Participatory problem solution methods in use of OHS

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Background

- Recent studies show that psycho-social factors affect well-being, work ability, sickness absences and early retirement
- Traditionally OHS has worked more with the physical factors in workplaces
- Changes in work life have made psycho-social factors more important
- This means that we must widen OHS practice to also take these factors into account
- We must develop new methods for working with work communities rather than mainly with individuals

The aim of this study

1) Are participatory problem solution methods feasible in the use of OHS?

2) What results can be achieved through this kind of short interventions?

Study Design

- This study took place in 2008-2011
- Participants; 11 OHS units with their client enterprises
- Eleven OHS units carried out a problem solution process in their client enterprises, supported by a FIOH research group
- They(OH units) worked with selected representatives of work communities 4-5 times, about 3 hours at a time
- Qualitative data were collected from this process; plans, assignments, interviews, research diary notes. The data were analysed using inductive content analysis

Process

Researchers with the OHS units

Assessment of needs

Goal setting

Development plan

Development activities x 3

Assessment of the process

OHS UNITS WITH THEIR CLIENT ENTERPRISES

Theoretical basic

- Process consultation
- Co-creating
- Socio-constructivist learning theory
- Positive psychology
RESULTS

Needs

• Attitudes, competence and work ability of employees
• Work environment
• Significance of leadership
• Support of workability
• Communication
• Planning work and division of tasks
• Role of OHS

Goals; areas to be improved

• Psycho-social well-being
• Division of work
• Clarification of roles
• Meeting practices
• Communication and interaction
• Fluency and quality of work
• Workplace rules

Methods OHS to meet the needs

• Information
• Surveying
• Organising work
• Training in work community co-operation
• Development of meeting practices
• Drawing up rules and early intervention models
• Improving competence
• Training in groupwork

Achieved results assessed by managers

• Organising work and time planning
• Responsibilities of managers
• Commitment of managers
• Development of organisation
• Discussing work
• Motivation and professional competence
• Activities for improving work and working conditions
• Interaction and communication

Results

• The situations in work communities were very multidimensional
• The relationship between psycho-social conditions and the well-being and work ability of employees was identified.
• Sick leaves were used as a solution to solve difficult situations in work communities
• OHS used solutions concerning individuals instead of solving problems in work communities, in cooperation with employees and employers.
• When OHS units worked with work communities in order to solve problems and develop working conditions, many improvements were seen
• Systematic, goal-oriented way of working needs to be developed
Discussion continues...

- The roles and responsibilities of client organisations and OHS need to be clarified.
- When work life changes, the well-being of work communities must be discussed. This requires co-operation and a multiprofessional way of working in OHS.
- There is a need to develop methods for handling communal questions together with employees and managers.
- We still need changes in attitudes and to broaden the concept of a client to concern not only individuals but also organisations and communities.

Recommendations

- To focus on communities in OHS in order to prevent and treat mental problems and support return to work after sick leave.
- To develop, test and regularize methods and models for co-operation between work communities and OHS.
- To develop competence in this kind of intervention.
- To include methods and models in OHS training.
- To strengthen multiprofessional co-operation.
- To extend work careers, support of decision-making on the macro level is needed.

Thank you for your attention
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