

Coping strategies of social entrepreneurs are explored in our narrative study of local social entrepreneurs with the aim of channelling the learnings into the teaching of social entrepreneurship in higher education.

## Theory-based Research Gap

Various types of social entrepreneurs and entrepreneurships are identified through their self-narration (Dey and Steyaert, 2010). Common characteristics of the narratives are, that: (1) they are framed as tensions between entrepreneurial logic and resistance or emancipation (Driver, 2017), (2) they describe the main turning points as struggles with these tensions and reflect on possible narrative resources they use (Dey and Lehner, 2016). An important resource is the “ideal” social entrepreneur narrative, which is transmitted by the social entrepreneurship intermediaries (e.g. Ashoka, Impact Hub). The “ideal” is a heroic individual in search for meaningful work life, while also having fun (Dey and Lehner, 2016). The study of Dempsey and Sanders’ (2010) on narratives of iconic social entrepreneurs captures the existence of this “ideal” social entrepreneur identity towards which they aspire, but also shows the dark side of its existence, by describing long working hours, sleep deprivation, and the disappearance of personal life. On the other hand, the ideal social entrepreneur is portrayed via the desirable characteristics (see e.g. Guclu et al, 2002), in order to become good, successful, incredible, brilliant or excellent social entrepreneur – as it is often framed in the business and management literature of social entrepreneurship.



The “ideal” social entrepreneur identity towards which they aspire has a conflicted, rather ambivalent nature asking for more research into how is the “ideal” work identity influencing the individuals’ struggle to construct a coherent, continuous and positive work identity for themselves.

## Research Questions

How do Hungarian social entrepreneurs construct their work identity in relationship with the “ideal” identity?

This is addressed through two sub-questions:

1. How are the expectations around the “ideal” social entrepreneur influencing and shaping the identity construction process(es)

One of the most powerful ideal identity transmission practice is mentoring.

2. How do the social entrepreneurs cope with the identity tensions emerging from occurring misfits with the ideal identity?

Besides the adaptive tactics we uncover non-adaptive tactics of coping strategies

## Research Methodology

The empirical research is based on 12 narrative interviews with Hungarian social entrepreneurs.

Interviewees are highly recognized social entrepreneurs and young, emerging social entrepreneurs in mentor-mentee relationship.

Thematic analysis on the narratives aims at identifying the micro-narratives built around identity tensions.

## Findings

The main research results capture the nature of identity tensions, and the coping strategies, highlighting adaptive tactics, such as, how do they transform their work into more meaningful, and also the non-adaptive ones (as self-alienation). Within the discussion section of the paper we also reflect on how the micro-narratives can contribute to the case-based learning of social entrepreneurship, adding to the competency development approach.

## Indicative references

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