

Social economy empowering employees and their family

Enterprises and higher education institutes join in 'learning at the workplace'

*Joris Dewispelaere, Phd Psychology, University College Brussels (HUB), Department of Family Sciences
Joris.Dewispelaere@hubrussel.be*

The presentation discusses the results of the project 'Family – directed learning at the workplace in social economy'. A guideline and checklist was developed regarding the training of students in higher education to coach employees taking in account their family context and empowering employees, employers, students and lecturers by implementing added values of social economy.

Social economy provides answers to the current challenges of exclusion, poverty, unemployment and inequality. Fostering non-market values, it can help creating sustainable and ethical answers to the latest crises. This paper describes a research-project ordered by the Flemish Government, department of Education (august 2012). Together with the umbrella-organisation for social economy in Flanders: Vosec/CollondSE and three social economy companies: Ateljee (Gent), CDJ Services (Asse) , Opnieuw en co (Mortsel) and the Regional Technological Center Vlaams Brabant, the HUB-Higher Institute for Family Sciences developed a guideline and checklist for the training of professional bachelor students (Family Sciences, Social Work, Remedial Pedagogy,...) in the enterprises. They learn to coach the employees with special focus on the relationship between family-life and employment.

During the one year project existing reports on learning at the workplace, on the added-values of social economy for personal life and for the society, on dealing with poverty, exclusion and diversity were integrated with the results of a focus-group study and of further discussions with stakeholders. The focusgroup discussed the relationship between employment and family life on the one hand, and the possible path of learning to coach and empower employees. The developed checklist was tested twice in 10 enterprises: after a first and a second phase of conceptual work.

The Checklist 'Family directed learning at the workplace in social economy' has eleven premises.

-Three premises deal with the added value of social economy. The sustainable development on a social, financial and value-level , the added value for persons (empowerment as central value) and the added value for society are discussed referring to Reports of the umbrella-organisation VOSEC/CollondSE (Raus, 2010) , of the flemish government (Vandebossche, 2011)and the Manual for management in social economy (Castermans,Gyselincks, Vallet, 2010). A focus is on research in positive psychology (Lopez, Snyder, 2009 ; Cohn, Frederickson, 2009), positive coaching (Laperre, Wouters,2010)) and presence (Baart,2002, 2006).

- Four premises are about the relationship between family-life and employment.

From the focusgroup the most important results are included . Characteristics of the familycontext that influence the motivation to work are manifold. A context of poverty or of psychosocial problems ask for temporisation of the employment. A family can also be the social network that encourages to work. Employment then means empowerment of the whole family by earning money, getting social insurance and offering a position in society. Being employed fosters communication skills, opens up to a broader social network and to contact with other persons in need of supported work. As to the context of poverty (20 % of the employees in social economy in Flanders), the Report on poverty in Flanders

(www.4Vlaanderen.be) and several methods to create bounds with persons in poverty are discussed and integrated in the Checklist (Geenen, Corvelijn, 2010). The W² concept is introduced: work and welfare as joint-goals (Steensens a.o., 2008). W² deals with the empowerment not only of the employees but also of the employers and intermediaries.

Regarding the focus on diversity (16% of the employees in social economy in Flanders) the checklist integrates work on a pluralistic view in dealing with diversity in work contexts (HUB-HIG, Motief a.o. (2012) and includes results of reports as the Report on cultural diversity at the workplace (Adam, Rea, 2010) or the Brussel-Detroit report on integration of muslims (Lewis, Pearson, 2008).

The profile of competences of the professional bachelor Family Sciences is offered as inspiration for empowering the life of the individual taking in account the family context of employees. The central competence of Family Sciences deals with sustainable relationships in family-life and between groups in society. Specific competences deal for instance with strengthening familylife, conceptual and methodological work with persons and their family or with focusing on specific contexts.

-Four other premises deal with qualitymeasures regarding learning at a workplace as they were developed by the Flemish Department of Education (www.ond.vlaanderen.be/werkplekieren) and the Antwerp University (www.ond.vlaanderen.be/werkplekieren/GIDS). Especially the taking care of the qualities of a learning environment (Baert, 2006, 2008) and establishing a common choice of relevant competences and learning targets are important (Dewispelaere, 2012 ; Donche e.a. ,2012).

The structure of the Checklist follows the 'Plan-Do-Check-Act(Adjust)' cycle (Emmerik, 2007) and covers a one year traject of learning. 'Checks' are about the preparation of the traject with enterprises and students, then about the implementation in a programm of first embedding the students in the enterprises, later turning to be coaches of the employees. They deal with the evaluation of the students and of the joint efforts of enterprises and the higher education institute. Checks specify what has to be done by who and when. All 'Checks' are followed by some 'GO's'. A 'Go' offers information about resources that can help to promote the quality of the Check or offer information for further deepening the competences of a student, tutor in the enterprise or lecturer.

Example: CHECK 7Application: Enterprise, student: month of start of learning at the workplace:
Do/Done Remarks

GO 7: Application

- Does the student motivates well his choice of the enterprise?
- Does the student show authentic motivation and interest?
- Is it clear that the student has reflected on what it means to work family-directed? (for instance: recognizing the empowering of working on the person and the possible positive and negative consequences for the family-context ; recognizing the problems of a single-parent to work ; having knowledge of the specificity of people working in social economy)
- Does the student shows knowledge of the added-values of social economy) (See: EQFM model and Report on added value of social economy))Further reading: www.vdab.be, www.stepstone.be, www.careerbuilder.be and website(s) of RTC's: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/rtc>
- See also: [check 1-4](#)
- The training follows up of the application of the student (with enterprise, with student)

The Checklist is offered in a paper and an electronic version. The electronic version offers the tutors in the enterprises, the students and the lecturers of the higher education institute direct access to the reports mentioned and to a wide range of other reports, research and tools regarding the different important issues for learning to empower the employees and regarding the features of social economy. Special attention is paid to the results of the focusgroup and other studies on the relationship between family life and motivation to be and stay employed (Sannen e.a., 2011).

The Checklist builds bridges between social economy enterprises and higher education. Together they look for the relevant competences and learning environment to teach students about the added values of social economy and the empowering of employees. The specific attention to the relationship between working–life and family-life shows a lot of possibilities to encourage the individual employee to stay at work and by working fostering the integration of his family in society. Employees, students, employers and lecturers are joining in developing the added values of social economy.

Literature

- Adam, I., Rea, A. (2010). Culturele diversiteit op de werkvloer. Onderzoek uitgevoerd in opdracht van het Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en voor Racismebestrijding. Brussel: Institute for European Studies.
- Baart, A. (2006). Een theorie van de presentie (A theory of presence). Lemma: Den Haag.
- Baert, H., De Rick, K., Van Valckenborgh, K. (2006). Towards the conceptualization of "Learning Climate". In: De Castro R., Sancho A., Guimaraes P. (Eds.), *Adult education: new routes in a new landscape*. (pp.87-111). Braga: University of Minho
- Baert, H. (2008). Naar een cartografie van condities voor werkplekieren in arbeidsorganisaties in Vlaanderen. Leuven: WSE rapport.
- Cohn, M., Frederickson, B. (2009) Positive Emotions. In S.J. Lopez & C.R. Snyder (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology* (2nd ed., pp.13-24) . Oxford: Oxford Press.
- Blondeel, J. (2010). Werken aan een professionele en excellente organisatie. In: *Handboek Management in de Sociale Economie*. Afl. 1., p.2.1-2.31. Brussel: Politeia.
- Departement Onderwijs en Vorming. Afdeling Strategische Beleidsondersteuning. (2008). Leidraad Werkplekieren: www.ond.vlaanderen.be/werkplekieren
- Dewispelaere, J. (2012). Rapport Gezinsgericht werkplekieren in de sociale economie. Onuitgegeven publicatie, Brussel: Hoger Instituut voor Gezinswetenschappen – Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel.
- Donche, Vincent; Verbeke, Heleen; Ilsbroux, I.; Sammels, E.; Janssen H.J.; Petegem, Van, Peter (2012) . Licht op werkplekieren: inzichten vanuit praktijk en onderzoek. In Mosselaer, Van de, H. [edit.] *Goesting in leren en werken*. Antwerpen : Garant, p. 211-228.
- Laperre, I., Wouters, S. (2010). Begeleiden op de werkvloer in sociale economie. Antwerpen: Garant.
- Lewis R., Pearson, F. (2008). Comparing the integration of Muslims in Brussels and Detroit *Report of the Institute for European Studies VUB, Center for Peace and Conflict Studies Wayne State University*, www.ies.be
- Raus, H. (ed.) (2010). Eindrapport Maatschappelijke verantwoording en rekenschap in de sociale economie. Brussel: VOSEC.
- Sannen, L., Castermans, S., Van Regenmortel, T., Lamberts, M. (2011). Duurzame tewerkstelling van kansengroepen. Leuven: HIVA.
- Steenssens K., Sannen L., Ory G. & Nicaise I. o.l.v. Nicaise I. & Van Regenmortel T. (2008), *W2: Werk- en welzijnstrajecten op maat, Een totaalconcept*. Leuven: HIVA.
- Vandenbosche, F. (2011). Beleidsbrief Sociale Economie. Beleidsprioriteiten 2011-2012. Ingediend op 25 oktober 2011. Brussel, Vlaams Parlement.