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A systematic map of research effort addressing strategic and operational management of charitable and philanthropic activities: Protocol

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Giving Evidence
Enabling giving based on sound evidence

CHARITY FUTURES

Contents

Background

This study is driven by two organisations that recognise the growing amount of research activity around charities and philanthropy. The first is Giving Evidence which advocates and encourages charitable *giving* based on sound *evidence*. Caroline Fiennes, the Director, recognises that smart donors consciously use two strategies: first, if adequate evidence already exists, then they use it to inform decisions; or if it doesn't exist, they fund the production of it (Fiennes 2016). The second is Charity Futures, an independent think-tank promoting the long-term sustainability of charities. To this end, Charity Futures intends to establish an institute of charity studies in an Oxford college. To inform the work of both organisations, **this study will assess the research already available, on strategic and operational management for charitable and philanthropic / funding activities**. This study complements an on-going 'sister project' conducted by the same two organisations, looking at research demand by eliciting priority research topics from charities and donors, that is adapting methods developed by the James Lind Alliance for setting research priorities collaboratively. Comparing the findings of the priority setting exercise with mapping of existing research and on-going supply in the current study will identify important gaps and the most fruitful areas for funding future research in the UK. Giving Evidence and Charity Futures have been joined by the EPPI-Centre to conduct the current study. The EPPI-Centre is an academic centre within University College London committed to informing policy and professional practice with sound evidence, through systematic reviews of available research, and focusing on the study of and training for research use.

UK policy background

The 2006 Charity Act requires organisations in England and Wales claiming 'charitable status' to demonstrate that their activities are for public benefit. The Charity Commission is the regulator, and has five main objectives:

1. The public confidence objective: to increase public trust and confidence in charities.
2. The public benefit objective: to promote awareness and understanding of the operation of the public benefit requirement.
3. The compliance objective: to promote compliance by charity trustees with their legal obligations in exercising control and management of the administration of their charities.
4. The charitable resources objective: to promote the effective use of charitable resources.
5. The accountability objective: to enhance the accountability of charities to donors, beneficiaries and the general public.

Research addressing any of these objectives, and whether or how they interact, could inform strategic and operational management by charities and funders[1]. Indeed, it was around the same time that two relevant research centres were established in the UK: the Centre for Charity Effectiveness at Cass Business School (Cass CCE) at City University was established in 2004, and its publications first appeared in 2006;[2] and the Third Sector Research Centre at the University of Birmingham was established in 2008.[3]

Research background

Accountability to stakeholders, as required by the Charities Act, is a key motivation for third sector organisations to evaluating their own services (Bach-Mortensen and Montgomery 2018). The extent

[1] We use the term 'funders' to mean: private foundations, corporate foundations, public sector agencies which providing funding to non-profits, and individuals.
[2] https://www.cass.city.ac.uk/faculties-and-research/centres/cce
[3] https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tsrc/index.aspx

to which this also includes evaluating strategic and operational management arrangements is unclear. Some research addresses fundraising mechanisms, but findings are contradictory, as described below.

A recent study demonstrated a complex interaction between providing evidence of the effective use of charitable resources and attracting charitable donations (Karlan and Wood 2017). Adding scientific evidence to stories of individual beneficiaries did not influence the overall donations secured through direct marketing. Although, large prior donors were more likely to give and to give more, this gain was offset by small prior donors who were likely to give less. These findings that distinguish 'warm glow donors who respond negatively to analytical effectiveness information, and altruism donors' who respond positively to such information, (Karlan and Wood 2017, p1) have implications for how charities and philanthropists use or build evidence of the impact of their activities. The strength of this study is its experimental design to assess donors' behaviour; its limitation for the current work is that it was focused on a US based charity supporting activities around the world, rather than having direct links to the UK where charitable giving may be subject to different influences.

A series of opinion polls asked about public attitudes towards charities, ending with questions about public perceptions of charities' use of evidence and how this is linked to public trust and donations to charities (Harrison-Evans et al 2014). This study found that the public expected the charities' activities to be based on sound evidence, particularly members of the public who have and people who have high levels of trust. The strength of this work for the current study was its UK context; its limitation for the current work is its reliance on opinion polls rather than observing behaviour.

These contradictory findings emphasise the need for rigorous relevant research to inform UK charities and funders. A systematic review of the drivers of charitable giving (Bekkers & Wiepking 2011) identified eight drivers of charitable giving: awareness of need; solicitation; costs and benefits; altruism; reputation; psychological benefits; values; and efficacy. These can vary nationally, and be influenced by national policies. For instance, UK residents seem to be less responsive to tax incentives. A subsequent meta-analysis found that whether private charitable donations are lower where there is higher government support, and vice versa, is also influenced by context (De Wit and Bekkers 2015).

This focus on fundraising addresses only a small part of strategic and operational management. Studies of other aspects would be helpful for informing charitable work but more effort is required to find them, if they exist. Research addressing charity and philanthropy appear in journals from a wide range of disciplines, including marketing, economics, social psychology, biological psychology, neurology and brain sciences, sociology, political science, anthropology, biology, and evolutionary psychology (Bekkers & Wiepking 2011). This creates a barrier to third sector organisations using research evidence in practice where funders and commissioning bodies want to know and share what works, but may have limited knowledge about locating and synthesising research evidence from such a diverse range of disciplines and sources (Ravenscroft 2013).

Research questions

This systematic map of the research literature will address the following questions:

What is the nature and extent of the empirical literature on strategic and operational management for charitable and philanthropic activities relevant to the UK?

What research is produced by UK academic centres focused on charities / philanthropy?

Methods

This map will adopt the methods of framework synthesis (Brunton et al. 2018) whereby an initial framework is constructed by the research team and the immediate users of the findings, Charity Futures. The framework will be populated with relevant research and possibly amended in the light of new understanding as the nature and scale of the relevant literature become apparent.

It will draw on systematic review methods for identifying studies, screening studies against predefined inclusion criteria, coding key characteristics of included studies and describing and presenting findings. The map does not involve the quality appraisal, data extraction and synthesis of findings undertaken in a systematic review.

Scope of literature to be mapped

A set of inclusion/ exclusion criteria were developed by Giving Evidence and the EPPI-Centre in discussion with Charity Futures to identify studies to be included in the map. Studies will only be included if they meet each of the following criteria:

1. **Study focus:** addressing the strategic and operational management of charitable and philanthropic activities. This includes charitable and philanthropic giving by third sector organisations, charities, foundations, and corporations. Studies will not be included if they address specific areas of social policy in which charities are active, such as services for homelessness, without also considering strategic and operational management.

   Charitable organisations include registered and non-registered charities, faith groups, Community Interest Companies (CIC), and not-for-profit social enterprises that, in UK legislation, meet the test of public benefit. The funding for charity and philanthropic activities can be from:
   - Statutory entities which fund non-profits (e.g., local authority, central government)
   - Institutional foundation (either grant-making or ‘operating foundation’, i.e., foundations which run their own programmes)
   - Individual donors
   - Advisor or advocate of philanthropy
   - Corporate foundations

   Studies about charitable giving or philanthropy by corporations as part of its corporate social responsibility strategy will be included. However, studies that are solely about wider corporate social responsibility (CSR) such as encouraging staff to volunteer in their communities, improving working conditions, or waste management processes, will not be included.

2. **Publication date:** Studies published in 2006 (to align with the 2006 Charities Act), or later

3. **Language:** Studies published in English

4. **Design:** Any empirical study design

5. **Geographical location:** Studies relevant to the UK. Studies with an international focus, such as systematic reviews, will be included if they include the majority of studies from similar economic countries, e.g. OECD countries. Relevance may also be assessed in terms of whether charities have a strong UK organisational presence or strong UK benefit.

Identification of potential studies: search strategy

We plan a three pronged strategy to identifying studies:

a) a search of bibliographic databases;
b) a search of relevant UK websites; and
c) a search for systematic reviews, and the studies they cite.

a) A search of bibliographic databases

We will conduct a search of multidisciplinary databases through *ProQuest:*

- Arts & Humanities Database
- ABI/INFORM Collection (1971 - current)
- Asian & European Business Collection (1971 - current)
- Business Market Research Collection (1986 - current)
- Education Database (1988 - current)
- Political Science Database (1985 - current)
- Psychology Database
- Research Library
- Social Science Database
- Sociology Database (1985 - current)

b) a search of relevant UK websites

We will search the websites of the following centres which focus on charity and philanthropic research. We will look there for published reports and peer reviewed articles:

- Third Sector Research Centre, Birmingham https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tsrc/
- The Centre for the study of Philanthropy and public good, St Andrews http://www.philanthropy.scot/
- Centre for Philanthropy, Canterbury, University of Kent https://www.kent.ac.uk/sspssr/philanthropy/
- Centre for charitable giving and philanthropy, Cass Business School http://cgap.org.uk/
- Hartsook Centre for Sustainable Philanthropy, University of Plymouth https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/schools/plymouth-business-school/centre-for-sustainable-philanthropy
- The Marshall Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science http://www.lse.ac.uk/Marshall-Institute
- Centre for Research on Entrepreneurship, Wealth and Philanthropy, University of Newcastle https://www.ncl.ac.uk/rewp/
- Centre for Voluntary Sector Research, Sheffield Hallam University, https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/specialisms/centre-for-voluntary-sector-research
- The Third Sector Knowledge Portal (if possible) https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tsrc/about/knowledge-portal-intro.aspx

We will also include research that has informed the work of Giving Evidence and Charity Futures by searching their websites.

c) *a search for systematic reviews*

We will search sources rich in systematic reviews of social science:

- The Campbell Library https://campbellcollaboration.org/library.html
- Centre for Evidence Based Management https://www.cebma.org/

We will also search for systematic reviews or syntheses using simple search terms in Google and Google Scholar.

Screening studies: selecting studies for inclusion

The results from the bibliographic searches and website searches will be uploaded into the EPPI-Centre's dedicated software EPPI-Reviewer 4 (Thomas et al, 2010) and duplicate records will be removed.

Studies will be screened against the inclusion and exclusion criteria against the title and abstract with full reports retrieved for those studies that appear to meet the criteria or where we have insufficient information to be sure. The inclusion and exclusion criteria will be re-applied to the full reports and those that do meet these initial criteria will be excluded.

Describing included studies

The studies identified and included in the systematic map will be coded to describe or 'map' the evidence base for the research evidence relating to charitable giving and philanthropy research. A coding tool will be developed and applied to each included study. The initial codes will be aligned with those used by Cass CCE (in item 4 in the list below) and applied to the titles and abstracts of research reports. If time permits they will be applied to the full text of reports.

The included studies will be described according to the following key characteristics:

1. Location of research
    - Date of publication
    - Geographical location
    - Source
    - Type of non-profit Organisation: The International Classification of Non-profit Organizations (ICNPO)
2. Type of research (completed studies)
    - Type of study (RCT, systematic review, case study, etc.)
    - Type of document (report, journal article, audit, book etc.)
3. Aim of study (to evaluate, to explore relationships etc.)
4. Classification of study focus (based on work at Cass CCE). Initial classifications of research fall into three domains: 1. Funding and income, 2. Managing people and 3. Effectiveness. This classification may be further developed and refined from additional reading of the literature.
    1. **Funding and income** (Major donors, Corporates, 'Retail donors', Foundations/ institutional funders, Public sector funders)
    2. **Managing people** (Staff, Volunteers, Members (as the National Trust for example has members) and leadership
    3. **Effectiveness** (Generating research about effectiveness/impact); Collecting and managing performance data (both monitoring, and evaluation data); Using research about effectiveness/impact:
        - Setting strategy
        - Governance

- Finance
- Communications
- Intended beneficiaries: hearing from and involving them
- Collaborations and mergers
- Lobbying and campaigning
- Investment (i.e., financial investment, such as managing an endowment)
- Legal issues, e.g., legal forms for non-profits
- The sector as a whole.
- History
- Politics
- Other?

Where possible we shall code for: who the research is produced by (i.e. their organisational affiliation) and who funded the work.

Analysis

A framework synthesis method will be adopted whereby the literature is described according to the initial classification system. As more literature is identified, if other key issues and recurrent themes appear, the classification system will be refined and the coding of individual studies amended in light of any changes. If we identify, or can easily construct, a clear framework for making better sense of this literature, this will be applied to present a coherent picture of the literature available. Subsections of the framework will shape tables to describe the literature under key themes in order to develop concise summaries, and identify gaps in research. Conclusions will be drawn from the themes and associations between them.

References

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Authorship of this report

Sandy Oliver, Professor of Public Policy and Deputy Director, EPPI Centre, UCL Institute of Education.

Carol Vigurs, Research officer, EPPI Centre, UCL Institute of Education.

Caroline Fiennes, Founder and Director of Giving Evidence, an organisation which works to enable charitable giving to be based on sound evidence.

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Appendix 2. Search strategy for electronic databases

Proquest Central

ti(Philanthrop$ or charit$ or altruis$ or donation$ or "corporate giving" or "charitable giving" or “fund raising” or fundraising) OR ab(Philanthrop$ or charit$ or altruis$ or donation$ or "corporate giving" or "charitable giving" or donation$ or “fund raising” or fundraising)

NOT
Ti("corporate social responsibility" OR CSR OR “impact invest$” OR organ OR tissue OR blood OR Sperm OR gametes OR embryo OR kidney OR liver OR mitochond$ OR cornea)OR ab("corporate social responsibility" OR CRS OR “impact invest$” OR organ OR tissue OR blood OR Sperm OR gametes OR embryo OR kidney OR liver mitochond$ OR cornea)

Database limits applied:
-Journals
-United Kingdom
-from 2006