



Sustainable Innovations as Way to Achieve Social Inclusion

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Abstract

The sustainable innovation put together environmentalism's protection of natural systems with the notion of business innovation while delivering essential goods and services that serve social goals of human health, equity, and environmental justice. In this way, sustainable innovation carries with it a concern regarding social responsibility. Inclusive organizations employ diverse individuals (people from diverse backgrounds or communities, and/or volunteers). These are learning-centered organizations that value the perspectives and contributions of all people, incorporating the needs, assets, and perspectives of communities of color into the design and implementation of universal and inclusive programs. However, very little has been written on the subject. This can be attributed to a difficulty in measuring the results obtained, and in the difficulty of conceptualizing and theorizing innovation as a mechanism for social inclusion in organizations. We outline opportunities for the development of theory and empirical research around this construct in the fields of innovation and sustainability.

Keywords: Innovation, Sustainable Innovation, Social Inclusion.

1 Introduction

The inclusion in the organizational environment of "minorities" is one of the major contemporary challenges in any country. Over the years, the way society has sought to respond to the needs of these minorities has been delimited by the logic of charity and philanthropy. However, basing humanitarian action primarily on the ethics of charity is not sufficient for two reasons: first, because such charity seldom demands political responsibility from others; second, because the virtue of charity can often be distorted into dysfunctional and patronizing relationships between western aid givers and their 'beneficiaries' that can be colonial and even racist at heart (Slim, 2002). It is necessary, therefore, to involve individuals in production practices that guarantee their independence, which can happen through the insertion into the organizations.

Innovative practices, especially sustainable innovation, have greatly influenced the inclusion of people in the organization. However, despite this influence, very little has been written on the subject. Over time, the concept of "sustainable development" has been broadened and deepened to add to the ecological issues of human and social

development. Although there is no consensus on sustainable development (Velazquez, Esquer, & Munguia, 2011), there is an agreement that includes economic, social and environmental.

To reverse this situation, Elkington (1998, p. 142) suggested: "to radically define the new visions of the meaning of social equality, environmental justice, and business ethics. This requires a better understanding not only of the financial and physical forms of capital but also of social, human and natural capital." Only then will the company survive in the long run - business sustainability.

The economic result is fundamental to the financial health of the company, but in the long run, the organization will not survive if it does not worry about the social and environmental sustainability of its activities. Social sustainability implies in the humanitarian context of the business and is related to the themes: poverty, income inequality, diseases, access to health, etc. Environmental sustainability considers the impact of business on the quality and quantity of natural resources, on the environment, on global warming, on biodiversity, on waste management, on reducing energy consumption and resources used, on using and producing alternative energy, and increased pollution and emissions management (Haugh & Talwar, 2010).

This paper aims to discuss sustainable innovation as a way to include minorities in organizations. In this way, our focus, within the concept of triple bottom line, will be the social responsibility.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Innovation

It should be pointed out that innovation consists of the introduction of new consumer goods; new production or transport methods; new markets; new sources of raw materials, and new forms of industrial organization created by firms (Schumpeter, 1942). The nature of capitalism is the transformation provided by the introduction of innovations, which continually revolutionize the old and create new elements, constituting what Schumpeter (1942) called of "creative destruction". Companies need to innovate not only to survive, but also - and especially - to make a profit.

Innovation is a process that aims to materialize ideas that allow the generation of value, from ideas, to companies and consumers (Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008; Tidd & Bessant, 2014). Innovation takes place when new ideas or new ways of thinking are valued and successfully introduced by organizations as a product or service on the market (Afuah, 2003).

Regardless of the concept of innovation used, it is a fact that represents a great challenge for organizations and is permeated by failure. In this way, the analysis of innovation must go beyond its definition; and one must therefore understand how the innovative process takes place (Tidd & Bessant, 2014).

2.2 Typology and Degrees of Innovation

In most cases, innovation does not take place in a "radical" way, to the point of changing the nature of products and processes and promoting the "creative destruction" portrayed by Schumpeter (1942). Most innovations are incremental improvements, that is, ideas are used in new models of existing products and services, or adjustments in organizational processes (Afuah, 2003; Tidd & Bessant, 2014).

Among the types of innovation emphasized by the Oslo Manual (OECD / Eurostat, 2005) there are technological innovations of product and process. Organizational and managerial innovation includes the introduction of modified organizational structures, to the implementation of advanced management techniques and the implementation of new or significantly altered strategies (OECD / Eurostat, 2005).

Innovations - whether of product, process, organizational, among others - are essential not only to broaden or sustain the growth rate of countries and to change the direction of economic progress, with the purpose of bringing improvements to the quality of life, are for the conservation of natural resources in the long term and improvement of the environment.

Based on what has been stated, expressions such as "eco-innovation"; green innovation and sustainable innovation are also in focus when it comes to innovation. They will be explained in the next topics.

2.3 Sustainability and Sustainable Development

This paper aims to discuss how sustainable innovations can contribute to the creation of companies that are more inclusive. It is assumed that companies that adopt Sustainable Development Corporate care about the social aspects by looking more deeply at their employees and at problems related to society. Innovation emerges as a tool that will assist companies in this goal.

A sustainable company is one that contributes to sustainable development while offering economic (profit), environmental (planet) and social (people) benefits. The structure of the Triple Bottom Line has roots in stakeholder theory, organizational management theory and business ethics (Hart & Milstein, 2003). Corporate sustainable development implies that companies, instead of giving weight only to their financial results, should also seriously consider the environmental and social impacts of their products and services (Elkington, 1994; Robinson, 2006).

The problems that affect society and the environment have been incorporated into business issues as a necessary condition for business continuity. Elkington (1994, p. 142) suggests, "radically defining the new visions of the meaning of social equality, environmental justice and business ethics".

Finally, corporate sustainable development implies that companies, instead of giving weight only to their financial results, should also seriously consider the environmental and social impacts of their products and services (Elkington, 1994; Robins, 2006).

Various stakeholders - such as governments through laws, regulations and implementation; professional societies by means of standards and norms; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) through public pressure, and customers for loyalty-involve organizations to embrace sustainable development (Escobar & Vredenburg, 2011). Second, some corporations advocate and embrace sustainable development because they accept a higher level of moral obligation and responsibility than is required by law enforcement (Robins, 2006).

In line with this view, Hansen, Grosse-Dunker, & Reichwald (2009) argue that sustainable innovation is essential, both at the normative, moral and at business level. On the moral side, companies have not only the responsibility, but also the ability to contribute to solving global challenges of society and the environment.

In the next topic, we present concepts and the current context of the discussion about sustainable innovation.

2.4 Sustainable Innovation and Previous Studies on the Subjects

Innovations for Sustainable Development are usually more complex, since they must pay attention to the demands of the stakeholders, and more ambiguous, since the different parties have contradictory demands (Hall & Vredenburg, 2003).

From the Schumpeterian Economy, many neo-Schumpeterians have studied innovation in industries, mainly manufacturing, with the aim of increasing the competitiveness of companies (Tidd & Bessant, 2014). The findings of Venn & Berg (2013: 104) indicate the need for "external benefit management".

According to Greenland, Levin, Dalrymple & O'Mahony (2018) despite of drip irrigation (DI) water efficiency is recognized this kind of irrigation is not the determinant factor to the farmers' criteria of selection. Björklund & Forslund (2018: 209) found that sustainable logistics innovations (SLI) process consists of five phases: 1) Identify problems, 2) Brainstorm ideas, 3) Find solutions, 4) Quantify sustainability benefits and 5) Implement, follow up and spread. In addition, the results pointed to a "pre-phase" not yet found in the literature that serves to actively identify problems.

The study of Franceschelli, Santoro & Candelo (2018) highlights all the sustainable elements for each component of the business model configuration designed by Osterwalder (2004) with the purpose to provide a deeper view of the sustainable business model concept.

Table 1 lists the authors, the respective sectors studied, the types of research and the objectives of their researches.

Table 1:
List of Authors, Sector, Type of Research and Objective

Sector	Types of research	Objective	Authors
Electronics	Nested Cross-case	Offer a novel perspective on "deep benefit management" in inclusive business ventures at the Base-of-the-Pyramid (BoP)	Venn, Berg (2013)
Food production	Depth interviews & Survey	Examine impediments to the adoption of sustainable water-efficient technological innovation in Australian agriculture	Greenland, Levin, Dalrymple & O'Mahony (2018)
Logistics	A Multiple Case Study	Explore the sustainable logistics innovations (SLI) process, in order to identify critical factors, challenges as well as actors involved.	Björklund & Forslund (2018)
Food	Case Study	Investigate and present the way in which a food start-up can develop business model innovations, taking into account the importance of social and environmental issues	Franceschelli, Santoro & Candelo (2018)

Source: Authors (2019)

It is interesting to note that none of these studies indicated in table 1 relates Social Innovation with Social Inclusion.

3 Research Methodologies

For this study, we chose to use the systematic literature review. Systematic review of literature or simply systematic review is the scientific research that brings together relevant studies on a research topic, using the specialized literature database.

4 Discussion and Results

In the spectrum of sustainable innovation, considering the economic nature and operational aspect of the concept of innovation, environmentally sustainable innovations, or eco-innovations, have been more widely studied. Hellström (2007) explains that the dimensions involved in environmentally sustainable innovation are not only focused on the traditional dimensions. These dimensions can be analyzed through eco-efficiency criteria, defined by the reduction of environmental impact, use of renewable resources, product life cycle in line with the planet's renewal capacity

A justification for the few studies in social innovations may be related to the difficulty of measuring their results, in the inability to conceptualize and theorize innovation as a mechanism for including the wider society in socio-economic and development activities, or the lack of appreciation of the potential roles that innovation can play in development (Daniels, Ustyuzhantseva & Yao, 2017).

The use of Assistive Technologies (Cook & Hussey, 1995) has been widely used by financial institutions; call center and telecommunications companies (Jaeger, 2006) in order to allow greater accessibility for people with physical disabilities. However, there are few academic studies, or entrepreneurs, that present the results of the use of these tools.

The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and equal access to electronic information and services has become an important area of concern for social justice for those who have been marginalized in other areas of society (First & Hart, 2000). The correct use of ICTs can help include not only people with physical disabilities in the labor market. Moreover, as a form of knowledge transfer (Roberts, 2000). In this field, there are a number of companies using ICTs to promote improvement in school education for poor children.

In this way, ICTs, besides allowing school inclusion, and consequently insertion into the labor market, also allows the shortening of distances, making it possible for people from less favored regions to enter virtually markets in more developed countries.

4 Conclusions

Sustainable management of innovation is therefore essential, both at the normative (moral) level and from the business point of view. From the moral point of view, companies have not only a responsibility, but also the ability to contribute to solving the global challenges of society and the environment. From the business standpoint, regulatory impulses for social and environmental innovation are becoming more pronounced due to anticipated changes in laws, and regulations and a visionary drive

for such innovations to respond to new business opportunities (Hansen, Grosse-Dunker & Reichwald, 2009).

The ecological and social variables, therefore, are new sources of innovation that are used to differentiate products and services, redefine competition and create competitive advantage (Hansen, Grosse-Dunker, & Reichwald, 2009). Although some conceptual models of sustainable innovation (Hart & Milstein, 2003) exist in the literature, little empirical work investigates how it can be used to make the company more inclusive.

In relation to value delivery, a topic of growing significance is the use of innovation to minimize damage to the environment and to improve social conditions, as well as increase the economic profit of the company. This is often labeled as the triple bottom line approach (TBL) (Elkington, 1994; Hart & Milstein, 2003) that the focus of the company must be to achieve economic, social and environmental results. In the research on sustainable innovation or sustainable development innovation, the term TBL has been widely used, since the purpose of innovation is to offer economic, environmental and social benefits (Chang, 2011; Hart, & Milstein, 2003; Lybæk, Christensen, & Kjaer, 2013).

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