Zelfbestuur en participatie. Ontwikkeling van zelfbestuuroganisaties en deelneming aan de besluitvorming
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Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
1993

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):

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Download date: 02-01-2019
Summary

SELF-MANAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

This study deals with the development of self-management organizations and the participation in decision-making in self-management organizations by co-workers of this kind of organizations. Participation meaning to make use of democratic rights. Democracy is the right to participate in the preparation of policy and policy-making, and the right of controlling the execution and evaluation. Essential in this study is the participation in decision-making by co-workers applied to the labour and policy of the organization. Participation in decision-making is becoming more and more a topic in industry. Realization is growing that the human factor can play a decisive role in the competition with other organizations. It is becoming essential to make way for the employees according to the policy-making of the organization.

At present participation is often seen as an instrument of human resource management (HRM). HRM views members of the organization as human capital. More and more organizations acknowledge that their employees are expensive and valuable production factors. Management as well as employees have an interest in employee participation. Management partly because of good personnel management, but mostly because of competition; employees partly from an ideological point of view (the right to participate), partly from a functional perspective (becoming a better functioning employee). With regard to this trend of employee participation it is interesting to look at organizations that have legal opportunities for co-workers to know, to discuss, to think and to make decisions about the policy of their organization (for instance worker co-operatives, where the employees have a complete say in their organization). Another example is an organization whose objectives are the same as worker co-operatives, but that is not in the juridical sense a worker co-operative. In both cases we are dealing with organizations that govern themselves, self-management organizations. It is said that members of self-management organizations (democratic organizations) are in general more concerned about the well-being of their organization than members of 'classical' organizations (organizations without any or with only a few possibilities for participation in decision-making).
The main part of this dissertation consists of a study of available literature about self-management and participation. Moreover, the study includes two empirical exercises. The empirical exercises don't have the intention to contribute to answering the research-problem 'pure sense'. It is true that they contribute to the knowledge of the phenomenon of self-management in the Netherlands and the functioning of self-management organizations. At the same time they have contributed to the creation of the research-problem.

Chapter I focuses on the research-problem and the conceptualization. The study is meant to be a contribution to the knowledge of the phenomenon self-management in The Netherlands and to the knowledge of the operating of self-management organizations. Moreover it is the intention to contribute to the improvement of self-management in the Netherlands and more in general to contribute to the participation of employees.

The research-problem consists of three questions:

- which are the factors influencing the development of self-management organizations in the Netherlands?
- which are the factors influencing the participation in decision-making in terms of work and organization policy by the employees at this kind of organizations in The Netherlands?
- which are the possibilities influencing these factors?

It is important to know from which perspective the implementation of participation in decision-making is pursued. Relying on specific ideologies and values each school of thought implies other consequences for the co-worker and the organization. Therefore we are discussing the concepts self-management, worker co-operatives, participation and functional and structural democracy.

In answering the research-problem as presented in the previous chapter it is a necessity to outline a historic perspective. Chapter II focuses on two lines that are relevant as related to our subject. These lines are subsequently the theoretical-historic roots of participation and the development of the phenomenon self-management.
These lines are crossing at the filling in of participation. The filling in of participation defines the quality of self-management. The treatment of the theoretical roots of participation leads by way of Scientific Management, Hawthorne and Revisionism to Human Resource Management.

At the same time this chapter deals with the roots of the ideas that are connected with self-management and the like. To put the Dutch situation into a broader perspective, attention is given to the development of self-management -mainly coinciding with the development of the worker co-operative- in France, Great Britain, Italy, and Spain. Spain is mentioned in this analysis because of the world-wide prominent position in regarding self-management of the Mondragon-experiment in Basque provinces. When writing about the development of self-management in The Netherlands notice is given to the agricultural colony 'Walden' of Frederik van Eeden and his association 'Gemeenschappelijk Grondbezit' (GGB). Discussed is the railway strike of 1903 and the relation between the GGB and the unions. Furthermore this chapter deals with the 'Stichting Zelfbestuur' (SZB) at Utrecht. At the time this foundation represented the 'Associatie van Bedrijven op Coöperatieve grondslag' (ABC). The ABC is an umbrella organization for worker co-operatives and the like in The Netherlands. For the sake of completeness attention is given to the sociocratic-experiment.

From developments in the countries mentioned above one gets the impression that there is always a tension between the need for employment and the ideological aspect. Economic motives seem to be the cause for the government and in its footsteps the financial institutions to promote or not to promote the development of co-operatives. The protagonists of self-management are using, on account of employment, ideology or a combination of both, the choices of the government, the unions and the financiers to strive for their own ideals.

Chapter III discusses some internal and external factors (as viewed from the organization) that according to literature can be of influence on the development of self-management organization or the participation of co-workers in the decision-making in self-management organizations.
These factors are the context of the development of self-management and participation in decision-making in self-management organizations.

The factors: hierarchy, size, the level of preliminary education and economic structure are to be judged as positive, at least not negative. The factors: tradition, the dominant values of education, the attitude of the financial institutions, the attitude of the government, the attitude of the unions and the mutual economic cooperation are not to be judged positive in general and in particular when compared to countries as France and Italy and the Mondragon-experiment for the improvement of self-management or participation in decision-making in the Netherlands.

The attitude of the government and the attitude of the unions are to be considered as the main hindrances for the development of self-management. Concerning participation in decision-making too much emphasis at the educational level is laid on competition and too little emphasis on cooperation.

This chapter also deals with the possibilities of education as an instrument for enlarging the participation in decision-making in Dutch self-management organizations. A strict hierarchical structure of the production process is not present at most of the self-management organizations in The Netherlands. The lack of a strict hierarchical structure, the small size of the organizations and the high level of preliminary education of the co-workers give possibilities with help of the right educational programs to enlarge participation. However there will be problems if education has not taken place in the context of ‘organizational learning’. A good ‘supportive structure’ is a condition for implementing educational programs.

Such educational programs have the intention to improve the participation in decision-making by co-workers of the organization. Therefore it seems logical to apply a kind of action research.

Judging the quality of the supportive structure it seems doubtful to have high expectations of the results of these programs.

Chapter IV presents a case about the rise and fall of a self-management organization. This case discusses the causes of the bankruptcy of the worker co-operative King Nöbel.
The research was ordered by the SZB. The technical-economic system, the open system and the social system were researched by means of document analyses and interviews. This research revealed that various factors of the systems named above had caused the decline of the worker co-operative King Nöbel. An important conclusion is that the worker co-operative King Nöbel was a worker co-operative in theory but not in practice. One of the reasons for this outcome is the lack of faith the co-workers had in the co-operative and in each other. Furthermore the double role (being employee and employer at the same time) can lead to problems and stress.

This last conclusion led to a follow up research as discussed in chapter V. This chapter deals with objective characteristics and stress patterns and their connections. In particular the influence of the self-management construction (double role) on the structure of the stress patterns of the co-workers of self-management organizations in the Netherlands is discussed. The research focuses on stress as experienced by the individual member of the organization. With the help of a number of objective organization characteristics that were thought to be relevant, the possibility of predictions about problems (stress) inside self-management organizations is researched. The objective organization characteristics are surveyed by a newly developed questionnaire: 'Vragenlijst Organisatie Kenmerken' (VOOK). The stress patterns are surveyed by the questionnaire: 'Vragenlijst Organisatie Stress' (VOS). Conclusions from previous research that specific characteristics of self-management organization, that is to say the structure of participation and the connected double role can lead to problems and stress, were not confirmed. In our research the stress patterns hardly vary from the results from research about organizations with a more classical structure. 'Lack of influence in decision-making' is an important predictive variable with regard to the strains.

This is the most striking result because of the fact that the most important characteristic of self-management is that in principle the decision-making is in the power of all the employees.
It is even more amazing because in most of the surveyed organizations there are no hindrances in terms of hierarchy, size and the level of preliminary education. Obviously the organizations in question and their workers have difficulties to translate their theoretical goals into practice.

The final chapter, chapter VI focuses on the prospects of self-management in The Netherlands. The ABC and the SZB have not gained many results with their endeavors for the development of self-management. The possibilities for enlarging self-management 'pure sense' seem to be limited. The attitude of the government and consequently the attitude of financial institutions and the attitude of the unions are creating mostly a negative climate for the development of self-management in The Netherlands. It is possible that the attitude of the Dutch government towards self-management organizations will change as a consequence of the European political and economic unification.

From a pragmatic view it seems that the time has come for the ABC to change policies in view of Dutch, European and American developments. It seems desirable that the ABC enlarges the target system by not only functioning as an umbrella organization representing self-management organizations, but also representing organizations where employees participate in a larger measure in the capital of the organization. Developments in the U.S.A. and in Europe according to 'Employee Stock Ownership Plans' (ESOPs) lead the way for the ABC. But, like worker co-operatives, ESOPs do not imply that participation in decision-making is a more or less automatic result.

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