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INCLUSIVE COMPANIES, REINVENTING QUALITY OF LIFE: A THEORETICAL REVIEW

Carmen Echazarreta Soler

Universitat de Girona, Spain
Email: carmen.echazarreta@udg.edu

Albert Costa Marcé

Corresponding Author: Universitat de Girona, Spain
Email: albert.costa@udg.edu

Abstract

The global economy has suffered a serious and rapid slowdown that has led to unemployment and a shortage of decent work, fundamentally affecting the most vulnerable sectors of society. In order to overcome the inequality and exclusion inherent in the current economic system, companies that are termed 'inclusive' produce opportunities for development and aim to improve the quality of life of those who suffer social exclusion. This study aims to describe the main characteristics of inclusive companies based on four fundamental principles: values, team management, corporate social responsibility, and responsible marketing. This theoretical review of the most important studies concludes that there is a need for inclusive companies that contribute to the common good while generating profits. Such companies also have to be smart, championed by leaders who promote the use of information technologies and communication to improve citizens' quality of life. Likewise, companies have to be sustainable, balancing business development on the one hand with the environment and protection of the planet on the other. In essence, in order to move towards a new ethics and business policy, society needs companies that are committed to inclusive development.

Keywords: Inclusive Companies, Values, Team Management, Corporate Social Responsibility, Responsible Marketing

1. Introduction

The world economy has suffered a serious and rapid slowdown. The effects of the economic crisis and the recession are mainly felt in the social sectors. The destruction of thousands of jobs, a precarious labor market, and the lack of work are all factors of risk in social exclusion and marginalization. Resources, systems of protection and welfare state benefits have all shrunk. At the same time, access to the labor market has become more complicated for those with educational, social, economic and professional qualification shortcomings. This has resulted in a notable increase in repossessions and evictions, which have had a profound impact on the more disadvantaged groups of society (Hadad Hadad and Valdés Llanes, 2010).

According to the International Labour Office (2012, p. 9): "The world is facing a serious jobs challenge and widespread decent work deficits...there is a backlog of global unemployment of 200 million – an increase of 27 million since the start of the crisis... Hence, to generate sustainable growth while maintaining social cohesion, the world must rise to the urgent challenge of creating 600 million productive jobs over the next decade, which would still leave 900 million workers living with their families below the US\$2 a day poverty line, largely in developing countries".

At the same time, youth unemployment has risen, with rates three times higher than in the population in general, thus making them one of the groups most at risk and affected by the crisis (United Nations, 2015b).

While the world economy has seen a drastic fall in its ability to create new jobs, new technology enables companies to optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of their production processes and the provision of those services that improve the quality of their customers' lives (Seisdedos *et al.* 2015).

In order to overcome the inequality and exclusion inherent in the current economic system, the main aim of inclusive companies is to reinvent themselves and evolve towards a concept of business in which collaboration, participation and employee involvement is both indispensable and decisive.

Sustainable companies offer new forms of social inclusion, choosing to "respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity" (United Nations, 2015a, p. 21).

Strategic activities in smart business contexts are generally deemed to be healthcare, health, the environment, and education. Emphasis is also placed on participation and transparency in customer service and communication (Seisdedos *et al.* 2015). We should bear in mind that, on a general level, agriculture is still the greatest employer globally, and that recent years have seen the creation of over 2.3 million green jobs in the renewable energy sector (United Nations, 2015b).

As Eguiguren and Barroso (2011, p. 111) state, "the management of companies requires alternative economic and political models and corporate values, characteristic of a sustainable and inclusive business culture".

According to Klionsky *et al.* (2012), smart, sustainable and inclusive companies act in the market with a sense of responsibility, transparency, democracy, participation and ethics. This paper aims to show the result of a systematic process of selection and review of a number of proven research studies on inclusive companies, and thus provide the scientific community with a different perspective of the current business model; one that is more humane and sustainable.

2. Inclusive companies

As Fisac Garcia *et al.* (2011), research into inclusive business models aimed at promoting the generation of opportunities for development and improving the quality of life of people suffering from social exclusion is currently experiencing an upsurge in interest. There is great scope for social companies, meaning those organizations seeking to create social value through an economic activity, to become a reference model for the design of future sustainable organizations.

The digital revolution is a further fundamental factor in the current economic context. This facilitates the creation of the collaborative society, in which the productive system is developed through knowledge instead of physical strength. Training plays a vital role in this context, and needs to incorporate technology (connectivity, devices, multi-tactile solutions, adaptation for disabled people etc.) and facilitate and share access to information. As well as contributing to productivity, the collaborative society foments the appearance of business models that question traditional ones, thus forcing their transformation. According to Guttentag (2015) on a collaborative level, in December 2015, the Airbnb had 60 million guests, while over a million journeys a day are made using Uber. These experiences in the service sector are an example of the organizational and structural change that the business world is currently undergoing. Márquez

et al. (2010) state that inclusive companies are founded on four fundamental principles; values, team management, corporate social responsibility, and responsible marketing.

3. Values

Like collaborative societies, inclusive companies base their mission on covering the needs of society as included in the United Nations Development Programme, "to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve health; and combat disease; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development". Not only is the mission of inclusive companies focused on the long-term future, but also furthers it. The mission should be worded simply, directly and clearly; and if, possible, should be ambitious, answering a social need and distinct to that of other companies (Foladori, 2014).

According to Pin *et al.* (2005), the start of the 20th century saw business introduce values that were linked to productivity and efficiency, seeing the worker as part of the productive mechanism. This changed in the mid-20th century, as business culture became more democratic, and an emphasis was placed on more psycho-social ideas of organizations. Greater importance was placed on a new set of values, such as team spirit, intrinsic motivation, and professional and organizational development.

García (2003) conclude that over the past three decades, the appearance of the new paradigm of management through values has made the concept of the individual integral. This focus places importance on all facets of the individual, not merely the professional. The value of the person as an individual is emphasized, while economic and psycho-social dimensions are also taken into account. The organization is seen as a group of people, each important themselves, and individually important as parts of the company. At the forefront of this new concept is the resulting balance between the individual and the organization, and between work, family and personal life.

In accordance with the concurrence of a complex series of factors, a company's values are formed and strengthened (Pin *et al.* 2005) in aspects such as: a) The beliefs and values of the founder. All companies have their origin in ideas and principles established by their founders; b) The beliefs and values of management that directors or managers aim to extend, confirm or modify, particularly at a time of generational change; c) The beliefs and values of employees. The employees contribute to the reshaping of the company's values. This is a system of constant feedback, management systems influence the values of employee, and, finally; d) The economic, legal-labor, and social habit framework. These are formed and developed at a specific historical moment, greatly influencing and conditioning the shaping and transmission of company values.

4. Team management

Pedraja-Rejas and Rodríguez-Ponce (2008) state that one of the most significant advances in the area of strategic management is the establishment of a relation between top level management when formulating the strategy and general efficiency of the company.

On the individual level, leadership is based on the influence a person has on their team or reference group. On the relational level, and thanks to the link established with their team, the leader affects others to carry out tasks that aim to develop collective efficiency and effectiveness. The main criterion by which the efficiency of leadership style can be measured is the success of the organization. The success of a work team will be measured on the basis of the organization's successes (satisfying clients' demands, giving a good impression to staff and suppliers, and ensuring profits for company owners).

Leaders have to overcome the problems that arise in the organization. They develop, initiate and assess potential solutions, and plan and implement future decisions that aim to solve these problems. It should be taken into account that the cognitive base and values of any leader limit selective perception, the interpretation of problems, definition and assessment of possible solutions and the choice and implementation of the strategy. Leadership style is clearly a variable that has direct consequences on an organization's processes and results.

According to Dolan and Garcia (2002), relevant studies have proved that leadership style influences the conduct of individuals in the company. According to the same authors, recent studies confirm that leadership style has a direct influence on teamwork processes, the work climate and company results. Other research concludes that leadership is the ability to exercise control optimally in order to meet the company's strategic goals, as well as to maximize profits and strengthen those groups that make this possible, fomenting the development of the right work climate (Elkington, 1994).

On the other hand, the leader acts as an inspiring and stimulating motor for the group to complete its work. The leader should generate consensus through forming a strong link of relation and trust, acting through values such as honesty, commitment, ethics, empathy, proximity, effectiveness, efficiency, leadership capacity and responsibility (Pin *et al.* 2005).

Consistent with García (2003), in order to achieve high quality professional performance in contexts that are changing as now, it is important to foment and nurture qualitative factors and intangible values such as imagination, trust, creativity, freedom, authenticity and beauty. These poetic and creative values are as important, or more so, than traditional quantitative economic concepts related to pragmatism, such as optimization, client orientation or productivity.

Work teams need emotional values such as happiness, solidarity and freedom to power creativity, talent and innovation, as well as to affect an improvement in the work climate, which, in turn, is directly linked to worker performance. Directors who manage work teams tend to rationalize processes and teams; they often fail to appreciate the company's values or take them seriously, neither do they tend to view the values as a real asset, one that, as such, should be correctly managed. What normally happens in these cases is that directors spend most of their time dealing with what they see as the truly important aspects of the company, such as accounts, profit and loss, budgets or taxes. Time will show the necessary cultural change that the current modern, globalized economic context demands. Various studies conclude that the formulation of the mission, vision and values through a participative process that can involve all a company's workforce improves performance, commitment and the work climate. This highlights the need for shared values in work teams and organizations (García & Dolan, 1997).

According to Seisdedos *et al.* (2015), the distribution of competences and responsibilities in organizations is vital in order for their management to receive the necessary dedication and focus; however, this in itself makes carrying this out complicated. As an alternative to these problems, and in order to form teams with shared values, capable of working productively and maximizing their abilities, it is necessary to open up in surroundings that are traditionally limited. There is evidence that current techniques of social intervention are no longer useful in a globalized society that is undergoing permanent change. It is often over a coffee when people interact independently from the organization, the independence implicit in such an interaction making it more fruitful. Simpler and more productive ways of organizing meetings and events are clearly needed.

This is confirmed by ethnographic research. Observation of the simple but effective methods that some ethnic groups with little contact with the outside world, such as indigenous peoples of Africa and North America, use to reach agreements and initiate work that benefits all, produces a range of intervention techniques that facilitate the involvement of all members of large groups, or simply the discussion of highly complex subjects. Numerous authors have studied and experimented with a range of methodologies that are particularly useful in complex, urgent situations, with diverse, multi-disciplinary groups that need to deal with a situation productively and innovatively (See Table 1).

Table 1. Intervention technologies in large groups

<p>Open Space Technology: a way to facilitate productive meetings of between five and 2000-plus participants. The meeting is given a clear subject, the facilitator gives a brief introduction about the methodology, and participants create the agenda together, which is then discussed at different times and in different sub-spaces (Owen, 2008).</p>
<p>Future Search Conference: this lasts two and a half days, and permits the involvement of all key actors in planning the future of an organization. During the session, various activities are developed for participants to discover and recognize the past and define the present. Finally, they collectively construct an image of the future, producing common aims and a group action plan (Weisbord and Janoff, 1995).</p>
<p>Appreciative inquiry summit: a new intervention technique capable of initiating a process of profound change in complex systems, or when conflict arises. It is designed to make groups evolve, becoming more efficient and bringing out the best in people, organizations and the relevant context (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2011).</p>
<p>Circle or council: an ancestral form of meeting that facilitates conversation between key actors. Circles tend to transform arguments into respectful conversation and deep listening (MacDougall, 2005).</p>
<p>World Café: this takes its name from a typical café discussion. Participants number from 10 to 1,000; they meet in small groups (4-5 people) around tables and calmly discuss a subject or subjects that concern them all. Conversation produces ideas, and each circle has a host who serves to seed ideas and never changes tables (Brown <i>et al.</i> 2005).</p>
<p>Appreciative inquiry: is a technique of organizational development that aims to help groups renew themselves and focus. It is based on the principle that organizations change depending on the questions that are raised (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2011).</p>

Source: Friedmann and Llorens (2002)

According to Cooperrider and Whitney (2011), there are further techniques that also produce significant results. These are: Generative dialogues; action learning; collective mind-mapping; collective story harvest; graphic facilitation; U theory; and dialogue.

5. Corporate social responsibility

It is now widely accepted that companies do not only fulfil their economic, ethical, social and legal obligations towards their shareholders, but also towards the planet, the environment, staff, suppliers and distributors (Lafuente *et al.* 2003). Corporate social responsibility can be defined as the recognition and integration by companies of social and environmental concerns (Cuesta González *et al.* 2003).

According to Parra Valcarce (2008), studies conclude that the public has a more positive perception of the image and reputation of a company when they see corporate social responsibility. To this end, consumers expect companies to act in coherence with social values. A study by Ernst and White (2000) on CSR showed that 70% of European consumers said that the commitment of companies to social responsibility was an important factor when buying a product or service.

Corporate social responsibility represents those companies that have sustainable values as their *raison d'être* on their founding. According to Felber (2012) a number of factors are necessary for this to occur (See Table 2):

Table 2. Vision of Economy for the Common Good

Economic sphere: an ever-larger number of consumers, clients and suppliers value those companies that direct their efforts towards the community and not towards financial success. Effort is also made to reduce the environmental footprint, thus making the world more sustainable and fairer.
Political sphere: legal changes are needed to encourage sustainable companies. New regulations are called for that aim to provide a better life for all life and the planet. The legal framework should promote a radical shift, favoring co-operation and sustainability instead of profits and GDP.
Social sphere: movements are needed that continue to raise awareness of the need for a transformation of the system. It calls for new companies, which co-operate with each other and practice solidarity, promoting fair trade. People with greater empathy, sensitivity, responsibility and social competence serve as an example.

Source: Felber (2012)

Following Eguiguren's work (2011), two distinct types of company or organization are established; those that carry out corporate social responsibility actions, and those that are founded with the guiding principle of becoming the axis of business sustainability and values. Companies can, therefore, have aims that go beyond making strictly financial profits. Regarding the differences in the activity to be carried out, corporate social responsibility selects criteria that are not necessarily linked to the company mission, while the activities of sustainable companies are based solely on the company mission (Miotto, 2010).

The structure and staff of corporate social responsibility companies fall outside the organigram and become external, voluntary, anecdotal or inexistent. On the other hand, part of the daily task of the sustainable company is an activity that makes a social contribution. On the economic level, companies that carry out corporate social responsibility tend to dedicate a part of their profits to such activities. According to the Fundación Seres, Sociedad y Empresa Responsable (2016), notable Spanish companies are Ilunion, Adecco and the Fundación Adecco, Vodafone, Meliá Hotels International, Orange, BBVA, Konecta, DKV Seguros, Indra, CaixaBank, ESADE, Fundación Repsol, and Ferrovial.

Furthermore, inclusive companies tend to dedicate part of their work, research and capital to set up initiatives that, over time, will become sustainable. In 2012, the G20 organized a "Challenge on Inclusive Business Innovation", a global competition managed by the International Finance Corporation that rewarded businesses with innovative, scalable, and commercially viable methods that provide economic opportunities for the poor, while improving access to drinking water, electricity, healthcare, education, housing, telecommunications and financial services. Among the winners were such business initiatives as: Apollo Hospitals Group of India, offering specialized medical services in rural areas; Ecofiltro of Guatemala, manufacturing very low cost water filters; Engro Foods Limited of Pakistan, helping small milk producers in rural areas; Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd. of India, providing irrigation systems to farmers; Manila Water Company of the Philippines, providing accessible drinking water; Reybanpac Unidad de Lácteos of Ecuador, helping fight malnutrition through providing milk product drinks; Sustainable Harvest Coffee Importers of the USA, helping small coffee growers in Central and South America, and East Africa, and; Vinte Viviendas Integrales of México, offering accessible, ecological housing to families with limited resources (Manchón, 2012).

Furthermore, while the aims of corporate social responsibility include improving the company's image and making tax savings, that of responsible and sustainable companies is to comply with their mission and aid the worse-off through paying the taxes due in each country, and not using certain countries to gain tax advantages. Finally, corporate social responsibility companies carry out little assessment and monitoring, while sustainable businesses measure social profitability and investment as well as quality, effectiveness of resources and efficiency.

The theoretical base of inclusive companies is an economic project that is open to companies and promotes a sustainable economy that is an alternative to the financial markets created by Felber (2012). His starting point is the concept of the Economy for the Common Good, the ideological components of which are far removed from those of capitalism and communism,

and promote a new way of creating a business based on values such as human dignity, solidarity, co-operation, environmental responsibility, and empathy.

6. Responsible marketing

In this context, responsible marketing aims to satisfy the rational, pondered and proportional needs of consumers through the manufacture and sale of products and services at a reasonable and fair price. Profits are sufficient to ensure the continuation of a contribution to social development, as well as for those who risk their capital and dedicate their efforts to receive fair compensation (Eguiguren, 2011).

In the terms of Palacios Alvarado (2015), responsible marketing is connected to strategic decisions that businesses take regarding their customers, and is linked to key factors such as the creation of a product or service, setting prices, distribution channels and fair communication strategies. Intelligent companies design responsible marketing strategies, showing their solidarity and fairness to the planet, the environment, and people. Competition with other companies is surmounted through the search for cooperation that ensures that the companies, suppliers and consumers with whom they work are also strong, competent and sustainable.

Unlike advertising practices based on subliminal perception, stereotypes or the target's prejudices or double standards, responsible marketing advocates the use of creativity based on ethical principles such as democracy, transparency, the verification of information, and truth. Eguiguren (2011) provides a series of principles for responsible marketing: a) Products answer a rational need in the society in which they are sold; b) They are designed so that their production causes minimal or no environmental impact; c) The services or products are coherent with the company's mission and values; d) All the company's products and services are sustainable; e) The use of those new products sold generates value for society; f) Innovation is focused on satisfying the already existing needs of the consumer; g) The products sold provide social value and sustainability, and; h) No products are sold that, while profitable, do not conform to the ethical principles of responsible marketing.

Regarding ecological marketing, intelligent companies have the responsibility to transmit the culture of permanence practically to consumers and society in general. Authorities are also obliged to favor actions that lead to sustainable development, with positive and coercive regulations and laws designed to meet environmental goals.

As noted by Schlottchauer (2014), greater internet connectivity and a mistrust of conventional advertising gives rise to a new kind of consumer. This consumer is active, and consults a range of sources of information when deciding whether or not to buy a product or acquire a service. The need of consumers to obtain real and not institutional information on brands has led to review-sites, websites that let consumers publish their opinions on their experience with specific products and services.

Schlottchauer (2014) analyzes TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel comment website, which houses user-generated content, experiences, growth, monetization, competition and risk factors. The study concludes that TripAdvisor is a space for companies to construct and manage their reputation; since it has been created by peers, the content generates trust in travelers around the world. The positive reputation the site has gained in the sector is its greatest intangible asset. Another company value is the constant innovation that allows the company to anticipate the changes and preferences of its users.

7. Conclusion

Having described and analyzed recent research into the concept of inclusive companies as a model of creation, management and business leadership, the conclusion is that it is one that, while diametrically opposed to the capitalist model, may be useful when facing the effects of the economic crisis and recession.

It has been shown that inclusive companies can help generate sustainable growth and, at the same time, maintain social cohesion, since they promote the generation of opportunities for development and aim to improve the living standards of people suffering from social exclusion.

The establishment of sustainable companies may benefit firstly, the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, such as young people, women, migrants, the long-term unemployed, the disabled and people at risk. There is no doubt that the generation of social value for such groups aids in fighting poverty and exclusion.

Secondly, it could give rise to the strategic appearance of new business seams in areas such as healthcare, health, the environment and education. Sustainable companies incorporate new elements for the creation, management and administration of businesses that are connected to values, team management, corporate social responsibility and responsible marketing. As Fisac Garcia *et al.* (2011) point out, four factors help to resolve social problems and those related to poverty, as well as to transform or humanize the capitalist system. Thirdly, as described by Eguiguren (2011), smart, sustainable and inclusive companies encourage a sense of responsibility, transparency, democracy, participation and ethics in management.

This is a preliminary study, and aims to describe an approach to an alternative model of business creation, administration and management. The review of publications and other complementary research shows the need for an integrating model. Furthermore, descriptive and experimental studies are needed that define quantitative and qualitative indicators that can develop this new, inclusive model, as are posterior studies that can assess the results of the model developed.

The field of sustainable, inclusive companies is new, and the number of published writings has grown over recent years. The fact that the subject is so new means that there is a need for material that is essentially expository, didactic, informative and general in nature to teach and raise awareness of it. There is also a need for research that takes a more critical and analytical line and generates a standardized inclusive model that allows the system to be implemented and the overcoming of difficulties involved in scaling a global system of creation, management and administration to the specific conditions of each company or organization. Further studies are needed to confirm the results and conclusions. We conclude that faced with these new scenarios and challenges, research in this area should be systematic and multi-disciplinary.

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