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LOCAL ANSWERS FOR LABOR MARKET DISPROPORTIONS- AN OVERVIEW OF AN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT PROJECT BY AN AGRICULTURAL REGIONAL INTEGRATED VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

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ABSTRACT – Local answers for labor market disproportions- an overview of an organization development project by an agricultural regional integrated vocational training centre
The Eastern Hungarian agricultural regional integrated vocational training centre's currently running organization and human resource development project - sponsored by the European Union – provides new methods and lateral thinking in the institute group's former management practice, in many respects. Both the project based operation and the working in developer workgroups aims at the creation and maintenance of the a more efficient and flexible organization, the project's implementation itself is –from the aspect of management theory – is a change management activity. The final success of the project is essentially depending on the enthusiasm and attitude of the numerous participants; therefore it was expedient to analyze the project staff's qualitative composition through an objective method. The survey allows of the creation of information about the necessary incentives, the examination of success of the initial selection, or rather the viability of a new configuration supplemented with the project organization and the team based working in the scope of public education institutes.

Keywords: empowerment, change, agricultural training, organization development, TISZK.

INTRODUCTION

After a law change in 2007, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development – towards the continuous development and dissemination of more efficient didactics – needed to alter its supervised vocational training institutes' organizational and operational system. The claim of getting to development resources and funds, the retaining and expansion of their role in education market had necessitated the creation of three regionally defined, so-called integrated vocational training centres (their Hungarian acronym is "TISZK"), allowing of harmonized planning, operation and leadership. In case one of them, the Eastern Hungarian agricultural regional integrated vocational training centre - with its six member vocational training institutes – the financial fund for integration is currently a Social Renewal Operational Programme 2.2.3-09/1 construction based project which is essentially a complex development, that modifies the earlier operation of the whole institution group, at the same time it efficiently serves the spread of new teaching and learning techniques, through the next, for execution predetermined elements: developing common knowledge-, human resource management- and control system; preparation for modular education and training, in line with the economic needs and new training structure; developing community services; marketing innovations; involving socially and economically disadvantaged groups in vocational training; competency based education, project based education, e-learning; developing career tracking system; establishing real, close contacts with local employers and employment services, offices.

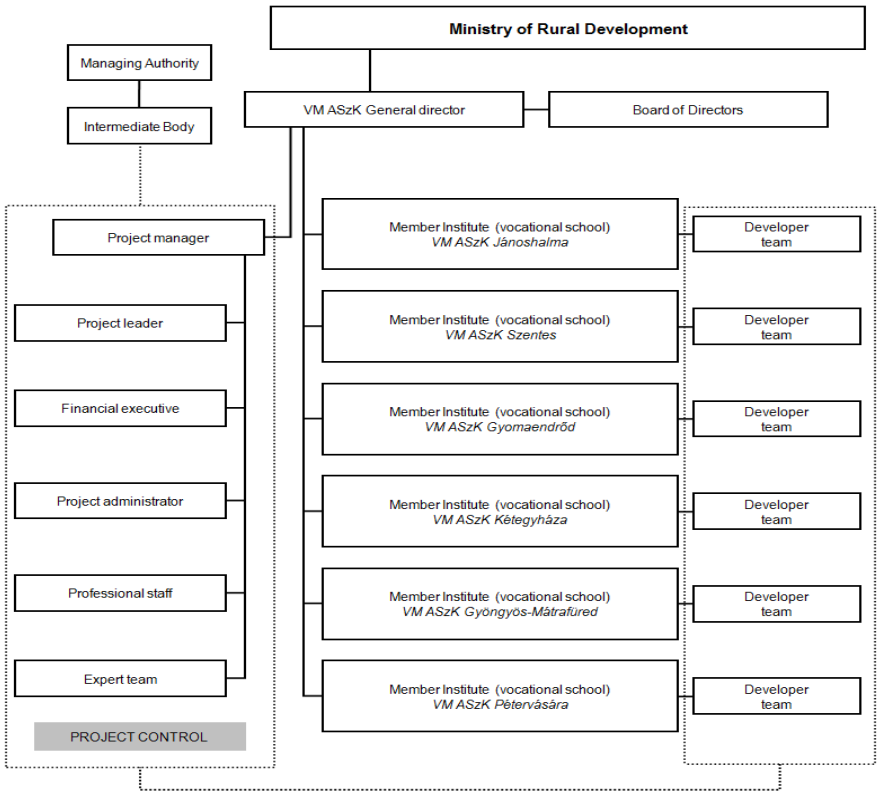
The background of the development: project-based operation and empowerment

The instruments of *structural coordination* introduced before and in the course of the inception of the project, are such additional, supportive solutions that ensure the satiation of the increasing coordinative needs. The actuation of these instruments among others provides the following benefits (Dobák, 2008):

- facilitation the handling poorly structured and multifactored problems, and the improvement of quality of decisions;
- boosting the information processes within the organization (i.a. the horizontal information flow), and enhancing internal communication skills;
- the participation in decision supporting and decision making - generally the common thinking - can promote the employees' satisfaction and their identification with organizational purposes.

The next figure (Fig. 1.) demonstrates the organizational configuration of the Eastern Hungarian agricultural regional integrated vocational training centre in case of the integration and installation of project body, illustrating that after the formation of the integrated institution, the project teams – at least theoretically – can decisively support the horizontal coordination and in general terms the information flow and knowledge sharing.

Figure 1: Organizational configuration of the Eastern Hungarian agricultural regional integrated vocational training centre



Source: own construction

At the same time the project carries an additional phenomenon. The projects' developer teams are working in the framework of *empowerment*. *"Empowered organizations give their employees more independence, decision making authority and responsibility than their traditional counterparts. These organizations rely on self-directed work teams,*

empowered – within certain limits – to make decisions that managers reserve for themselves in traditional organizations" (Lövey et al., 2007) The empowerment is not unprecedented in management science. Its predecessors are the human relations management, the management by participation, the team based working and the autonomous workgroups. Both are intrinsically reflecting similar approach to empowerment.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The development tasks in the organization development project are predominantly executed by an internal staff of about 60 persons. For analyzing the selection's efficiency, and the sustainability of the new organization's structure, we made two surveys among the employees, at first right after the project start, then after 12 months of the 24 month term project. In order to follow up the occurrent changes, we used the same query each time, which contained questions about the project's organizational development background and the participants' motivations. In course of the cluster analysis – suitable for the measurement of adequacy and attitudes – the objective was to categorize the contributors in such distinct groups, that are nearly homogenous by the component features, in order to plan the customized interventions and actions for each created (or rather theoretically de facto existent) groups. The starting point for the non-hierarchic, K-means cluster analysis was, that – in virtue of the partial, preliminary recognition of members, and by the exploratory statistics – the suppositions about the project can be aggregated in the next three groups: *first group*: absolutely coincident, absolutely motivated approach about project aims; *second group:* moderately coincident, middling motivated approach; *third group:* dismissive approach, the antipodes. The aim of cluster-analysis was to disclose that is it possible to reasonably create this three group by the available data. Before the analysis we assumed that the headcounts of the individual clusters can be notably different, since – in a favorable case – the third cluster contains much less member; yet it presents fully distinct suppositions than the first and second clusters. Thus a small, but deviant group can also be created. The cluster analysis was executed through two question groups. The utilization of first question group was intended to create clusters by the opinions of the kind and quality of deputed tasks for the staff, together with the availability of necessary information, using the following questions:

- How true is that you work after tangible and clear objectives? (variable: vilagoscelokmenten9)
- How true is that you get properly customized tasks, in appropriate volume in the course of team work? (variable: megfmunka11)
- Do you think that working in developer groups is a diverse activity? (variable: valtozatosmunk12)

The second question group aims at the creation of clusters through the team members' attitude about project tasks, as well as their loyalty about leaders and the organization. The component questions are the following:

- In your opinion: how does the pedagogic coordinator had supported your group's work in the recent period? (variable: tamogataspedagog3)
- In your opinion: how enthusiastic is your workgroup leader about the supporting of your workgroup? (variable: elhiv_vezetoje6)

- Based on your own rating: how enthusiastic are you about the supporting of your workgroup? (variable: sajatelhivatottsag10)
- Do you think that the work of developer groups is useful? Please choose from the specified aspects. (variables: mierthasznos13nemhasznos/ mierthasznos13fejlodesem/ mierthasznos13intezmeny)

RESULTS

Clustering through the kind and quality of tasks and the availability of necessary information about the project tasks

The next table (Tab. 1.) contains the final cluster centers issued after the iteration process.

Table 1: Comparison of final cluster centers of first and second survey

Final Cluster Centers, first survey				Final Cluster Centers, second survey		
Variable	Cluster			Cluster		
	1	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**
vilagoscelokmenten9	5	4	3	5	5	3
megfmunka11	2	5	4	4	5	3
valtozatosmunk12	1	1	3	3	1	3

Source: own calculation

According to the table the three clusters are raising two problems to solve. Namely, the members of first cluster are working after clear objectives, but in the course of division of work they cannot get appropriate, personalized tasks, though they think that working in developer teams would be diversified activity. At the same time the lack of information about the project tasks and objectives came up in the third cluster (value "3" of vilagoscelokmenten9 variable), but more serious problem is that the members considered the workgroups tasks to be rarely diversified. The significance of these recognitions is that these are appointing the orientation of future management actions. The following table (Tab. 2.) contains the number of employees in each group, as well as it allows of drawing conclusions about the qualitative composition of the body. Namely, according to the opinions of the largest Cluster 2, the participants – in most of the cases – are working after definite aims, with the appropriate distribution and diversified tasks. The most problematic cluster (No. 3.) contains only four persons.

Table 2: Comparison of Number of Cases in each Cluster by first and second survey

Number of Cases in each Cluster		
	First survey	**Second survey**
Cluster 1	4,000	14,000
Cluster 2	32,000	30,000
Cluster 3	12,000	2,000
Valid	48,000	46,000
Missing	1,000	2,000

Source: own calculation

In January 2011, the measurement was repeated, using the same query, principally for the tracking of changes, and checking the effects of corrective interventions. The initial conditions at the second measurement were identical; it was still presumed that the creation of 3 groups was actually reasonable after the first survey's outcomes. In virtue of the second analysis, some significant changes had predominated, both in point of each group's headcounts, and qualitative parameters. The patterns are the following: the original first cluster (at the initial measuring) stood for the middle course. By the second survey, the headcount of the group had notably decreased (-10 persons), in general showing a higher standard and – likely –several employees from the original Cluster 3 had migrated here. This fact – beyond that its members find the work rarely diversified – means an important headway.

Clustering through the attitude about project tasks and loyalty

The main intention of clustering by the second question group was the possible filtration of deviant elements. Three main approaches are standing out from the table of final cluster centers (Tab. 3.). The fist cluster contains the "middle-of-the-roader" employees, who rated their enthusiasm with a "4" value and in general they tended to give this "good" value on the 1-to-5 rating Likert scale, also in case of other questions. This group finds the project useful from the angle of the institute's future. Second cluster is the group of fully loyal participants, the "elite", who presented the ideal answers to all of the questions, and find the project useful from both the aspects of the organization and the members' personal development. These members are appreciating their superiors and the so-called pedagogic coordinator, also.

Table 3: Comparison of final cluster centers of first and second survey

Final Cluster Centers, first survey				**Final Cluster Centers, second survey**		
Variable	Cluster			Cluster		
	1	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**
sajatelhivatottsag10	4	5	3	4	5	2
mierthasznos13nemhasznos	0	0	1	0	0	1
elonyosnektartja14	1	1	5	1	1	4
elhiv_vezetoje6	4	5	3	4	5	4
tamogataspedagog3	4	5	3	3	5	3
mierthasznos13fejlodesem	0	1	0	0	0	0
mierthasznos13intezmeny	1	1	0	1	1	0

Source: own calculation

The two, on the whole positive employee groups' total headcount was 45 at the first survey, which number exceeded the previous expectations, thus it can be declared, that the realization of the project was based on an exceptionally apprehensive body. Of course, the analysis provided the desirable advantage: it disclosed that three-element group, of which members were typical deviants. They did not set store by the project, they were disharmonious with the project's purposes, in addition they were liable to underestimate their superior performance. In their case, the aim was the prompt identification, the exploration of their intentions, the motivation or in the last resort, the elimination.

Table 4: Comparison of Number of Cases in each Cluster by first and second survey

Number of Cases in each Cluster		
	First survey	Second survey
Cluster 1	14,000	11,000
Cluster 2	31,000	33,000
Cluster 3	3,000	1,000
Valid	48,000	45,000
Missing	1,000	3,000

Source: own calculation

By tables 3. and 4. it is apparent, that in the course of the second, repeated measurement, both in qualitative aspects and the headcounts of clusters, a small-scale positive change has occurred. By the two analyses, the qualitative contents of clusters are almost the same. The third cluster still contains one deviant member, though the components of the cluster are presenting a higher standard.

CONCLUSIONS

The proclaimed long-term aim at the establishing of the new, regional integrated vocational training centre was the creation of an institution, which is fully flexible from the viewpoint of training demand determined by labor market. The related expectations are the professionally and economically sustainable operation and the contribution to the enhancement of the higher local employment rates. As the part and instrument of these aims the SROP project started early in the year of 2010 serves as an excellent starting point, especially through its subservient innovations. Besides the integration, several coordinative elements had been introduced. The project itself, the team-based working and regular meetings and conferences of Board of directors as *structural elements* had temporarily modified or had not modified the primary work distribution and scopes of authorities. After the formal development of the integrated vocational centre, at the beginning of the project and by the first survey demonstrated in this paper, several activities have happened. As a synthesis, it can be stated, that since the initial measurement, significant, positive improvement and redistribution has occurred in the employee structure. The greatest advance can be observed in the mitigation of the lack of information, across the so-called *technocratic coordination* and its instruments, the so formalized regulations that shape the course of activities of certain subfield of the organization in a uniform way: the regulations and methods, the plans, programs, procedures, the budgets, financial plans and internal settlement prices, etc.
Also, the on-line project management and teamwork software belongs to this scope, in which the staff is able to work in a virtually, well organized platform. Additionally, the planning tools such as the work schedules for different time intervals with fixed responsibilities and competencies were also useful. The *person oriented coordination* tools applied in the project are foremost serving the individuals identification with the new organization created by the integration of six, previously separate vocational schools, each with great traditions. The accentuation of the strong organizational values, the raising of organizational culture, the development of management's attitudes and the development and implementation of internal training methods constituted the related main aspects. The necessary coordinative tools are the following: conflict management

related to the new organizational configuration; the selection and nomination of leaders; training and development of human competencies, with special regard to the leaders of self-directed workgroups; team building trainings. On the ground of the instruments, provisions and the supportive analysis presented in this paper it seems that the success of the complex and novel project is assured. The attribute, that the integrated, new institution is a part of a broader educational, economical and social system; raising the project purposes to a higher dimension. Hopefully, by means of the that the training centre along with the agricultural vocational training will take their rightful place in the region, with this giving the answer to the current problems of labor market.

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