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Linking Theory & Practice

Introduction to linking theory & practice section

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The article by Slatten, Guidry and Austin entitled “Accreditation and Certification in the Non-Profit Sector: Organizational and Economic Implications,” on the role of accreditation and certification in the non-profit sector, provides a useful perspective of how these processes could help assure donors and other stakeholders on the acceptability of practices in non-profit organizations. Borrowing from institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), the authors argue that accreditation and certification processes help external stakeholders determine an organization’s conformance to some prevailing industry-wide standard, and consequently assure donors of a minimal standard of quality. The authors also borrow from agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989) to explain how accreditation and certification can be seen as a layer of protection for donors from managerial interests that may stray from those of the organization’s original non-profit intent (Holland, 2002). By applying concepts from both institutional theory and agency theory to illustrations from the health care and education sectors, the authors help readers understand the importance of accreditation and certification to non-profit organizations. Research on non-profit accreditation and certification bodies is still relatively new and could benefit from more research effort. The authors have provided one useful perspective on the role of such bodies, and borrowed from two different theories to provide a framework for further thought. Readers will find this article insightful and thought provoking as they ponder the future of non-profit accreditation and certification bodies in the growing non-profit sector.

References

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