

The Development of Education for Social Entrepreneurship and Nonprofit Management Diverging or Converging Paths?

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Although nonprofit management education has developed within a variety of university settings to date, curricula content of these programs has converged over time. However, recent social entrepreneurship programming calls into question whether such convergence will continue. This article compares social entrepreneurship education programming in schools of public administration and policy, schools of business and management, and religiously oriented institutions and considers whether curricula among these groups will remain distinct. Possible scenarios include convergence toward the traditional nonprofit management education model, toward the new business school model of social entrepreneurship, toward new blended models, or continued bifurcation between traditional and business school models.

Keywords: *social entrepreneurship, education, nonprofit*

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NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT EDUCATION HAS multiple roots dating back a half-century or more in the United States and the United Kingdom. Various professional fields, including health care, education, social work, and the arts, have long featured administration specialties in their graduate programming; many of these programs still exist but to some extent have been integrated with, or superseded by, generic nonprofit management education programming. Generic nonprofit management education programs began to grow in the 1970s, including undergraduate specializations focused on managing youth-serving organizations and promoted by American Humanics in various U.S. colleges and universities, and at least one graduate certificate program in nonprofit management pioneered by Columbia University. A handful of master's degree programs in nonprofit management started up in the late 1970s and 1980s (University of San Francisco, Case Western Reserve University, the New School, University of Missouri–Kansas City, Brunel University in the United Kingdom, and a few others); the 1990s witnessed exponential growth in the number of these programs.

The plethora of programs developing in the 1980s and 1990s grew within a variety of university settings. The largest group emerged within schools of public administration, where it was natural to extend the concept of management for public service to the nonprofit sector within master of public administration programs. Another small group developed under independent, interdisciplinary auspices so as to create curricula from first principles and accommodate multidisciplinary approaches. Some schools of management or business as well as schools of social work also embraced the concept of nonprofit management education and developed new master's degree and certificate programs.

Over time, graduate programs in nonprofit management began to converge in their content and orientation. This was a natural process, nicely fitting the concept of “institutional isomorphism” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) wherein organizations in the same field tend to grow more similar over time because of common environmental pressures and incentives as well as behavioral tendencies to imitate and adopt the successful ideas of competitors and colleagues. This process was explicitly assisted by professional organizations, notably the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC), which developed curricular guidelines for the field, and the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, which integrated nonprofit management into its accreditation process. External developments and advances in professional thinking also influenced nonprofit management curricula in ways that made the universe of nonprofit management education programs more homogeneous. Thus, programs widely adopted courses addressing such topics as program evaluation, performance measurement, and globalization of the sector as these subjects became more prominent.

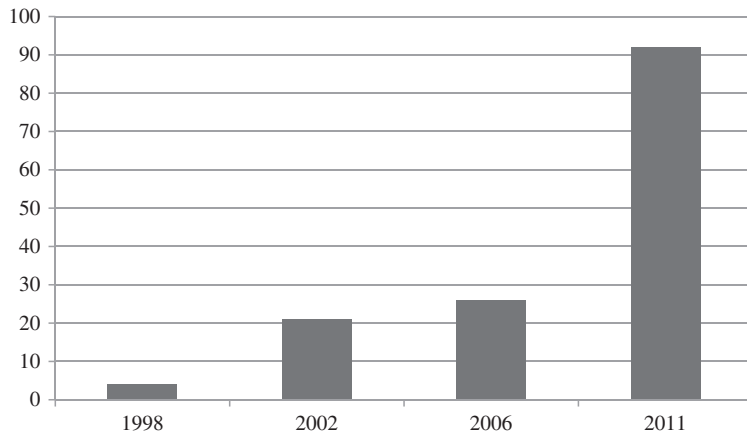
Social entrepreneurship and social enterprise are the current fashion in nonprofit management education programs. A recent article in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* proclaimed social entrepreneurs as “the hottest game in town and the buzzword of the decade” (Bernholz, 2011). While social entrepreneurship courses are now offered in a variety of institutional settings, often within the context of nonprofit management education programs, several new programs devoted solely to social entrepreneurship are located in business school settings. This is an interesting development because business schools have generally lagged in offering courses in nonprofit management per se. The framing of social purpose management education under the new labels of *social enterprise*, *corporate social responsibility*, and *social entrepreneurship* and the breaking free of the strict sectoral boundaries implicit in nonprofit management education seem to have given greater license to business and management schools to expand into this field. Nonetheless, these programs claim to be educating social entrepreneurs, many of whom are likely to work within the context of nonprofit organizations. Hence programs on social entrepreneurship should be counted within the universe of contemporary nonprofit management education programs.

From the viewpoint of the field’s future, however, social entrepreneurship programming poses a unique challenge to the question of whether the field will continue to converge into a commonly accepted framework of educational principles, standards, and content for future managers and leaders of social purpose organizations. In some sense, this is a test of the institutional isomorphism theory. As we demonstrate, traditional nonprofit management education programs are moving to adopt social entrepreneurship into their curricula. However, it is unclear whether business school programs in social entrepreneurship will eventually broaden their scope to include other elements of nonprofit management education that traditional programs now deem essential to the proper education of social sector leaders and managers.

This article offers a comparison of social entrepreneurship education programming in alternative university settings, including schools of public administration and policy, schools of business and management, and religiously oriented institutions. We find important current curricular differences among these groups, but we can only speculate on the implications associated with either the persistence or diminution of these differences over time. Possible scenarios are explored, including convergence toward the traditional nonprofit management education model, convergence toward the new business school model of social entrepreneurship, the development of some new, further evolved and blended model, or continued bifurcation of the field between traditional and business school models.

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Figure 1. Growth in Social Enterprise and Social Entrepreneurship Courses: 1998–Present



Survey of Social Entrepreneurship Programs

During the past decade there has been a dramatic increase in the number of graduate-level social entrepreneurship courses offered in the United States (Figure 1). The historical census of nonprofit management education courses maintained by Seton Hall University included only four courses in 1998, increasing to twenty-one and twenty-six in 2002 and 2006, respectively. (For a more complete description of the methodology used in the development of the census, see Mirabella, 2007.) Today nearly one hundred courses are offered. Most of these courses are offered as singleton courses within the nonprofit management master's degree program. However, some are included as part of a concentration in social entrepreneurship or a complete master's degree in social entrepreneurship. In our review of graduate education programs with a social entrepreneurship emphasis, we found twenty such programs in the United States and at least sixteen in universities around the world. Most of the websites for these thirty-six programs include a homepage on which the major purpose of the program is elucidated, with the goals and objectives of the social entrepreneurship program clearly articulated. We undertake a detailed analysis of these goals in the following section.

Findings

Program Goals. In the United States the most frequently mentioned purpose of the social entrepreneurship program is to create social value, including such purposes as a commitment to working on social issues, improving social and economic conditions, and addressing critical issues that require social transformation. Nearly 75

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percent of the social entrepreneurship graduate programs included the latter value in the description of program purposes. Providing leadership to solve problems and working across sector boundaries were included in more than half of the purpose statements.

Although borrowing and adopting the logic of the private sector was stated more often by business schools (63 percent), it was also mentioned by three programs in other settings. Purposes associated with crafting entrepreneurial solutions such as innovation, identifying opportunities, and organizing resources were mentioned by fewer than half of the programs as their stated purpose. Finally, five of the programs made reference to the importance of developing economically sustainable solutions or working on social ventures; all of these were located in public affairs and administration or religiously based programs.

By contrast with programs in the United States, the most frequently mentioned purpose stated by programs in other parts of the world was crafting entrepreneurial solutions, mentioned by 81 percent of the programs. Creating social value, which was most often cited in the stated purpose of U.S. programs in social entrepreneurship, was mentioned by fewer than half of the international programs (43 percent). Preparing graduates for work in social ventures was frequently mentioned, with 69 percent stating this as a program purpose.

Regardless of location, very few programs embraced the adoption of creating an ethical, responsible worldview or mobilizing people from diverse backgrounds in their website overview. And even fewer declared that an understanding of political, economic, and policy forces is an important program emphasis. The focus seems clearly placed on the development and implementation of social ventures, less on the political, policy, or ethical dimensions of social entrepreneurship. And we found no mention of engaging the citizenry in the development of policy alternatives.

Curricular Content. Course descriptions and programmatic content of U.S. social entrepreneurship programs are generally more available on the Web than are those for international programs. This is in part due to the many and varied curricular models for postgraduate study in other parts of the world. To analyze curricular content we employ the framework suggested by Young and Grinsfelder (2011), who reviewed case studies in the literature to discover the skill sets required by social entrepreneurs to acquire resources and accomplish other tasks necessary for the success of their ventures. They identified three general skill sets: market skills, political skills, and management skills. *Market skills* were those necessary to operate successfully in a market environment; *political skills* were those needed to negotiate public sector environments; and *management skills* were those required to successfully run their organizations from the inside.

For this study, we expand on the management skills typology to include *philanthropic skills*—the unique skills required for acquiring philanthropic resources, managing volunteers, and so on. Other management skills are those required to operate an organization—skills not specific to running a philanthropic organization—and we have labeled this category *generic management skills*. Finally, there are a small number of courses focused on leadership *outside* of those related to leading an organization, with more of a focus on the values of what we might call *servant leadership*. To capture these courses, we created a fifth category called *leadership skills*. In short, by modifying the typology proposed by Young and Grinsfelder (2011), we recognize five general skill sets: market skills, political skills, philanthropic skills, generic management skills, and leadership skills (see Appendix).

To code each course, course descriptions were reviewed and courses assigned to specific categories based on an analysis and identification of keywords in the description. When we found courses that covered content in more than one category, they were assigned to two or more categories, again based on the course descriptions found on the university websites. The components of the degree program were analyzed separately, electives in the concentration and core requirements, and then collectively for the total master's degree program.

In the social entrepreneurship programs, most courses focused on market skills (37 percent) and philanthropic skills (34 percent), which is to be expected because courses in social entrepreneurship and social ventures address the skill sets of both the market and philanthropy. Political skills were less likely to be found in the social entrepreneurship concentration (15 percent); so too were generic management skills (11 percent), which we will see is not the case when we examine the core requirements for these master's degree programs. Finally, leadership courses were unlikely to be offered as part of the concentration, representing 3 percent of all the content.

The results of the analysis of the curricular content of the social entrepreneurship concentration courses are shown in Figures 2 and 3. The bar graphs in Figure 2 graphically depict the degree programs, one graph for each institutional location of the degree program, giving us a greater understanding of the variations in curricular offerings in different institutional settings. Not surprisingly, there tends to be more of an emphasis on philanthropic and political skills in social entrepreneurship programs located within a public policy, service, or administration school than in programs located within a school of business. In addition, there is more of a balance among the five skill sets necessary for success as a social entrepreneur. For example, the social entrepreneurship concentration at New School University has a fairly even split in the curriculum among business, political, and philanthropic skill sets. On the other hand, when the social entrepreneurship program is located within a business school,

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Figure 2. U.S. Social Entrepreneurship Programs: Concentration Course Descriptions by Institutional Location and Young/Grinsfelder Typology

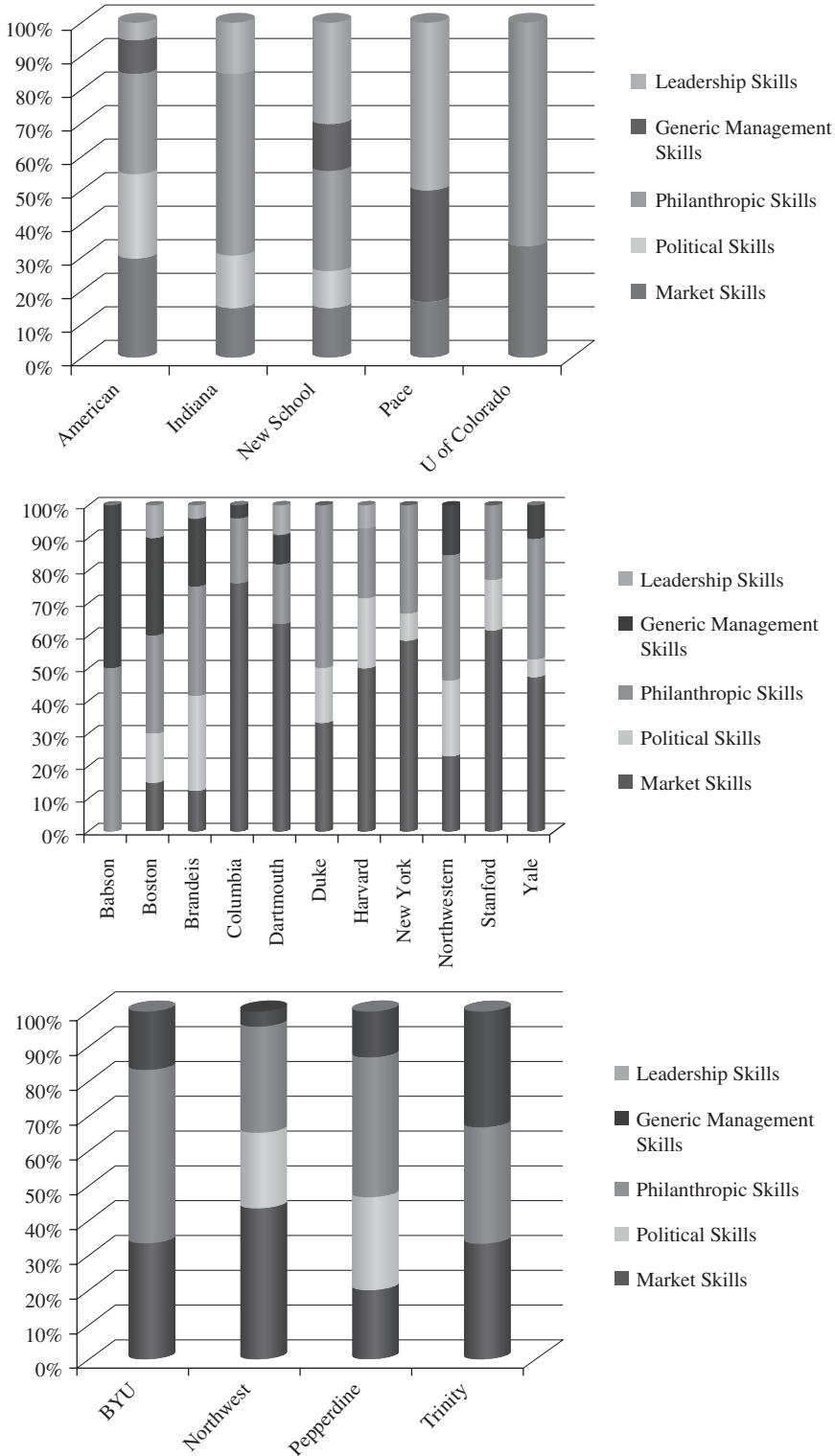
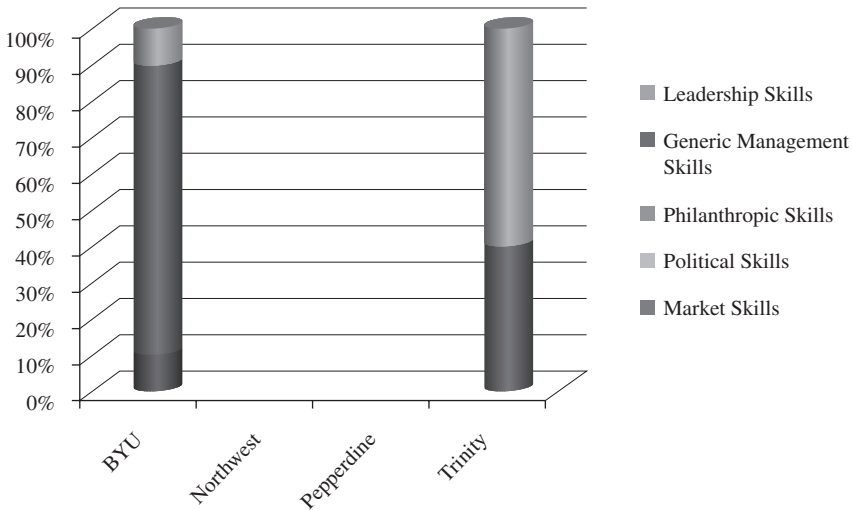
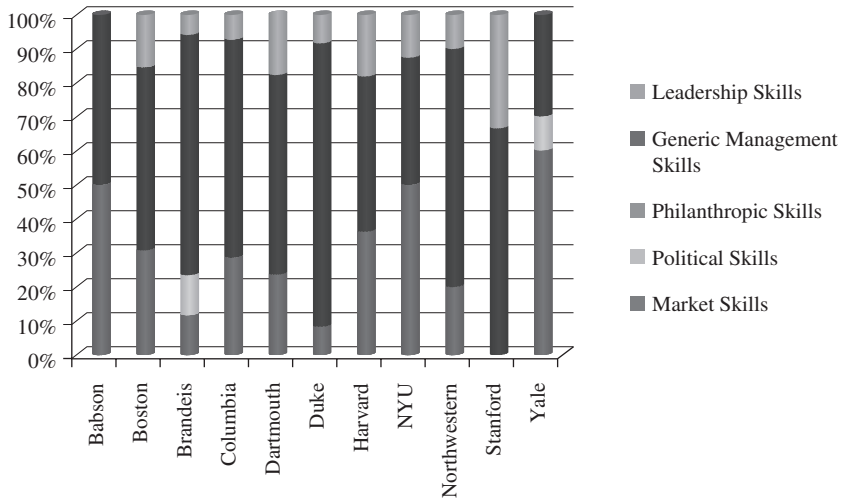
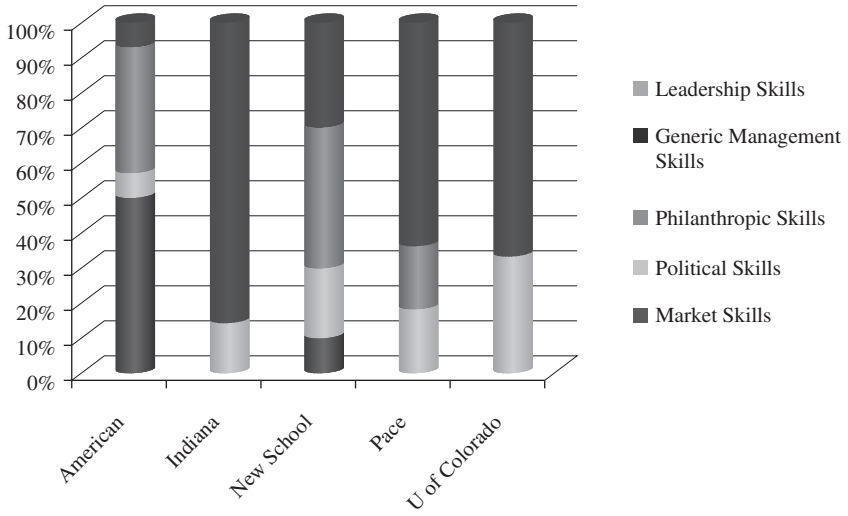


Figure 3. U.S. Social Entrepreneurship Programs: Core Courses by Institutional Location and Young/Grinsfelder Typology



more attention is paid to market skills, which comprise 42 percent of the content compared with 31 percent comprised of philanthropic skills. There are notable exceptions, however, including Brandeis, Duke, Northwestern, and Yale. Brandeis University offers an MBA for those interested in managing an organization with a social mission and has many courses focused on nonprofit or civil society organizations and thus much more content on philanthropic skills. At Duke University, faculty are appointed jointly to the program in social entrepreneurship and nonprofit management, and several courses in nonprofit management are available as possible electives within the social entrepreneurship curriculum. Similarly, many of the nonprofit courses within the executive education program at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management are available to students within the social entrepreneurship program. Finally, the long tradition of offering courses and programming on the nonprofit sector at Yale University has resulted in a diverse array of course offerings that students can elect to take.

Four of the twenty social entrepreneurship programs in our analysis identify as religious institutions. We capture them separately here to draw attention to their focus on curricular content that seeks to establish an "ethical and responsible worldview." As an example, the program emphasis in social entrepreneurship is one possible concentration of the master of arts in social engagement at Trinity International University, a Christian university located in Illinois. The university's website describes the degree as a program of study that "will equip [the student] to trace the contours of contemporary culture, interpret its movements and messages, and engage its challenges from a Christian worldview" (<http://www.tiu.edu/graduate/academics/ma-culture>). While still leaning somewhat toward market skills, there is a balance among the various skill sets in programs located within religious institutions.

The social entrepreneurship programs comprise the concentration leading to various master's degrees. Most of these programs require students to complete a common core as part of the degree program. The exceptions in our study are Northwestern University, which leads to a master of arts in social entrepreneurship, and Pepperdine University, which offers a master of arts in social entrepreneurship and change. Almost all the courses in these two programs are required. Regardless of setting, the core courses required by master's degree programs tend to be heavily dominated by generic management skills: 44 percent of the courses in the public administration core, 60 percent of the courses in the business administration core, and 67 percent of the core in programs housed in religiously affiliated institutions (Figure 3). Core courses with content on philanthropic skills and political skills are fairly well represented in the public administration core, but absent in the core of business programs. Business programs, however, are more apt to focus on leadership skills in the core curriculum, as are master's degrees housed in religious institutions.

Figure 4. Combined Master's Degree Curriculum by Institutional Location (percentage)

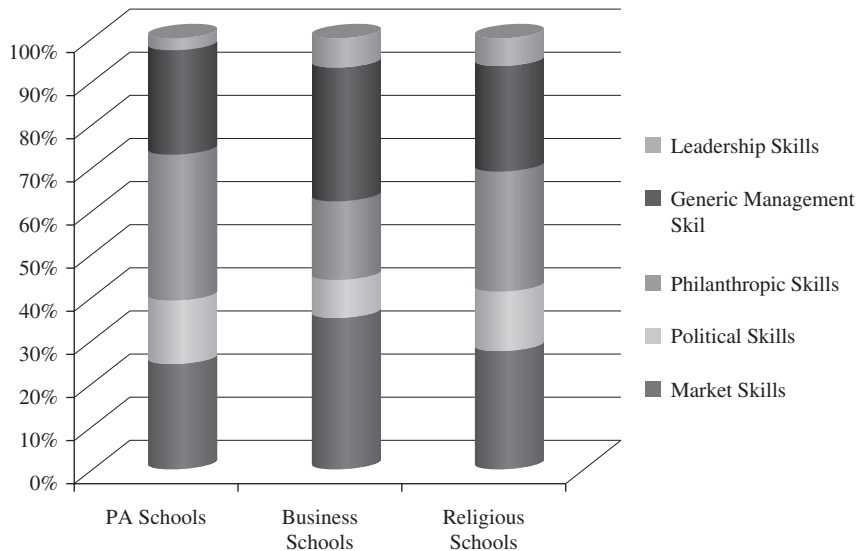
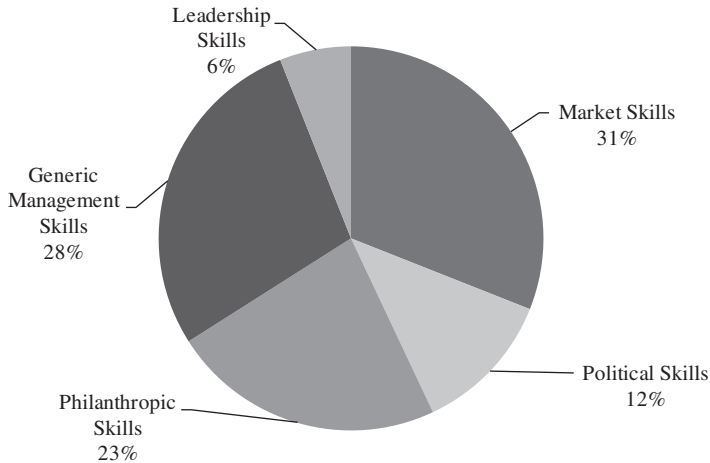


Figure 4 shows the combined set of courses for all the degree programs by institutional location, including all social entrepreneurship concentration courses and required core curricula. Although courses were more evenly distributed among the five skills sets in the social entrepreneurship concentration regardless of location, the importance of institutional location is made clear by combining the course in the concentration with those required in the general college core. In a business school setting, the majority of courses focus on market and generic management skills (66 percent). Schools of public policy, service, and administration are a bit more balanced than business schools, with 49 percent of all courses focused on these skills. Political skills are covered more in public administration schools (34 percent) than business schools (18 percent). There is also a more balanced focus on the various skills sets within religious institutions. Figure 5 summarizes all core and concentration courses for the social entrepreneurship programs in our sample by skill set. In summary, market skills are most frequently found (31 percent), followed by generic management skills (28 percent) and philanthropic skills (23 percent). Political skills are far less often found in these courses (12 percent), as are leadership skills (6 percent).

Discussion

Our review of graduate programs in social entrepreneurship has drawn attention to the importance of institutional location to curricular content. Of the twenty programs examined, 65 percent are

Figure 5. Social Entrepreneurship Programs: All Courses, All Degrees



located within business school settings, and nearly 75 percent of the content in the business school setting is focused on market skills. The growth of these programs, particularly within schools of business, is taking place at the same time that our tolerance of government-developed solutions to social issues is waning. In their discussion of the emergence of social entrepreneurship as a new “institutional logic,” Lounsbury and Strang note that “the declining ambitions of government-directed public policy over the last two decades are paralleled by the growing prestige of ‘business’ and ‘management’” (2009, p. 75). Further, they maintain that social entrepreneurship “arises at the intersection of these paired shifts in American culture and organizational structure” (p. 76); that is, organizations in the third sector are increasingly encouraged to adopt the skills and techniques of the market both to develop programs for social change as well as to create social enterprises that will be self-sustaining without government or philanthropic support.

The convergence or divergence of social entrepreneurship education programs offered in different institutional settings will have important implications for how society prepares future leaders to address pressing social problems. Several alternative scenarios are possible. One possibility is that social entrepreneurship programs in public policy and administration and business schools will diverge or remain distinct over time. In this case, business and management schools would continue to lag in their inclusion of political and philanthropic skills in their curricula, while schools of public policy and administration would continue to offer more balanced content. Under this scenario, if business school curricula continue to grow in popularity for prospective managers of social purpose organizations, it

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appears from our analysis that students in these programs will not be sufficiently exposed to important values and skills necessary for successful management of social ventures. In addition, traditional nonprofit management programs may suffer from loss of patronage and resources if they cannot overcome the surface attractiveness of the new genre of business programs. Alternatively, traditional programs may become more competitive over time by promoting their more comprehensive approach. One merit of the diversity scenario is that it will conserve choice for prospective students, some of whom may prefer one path versus another for their own practical or philosophical reasons.

A second possibility is that social entrepreneurship programs will converge to a relatively homogeneous model as suggested by the institutional isomorphism hypothesis. In this case, there are two sub-scenarios. One distinct possibility is that the field will converge toward the business school model of social entrepreneurship education, perhaps pulling the entire field of nonprofit management education with it. In this case, schools of public policy and administration would continue to enrich their curricula with coursework in market-oriented and generic management skills, perhaps even deemphasizing political and philanthropic skills. This scenario would reflect a general societal trend toward the efficacy of business management solutions to public problems and a devaluing of government, as we have witnessed during the past decade or more. It would also be consistent with the data we observed in our survey, that public policy and administration curricula are absorbing social entrepreneurship curricular ideas from the business school programs, but so far the same does not seem true for business schools emulating public administration and policy curricula. Such a scenario would seem unfortunate, given the important values and public service skills in public administration and policy school social entrepreneurship curricula that might be lost.

The second distinct subscenario is for the field to converge toward a more homogeneous and comprehensive model of social entrepreneurship education. Thus business schools would accelerate efforts to integrate political and philanthropic skills into their curricula, while schools of public policy and administration would continue to enhance their market and generic management content. This case would reflect mutual learning among social entrepreneurship programs based in diverse institutional settings. Business school curricula would become more comprehensive and well rounded while policy and administration school curricula would become more cutting-edge. Ultimately, comprehensive curricular models would emerge, perhaps updating those developed by NACC for nonprofit management education that could serve as guidelines for future social purpose organization management across the board.

It is not clear at this point in time which scenario is the more likely. Although the theory of institutional isomorphism is compelling,

business schools and schools of public policy and administration (and religion and other varieties) have very different cultures. In business schools, the notions of social purpose, corporate social responsibility, and public service are relatively new and not entirely mainstream, while public service and social responsibility are intrinsic to schools of public administration and policy. It is easy to see how shifting of social entrepreneurship programs toward more comprehensive curricula models may be vigorously resisted or perhaps just neglected or ignored within schools of management and business, where students hope to recoup their payment of high tuitions and student loans after they graduate and where the accreditation and ranking systems make it difficult to build nonmarket-oriented skill sets. Thus, this scenario would require a conscious effort by schools of management and business to discount the tuitions of students seeking careers as social entrepreneurs and to revisit the standards by which they judge their own performance.

Another cultural and institutional dimension of social entrepreneurship is more subtle and less well understood in terms of its effects on business school and public administration and policy curricula. While entrepreneurship per se is a subject more commonly found in business schools than in schools of public administration and policy, entrepreneurship has historically not been high in the pecking order of subjects valued within business schools, although this is changing. In addition, entrepreneurship focuses on change and innovation, and usually the founding of new enterprises or programs. It tends not to focus on the maintenance and growth of established organizations. This is one area that business schools and schools of public administration and policy have in common: the principal focus on organizations rather than the process of entrepreneurship. A possible common ground for these two types of institutions is to work together on the notion of “social enterprise,” which encompasses the long-term management as well as short-term development of social purpose organizations. The framing of social entrepreneurship programs in business schools may be self-limiting, and a broader emphasis on social enterprise might increase their support within their own institutions while establishing more common ground with the rest of the field of social purpose management education.

Conclusion

Our findings show that the institutional location of a social entrepreneurship education program strongly influences its content. In particular, programs in business schools are more heavily tilted toward the teaching of market skills, whereas programs in schools of public administration are more balanced in their emphasis of market, political, philanthropic, generic management, and leadership skills. The theory of institutional isomorphism, as well as recent historical experience in the development of nonprofit management

education, suggests that the social entrepreneurship curricula offered in different institutional settings will become more alike over time. However, this is not at all inevitable, particularly in light of business schools' historical reluctance to enter the field of nonprofit or third-sector organization management until it was framed in their own terms of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise. In addition, recent trends in the public and nonprofit sectors toward market-based solutions and business methods dull the incentives of business schools to broaden their approaches. Nonetheless, mutual learning among social entrepreneurship education programs in alternative settings is essential if the quality and effectiveness of these programs are to advance. While there is nothing wrong with offering choice among various educational approaches to prospective students of social entrepreneurship, it remains important for all such students to gain a full set of tools for the challenges they will inevitably face in practice.

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Appendix

<i>Market Skills</i>	<i>Political Skills</i>	<i>Philanthropic Skills</i>	<i>Generic Management Skills</i>	<i>Leadership Skills</i>
CSR	Communities	Fund-raising	Capstone	Corporate governance
Branding and positioning	Conflict resolution	Leadership and service	Development management	Leadership and organizational behavior
Economics	Corporate governance	Nonprofit management	Ethics	Leadership and service
Environmental entrepreneurship	Development management	Social capital	Law	Leadership for sustainability
General entrepreneurship	International affairs	Social entrepreneurship	Management field projects	Leadership perspectives
Marketing	NGO activism	Social ventures	Nonprofit accounting	Leading social innovations
Marketing and PR for social change	Political economy	Strategies for nonprofits	Nonprofit finance	Leading the mission-driven organization
New venture	Politics		Program evaluation and information management	
Private sector skills	Public policy analysis		Strategic management in nonmarket environments	
Social entrepreneurship	Strategic management in nonmarket environments		Strategies for nonprofits	
Social venture				
Sustainable enterprises				