

The Social Entrepreneurship Approach

The concepts of social entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurship are described in different ways in the literature. This program uses the description provided by the Schwab Foundation [1]: A social entrepreneur is "A pragmatic visionary who achieves large scale, systemic and significant social change through a new invention, a different approach, a rigorous application of known technologies or strategies, or a combination of these." Social entrepreneurship, as described by the Schwab Foundation is "about applying practical, innovative and sustainable approaches that benefit society in general, with an emphasis on those who are marginalized and poor" and "a term that captures a unique approach to economic and social problems, an approach that cuts across sectors and disciplines."

Social Entrepreneurship as an Educational Tool

The concepts are usually applied to individuals who design and implement programs with an immediate impact on specific population groups. In this program, social entrepreneurship is applied to describe a mind-set and a way to approach policy analysis, advice and design, which the cases will attempt to instill in the students. As stated by Streeter, Jaquette, and Hovis [2], entrepreneurship education helps students become leaders, innovators and creative problem-solvers because it blends "real world experience with conceptual learning in the classroom." This program seeks to develop these characteristics in the students and attempts to simulate the real-world experience by bringing cases of real policy situations into the classroom.

Building on the Schwab descriptions mentioned above and material from several other institutions and individuals [3], the following characteristics of the social entrepreneurship approach are emphasized in the cases: Social entrepreneurs have a social mission, which in the case of this program is to reduce poverty, hunger and human misery in developing countries in a way that is sustainable over time. They see themselves as change agents, seeking to solve problems and exploit opportunities through innovative analysis and economically viable action by governments, the private sector, and civil society. They pursue action over rhetoric and they focus on the creation of social value and public goods to compensate for market failures and poor people's inability to express their needs in terms of market demands. Policy recommendations made by the social entrepreneur (in this case the student in the course and the student after completing his or her degree) will aim to change the underlying causes of problems rather than symptoms by utilizing new opportunities provided by modern science and technology, including molecular biology and digital technology, as well as new knowledge in the social sciences and opportunities offered by globalization.

This program integrates social entrepreneurship thinking into the analysis of the global food system following Cornell University's "radiant program approach." [4] A social entrepreneurship approach will be used in the course to instill social entrepreneurship thinking into the analyses performed by the students so they may become social entrepreneurs or use a social entrepreneurship approach in their future teaching and policy advice, design, and implementation. The social entrepreneurship thinking that will be promoted in the case analysis and discussion will be presented in a lecture during the



first week of the course and will include the characteristics mentioned above as well as a set of guidelines for how to analyze the cases and prepare policy recommendations.

The Cases

Each case has been peer-reviewed by at least 2 members of the task force or external reviewers, revised and edited before it is finalized. In addition to the task force members, more than 100 reviewers have been involved. Each case, which is of a length of 6000-7000 words, focuses on a specific and real situation requiring policy action.

In addition to the necessary background information, each case presents and discusses policy issues and options, identifies and discusses the interests of each major stakeholder group, and provides an assignment to the students. Each case is about a past, current or expected future policy situation and is written by a professional with field experience relevant to the case. It focuses on a situation where policy alternatives exist and where policy lessons can be learned for use in future policy analysis, design, and implementation. The cases were selected to simulate real policy-making environments and to cover the key aspects of a course on policies for the global food system, with emphasis on food systems in developing countries. The textbook provides the context for the cases.

The Classroom Activities

The cases and the textbook are developed to be used in a participatory social entrepreneurship teaching model. It is recommended that each course be limited to 30 students to facilitate active participation by all. A 50-minute class session may consist of a 15-minute presentation of a case and policy recommendations by a group of three students to whom the case was assigned at least one week prior to the class. Then a 25-minute general class discussion moderated by the instructor may follow, and the session will conclude with a 10-minute lecture, drawing lessons from the case that can be generalized for the topic from which the case was drawn. For those cases where the assignment to the students included the development of recommendations for action by more than one stakeholder group, the three students may each present a stakeholder perspective for discussion in class. Further, to facilitate discussion and highlight stakeholder interests, the class may be divided into groups, each representing a stakeholder group in the general discussion. Each subtopic to be covered by cases will be introduced by the instructor in a lecture, which may be based on a chapter in the textbook.

Experience from using the cases in graduate and undergraduate courses at the University of Copenhagen, Wageningen University and Cornell University indicate that a 50-minute class session may be too short for a thorough discussion of a case and that 75-minute sessions would be more appropriate.

FOOTNOTES

1. Schwab Foundation: <http://www.schwabfound.org/whatis.htm>
2. Deborah H. Streeter, John P. Jaquette, Jr., and Kathryn Hovis. "University-wide Entrepreneurship Education: Alternative Models and Current Trends". Department of Applied Economics and Management, Working Paper 2002-02, Cornell University, March 2002, p. 5.
3. Including Ashoka, The Center of the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship, The New Heroes, and the Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership at Stanford University.
4. See Deborah H. Streeter, John P. Jaquette, Jr., and Kathryn Hovis. "University-wide Entrepreneurship Education: Alternative Models and Current Trends". Working Paper 2002-02, Department of Applied Economics and Management, Cornell University, March, 2002

