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Social Context

Prior to understanding any case study we need to know something about the context in which the case is situated.

The mental- and social frameworks limit the number of possibilities and having knowledge of these frameworks make otherwise incomprehensible actions intelligible.

In the Netherlands we distinguish the Profit Sector (labour market 1), the governmental bodies (labour market 2), the not-for-profit or social profit sector (labour market 3) and the 4th labour market, the subsidised labour.

This 4th labour market has 2 branches:

- 1) individual subsidies to stimulate entrance to labour market 1,2 or 3.
- 2) sheltered workplaces

Then we have the final sector, the care, our sector. We could call it the 5th sector, hidden labour.

People who find themselves in this rest group are not allowed to work at all, when this work means generate some income.

This is the AWBZ group (see the Glossary!).

These people should visit a Day Centre and are as productive as possible.

People with an AWBZ indication should not earn anything: they are pensioners from the age of 18 until the day they die.

PameijerKeerkring, belonging to labour market 3, is active in this (5th) sector.

To find employment in a sheltered workplace one has to go through an introductional planning and indication procedure. A sheltered

workplace is only accessible to those who cannot find paid employment through agencies working with personal subsidies.

One of these agencies is OMI J Rijnmond, a social firm and for many years a solid partner of PameijerKeerkring

It is important to see how exceptional this partnership is: A sheltered workplace would be a more natural partner since the social firms are aiming at the not disabled, the ones who can be too productive to be allowed to enter a sheltered workplace.

Case Studies

1) Brian

Brian died 2 years ago at the age of 49.

Brian was severely disabled. He had spent most of his adult life in a day centre and was seen as the source of a number of problems. He never tuned in with the easy pace of things at the Day Centre. He had too much energy and longed to do something useful.

Brian jumped to the opportunity to join the OMI J and from Day 1 his behaviour changed.

He fitted nicely in the social structure of the workplace OMI J.

Brian never learned to work so it was not easy for him, neither was it for his colleagues: the other OMI J workers.

When Brian died I went to his funeral. Bart Branderhorst mentioned to me that at a funeral of a PameijerKeerkring care user of this age the number of people paying their respects would not be more than 20-25.

Most of them would then be other care users by the way.

At Brian's funeral there were 139 people, most of them colleagues from work, fellow workers in the OMI J organisation.

Further serious examination produced the following data: the younger the disabled care user dies in the group over 18, the more people are likely to come to the funeral.

After the age of 50 the number of visitors drops rather dramatically.

Parents are dead in most cases and the family members that show interest in the disabled person is small. We must bear in mind that the Netherlands is a very individualised society.

Brian's funeral was different.

This is perhaps a rather unusual example of integration through work but an undisputed one. It makes the degree of integration measurable in a way.

2) Wajeed

Wajeed is a severely disabled man who fled with his parents from Afghanistan in the early nineties. Wajeed went to a PameijerKeerkring Day Centre and he choosed to join an OMI J workplace in 1997. Bare in mind that in the OMI J someone becomes a workerand is no longer a (AWBZ) pensioner.

We know his parents; they show an interest in what their son does during the day. Whenever we meet the father does the talking, the mother remains silent.

Wajeed´s attitude towards women is not without problems.

Whenever he sees a chance to touch a woman, he does so. Preferably in a sexual way.

He touched the breasts of an OMI J colleague and this young woman got scared and, later, complained at later time.

Wajeed was suspended. He had to leave the OMI J premises.

Just like any other OMI J employee who would have do the same.

PameijerKeerkring has the legal obligation to offer Day Activities to anyone in the AWBZ. This organisation has, as such, no possibility to suspend a client.

So Wajeed went back to the Day Centre he visited before he moved up to the OMI J.

He didn't like it there. He felt he could do better.

Then something happened. OMI J and PameijerKeerkring decided that for organisational reasons the Day Centre's Woodwork activity should better be placed in the new OMI J Rijnmond factory hall.

The woodwork place was moved, with all its equipment and all its clients.

And so Wajeed came, as a PameijerKeerkring client, back into the atmosphere of the OMI J.

His attitude may have changed or not, his behaviour has changed. Due to the fact that Wajeed knows that by any misbehaviour he will, again, have to leave this (in his parents and his own eyes) real work and go to a Day centre.

3) Lisa

Female, 26 years old. Living in her own apartment in a "sheltered house". Indecisive, wanted to do everything too well, wanted to have everything under control, frightened. Lisa worked as a caterer at the Kinderdijkstraat, the main office of OMI J. In her home environment, in her relationship towards friends and parents, problems grew. Also in the work environment problems arose. At OMI J she took work from other colleagues, the colleagues could not communicate with her and quarrels were daily.

So in her home environment, in leisure time, in her relationship with her parents and in her work the stress became very high.

Then Lisa had a fight on her work. She was suspended from OMI J for 14 days, a normal work procedure at OMI J.

After a lot of discussions and good agreements with all the facets of her live (home, relations, leisure time and work) she came back to OMI J.

But after some time it happened again. Stress in all the facets. New and severe struggles. For her colleagues at OMI J (but also for the people she lived with) the limit was reached.

Lisa was admitted to a psychiatrically hospital for 6 month. Her behaviour changed radically. After discussions with her colleagues she could come back to OMI J. This was Lisa's greatest dream and this is where she has worked so hard for the past 6 months.

Starting with 2 days a week and after a view months for more days.

Now she is fully accepted by her colleagues and does good work. Lisa has learned the hard way how she has to behave in a real work environment, how to communicate with her colleagues and to do what she is told.

Conclusion

Working with a social firm offers the possibility for *learning of experience*.

Without the possibility for sanctions staff chooses different, not confronting patterns of behaviour.

They talk. Colleagues at OMI J do. That is a world of difference.

In the OMI J context security is a tool. A basis upon which experiences happen.

In the care context security appears like an aim in itself.

The social firm as representative of the *real world* (not AWBZ protected that is)

Offers a much more stimulating and fit for learning environment than the care sector itself can ever offer.