

DEVELOPING TOOLS FOR STEWARDSHIP: THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTING TECHNIQUES

Project:17

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INTRODUCTION

□ RESEARCH TEAM

The project is the result of joint collaboration between researchers at St. Andrews University and the staff and trustees of FHT;

□ PURPOSE

The project aims to identify tools to account and manage the stewardship-infused activities of Falkland. In particular techniques will be proposed in order to support the daily management and reporting of the activities of FHT.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

□ PROJECT PHASES

- The project has developed through three main phases:
 - 1) Interpretation of the concept of stewardship
 - i) study of what stewardship means for FHT
 - ii) analysis of what stewardship means for other organizations
 - iii) review of the literature about stewardship
 - iv) analysis of the interconnections between stewardship and other key concepts of the Social/Environmental accounting literature
 - 2) Mapping of the organization in order to understand
 - i) vision, mission, strategic goals, activities and governance
 - ii) stakeholders and impacts of organization's activities
 - 3) identifying and proposing tools for accounting, reporting and managing

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

- ❑ An action research methodology has been followed in conducting this research project. In particular, researchers have been actively working in collaboration with FHT staff for a significant period of time.
- ❑ Different research methods have been employed in order to collect data and information:
 - i) observation;
 - ii) interviews with staff;
 - iii) participation in seminars and meetings.

ROLE AND PARTICIPATION OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- ❑ Community Partners have been actively involved in each one of the project phases. In fact, staff and trustees of FHT have provided significant support in the first stage of “conceptualization” as well as in the second of “mapping”. This collaboration is consistent with the methodology followed in this project.

MAIN FINDINGS

- ❑ At the present we are in the third phase, i.e. “developing tools and techniques for accounting, reporting and managing”
- ❑ Main findings include:
 - Developing a model of social accountability in order to make sense of the concept of stewardship (as an alternative conceptualization of principal-agent relationships)
 - Stewardship appears to differ from accountability (i.e. be a special case of that concept) due to the nature of the assets to be stewarded and the time frame of the analysis
 - In FHT different types of accountability models (each one with a different level of resolution) seem to operate at the same time

Implications for the Social Economy

- ❑ Awareness of the concepts underlying the approach taken by FHT
 - Stewardship was used in a 'common sense' manner but now can be used with more rigour and with more appreciation of what it may mean for the organisation
- ❑ Appreciation of how others have dealt with the Stewardship task
 - Knowledge sharing may eventually emerge from the project

How Students Benefited from the Project

- ❑ A post-doc post has been created to complete the project work. This approach was used because of the complexity of the organizational setting as well due to the availability of staff to work on the project.

Next Steps

- ❑ Over the next few months the third phase (of developing tools for accounting, reporting and managing) will be completed.
- ❑ In particular, researchers intend to propose a set of techniques which will aid staff at Falkland to undertake their stewardship-infused activities.
- ❑ The results will be shared with the staff and trustees of Falkland and subsequently presented at conferences and seminars.