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Perspectives of the social-environmental management in the Brazilian industry: a study of the footwear sector of Franca-SP

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Abstract

The corporative responsibility bears aspects of social, economic and environmental sustentability. However, for the distinct sectors and governmental spheres, the adoption of new projects of supported development becomes a challenge. This article describes the influence of the spread Brazilian social-environmental management in the footwear industry of Franca, State of São Paulo. The research had exploratory and qualitative character, using the technique of case study. The marketing difficulties of the footwear sector leave the development of social-environmental projects behind. In this context especially, the demand for public policies is even bigger to stimulate and to make possible the social-environmental management in enterprises.

1. Introduction

Ecosystem deterioration and child work exploitation are among main current problems. This reality, mainly in underdeveloped or during development countries, is completed by others low performance pointers in world scale, opening space to major differences, in social and environment protection levels.

During last decades, social and environment compromise questions were put in discussion of relevant events, with proposal of knowledge diffusion and acquirement about need of sustainable development. With ecological, economical and social sustainability conception, respect by individuals and environment are no longer only ONG's concerns, but are now strategical components to private initiative.

In Brazilian footwear sector, concerns with ecosystem deterioration is being put on spot in sector's discussion and children work exploitation is less evident, due social projects that involved this sector in the 90's. However, because it is a manufacture activity, with some hand-made phases, footwear confection has used children work until the beginning of the 90's, when Children and Teenagers Statute, with law no. N° 8.069, from July 13th, 1990, has started to give children and teenagers full protection.

Under environment aspects, there is the environment pollution problem, due the use of chromium salt during animal leather tanning process, many activities in footwear-leather chain has a pollution potential, including shoes production that generates chromium leather residues.

Both issues still challenge viable proposals of social and environment management and current laws observance. In this way, Corporative Responsibility aspects will be approached focusing on Social Management and Environment Management importance to sustainable development. Next, Brazilian footwear industry characteristics will be presented, as well as footwear industrial pole aspects from Franca city, São Paulo state, to put on context the city's environment and social management.

2. Corporative Responsibility issue under Social Management focus

One of the greatest globalization influences was commercial opening in some countries, which has facilitated their social and economical transactions. Overall,

technological magnifying allowed that customers had access to information, products and services, produced in any part of the world. Customers value not only economical variables, but also others that add value to the organization even if it is a long term view, as it happens with responsible management technique (ACKERMAN, 1997). Studies indicate that first discussions of responsible management in Brazil took place in the 70's, "having as protagonist the Company's Christian Diligent Association – ADCE Brazil, which main initial objective to promote a debate about social results" (ASHLEY et al, 2003, p.73).

Studies published by international organizations, such as ONU (United Nations Organization), allow a greater view of relationship between social and environmental problems. Worldwatch Institute annual report *In the Way of a Sustainable Society* (2006) affirms that highly consumption practices, adopted by people that live in rich countries, are being copied by countries in development. So, ecosystem's wild exploitation challenges economical prosperity, mainly in countries in development.

Studies published by international organizations, such as ONU (United Nations Organization) allow us to have greater visibility about social and environment problems. Thus, WorldWatch Institute annual report *Directed to a Sustainable Society* (2006) reports that highly consumption practices adopted by 1 billion people that live in rich countries, are being copied by in developing countries. So, the major challenge is to conciliate environment degradation with wild exploitation to human sustain, because economical prosperity is not restricted only to rich North countries, it is increasing in development nations in Asia and Latin America, where several past factors hindered success, due political instability, commercial barriers, unclear rules, lack of understructure, deficient education, innovation obstacles and foreign capital increment, have increase investments and consumption.

Challenged by commercial opening, in globalization scenario, Brazilian economy received new products and technologies that attached much information. In these

circumstances, companies had to redefine their market strategies to compete with international competitors, relating the objectives to produce with quality, reliability, rapidity, flexibility, low cost and continuous improvement (SLACK, et. al., 1996). Thus, social responsibility and environment was and is still being a correct strategy to companies that search for competitively, and this has become a strategic differential to organizations which give quality to their clients (BERRY & RANDINELLI, 1998).

Sustainable use of natural resources has become a strategic, social, environment and economical issue. In this context, social-environment approach recognizes intrinsic value of nature and admits that it should be used to achieve human needs. Barbieri (2004, p.23) recognizes social-environment approach as a systemic search for production and sustainable consumption, “[...] understood as those that search to understand human needs respecting environment limitation, limitations that are not statically and that human being can and must extend them to take care off all”.

Under corporative responsibility aspect, Barbieri (2004, p.26) accepts that an environment management model aim at contribute to “[...] generate incomes and wealth, minimize their adverse environment impacts, maximize the benefits and making society more fair”, basing it in “economical efficiency, social equity and environment respect” criteria.

When Brazilian reality is looked by its social side, it is necessary to promote quick improvements. According to World Bank president, Vinod Thomas (2006), the 40% richer Brazilian people have 82% of the incomes, while the 40% more poor people remains with only 8% of the incomes. With that, it is very important to implement changes that assure sustainable development. In this way, to fomenter business strategies endowed with social and environmental responsibility, and that reinforce the necessity of companies’ contribution to system’s sustainability.

In this context, to understand social function in the company in capitalist economy reveals its importance focused on company's strategies and responsibilities. According to Ficher (2006) social function is related to "commitments to develop people which it uses, with security and customer and clients satisfaction; with environment protection and non-renewable resources and community well-being". These elements appear as strategic targets, as important as "*market share*" and "business yield" to capitalist entrepreneur logic.

Under corporative responsibility view, Martinelli & Cotrin (2003, p.09) point out that true response to ecological crisis must "[...] be in world scale and under condition to make an authentic political, social and cultural revolution re-orienting material and non-material production goals". And to Tachizawa (2002, p.68-70), "new order organization must choose providers that reach ethical requirements and that use productive resources in a responsible way".

Environment and social management is important to all citizens, because it legitimist production organizational commitments that are monitored by social and environmental performance.

3. Sustainable development and environment management responsibility

Intensive exploitation of nature resources and exaggerated natural product consumption have turned human been in their own consumption model victim. Environment deterioration is bringing up reflections, in privative and public organizations, searching for ecological solutions in global level. UNIDO's (2005) and Worldwatch Institute's (2006) reports remark that environmental problems are being felt by people and institutions.

"Our Common future", a report published in 1987, by ONU's environment world commission, sustainable development concept that reaches present need without compromising future generation's capacity to take care of their own needs, has spread with

great merit making that all nations face ecological problem as an important factor internally and externally of their territorial frontiers (DONAIRE, 1999, p.28-29).

One of inevitable consequences of industrial productions is industrial residue production, which overload pollution making ecosystem's deteriorations worse.

As inevitable consequence of industrial production we have residue generation and pollution increase, which remark actions to environment impact reduction. These problems influence organization administration, demanding from strategic planning a better involvement with social and environmental issue and follow up of global tendencies as a way to get competitive advantage. Thus, Environment management appears as an administrative tool endowed with goals, objectives, directives and activities, and having proposal of "get positive effects about environment, reducing or eliminating damage or problems caused by human actions or avoiding them to appear" (BARBIERI, 2004, p.20).

To Tachiwaza (2002), environmental management is base on new environmental conscience, appeared during cultural transformation that happened in the 60's and 70's. This approach has increased and placed environmental as on of the main elements to development, and in the 80's investments to solve environment problems have been initiated. Stimulated by resources exhaustion, by alterations from environment degradation and from Industrial Revolution, industrial production has demanded an increase of intensive techniques, new substances and materials that compromised ecosystem balance, increasing air, soil and water pollution.

Donaire (1999, p.29) remarks that warning given by ONU's report must not be seen as a decadence and poverty preview limited by planet's resource amount. However, it must be understood as a "possibility of appearance of a new era in economical growth that is supported by politics which keep and expand nature resources base".

Commitment by a greater number of people, public and private institutions in responsible actions execution, express initiatives to mitigate social and environmental problems (LUNN, 2006). As population growth has already strongly tested planet's sustentation environment limits, Fischer (2006) observes that challenges demand "intersector collaboration to develop and consolidate valores and cultural patterns which sustain social responsibility as an attribute of any citizen".

However, partnership relations reinforcement and subgroups interdependency, constituted by countries, states or cities is necessary around a sustainable development. According to Worldwatch Institute (2006, p.12) report, "[...] to keep people poor is not the solution – moral or practical", and so social-environmental management endowed of responsibility contributes to brighten up and to eradicate social and environmental problems. This report shows WWF (2000) study, sponsored by World Nation Foundation, reporting that poverty performs a main role about basic causes of biodiversity loss.

More profound investigation of responsibility dynamic diffused in social and environmental management and interaction between active elements in society allow organizations to propose more effective social and environmental actions. Under holistic perspective, social and environmental management techniques offer manager support, because it allows company's competitive advantage value, as well as social and environmental well being of neighbor's communities.

Influence analysis of social and environmental management to Brazilian sustainable development, spread in industrial footwear polo in Franca city, São Paulo state, and two main aspects of social and environmental programs of this city, evidenced public politics importance to incentives and to make possible sustainable development in this important economical sector. Next, it is described characteristics of Brazilian footwear industry and social and environmental projects analyzed in footwear pole of Franca city.

4. Brazilian Footwear industry

Brazilian Footwear sector is composed by over 7 thousand industries in 2005, which produce around 725 millions pair f shoes, and in 2006, there were 164,92 millions directed to exportation (Abicalçados, 2006). Brazilian shoes reach several markets around the world, exporting a great amount of leather shoes, which is a component that for much time was and still is the main resource. Industries have used 312,58 thousand people in 2004 and sector sales in the country have surpass U\$1.700,00 millions dollars.

Industrial shoes production has a specific characteristic that is to place itself in some geographical regions in Brazil. Shoes industrial production is concentrated in certain geographical regions in Brazil. Vale dos Sinos region, in Rio Grande do Sul state is the main national manufacturer, followed by São Paulo state, which is remarkable by the volume of produced pairs in Franca, Birigui and Jaú cities.

In competitive market as footwear segment, managers reach productivity gain, with new manufacture techniques to get competitive advantages “[...] otherwise they will be in last place in globalization process” (FARAH JÚNIOR, 2000, p.52). In these competitive markets, ecologically and socially correct production is detached as a value strategy to companies committed to environment and social well-being. Tachizawa (2000) and Barbieri (2004) recognize that customers are more conscious, preferring to buy items from this type of company, stimulating ecological sustainability and human values maximization.

However, in footwear and leather sector still have great challenges to fit in the ideal sustainable model, that is, a model that searches to reach human needs respecting environment limitations in benefit of all. However, it will be presented footwear industry of Franca city to put two analyzed projects in context.

5. Industrial pole characteristics of Franca city and city's social and environmental management in this sector

Industrial concentration, since component manufacture until shoes exportation, in footwear pole of Franca city, has a big role in national and international market. According to data from Franca's Footwear industry Union (SINDIFRANCA, 2006), in the city, male shoes production is around 84%, female shoes around 14% and children shoes around 2%. Local manufacture is about 71% of internal production and 29% of total exportation, generating jobs and development to the city. This branch has 760 industries with a production capacity of 37,2 millions pairs of shoes a year, with mainly leather shoes confection, and also leather boots, tennis shoes in leather, canvas and nylon. However it has manufactured 27,9 millions pairs in 2005 using only 75% of its capacity, leaving part of the production idle due economical and external difficulties in negotiation.

Difficulties to export national shoe with competitive price and profit warranty, requires even more efforts from managers which must invest in new strategies to improve quality, of greater productivity and interest by external customers eyes. Thus, economical oscillations are felt by local entrepreneurs, reflecting in decrease of exported shoe volume comparing to previous years. This way, it is urgent to footwear companies, in wholesale and retail, the adoption of a flexible management with quality, technological and social and environmental performance patterns...

Some articulations, allying organizational strategies with social-environmental well-being, interact adding value to products and to the company itself. For this reason, companies are certifying according to ISO 9000 rules (quality), ISO 14001 (environmental management system) and SA 8000 (social responsibility), proving a new corporative culture fortified by "correct" or "responsible" brands. With this purpose, Franca's Company "Free Way Boots & Shoes" has made license contracts with *Greenpeace*, one of the most active

environmental organizations, to launching a leather shoe line, with pure Amazon latex and vegetable treatment, material removed from tree trunks. (TACHIZAWA, 2002, p.75).

Great challenges still hinder sustainable development in footwear and leather sectors, in shoes manufacture process, tanning leather represents a highly polluting phase, however final product elaboration requires also use of other resources with polluting agent potential such as rubber, glue and plastic. Some activities that use highly polluting substances, such as leather tanning with chromium (Cr), were not yet replaced by cleaner technologies.

This way, strategic planning of social and environmental management in shoe industry must have sector's particular characteristics with strategies and effective actions to face micro and macro environment factors, and thus, to conquer most demanding markets. Thus, it is remarkable the need of a sustainable development model adapted to the sector's characteristics, with capacity to qualify organizations concerned with environment and people social well being.

5.1 Children work issue and Pro Children social project

For many time, children work in footwear industry, was seen as something common, due outsourcing of the manual sewing stages in shoes, performed at home by families of some employer or unemployed of the industry. This outsourcing type can be called "sew benches". According to Garcia (2003, p.01), "analysis of productive structure in shoes industry shows that production process in general, demands a great quantity of hand-maid work, given the importance of workers intervention in important phases of productive process". As consequence, it represents the reason why work has had an important role in company's costs, and work's costs reduction was very important in search of competitive advantages.

In Franca city, dislocate industrial production to the workers home was seen, by shoes entrepreneurs, as an income-producing strategy of productive process itself. A research made for City Hall registered, by its Technology department, the existence of 1063 “sew benches”. These benches were a result from outsourcing phenomena, characterized by a kind of work made in improvised, small and with bad ventilation places, installed in private houses, in this stage of production it is verified children work (IPEC, 2007, 104).

In sew benches, work involved all family that wished expectation of better incomes. Thus, they put children to work, believing that “ through work, children would develop better and would be more prepared to adult life” (IPEC, 2007, p.104). With that, it was observed that involvement of children work issue, is related to cultural aspects, because family work practice was a strong cultural heritage, existing a great resistance by society in the way of perceive children work as a problem.

In 1992, Unic Workers Central (CUT), in partnership with International Program to Eliminta Children´s Work (IPEC), from International Work Organizaion (OIT), has made several studies in the country about children´s work issue, promoting wide debate about this theme in several regions. It was clear the importance of children´s work in footwear sector, and manily strongs traces of this in Franca city entourage.

USP and FUNDACENTRO studies (apud IPEC, 2007, p.105), beyond approaching more wide aspects of the problem, has detected another serious problem related with children working in shoes boards: glue use. This substance, used in shoe production, may cause serious damage to respiratory system, as weel as in stomach, intestines and neurologic system after long term periods of product contact, being a inibitor factor of children´s plein development.

In 1995, it was established Pro Children Institute, which was supported by Franca´s Shoes Industry Union, Industry and Commerce Association, CIESP/ FIESP Regional

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Bureau, Abrinq Foundation, UNICEF, OIT/IPEC, São Paulo state Job and Work Relations Secretariat, Rights Conceal and ONGs. Action priority was to fight against children work in footwear sector in Franca city through “Children Work’s Prevention and Eradication Program in Footwear Sector”, whose objective included children’s permanence in school and teenagers occupational and professional qualification.

This program previewed study sponsor, allowing immediate removal of children from work situation and promoting their entering in school and complementary activities through professional classes in several areas. Pro Children Institute manages resources originary from the companies, and directing them in study sponsor in several areas like *ballet*, swimming, basketball, soccer, computer class, English class, Spanish class, bureau helper class, automobile mechanics class, music and young citizen class, taking care of children who need opportunities. Companies that participate in this program receive “ProChildren” certification, declaring that they do not use children work, which symbolize their social responsibility.

According to Thrid Sector Administration Study Center from CEATS FIA/USP (2005, p.01), “Pro Children Program involves 45 shoes industries, among which 44 are in Franca city, including companies from other sectors. Program also includes certification of more than a thousand micro-companies and individuals that act as shoes industries providers”.

With this project there was a movement, involvment, articulation and support to actions that focused educational promotion, plein children and teenagers development, their preparation to exercise citizenship and work capability. For this, it was very important creation of a department to receive children work dennunciation. Beyond that, it was important the articulation of shoes industries, non-governemental industries and local public governement take responsaibilities to implement and coordinate this social project.

5.2 Industrial garbage issue and Environmental project “industrial residue collect and destination”

A great pollution factor is due use of chromium salt in animal leather tanning. According to Ambiente Brasil (2007) chromium, when present in soluble form, with six times valence, chromate or dichromate, shows environmental risks, because heavy metals (elements with high molecular weight), when absorbed by human beings, are deposited in bones and fat tissue and dislocate noble minerals from bones and muscles to blood circulation, provoking diseases such as Asthma (bronchitis) or even cancer.

Footwear sector, represented by “leather, shoes and artifacts” industries are characterized by a great amount of residues, due the use of non-homogeneous resources in morphology and quality” (SOUSA, 2005, p.03). Among main resources used in shoes productions are bovine and goat leather, hardware, tissues, adhesives, leather, rubber and EVA soles (SINDIFRANCA, 2006, p.05). At the end of the productive process, we have great quantity of residues that requires treatment and appropriate destination, in appropriate places, like authorized industrial garbage dumps.

Because of these needs, it was implanted in Franca city a new garbage dump to receive industrial and domestic residues, with a 25-years useful life. It was built under rigorous technical criteria searching for environment preservation with estimated capacity to receive 100 tons per day of industrial residues and 200 tons per day of domestic residues (FRANCAL, 2006). However, this garbage dump is receiving 160 tons of industrial residues per day, which points out the need to determine other projects about environment injuries which support local sustainable development...

The challenge is to find economically viable proposal to social and environmental management and that also fill current rules. The inadequate disposal of industrial residue in public places and open dumps are still common practice in Brazil, which brings esthetic and

sanitary impacts, injuring many communities due contamination risk through highly dangerous chemical elements.

As environmental impacts associated with great volume and dangerous of industrial residues, it was verified the need to treat shoes residues and, after that, give them adequate destination. According to Schneider (2003), exaggerated generation of different solid residues is related to human beings' unlimited capacity to develop knowledge and to invent new things, generating each day new products, promoting resources transformation and creating new needs to their comfort and well being.

Leather is one of the main shoes resources, receives in tanning phases highly polluting resources that concerns environmental committed managers, like Cleaner Production politics (P+L). Generally, leather tanning uses chromium sulphate as active element, whitewash to swell and correct salt skins' Ph, sodium sulphet or sulphuric and formic acids to remove hairs in leather in (SOUSA, 2006). Because of these resources using in leather preparation, tanning activity has highly polluting potential, and theses elements need technical specification to deposit and storage.

With leather use in shoes manufacture, there is residue generation. Shavings or left-over are deriving from tanned leather cutting, bran, scraps or remnant are generated in finishing process, final phase in shoes production (SOUSA, 2006). Beyond that, other residues such as chromium leather, shoes with flaws, leather powder, fabric sweeping and others remaining residues constitute companies industrial garbage.

In this way it is necessary to make adequate planning of residue management in footwear industry. So, planning must include sector's peculiar characteristics with effective strategies and decisive actions to overcome treatment problems, and right destination of generated residues. However project analysis "Collect and destination of industrial residues" allow us to survey that responsibility assumed by Sindifranca and companies is restricted to residue

destination to city's garbage dump. According to Sindifranca (2006), only 120 companies participate in the residue destination to city's garbage dump project. However, from Sousa's reports (2006) it is clear that daily industrial garbage production, around 160 tons a day, is bigger than projected capacity to garbage dump (around 100 tons a day), and because of that it is presumed that storage capacity will be depleted before it was predicted.

6. Method

This study is based in generated data from bibliographic survey, and from information's from technical reports from Footwear Industry Union from Franca city and from Brazilian Footwear Industry Association. The research was qualitative and exploratory, using case study technique to study main social and environmental programs from footwear pole in Franca city. According to Lakatos (2002, p. 71) bibliographic research, or secondary sources, encloses all bibliography already published related to the study theme, and because of that this technique was used and also exploratory research, that according to Mattar (2005, p.86), represents "[...] one of the faster and more economic ways to mature or go deep a research problem". There were made surveys in books, magazines, papers, texts to discussion and consults, such as Sector Report Lafis, ABNT, Brazilian Footwear Industry association, applied economic research Institute, Social and Economical Research institute, among others. These data sustained the objective of describing Brazilian social and environmental management influence spread in footwear pole of Franca city, São Paulo State, detaching the need of public politics to stimulate companies in adopting responsible actions.

Qualitative investigation and case study technique allowed reporting two main projects developed in Franca: "Pro Children" and "Collect and Destination of Industrial Residues" were used and pointers of companies committed to social and environmental well being.

7. Final considerations

Consulted bibliography (TACHIZAWA 2002, CHEN 1994 and BARBIERI 2004) pointed out the importance of social and environmental management, presenting advantages to reinforce products brand with social-environmental certification. Investigation of two main projects developed in Franca, “Pro Children” and “Collect and Destination of Industrial Residues”, reveals that government and society motivation is incipient, and mainly from companies to commit with social and environmental well-being in attempt to promote sustainable development.

Market difficulties of footwear entrepreneurs take away priority to execute social and environmental projects. Empirical knowledge allows us to infer that, to most of them, social and environmental responsibility sounds like an incumbency and few look at it as an investment or a strategic tool to add value to the company’s product. It was clear that footwear industry in Franca has potential to assume more responsibility before community, once that examples reveals that less than 5%, from total 760 footwear companies participate in Pro Children project. From all companies established in the city, only 120 participate in “Collect and Destination of industrial residue” project with Sindifranca to residue destination in city’s garage dump. According to Environmental Quality report in São Paulo state, from State Environmental Secretariat (2006), Franca city is among most polluting potential areas in the state. Due establishment of 6 leather and coats industries, priority activity in the city is to establish environment pollution control.

Besides they are not an exception, companies that participate in social and environmental projects modify their attitudes about polluting activities and workers hiring. This way, social and environmental management practice contributes to right destination of

industrial residue and to put children in school. So to an effective social and environmental management, it is important to involve all people, which can contribute to economical and social development..

This approach is crucial to strategic planning of sector's social and environmental projects. Integration between public politics and companies' actions must have the same sustainability ideal, looking forward to optimize social and environmental performance, once that isolated actions tend to be in discredit, and not be executed. In this context, it is necessary public politics that stimulate and articulate responsibility in all shoes productive chain. Finally, it is necessary other studies which search for real potentiality in social and environmental management as a competitive strategy, increasing shoes added value.

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