

Păunescu, Carmen; Drăgan, Denisa; Cantaragiu, Ramona; Filculescu, Adina

**Article**

## Towards a Conceptualization of Social Entrepreneurship in Higher Education

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## **Towards a Conceptualization of Social Entrepreneurship in Higher Education**

Carmen Păunescu

UNESCO Department for Business Administration, Bucharest University of Economic Studies  
2-2A Calea Grivitei, District 1, Bucharest, 010731, Romania  
[carmen.paunescu@fabiz.ase](mailto:carmen.paunescu@fabiz.ase)

Denisa Drăgan

UNESCO Department for Business Administration, Bucharest University of Economic Studies  
2-2A Calea Grivitei, District 1, Bucharest, 010731, Romania  
denisa.glmn@gmail.com

Ramona Cantaragiu

UNESCO Department for Business Administration, Bucharest University of Economic Studies  
2-2A Calea Grivitei, District 1, Bucharest, 010731, Romania  
ramona\_cantaragiu@yahoo.com

Adina Filculescu

UNESCO Department for Business Administration, Bucharest University of Economic Studies  
2-2A Calea Grivitei, District 1, Bucharest, 010731, Romania  
adinafilculescu@gmail.com



## Abstract

The paper aims to investigate multiple meanings and conceptualizations of social entrepreneurship in nonprofit, business and higher education sector. In the paper, the characteristics of university social entrepreneurship are investigated and the driving forces that determine the social entrepreneurial behavior of academic community members are discussed. Also, possible links between social responsibility and social entrepreneurship in higher education are addressed. The conceptual model that is proposed is based on a thorough review of the recent literature on academic entrepreneurship, social responsibility, and social entrepreneurship. Also, secondary data in the form of official reports and other relevant documents available on universities' and public and non-governmental organizations' websites have been scrutinized. The examination reveals that, generally, universities experiment with different models of entrepreneurship, both business and social. Our findings also suggest that universities which are society-oriented and driven by a social mission are more likely to transform into social entrepreneurial institutions than the others. The paper argues that a university with an entrepreneurial culture embedded in all organizational processes and institutionalized at all managerial levels tends to be more concerned with addressing current society problems or unsolved market needs. Our findings need to be further tested empirically in future researches.

**Keywords:** university engagement, social entrepreneurial behavior, social entrepreneurship, university entrepreneurship, social responsibility

## 1. Introduction

According to a report prepared in 2012 for the European Commission, which analyzes the effects and the impact of entrepreneurship programs in higher education, entrepreneurship has a strong positive impact on the economy and society of a nation. It is a purposeful activity which includes initiation, promotion and distribution of wealth and societal value. An entrepreneur is viewed as a critical factor in economic development and an integral part of the socio-economic transformation. We argue that an entrepreneur is someone who changes the way people do certain things through creative destruction

(Schumpeter, 1934), while entrepreneurship is seen as the way to innovate and create value as well as an unprecedented desire to change how things are viewed and done.

In recent decades, the concept of entrepreneurship has been extended to include not only those perspectives directly referring to activities of business creation and development, but also those perspectives which embrace other types of entrepreneurial initiatives (Stam and van Stel, 2009). These can be manifested in the form of academic entrepreneurship (Cantaragiu, 2012), social entrepreneurship (Mort et al., 2003), political entrepreneurship (Martin and Thomas, 2013), scientific entrepreneurship (Casati and Genet, 2013) or eco-entrepreneurship (Mars and Lounsbury, 2009).

In all these new strands of entrepreneurship the accent is placed on sustainability and long-term benefits that result both for the organization itself and for the surrounding environment encompassing both its natural and human resources (Schaltegger and Wagner, 2011). Therefore, entrepreneurship proves to be a new way for old and new institutions to survive and thrive, this being true even for higher education institutions which are currently confronted with an increasing competition coming from alternative forms of education and a high degree of internationalization (Marginson, 2006).

Nowadays, those universities which are not entrepreneurial are more likely not to be competitive in the new market of higher education and this will lead to their demise in the newly created environment based on extreme competition (Păunescu and Cantaragiu, 2012). That is why, recently, more and more universities have become aware of the need to embrace social goals and to build an identity that is to be recognized through the impact the university has on the communities in which it is present.

In this context, the present paper aims to open up some research avenues for social entrepreneurship theory by presenting an exploratory analysis of the extent to which elements applicable to university entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship in non-profit, business or government sectors are transferable to social entrepreneurship in higher education. The main purpose of this paper is to awaken scholarly curiosity for social entrepreneurship as part of the academic environment. Thus, the paper explores multiple meanings and definitions of social entrepreneurship using an extensive analysis of the recent literature in the field. Also, by using various specialized official reports and other relevant university documents, the dimensions and characteristics of university entrepreneurship are investigated and the driving forces that lead to the social entrepreneurial behavior of academic community members are explored. In addition, possible links between social responsibility and social entrepreneurship in higher education are addressed.

## 2. Conceptual Definitions of University Entrepreneurship

There has been an increased scholarly interest in academic entrepreneurship or academic capitalism (as Slaughter and Leslie (1997) have termed it) in the field of hard sciences. This is evident even from some of the definitions given to academic entrepreneurship which are based on patenting, research contracting, royalties and spin off companies, most of which are viewed only from the perspective of the academia that patents inventions and not from that of an artist who protects his/her rights by copyright or a scientist who sells his/her know-how (e.g., Wright et al., 2009). Different social and economic environments may lead to different challenges being posed to universities in the transfer of technology and knowledge to the market. Today, universities battle each other in the quest for capital and the market makes no discriminations between hard or soft sciences, they all have to prove their value or they disappear. Moreover, knowledge is created inside all higher education institutions oriented towards research, but it only becomes valuable when it impacts society.

When the term academic entrepreneurship was first conceived, it referred simply to an extension of business entrepreneurship to academia, a mere differentiation between companies founded based on academic knowledge and the others. As its popularity grew and more and more disciplines and institutions got involved in entrepreneurial activities, it started to borrow the discourse of the social entrepreneurship which is a rising thread of inquiry in social sciences today. Based on the different views of entrepreneurship, the scholars involved in the study of academic entrepreneurship can be integrated into three main categories expressing the extensiveness of the definitions they use: commercial definitions, knowledge transfer definitions and value creation definitions (Cantaragiu, 2012).

The prevailing definitions of academic entrepreneurship start from the idea of for-profit business creation and talk about university spin-offs, the companies started by academia (Shane, 2004; Wright et al., 2009). Some authors have created a more detailed taxonomy and have separated the businesses created by academics on the basis of their own research from those created by other means, talking about general academic entrepreneurship and research-based entrepreneurship (Goel and Grimpe, 2011). Others have looked only at academic businesses set up using venture capital (Zhang, 2007), while others took into consideration any business created on the basis of intellectual property generated inside universities, irrespective if the entrepreneur was part of the academia or not (Hayter, 2011).

The authors who choose to regard academic entrepreneurship as a means of transferring knowledge from the university environment to the market extend the definition so that it includes all the contacts that the academics have with business entities which are the basis of monetary value creation (Philpott et al., 2011). The third stream of definitions embraces the view of entrepreneurship as creation of

societal value, without necessarily putting emphasis on monetary value in particular (Botes, 2005), and it will prove particularly worthy of attention as it provides a sound basis for the discussion of social entrepreneurship in universities.

In the current paper, academic entrepreneurship is regarded as the result of one or many individuals' option for certain activities which happen inside an organizational setting. This view stresses three main facts (Cantaragiu, 2012): (1) that academic entrepreneurship can be the choice of a rogue academic who decides to take matters in his/her hands without institutional support, (2) that it can be the result of many individuals working together to achieve an entrepreneurial organizational culture, and (3) that irrespective of whether it happens with or without organizational support, it does happen inside an organizational setting which implies that there are certain norms and regulations that need to be combined with the personal attributes of the persons involved in this type of activity in order to obtain an entrepreneurial result. Thus, the person and the institutional context matter in equal measures and they both shape each other, making academic entrepreneurship a result of both personal and organizational characteristics.

Based on the definitions presented and taking into consideration their blind spots, the following conceptual definition has been conceived: *"academic entrepreneurship is a practice performed with the intention to transfer knowledge between the university and the external environment in order to produce economic and social value both for external actors and for members of the academia, and in which at least a member of academia maintains a primary role"* (Cantaragiu, 2012). This definition includes a part of the category of the commercial definitions because it stresses the importance of the academic entrepreneur as the one who coordinates the transfer of knowledge as business creation and excludes those companies created on the basis of university knowledge but not by academia. Thus, the academic entrepreneur is the initiator of the entrepreneurial practice and it has to remain the main shaper of the practice in order for the activity to fit into what is called academic entrepreneurship.

### **3. Current Theories on Social Entrepreneurship**

The field of social entrepreneurship (SE) has been recently identified as a distinct field of study and it has been given increasingly important recognition ever since. This domain has attracted the interest of many researchers, academics and policy-makers in recent years. Social entrepreneurship is an emerging area of investigation within the entrepreneurship, social responsibility and not-for-profit business management literatures (Weerawardena and Mort, 2006). The terms "social entrepreneur/ship" are

widely used, but very few are those who actually understand the real meaning of social entrepreneurship.

One group of researchers refers to social entrepreneurship as not-for-profit initiatives in search of alternative funding strategies or management schemes to create social value (Austin et al., 2006). Thus, social entrepreneurship is viewed as an entrepreneurial activity with an embedded social purpose. It seems to be a very complex process aimed to concomitantly achieve very strong objectives which are economic, social and environmental, but the biggest efforts must be directed to the pursuit of social goals. Social ills or unmet social market needs have been identified as drivers of social entrepreneurship, and non-profit organisations are seen as a growing source of solutions to issues that currently threaten the well-being of society.

Another stream of research views social entrepreneurship as a means to alleviate social problems and catalyze social transformation (Alvord et al., 2004). Social entrepreneurship is a process that catalyzes social change and addresses important social needs in a way that is not dominated by direct financial benefits for the entrepreneurs. Higher priority is given to promoting social value and development versus capturing economic value (Mair and Marti, 2006). Therefore, social entrepreneurship refers to the establishment of new social enterprises through innovative means and the implementation of creative solutions to the social issues identified.

According to Dees (1998), social entrepreneurship combines the passion for pursuing a social mission with a business model sustained on innovation and determination. Dees views social entrepreneurs as change agents and creative innovators in the social sector. In contrast with this approach, there are more pragmatic definitions that see social entrepreneurship as a source of generation of income by ventures in the pursuit of social outcomes (Boschee, 2001). Tan et al. (2005) suggest that social entrepreneurship is aimed at benefiting society rather than individuals or stakeholders. A person is a social entrepreneur only if that person attempts to make business profits, bring benefits or create value for society or a segment of it by innovation in the face of risk, in a way that involves that society.

Social entrepreneurship may be expressed in a vast array of economic, educational, research, welfare, social and spiritual activities adopted by various organizations (Leadbeater, 1997). Considering this diverse range of activities, researchers have attempted to conceptualize social entrepreneurship in different contexts, including the public sector, universities, community organizations, civil servants, and charities. Most research studies were conducted in the field of non-government not-for-profit organizations. For example, Cook et al. (2001) suggest that social enterprises that carry out for-profit activity to support other non-profit activities can be viewed as social enterprises.

Social entrepreneurship is emerging as an innovative business approach for dealing with complex social needs, especially in diminishing the dependence of business ventures and other organizations on public funding (Johnson, 2000). In their study, Cook et al. (2001) criticize the idea that social entrepreneurship can replace welfare state initiatives as misguided and dangerous. Instead they take after Giddens (1998) and argue that the social partnerships between public, social and business sectors harness the power of the market in the interest of the public.

To explain the content of social entrepreneurship, other researchers (e.g., Mort et al., 2003) introduce a multi-dimensional construct which builds upon three concepts: entrepreneurship, social responsibility and innovation. The key dimensions of the social entrepreneur construct are: is driven by social mission, shows a balanced judgment, explores and recognizes opportunities to create better social value for clients, is innovative, and is pro-active and risk-taking. Furthermore, Reza et al. (2010) regard social entrepreneurship as the practice of responding to market failures with transformative and financially sustainable innovations aimed at solving social problems. There are three essential components of social entrepreneurship discussed: (1) response to market failures, (2) transformative innovation, and (3) financial sustainability. Social entrepreneurship leads to the establishment of new social organizations and continued innovation in existing ones.

In what concerns the legal form of organization, Pomerantz (2003) defines social entrepreneurship as *„the development of innovative, mission-supporting, earned income, job creating or licensing, ventures undertaken by individual social entrepreneurs, nonprofit organizations, or nonprofits in association with for profits“* (p. 25). As such, social entrepreneurship can be pursued by different types of entities, nonprofits, for-profits or government, and is meant to contribute to improving the society welfare by creating jobs and other types of social value.

Despite the increasing academic as well as practice interest in social entrepreneurship, the business management area still lacks a good conceptual understanding of the economic role and logic behind the social entrepreneurship process (Santos, 2009). Definitions are multiple, but they are usually driven by practice rather than theory (Mair and Marti, 2006). The conclusion that derives from our literature review is that even though there is a substantial body of literature on social entrepreneurship emerging from a number of domains, the literature is fragmented and has not lead to a development of an empirically derived coherent theoretical framework.

Based on the definitions presented, the following conceptualization of social entrepreneurship has been conceived as an innovative process which occurs in social mission-driven organizations aimed to

generate creative new solutions for society needs remained unsolved, by using a limited pool of resources, which will lead to social transformation and value creation.

#### **4. Linking Social Responsibility to Social Entrepreneurship in Higher Education**

Practice has shown that adopting the principles of social responsibility (SR) serves the organizations' objectives of increasing its competitiveness and sustainable development. According to Sen (2007), in the years to come, it will not be sufficient for organizations *"to treat social responsibility as a discreet part of business strategy"* (p. 552), instead this should be integrated in the achievement of the business commercial objectives.

The socially responsible behavior of universities is regulated by the same laws which apply in the case of commercial companies and it is thus a voluntary action. As Nejati et al. (2011, p. 440) state, *"in the lack of any specific law obliging universities to consider social responsibilities as their core policies, and any incentive for considering social practices as a KPI for universities' performance measurement, the social practices of universities seem to be more voluntarily-based and still unexplored"*. However, most universities have chosen to adopt some type of SR activities in the areas of economic, intellectual, social and cultural capital. For example, Nejati et al. (2011) showed that the top ten universities in the world practice reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, reduction in the use of fossil fuels and increase their use of renewable energy, increase of environment awareness among staff and students and running a specialized environment centre/network. Concerning the social and cultural areas, we have found that universities can contribute to the fostering of local and national culture as it happened in the case of the University of Adelaide which supports a student organization aimed to promote the local literature which is threatened by cultural extinction (Mehta, 2011). Universities are also concerned with the promotion of social entrepreneurship by changing their curricula and implementing activities in which students get involved with communities that are in need of some type of assistance. Matten and Moon (2004) affirm that as a highly diverse understanding, contextualization and packaging of social responsibility practices in universities persists, there is a need for more institutionalized future drivers of social responsibility in education, particularly in the form of *"support from business stakeholders and inclusion in program accreditation and ranking systems"* (p. 335).

There are many ways to implement social responsibility initiatives, but one clearly stands above others. This is the approach in which the employees of the organization volunteer for socially beneficial projects, while the organization provides only professional support and guidance. It is frequently argued that social responsibility is the domain of large enterprises, but the employees of a smaller company as

well as of a public institution or university can volunteer for beneficial projects in the same way as those belonging to a multinational company.

Advancing the civic engagement of higher education is about to become an important global movement (Stanton, 2008). Universities are supposed to improve the quality of life in their host communities and contribute to solving the needs that are established by those communities (Bringle and Hatcher, 2002). Leadership seems to be the most important contributor to fostering social responsibility in higher education. This can be bottom-up leadership which fosters grassroots social initiatives or university leadership in which the management encourages social entrepreneurial drives (Astin and Astin, 2000).

In the release following the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, it is clearly mentioned that higher education “should lead society in generating global knowledge to address global challenges, inter alia food security, climate change, water management, intercultural dialogue, renewable energy and public health” (p. 2). The university should contribute to sustainable development, wellbeing and the realization of human rights. As Astin and Astin (2000) state: “[h]igher education has the potential to produce future generations of transformative leaders who can devise more effective solutions to some of our most pressing social problems” (p. 6).

Government agencies and foundations have invested substantial sums of money to identify and meet social goals, but they have failed in terms of efficiency and sustainability. Major social sector institutions are often viewed as inefficient, ineffective and unresponsive (Haugh, 2005). Social entrepreneurs are needed to develop new models for a new century. As there are changes in everyday lives, they are also subject to change in terms of thinking style, behavior and of finding solutions to society’s problems. As such, social entrepreneurship is considered an excellent way to change society, to reshape customers’ behaviors and to create social value such as development and sustainability (Păunescu, 2012).

Even though social responsibility has increased its visibility in the corporate and financial sectors, the higher education sector’s involvement in social concerns has remained surprisingly low and has its limitations (Vasilescu et al., 2010). Universities have not sufficiently expanded their academic curriculum with courses in which students are taught about responsibility and how their particular professions might contribute to a better world. An approach towards establishing more dynamic and proactive relationships with larger societies is sensed. Nevertheless, there are already some prominent examples of universities that have a social entrepreneurship orientation and that developed programmes, initiatives and activities that promote best practices in this respect. These top universities are known at the international level through their social implications and can be set as benchmarks, especially when moving from the concept of local to the one of global.



However, we consider that the social responsibility activities represent a good place to look for knowledge about the environment which could lead to the discovery of social entrepreneurial opportunities (Păunescu, 2012). Moreover, some of these activities can be transformed into distinct social entrepreneurial practices by institutionalization and integration into the university's mission and strategy and organizational structure. Most importantly, the university has to acknowledge that the accomplishment of any social mission depends on the participation of multiple actors and that it is a collaborative effort (Păunescu and Cantaragiu, 2012).

## **5. Conceptualization of Social Entrepreneurship in Higher Education**

### **5.1. Practices of Social Entrepreneurship in Universities**

Everyone within the university needs to adhere to a responsible behavior in order to succeed. The implementation of cooperation for an overall responsible behavior through communication, empathy, solidarity, fairness, morality and appropriate rewards is a must. Also, everyone within the university needs to become motivated by a common mission, not only by personal gain, which encourages individual creativity and entrepreneurial action. According to Philpott et al. (2011), the university with an entrepreneurial orientation is concerned with improving the professional and social competences being offered, but also with the results and performances obtained both in the scientific and technological domains, especially on the labor market. Therefore, a university with a social entrepreneurial orientation should be concerned with solving the emergent social needs of the communities in which it is present and creating value for the segment of society it addresses.

In terms of the shape of the relationship between social entrepreneurship and universities we can talk about universities that set up social entrepreneurship programs and research centres with the view to develop the knowledge in this field and become thought leaders and universities that go one step further and build incubators for social enterprises.

As regards the first type of relation, the most prominent case is that of the Centre for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship (CASE) set up in 2002 at Duke University, the Fuqua School of Business. This initiative targeted the establishment of an MBA Program for students interested in setting up and running social businesses and the involvement in the pursuit and dissemination of state-of-the-art research in the field. Included in the plans for the future are the desire "to identify the education needs and key players in the field of social entrepreneurship and develop a business plan for establishing CASE as the leading disseminator of practical social entrepreneurship knowledge and training"<sup>1</sup>. Of course,

teaching is usually blended with hands-on experiences which allow students from social entrepreneurship programs to get involved in actual projects. For CASE students, this implies working closely with social enterprises to provide viable solutions for their problems. Initiatives like this have sprung all over the globe, in South Africa, at the University of Johannesburg where they have set up a Centre for Social Entrepreneurship and Social Economy (CSESE); in USA, at Columbia Business School which through its Research Initiative on Social Entrepreneurship (RISE) strives *“to study and disseminate knowledge about the markets, metrics and management of for-profit and non-profit social enterprise and social venturing”*<sup>2</sup> and at Stanford University where they have the Centre of Social Innovation; and in Canada, at the University of Alberta where we can find the Canadian Centre for Social Entrepreneurship.

In some other cases, universities have decided to support social entrepreneurship initiatives by offering professional advice on marketing, funding, finance, human resources with the help of their staff and students. University of Hertfordshire, through its Social Enterprise Unit has become partner for the UnLtd and HEFCE HE Support initiative and desires to develop a support structure for social entrepreneurship. Currently, they offer business advice to charities, non-profit organizations and also allow their MBA students to engage with the community through a project of their choice. Another way is to set up an award for social entrepreneurship initiatives and encourage students and staff members to apply as is the case with the Oxford Brookes Social Entrepreneur Awards or the Global Social Entrepreneurship Competition set up for students all over the world by the Global Business Centre at the University of Washington, Foster School of Business.

Other universities have gone one step further and they have set up projects involving business ideas contests and incubators for social enterprises. This is the case with the SocialSpin project at the Catholic University of Portugal which has started in 2010 as a platform to support the start-up and development of social enterprises by young people. The interesting feature of this program is that SocialSpin is part of a larger project called Spinlogic incubator which also contains three other groups: BioSpin (agriculture and food industry, environmental protection and health), ArtSpin (arts and design, communication and social media, cultural and creative industries) and GesSpin (business consulting and training). This type of organization creates powerful synergies among the groups and the rest of the university. Another example is provided by the Global Centre for Social Entrepreneurship set up by the University of the Pacific with the mission to actively engage the university by combining academic and practical

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.caseatduke.org/about/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.riseproject.org/mission.htm>

curriculum, enterprising internships and apprenticeships, applied research, global and local community outreach and career opportunity development<sup>3</sup>.

In Romania, the Association of Schools of Social Work (ASSW) was established in 2010 as a non-governmental organization with the purpose of promoting and developing the education and research in the field of social work, both at national and international levels. The founders are academics from the top four Social Work Departments in Romania: University of Bucharest, University Babes-Bolyai of Cluj, University Al.I.Cuza of Iasi and West University of Timisoara.

One of the most well-known universities in terms of involvement in social innovation comes from the UK, a country which has set up nation-wide initiatives trying to foster social entrepreneurship programs in higher education institutions. Northampton University has an institution-wide social enterprise strategy through which it supports students who intend to open social enterprises and it also uses the knowledge it constantly gathers to try to influence both policy and practice. The university targets three pillars: a student offer which includes the opportunity to work in a social enterprise, the integration of social enterprise into teaching, learning and research and a long-term strategic project with local authorities, businesses, the third sector and individual citizens in Northamptonshire<sup>4</sup> through the Inspire Northamptonshire Initiative which has as a mission to transform the county into the Silicon Valley of social enterprise in the UK.

The idea behind these initiatives is to continuously foster the creation of university spin-outs which are socially oriented. In a report from 2009 drawn up by the Anglia Ruskin University<sup>5</sup> there are offered a number of case studies of social ventures set up by students or researchers which range from a management consulting firm for the non-profit sector which offers its services for free (The Cranfield Trust set up by Cranfield alumni), to a centre which provides diagnostics services for adults suspected of having autism (the Autism Diagnostic Research Centre from University of Southampton) and to an organization that supports female-led rural businesses to start and mature (WiRE from the Harper Adams University College).

What most universities choose to do is to set up initiatives in partnership with local and national entities that are able to provide funding and additional support for social business start-ups. The level of embedding in the local environment is proving to be mandatory and beneficial for successful university social entrepreneurship as it is proven by the Wilson Center for Social Entrepreneurship which sustains

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<sup>3</sup> <http://globalctr.org/about/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://socialenterprise.guardian.co.uk/social-enterprise-network/2011/jun/13/social-enterprise-higher-education-northampton-university>

<sup>5</sup> <http://195.88.100.72/resource/files/2010/01/12/guide%20to%20social%20enterprise.pdf>

the non-profit community and Pace University through education, research, communication and advisory service provided with the help of Boston-area entrepreneurs and philanthropists. Also, at Tulane University there are a number of programs that target community engagement such as the Urban Innovation Challenge which provides fellowships to innovators working on system level change ideas in New Orleans or PitchNOLA, a partnership with SENO and LRI, organized as a competition for ideas that solve specific social problems in New Orleans.

## 5.2 The University Social Entrepreneurship Construct

As it was previously discussed, scholars regard social entrepreneurship in multiple ways depending on the surrounding societal context and the roles played by the social entrepreneur, such as: value creation, society transformation, social innovation, financial sustainability (Mort et al., 2003; Austin et al., 2006; Mair and Marti, 2006). An extension of these approaches to higher education allowed us to explain the concept as follows: (1) social entrepreneurship in universities is viewed as a response to unsolved social needs regarding, for example, the access to education and quality of education, (2) the academic social entrepreneur acts as a change agent in the university through his/her concurrent efforts to (re)shape mentalities and develop responsible behaviors and (3) social entrepreneurship in universities contributes to the process of co-generation of value, for example through the viable partnerships extended in local communities. Therefore, social entrepreneurship in higher education should be an individual conviction that is upheld at the collective level and a strategy that is thoroughly implemented, not just outspoken in a mission statement.

The current problems the higher education is facing, which either refer to access to education or quality of education, have created an environment that is ripe for innovation by ambitious social entrepreneurs. The central driver for social entrepreneurship in higher education is considered to be the *social problem* being addressed (Austin et al., 2006) and the main consequences the *value created* in society (figure 1). In the existent literature regarding the current trends in higher education we have identified various determinants of social entrepreneurship in universities: knowledge creation and exchange within community, partnerships with civil society, existent regulatory framework, alternative funding strategies, management schemes which sustain organizational change, sense of accountability to the functional entities served, and the pressure to be more engaged (Păunescu and Cantaragiu, forthcoming). In terms of outcomes, quantifiable measures of the value created by a socially-oriented university can be expressed in terms of: the number of student organizations with a social purpose housed by universities and the number of social projects run by them, the number/ value of research

projects focused on social needs implemented by university, the number of viable partnerships developed with civil society, community engagement actions (e.g. participation to curricula design, environment protection etc.) to name a few of them.

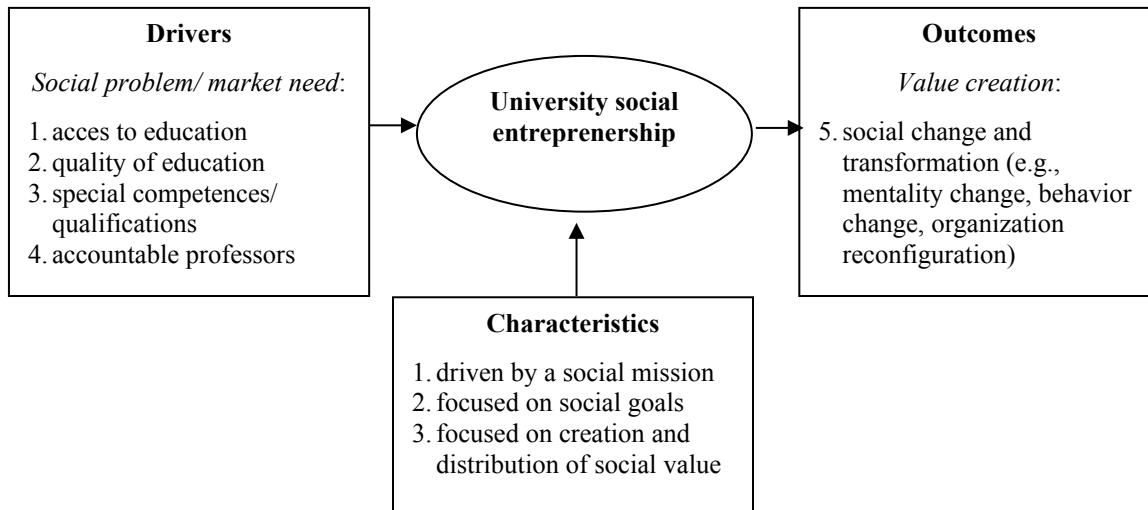


Figure 1: The University Social Entrepreneurship Construct

Based on the presented literature and analysis of different university documents, we derive the following definition of social entrepreneurial university: *“Social entrepreneurship in academia is about applying practical, innovative and sustainable approaches to benefit both the academic community and society in general as well, with an emphasis on those who are disadvantaged and poor”* (Păunescu et al., 2012). It is a term grounded in certain values, objectives and processes that are common to each social academic entrepreneur, independent of whether his/her area of focus has been education, research, human rights, workers' rights, environment, economic development, agriculture or whether the universities are public or private.

## 6. Conclusion and Further Research

Entrepreneurship and social responsibility should be regarded as regular activities in the life of the university and be treated equally seriously. Unfortunately, social entrepreneurship in academia is still perceived as being optional by many faculty and students. That is why it is necessary to explain the benefits, the rational and emotional reasons and broaden the horizons of everyone involved, so that each one feels he or she is accomplishing something truly great, meaningful and important for him or

her and for society. A university that is interested solely in transferring knowledge and research results will not have as many open doors as a university that listens to the needs of the community and tries to give a helping hand.

This paper paves the way for many new research avenues. Firstly, it is clear that universities are engaged in different types of activities motivated by social responsibility, but further research is needed in order to evaluate those practices against the social entrepreneurship paradigm. Secondly, the model we propose needs to be empirically tested either by looking at examples of universities which are considered socially entrepreneurial and their path that lead them to that or by following the struggles of universities that are on their way to becoming more socially oriented. Thirdly, the impact of university social entrepreneurship practices on the teaching and learning activities has yet to be fully explored and we believe that further research will lead to the establishment of new pedagogical methods which are based on community collaboration and the creation of legitimacy for the knowledge accumulated by students by testing it against real situations. Finally, there should be more research concerning the impact on students' engagement with university activities generated by social and commercial entrepreneurship in academia.

The present paper contributes to the study of social entrepreneurship in higher education by refining the meanings and characteristics of a society-oriented, entrepreneurial university. In the paper we introduce three conceptualizations for the following inter-related terms: university entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship and university social entrepreneurship. Also, the determining factors which explain the social entrepreneurial behavior of the academic community members are exemplified as well as its corresponding outcomes.

Currently, it doesn't exist a clear understanding of what social entrepreneurship in higher education is and this might slow the initiatives to get involved in solving community's problems. Social entrepreneurship needs to be promoted in higher education and this is the next right step. In this respect, our findings suggest that universities which are society-oriented are more likely to transform into social entrepreneurial institutions than the others.

The view of social entrepreneurship in university put forward in this paper is far from complete, but however we see it as an important first step to enhance our theoretical understanding of the phenomenon and facilitate future research.

Although there is some broad, empirical research on social entrepreneurship, the lack of empirical studies has placed limits on our understanding of the important drivers and outcomes of social entrepreneurship. Moving toward more rigorous empirical studies, and establishing major theoretical

perspectives by which researchers may explore these questions, should benefit both practitioners and academics (Certo and Miller, 2008).

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