

# Contabilidad social en organizaciones de la Economía Social: el programa ARTE aplicado al Grupo CLADE

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**Resumen.** Existe una preocupación creciente en las empresas (y específicamente dentro de las organizaciones de economía social) y en la sociedad sobre la necesidad de alinear los intereses de estas con los del conjunto de los partícipes sociales y el bienestar de la sociedad. Las Universidades y sus Facultades de Ciencias Empresariales están encontrando dificultades en adaptar sus currícula y herramientas pedagógicas para ayudar a la actual y futuras generaciones de gestores en la implementación estratégica de este alineamiento de intereses. En este artículo proponemos un programa de educación ejecutiva en gestión (Action Research Training Experience-ARTE) como una herramienta práctica para contribuir a este alineamiento de intereses. El programa ARTE incorpora dos tipos de innovaciones. En primer lugar, el objetivo de ARTE es diseñar e implementar un método de contabilidad social capaz de informar a las organizaciones participantes acerca de sus resultados en el ámbito financiero, social y de la sostenibilidad. En segundo lugar, el programa ARTE se implementa a través de una metodología no tradicional: aprendizaje activo y crítico (critical action learning). En el artículo analizamos el marco teórico de ARTE y desarrollamos su aplicación práctica a siete subsidiarias de un gran grupo empresarial perteneciente a la economía social. El artículo muestra la posibilidad de introducir en una empresa de economía social un método de contabilidad social capaz de producir información válida para comprender y alinear el valor que esa organización produce con los intereses de los partícipes sociales, y con el bienestar de la comunidad en la que se inserta.

**Palabras clave:** Contabilidad Social; Action Research Training Experience (ARTE); Valor Social.

**Claves Econlit:** M41; M53.

## [en] Social accounting in organizations of the Social Economy: The ARTE program applied to the CLADE Group

**Abstract.** There is a growing concern in corporations (and specifically inside social economy organizations) in order to align the interests of stakeholders and society at large with the traditional interest of corporations, focused on profits. Business schools have difficulties in adapting their curricula and pedagogical tools to help current and new generations of managers to strategically implement that alignment of interests. In this paper we propose an executive management education program (Action Research Training Experience-ARTE) as a practical tool to tackle this problem of alignment. ARTE incorporates two kinds of innovations. On one hand, the object of ARTE is to design and implement a social accounting method able to inform participating organizations about their results in financial, social and sustainability issues. On the other hand, ARTE is implemented through a non-traditional methodology: critical action learning. In the paper we analyze the theoretical framework of ARTE and we develop its practical application to seven subsidiaries of a large industrial group belonging to the social economy. The article shows the feasibility of introducing a social accounting method in a corporation belonging to the social economy able to produce information valid to understand and align the value that each organization produces with stakeholders' interests and the wellbeing of the community where the corporation operates.

**Keywords:** Social Accounting; Action Research Training Experience (ARTE); Social Value.

**Summary.** 1. Introduction. 2. Methodology. 3. Contextualization. 4. Results. 5. Discussion of results. 6. Conclusions. 7. References.

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## 1. Introduction

There is a growing concern between academics about the fact that the main interests and objectives of corporations are drifting apart from the main interests and concerns of society (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Melé and Schlag, 2015). This situation is affecting also the perception of citizens in different countries around the world. In this line, the Edelman Trust Barometer (2018) shows that in the EU (data calculated for Ireland, Poland, UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Sweden) trust in companies only reaches up to 45% of the population. Although it is true that in the USA it is somewhat higher (48%), it has dropped 10 points in the last year. According to this social barometer, a majority of citizens do not share the idea that companies contribute efficiently to the social function that legitimizes them: create value for society (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2018).

There are many reasons that can be helpful to explain this declining trust rate. One line of reasoning questions the relationship between the performance of corporations and social wellbeing. It may seem that the social contract (Donaldson, 2017; Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994) underlying the neoclassical model has broken (Costas, 2017). In developed countries, at least, society has stopped perceiving that the good performance of companies means, in a correlative way, a benefit for citizens. The understanding of the role of companies within the economic activity is changing. The neoclassical paradigm proposed the pursuit of profit maximization as a way to link corporate outcome, economic efficiency and social wellbeing. However, both at the academic and social levels new, different proposals are arising, trying to maintain the linkage between corporate and social interests through new approaches (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Freeman and Ginena, 2015).

At the social level, and again according to the Edelman Trust Barometer 2018, 56% of the population considers that "companies that only think about themselves and their profits are bound to fail" (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2018: 38). In this context, some corporations are changing their interactions with society without waiting an academic consensus about the role of the firm in society. Aspects such as the consideration of the interests of all stakeholders and multi-stakeholder's governance, which are still discussed with passion and few advances in the theoretical field, have been resolved for a long time in business practice (Retolaza, San-Jose and Ruíz-Roqueñi, 2016).

This delay of the academy in comparison with the developments achieved by practitioners can be found not only in research, but also in teaching (Hibbert and Cunliffe, 2015). Academic institutions and teachers which are anchored in theories based on short profit maximization tend to transmit this logic to students, hindering or delaying the transformative potential of new theories that propose a different relationship between corporations, stakeholders and society at large (Freeman and Ginena, 2015; Alcaniz, Aguado and Retolaza, 2020).

In this context it is necessary to develop innovative teaching proposals (Antonacopoulou and Sheaffer, 2014), which allow students to connect with an economic and managerial logic that links the interest of the corporation (including all stakeholders) with social interests (Nonet, Kassel and Meijs, 2016). At the same time, this new logic could be able to develop competences that facilitate the restoration of the social contract of corporations with society, and more specifically with citizens. Following this line, it will be helpful to identify and propose learning experiences that allow advancements in the formation of management students, in accordance with the previous paragraphs.

One of these experiences is the ARTE Program (Action Research Training Experience), developed by Deusto Business School (University of Deusto) in collaboration with the CLADE Group. The CLADE Group is formed by eight different subsidiaries, under the legal form of cooperative societies. Although they belong to different industrial sectors, they share common values, mission and vision in the wider framework of the social economy. Their main values are linked to participation in the decision-making process, social responsibility and collaboration with society. The CLADE group has an annual turnover of almost 300 million euros and 5400 employees. It is the main cooperative group in the Catalonia region (Spain).

It is not a coincidence that one of the economic institutions (the CLADE group) interested in connecting social and economic interests belongs to social economy (in the form of a cooperative group). In fact, cooperatives could be a proper answer to the aforementioned mistrust between corporations and society, due to the fact that they promote participation in business ownership and decision-making (democratic management), the search of sustainability (in the economic, social and environmental domains), and an organizational culture based of cooperative values and principles (Martínez Charterina, 2015). Those characteristics could help in connecting social expectations about corporate behavior (Cracogna, 2015).

The executive education program ARTE (where participants are usually top managers of corporations) has two major objectives. The first one is to train successfully the key executives of the participating entities, so that they will be able to lead the development of a social accounting system in their organizations. The second objective of the program is to effectively develop a social accounting in the companies of origin of the participating managers. Those corporations could be part of the social economy (as in our example with the CLADE group).

This learning experience in the field of management incorporates two major innovations. The first innovation relies in the use of social accounting as a vehicle to develop in managers the necessary awareness (social competences) to align the interest of the corporation with the interests of citizens. The second innovation is the use of critical action learning as the pedagogical methodology of the program. In fact, the success of the program is not measured through the results in theoretical tests at the individual level, but through the implementation of a functioning social accounting in the participants' corporations. In short, the success of ARTE is based on the design and implementation of a social accounting by the participating managers in their own organizations.

This article aims to develop two complementary and consecutive objectives which will help corporations to measure and align social concerns with the objectives of the corporation. The first objective is to highlight the necessity of innovative educational programs in the field of management, able to transfer new theoretical and applied knowledge to managers. The second objective is to present ARTE as an enabling tool to engage managers in a social accounting action learning process. In order to fulfil those two objectives, we will investigate how managers can learn about sustainability, responsibility and ethics inside their own organizational environment (and not inside a classroom). In addition, we will understand how this learning is transferred to the organization in virtuous cycles of innovation and change. Finally, we will contextualize this learning process within the frameworks of Global Compact, PRME and the Ledesma-Kolvenbach model. We will apply all this framework to a corporation belonging to the social economy (The CLADE group). Thus, we are proposing that corporations belonging to the social economy are in a suitable position to introduce managerial innovations which can help them to better connect social and economic interests. In the case of cooperatives, the ARTE program could enhance the development of the 7th. cooperative principle, concern for the community (Martínez Charterina, 2015; Cracogna, 2015).

The paper is structured as follows. After the introduction, section 2 will describe the materials and methods used in the paper in order to develop ARTE. Section 3 will develop the conceptual framework of ARTE and the role of social accounting as a source of information for stakeholders and society. Section 4 will summarize the results of applying the ARTE framework to a corporation belonging to the social economy (the CLADE group). Section 5 will discuss the main results obtained after developing the ARTE process. Finally, section 6 will highlight the main conclusions of the paper, underlying its strong points as well as its limitations.

## 2. Methodology

The transfer of social competences to students (undergraduate, postgraduate and practitioners) in traditional management programs has some important limitations. In the theoretical field we find two major restrictions. In the first place, the neoclassical theory (which is at the theoretical base of most traditional management programs) establishes a linkage between profit maximization, efficiency and the achievement of the microeconomic social optimum (Friedman, 2007, 2009). Secondly, the anthropological model of neoclassical microeconomics (*homo economicus*) tends to reduce the human person to a rational consumer, although this consumer may have a limited rationality. This rationality is attached to obtain the highest possible level of personal utility or wellbeing, which implies an egocentric point of view. In this theoretical framework social competences are simply not considered. More specifically, they can be detrimental to the proper functioning of the economic system, because they introduce an external logic to it, able to produce distortions that are difficult to anticipate (Dierksmeier, 2016).

At the same time, the transfer of social competences in the traditional management programs faces important methodological limitations. On one hand, there is an increasing gap between the academic research in management that is published in high impact scientific journals and, on the other hand, the incorporation of new knowledge by managers that is encoded in other outlets (professional magazines, books, seminars or economic newspapers) (Aguado, Alcaniz, Retolaza and Albareda, 2016).

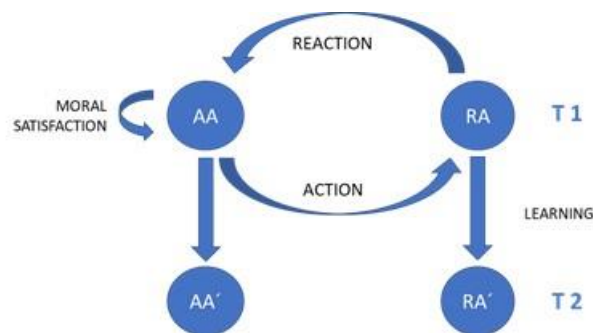
In addition, there is a growing delay between the innovations developed in management theory by academics and their transfer to practitioners. This phenomenon is due to two different reasons. In the first place, in many cases there is a time gap between the generation of new ideas in the academia and the publication of those ideas in scientific journals. Secondly, the educational institutions usually do not incorporate those new ideas in their academic programs in the short time. In general, official programs taught by universities are difficult to change due to regulations or rigidity. Usually, universities accept those new ideas in management theory when they are generally accepted by both practitioners and academics and, therefore, are no more innovative ideas. On the other side, it is true that managers are reluctant to assume the risks involved in the incorporation of innovations related to management, especially if they do not see a clear connection with the financial results of the firm (Kostera and Pirson, 2016).

Critical action learning (CAL) and social accounting can be considered as innovative methods which can be useful to reduce the delay in the incorporation of innovations in management, including the field of responsible and sustainable management.

Critical Action Learning (CAL) can be defined as an experimental learning methodology, where participants work in the solution of a real issue (problem) that is happening in the organization (Revans, 1982a, 1982b; Revans, 1983; Rigg and Trehan, 2004; Trehan and Pedler, 2009). It can be considered a form of action research specially adapted to organizational settings (Dick, 1997). Participants benefit from both the interactions with other participants and the tailored sessions with professors. At the same time, they apply the knowledge that has been transferred by the team of professors to find solutions to the real issues (problem) that are taking place in the participants' organizations (Revans, 1982a). Participants take advantage of CAL as a useful methodology to incorporate operational knowledge as a learning outcome. At the same time, CAL facilitates, to a large extent, the internalization of new perspectives, cognitive processes, and values (Hibbert and Cunliffe, 2015). The aforementioned characteristics make CAL a suitable methodology to incorporate an innovative perspective about the social function of the company and its measurement.

The process of learning and motivation that is present in ARTE can be explained utilizing the theory of human action (Perez Lopez, 1991). According to this theory, human action is presented as an experimental process where through a qualitative/quantitative feedback (in our case, following the guidelines of the Corporate Social Performance model) (Hilliard, 2013), the active agent (manager) (AA) can assess the impact that his/her actions have for the whole set of reactive agents (RA) in the organization (stakeholders). This process can generate in managers (participants of ARTE) the development of a spontaneous motivation to generate social value for both stakeholders and society at large. Figure 1 illustrates this process.

Figure. 1. Theory of Human Action



Source: own elaboration, based on Pérez Lopez (1991).

From the perspective of neoclassical theory, there are few incentives to incorporate elements related to social responsibility or ethics in the teaching of management theory. In fact, following neoclassical microeconomics, it is possible to consider that the social responsibility of both managers (agents) and shareholders (main) corresponds to profit maximization. This profit maximization, through the Paretian process, will lead to the social optimum. In fact, the introduction of other considerations (related to ethics, for example) can affect negatively to profit and to the achievement of the social optimum (Dierksmeier, 2011).

However, this orthodox approach is clearly evolving, and there are at least four kinds of developments that can serve as a theoretical anchor to the introduction of sustainability and social responsibility in the core of organizational capacities and managerial competencies in management education. The first alternative approach is social economy. According to this approach, the pursuit of the collective interest (of the stakeholders of the organization or of the society as a whole) replaces the centrality of profit as the fundamental indicator of the success of the organization. Cooperatives, for example, have the objective of making compatible collective and individual aims, while respecting cooperative principles (Cabaleiro Casal, 2019). Secondly, it is possible to highlight the expansion of the neoclassical theory through the analysis of the internalization of the negative externalities that the economic activity generates, both social and environmental. In the third place we consider the concept of shared value, which proposes to make compatible the maximization of long-term profit with the generation of social value (Porter and Kramer, 2011). Finally, we could study the set of theories that are based on the concept of social contract (Rousseau, 1968), such as the Integrative Social Contract Theory (Donaldson, 2017; Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994), the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church (Melé, 2011; Goodpaster, Maines, Naughton and Shapiro, 2018), the

Civil Economy (Zamagni, 2010) or the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar and De Colle, 2010).

From any of these four approaches, which are alternative or complementary to the orthodox neoclassical theory of the firm, it is possible to find theoretical support for the concern of managers in relation to the social impact of their organizations. However, and accepting that many current executive programs in management incorporate proposals supported in these new models, we agree with Jensen (2002) in the sense that the introduction of multiple objectives in management blurs the objective of the managers and prevents their control by the principals (shareholders). However, in our view this criticism is appropriate only when managers lack the necessary tools to measure and integrate those different objectives. In parallel to the traditional financial accounting, which systematically integrates all kind of relevant information in order to present the annual results (profits) that will be the measure of success or failure for the firm, managers could focus on the value that their organizations create for society, through the development of a social accounting. In the case of cooperatives, social accounting could serve as a tool to measure the progress of the organization in the connection between social and economic aims, with is specially aligned with the 7<sup>th</sup> cooperative principle (Cracogna, 2015; Martínez Charterina, 2015; Kontogeorgos and Chatzitheodoridis, 2019).

In any case, in our experience, the key element in order to assess the social impact of corporations (including always cooperatives and other organizations in the social economy) is the introduction of a social accounting system able to measure the effectiveness of the firm in relation to its social objectives (purpose of the firm), at the same time that the traditional financial accounting is being carried out (Retolaza, San-Jose and Ruiz-Roqueñi 2015). Thus, the development of a social accounting is the instrument used to focus the attention of managers on the social objectives of the firm and the element that is in the base of the training process.

### 3. Contextualization

In this section we will describe, on one hand, the three main approaches which are at the base of the ARTE program and their linkage with it. Those approaches are used to transfer knowledge from universities and international organizations to managers working in corporations and organizations.

On the other hand, this section will develop the concept of social accounting and its relevance in order to build an accounting system able to inform all stakeholders about their contributions to the objectives of the corporation, the objectives of all stakeholders, and the contribution of the corporation towards society.

#### 3.1. Conceptual framework of ARTE

Management executive education fulfills a social function, because it prepares future or current managers to achieve results that optimize the social function of the company, either in the framework of the neoclassical model (profit maximization), or within the framework of any of the alternative models that are focused on social value creation (Hesselbarth and Schaltegger, 2014).

Among the approaches related to the transfer of knowledge to managers, three are at the base of the conceptual framework of ARTE: UNGC (United Nations Global Compact), UNPRME (United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education), and the Ledesma-Kolvenbach model.

The Global Compact and UNPRME are two UN initiatives that are linked in their approach to corporations and current and future managers towards making a positive contribution to the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) stated by the UN. The Global Compact is directed towards businesses and managers and asks them to fulfill ten broad principles based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other UN principles about rights in the workplace, corruption and sustainability (Rasche and Waddock, 2014). In this way, corporations will be engaged not only in economic sustainability (profits and involvement with shareholders), but they will be engaged also with the interests of employees, public administrations, customers, suppliers and even non-stakeholder actors (Retolaza et al., 2016). On the other hand, UNPRME is directed to business schools and the kind of management education that is offered to the present and future generations of managers and business leaders. UNPRME is based on six main principles that highlight the importance of introducing in the academic curricula the necessary contribution of firms to achieve social, economic and environmental sustainability. In addition, UNPRME underlies the importance for firms of contributing not only to shareholders' interest, but also to the needs of the whole set of stakeholders and society at large. In this point, UNPRME asks business schools to incorporate the set of values about social global responsibility that are expressed in the Global Compact Initiative (Aguado, Alcaniz and Retolaza, 2015).

The Ledesma-Kolvenbach (L-K) model is a recent educative paradigm for higher education that has been developed by the Society of Jesus. Management and business schools of the Society of Jesus have started to

apply the model in different countries in Europe, North and South America, and the Asia-Pacific region. The L-K model is a comprehensive model based on human dignity and sustainability, and compatible with the proposals of UNPRME, the SDGs, and Global Compact initiative. The L-K model proposes the development of four pillars: utility, humanity, justice, and spirituality. The utility dimension tries to foster in students the tools and knowledge that are necessary to become a professional manager. Through the humanity dimension, Jesuit business schools try to raise the awareness of students about their own values and enhance the respect of human dignity that is an intrinsic characteristic of all human beings and stakeholders of businesses. The justice dimension is a call to treat in a fair way all economic and social partners, avoiding corruption and deception. At the same time, this dimension is completely aligned with making a positive contribution to the SDGs from corporations.

Finally, the L-K model proposes for managers a servant-leadership model, in which managers are the first ones to champion responsible and sustainable business models in their own organizations. This model could be easily adapted by other institutions of higher education with similar humanistic principles (Aguado et al., 2016; Society of Jesus, 2014).

### **3.2. Social accounting: a source of information oriented to stakeholders and society**

The traditional financial accounting presents limitations when it has to inform about the whole value generated by any organization. In relation to firms, some authors have underlined the gap that exists between the interest of corporations and social interest (Hamel, 2009). In order to shed light on this issue, firms usually supplement the accounting information with social reports (for example through the GRI). In other cases, public administrations require the inclusion of additional non-financial information in the official reports. In the United Kingdom, for example, the very existence of the Public Services (Social Value Act, 2015) that came into force in 2013 is a recognition of a possible divergence between the value created for the customer through public procurement, measured in cost (input), and the value generated for society, considered as a set of outputs (positive and negative) much wider than the mere service or product offered in the purchase process. In management processes that involve public administrations, it is often assumed that there is a direct correlation between expenditure (budget), and the results obtained. Thus, political debates tend to focus in the amount and structure of the budget, instead of worrying about the efficient use of it. In order to exercise political rights in a responsible and active manner, citizens should have much more information about the value that is generated for society by the programs and actions funded by public administrations. On the other hand, the so-called third sector of the economy (non-for-profit-organizations) seems to need the development of some type of information which, in a systematic way, could allow this kind of organizations to transmit to their stakeholders the social value that they are generating with their activities. The processes that have been initiated by many of these entities in order to develop systems of social accounting seem to confirm, at least, the practical necessity of this kind of information (MSF UK, 2017).

In order to generate information not only about profit, but also about the value generated by all stakeholders and society, it could be helpful the development of a social accounting oriented to present valuable information to the whole set of stakeholders. This information may respond to the interests and worries of each stakeholder for whom the firm generates or destroys value (Laasch and Conaway, 2014) either by action or omission (in the case of non-stakeholders). This new information should be consistent with the basic assumptions of traditional accounting and with the same informative guarantees: objectivity, prudence, uniformity, exposure and materiality (Hilliard, 2013). With the objective of reinforcing the credibility of this social accounting, four elements should converge. In the first place, it is necessary to have an explicit and standardized methodology that allows the development of the monetization process. Secondly, the social accounting process should be traceable, so that it could be verified that, from the stakeholders' map to the final report, the steps demanded by the methodology have been taken and there is continuity in the process. In the third place, the methodology must build an intersubjective agreement on fair value. This agreement can be achieved through standardization (long term), sectoral agreement (medium term) or specialized external analysis (short term). In the fourth place, transparency is crucial, so that all stakeholders could know the elements that have led to a certain assessment, allowing the replication of the process of analysis and calculation. As a corollary of these four elements, an external certification granted by an independent entity (for example, a pool of universities implicated in the development of social accounting) would endorse enhanced credibility and simplify the acceptance process of social accounting for the stakeholders. In relation to the consistency of social accounting, the internal consistency, which is relative to a single firm or institution, is relatively easy to achieve. In relation to the sectorial consistency, it is necessary to ensure that the firms or institutions of the same sector use similar criteria about monetization in order to allow comparability.

This is a path in which social accounting must progress through the organization of sectoral communities of stakeholders that contribute to this necessary standardization of criteria. Cross-sector comparability is

even more difficult, as it is in traditional financial accounting, and it may take years of practice and sectoral benchmarking to achieve it.

## 4. Results

The problem that we try to tackle with the Action Research Training Experience (ARTE) is the reorientation of the focus of the organization towards social issues. We will present ARTE in section 4, as a concrete result of applying the methodologies and approaches presented in the previous section. The key areas of ARTE, when applied to a given corporation, are the case description, problem, and proposal (Barnes, Christensen and Hansen, 1994; Hamel, Dufour and Fortin, 1993; Yin, 2009).

### 4.1. Case description

1. Background. The methods and approaches developed in section 2 are going to be applied to a real corporation (a cooperative group). This case was developed in the year 2017 with the participation of seven out of the eight organizations that form the CLADE Group (the participating organizations were: Suara S. Coop.; Abacus, S. Coop.; the Blanquerna Foundation; Lavola, S. Coop; Association AMPANS; ESCOLA Sant Gervasi S. Coop., and Cooperative Plana de Vic). The training process was based on the CAL methodology and the social accounting approach (Hilliard, 2013), adapted by the team of professors in charge of ARTE. The CLADE Group was responsible for the participation/motivation of its affiliated entities.
2. The Purpose is threefold. On one hand, one of the objectives is to transmit to society the social value generated by each organization. On the other hand, the second objective is internal to the entities that participate in the process: it consists on guiding each organization towards the generation of social value (not only profits). The third objective is to train managers, so that they could be able to implement a system of social accounting in their organizations. All these three objectives could be of high interest for all kind of corporations, but specially for those belonging to the social economy. In the case of cooperatives, this purpose is aligned with their cooperative principles (ICA, 2015).
3. Research questions. Is it necessary to generate a social accounting that complements the financial accounting? Is ARTE a good instrument for the alignment of organizations with social interest? How can the involvement of the entire organization in the process be increased? How can social and financial accounting be integrated into strategic processes?
4. Limits of the case study. In this case, the limits are set about the ARTE training process. The legal form of each organization and other contextual variables (such as location) are not considered.
5. Methods of collecting information. ARTE is structured to facilitate the collection of information from each of the participating organizations. This information is collected in three levels: economic information of the entity, obtained from the financial accounting data; information on social value (there is no market value), obtained through a process of phenomenological dialogue with the stakeholders of each organization; and emotional information, obtained through structured questionnaires. Complementary metainformation is obtained on the ARTE process itself, through the feedback during working sessions between professors and managers (participants), the social value reports developed by the participants at the end of the process, and through a feedback process of After Action Review (AAR), together with a questionnaire to value the usefulness of the whole process.
6. Methods of analysis and interpretation of information. The information obtained in relation to the entities that participate in the process is systematized and interpreted in order to achieve five kinds of result: 1) value generated through market mechanisms; 2) specific social value distributed to stakeholders through non-market mechanisms; 3) socio-economic return for public administrations; 4) emotional value generated for stakeholders; 5) Integrated Social Value. The information on the process itself is analyzed and interpreted through the After Action Review (AAR), and is structured in a SWOT format.

### 4.2. Problem

As we have mentioned before, the problem for organizations has three different dimensions: how to show to society in a systematic and understandable way the social value generated by organizations; how to shift



organizations from being focused only on profit maximization to consider also the creation of social value; train managers to be able to implement a social accounting system and to align the performance of firms with both social and financial objectives.

### 4.3. Proposal

The proposal that is made to each participant (in this case, the CLADE group) has a double dimension. The first dimension is the methodology in which the ARTE experience is based: action research -AR- (in the specific form of critical action learning). The second is the framework in which the skills and competences are transmitted to participants. We have labelled that framework as training experience (TE). The integration of both dimensions results in the ARTE program, which is presented as an innovative learning experience, able to align the interests of corporations with social wellbeing.

Action Research (AR) (Lewin, 1946; Lewin, 1948) is a process based on reflection aimed at the resolution of problems (Denscombe, 2010). AR is usually developed through a community of practitioners, where participants learn simultaneously how to design and implement a solution to the analyzed problem. In this case, the problem is the development of a social accounting in each of the participating organization. Critical Action Learning could be understood as an adaptation of AR to organizational settings (Dick, 1997).

The Training Experience (TE) adds to action research the formation of a group with the managers of all participating entities, plus the team of professors in charge of the experience. The training experience can be divided in seven consecutive steps. The characteristics of each step are explained in table 1.

Table. 1. The 7 steps of the Action Research Training Experience (ARTE)

ARTE [ACTION RESEARCH TRAINING EXPERIENCE]	Dedication (hours)
1st. DAY: Explanation of the process Design of the maps of stakeholders	1 day (8 hours) *
2nd. DAY: Review maps of stakeholders Preparation of interviews	1 day (8 hours) *
3rd. DAY: Analysis of interviews Identification of variables that create value for Stakeholders	1 day (8 hours) *
4th. DAY: Redefinition of variables and orientation to indicators of value	1 day (8 hours) *
5th. DAY: Identification of outputs	1 day (8 hours) *
6th. DAY: Review of outputs. Identification of proxies	1 day (8 hours) *
7th. DAY: Review of proxies Calculation of Integral Social Value Presentation of results	1 day (8 hours) *
ONLINE SUPPORT GIVEN BY PROFESSORS (email, videoconference, phone)	
* Along with the 56 hours of seminars, an additional amount of 150 hours of personal dedication by each participant would be necessary to carry out the whole process.	

Source: own elaboration

In the following lines we will present the pedagogical objectives of ARTE, which are part of the proposal formulated to each participant.

1. Main Objective: Monetize the social value generated by a firm in an objective and comparable way.
2. Specific Objectives:
  - 2.1. Shift the orientation of the firm towards the generation of social value. (Action Research)
  - 2.2. Design the stakeholders' map of the firm. (Stakeholder theory)



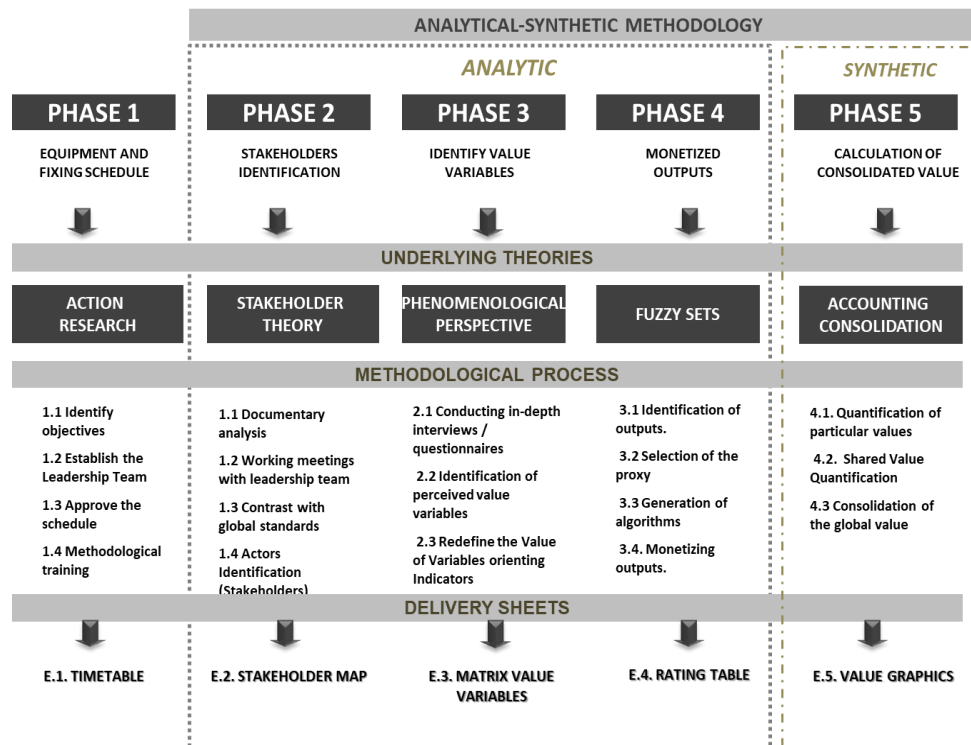
- 2.3. Identify the variables that generate value as perceived as such by stakeholders (phenomenological perspective)
3. Identify proxies that allow monetizing the variables that generate value identified in the previous step. (Fair value)
4. Determine a range of monetary value for each of the proxies (blurred logic)
5. Quantify economically the social value generated by the firm (CSPM).
6. List the non-monetary outputs (emotional value).
7. Present the global value generated by the firm (financial, social and environmental values).

In the following figure (figure 2) the whole process is shown. An adaptation of the Corporate Social Performance Model (Hilliard, 2013) can be considered as the general framework used in the case of the Clade group that have followed the ARTE process. From this general framework, participants, with the help of professors, will develop an *ad hoc* process for each organization (Retolaza et al., 2015; Retolaza et al., 2016). Figure 2 shows the whole research process that is followed in order to design and implement an accounting system able to monetize the social value generated by a given organization or firm. In this case, this process was followed by the seven institutions belonging to the Clade group.

As it is shown in figure 2, the process has five distinct phases, plus a phase of feedback and continuous improvement:

1. Determination of the team of professors, participants in each institution, and schedule (time framework). This phase could be understood as a preliminary or preparatory phase. Nevertheless, it is of vital importance, because an adequate selection of the participating managers will determine to a large extent the success of the whole process. In addition, the schedule will be not only the starting point, but also the reference to avoid delays in the process.
2. Identification of the stakeholders that receive the value that is generated by the organization. In this case, value is identified from the point of view of stakeholders (perceived value), not from the point of view of the organization.
3. Identification of the variables that generate value for stakeholders. Following the approach of the previous phase, this identification will be carried out in dialogue with the different stakeholders.
4. Monetization of the variables that generate value. In this phase we do not continue with the subjectivist perspective of the previous one. Instead of using a subjective assessment of value made by stakeholders, we focus on quantifying in an objective way the outputs linked to each variable of value, through proxies. The logic used in this process of monetary quantification is the same one that was proposed in the quantification of fair value. However, we have to consider that ranges of value in the case of intangible assets or proxies are much broader in comparison with tangible assets. At the same time, it is more complex to achieve a consensus in the value proposed for intangible assets, in comparison to tangible assets.
5. Calculation and visualization of the integral social value. The final amount of integral social value is achieved adding the partial calculations that are presented in the CSPM model.
6. Feedback and continuous improvement. This process is proposed to each organization participating in ARTE and can be achieved through the annual implementation of social accounting. At the same time, other organizations, especially the ones that belong to the same sector or value chain, could benefit from the experience of previous participants.

Figure. 2. Phases of CSPM applied to ARTE



Source: Retolaza et al, 2016

## 5. Discussion of results (ARTE applied to the CLADE Group)

The evaluation of the training process that was developed in the Clade 4 group was carried out through two types of outputs. On one hand, a written document where each participant presents the results of the monetizing process of social value corresponding to the year prior to the training process (in this case, data from 2016). It should be noted that all participating organizations except one completed the social accounting process adequately. This shows the potentiality of ARTE to be a vehicle to develop social accounting in organizations.

On the other hand, the second type of output is the After Action Review (AAR). This method was developed in the 80s by the US Army in order to evaluate the process of adaptation to dynamic and changing situations. In the 90s it was adopted by the top management of certain corporations (Shell, Colgate-Palmolive, Harley Davidson, and others) to identify best practices and avoid mistakes (Morrison and Meliza, 1999). It is a simple process used by a team, with the aim of improving future performance based on the lessons learned after facing problems in the past. The evaluation process consists of an active discussion centered on four key questions: What did we intend to achieve? What has really happened? Why have things been different in comparison with the original plan? What have we learned?

The conclusions of the reflection about those four questions have been visualized through a SWOT matrix. In the following lines we highlight the main ones.

**Strong Points.** High participation (very low rate of absences and drops); low cost per organization; involvement of participants; completion of accounting processes; participation in the group consolidates knowledge and increases security in applying the proposed methodology; innovative nature of the process.

**Weaknesses.** Small connection with the whole organization; partial understanding of the obtained result; difficulties to get internal data; dialogue with stakeholders requires time, and it has not always been possible (in those cases it has been replaced with questionnaires, with poorer results); lack of data at the sector or cluster level.

**Opportunities.** Involve more than one person per organization; systematize a process to socialize the acquired knowledge with the organization as a whole; develop from the starting point of the process the objective of understanding the results of social accounting.

**Threats.** Existence of various social accounting systems; doubts about the understanding of results by society; fear of focusing on simplistic indicators; important aspects not sufficiently monetized due to difficulties in identifying proper proxies; possibility that some organizations could distort results through a proactive selection of variables or proxies.

At a global level, participants and the team of professors in charge of ARTE highlight the usefulness of the process in the following areas: 1) there has been an increase in motivation and orientation to the generation of social value not only by participants, but also by their organizations; 2) social accounting provides data that allows rethinking the purpose and strategy of the organization; 3) the results of ARTE can facilitate the comparative analysis between different years, and the benchmarking with other similar organizations belonging to the same sector/cluster; 4) the publication of results increases the transparency and the symmetry of information with the stakeholders, which allows them to make more informed decisions; 5) social accounting allows the quantitative analysis to calculate tradeoffs between social and economic results of each participating organization.

As we have shown, participants have shown in general a positive opinion about the ARTE experience. However, both participants and the team of professors have identified some limitations. The main one is linked with the process of standardization of variables and proxies, so that results in different organizations can be compared. The second limitation draws attention to the lack of a certification which ensures the correct use of the methodology. The third limitation focuses on the need of an audit process in relation to the outputs identified by the participating organizations and the documents used to develop the social accounting of those organizations.

## 6. Conclusions

ARTE is based on three different approaches that try to link corporations with social responsibility and sustainability: UNGC, UNPRME and the L-K model. Higher education institutions have difficulties in order to design and implement innovative programs to introduce those topics in management education. ARTE may be one example in this direction of finding a way ahead.

In ARTE, the methodological base (AR-CAL) allows the introduction of social accounting as an innovative and critical learning tool and, at the same time, it makes possible the learning process in an active way, inside the organizational context (and not only inside the classroom).

Regarding the first objective of the paper, we highlight the fact that in many cases universities do not introduce in their core programs innovative and disruptive knowledge. At the same time, scientific journals tend to publish research done by academics with a certain delay which may generate a problem of making that research outdated when it is published. As a possible solution to this problem, CAL methodology shows how managers can learn innovative or even disruptive knowledge about sustainability, responsibility, and ethics inside the organizational environment. In addition, this methodology is able to reduce the time gap of knowledge transfer from the academia to managers. Besides, the learning process takes place inside the organizational environment and is linked with it. At the same time, CAL is an efficient tool to solve specific organizational problems. It is able to solve the given problem (to develop a social accounting in each participating organization), and train managers to implement and develop that system of social accounting.

Regarding the second objective of the paper, it seems that ARTE could be a useful tool to develop specific competences oriented to include in organizations key elements of social responsibility and sustainability. At the same time, ARTE permits the use social accounting in the CSPM framework and allows the introduction of a complementary role for organizations in society, closer to social expectations. In addition, ARTE introduces and develops ethical competences in managers, trying to involve the whole organization in the process. It is important to underline that the success of ARTE in relation to managers is not based on exams or on doing academic papers, but on the actual development of a social accounting system inside the organization of each manager participating in the program. In order to perform this task, each manager needs to have the support of the whole organization, making possible the transformation of the whole organization towards a stakeholder-based approach.

According to participants in ARTE, this program has strong and weak points. Among the strong points, high participation, involvement of participants, and the generation of a complete social accounting process should be highlighted. On the other hand, lack of data or poor connection with the whole organization were the main weaknesses.

After the completion of the whole ARTE program, both participants and the team of professors in charge of the process underlined the possibility of using data obtained through the calculation of social accounting in order to contrast the purpose or the strategy of the organization. In this line, ARTE increases the information available for stakeholders, and the organization could contrast if the actual creation of value for stakeholders is in accordance with its mission and purpose. If this is not completely the case, social accounting could be a tool to help corporations to measure if their creation of value per stakeholder is aligned with their own purposes.

Regarding the implementation of ARTE in organizations belonging to the social economy, in our view, this methodology provides to their managers with additional information about the social involvement of those organizations. For example, managers could communicate to society the contribution of the

corporation to employees, to cooperative members, to the public administration (through taxes), and to the surrounding local community. In the case of cooperatives, that information could be used to guide the strategic planning of the organization and align the performance of the cooperative with the cooperative principles that are at the base of the cooperative movement.

One of the limits of the ARTE experience is that it has been applied to only one experience at the moment. Due to this fact, it is difficult to establish general conclusions about the whole process. On the other hand, this situation generates the need of continuous research in the field, comparing CAL initiatives with the results obtained in the After Action Reviews (AAR). In addition to those limitations, participants in the ARTE program highlighted the lack of a completely standardized procedure, so that results in different organizations could be easily compared. In this line, the development of auditing processes linked with social accounting could be a way to advance in this standardization process.

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