

Centre for Rehabilitation, Education, and Pedagogy (Ośrodek Rehabilitacyjno-Edukacyjno-Wychowawczy) (OREW) in Nowy Targ: Partnership in management and institutional development through individual employee development

What does this case study demonstrate?

A high level of employee involvement and open, energetic leadership contribute to a dynamic development of the institution. Thanks to participation in the analysis of functioning of the organisation, in the assessment of its needs and the direction of its evolution employees feel that they are co-responsible for decisions taken and implemented by the management. The organisation is developing dynamically and systematically implements new solutions and improvements in the methods of rehabilitation of severely disabled children. It is an attractive workplace where employees are often authors and implementers of new projects. The implemented solutions result in an increase in the number of pupils assisted, increase in rehabilitation methods offered and activities aimed at an extension of premises base for the further development of the institution. The number of entities offering rehabilitation services for disabled children and adults has been increasing recently it is because the growing of government funding programmes for these purposes. However, only entities with the highest expertise and achievements can be successful in the market.

Workplace innovation elements:

Commitment on the part of the employees and the organisation leader, mutual trust, dialogue and communication, learning and thinking, consulting of key decisions, open relations in the organisation.

Context

The organisation was established in 1989, it is a non-public institution created and governed by the Polish Association for the Benefit of Mentally Disabled Persons, Nowy Targ. It was formed by parents determined to fight for decent conditions of life and education for their children, for whom there was no place in any educational establishment. During the 25 years of its activity, it took care of the organisation of medical, rehabilitation, clinical, psychological, legal, and social assistance for disabled children, as well as the strengthening of parental competence and motivating the parents to undertake social and self-help activities. The Association operates in the local environment, promoting its mission, gaining the cooperation of volunteers – professionals and youth, different types of organisations and institutions, as well as local authorities.

The Centre for Rehabilitation, Education, and Pedagogy (OREW) currently employs 57 specialists, educators and administrative staff. 63 children and youths aged from 3 to 25 currently attend the centre. It provides them with multi-profiled educational, therapeutic and rehabilitation assistance. It creates optimal conditions for the fulfilment of the schooling obligation according to an individual program. The Centre also hosts the Early Development Assistance Team (ZWWR), covering with its support approximately the 60 youngest children per year.

Partnership in management

In order to improve and facilitate the coordination of separate decisions taken in the Centre, the management decided to create the Coordination Team in order to integrate decision procedures under a single scheme. The Team consists of four representatives of all groups of workers: physiotherapists, speech therapists, psychologists, teachers and management (Director and Deputy Directors). The body is an informal advisory and consultative structure. Thanks to its openness and broad employee representation, it is also an intermediate element between the employees and the management. The employees freely share their ideas and comments with the Coordination Team which discusses new projects and takes them into consideration in its forum. Through an open and dynamic approach to the centre management, the employees feel they take part in the decision-making process concerning matters important for the Centre and its functioning. At the same time, thanks to individual employees' initiative, the activity and development of the Centre has a continuous and creative nature.

Institutional development through individual employee development

The employees point out that the Centre applies many practices which let them demonstrate their autonomy and initiative in the accomplishment of the tasks assigned.

The management of the Centre uses an innovative Incentive Scheme (including financial and non-financial aspects) in team management. In return for high achievements, understood as receiving additional funding from structural funds and creative contribution to the accomplishment of the tasks assigned, the employees receive one-time bonuses within a monthly system. Participation in educational classes, including training, studying and internship is linked with additions to salaries. Employees are also entitled to use specialised rehabilitation equipment, and other resources owned by the Centre and its premises after the working hours.

The rules and practice in the OREW Centre allow the employees to expand their competence, e.g. by financing postgraduate studies, nationwide and international exchange and internship projects. The Self-Education Council of the organisation makes it possible to share the gathered knowledge and raise the workers skills, for the benefit of the pupils as well as the employee's own educational level and position on the labour market. Self-Education Council is formed of all the teachers and specialists employed within entity.

Recently, the employees initiated the creation of an Integrated Computer Schedule covering the use of rooms, specialists working time and the pupil's individual schedules. The application was developed for a more efficient use of space and time for the pupils needs, and for a maximum use of the specialist's time and skills.

The management and staff willingly participate in planned and spontaneously organised integration meetings for employees and their families, as well as for the pupils. Spending time together and celebrating special occasions is an element which creates bonds among the employees. The employees emphasise it themselves that, in general, they like their work and its atmosphere. They also feel they can directly influence the implementation of their obligations and they willingly implement minor improvements and create training aids to increase the effectiveness of their actions.

Who benefits?

The employees evaluate their work very positively. The work is hard, but as they put it themselves, "*work at OREW gives satisfaction and a sense of mission*", "*I like working in a place where I feel needed and fulfilled*". The employees highly appreciate the opportunity of demonstrating autonomy and initiative in the accomplishment of the tasks set for them; they find them clearly defined, interesting and challenging.

The parents of disabled children feel they can rely on the association in difficult situations. They assess the relations within the organisation, the commitment of the employees and the effects of their work very positively.

The disabled children (pupils of the centre) benefit from the expanding offer and from the actions integrating the environment of disabled people's families and raising their protective and educational competence.

Prognosis

In the not too distant future further development of the institution and its employees is expected, thanks to the endeavours of the management actively seeking additional funds aimed at the development of the specialists' knowledge and at the extension of the premises. Thanks to its broad range and capacities of assistance to disabled children, the entity became a strong competitor for the special school opened in the area. Innovative solutions and programmes implemented in the Centre contribute to the improvement of the quality of the children's life and of the support offer for persons aged more than 25, which is planned for the future. The management together with the employees are planning further improvements (new rehabilitation programmes) and raising the efficiency of the functioning of the Centre.