

Book review: Seymour, Richard G. (ed.) (2012). *Handbook of research methods on social entrepreneurship*. Edward Elgar: Cheltenham.

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Social entrepreneurship has become a buzz-word in the business and political arenas, as well as in the academic world. With this handbook, Seymour aims to raise some critical issues regarding research methods and design in the social entrepreneurship field. He aims to fill a gap by addressing questions relating to philosophy of sciences and by providing an overview of the variety of research methods that may be applied to research in social entrepreneurship.

The book is divided in four parts. First, general questions about social entrepreneurship research are touched upon in order to pique the readers' curiosity. Then, three research postures are reviewed. In the third part, three examples of data gathering and research methods are presented. And finally, an overview of the extant literature in the field is provided along with the challenges faced by researchers in the social entrepreneurship field.

The first chapter intends to provide a working definition of social entrepreneurship drawing on extant literature. Seymour describes distinguishing features of the social entrepreneur, social entrepreneuring activity and social entrepreneurship as compared to commercial counterparts. In the second chapter, Seymour addresses philosophy of sciences issues and explains how they impact social entrepreneurship research. In particular, he highlights the strengths and the weaknesses of objectivist and subjectivist approaches with regard to the different levels of analysis.

The third chapter reviews listening to narratives as a first research posture. Presenting their contribution as a conversation between a PhD-student and his supervisor, Steyaert and Bachmann discuss how narrative approaches can be applied to social entrepreneurship research. They consider the philosophical assumptions of such a posture, as well as the generation and the analysis of narrative data in a social entrepreneurship context. Next, together with Seymour, Tasker and Westberg describe action research in a social entrepreneurship setting in the following chapter, taking a research project they conducted in Ecuador as an example. They evaluate action research as a productive and pragmatic approach with regard to social entrepreneurship thanks to the collective development of solutions to problems identified by the participants, which is at heart of the social entrepreneurship process. In contrast, they warn against the potential over-subjectivity, which may also lead to conflict between the researcher and the participants, as well as against the possible slowness of the action research process. Afterwards, the fifth chapter deals with case study as a research strategy, which Kumar and Ormiston consider very valuable in social entrepreneurship as the field is not theoretically well developed yet. They provide an example of case study design as well as a useful checklist and very practical advice for best practice.

The third part starts with describing how discourse analysis may be applied to a social entrepreneurship setting (chapter 6). Salignac argues that this method is particularly relevant to investigate the construction of new social phenomena as well as the social value creation though she acknowledges the time-consuming dimension of discourse analysis. Using examples in the Fair Trade sector, she then sets guidelines for undertaking discourse analysis. Thereafter, in the seventh chapter, Webster and Ruskin provide with social network analysis techniques. As an example, they

analyze the Schwab and Skoll Foundations' networks. They finally discuss three network theories that may prove insightful in social entrepreneurship: the strength of weak ties, the small-world phenomenon, and the concept of embeddedness. The next chapter by D'Alessandro and Winzar begins with a description of the different types of surveys and the errors that have to be avoided. Then, they guide the reader step-by-step through the design of measurements and of a questionnaire. Lastly, they describe several techniques for the analysis of survey data. In the ninth chapter, Seymour introduces the logic of drawing and verifying conclusions, which he considers to be a widely misunderstood component of research. He compares the three means of drawing inferences: deduction, induction, and abduction. The different types of validity are also reviewed, focusing on inductive and abductive research.

Finally, the fourth part consists of the sole tenth chapter, in which McKenny, Short, and Payne provide an overview of the extant social entrepreneurship literature in top-tier management and entrepreneurship journals and make a plea for more quantitative methods and deductivist approach in studying social entrepreneurship in order to give legitimacy to the field. Consequently, they briefly present some statistical techniques that may be used in social entrepreneurship research.

As it is often the case in an edited book, the quality of contributions is not homogeneous. Nonetheless, Seymour introduces and links the various parts of the handbook to make it coherent and fluent for the reader. In addition, most contributions are presented in an easy-to-read fashion and are accessible to all readers, whether they are already familiar with the research issue/method presented or not. Hence, Seymour's handbook has the potential to trigger mixed methods research projects by piquing qualitative researchers' curiosity to quantitative methods, and inversely. However, the choice for accessibility may also be perceived as a weakness of the handbook, as several contributions remain quite superficial or very generalist. The applications to social entrepreneurship were sometimes disappointing as they were not exploited in depth.

This book is a very useful reading for Master- and PhD-students starting a dissertation on social entrepreneurship. It pushes them to ask themselves questions about their philosophical positioning, which is too often disregarded in entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship studies. In addition, it may help them to broaden the scope of the postures and methods they take into consideration for their research project. Indeed, the book opens new perspectives to social entrepreneurship by suggesting a variety of methods rarely applied in this context. Finally, it highlights some critical issues with regard to doing research in general, and in social entrepreneurship in particular, and provides useful checklists for avoiding common mistakes. Overall, this handbook is a kind of practical guide, with which Seymour succeeds in leading the reader through the journey of conducting research of quality in the emerging field of social entrepreneurship.