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IMPLICIT BOUNDARIES, BOUNDARY CONFIGURATIONS AND KEY AGENTS: TRACING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE LEARNING

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We micro-analysed organizational learning interactions in social enterprises from a boundary perspective. Using qualitative data from four Indian social enterprises, we identified three implicit boundaries – competence, social and power – which in isolation and through mutual interactions impacted learning. Dynamic stakeholder interaction configurations, learning mechanisms and critical agents were identified for each boundary. Immersion through lived experience rather than mere membership of the target community enabled learning across social boundaries. Learning involved interactions between competence and social boundaries, with middle managers playing a critical integration role in the process. Within the enterprise, horizontal overlaps between competence boundaries at the middle management level (through specific integration mechanisms) supported learning. Potential power boundaries due to knowledge differences were inferred in the enterprises. The prevailing learning modes, supported by socialized use of legitimate power, acted as influence mechanisms to facilitate learning.

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