



AN APPROXIMATION TO SOCIAL INNOVATION IN COLOMBIA: TWO CASE STUDIES IN BOGOTA D.C.

Social Science

**Gutiérrez R.
Ramón Eduardo**

ABSTRACT

It has never been so urgent the task of finding a new way of thinking in nowadays world. This is what the social innovation concept is about. At this moment, there is no international recognized definition for Social Innovation although the term is widely used. This may be in part due to the recent appearance of the concept. In this article, social Innovation is understood as all those actions across which an organization develops answers for the solution of its needs in a solidary and enclosing way, working in network with various social actors (other organizations, the State, the communities, the employees, etc.) And these actions deliver in new social practices. Here, work is seen not only as the production of new technologies or new products or services on the market, but also seeks to generate new practices of management inside the organizations leading them to be more solidary, fairer and equitable. In this way, social innovation improves the quality of life inside the organization and in their surroundings. This research describes two cases of social innovation in Bogota, displaying the success factor and the processes that allowed their implementation. The methodology used was qualitative and descriptive.

KEYWORDS

Social innovation, organizational studies, competitiveness

I. INTRODUCTION

THIS article presents an approximation to two cases of social innovation in the City of Bogotá DC, as part of a research process being carried out at the Autonomous University of Colombia within the Observatory Research Group on International Economic Relations and Business Administration, following the Competitiveness and Productivity Research of Colombian Companies line of study. The purpose of the research and article is to recognize the elements associated with the management models in each of the organizations studied that allow the development of social innovation processes so that they can be replicated in other experiences.

In the first part, the document presents some minimal conceptual assessments to what social innovation is, whereas in the second, the results of field work are presented for each of the four cases together with an organization framework description, the innovation process carried out, the difficulties confronted, the success factors, and what follows for the near future in terms of particular social innovation is concerned. The final part of the article presents the conclusions.

Each organization studied is introduced as the documents unfolds: Miquelina Garments and SIIGO (Integrated Operative Management Information System). The methodology used herein is qualitative, descriptive and based on in-depth interviews with leaders of each of the organizations of the two case Study. This article intends to serve as a tool to help build later on elements that allow analyzing and replicating social innovation as a model of inclusive management that can foster impact beyond the pure economical aspects for organizations in Colombia.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

For Parra (2011) "something inside us, something inscribed in our genes, in our deepest nature, drives us to change, makes us lovers of the new, of what can potentially be useful" (3). However, it is necessary to clarify that innovation as a contemporary concept has a broader meaning than inventing something new. As such, innovation only happens when a new way of doing things replaces the old way in a community of people. It is then when innovation becomes an economic and social fact. It turns economic because it implies a new type of product, service or business that generates profits for those involved and social, because it extends through a community and elevates, in some way, its well-being, or at least changes the living conditions of that community.

Now, never before has the task of finding a new way of thinking been as urgent in the world as it is now. From the global financial instability that has been experienced in recent years to the political turbulence in nations as dissimilar as Venezuela and Syria, to give some examples, as well as the crisis of natural resources that we already suffer, the risks of climate change, global pandemics and extreme poverty; they are proof that traditional formulas for dealing with problems are no longer enough.

Then, it is necessary to take responsibility from multiple perspectives on *the impacts of our life model*, which implies knowing what effects science, technology and innovation have on society. In this respect the article by Milanés, Solís and Navarrete (2010) can be very useful. As the authors point out, the so-called scientific or knowledge impact has traditionally been evaluated on the basis of the results of scientific and technological activity, and for this, the analysis of the number of citation received by scientific works has been used. This type of impact is analyzed from and within the scientific community, that is, between the same generators and consumers of scientific knowledge. Therefore, it focuses on the impact of science on science itself or on knowledge, and does not integrate other social dimensions that can be impacted such as those related to economics, health, environment, social security, poverty, employment, and so on.

These potential impacts generate, in the short or long term, possible real impacts in social categories such as quality of life, social development, employment and the environment itself. Their relation is direct and necessary, and getting rid of this partial dimension of the analysis implies obtaining partial and incomplete exploratory results. Hence, it would be necessary to consider which aspects of science and technology are correlated with the possible social dimensions under study (poverty, health, education, culture, human settlements, etc.) to obtain indicators that really show the real effects produced by the results of science and technology in the overall population and the productive system (Milanés, Solís, Navarrete, 2010). These considerations are key in understanding the processes of social innovation that will be discussed here.

Social innovation is a widespread concept today, on which there is no internationally agreed definition yet due to, among other factors, the fact that it is a recent concept. For the purposes of this study, social innovation is understood as all those actions through which an organization (independently of its aims) develops responses for the solution of their needs in a solidary and inclusive manner, through networking, articulating with diverse social actors (other organizations, the State, etc.) which then becomes new social practices. Social innovation differs from innovation in the sense in which it has usually been understood in the field of organizational knowledge, in so far as it goes beyond the idea of increasing financial profitability for organizations. The former means that social innovation does not only deal with the generation of new technologies, products or services to be put on the market, but looks forward to generating new management practices within the organizations that leads them to be more solidary and fair, leading not only to the solution of the problems for which the Organizations are configured, but also in contributing to improve the quality of life of the environment where they play.

ECLAC (2010) proposes social innovation as new forms of management, administration, execution, new instruments or tools,

new combinations of factors aimed at improving social conditions and life in general of the population of the region.

For Monsalve-Zapata, (2015, p.33), social innovation has the following stages:

1. Challenges and opportunities: clarity about the challenges implicit in any social problem.
2. Alternatives: ideas and proposals that must be analyzed by the beneficiaries of social innovation.
3. Experimentation: that facilitates the comparison between theory and practice to make the necessary corrections.
4. Sustainability: assurance in relation to the innovative idea, that is, the capacity to maintain itself over time and to support other related ideas.
5. Scalability: from the innovative idea, in order to have broader and more inclusive benefits.
6. Impact: In the social or economic system where the proposed social innovation model is developed.

The success of this process would rely on the interaction between of six factors: education, information, communication, dissemination, research and accumulated experience. Since it would seem that companies in their actions instead of promoting solidarity practices favor competition between individuals and selfishness, a change in the ways organizations are managed would be the first thing that need be modified so that there can be social innovation. To manage those changes, one must take into account four main components: technology (knowledge intended for social welfare), economic anthropology (world sustainability in several ecosystems with equality and equity), rational consumption and an inclusive financial system (Monsalve-Zapata, 2015). The tendency is that governments have stimulated, through public policies, the promotion of equity and social inclusion, stimulating economic growth at the same time.

The process has involved different private and official bodies, from universities and research centers, which help generate new knowledge and technologies, which irradiate markets and companies, motivating the mobilization of resources and these, in turn, help to motivate the entrepreneurship and generate innovations.

A study on the progress of these processes can be consulted in Domanski, Monge, Quitiaquez and Rocha (ed.) (2016) who present the results of social innovation in Latin America as part of a project with the participation of The Park of Social Innovation of UNIMINUTO Colombia, the Foundation for Social Innovation, the Government of Cundinamarca in Colombia, and the Technical University of Dortmund in Germany.

Nowadays the social innovation movement has increased and that has led to the creation of social innovation centers at universities and higher education venues which seek to involve teachers and students in the subject allocating time and academic spaces for research. For universities and their innovation centers it is very important they can form alliances that can be achieved with the public and private sector, since these companies bet in a positive way on the contributions that can and can be generated with the implementation of social innovation in order to achieve common benefits.

III. RESULTS

In-depth interviews were conducted with the leaders of each company, and dialogues were made with some of the employees in order to learn in detail the process and the approach they had when taking the organization into social innovation, its difficulties and opportunities, its main agents and their expectations. Below are the results of the investigation for each of the cases.

A. Miquelina Garments

a. Company description.

The foundation has a religious origin and is led by the Adoratrices Sisters who started out from a nun called Micaela who led an order in Spain, and from whom the garment company was named afterwards. Due to decades of civil conflict, Colombia has one of the largest numbers of internally displaced people in the world. More than half are women and girls, vulnerable to violence, prostitution and drug abuse and with families that depend economically on them. The religious organization created a foundation in which the sisters go to prostitution zones, talk to the sex workers, and tell them a little about what they do. They go with some "peer leaders", girls who have already managed to

get out of prostitution, and tell them about their experience in the foundation. Some of these women are taken to the Foundation facilities where they get accustomed to the Foundations procedures, and if interested, they get started on a program of accompaniment of all kinds, including psychological support. It is also about including their families in this issue, both children and spouse or partner and siblings if they have them.

At the Foundation, the women are induced to enter formal work life. They are taught arts and crafts in the one training workshops where they are taught culinary, beauty, and some manual arts, especially the making of clothing. At first, the Foundation did not intend to create a garment factory, but to provide training to these people and only seek their insertion in the labor market. Nevertheless, the attendance tuned out to be huge not being able the Foundation to accommodate all the women who appeared in search for jobs.

Thus, in 1977, Sister Esther Castano Mejía, started a workshop with a few second-hand sewing machines in the capital, Bogotá. She called it "Miquelina Creations". In this small plant she began to sell what was produced in the San Victorino neighborhood of Bogotá, very simple, very basic things. Nowadays, the manufacturing process is endorsed and supported by SENA (The Colombian National Institute for Technical Learning), and to the extent that SENA qualifies the workers as suitable, they enter the production plant.

b. Social Innovation Process

In 1992, says Hector Tamayo, Manager of Garments Miquelina, "someone brought samples here, some very special samples of very complicated jackets to export to a possible client in England... then the sisters stayed up late working with the girls, until they had them super well and they were delivered to this person and sent to England, and there they loved them" (interview of June 14, 2017). Later, the owner of the company in England, Nick Brown, founder of Nikwa & Paramo, met the workshop during a visit to Colombia. Such was the expectation that a great alliance was incorporated, successfully aligning long-term social and commercial objectives. Form that moment on, Nikwa & Paramo makes about 85% of Miquelina's production demand.

Over the years, both companies have learned, grown and thrived together. Today, with the encouragement of Paramo, Miquelina, is a registered organization and a modern factory certified by the ISO 9001 quality standard. The success of this project reaffirms that social responsibility and high quality are in fact compatible.

A satellite project recently launched in the city of Pereira is expanding the valuable work of Miquelina in a new location. Through the partnership with Paramo, Miquelina can make important ongoing contributions to the development of impoverished districts.

As of 2017, all Paramo products manufactured by Miquelina will be labeled WTF First – Buyer, and as such, it is the first worldwide manufacturer of first quality outdoor clothing achieving WFTO membership. This achievement is the result of 25 years of gratifying collaboration made possible thanks to the tireless commitment of the women of Miquelina with the support of the charity Cáritas Germany, and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development.

With the production and recognition that Miquelina has obtained, it can employ two hundred women each year, offering courses to more than four hundred women so they can develop themselves in the workplace. Furthermore, they have built about one hundred and thirty one houses through the Foundation cooperative, and also, provide kinder garden services for about two hundred children as well as community dining rooms for around three hundred people.

Due to the work that Miquelina offers, society has gained international recognition. For example, in Germany they won the Mundology Festival Prize for the care of life, and the Fair Trade Certificatio granted by the World Fair Trade Organization. Miquelina is a company that applies balanced methods and relationships in working conditions, wages, the environment, and that battles against child labor, slavery and the undue exploitation of women.

For years, a group of nuns have taken care of vulnerable women and their children, looking for strategies to improve their quality of life, and also being responsible for developing links and friendships with

other women. Other citizens reach the recruitment centers and know the project, the trainers are responsible for training the staff and motivate them to stay in the place and develop productive skills. The social work team and psychology are responsible for supporting women to rebuild a life plan and develop solutions for their traumas. Finally Miquelina offers social reintegration and work placement.

c. Success Factors and Impact on Organization Competitiveness.

As success factors associated with this social innovation case one can find the possibility of having almost secure sales abroad thanks to the partnership with the Nikwa & Paramo brand, the manufacturing of a high quality product (the jacket), and the advantage of having sale prices set in a foreign currency which increases profitability given the exchange rate to Colombian pesos. Another very important factor for the success of this social innovation example is that the process with the women whose life is transformed is an integral one, with permanent psychological accompaniment for both the working women and their family members. This support helps each one of them make the process be understood and internalized not only by themselves, but also and by their support network.

Another very important success factor is having obtained the certification in Fair Trade, being Miquelina the only textile and Garment Company in Colombia that is currently certified by the WFTO. Having won this certification makes the company competitive in international markets while increasing the prices of their products in the local market when compared to those of the competition. As today, 270 women benefit from this process by working at Miquelina. Finally, it can also be added that the garments manufactured by Miquelina are Fluorocarbon free and made with environment-friendly liquids, guaranteeing that the products are 100% compliers to Nikwa and Paramo's requirements.

d. Difficulties Found in the Social Innovation Process

The greatest challenge and difficulty found insofar has been for the company to stand itself in foreign markets when demand from its main buyer is not big enough, particularly in the last year when demand went as low as 40% of what was expected.

In one hand, one great difficulty encountered throughout the process is to support displaced women who for social, cultural and family reasons may defect. Hence, the needs to invest in training and education actions that help transform the way women look towards life, and towards other manners of exercising their work life. In the words of the manager Hector Moncayo "... here we have a very special feature, and it is that the average staff have worked in the company between 15 and 20 years. There is an impressive work stability, making it difficult for these ladies to go back [to prostitution]. However, those that come brand new are more complicated, and then there is an enormous effort on the part of the congregation to keep an eye on them. Here we have a program with psychologists all the time, looking at how they are doing, how their environment is, what their difficulties are, and a series of prerogatives are set for them depending on specific degrees of difficulty" (personal interview, June 14, 2017).

In line with the latter, the manager also points out that behind the "business" of prostitution there are some terrible mafias that know the kind of labor the Sisters and girls do, so that when they go visit an area pimps are already aware and close the doors when they pass. This makes it dangerous to go to these areas and increasingly difficult to attract new people in Bogota. Their experience in other cities has been relatively easier since women want to work with them as in the case of Pereira, where the sex workers offer themselves. Moncayo points out that in Bogotá the difficulties are enormous since it is a big city, and its stories can be terrible.

On the other hand, operating costs are high because they pay for psychologists and permanent training, among others. This makes it necessary to Miquelina to position itself in strategic local markets such as products with a certain level of complexity in production, with high quality standards, and prices that are not on the lowest side of the market.

e. Organization Prospective

Now, the biggest challenge for Miquelina Garments is to power its international certification in order to open access into new markets thought at international level. Thus, it is necessary for them to adjust their administrative platform with alliances with the entire production

chain, suppliers and distributors. In addition to *Paramo*, the company looks forward to diversifying their products and now has new clients Miguel Ceballos Clothes, a brand that produces suits for the Colombian Military Forces. Some contracts have also been obtained with Mexico and Chile, but in small amount. It is expected that the virtual contact platforms with the client will be English bilingual bringing the need to train some people in this language.

In 10 years, in the words of the manager, they hope to greatly expand the breath of the work, both locally in Bogotá, and in other cities where there are currently no workshops. Their plan with these certifications is to greatly expand the market and work at least two shifts the whole plant, expanding the Juan Jose Rondon plant (one of the most recent production plants) where they have allowable space, and to expand also Pereira. Miquelina is aware that the world no longer wants exclusivity on the jackets, but also is asking to diversify into new market segments such as sweaters where they feel confident they can step in.

B. SIIGO

a. Company description.

SIIGO (Operative Management Integrated Information System, acronym in Spanish) is an accounting software developer and marketer. Its target market is small and medium enterprises in the commercial and industrial sector that have systematized their administrative and accounting tasks with common operational systems. The company started out in 1988 founded by Software Engineer Ricardo Alejandro Ortiz Deulofeut in partnership, shortly after, with Fernando Reyes, the current commercial vice president. Originally, Fernando sold computers and Ricardo developed software. In 10 years the company has grown and diversified its service portfolio to the point of buying the building where it operated.

In 1998 SIIGO was awarded by the company Byte as "the best administrative software". Due to this important recognition, European companies wanted to invest in it prompting the release of a set of stocks shares bought by the Dutch Company Star Software. The portfolio was diversified by offering SIIGO schools, SIIGO Health, and SIIGO for Public Companies, among others. In the words of Gladys Sarmiento, Manager of Processes and Quality of SIIGO "... after having a small portfolio, we became to have an exaggeratedly large one that encompassed many markets [...], then we lost a little bit the horizon" (personal interview, June 28 of 2017).

Hence, Ricardo Ortiz decided to repurchase shares in 2011, without breaking ties with the Dutch company who became the products distributor. Ortiz and his son David started working together making a very good team that created an independent innovation department from the software development area.

b. Process of Social Innovation at SIIGO

Since 2011, SIIGO has changed its management logic and its main objective has shifted towards encouraging their employees to "be happy". This has been done by implementing a concept that is taking a lot of force today: the *Management of Happiness Model*. Back then, David Ortiz assumed the management of innovation and began a series of important changes in the internal management of his work group.

The initial focus that was motivated in order to generate changes had a connotation of spirituality: the restructuring process was based on everyone being treated equally regardless of position held; they started with small changes such as, for example, the elimination of offices, of cubicles and walls that did not allow total visibility of the area. An open concept was promoted since in this way it can be observed with greater precision the team's performance, and it gets easier to interact directly with each team member.

The interpersonal treatment eliminated formal referral terms such as Mr., Miss and Ms. towards superiors in order to create an environment of equality within each area, increasing the levels of trust between workers and bosses, whom managed to put an end to the fear towards superior commanders, instantly causing communication to be more fluid, friendlier and above all, transparent. Scolding was also completely eliminated from SIIGO to foster boss-worker trust and further encourage each worker to improve personally. In SIIGO nobody, regardless of their position, can scold anyone no matter how serious a possible fault might have been.

Collective communication systems were also opened through

networks such as WhatsApp, where everyone knows what is happening and thus the information flows and everyone can contribute to solve problems, creating collective and online collaboration. Another change implemented was a dress code. Ricardo and David Ortiz observed the joy that produced in workers "Jean Days", and then thought that if these small changes made employees happy, those policies could be implemented day by day. Indeed, at SIIGO each worker is free to dress and express his personality without having to reach the formalities that are observed in other companies.

This company began to change the traditional performance evaluation models of its employees, and channeled them into four important realms: purpose, values, skills and results.

c. Success Factors and Impact on Organization Competitiveness

SIIGO is an important case to show social innovation in Colombia. It was observed that a structural change in its human resource created a significant value in each of its employees from the application of a new management model. This generated a significant change in each one of them that promoted entrepreneurial empowerment that helped solve significant problems and present efficient and effective solutions. The process success was due to the owners and founders' change of vision (Ricardo and his son), for whom the idea of making an organization focused on the people that makes it up made sense in the form of human talent administration. Happy people produce a highly efficient company with excellent financial results that are distributed in salary improvements for the people who work in the company, with a better positioning in the market, and with better competitiveness in a local market that tends to import technology.

An important external milestone for SIIGO was to become part of the d1 network, which is an international organization that supports high impact performance as described by the general manager and founder of the company: "Becoming part of that elite is not easy since out of 1,500 aspiring companies only 35 have been accepted, which indicates the kind of very strong filters they have, and the brutal entrepreneur capacity one has to demonstrate besides proving to have a profitable business".

Social innovation at SIIGO is an innovation itself in terms of organizational culture in which values are less corporate and more focused on human values. That was implemented after Ricardo Ortiz and his son came into contact with various experiences of organizational models in places such as Microsoft, Google, the company Zaptos.com (sells shoes online), the book *The Four Agreements*, and training seasons at Stanford University, all of them coinciding in that the fundamental thing in organizations is people.

Convinced of the importance of contributing to other people as well as their clients and employees, SIIGO created the SIIGO Foundation to train low-income young people in technical accounting. This foundation was operated directly by SIIGO until 2013 until it started being operated under an agreement with INCAP (a Colombian Higher Education Institution at the technical level), and since 2017 by Campo Alto (another Colombian Higher Education Institution). The Foundation has graduated insofar 1126 people, and as 2017 it had 227 students. The Foundation financial resources come in part from donations from the same company employees.

d. Difficulties Found in the Social Innovation Process

The biggest process difficulty at SIIGO was the cultural resistance of some of the managers who did not want to sacrifice the possibility of scolding and hierarchical treatment. The possibility of equal treatment with subordinates seemed inappropriate, impossible and intolerable. In the words of Ricardo Ortiz "... to change the paradigm in managers is a very complex mission. For example, here there is a ban on human beings mistreatment, so that when you tell a manager that screaming and bad temper speaking in public is forbidden they come to ask... why do you pay me, if for them *that* is being a manager?...". The people who did not come to understand this are no longer in the company. SIIGO measures levels of happiness, productivity, effectiveness and takes immediate actions. Its products are highly responsive to their customer needs and to the changing tax and accounting regulations of Colombia.

e. Organization Prospective

At this point Ricardo Ortiz points out "... We are ambitious; we want to be the model to follow in the Colombia, a model of achieving

excellence with happiness. We are convinced that this will transform the world. I invest a quarter of my time talking about this in companies, and I have already told this story to some 60 companies in the country. Anywhere they invite me, there I go, and I go for free. We dream SIIGO to become a role model. We are not interested in copyrights: if everyone wants to come to make a copy of the model they can do it. As pioneers we must be innovating in our model at all times; I jokingly say that we are already in version 3.0 because we cannot stop when it comes to beings human beings. We got into the community that bet on companies that bet on happiness at work, and the great challenge is to get our employees to come to serve and not to work. Let's say that is the biggest challenge "(personal interview, June 28, 2018).

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Since the main objective of this research is to recognize elements associated with the management models applied in each organization studied that have allowed the development of social innovation processes in order to be replicated in other experiences, it can be concluded that:

1. The success factors of innovations in both cases can be traced are to the organization founders who have included the employees as the first beneficiaries of actions developed to change the living conditions of everyone involved and; furthermore, their environment. In Miquelina's case, by changing the life purpose of the women who previously worked as sex workers. In SIIGO's, by changing the lives of their workers to pursue happiness at work.
 2. Both innovations have made each of these organizations recognized in their fields which in turn have given them a competitive advantage. In Miquelina's case, the WFTO Fair Trade certificate helped them position themselves in a favorable situation to explore international markets. In SIIGO's, the company's recognition as a model company in the field of happiness management help them develop confidence in current and potential customers in terms of their competitiveness. In other words, recognition that goes beyond altruism for their actions has become a competitive advantage for each organization.
 3. In both cases reported in this article, the stages of social innovation identified by Monsalve-Zapata (2015) are met, but not in a planned manner, but rather as an emergent manner.
 4. Both organizations have modified traditional management practices, based on the exercise of trust and help, rather than control and authoritarianism.
 5. Several actors converge besides the people who work in the organization in order for the process of social innovation be successful. In Miquelina's example, its main client Nickwa and Paramo is a strategic actor whereas in the case of SIIGO the processes of training by the owners and how to bring this knowledge and practices into common practices for all are vital in achieving the transformation of the organization.
 6. It would be important to join or create a network of successful cases of social innovation both in Colombia and other countries so that it can support management transformations of their practices towards social innovation.
 7. It would be interesting to continue to research and to propose a system of indicators that allow measurement of progress of an organization as soon as it is linked to social innovation management models.
 8. This research can be part of alternative and subaltern modes of conceiving management at organizations beyond the search for profitability solutions only.
 9. The two social innovations reported in this document have been sustainable and will continue to be so as long as the founders and members of the organization know that their process is their own, particular, involving benefits for everyone.
1. Bachelor of Business Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Specialist in Social Evaluation of Projects Universidad de Los Andes, Bogota Colombia. Master of Arts in International Studies Research, University of Paris III, France. PhD Student in Communication Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina. Associate Professor Universidad Autónoma de Colombia.
 2. SENA is a Colombian public institution created in 1957 in charge of providing complementary and qualified training programs that seek the technical training of human resource. It trains people to link them to the labor market and carries out business, community and technological development activities.

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