

EXPANDED ABSTRACT

Organizational factors improving employability of Work Integration Social Enterprises

There is significant consensus among experts that the Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE) sector in a broad sense is expanding, partly because of its potential for being more efficient than traditional employment integration schemes (O'Connor & Meinhard, 2014). Therefore, in view of the limitations of research in this sphere (Campos, Melián, & Sanchis, 2014) we need to improve our knowledge of how Integration Enterprises (IE) work and of the factors contributing to improved employability (Chiaf & Giacomini, 2009) within the framework of assessment of active employment policies (Card, Kluve, & Weber, 2015; Malo & Cueto, 2015; García Pérez, 2017).

Aims

This paper presents the results of a survey of an exploratory nature aiming to identify and assess the organisational factors that contribute to improved employability in WISE. The aims of the research focus on:

- Identifying the organisational factors that influence employability in WISE.
- Designing an instrument, the Questionnaire on Organisational Factors in Employability (CUFEE in its Spanish acronym) to allow assessment of how far WISE contribute to improved employability.
- Analysing the relations between the results of the CUFEE, the features of companies and integration rates.

Methodology

On the basis of a review of the literature, a heuristic model of employability in WISE is proposed in order to identify, on the basis of a qualitative study, the magnitudes and indicators that contribute to organisational employability. A tool - CUFEE - was designed to assess organisational factors in employability and 32 WISE responded to it, making it possible to estimate the metric features of the tool and extract preliminary data concerning the degree to which these employability factors are present in the WISE and how this is related to the features of these enterprises and their integration rates.

A mixed methodology was used. The first part used qualitative methodology to construct the tool - the magnitudes, sub-magnitudes and items - to best measure the organisational employability factors of WISE. In the second part a quantitative methodology was used to test the reliability of the tool designed and obtain the first results.

The CUFEE scale shows the professional's opinion of how far certain features or practices of the company and the place of work are present or implemented in the WISE. It is a Likert-type scale with 5 response options. The reference sample is made up of 32 Spanish integration enterprises with different features in terms of business sector, size, age, financial circumstances, proportion of people with integration contracts in the workforce and integration rate.

Results

The study has identified three levels of magnitudes where WISE contribute to employability. The first level of magnitude takes in general features including factors relating to technical development, organisation and the company's links to the job market. The second magnitude includes how far jobs at WISE involve training at three levels: level of opportunities, levels of challenge and the types of skills developed. Finally, the third magnitude concerns the functioning of the integration enterprise; this includes factors like teamwork, the degree of systematisation of production processes and coordination between professionals.

Moreover, through the CUFEE tool this survey has provided us with a description of WISE taking into account employability factors that help to identify their strengths and weaknesses. According to the results of the survey, the prevalence of the factors that contribute to employability is middling to high. The companies see themselves, in general, as working well internally, stressing the support they give to people with integration contracts and how they work as a team of professionals. An aspect that could be improved is participation by people with integration contracts in the company.

Regarding the training features of the job, a weakness identified in the survey has to do with the training opportunities offered by the jobs. In this respect, diversification of work experiences with opportunities to gain experience in different jobs, contexts and performing different functions might be a way for WISE to improve.

One of the aspects that scored the lowest has to do with the link between WISE and their jobs to the labour market. Even though mediation and job searching activities are run, deepening the link with the labour market would seem to be an area to work on. This is especially relevant if it is also borne in mind that correlations have been found between these factors and the integration rates achieved by enterprises.

Finally, the financial circumstances of WISE are the variable that most influences the results on the scale. The survey indicates a strong inter-relationship between the operational aspects and social side of WISE and the need to maintain a balance between them in order to achieve their social goal, as pointed out in different studies (Campos et al., 2014, Barbieri & Guerra, 2011).

Conclusions, limitations and contributions of the survey

Even though the literature identifies employability as a construct that includes individual and contextual factors, in practice there is a common tendency to consider only the factors that have to do with people, even within the WISE themselves (Llinares, Córdoba & Zacarés, 2012). In this respect, one contribution of this survey was to identify the organisational factors in employability in WISE.

This is the first research in Spain to identify and analyse the impact of organisational factors in WISE, offering a description of their strengths and weaknesses in their contribution to employability.

The principal limitations in the survey are related to the size and features of the sample, which do not allow generalisations to be made from the results. While the tool initially appears to have adequate metric features, the results need confirming in subsequent research.

To sum up, this research contributes to the understanding and development of employability in integration enterprises, with an emphasis on the elements of the context, at the same time providing a tool that can be used by integration enterprises to assess their own functioning. Moreover, the results obtained suggest relationships between the features of the enterprises and the integration rates achieved by people with integration contracts, which might be a starting point for further research.

KEYWORDS: Employability, social inclusion, work integration social enterprise, evaluation.