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Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial orientation and religion: the Pastor as an entrepreneur

Orientação empreendedora e religião: o Pastor como empreendedor

Orientación emprendedora y religión: el pastor como emprendedor

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Abstract

In recent decades Brazil has witnessed radical changes in its religious composition, with rapid expansion of Evangelical communities. Within these communities there exist various religious associations in which pastors play a key role. Using the theoretical framework of Entrepreneurial Orientation, and based on interviews with 20 Neopentecostal pastors in Belo Horizonte/Minas Gerais, this article shows that, in their work developing their churches, pastors exhibit characteristically entrepreneurial behavior (innovation, proactivity, competitive aggressiveness, risk-taking, autonomy). This study further demonstrates the importance and explanatory power of the Entrepreneurial Orientation theoretical framework and may open new research perspectives for social managers, social scholars and practitioners in related fields.

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Keywords: Entrepreneurial orientation; Entrepreneurship; Religion; Pastor; Independent Neopentecostal churches

Resumo

O Brasil tem presenciado, nas últimas décadas, transformações radicais em sua composição religiosa, com rápida expansão das comunidades evangélicas. No interior destas comunidades, proliferam diferentes agremiações religiosas, onde os pastores exercem papel-chave. Este artigo, de natureza teórico-empírica, investiga a atuação de 20 pastores neopentecostais, de pequenas igrejas independentes, localizadas na região metropolitana de Belo Horizonte, apropriando-se da mais recente literatura sobre Orientação Empreendedora. Ao fazer isso, mostra que os pastores, visando o desenvolvimento de suas igrejas, combinam, sob diferentes maneiras, atributos inerentes ao comportamento empreendedor (capacidade de inovação, proatividade, agressividade competitiva, capacidade de assumir risco, autonomia). Ao iniciar, no Brasil, o estudo empírico do empreendedorismo religioso, o artigo abre novas perspectivas de reflexões e investigações na área.

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Palavras-chave: Orientação empreendedora; Empreendedorismo; Religião; Pastor; Igrejas Neopentecostais Independentes

Resumen

En las últimas décadas, Brasil ha visto cambios radicales en su composición religiosa, con una rápida expansión de las comunidades evangélicas. Dentro de estas comunidades existen varias asociaciones religiosas en las que los pastores desempeñan un papel clave. En este estudio, de enfoque

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teórico-empírico, se analiza la actuación de 20 pastores neopentecostales, de pequeñas iglesias independientes, ubicadas en la región metropolitana de Belo Horizonte, con base en los más recientes estudios sobre Orientación Emprendedora. Se muestra que, en el trabajo de desarrollo de sus iglesias, los pastores exhiben un comportamiento típicamente emprendedor (capacidad de innovación, proactividad, agresividad competitiva, toma de riesgos, autonomía). Este trabajo, al iniciar los estudios empíricos de la iniciativa empresarial religiosa en Brasil, abre nuevas perspectivas de reflexión y análisis en el área.

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Palabras clave: Orientación emprendedora; Iniciativa empresarial; Religión; Pastor; Iglesias neopentecostales independientes

Introduction

In recent decades Brazil has witnessed radical changes in its religious composition, with rapid expansion of Evangelical communities. During the 1990s these communities almost doubled, from 13 million members in 1991, to over 26 million in 2000 (Pierucci, 2004). Coincident with this period of Evangelical expansion has been not only on-going competition between the Evangelical and Catholic churches to recruit believers, but also a strong and growing rivalry between the Evangelical churches themselves. As noted by Editora Abril (2012) magazine, Evangelical churches attract believers where the Catholic Church had not prepared to congregate and adapted the message to various audiences. Currently, more than 42 million people – 22% of the Brazilian population – identify as members of an evangelical faith (Pierucci, 2011). The growth of the Brazilian Evangelical community has been especially pronounced with respect to Neopentecostal churches. Called by one scholar the true protagonist of the admirable expansion of Protestantism in Brazil (Pierucci, 2011, p. 476), and known to be especially popular among the poorest Brazilian communities (Rivera, 2010, p. 60), the Neopentecostal movement is generally recognized as ‘the hot issue’ of Brazilian religiosity (Passos, Zorzin, & Rocha, 2011, p. 709). Pacheco, Ribeiro da Silva and Ribeiro (2007, p. 55) have even gone so far as to call the expansion of Brazilian Neopentecostalism the most important event within Christianity in the last century. It has been noticed by Pacheco et al. (2007) that, should the current growth trend continue, within several decades – no more than 30 years – Brazilian Evangelicals will number the same as Brazilian Catholics.

In Brazil the term ‘Evangelical’ is a generic one, more or less synonymous with the term ‘Protestant’ (Pierucci, 2000, p. 284). ‘Evangelical’ thus encompasses all churches of historical Protestantism (Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Adventists, Mennonites, etc.), plus Pentecostal churches (Pierucci, 2011, p. 475). Both the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), in its Demographic Census of 2010 (<http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/>, retrieved on 16 Jan 2014), and the Fundação Getúlio Vargas, in its Map of Religions (2010), classify each of these churches and religious denominations as Evangelicals, distinguishing the Pentecostal Evangelicals (Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus, Assembleia de Deus, etc.), the Evangelicals of mission (Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, etc.), and other Evangelical categories. According to Pacheco et al. (2007) and Rabuske, Santos, Gonçalves and Traub

(2012), especially since the late 1970s Pentecostal churches have differentiated into two basic types: the classical Pentecostals – including Congregação Cristã no Brasil, Assembleia de Deus, Evangelho Quadrangular, Deus é Amor, O Brasil para Cristo, etc. and the Neopentecostals. Pierucci (2000, p. 288) has characterized churches belonging to the latter category as doctrinally uncomplicated and as offering a very efficient form of religiosity in practical terms. Neopentecostal churches base their worship on the specialized offering of magical-religious services of a therapeutic and thaumaturgical nature, centered on promises of divine concession of material prosperity, on physical and emotional healing, and on solving family, affective, love, and sociability problems (Rabuske et al., 2012, p. 264). Within the Neopentecostal category there are both recognized institutions – such as Universal do Reino de Deus, Internacional da Graça de Deus, Mundial do Poder de Deus, Renascer, and Sara Nossa Terra (Pierucci, 2000, p. 288) – and independent churches (Rabuske et al., 2012), many of which are small in size. More than 14 million Evangelicals, about 35% of all Evangelicals in the country, attend independent Neopentecostal churches, according to an inference drawn from the IBGE demographic census. It is this portion of the overall Brazilian Evangelical population, the independently organized churches, that is the context of the current study.

In this religiously vigorous and competitive environment, a specific actor stands out, the Neopentecostal pastor, who is the focus of the present investigation. This paper, a novelty in the area, seeks to analyze the entrepreneurial behavior of the Neopentecostal pastors responsible for the creation and management of small independent churches located on the periphery of Belo Horizonte/Minas Gerais and in the metropolitan area. As noted by Mariano (2003, p. 120), these pastors are mainly inserted into ‘an autonomous Pentecostalism’, and are responsible for forming small and independent communities scattered mainly on the periphery of the great urban centers and organized, [mostly,] around the charismatic attributes of its leaders (Pacheco et al., 2007, p. 55). For this, we use the theoretical approach of Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) (Pearce, Fritz, & Davis, 2010; Rauch, Wiklund, Lumpkin, & Frese, 2009). In this approach, entrepreneurs, whether religious or not, can be identified by their ability to combine flexibly different but related methods, practices, and behaviors in the service of improving the performance of their organizations (churches, in the current case). Such entrepreneurs share a capacity for innovation, proactivity, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy, and are

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