

Report on the local project of the Rotterdam STEPS trialogue
2003-10-01

The three partners in the STEPS project are: PameijerKeerkring (charity/service provider), INHOLLAND university, OMIJ Rijnmond (social firm).

Local government has no significant role in the support of the disabled and is therefore no full member of the local trialogue. The municipality is in many ways connected with either the project or with one or more partners participating in the local STEPS project.

Since *meaningful Day Activities* are the core business of the partnership, the title of the local project is: *Work as tool of integration and emancipation*.

Co-ordinator of the project on behalf of the three partners in Rotterdam is mr. L.P.B. (Bart) Branderhorst (Ph.D.)

PameijerKeerkring is represented by mr. Peter van der Hoeven and mrs. Els van Kooten.

On behalf of the INHOLLAND university mr. Peter Peeters and mw. Chantal Aarts participate. OMIJ Rijnmond is represented by mrs. Arianne van Geel.

The working group Methodology 2 other members of staff from OMIJ Rijnmond participate, mr. Jos Dirks and Aarti Ramal-Bhoelai and from PameijerKeerkring mr. Peter van Loon. Bart Branderhorst takes part in the working group meetings to ensure maximum communication with the coordinating body.

The working group Methodology addresses the issue of integrating people with intellectual disabilities into a workforce of a social firm; what are the critical factors of success, what are the values and the skills the personnel department needs to develop and what are the skills they have.

The persons with an intellectual disability are active in one of the 23 activities OMIJ Rijnmond knows. Especially in the workforce keeping the greens (Public gardens as well as private ones) a number of PameijerKeerkring clients are active.

Gardening and forestry (=keeping the greens) is one of the 23 activities mentioned above.

The objective is to present a module in which untrained workers (i.c. people for OMIJ Rijnmond) can look up any problem they are faced with in relation to intellectual disabled.

Social, intellectual and/or physical issues are addressed in the module.

The Personnel department knows about the module, updates it and stimulates it being used in practice, on the integrated workforce level.

Problem is not the composing of the module, neither is it difficult to find examples (good practices and bad ones) but the difficult aspect is its implementation.

The working group meets every month to make sure the implementation is successful and to correct aspects in the module, when there comes new information available that should be taken into account.

The day to day practice was (and still is in many places) that persons with an intellectual disability come and work in a certain OMIJ activity (one of the 23) because he/she so wishes. OMIJ is a social firm that have to make ends meet by the work it does, i.c. by the products and services it produces.

There is a tension between supporting the disabled colleague and getting a maximum result in terms of a certain product.

It is depending very much on the OMIJ worker on the spot how an intellectually disabled person is supported.

A standard and clear procedures are essential in creating a system of support that does credit to both aspects: the line of production and the support the individual needs.

We are combining 2 worlds here: the profit sector and the care sector.

The meta view has to come from the INHOLLAND university.

These meta observations then are translated into easy accessible language and provide handles to tackle everyday problems on the work floor.

We have achieved a mutual language: when addressing challenges we do not loose too much time anymore in describing situations and explaining backgrounds.

In a number of situations this offered benefits for both clients (intellectual disabled persons) and workers (OMIJ Rijnmond personnel). In case studies that will be presented in the Barcelona conference the Rotterdam trialogue will go into this in detail.

This achievement took some time. The major obstacle in our process is the illogical composition of the trialogue. Local politicians and/or representatives of the municipality are not important in our field in the Netherlands. They might be, but not because a political system tells them so.

Also a connection between a social firm and a care provider is unusual.

Last but not least: there might be a thin line connecting the INHOLLAND university to PameijerKeerkring but it is a very thin line and there would not have been any communication between OMIJ Rijnmond and the university.

The partnership is not an organic one.

The complexity of the trialogue is a threat to it's continuity. This required attention in the beginning of the project.

Now there are concrete plans to continue the cooperation of the three partners in a post STEPS period.

The involvement of people with learning disabilities in the Rotterdam trialogue has been non existent on an organisational level.

This is partly due to the fact that the cooperation between PameijerKeerkring and OMIJ Rijnmond was a fact long before the STEPS project began.

On the level of the individual the care user was (and is) director of his/her own life.

What job the individual chooses in OMIJ, or yes / no wanting to leave the Day Centre at all, is up to the individual. The opportunities for choice are much wider in the OMIJ context than in the context of any service provider, but "the choice, also to choose or not, is yours".

As STEPS spin off the client conference in February 2004 in Hamburg must be mentioned.

In this conference and in another client meeting in Brussels in November 2003, clients will give presentations around the theme of living with a disability in present day Europe.

The Rotterdam trialogue intends to organise a local conference around "Europe" in April or May in which the experiences of both client conferences and the STEPS project are discussed.

Els van Kooten is one of the PameijerKeerkring representatives to see to it that the STEPS project experiences are used to the maximum.

The bulk of the activities takes place in the OMIJ Rijnmond premises, Kinderdijkstraat 71 in Rotterdam. But not exclusively; there is a wide variety of both activities and locations.

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