

The Convergence of ICA Principles with the “Best Workplace” Practices: A Qualitative Study in the Field of “Employee Relations”

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The last four decades have seen a growing tendency of companies in the conventional economy to turn to new markets, while striving to maintain a balance with those communities trying to make the opening, through workforce management practices and actions within the framework of corporate responsibility.

On the path from local to global and from global to glocal, market forces have perceived how important it is to maintain an equilibrium with the community, stakeholders, and the impact that any change brings to this community and the environment as well. The terms “community” and “community impact” are inextricably linked with the cooperative economy and the principles governing it and they are not alone in borrowing from the solidarity-based economy, particularly in the field of labor relations.

According to the present study, which was carried out last year, remarkable similarities have been observed between the values of the “Best Workplace” practices – taken up by many conventional enterprises – and the cooperative principles of ICA. At the same time, workers in the conventional economy showed a manifest familiarity with cooperative principles. As part of this research, two focus groups were implemented: the first with workers in a conventional company that has received more than once the “Best Workplace of the year” award; and the second with members of a collective representation of workers in companies that have received the equivalent award once or more than once.

The aim was to investigate how workers perceive ICA’s principles and to what extent the inclusion of these principles has positively contributed to improving working conditions. In other words, what is the impact the cooperative economy may have beyond its field as well as the prospects that the cooperative economy may hold for the future? How likely is it that workers coming from the conventional economy will consider their participation in a cooperative venture as a proposal for economic and environmental sustainability in the years ahead? Can they profigure themselves as stakeholders and shareholders at the same time? What is the likelihood of assisting the creation of joint bodies in the economy coming from different sectors for the sake of the common good? This research has produced some important findings, as well as raised some new questions, which could be the subject of further investigation.

KEYWORDS

ICA’s principles, community, impact, Best Workplace, focus groups

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