

Common Good orientation and Integral Human Development. Are Good Purpose Companies the ones that build Character, Virtue and foster Happiness?

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Abstract

Both conceptual ideas and practice of leadership are rooted in the understanding and view on human nature. This paper presents an empirical investigation of a theoretical model „the three-dimensional conception of human nature and leadership”.

An in depth, case study based, analysis is carried out for six Hungarian middle-size organisations, among these three are social businesses and three are conventional, for-profit businesses. The empirical part of the paper is built on a mixed method data collection, quantitative (survey) and qualitative (personal in-depth interviews) sources of data are used during the analysis. The main objective of the research is to understand the level of common good orientation in these businesses and to investigate if the business purpose and practiced leadership is manifested in people-centered approach across the transactional, transformational and transcendental dimensions of leadership.

The findings of the research are presented in the form of short organizational case studies, in which the organizations in the research are discussed in their complexity. The businesses are understood in this part as small “social words”, that are described through four interconnected levels, their spiritual core, the degree of servant leadership practiced, the opportunities for integral human development in the organization and the contribution of these companies to a broader common good.

Besides the organisational case level results of the research, the author also provides insight to the common observable patterns, differences and connections among social businesses and conventional for-profit businesses investigated. Seemingly contradictory cases of strong common good orientation with low level people-centric management practices and low common good orientation with high level people-centric management practices will be analyzed and discussed in depth. In the conclusion of the paper the organizational practices and the validity of the conceptual models and applied research methodology are all critically discussed.