



MCDSARE: 2020

International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on the Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education

THE CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FROM A BIBLIOMETRIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The concept of social entrepreneurship arouses a legitimate interest in both the economic literature and in the social sciences literature. The consideration of the concept of social entrepreneurship results in the identification of some notions from the conceptual area confined to it, such as sustainability, social responsibility, mission, value and social impact. But the definition and understanding of social entrepreneurship necessarily implies the term "social", and, once recognized as defining, this term implies the establishment of the role and contribution of social entrepreneurship in the society, suggesting the solving of several issues in this segment of social practice, such as the issues associated with vulnerable and marginalized groups. Since in the last years, the volume of scientific research in the economic field that addresses the topic of social entrepreneurship has increased dramatically and it is increasingly difficult for researchers to follow the relevant literature in their field, we have used quantitative bibliometric methods that can manage data and filter important works by estimating their impact and discovering the underlying structure of a research field. The purpose was to obtain a representation of the structure of the research area, by dividing the elements (authors of documents, articles, words) into different groups and to revise a certain line of research by using bibliometric methods that allow a quantitative approach for description, evaluation and monitoring of published research.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship; corporate social responsibility; bibliometric analysis;

1. INTRODUCTION

The idea of social entrepreneurship originates from the charitable activity, initiated mainly by the church. "Charity" is a term of Latin origin, "caritas", which refers to the feeling of compassion towards others. The term "charity" does not imply self-help, but only suggests the living of a feeling of

compassion. Social entrepreneurship is a process by which social value can be created by combining resources in new ways, exploiting existing opportunities in order to generate value and social development.

The social character of entrepreneurship can be found in several areas, such as social assistance and health services (Aravind eye hospital network, India), education and professional training, or social enterprises for integration into the labour market (which helps the unemployed, or those who are poorly qualified to be integrated into a productive activity).

Social entrepreneurship is innovative by means of its potential to provide solutions to some of the challenges of contemporaneity, among which we can mention: population aging, unemployment, poverty, people suffering from chronic diseases and thus socially exposed. The underprivileged population, the target of social entrepreneurship, integrates into various projects, which involve the promotion of social inclusion. The differences in approach of the social entrepreneurship can be reflected by means of a geographical conditioning, or by means of a historical one. For example, in the US, the country that relies on a solid functional market economy and tradition, social entrepreneurship seems to be in a more restricted position of interest. In South America, the position of social entrepreneurship is close to that of the US, but for different reasons. Here there is a private sector that is underdeveloped and the central authorities usually deal with the problems arising from the expansion of population poverty through coercive methods. The strategy is radically modified in the European space, in which both governments as well as local authorities support the ideas of social entrepreneurship, and at a pan-European level there is a normative consensus aimed at achieving an economic-social support (Kerlin 2009, EC 2009).

2. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN RESEARCH LITERATURE

Social entrepreneurship offers political actors and administrative decision makers at different levels of hierarchy a space for reflection and examples of good practices for achieving the desires of the social economy in the current landscape. As the dimension of the efforts of the state, as a global administrator of a country, can be overwhelming, the experiences coming from the field of social entrepreneurship can be a solution destined to alleviate this shortcoming (Defourny and Nyssens, 2006). There are authors who have concluded that the purpose of social entrepreneurship is that of a large-scale systemic change (Weerawardena, Sullivan, 2006), changes that should lead to the creation of social value (Dees, 1998) or to achieve a symbiosis between charity and business, in order to solve a certain social problem, borrowing the social purpose from charity and the entrepreneurial approach from the business environment (Kosteka, Bereznyak, 2014). The result of such management is measured according to the social impact brought to the community, because a social enterprise aims at first to solve such situations, the obtainment of income being somewhat secondary. We have to run the social enterprise in this direction in order for it to be, on the one hand, efficient, and on the other hand to continue its mission for which it was created. In terms of the role of entrepreneurship, this is focused on the search for social balance, as reality is an "unfortunate stable balance" that makes the exclusion, marginalization and suffering to be somewhat characteristic to a large segment of humanity (Martin, Osberg, 2007).

This assertion of the social economy implies its coexistence with other types of enterprises and even supports the coexistence of the profit-generating activities with the economic activities aimed at supporting the social and economic insertion of the disadvantaged segments of the population. According to the study made by Hoogendoorn (2016), social entrepreneurship is a clear process dependent on the level of development of a country. In less developed countries, where there are no alternative and sufficient sources of income, people are forced to practice entrepreneurship out of the necessity of subsistence, so that social entrepreneurship becomes the instrument of the rich, who perform this activity as a manifestation of wealth and of the surplus of wealth.

Through the benefits it achieves, social entrepreneurship has become a widespread practice and certainly topical in recent years, involving innovative approaches in fields such as education,

environmental sciences, economics, human rights, being considered an important element in the sustainable development of countries. (Mair and Noboa 2006). It can also be a tool that determines systemic social changes (Nicholls 2006) and a space for new hybrid partnerships (Austin et al. 2006), thus giving legitimacy to new types of mixed organizations. For-profit organizations pursuing social missions, non-profit organizations generating commercial revenues, and other mixed organizations and cross-sectoral collaborations are also considered, as all of these suggest that the traditional boundaries of this sector tend to fade (Battilana, Lee 2014). According to Weerawardena and Mort (2006), social entrepreneurship is a multidimensional construct, which implies a behaviour meant to result in the accomplishment of the social mission, having the capacity to recognize opportunities for the creation of social values. Mair and Marti (2004) consider that this is a process that consists in the innovative use of existing resources, used to explore and exploit opportunities for the fulfilment of a social mission. Thus, we observe a number of key characteristics that aim at focusing on social or environmental outcomes, which take precedence over strategic profit-making considerations. Another defining feature is innovation, which can be pursued by means of new, organizational models, by means of products and services able to respond to new societal challenges (Huybrechts, B., Nicholls, A., 2012).

Social entrepreneurs face challenges which are especially related to attracting financial capital (Zahra et al., 2009). This comes from the fact that the scope of activities is intentionally located in areas where the market operates poorly and there is limited potential for economic development (DiDomenico et al., 2010; Mair and Marti, 2006).

3. METHODOLOGY

Our aim was to analyse the concept of **social entrepreneurship** from the perspective of the actions it involves, as well as of another concept with which it interacts - **corporate social responsibility** by dividing the elements (authors of documents, articles, words) into different groups in order to identify a certain line of research.

As bibliometric methods we applied the co-citation analysis, the co-keyword analysis and the scientific mapping in order to map the structure and develop the social entrepreneurship domain. We have opted for bibliometric methods, because these use bibliographic data from the databases of publications, in order to construct structural images of the scientific fields and offer an objectivity measure in the evaluation of the research literature (Garfield, 1979). Thus, these can be used to detect informal research networks, namely "invisible colleges", which exist beneath the surface but are not formally linked (Crane, 1972). We intended to answer to the following research questions:

- **What authors influenced the research in the field of social entrepreneurship the most?**
- **What is the dynamics of the conceptual structure of social entrepreneurship?**

We chose the *Web of Science Core Collection (WOS)* as database because it provides metadata for a bibliometric analysis. In the search construction of the relevant articles, we have combined the requirements of Boley's logic with the fuzzy ones, resulting for the *Web of Science Core Collection* the *(social entrepreneurship*) AND (corporate social responsibility*)* search string, the selected time range being 1975-2020. Initially 489 articles resulted, later being reduced to only 336 by choosing articles written in English from the fields of business, management, business finance and economics.

We used as bibliometric analysis software VOSviewer (Visualization of Similarities), which produces a match frequency matrix, in which the elements of the matrix are co-citations (for the co-citation analysis), or keywords with frequent occurrences (for co-words analysis). The VOS method positions the concepts in a conceptual map based on the strengths of their association. Thus, concepts that have high associative power are located close to one another, while concepts that have low associative power are located far from each other. In order to visualize the associations between the authors we created a map of the author co-citation (figure 1), a concept introduced in 1981 by White and Griffith.

White and Griffith proposed that the citation analysis of the author contribute to the knowledge of the intellectual structure of the scientific disciplines, by "author" meaning the set of works published by an author.

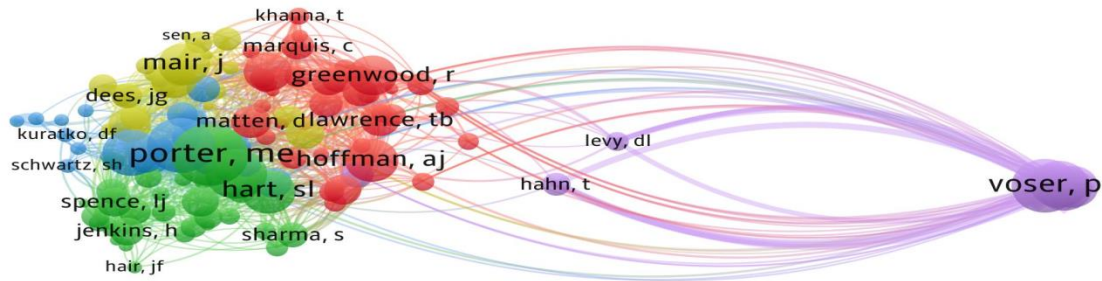
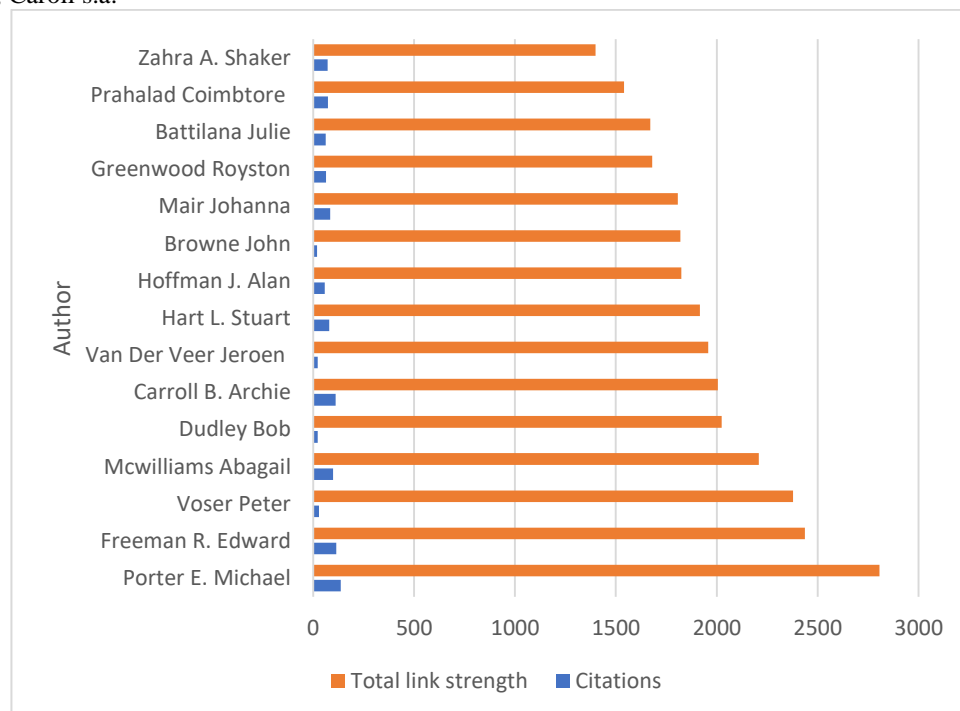


Figure 1. View of the map of the author co-citation.

We have selected in the VOSviewer software a minimum threshold of 20 co-citations, from a number of 13886 authors resulting a number of 124 who have passed the required threshold.

Each node represented an author, and its size indicated how many times the author was found in the 336 articles, and a link between two nodes indicated a citation relationship. The nodes were also grouped according to similarity.

The authors' co-citation network (see figure 2) showed that the most influential authors in the field of research related to social entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility, taking into account the citations and the total power of the link between them, were: Porter, Freeman, Voser, McWilliams, Dudley, Carroll s.a.



Co-words analysis is a content analysis, using the author's keywords to study the conceptual structure in a research field (Callon et al., 1983). Circles with the same colour suggest similar topics, addressed in the researched articles, and the circles which have different colours in the graph represent clusters. The lines between two circles indicate that two keywords or topics have occurred together. The thicker the lines, the more the keywords are associated. The words "entrepreneurship" and "corporate social responsibility" have the greatest connection, the distance between the two keywords demonstrating the relative power and the similarity of the subject addressed in an article. Corporate social responsibility and social entrepreneurship may be innovative alternatives, the first supported by the management of the organization, and the second by the capacity of the social entrepreneur, who seeks social change and wants to increase the opportunities of the environment by means of efficient, sustainable actions (Niño, 2015).

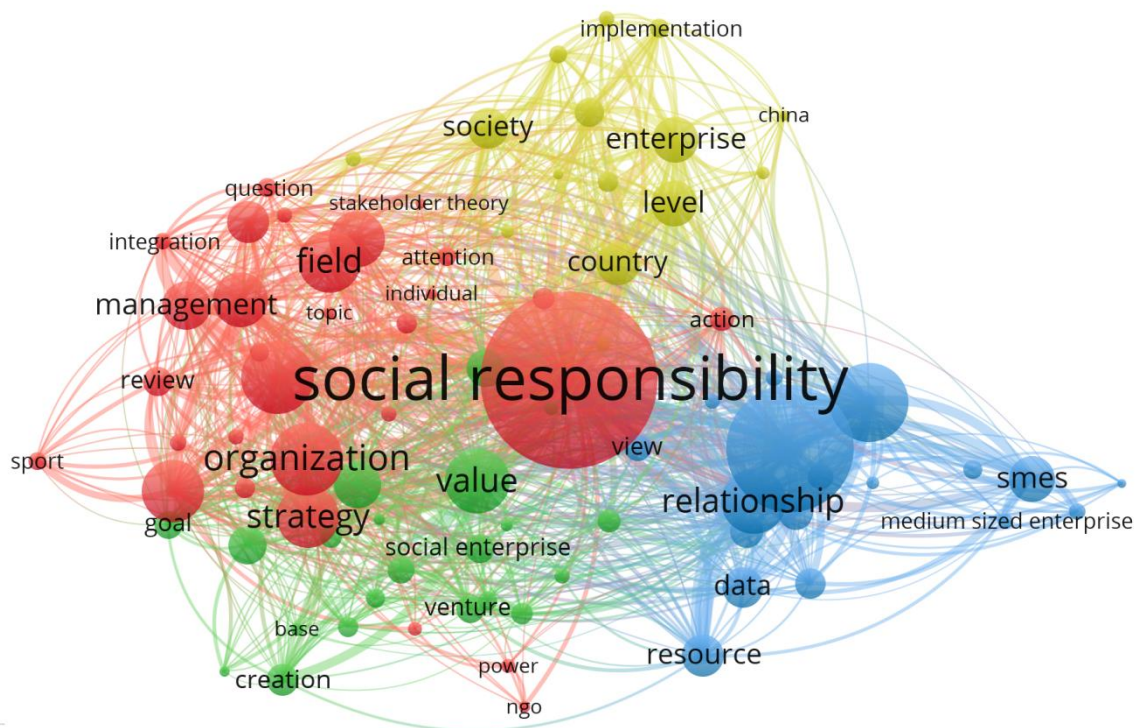


Figure 4. View in the network of terms targeting the topics of articles.

Figure 4 displays the words network indicating the topics addressed by the 336 selected articles. In the representative cluster, the red cluster, associations between the concepts related to social responsibility, management, organization, stakeholder theory can be identified, given that social entrepreneurship focuses on the actions arising from the management of the organization (Austin et al., 2006), and stakeholders in the organizational decision-making process are gaining an increasing role (Siegel and McWilliams, 2011). The green cluster associates terms such as value, creation, social enterprise, naturally, considering that social entrepreneurship is considered as a different form of entrepreneurship, because it gives a relatively higher priority to promoting social value and development, while harming the economic value (Mair, 2006).

4. CONCLUSION

The current study was based on several methods of bibliometric analysis, because these allow us to identify, in a relatively short time, the most influential researchers in a field and the connection between various concepts. Using the author co-citation analysis, we identified the most influential among them, namely Michael Porter, the author who initiated the concept of creating shared value (CSV). This concept has redefined corporate policies and practices, which enhance the competitive advantage and profitability of a company, while simultaneously promoting social and economic policies in the communities in which it operates. The creation of social value is the central purpose of social entrepreneurship, making significant contributions within the communities on which they intervene. Word analysis and conceptual mapping creation highlighted that social entrepreneurship is directly related to the concept of social responsibility, which by being integrated in the corporate strategy, can itself be considered a social innovation (Szegedi et al., 2016).

The main limitation of this study concerns the sampling process, which included articles extracted only from the Web of Science database. Although it contains complete information regarding the authors and cited references, this omits information that would have improved the quality of the study (as, for example, the distinction between theoretical and empirical articles). Although the bibliometric analysis offers a perspective on the dynamics of research and knowledge flow in a specified area over a period of time, the definition of clusters as theoretical pillars of research could be biased.

The use of author co-citation analysis is criticized by some researchers for its inaccuracy (Jeong et al., 2014), due to its limited focus on the authors themselves, without taking into account other information, such as the same author's citation time periods in each work. Although co-words analysis is often used to explore the network of research topics and trends in a specific discipline (Callon et al., 1991), this method has its weakness in ensuring the stability of the concept, which can become obsolete over time, in the long term (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 1997). However, keywords can help a great deal in citation analysis, revealing the main content of an article and facilitating the understanding of the significance of a researched concept (Griffith and Steyvers, 2004). The bibliometric analysis offers a perspective on the increase in the volume of literature and the flow of knowledge in a specified area, over a period of time, analysing the information collected in the database, such as citations, authors, keywords or the range of journals consulted (Van Raan, 2005). Future research may develop an advanced keyword ranking method in order to better explore research patterns and trends in an investigated field.

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