

Nothing personal

On entrepreneurship in the public sector

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is often described in terms of proactivity, autonomy and innovativity. The predominant suppositions about entrepreneurship contains the idea that entrepreneurship is exercised in a market context where actors strive for economic profit. This thesis is built upon the idea that there is a paradox between autonomy and adherence to the market context. The view is that transformations in public sector could be understood in terms of entrepreneurship being exercised. The specific aim of the study is to produce knowledge about how entrepreneurship is practised in public activities, thereby attaining the general aim which is to promote knowledge about the transformation of the public sector.

The school sector has been chosen as the empirical area. Entrepreneurship has been operationalized into a project, i.e. an exception from regular activities. Three studies have been conducted. The first study consist of telephone interviews with 82 school principals who describes projects which where being run at each school. The two remaining studies are case studies of two different projects at two different schools.

One conclusion is that entrepreneurship in public service should be viewed as processes which possess a collective form. Collectivity was displayed in several ways. One way was through the large sets of actors present in many of the projects. The second way was the absence of focus on any particular individual. The third way deals with heterogeneous opinions and objectives. Explanations suggested emphasize that organizations within the public sector tolerate entrepreneurship in a collective form but not the version where the individual is represented as an entrepreneur.

Keywords

Public sector, entrepreneurship, project, collective, school, process, innovation, interview, individual, transformation.