

Book Review

Innovation in Social Science

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Bibliography of the reviewed book: Márkus, E., Boros, J., & Kozma, T. (2022). *Sustainability of innovation*. Debrecen University Press

Introduction

In this book entitled *Sustainability of Innovation*, we can discover different ways to depict innovation which shape this world. At the same time, the information conveyed in this series offers a look at education from a different angle, one in which practices are both for the traditional classroom and for practical everyday life.

This book contains two key words in its title, and the fact that sustainability is mentioned 10 times and innovation 317 times tells us that the book's content in its entirety is shaped by innovation. The authors describe innovation as new solutions to solve everyday problems, and, when these solutions are permanent and successful, they become sustainable. In other words, the key to education shall be transformative, meaningful practices.

In the volume of this book the authors attempt to answer the question: when can we call a solution sustainable? This work is the fourteenth edition of the education book series, *Region and Education*. The editors of this last edition with their experiences contribute significantly to understanding the possibilities for tackling different social problems.

This book is edited by Boros Julianna, Dr. Márkus Edina, and Dr. Kozma Tamas. Boros works at the Faculty of Humanities as an assistant professor at the University of Pécs. Dr. Márkus is currently the Deputy Director of the Institute of Education of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Debrecen and Dr. Kozma is a Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Educational and Cultural Studies and founding president of the Center for Higher Education Research and Development, both at the University of Debrecen. Prof. Kozma is the founding editor of HERJ (Hungarian Educational Research Journal) and president of HERA (Hungarian Educational Research Association).

This last issue is composed of three chapters. The first is called "Sustainability", the second is named "Social Innovations" and the third is called "Lessons to Learn". In total the volume contains fourteen papers, and it has a session with the professional biographies of all the co-authors who participated in the edition at the end of the book.

Review

This section explains the distribution of the book and its content, as well as a brief summary of the articles from the collaborating authors. Despite the fact that not all the articles are mentioned in this review, they are all worth reading in detail as they serve as a guide to creative solutions to education issues.

The first chapter is composed of two articles, the first article takes a philosophical stance to define the concept of civic society in general and as pertains to Hungary. According to the author civic society is viewed from the perspective of the non-profit sector. The second article intends to clarify the concept of empowerment across disciplines, with emphasis on social innovation. Therefore, empowerment refers to the role of civic society in promoting innovation and is well understood as a basic right of the citizenry.

This initial chapter contributed to the understanding of and depicted the two concepts mentioned above from a theoretical and historical perspective. Socio-political aspects are explored to explain to the readers the

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intricacies of the for-profit, non-profit sectors in connection with the public and private sectors. On the other hand, the article about empowerment intends to explore its own concept, its emergence, and its changes through time. In this chapter the reader can learn how NGOs manage mechanisms to support social initiatives in disadvantaged areas and showing that innovations through responsible research can transform poor conditions.

The second chapter, one of the richest in content, shares with the readers the different areas of social aspects of humanity and the way they are impacted through the aid of innovators. Twelve articles belong to this section, all of them are inspiring and contribute to demystifying the idea of innovation. The concept of innovation for many can refer to the creation of something new, however throughout the different articles, we will come to realize that modification, creativity, and a different perspective from which to view things can also fit into the term, innovation.

The purpose of the book in this volume is to answer the question, “when can we call an innovation permanent, or sustainable?” Although all the articles are very insightful and help in giving answer to this question, four of them are contained in this review which contribute specifically to understanding sustainability in social sciences.

“*Leading in seedlings*” by Boros Juliana, Bucher Eszter, and Csikai Adél is about Olajütő Szociális Szövetkezet, an oil manufacturing business situated in the south of Hungary (Ormánság) in a small town called Kisszentmárton. It was established in 2009 with the help of the National Employment Service. The company emerged as a solution to social, environmental, and economic challenges. The eight, unemployed yet motivated founders started the company with the unique intention to serve the community, aiming at this one goal rather than separate individual motivations. This initiative strives to support the income of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs there. The location of this business is significant because this area, due to the good climate and the soil, is appropriate for the cultivation of pumpkin seeds for oil. Thus, pumpkin seed oil can be bought throughout the country in national food chains such as Spar, Auchan, Bijó, Herbaház, and MediLine.

The next article is entitled “*The case of the invisible school*” by Edina Márkus and Vanda Guba. Bottom-up initiatives have funds for establishing networks and the mentors receive remuneration, but this is not the case of the invisible school, which is a bottom-up initiative that involves lots of voluntary work. The invisible school connects children who wish to receive education to university students and/or adults who want to help. It started 6 years ago in 3 homes in Debrecen. The initiative intends to give positive reinforcement to the children and provide teaching practice and the improvement of communication skills for the volunteering mentors. The organization cooperates with NGOs, and is supported by the University of Debrecen, Auchan, ReFoMix Kft, and by the SZETA in Debrecen. The organizers coordinate the invisible school as a voluntary activity and the challenging part of the initiative is to recruit new volunteers and train them properly to fulfill the objective of helping children in need.

The third article to be explored is “*The role of community radio in covid-19*” by Gabriella Velics. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the education sector had to shift from the classroom to home. However, the conditions and success of this depended on external factors. One of the factors is the family’s socio-economic situation in which resources, like the internet, that we may take for granted as being available in some areas lack in other areas. This article examines the case study of four countries, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Bolivia, and Sierra Leone. The information was collected by the Community Media Forum Europe (CMFE), and it reveals that the case studies though these target countries be widespread, they still share several similarities in how to provide access to education in rural areas. Like other countries with problems such as geographical constraints, lack of technological infrastructure or even literacy, and where ICT technology was not an adequate solution because of these and other poor conditions, solving the issue relied on radio lessons in areas where the internet was limited. This the innovation proved a great help during the pandemic, when children had to stay at home, but education still needed to be imparted.

The last article is “*Community gardens: innovative platforms for inclusive education*” by Beáta Andrea Dan. This is a case study in a Romanian setting where the local special educational needs programs (SEN) and community gardens (agricultural practices in public spaces) cooperate to promote a healthy and inclusive environment. This initiative permits that through practical inclusion, students with special needs can discover the world. It also allows for new teaching techniques. Gardening activities are the central focus of a new extra-curricular program designed by nine SEN teachers and five volunteers for children with disabilities. This type of practice helps to develop physical activity and enhance the health of disabled students. The innovation in this practice is well accepted by the community, who are interested in supporting innovative educational platforms. Through this program, students’ anxiety is lowered when learning by doing, and the interest in biology and

natural science lessons increases. A positive factor, considering that traditionally teaching and learning practices, not only in Romania but also in many other locations, are theory-oriented, resulting in low student interest in academic knowledge. With time and effort, this initiative can turn the traditional way of teaching into an innovative practical form.

The previous four articles highlight the importance of innovation in different social sectors and show that it would be worth reading the remaining articles to encounter different ideas on how to positively contribute to, improve on, and change economic, social, and environmental sectors.

The last chapter of the book is “*Lessons to learn the key to sustainable innovations*” by professor Kozma. In it, he summarizes the book in a discussion about the sustainability of innovation using additional cases or examples. The main conclusion of this section is though the traditional relationship between a government and its people is hierarchical success will happen if innovation is accepted by the local, regional, or national government, having clear that the roots of sustainability in innovation are based on collaborative work between state and local officials and their citizenry in order to make innovation sustainable and to come up with new and improved ways to educate the next generation.

Conclusion

This book provides a source of knowledge for the people in the fields of humanities and educational science to help them comprehend the innerworkings of other fields and to aid them in integrating them. For instance, the idea of social entrepreneurship is promoted by non-profit international organizations like the European Union’s initiatives (for example Social Economic Action Plan (SEAP)). Although this topic requires more research and exploration, even reading the first article bestows upon the reader a wealth of knowledge and a firm background from which to learn more about new ways of innovation.

The articles in this book are examples of innovation in social science. The concept of innovation is explored along with the sustainability of the solutions to the problems mentioned in each of the articles. Different themes are approached, not only in an educational setting, but practical aspects beyond the classroom as well. In addition, concepts like community, top-down and bottom-up are explored, as well as the difference between the terms of feasibility and applicability. The content is rich in the sense that different fields, varied topics, and disadvantaged populations (e.g. SEN, influencers, poor communities, minorities, etc.) are the subjects of study. Therefore, I recommend this to be read by educators, sociologists, high social leaders, and those who want to be inspired by innovation and new alternatives to improve the lives of the students and communities in need of improvement.

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