

Social Innovation

Unit 3: Types and fields of Social Innovation

This unit is focused on knowing about the types and field of social innovation. For the same, we will learn about the different types of social innovation and learn to be able to integrate these types into practice. We will also look into the different fields of social innovation and explore and understand these fields.

To begin understanding the types of social innovation we can refer to Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd. The philosopher designed a systemic framework identifying ten types of social innovation.

These ten types of social innovation are socio - juridical, socio - cultural, socio - political, socio - ideological, socio - ethical, socio - economic, socio - organizational, socio - technical, socio - ecological and socio - analytical. As per the author, the social innovation sphere can include one or several of these typologies. This is the case because because one type might lead or require another one to exist (Wigboldus, S., 2016).

As for the types of innovation we can classify them as product innovation, process innovation, incremental innovation, radical innovation and disruptive innovation (Propris, L. D., 2002).

Product innovation can run the gamut from new products and product-line extensions to product improvements and style changes. Business managers need to understand this entire spectrum of product innovation in order to be able to compete effectively in the marketplace (Heany, D. F., 1983).

It is the introduction of something new. That something could be anything from new services to products, processes and even incremental improvements to something that already exists. In practice, however, people usually refer to new or improved products when they talk about innovation (<https://www.viima.com/blog/product-innovation>).

According to OECD, *process innovation* is the implementation of a new or significantly improved production or delivery method. This includes significant changes in techniques, equipment and/or software. Process innovations can be intended to decrease unit costs of production or delivery, to increase quality, or to produce or deliver new or significantly improved products (OECD, 2005).

Incremental innovation is about making small improvement to existing products or services. These are also normally low cost improvements and helps differentiate from existing competitors further (<https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/what-is-incremental-innovation/>). As stated by Gloria Barczak, professor emeritus of marketing and innovation at Northeastern's D'Amore - McKim School of Business, "You are not really trying to bring new technology in, nor are you necessarily trying to look at a new market but you are trying to improve the product in some way".

To understand *radical innovation* we can look at the dimensions of innovation as proposed by Verganti (Verganti, 2008). Verganti says that radical innovation are profound changes. These kind of innovation are innovation that combines power of new business models and technology. Radical innovation follows the principle of displacement and replacement.

After looking thoroughly through the types and field of innovation it is also important to understand the social entrepreneurship perspective of social innovation. The social entrepreneur perspective of social innovation talks about motives, mission and outcomes of social value creation process. Motives, mission and outcomes are important aspect of social innovation and for an entrepreneurship to be considered social these needs to be met.

Without the social motive involved in an entrepreneurial venture it is hard and complicated to consider as social innovation. It is also important to understand that social entrepreneurship as a part of social innovation requires co - creation through networks and partnership. We can argue that co - creation is a part of social entrepreneurship as well however, co - creation as a part of entrepreneurship differs in a social ventures in terms of profit oriented or positive impact oriented.

There is also a different kind of effect of institutional actors on the social entrepreneurship process in relation to social innovation. This is because various clusters can be taken in the context of social innovation in relation to social entrepreneurship. These clusters are namely: opportunity identification, evaluation, formalization, exploitation and scaling up.

Similarly, territorial development perspective of social innovation is also an important aspect to understand. There are patterns and links between social innovation and territorial development research. This is because social innovation is an alternative perspective of development. Territorial development perspective further underpins that social relations is important to empower communities.

Transition management perspective of social innovation helps explore socio technical innovation in markets. The catalyst for such perspective means civil society led innovation in social institutions arrangements. Transitions are transformation processes in which society changes in a fundamental way over generation or more (Rotmans, Kemp and Van Asselt, 2001).

At this stage, we also need to look into the key terminologies used and will be used during the course. We have discussed about social innovation and social entrepreneurship. We have touched into the concept of design thinking but gradually we will learn and understand in detail about the same.

We also need to understand the concept of VUCA. VUCA stands for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous context we are a part of. We will discuss in detail in the upcoming sessions. Further, terminologies intrapreneurship and extrapreneurship is also important to understand.

Intra is about entrepreneurship in a internal setup such as within an organization or within a small community whereas, extra talks about the external environment that can span beyond a country or has a bigger scope. Another key terminology necessary during the study of social innovation is *Bottom of the Pyramid*. It is a popular terminology to define the under and less privileged group/ individuals in a society. It also defines the group of people who are underrepresented, underprivileged and do not have access to or are unable to access basic necessities like food, shelter, health, education and as such.

Two key takeaways from this session are questions to ponder further.

1. How has the social innovation conceptualization evolved over time; what patterns of core – meanings and characteristics can be found in the social innovation definitions and research findings in different social innovation knowledge clusters?
2. The clear difference from other forms of innovation is on the basis that they are aimed at conferring benefits primarily to society and are understood as contributing to capacity building among people and communities in resource – constrained environments.

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