

SOCIAL EDUPRENEURSHIP – AN EMERGING PROFESSIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

These research notes present the initial concept of Social Edupreneurship as an emergent professional framework for transformational education. The basic elements of the emerging model are described with the express intent of generating critique and feedback, which will inform further development, iteration and refinement of the model. As the initial step towards a doctorate in professional practice, these research notes draw on practitioner research methodology. This paper contributes a new approach to conceptualising the role of an educator, drawing on current trends and tensions in tertiary education.

INTRODUCTION

The process of developing and refining a professional framework of practice can be a blend of aspirational planning, conceptual thinking, experimental action, reflection on practice and synthesis. This paper begins by describing an aspirational statement and an underlying value proposition. The concepts within the aspirational statement are then unpacked. The potential benefits of the proposed research are then outlined.

ASPIRATION AND VALUE PROPOSITION

The aspirational intent of this research is to provide a framework for the researcher to become a practice leader in Social Edupreneurship as a model for transformational education. The Social Edupreneurship model should establish an accessible and vocationally relevant framework for learning that maximises regenerative impact, and is aligned with a heutagogical approach to tertiary education. This is a direct response to anticipated challenges in the future of tertiary education.

Some key elements need to be unpacked from the aspirational statement and value proposition so that they can be understood more clearly.

A *practice leader* would be expected to have developed concrete examples that illustrate their professional framework. This is in contrast to a *thought leader* who, it is suggested, is more focussed on developing the concepts, leaving it to others to make them more concrete.

The term *Edupreneur* has been used predominantly in the USA and India to describe educators who have become involved in EdTech start-ups or innovative commercialisation models for education (Lavaroni, Leisey, & Leisey, n.d.; Soni & Trivedi, 2013). However, more recently in Australia, the term has referred more to creating innovative practice in education (Gerver, 2014; Tait & Faulkner, 2016).

In the context of the model being described here, *Edupreneur* refers to an educator who applies elements of entrepreneurial or intrapreneurial practice to an educational context. These elements could be applied on more than one level: seeing each student as start-up founder or seeing each programme or course as a start-up. While the intention is to focus on a framework of practice for tertiary education, it is anticipated that practice in the compulsory education sector will both inform this model and be highly interrelated.

The inclusion of the word *Social* relates directly to the field of social enterprise. While internationally there is a range of definitions in use (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010), a working definition of this proposal is that the educational activity undertaken is expected to be of authentic value to a community (*maximising regenerative impact*). This relates closely to the emphasis placed on *transformation* and the development of a transformational mind-set (Mann, Eden-Mann, et al., 2017). This includes both the transformational experience of the learner and the transformation that may take place due to the authentic social impact of the learner's work.

Accessible in this instance refers to a framework that leans on concepts and structures that are well understood by many and not exclusively academic. This could increase the extent to which the model can be replicated. The idea of a *vocationally relevant framework* emphasises the close relationship to a concrete change in practice for both learners and educators.

A *heutagogical approach* to tertiary education is one that embraces self-determined learning as fundamental to a transformational experience (Kenyon & Hase, 2001; Mann, Ker, Eden-Mann, & O'Brien, 2017a; Mann, Ker, Eden-Mann, & O'Brien, 2017b).

In summary, this is a model of action in education that makes a difference to learners and communities and is learner-led. This framework could be constructed through the synthesis of social enterprise, entrepreneurship and education frameworks of practice.

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH NEEDED?

The Otago Polytechnic mission states that "*Our people make a better world,*" but is this notion of transformational change at the heart of current educational frameworks of practice?

There are several factors that suggest it should be:

The tension between compliance and individualised future-focussed learning. For example, the dismantling of national standards in the New Zealand compulsory sector to focus on individual growth rather than testing (Ministry of Education, 2017)

An exponential rate of change in education. For example, unbundling of qualifications to meet more specific needs in an on-demand basis (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2016),

Public challenges to whether current qualifications are fit-for-future-purpose (Suckling, 2016; Valintine, 2018)

Increased need to see clear purpose from new generations entering the workforce (Downing, 2006)

The need for more individually determined education to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world. (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2016)

A synthesis of the educational, entrepreneurial and social enterprise frameworks of practice has the potential to respond to all of these factors. The establishment of a new purpose- and capabilities-focussed programme at Otago Polytechnic (Bachelor of Leadership for Change) both meets the need for a new framework of practice and provides a timely opportunity to safely develop and implement a new framework.

CONCLUSION

These short research notes present a conceptual framework for educators working within a heutagogical paradigm. This conceptual framework needs to be developed into a framework of practice. The author invites any feedback and critique which could inform the development of this model.

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