of conducting surveys via Websites have gained significant popularity. Compared with traditional modes of surveys, Web surveys have several advantages, including shorter transmitting time, lower delivery cost, more design options, and less data entry time (Fan & Yan, 2010). Due to the purpose of this study we are interested in how social entrepreneurship education is taught in business school worldwide. The way of efficient survey would be Web-based quantitative methodology for us. Reviewed the evolution of Web-based content analysis, the first application of content analysis was the Church conducted a systematic examination of the content of early newspapers; then 1940s and 1950s that content analysis became a well-established paradigm (Berelson, 1952; Berelson & Lazarsfeld, 1948; Krippendorff, 1980). In the near feature, content analysis techniques have also been used increasingly to analyze content on the Internet (Herring, 2010).

Therefore, the aims of the research are set forth as below:

1. To explore related literature, in order to understand the development of the Web survey and how it facilitates academic research.
2. To apply Web-based content analysis to the social entrepreneurship syllabi provided on the Web pages of the business schools included in the Beyond Grey Pinstripes (BGP) Global 100 List: 2009–2010.

This study followed the steps of traditional approach in Web-based content analysis; McMillan (2000) suggested the five steps, (1) The researcher formulates a research question and/or hypotheses. (2) The researcher selects a sample. (3) Categories are defined for coding. (4) Coders are trained, code the content, and the reliability of their coding is checked. (5) The data collected during the coding process are analyzed and interpreted.

On the basis of the Beyond Grey Pinstripes (BGP) Global 100 List: 2009–2010 of business schools, with an emphasis on...
Section 2 provides a detailed introduction to the Web-based surveying social enterprises. The subsequent sections of this paper are organized as follows. Section 2 provides a detailed introduction to the Web-based survey, social entrepreneurship, and social entrepreneurship education. Section 3 describes the method of Web-based content analysis and the process of collecting syllabi from school Websites. Section 4 then presents the results of the analysis of social entrepreneurship education. Finally, Section 6 constitutes the discussion and conclusion.

2. Literature review

2.1. Web surveys

The system of interlinked, hypertext documents known as the World Wide Web has grown to become the main content delivery system on the Internet, and the number of Internet users is increasing rapidly every year (Herring, 2010). This development has also affected academic institutions: not only has the number of Web pages presenting academic institutions increased, but more scientists are also creating their own individual Web pages (Dumont & Frindte, 2005). A Web-based survey methodology developed when mail and telephone surveys reached maturity, and researchers began to utilize the Internet as a survey medium; research into this methodology has demonstrated a wide variation in rates, speed, and quality of response (Cobanoglu, Warde, & Moreo, 2001). In comparison with traditional mail and fax surveys, the primary advantages of the Web-based survey are efficiency, speed, and low cost. The cost of mailing questionnaires is eliminated, the cost of coding respondents’ data is reduced, the data collection process is accelerated, human error is minimized, and respondents in different geographic areas are reached more effectively (Cobanoglu & Cobanoglu, 2003). The benefits of using Web-based surveys have won significant popularity for this new mode of gathering data (Fan & Yan, 2010).

The purpose of the present study was to understand how social entrepreneurship education is taught in business school worldwide. The most efficient form of survey was therefore a Web-based quantitative methodology, specifically Web-based content analysis. According to Herring (2010), content analysis is an established social science methodology, which broadly includes, as Baran (2002) suggested, “the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the content of communication”. As communication media, Websites and Web pages are particularly suitable for content analysis (Weare & Lin, 2000). Indeed, content analysis was one of the first methodologies used in Web analysis (Bates & Lu, 1997), and has been employed increasingly since, albeit not always in traditional ways (McMillan, 2000).

2.2. Social entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship satisfies unmet social needs, that is, the problems in society that the government is powerless to solve. Social entrepreneurship refers to the creation of positive social change, regardless of the structures or processes through which it is achieved (Dees, 1998a; Dees, 1998b). The process of social entrepreneurship refers to innovation activities with a social objective in the for-profit sector (Dees & Anderson, 2003). It involves reconfiguring resources in order to achieve a specific social objective (Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2004; Bornstein, 2004; Pearce, 2003). Moreover, social entrepreneurship is an effective mechanism for generating value in societal, economic, and environmental forms (Murphy & Coombes, 2009). Previous research has shown that the objectives and responsibilities of social entrepreneurship are clear; however, the debate on how to operate a social enterprise continues. A social enterprise can earn income through subsidies from the government or from foundations, and through personal donations; income could also come from various products produced, community service, recycling of waste, fair trade, etc. (Tracey & Phillips, 2007). A further source of funding is social venture capital, which responds to the growth of social entrepreneurship and the needs of social entrepreneurs (Miller & Wesley II, 2010). Social enterprise has to be characterized by aspects of general enterprise together with the mission of achieving a social objective. It offers a new way to do business that is enriched by a social purpose. It has attracted growing interest from policymakers, young people, entrepreneurs, funders, and established businesses (Leadbeater, 2007).

Further, the characteristics of social entrepreneurship are multi-dimensional and include opportunity recognition, risk tolerance, innovativeness, and resourcefulness (Alword et al., 2004; Gartner, 1988; Mintzberg, 1991; Singh, 2001; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990). In addition to these characteristics of social entrepreneurship, a social enterprise has the challenges of management accountability, double bottom line (social and commercial objective) (Tracey & Phillips, 2007), and triple bottom line (financial, social, and environmental) (Murphy & Coombes, 2009). Social entrepreneurs have a stronger sense of ethics and their mission is to deal with all stakeholders: they are also required to be determined, innovative, and resourceful. Mort, Weerawardena, and Carnegie (2003) described the social entrepreneur as “entrepreneurially virtuous”; according to Dees (2005), an entrepreneur focuses on social change instead of profit as the goal, and approaches this goal with an entrepreneurial spirit, one of determination, innovation, and resourcefulness. Peredo and McLean (2006) stated that entrepreneurs aim—either exclusively or in some prominent manner—to create social value of some kind through innovation and by tolerating risk and declining to accept limitations in the available resources. Mair, Battilana, and Cardens (2012) identified four “ideal type” models of social entrepreneurship, based on the predominant form of capital utilized in each case: political, human, economic, or social. Their study links each of the four models to different logics of justification, and refers to them as principles that act as justifications for the proposed solution.

Social entrepreneurial opportunities can be derived from emergent needs or longstanding inefficiencies, such as pollution, low-efficiency activities, recycling of wastes, green energy, public transportation, and banking facilities in rural areas (Austin, Gutierrez, & Ogliastri, 2006; Tracey & Phillips, 2007). Corner and Ho (2010) identified a pattern across all three cases, which they termed “opportunity development.” This pattern involves the nourishment and advancement of entrepreneurs’ ideas for social value creation, and suggests an organic process, whereby ideas take shape over time. Within opportunity development, furthermore, innovative ideas for value creation, and notions of how to implement these ideas, occur relatively simultaneously and in a recursive fashion. In general, social entrepreneurs must be adept at grabbing opportunities, operating social enterprises, dealing with managerial issues and stakeholders, and balancing financial, environmental, and social objectives.
2.3. Social entrepreneurship education

With the increase in the number of social enterprises, more social entrepreneurs are entering business schools to learn the skills and competencies required to build sustainable businesses (Tracey & Phillips, 2007). In response to this trend, business schools have established social entrepreneurship centers/institutes and have developed a series of programs and courses for developing a holistic social entrepreneurship education.

The primary objective of this study was to examine how social entrepreneurship is taught in business schools. Jones, Warner, and Kiser (2010) suggested that the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship has gained new impetus and is flourishing within society as a whole and within higher education in particular. However, questions remain about where social entrepreneurship programs should be situated within the academy, i.e., do they belong in business schools, alongside entrepreneurship education? Or are they more suited to inclusion among the social sciences? Is social entrepreneurship an interdisciplinary or a multidisciplinary field of study? Dees (2006) indicated the problems of social entrepreneurship education. First, who will teach these courses? There is no clearly defined path for a training faculty to follow in teaching social entrepreneurship. Second, business schools still consider social entrepreneurship a practice, not a discipline. Third, what brings students to the classroom? It is not merely to learn about earned-income strategies. Students want to know whether the organizations they are interested in are engaged in innovative, creative ways to tackle social problems. What attract students is the innovation as well as the willingness to look across sector boundaries for creative solutions. Dees (2006) reported that most business schools still address social issues by discussing the management of nonprofit organizations as social enterprises. Nonprofit management strategies increasingly include what were traditionally for-profit concepts, including earned-income strategies. Nonprofit management should increasingly include what were traditionally for-profit concepts and earned-income strategies. But from the points of Dees, the social entrepreneurship coursework and extracurricular activities are rarely connected to the mainstream, for-profit, business training of the rest of the MBA program (Dees, 2006).

According to Smith, Barr, Barbosa, and Kickul (2008), the design of social entrepreneurship education should be such that students learn what social ventures are and the extent to which they exist in today’s marketplace. Students must understand that social entrepreneurial ventures are primarily concerned with social value creation (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006). Moreover, students need to know that the resources necessary to achieve an organization’s social mission can come from many different places, including philanthropic foundations, government subsidies, and private donations, and earned-income (for-profit) activities. Social ventures take a variety of forms (Doherty & Thompson, 2006). Educating students on the concept of multiple bottom lines is necessary for the success of social enterprises. Finally, students must learn that social enterprises are answerable to multiple stakeholders, as are other institutions. However, because of the social mission of these social ventures, there is at least one additional group of stakeholders, namely, those who are impacted by the social mission of the organization.

Regarding the sustainability issue of social entrepreneurship education, Bonnet, Quist, Hoogwater, Spans, and Wehrmann (2006) suggested the integration of sustainability and entrepreneurship in terms of the triple-P principle (people, profit, planet), and discuss how to incorporate it pragmatically in the key elements of a business plan: business idea, mission, and strategy; context, stakeholder, and market analysis; marketing; production; organization and management; finance and reporting. Tracey and Phillips (2007) suggested an integrated approach to social entrepreneurship education, which would involve the weaving of social entrepreneurship topics, cases, and readings into traditional courses, the development of a social entrepreneurship speaker series, the development of teaching cases based on actual social enterprises (by the students), the introduction of social enterprise business plan assignments and social enterprise consulting projects, and the creation of opportunities for social enterprise internships. Fargion, Gevorgianni, and Lieve (2011) explored the potential of using active, experimental learning methods in an international environment, and of creating a situation wherein participants were confronted with “real world” problems, so that they could develop entrepreneurial skills. Gundlach and Zivnuska (2010) further pointed out that teaching social entrepreneurship and sustainability through an experiential learning approach can be more effective than using the traditional, lecture-based method. Experiential learning enables students to create and experience a passion for the subject independently, thereby provisioning them with the motivational and emotional resources they may need to be successful in the future.

The next section describes the dimensions of social entrepreneurship education, and discusses the questions and suggestions related to social entrepreneurship education. The survey based on the BGP Global 100 List: 2009–2010 investigated the arrangement of the programs, content of the courses, specialties of the teachers, teaching methods, grading of performance, score weight, etc. The results of the survey were expected to provide a clearer picture of the state of social entrepreneurship education.

3. Methods

Instead of an opinion-based questionnaire survey, we adopted a Web-based content analysis method to collect factual data. The Web-based content analysis provided us with an efficient and valid method to code the data from the Websites of various business schools. Navarro (2008), Wu (2007) and Wu, Huang, Kuo, and Wu (2010) ran Web-based content analyses instead of questionnaire surveys for time and cost efficiency.

We separated the research process into two steps:

1. To utilize the Beyond Grey Pinstripes (BGP) biennial report, which focuses on the social, ethical, and environmental aspects of business schools.
2. To collect and analyze social entrepreneurship-related business courses offered by business schools included in the Beyond Grey Pinstripes (BGP) biennial report.

For the sample selection, we followed the Beyond Grey Pinstripes (BGP) biennial report that focuses on the social, ethical, and environmental aspects of business schools. The BGP reports provide a sound representation of the curriculum of various business schools and these reports have been included in various reports (Evans & Marcal, 2005; Schoenfeldt, McDonald, & Youngblood, 1991).

The primary objective was to provide a holistic picture of the current state of social entrepreneurship education on the basis of an exploratory empirical content analysis of the world’s major business schools that focus on social entrepreneurship education. We used the BGP Global 100 List: 2009–2010 to investigate the arrangement of programs, courses, and curriculum in each school as well as to verify the relationship between social entrepreneurship education and the development of the characteristics of social entrepreneurship.

Of the 100 schools surveyed, 17 schools had curricula that focused on social entrepreneurship education, while the curricula
of 21 schools included entrepreneurship education; 68 schools had both kinds of curricula. That is, the curricula of 85 schools (85%) included social entrepreneurship education. The statistics in Table 1 show a sample with high representativeness and its relevance for our study.

The initial survey involved running a content analysis on the Web pages of business schools. The items we coded from the Web pages were the social entrepreneurship center/institute, level of the students (undergraduate, graduate, executive, and others), and programs/courses. Then, we conducted a deeper search; we downloaded the syllabus of the programs/courses and coded the specialties of the teachers, teaching methods, and course grading methods. We instructed and trained our coders to avoid personal bias and misunderstanding. Two teams of two graduate students each were established to code the Websites, and an independent graduate student was assigned to check the consistency of the data. We held a meeting after every 10 schools, in order to check the coding and avoid human error. Coders were asked to exchange their results with each other, in order to perform inter-rater reliability checks. We used the cross-tabulation function to calculate inter-rater reliability, and obtained a kappa value of 0.841, demonstrating that our coding team had a high consistency.

4. Results

In this section, we discuss the general descriptive statistics of the 100 schools surveyed in this study. The nationality statistics of the BGP Global 100 List: 2009–2010 show that there were 68 schools (68%) from the United State. The investigation of the management education for sustainability by Wu et al. (2010) shows that 84.5% of the schools in North America were under the AACSB accreditation system, and 17.1% of the American schools were under the EQUIS accreditation system. There were 486 American schools under the AACSB accreditation system and 117 schools under the EQUIS accreditation system. Comparing the number and percentage of the BGP survey, AACSB, and EQUIS, we found that the schools with social entrepreneurship education were centralized in North America and had high rankings. This also indicates that these schools can affect the development of global social entrepreneurship education.

As shown in Table 2, the survey focused on social entrepreneurship-related centers/institutes in the schools. There were 61 schools that had social entrepreneurship-related centers/institutes; we concluded that, in addition to the various programs and courses, these 61 schools paid more attention to social entrepreneurship education. They treated social entrepreneurship education as a long-term objective.

We also examined whether the schools had information regarding the levels of the students in the social entrepreneurship education programs. Table 3 presents the accumulative frequency; graduate students formed the majority of students, followed by undergraduate and executive students. A small percentage of those attending social entrepreneurship courses included the general public.

We investigated the activities involved in the programs in each school and conducted a frequency comparison between social entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship education.

The accumulative frequency in Table 4 indicates that there was no difference between social entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship education. However, the following five activities of social entrepreneurship education were noteworthy: experiential learning, community service, forums, workshop, symposia, and teamwork. The program activities of social entrepreneurship education involved experiential learning, community service (where students gained experience in running a social enterprise), and support (where students learned the first steps of managing social enterprise through forums, workshops, and symposia). Apart from the top five program activities in entrepreneurship education, such as business case research and computer simulation, the activities were found to be rather different from those in social entrepreneurship education.

In order to gain a better understanding, we sampled the syllabuses from the schools on the BGP Global 100 List: 2009–2010, on the basis of the syllabuses available online. There were 1214 syllabuses and curricula, including accounting, business government, business law, corporate responsibility, business ethics, economics, (social) entrepreneurship, environmental management, finance, human resources management, IT, international management, marketing, organizational behavior, production and operation management, public and nonprofit management, quantitative methods, strategy, etc. We sampled approximately 700 syllabuses of the curricula and coded the specialties of the instructors, teaching methods, course grading methods, and goals of curricula.

As shown in Table 5, we ranked the top five professional specialties of the instructors. The results indicate that social entrepreneurship curricula emphasize the teaching of management (organization, human resources, and strategy), finance and accounting, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and business ethics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Numbers of school by social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social entrepreneurship education</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional entrepreneurship education</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Classification of social entrepreneurship-related center/institute.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center/institute</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
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<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Social entrepreneurship education, classify by level of education.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others: General public.</td>
<td></td>
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<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Top 5 Comparison of program activities between social entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship education.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social entrepreneurship education</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture (textbooks)</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
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</table>
ics, marketing, and economics. The statistics reveal that business schools wanted to equip the students with the managerial ability required to manage a social enterprise, together with a sense of financial management for maintaining a healthy financial status and business ethics in order to strike a balance between social and commercial objectives.

The top 5 statistics of the teaching methods are presented in Table 6; the frequency of the curricula distribution shows that effective teaching methods included cases/projects, discussion, slides, reading, and lectures. Table 6 shows that the instructors taught through practice and lectures; this method ensured that the students acquired not only knowledge in the classroom but also experience through discussions and cases/projects.

Score grading refers to the methods used by teachers to evaluate the performance of their students. As shown in Table 7, the most-frequently used score grading methods were participation, exams, assignments, presentations, and cases/projects. From Tables 6 and 7, we find that a major portion of the teaching methods used by the teachers involved cases and discussion; their score grading focused on participation, exam, and assignment.

5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1. Web-based survey

In order to understand the particular effects of the Web-based survey, we compared our results with three previous studies that had a similar research theme, but employed different methods: Kirby and Ibrahim (2011), first of all, explored awareness of social entrepreneurship amongst Egyptian students, in order to determine what changes are necessary to create more graduate social entrepreneurs. They conducted a questionnaire survey of 183 from among the 2000 undergraduates at the British University in Egypt, drawn from across the university’s three faculties. Second, we examined Cukier, Trenholm, Carl, and Gekas (2011), who provided a content analysis of the literature on social entrepreneurship, with particular emphasis on case studies, using standardized search terms in several bibliographic databases (EBSCO, ProQuest, and Google Scholar). Finally, Mottner and Wymer (2011) investigated the general state of nonprofit educational offerings in US business schools accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). An online questionnaire was developed and an e-mail request with a link to the survey was sent to AACSB-accredited business schools. As shown in Table 8, we created a table of comparison, based on the following items: research, method, and survey scale.

As previous literature indicates, social entrepreneurship is a new and developing field; furthermore, it is difficult to conduct large-scale surveys of social entrepreneurship courses and research. On the basis of our comparison, we found that the questionnaire method could not operate on such a broad scale as the Web-based survey. Although each paper had a different purpose, the majority utilized Web-based surveys (data-based content analysis, online questionnaire, Web-based content analysis). This is because Web-based surveys enable researchers to conduct efficient investigations with a low cost but a large scale.

5.2. Social entrepreneurship education

Our investigations showed that social entrepreneurship centers have rich resources for social entrepreneurs, and the arrangements of the programs offer experiential learning, boards for consultation, and support forums to help students move toward managing social enterprises. Various courses were found to satisfy the needs of social entrepreneurs, such as Ethical Corporate Management, Financial Management of Nonprofit Organizations, Financing Social Ventures: Risk Capital for Expansion, Social Innovation Live, Business Opportunities in Education, Introduction to Green Design, Environmental Impact Assessment in the Energy Sector, Strategic Management of Nonprofit Organizations, Technology, Society and Environment, and Management and Environment.

In the social entrepreneurship curricula, the professional specialties of the instructors were mostly related to management (organization, human resources, strategy), followed by finance and accounting, and business ethics. This shows that the social entrepreneurship curricula emphasized the management of social enterprises through organization, human resources, strategy, and finance management; business ethics would help in maintaining the balance between double bottom line and triple bottom line. The teaching methods emphasized learning by doing, through cases/project studies, discussion, and lectures; theoretical and practical learning was imparted to students through integrated social entrepreneurship education practices.

The definitions and characteristics of social entrepreneurship were available from related research; we ran a Web-based content analysis on the BGP Global 100 List: 2009–2010. The analysis included the levels of the centers/institutes, programs, courses, and syllabuses. The results showed that the social entrepreneurship education systems of most of the business schools were appropriate for the current social entrepreneurship environment.
Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the editors and the anonymous reviewers who provided insightful and constructive comments on the paper. This work is supported by National Science Council of Taiwan (NSC 100-2628-S-110-006-MY4).

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