

12.6.2020, 14:00-15:30. Paul Tracey (University of Cambridge): *When Callings meet Entrepreneurship: How following their Calling affects Social Entrepreneurs and their Ventures*

Abstract

Many people seek to fulfill their calling – activities they perceive as profoundly meaningful and give purpose to their life – through their work. Indeed, an important body of research sheds light on the pursuit of callings through salaried employment. Recently, social entrepreneurship has become a key vehicle for the enactment of callings, but we know little about the challenges and opportunities of doing so. Yet there are good reasons to believe that the dynamics of callings for social entrepreneurs are different than for salaried employees. Specifically, creating a social enterprise and ensuring its financial viability requires pragmatism, which does not seem to align well with the idealism that often characterizes called individuals. To explore this issue, we conduct a qualitative study focusing on the experiences of social entrepreneurs as they build their ventures. We find that people who pursue their calling through social entrepreneurship risk overidentifying with their calling and becoming overwhelmed, jeopardizing their ability to fulfill their calling through their venture. We show that called individuals can overcome the core challenges that result from their calling by enacting call bounding, which involves pursuing a calling within clear limits. Our study contributes to scholarship on callings and social entrepreneurship.

Bio

Paul Tracey is professor of innovation and organization and codirector of the Centre for Social Innovation at the University of Cambridge Judge Business School. He is also professor of entrepreneurship at the Department of Management and Marketing, University of Melbourne. His research interests include entrepreneurship and innovation of different kinds, with a particular focus on social innovation. He received his PhD from the University of Stirling.