

Social Innovation: The Construct and Antecedents

Supervisors: Prof. Gordon Liu, and Dr. Fiona Harris (Department of Strategy and Marketing, The Open University Business School)

Project description:

Social Enterprises play a critical role in tackling the social problems that exist within communities across the UK (Liu, Eng, & Takeda, 2015; Liu & Ko, 2012, 2014). Social innovation generally refers to the novel approaches (activities) that social enterprises take with the aim of solving social problems (Dees & Anderson, 2006; Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). We would like to invite applications for PhD research on the topic of social innovation.

Although the concept of social innovation is widely acknowledged in academic and practitioner communities, there is no clear agreement about the domain of specific activities that translate such concepts into practices in the social enterprise context (e.g. Maclean, Harvey, & Gordon, 2013; Phillips, Lee, Ghobadian, O'Regan, & James, 2014). For example, researchers have considered different activities as social innovation such as new product and service development (Liu & Ko, 2012; Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena, & Carnegie, 2003), new organization form (Cooney, 2006; Liu & Ko, 2014) and new methods of production and new markets (Dees & Anderson, 2006; Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Phillips et al., 2014). Furthermore, extant relevant literature still pays little attention to the sets of contextual factors that foster or discourage social innovation (antecedents of social innovation (e.g. Phillips et al., 2014). Thus, the focus of this PhD study is to address these two knowledge gaps by 1) identifying specific activities that facilitate the operationalization of the social innovation concept and 2) identifying and testing how different antecedent conditions affect the engagement of social innovation.

It is envisaged that the research will involve both qualitative and quantitative research methods. According to our research agenda on the topic, we aim to contribute knowledge in several inter-related subject areas such as social entrepreneurship, strategy and general management.

These topics outline very high potential areas of research for a PhD student. We welcome applicants with a primary interest in social entrepreneurship. The applicant background may include management or sociology studies. Additionally, work experience in social enterprise or the third sector in general would be advantageous. If you share our interest in social innovation, we look forward to hearing from you.

References:

- Cooney, K. (2006). The institutional and technical structuring of nonprofit ventures: Case study of a US hybrid organization caught between two fields. *Voluntas*, **17** (2), pp.137-155.
- Dees, J. G., and Anderson, B. B. (2006). Framing a theory of social entrepreneurship: Building on two schools of practice and thought. In R. Mosher-Williams (Ed.), *Research on social entrepreneurship: Understanding and contributing to an emerging field* (Vol. 1, pp. 39-66). Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.
- Defourny, J., and Nyssens, M. (2010). Conceptions of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship in Europe and the United States: Convergences and divergences. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, **1** (1), pp.32-53.

- Liu, G., Eng, T. Y., and Takeda, S. (2015). An investigation of marketing capabilities in third sector: A study of British and Japanese social enterprise. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, **39** (2), pp.267-298.
- Liu, G., and Ko, W. W. (2012). Organizational learning and marketing capability development: A study of charity retailing operation of British social enterprises. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, **41** (4), pp.580-608.
- Liu, G., and Ko, W. W. (2014). Charity retailing in the UK: A managerial capabilities perspective. *Journal of Small Business Management*, **52** (3), pp.390-406.
- Maclea, M., Harvey, C., and Gordon, J. (2013). Social innovation, social entrepreneurship and the practice of contemporary entrepreneurial philanthropy. *International Small Business Journal*, **31** (7), pp.747-763.
- Phillips, W., Lee, H., Ghobadian, A., O'Regan, N., and James, P. (2014). Social innovation and social entrepreneurship: A systematic review. *Group & Organization Management*, pp.1059601114560063.
- Sullivan Mort, G., Weerawardena, J., and Carnegie, K. (2003). Social entrepreneurship: Towards conceptualisation. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, **8** (1), pp.76-88.