

Cooperative and Commercial Entrepreneurship in Puerto Rico: do entrepreneurial framework conditions exert the same influence?

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Abstract

As the comprehensive entrepreneurial literature shows, research on new venture creation is broad and varied. However, conceptual and empirical papers in *collective enterprises*, both at the start-up as in following phases, are limited. In this article, the authors focus on cooperative enterprises as a form of collective entrepreneurship. This work examines whether the entrepreneurial framework conditions (EFC's) in Puerto Rico favor or hinder the creation of cooperatives, contrasting the results with the effect of the EFC's in the commercial entrepreneurship. As an instrument for the comparison, we use the results from the National Experts Survey (NES) of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2013 study. According to the results of this exploratory study, the experts in both groups find that the majority of the entrepreneurial framework conditions in our environment do not favor entrepreneurship. However, commercial experts are more positive than the experts from the cooperative sector are.

Keywords: cooperative entrepreneurship, collective enterprises, creation of business, entrepreneurship framework conditions, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Puerto Rico

Introduction

As the comprehensive entrepreneurial literature shows, new venture creation has been studied from different and varied theoretical approaches. However, conceptual and empirical papers in *collective enterprises*, both at the start-up as in following phases, are limited. Collective enterprises are entrepreneurial initiatives created by a *group*. These are oriented towards the development of an economic activity that generates income and has impact in raising life conditions of the founders and the community (Aponte, M. 2011). Reasons for the limited research on this area can be diverse. According to Punita and Robert (2012), one of the explanations why collective entrepreneurship ventures have received less attention among the

press and academics, is in part because this type of initiatives focus primarily on the informal rather than the formal economy.

Among papers published between 2002 and 2009 in 7 academic journals in entrepreneurship¹ there were only two articles in cooperative enterprises (Aponte, M. 2011). On the other side, literature in social entrepreneurship has been growing (Saul E, Mickiewicz, T., and Stephan, U. 2013; Geophrey, D. 2012; Holger, P. and Shepherd D. 2011; GEM 2011; Nicholls, A. 2010; Doyle Corner, P. and Marcus H. 2010; Meyskens, M. et al. 2010; Di Domenico, M. et. Al 2010; Miller, T. et al 2010; Kistruck, G. and Beamish 2010; Matt Grimes 2010; Haugh, H. 2007; Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern 2006; Chell, 2007; Tracey y Owen, 2007).

The growing literature in social entrepreneurship show that there are multiple definitions of this term. GEM Special Report on Social Entrepreneurship (2011) exposes that social entrepreneurial activities manifest themselves in different ways - from a pure non-profit model to organizations that marry philanthropy with business models. For Holger and Shepherd (2011) social entrepreneurship is a process in which resources are combined in new ways to explore and exploit opportunities for value creation by meeting social needs, stimulating social change, or creating new socially aware organizations. Others define social ventures as organizations that pursue innovation with a social objective, which can include for-profit, nonprofit, or hybrid forms of organizing (Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern, 2006). Deeds and Anderson (in Varela, 2011) define social entrepreneurs as an individual *or a group of individuals* who innovate by integrating the business world with philanthropy to create social value.

The definitions for social entrepreneurship also differ widely across international contexts (Geophrey Desa, G. 2012). In his article, Geophrey describes how social entrepreneurship is conceptualized around the world. The author relates that social entrepreneurship in Germany, France, Belgium, and Ireland refers to third sector (économie solidaire) nonprofit ventures in the field of social services, financed and regulated by public bodies. Nordic countries use the concept with reference to worker cooperatives in the childcare and healthcare sectors. He exposes that in Spain, Italy, and Portugal social entrepreneurship refers to multi-stakeholder work integration programs for groups typically excluded from the labor market. The UK defines social enterprises as independent sector for-profit or nonprofit ventures that use quasi-

¹ *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice; Journal of Business Venturing; Small Business Economics, Journal of Small Business Management; Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship; International Journal of Entrepreneurship e International Small Business Journal.*

market mechanisms to increase efficiency in service provision. U.S. social ventures occur in a diverse array of organizational forms, from nonprofit organizations that involve some kind of earned income activity, to for-profit companies that have a social purpose (Short et al., 2009). According to this author. In Latin America, Asia, and Africa, social enterprises encompass nongovernmental organizations with few earned-income options, to for-profit startup ventures with a social mission. On the other hand, recent studies on social entrepreneurship in the United States have cited non-profit social enterprise as the most common form of social enterprise in that country despite the rapid growth of commercial forms of this type of organization (Siri T. et al. 2011).

As can be appreciated by the varied definitions of social entrepreneurship, the primarily characteristic to differentiate social enterprises from other entrepreneurial ventures seem to be their focus on addressing social problems independent on the organizational form it takes. It is in this sense that social entrepreneurship relates to collective entrepreneurship. Both types of entrepreneurial initiatives seek to relieve social exclusion and unemployment from poor or marginalized populations. Nevertheless, there is an important difference. In the case of social entrepreneurship, usually an entrepreneur has the vision, leadership and skills to start-up and develop the social enterprise. In the case of collective entrepreneurship, a group substitutes the entrepreneur. Although the collective venture may not have a social goal in itself, it contributes to raise life conditions for the founders as well as for the community. The cooperative model explicitly addresses the inequality gap and offers a mechanism to distribute income in an equitable way under a horizontal democratic management system.

In this article, the authors focus on cooperative enterprises as a form of collective entrepreneurship and compare the influence entrepreneurial conditioning factors exert in Puerto Rico for commercial and cooperative entrepreneurship. As an instrument for the comparison, we use the results from the National Experts Survey (NES) of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2013 study. GEM is the biggest and most important study about entrepreneurship in the world. It uses two surveys and secondary sources related to socioeconomic indicators of each country, enabling the comparison of the state, conditions and factors that influence the creation of new businesses among participating countries. In 2013 70 countries, including Puerto Rico, participated in GEM, representing all regions of the world and different economic development levels².

² GEM 2013 Global Report

Literature Review

As mentioned before, research on collective forms of entrepreneurship is limited. However, there are several works focused on the linkages and differences between social and commercial entrepreneurship. Among these, several articles address differences in the entrepreneurial orientation between the for-profit and nonprofit contexts as well as how the regulatory, political and technological institutions affect resource-mobilization in social ventures.

Punita Bhatt and Gailey (2012) present a case study on Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad, a women's cooperative in India. The authors use the case study analysis to assess the elements of empowerment embedded in the venture's business model as well as the women's individual perceptions of empowerment. The study concludes that according to the cooperative members, this collective form of entrepreneurship has empowered them in the areas of economic security, development of entrepreneurial behavior, and increased contributions to their families.

According to Aparna Katre and Salipante (2012), nonprofit initiatives involve private action for public good, whereas entrepreneurial initiatives involve private action for private good. The authors expose that there are systematic differences in the motivations, intentions and goals of individuals pursuing nonprofit and entrepreneurial initiatives, which implies differences in the organizing actions of each. The authors expose that there is the necessity to study the environment for these initiatives. Although broader personal, social, political, and environmental contexts influence launching both nonprofit and entrepreneurial initiatives, the motivations themselves and the axioms and rules associated with the respective institutional contexts are distinct (Katre and Salipante 2012). The study involved semi-structured interviews with 31 autonomous social entrepreneurs who had (co)founded 23 early-stage social ventures in North America, both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. A qualitative study of 23 social ventures revealed that entrepreneurs employ a blend of nonprofit and business venture behaviors, suggesting the importance of contextual factors.

Saul Estrin, Mickiewicz and Stephan (2013) addresses the linkages between social and commercial entrepreneurship, and propose the concept of social capital as an appropriate lens to apply to this relationship. Their nation-level measure views social capital as cooperative

norms and emphasize its development as being constructible through self-organization rather than as being endowed.

Morris Justin, Webb Rebecca and J. Franklin (2011) study the differences in the manifestation of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) between the for-profit and nonprofit contexts and the factors underlying these differences. The authors discern the differences between the nonprofit and for-profit contexts, and establish key differences in entrepreneurship between the two contexts.

Geophrey Desa (2012) contextualizes the relationship between institutional theory and resource mobilization in the domain of international social entrepreneurship. The article examines how regulatory, political, and technological institutions affect resource-mobilization in 202 technology social ventures from 45 countries. How do social ventures mobilize resources in the absence of supportive institutional environments? This article helps explain how individual social ventures contribute to societal level institutional change.

Saul Estrin, Mickiewicz and Stephan (2013) focus on the formal institutions that facilitate social entrepreneurship. Institutions are the “humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction” (North, 1991), shaping the national framework within which individuals choose commercial and social entrepreneurship. As the authors notice, to date, entrepreneurship theory has been largely concerned with institutions influencing commercial rather than social entrepreneurship.

Methodology

Puerto Rico was one of the participating countries in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) study for the year 2013. For this paper we will use the results of the Puerto Rico National Experts Survey (NES), one of two surveys developed by GEM. All participating countries in the GEM study use standard research instruments and methodology.

The NES main objective is to study, through a questionnaire, the perception of a group of national experts about several factors, named the Entrepreneurial Framework Conditions (EFCs), which may influence the creation of new business in an economy. GEM theoretical

model identifies nine main EFCs, presented in Table 1. Additional to these EFC's, the NES questionnaire include the experts' perception on other conditions, as: opportunities to startup, degree of skills and abilities to start up in the population, women's entrepreneurship support, high growth businesses support and encouragement, among others.

Table 1 GEM's core Entrepreneurial Framework Conditions

Condition	Description
1. Entrepreneurial Finance	The availability of financial resources - equity and debt- for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (including grants and subsidies).
2. Government Policy	The extent to which public policies give support to entrepreneurship. This EFC has two components: 2a. Entrepreneurship as a relevant economic issue and 2b. Taxes or regulations are either size-neutral or encourage new and SMEs.
3. Government Entrepreneurship Programs	The presence and quality of programs directly assisting SMEs at all levels of government (national, regional, municipal).
4. Entrepreneurship Education	The extent to which training in creating or managing SMEs is incorporated within the education and training system at all levels. This EFC has two components: 4a. Entrepreneurship Education at basic school (primary and secondary), and 4b. Entrepreneurship Education at post-secondary levels (higher education such as vocational, college, business schools, etc.).
5. R&D Transfer	The extent to which national research and development will lead to new commercial opportunities and is available to SMEs.
6. Commercial and Legal Infrastructure	The presence of property rights, commercial, accounting and other legal and assessment services and institutions that support or promote SMEs.
7. Entry Regulation	Contains two components: 7a. Market Dynamics: the level of change in markets form year to year, and 7b. Market Openness: the extent to which new firms are free to enter existing markets.
8. Physical Infrastructure	Ease of access to physical resources – communication, utilities, transportation, land or space – at a price that does not discriminate against SMEs.
9. Cultural and Social Norms	The extent to which social and cultural norms encourage or allow actions leading to new business methods or activities that can potentially increase personal wealth and income.

Source: *GEM 2013 Global Report*

The sample of experts is nonrandom; it consists of four experts knowledgeable in each of the EFC's categories presented in Table 1, for a total of 36 respondents. Each expert is selected based on its experience and reputation. In each category, there should be at least one entrepreneur or business owner. Each expert give valuations for the items in each EFC's on a five-point Likert Scale, where 1 represents the statement is completely false, 2 somewhat false, 3 neither true nor false, 4 somewhat true, and 5 completely true. A score of 4 or 5 implies a "positive" reply to the statement or a perception that the factor is favorable for the creation of enterprise; a score of 1 or 2 implies a "negative" reply or the perception that the factor does not foster entrepreneurship.

We received permission by the GEM board of Directors to also use the NES to study the case of cooperative entrepreneurship in Puerto Rico. This is a novel approach and is the first time the NES is used in this setting. The questionnaire is the same one used for the traditional NES. The difference is that the experts in this second sample are knowledgeable in the EFC's categories for the cooperative environment. This sample consists of 27 experts, three experts knowledgeable in each of the EFC's categories.

This work presents an exploratory and comparative study of the influence that the Entrepreneurial Framework Conditions (EFCs) have in the business creation activity between the cooperative and commercial entrepreneurship in Puerto Rico. Only the results for the EFC's with a Cronbach's Alpha with a value of more than 0.7 will be presented here. GEM uses this coefficient as a measure of the reliability of blocks of items or the internal consistency of the blocks. After all the NES data from all the countries is collected, GEM harmonizes the national files. Principal Component Analysis is a variable reduction technique that is used by GEM to summarize the items scores of a block in a new variable that represents a certain aspect of a particular EFC. The mean and the mean standard error of each new variable representing the EFCs is presented for the two samples studied.

Results

The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the scores of the two samples of experts regarding their perception on the effect of the main Entrepreneurial Framework Conditions in the creation of new business. Table 3 presents their

perceptions on additional conditions that might affect the national entrepreneurial environment. The scores are based on a five-point Likert scale, where a mean score greater than 3 may be interpreted as a positive perception of the experts on the effect of the EFCs in the creation of new enterprises.

Table 2 National Expert Survey descriptive statistics for the EFCs for the traditional and cooperative sample

Entrepreneurial Framework Conditions	Entrepreneurship experts score		Cooperative entrepreneurship experts score		Absolute mean difference
	Mean	Standard Error	Mean	Standard Error	
1. Finance: Financial environment related with entrepreneurship	1.90	0.09	2.14	0.15	0.24
2a. Government policies: priority and support	2.34	0.14	2.37	0.17	0.03
2b. Government policies: bureaucracy, taxes, regulations	1.54	0.09	2.47	0.19	0.93
3. Governmental programs	2.51	0.10	2.36	0.19	0.15
4a. Education & Training: Primary and Secondary	1.60	0.11	1.84	0.21	0.24
4b. Education & Training: Post-secondary (Vocational, Professional, College)	3.00	0.12	2.91	0.15	0.09
5. R&D Transfer	2.10	0.12	1.83	0.15	0.27
6. Commercial & services infrastructure	2.92	0.13	2.22	0.13	0.70
7a. Internal market dynamics	3.02	0.22	2.96	0.19	0.06
7b. Market openness:	2.21	0.14	2.29	0.14	0.08
8. Physical infrastructures access	3.38	0.13	3.72	0.13	0.34
9. Cultural and social norms	2.47	0.15	3.05	0.16	0.58

Scale: 1: Completely false, 2: Somewhat false, 3: Neither true nor false, 4: Somewhat true, 5: Completely true

The results in Table 2 presents, in general, a negative perception of the experts in both samples regarding the effect of the EFCs for the creation of business in Puerto Rico, implying the majority of the EFCs does not foster entrepreneurship. For both samples, only 2 out of 12 (16.7%) of the EFCs have a positive mean score above 3. The only favorable conditions for commercial entrepreneurship are the physical infrastructure access (3.38) and the internal

market dynamics (3.02), whereas for cooperative entrepreneurship they are also the physical infrastructure access (3.72) and cultural and social norms (3.05).

The lowest mean scores or less favorable EFCs in the opinion of the commercial entrepreneurship experts are government policies (1.54), primary and secondary education (1.60) and financial support (1.90); for the cooperative sample, the mean lowest scores are R&D transfer (1.83), primary and secondary education (1.84) and financial support (2.14). As we see both samples agree on two of the three less favorable entrepreneurial framework conditions for the creation of new enterprises (commercial and cooperative) in Puerto Rico: primary and secondary education, and financial support.

In terms of the major mean differences in opinion of the two samples of experts we have the following EFCs: (1) government policies, with an absolute mean difference of 0.93, being the commercial experts' opinion less favorable than the cooperative ones (1.54 vs 2.47); (2) commercial infrastructure, with an absolute mean difference of 0.70, where the cooperative experts perception is less favorable than the commercial ones (2.22 vs 2.92); and (3) cultural and social norms, with an absolute mean difference of 0.58, where the condition is more favorable to the cooperative entrepreneurship (3.05) than to the commercial one (2.47).

If we examine the standard errors of the mean scores for the twelve EFCs for both samples, we see that the scores of the cooperative entrepreneurship experts are more variable or heterogeneous than the other sample. In eight of the EFC's (66.7%) the standard error of the mean is larger for the cooperative sample. In fact, for the condition government policies is more than double (0.19 vs 0.09) and also for the primary and secondary education (0.21 vs 0.11).

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the scores of the perception of the experts about ten additional conditions that may help or hinder the creation of business. As previously stated, a mean score above 3 represents a positive experts perception (help) and below 3 a negative one (hinder). In general, these results are more favorable than the ones for the EFCs presented in Table 2. For the commercial entrepreneurship experts 60% of the additional conditions are favorable for the creation of business in Puerto Rico, and for the cooperative entrepreneurship sample 50%.

Table 3 National Expert Survey descriptive statistics for the traditional and cooperative sample

Additional Conditions	Entrepreneurship experts score		Cooperative entrepreneurship experts score		Absolute mean difference
	Mean	Standard Error	Mean	Standard Error	
10. Opportunities to startup perception	2.56	0.18	3.08	0.18	0.52
11. Degree of skills and abilities to start up in the population	2.47	0.17	2.00	0.16	0.47
12. Entrepreneur social image: Degree of motivation and valuation of entrepreneurs and its role	3.40	0.12	2.98	0.16	0.42
13. Intellectual Property Rights	3.31	0.18	3.34	0.18	0.03
14. Women's support to start up	3.36	0.12	3.45	0.16	0.09
15. Attention to High Growth: High growth businesses support and encouragement	2.69	0.15	2.53	0.23	0.16
16. Interest in Innovation: Valuation of innovation from the companies point of view	3.05	0.14	2.81	0.20	0.24
17. Interest in Innovation: Valuation of innovation from the consumer point of view	3.90	0.11	3.77	0.19	0.13
18. Wellbeing: Adequateness of regulations and work environment to allow people harmonize personal and professional life	2.37	0.15	2.67	0.14	0.40
19. Wellbeing: Perception on: entrepreneurs are generally more satisfied than rest of people on personal and working lives	3.62	0.12	3.16	0.14	0.46

Scale: 1: Completely false, 2: Somewhat false, 3: Neither true nor false, 4: Somewhat true, 5: Completely true

The favorable conditions for the cooperative sample of experts are: interest in innovation from the consumer point of view (3.77), women's support (3.45), intellectual property rights (3.34), wellbeing of the entrepreneurs (3.16) and opportunities to start up perception (3.08). For the

commercial experts, the favorable conditions are: interest in innovation from the consumer point of view (3.90), wellbeing of the entrepreneurs (3.62), entrepreneur social image (3.40), women's support (3.36), intellectual property rights (3.31), and interest in innovation from the companies' point of view (3.05). It is worth noting that both samples of experts have a positive opinion on the effect of these conditions for the creation of business (cooperative and commercial) in Puerto Rico: interest in innovation from the consumer point of view, wellbeing of the entrepreneurs, women's support, and intellectual property rights.

Both experts agree on the less favorable conditions presented in Table 3, although the ranking is not the same. For the cooperative experts the less favorable conditions are: (1) degree of skills and abilities to start up in the population (2.0), (2) attention to high growth (2.53), and (3) wellbeing in terms of the adequateness of regulations and work environment to allow people harmonize personal and professional life (2.67). For the commercial experts, the three less favorable conditions are the same but in a different rank order: (1) wellbeing in terms of the adequateness of regulations and work environment to allow people harmonize personal and professional life (2.37), (2) degree of skills and abilities to start up in the population (2.47), and (3) attention to high growth (2.69).

The major differences in mean scores are presented in: (1) opportunities to startup perception (0.52), where the cooperative experts' opinions are marginally positive (3.08) and the commercial ones not (2.56); (2) degree of skills and abilities to startup in the population (0.47), where the cooperative sample of experts consider this factor less favorable than the other experts (2.0 vs 2.47); and (3) the perception of wellbeing in entrepreneurs (0.46), where the commercial experts perception is more positive or favorable than the other sample (3.62 vs 3.16).

As it was shown for the EFCs in Table 2, the variability of the mean scores for the cooperative experts sample is usually greater (for 60% of the conditions) than for the other sample, making the opinions of these experts more diverse. The two conditions with the greater difference in variability are attention to high growth and interest in innovation for the consumer point of view.

Concluding Remarks

According to this exploratory study, the experts in both groups find that the majority of the entrepreneurial framework conditions in our environment do not foster entrepreneurship. However, as discussed, commercial experts are more positive than the experts from the cooperative sector are.

It is interesting to notice that both groups of experts identify among the first 9 EFC (Table 2), (1) primary and secondary education and (2) financial support as the less favorable entrepreneurial framework conditions for the creation of new enterprises (commercial and cooperative) in Puerto Rico. Among the additional ten EFC (Table 3), both groups of experts coincide that the less favorable conditions are: (1) degree of skills and abilities to start up in the population; (2) attention to high growth and (3) wellbeing in terms of the adequateness of regulations and work environment to allow people harmonize personal and professional life.

Among the most positive EFC for both samples is physical infrastructures access in Table 2 and valuation of innovation from the consumer point of view in Table 3.

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