

Does the organization mission matter for low-skilled worker integration?

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Abstract

Social Organizations are increasingly led to enter into competition with For-Profit Organizations, notably by the emergence of quasi-markets which are generally composed of low-skilled workers. In such context, we need to know if the mission of the organization has an impact on employment integration, and more particularly for low-skilled workers. This article uses the economic literature in order to compare social and for-profit organization about the employment integration of their low-skilled workers. This literature review has highlighted the specificities of social organizations which may influence employment integration. First, it is showed that the social values sustained by the mission of social organizations could be a source of intrinsic motivation that may imply a higher satisfaction at work and lower wages. Secondly, the organizational structure implemented by social organizations should be slightly different since these structures have to be adapted to the mission of the organization and workers motivations.

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1. Introduction

Social cohesion and workers' professional integration are seen as closely related to each other in contemporary European societies. The Lisbon agenda set by the European Union emphasizes that an active policy for employment is one of the key dimensions of social cohesion. In reaction, major changes have affected the international institutional context of public regulation in recent decades. In particular, there is an evolution from a tutelary regulation model (authorization of certain types of providers, in general non-profit) to a quasi-market regulation form. This evolution is mainly marked in the field of human services sector, where usually we found low-skilled workers (Henry and *al.*, 2009). The main feature of the quasi-market form of regulation is the introduction of competition between different types of providers, whether for-profit organizations or non-profit. Public and social organizations are then increasingly exposed to the competition of for-profit organizations (FPO). However, these organizations have different missions: if the goal of FPO is to maximize profit, public and social organizations pursue social objectives.

Meanwhile, the unemployment rate remained high in the EU, up 10% in 2012 (source: Eurostat, figures from April 2012), and although the employment rate has tended to increase over the last decade, this finding would be mainly due to the creation of precarious and non-standard jobs (Castel, 2009). With the Europe 2020 strategy, the EU re-opens the debate about employment. In this institutional context, the research question of the role of the organization's mission on employment integration appears as a central issue, particularly for low-skilled workers.

Following Paugam and Zhou (2007), employment integration is defined by two dimensions: one is the employment security, which refers to the characteristics of the employment contract; the second is the quality of job tasks, which covers the characteristics of the job itself. Hence, employment integration is not only the result of institutional mechanisms. Practices and other organizational characteristics may also play a role in determining who has access and how to professional integration. In an institutional context, the practices of human resources in the field of recruitment, selection, training and evaluation but also in the organization of work and level of working hours will shape the employment integration of each worker (Gallie, 2007; Leblanc *et al.*, 2001; Paugam and Zhou, 2007).

We will therefore conduct a comparative approach between social organization and FPO using the economic literature in order to know if they offer differentiated employment integration to their low-skilled workers. If the economic literature focuses on the characteristics of social organizations over other types of organizations, and that many questions of comparative analysis have already been discussed (in terms of efficiency, of trust in the relations with consumers, etc.), the question of employment integration is at the heart of recent works (Henry & *al.*,

2009; Leete, 2006; Petrella & *al.*, 2010). The question of the links between the mission of the organization and employment integration of low-skilled workers is then crucial, not only for practical reasons, but for theory.

Before beginning this review of the literature, it is important to be familiar with the concept of social economy and Non-Profit Organization (NPO). The literature, when it is of European origin, defined the third sector as the set of non-capitalist organizations that include associations and foundations as well as cooperatives and mutual companies. They cannot have as first goal the maximization of profit to reward stakeholders and are characterized by the search for economic democracy that can lead to worker participation in the management of the company. Most organizations that meet these criteria may belong to several schools of thought which are very close. For this work, we will call them social organizations, but we could just as easily call them third sector organizations or social enterprises. When it is of Anglo-Saxon origin, the literature captures the third sector as Non-Profit Organizations (NPO) which may not redistribute profits at all. This conception of the third sector excludes the cooperatives since they can redistribute some of their profits to their members (Defourny et *al.*, 2009). For this work, we will rely on both literatures (NPO and cooperative) since our empirical field will include the two types of organizations. Future observations might bring us to establish a distinction in our conclusions for each type of organization studied.

The literature has identified three main reasons for which social organizations should offer differentiated employment integration to their workers than FPO. First, their workers seem to have specific motivations in comparison with their counterpart in FPO; they are intrinsically motivated (section 2). Second, the social character of their mission should lead them to established incentives structures adapted to this kind of mission (section 3.1). And finally, social organizations seem to share some common principles, like the democratic decision making process, which are not present in FPO (section 3.2). All these theories and their potential impact on employment integration will be discussed and adapted to the particular case of low-skilled workers. The conclusions of this article will be subject to further empirical studies in order to determine whether the differences identified theoretically between these two types of organizations are effective in the low-skilled workers case and whether they have an influence on their employment integration.

2. Workers' motivations

From the motivation theories developed in psychology, economists have taken the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The concept of intrinsic motivation is not completely stabilized (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the border between

the two types of motivation is not always clear. For this article, we will use the following definition mobilized by several studies in economics (Benz, 2005; Besley & Ghatak, 2005; Frey, 1997b): intrinsic motivation comes from the enjoyment of the work itself, from the pleasure of undertaking activities, by the desire to get involved in the production of quality goods or services and by the desire to promote the ideas supported by the mission of the organization. By contrast, an activity that is performed to obtain a positive outcome (e.g. wage) or for the avoidance of negative consequences (e.g. to avoid a reprimand), is said to be extrinsically motivated (Frey 2000). Several studies have shown that most workers have both types of motivations but they give them different level of importance (Frank, 1996; Rosenberg, 1957).

2.1. Intrinsic motivation, satisfaction and wages

According to economic literature, people working in the third sector are usually intrinsically motivated by the mission of their organization (Benz, 2005; Narcy, 2009; Yeung, 2004, etc.). Since the mission of these organizations is not to maximize the profit but is rather to reach some social aims, it would meet the intrinsic motivations of workers and therefore constitute an additional source of satisfaction for them (Frey & Goette, 1999). Lanfranchi & Narcy (2008) distinguish two types of intrinsic motivation that may be particularly present within social organization: the moral motivation and oblatinal motivation. The moral motivation is similar to the concept of engagement. Guided by this type of motivation, some workers are willing to engage in activities they believe as socially useful. Oblational motivation results from the pleasure that some workers may experience in their work when they can perform acts of generosity toward others.

The assumption that people who are working in social organizations are intrinsically motivated by the mission of their organization is supported by the massive presence of volunteers in this sector (Degli Antoni & Giacomo 2009). Recent empirical researches have also shown that for the same work, the social mission of an organization could encourage the intrinsic motivation of workers, provided that the mission is in accordance with the workers values (Devaro and Brookshire, 2007). Following this reasoning, Lanfranchi & Narcy (2008), Leete (2000), Frank (1996) and many others postulated that when tasks are identical in a given job in different organizations, workers being in social organizations would be more satisfied from their job than their counterpart in FPO. Hence, worker satisfaction would be greater, all things being equal, in organizations characterized by a social mission.

However, the presence of intrinsically motivated workers could also have some impact on the wages. Indeed, if workers in the Social Economy are more motivated, all things being equal, they should therefore be willing to provide greater effort at

work (Leete, 2000; Frey & Jegen, 2001). Following this argument, Preston has developed in 1989 the “labor donation” theory which says that if workers of social organizations are more satisfied from their jobs all things being equal, they should be willing to provide, for lower monetary incentives, an effort at least equivalent than workers earning higher wages in FPO. Organizations with a social mission would thus be able to offer lower wages to their workers, thus affecting negatively job quality.

Empirical studies have generally confirmed that the satisfaction of workers in social organizations is often higher, even with lower earnings (Benz, 2005; Borzaga & Depedri, 2005; Mirvis, 1992). Light (2002) went even further by showing that workers of social organizations were more satisfied than their counterparts even when they were facing lower wages, a lack of resources and a heavier workload. Social organizations have therefore the potential to obtain a monetary benefit from the intrinsic motivation of their workers.

Social organizations have legitimate reasons to offer lower wages to their workers, even if they do not maximize their profit. Frey (1997a) noted that if intrinsic motivation is valuable to an organization, it is also expensive and fragile. Organizations of the Social Economy should not only spend resources to carefully select the most intrinsically motivated workers but also to find ways to maintain their motivation at the highest level over time (see point 2.3). According to Valentinov (2007) and Borzaga & Tortia (2006), this possible cut in labor costs and the presence of more satisfied workers are the main forces of social organizations in order to compete in a market, and thus to exist on it.

The empirical literature is divided over the presence of lower wages in social organizations. Indeed, if some empirical works validate this assumption (Frank, 1996; Preston, 1989; Weisbrod, 1983), the studies conducted by Devaro & Brookshire (2007), Leete (2000) and Ruhm & Borkoski (2003) could not prove the existence of a “wage penalty” to the detriment of workers being in social organizations and Mocan & Teikin (2003) surprisingly found that social organizations offered higher wages in the area of child care.

2.2. Adaptation of the organizational structure to workers' motivation

We have now to consider that if workers' motivations have an impact on their satisfaction, they can also affect the nature of the organizational structure of their respective organizations.

It is now accepted in the literature that workers usually do not value only the monetary aspects of their jobs and that they may have heterogeneous preferences (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Frank, 1996; Rosenberg, 1957). In the case of social

organizations, various studies have shown that they attract the most intrinsically motivated workers and that these workers have very specific preferences. Such workers would first see their work as a way to earn a living and support his family but they give less importance on wages and career opportunities than average workers (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006). However, they would generally give greater importance to their involvement in the process, to the improvement of their human capital (Menchik & Weisbrod, 1987) and to their relationships with all the shareholders (Prouteau & Wolff, 2004; Meier & Stutzer, 2008) because they want to find a fulfilling job at both personal and relational level.

It is quite clear that social organizations have some interest to offer what is called “an intrinsically motivated workplace” (Benz, 2005) which would develop organizational practices adapted to the motivations of their workers. In this way, these organizations are likely to increase the probability of attracting the most intrinsically motivated workers while strengthening their motivations. Indeed, intrinsic motivation is fragile and slightly declining over time if you do not pay attention to it (if someone is motivated to work in an association for its social mission and if the job given to him is an administrative work without much apparent interest, it is very likely that he does not realize the importance of his work in the mission success, and his motivation will, in all likelihood, fade over time).

Benz (2005) and Leete (2000) believe that such a place of work should be characterized by a high degree of autonomy, variety and creativity of the tasks, ethical values like fair wages, recognition of the work and a greater perception by workers of their influence on their work. We emphasize that most of these job characteristics were identified as essential to maintain and support intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan 2000).

A number of empirical researches have confirmed the presence of specificities in the organizational structure of social organizations. Studies by Benz (2005) and Mosca & *al.* (2007) conclude that if the third sector workers are more satisfied with their jobs than their counterparts, it is also due to the presence of non-monetary benefits. Lanfranchi & Narcy (2008) and Borzaga & Tortia (2006) show that greater autonomy, less repetitive work, professional development opportunities, recognition of their contribution and the nature of the work are the main reasons why workers organizations of Social Economy are more satisfied. Mirvis & Hackett (1983) also showed empirically that these workers have access to more autonomy, greater variety of tasks, and higher influence on their work than their counterparts. We can then hypothesize that social organizations develop specific organizational practices in response to the motivation of their workers and in consequence, may offer different employment integration than the FPO.

In conclusion, social organizations attract intrinsically motivated workers who will have some influences on the employment integration within those organizations. On the one hand, the mission of social organization would support intrinsic motivation

of their workers and thus increase their satisfaction; but this may lead Social Organization to offer lower wages. On the other hand, the specific motivations of these workers would encourage social organizations to develop an adapted organizational structure. These organizations can be seen as complex structures of intrinsic and extrinsic incentives that are intended to attract workers who are not primarily motivated by monetary compensation (Bacchiega & Borzaga, 2003).

2.3. What about low-skilled workers?

Now that we identified the presence of intrinsically motivated workers in Social organization and their potential impact on the employment integration within these structures, we must have to know whether the previous arguments remain relevant for the very particular case of low-skilled workers. Indeed, we have decided to focus our analysis on the so-called vulnerable workers because it is the public which is primarily affected by the issue of employment integration.

The issue is delicate: Is it relevant to consider that low-skilled people who work in organizations of the social economy have different motivations than their counterparts? We are invited to be cautious at least for two reasons.

First, it should be noted that low-skilled workers are usually in a precarious situation on the labor market. They should then value above all the monetary aspects of the remuneration. Indeed, the arguments of decreasing marginal utility tell us that less money someone owns, the higher will be the value he accords to it. Following this reasoning, even low-skilled workers who are the most intrinsically motivated by the social mission of their organization would be willing to sacrifice only an insignificant part of their wages to satisfy their intrinsic motivations. Hence, the labor donation theory seems no longer to apply with respect to such low-skilled workers.

We can also have some doubt on the ability of the mission of social organizations to intrinsically motivate the low-skilled workers. Indeed, the task assigned to low-skilled workers would generally be too far from the mission of the organization in order to generate additional satisfaction (Devaro & Brookshire, 2007). Hence, the social organizations would have much difficulty to support the intrinsic motivation of such workers. Henry and *al.* (2009) have even suggested an informational problem based on a study conducted in the quasi-voucher market services in Belgium: They emit the possibility that low-skilled workers do not know precisely the type of organization where they work or have worked.

All these arguments lead us to believe that social organizations attract low-skilled workers with motivations that have nothing specific. These workers would therefore no longer consider as more intrinsically motivated than their counterparts. We have also to note that the problem of the employability of low-skilled workers may be a

central theme for some social organization, and then they could have to face with marginalized workers who are rejected by the other organizations. This type of situation could be very problematic at the corporate level and should lead to many additional costs.

This suggests that all theories discussed at the first part of this article do not apply in respect of low-skilled workers. However, we will see that the mission of social organizations may influence the employment integration regardless any specificities in the motivation of their workers.

3. The mission of the organizations

So far we have tried to distinguish social organizations and FPO about their employment integration on the basis of workers motivations. However, as we just have seen, we believe that low-skilled workers attracted by social organizations do not show any specificity in their motivations. The question is now to know if social organizations may develop particular employment integration even without the presence of intrinsically motivated workers. We will see that this is more than likely.

3.1. The impact of the mission of the organization on the incentives structures

It is well known that the missions of FPO differ from the mission of social organizations, even if these organizations may have the same activity within the same market. If the mission of the first is clearly to maximize profit, there exist a multitude of missions in the field of social economy. We can speak about solidarity finance or sustainable development organizations or those dealing with issues of unemployment, housing, health, North-South inequality, etc. If social organizations could therefore have very different missions, they have a common denominator since they all have a social purpose.

Borzaga & Tortia (2006) highlight that if organizations cannot do without individual initiatives, the values supported by the mission of the organization should influence the preferences and behavior of the workers. The greater the correspondence between individual preferences and the desired organizational behavior, the higher is the probability of survival and development of the organization. Hence, any kind of organizations have interest to develop incentives structure with the primary purpose to encourage workers to make efforts in line with the mission of the company. In other words, the aim is to develop incentives that motivate them to act in line with the objectives of the organization even if there is

asymmetry of information i.e. even in cases where the employer cannot monitor the employee (Fehr & Schmidt, 2001). Borzaga & Tortia (2006) show that according to the mission of the organization, different combinations of incentives³ can be used to reduce the risk from information asymmetry and opportunistic behavior. Since the mission of organizations of the Social Economy and the FPO differ, we can expect that their incentives structures will not be identical.

Thus, since the aim of FPO is to maximize the profit, they would favor the use of monetary incentives linked to financial performance of the organization, such as bonuses or other compensation on performance (Devaro & Brookshire, 2007). By contrast, social organizations have to use others incentives than the monetary one if they want to have workers who are concerned about the social character of the mission. In other words, they must try to encourage their workers to be intrinsically motivated by using non-monetary incentives.

However, as mentioned above, the social organizations do not have all the same mission, which means they should not have the same incentives structures. For example, social organizations whose mission is the improvement of employability of low-skilled workers should be focused on training and support, while home services organizations should give more importance to the relational aspects.

This theoretical analysis leads us to assume that the incentives structures implemented by organizations with a social mission should significantly differ from those of private for-profit organizations. This type of contrast meets the key scientific debate regarding the potential influence of the mission of the organization on the employment integration of their low-skilled workers.

3.2. The specificities of the Social Economy sector

The organizations belonging to the Social Economy sector share some common principles that may have direct and indirect impact on the employment integration within these structures regardless to the will to motivate their workers.

First, social organizations are not subject to the imperative of profitability. This should allow them to adopt a less reactive behavior to the changes in economic conditions and therefore have a longer term vision of their relationship with their workers. In other words, the Social Economy organizations would be able to offer greater job security to their members.

Secondly, we can also talk about the democratic decision-making (one person, one vote) which is a very important principle in the Social Economy sector (see

³ Borzaga & Tortia (2006) ranked incentives into four categories: economic (salary, bonuses, advancement and career opportunities), extrinsic (job security, working hours compatible with the needs and work environment...), relational and procedural (autonomy, variety and creativity of the work...).

Defourny and *al.*, 2009). It would allow workers to have a real influence on the quality of their jobs, provided of course that they are present (or at least represented) at the board of directors. This is for example the case of cooperatives. And finally, the principle of the primacy of people and work over capital in the distribution of income could result in practices such as the distribution of surpluses in the form of rebates, reserves for investment, better pay and working conditions, etc.

This implies that some aspects of the employment integration are valued for themselves in social organizations.

3.3. What about the low-skilled workers?

The argument of the impact of the mission on the incentives structure is still true in the case of low-skilled workers. Indeed, organizations have to establish an incentives structure in line with their mission regardless the type of worker.

However, as mentioned above, low-skilled workers are usually confined to few meaningful tasks implying that it will be difficult to awaken their intrinsic motivations. Some incentives, such as autonomy, should be also used with extreme caution. In fact, confer a degree of autonomy of low-skilled workers may lead them to feel completely left out rather than motivate them.

4. Conclusion

This article has highlighted that social organizations have some reasons to offer differentiated employment integration to their low-skilled workers than For-Profit Organizations. Our review of the economic literature has first showed that workers of social organizations are usually intrinsically motivated by the mission of their organization. The satisfaction of these workers would therefore be higher, other things being equal, and that would allow social organizations to provide lower wages than those proposed in the FPO. Social organizations would also tend to adapt their incentives structure to meet the specific motivations of their workers, which is a second source of differentiation from For-Profit Organizations. However, we assume in this article that these theories are not adapted to the specific case of low-skilled workers because such workers seem not intrinsically motivated by the mission of their organization and their motivations do not appear to be specific.

Nevertheless, we have shown that social organizations may develop specific employment integration, even if their low-skilled workers are not intrinsically motivated. Indeed, the literature has shown that the nature of the incentives structure of an organization depends on the mission of this organization. As a result, the incentives structures implemented by organizations with a social mission should

significantly be different from those of private For-Profit Organizations. This type of contrast meets the key scientific debate regarding the potential influence of the mission of the organization on the employment integration of their low-skilled workers since the characteristics of the quality of the job refer to the incentives structure. This theoretical analysis has also highlighted that some principles shared by social organizations, like the democratic decision process, could have a direct or indirect impact on the employment integration within these structures.

Future empirical studies have to be conducted within the framework of quasi-market in order to test whether the specificities of social organizations identified in this article are verified in the case of low-skilled workers. In a second step, it will attempt to assess the impact of these disparities with FPO on the employment integration of low-skilled workers.

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