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Comparing, Contrasting, and Combining Civic Engagement Education Through the Lenses of Social Entrepreneurship and Service-learning

**Review by Paul H. Matthews
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Sandra L. Enos, *Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship in Higher Education: A Pedagogy of Social Change*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York, NY, 2015, 101 pages. DOI: 10.1057/978113754444.0001

Is social entrepreneurship education just a kind of service-learning found in business schools? Or is it grounded in such different history, assumptions, and practice that its commonalities with community-based pedagogy are only superficial at best? The field of social entrepreneurship—an “innovative, social value-creating activity” (Wei-Skillern, Austin, Leonard, & Stevenson, 2007, p. 4)—is sometimes construed as analogous to service-learning, but on many campuses the two fields seem to occupy disparate and non-overlapping spaces. Sandra Enos’s brief volume (84 pages in four chapters, plus prefix, one appendix, and references), published in 2015 as part of the Community Engagement in Higher Education series (Palgrave Macmillan), seeks to change that, and to illustrate some of the ways in which these pedagogies of service-learning and social entrepreneurship can, do, and do not intersect on college campuses.

In the first chapter (“The Landscape of Social Change Education”), Enos—a sociology professor with experience in both service-learning and social entrepreneurship—sets the context with a sketch of some recent discussions of university engagement’s place in higher education, and contends that both fields focused on in this volume should be considered a subset of “social change education.” She provides evidence for the growing institutionalization of each, for instance through journals and professional associations, and draws parallels specifically between the existence of overarching organizations that encourage campus involvement in both movements (e.g., between Campus Compact and Ashoka U). Next, she summarizes prior work presenting these two fields’ commonalities (e.g., these are social-change oriented movements seeking greater campus reach; entail community-based partnerships; and provide opportunities for real-world applications of knowledge) as well

as differences (e.g., a stronger focus on student learning in service-learning, versus on community/societal change in social entrepreneurship; a stronger orientation toward “disruption” of existing structures and practices in the latter; and differing language as well as desired learning outcomes). While Enos also contends that “[S]ocial entrepreneurship prizes the founding of new organizations” (p. 18), other researchers have noted the growth and value of social “intrepreneurship”—i.e., working to implement change within existing structures and organizations (Bornstein, 2007; Bornstein & Davis, 2010)—a construct not included in Enos’s overview.

Her second chapter (“Organizing for Engagement”) comprises the bulk of the book’s research contribution, an attempt to determine how these two pedagogies are organized and interrelate on campuses that offer both. Enos reports on website analyses and interviews she conducted with staff at the 10 campuses currently recognized with both Carnegie’s community engagement classification and the “Changemaker Campus” designation by Ashoka U. She contends that these “exemplars of service-learning and of social entrepreneurship education” (p. 23) should offer a view into the current status of institutionalization and potential relationships between these subfields of community engagement on U.S. campuses. As such, she investigates whether there are “patterns in the organization of these programs, whether there are typical disciplinary homes for service-learning and social entrepreneurship courses, ...and how programs that offer [them] are related to each other” (p. 27). However, Enos reports that little consistency was found; instead, “what we see are individual profiles, tied to institutional size, history, culture and leadership” (pp. 32–33). While she summarizes information about each campus in a table, its content reads more like field notes than an

analysis. As might be expected from a range of institutional sizes, types, and locations, she found that the colleges and universities studied had varying amounts of coursework, centralization, and support structures, and used different terminology in talking about their initiatives.

In chapter three, “Challenges for Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship,” Enos iterates several of the criticisms that have been extended toward these two sets of practice, including (for service-learning) a lack of “deliberate and intentional incorporation of civic skills” (p. 45), as well as issues of privilege, social justice, and the problematization of “service” (pp. 47–48). For social entrepreneurship, Enos notes that this field sometimes uses different terms (e.g. “social enterprise”) implying different foci; that innovations may struggle in being implemented at scale; and that the “celebratory nature of innovations in the social entrepreneurship space makes it difficult to mount a critical review of these practices” (p. 55). She also summarizes concerns that social entrepreneurship may tend to “paint the state, unions, public employees and other existing nonprofits as the enemy” (pp. 56–57), undermining rather than enhancing existing efforts, which may contrast with service-learning’s focus. In terms of social entrepreneurship education, Enos notes that existing courses have been criticized for a lack of emphasis on complex problem-solving, and for mismatches between desired competencies identified in course syllabi and those recommended by practitioners in the field. While interesting, and a good overview of some of the critiques offered for each field, this chapter does not contribute much new to the discussion beyond summarizing.

In the book’s final chapter, “Educating for Engagement: A Turning Point,” Enos renews her recommendations that, as two subsets of campus/community engagement, service-learning and social entrepreneurship should become better integrated institutionally. She provides examples from her own and other universities as demonstrations of how these two fields may fit into a broader conceptualization of civic engagement, as well as how particular disciplines might implement both. After repeating her calls for more cross-fertilization, Enos suggests the need “to challenge each other on what works—in teaching and research—and certainly on what strategies get us closer to working with community partners in problem-solving reciprocal ways” (p. 83). Finally, the book’s appendix provides a list of campus representatives for Chapter 3’s interviews.

Several aspects of this book raise issues worthy of contemplation for those in the community engagement field. The explicit comparison and contrasting between the two sets of philosophies and practices illuminates several interesting points. For instance, Enos contends:

Among the most important differences between service-learning and social entrepreneurship include the former’s focus on groups and collaboration vs. the latter’s on individualism, and vocabulary borrowed from the nonprofit sector vs. vocabulary taken from the business world. Other points that differentiate these fields are skepticism about market-based approaches to social problems on part of the service-learning community compared to an embrace of market-based solutions in the social entrepreneurship field. The service-learning field aims to educate students for civic engagement and democracy while some versions of social entrepreneurship work at solving problems outside of or independent of politics (pp. 16–17).

Likewise, a careful consideration of what each field might offer the other is a valuable exercise. Could some of the tools and concepts used in social entrepreneurship—e.g., the double/triple bottom line for determining return on investment—be helpful for assessing service-learning programs’ impacts? Could service-learning’s established expertise in reflection and in highlighting the importance of reciprocity with community partner organizations bolster the success of social entrepreneurship education and application?

In several areas, the book could be stronger. For instance, while couched at times in the language of research, this volume’s findings from campus interviews do not seem to follow many standards of qualitative methodology (e.g., thick description, coding, etc.), and as such fall somewhat short. Likewise, while the author includes a solid listing of prior articles that relate to this work’s guiding questions, Enos’s style of reviewing literature often seems more focused on enumerating a list of each author’s points, rather than synthesizing them as a whole. While in two separate chapters Enos offers other authors’ definitions for “social entrepreneurship,” she does not ever clarify how, specifically, she is using the term; and, while she notes that “the practice of social entrepre-

neurship is distinct from social entrepreneurship education” (p. 11), that distinction is not consistently apparent in the volume.

Several chapters enumerate details about certain journals, organizations and initiatives, yet omit others of similar potential interest and merit without explanation. For instance, for service-learning and community engagement, she lists several journals (*JCES*; the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*) and conferences and organizations (IARSLCE; Campus Compact), while other equally relevant resources (e.g., the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*; the Engagement Scholarship Consortium) are omitted. On the social entrepreneurship side, Enos provides a strong focus on both the Skoll Foundation and Ashoka, but does not acknowledge other important resources and players such as the Acumen Fund, the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, or Echoing Green (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). Likewise, her “short history of social entrepreneurship” seems to lay the founding of this field at the feet of Jeffrey Skoll and Bill Drayton, with no mention of key international “pioneers” (Bornstein & Davis, 2010, p. 13) such as Muhammad Yunus (Grameen Bank) and Fazle Abed (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee). Finally, frequent typos and minor errors (e.g., in names of national organizations, journals, and funders, or in referring to the “2012 [sic] Carnegie round of applications” [p. 29]) also distract somewhat from the book’s content.

In the end, Enos defends and extends her thesis statement: “Some may believe that service-learning and social entrepreneurship models of educating students for community engagement are incompatible but I am going to argue that they are not” (p. 70); however, as her own research shows, even on campuses considered exemplary in each area, at present these two fields tend not to converge in practice. For readers interested in how these two branches of engaged pedagogy might interweave more productively, *Service-Learning and Social Entrepreneurship in Higher Education* may be a good starting point, from either side of the equation.

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About the Reviewer

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