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Personnel Development

In Germany the subject human resources development in libraries is commonly occuring in the context of organisational development, participatory management styles, flat hierarchies and teamwork. Most authors assume that employees are open to changes and capable of learning, if only they are shown correctly how to do a job, if only they get further vocational training an are being motivated constantly. Most authors believe that one can form the library of the future by further vocational training, let it only be enough.

Human resources development

- To promote and develop members of staff does not mean to change them – that usually doesn't work properly anyway. But it does mean to take them as they are and to make the best of it. That is to use their strengths and make their weaknesses insignificant. There is no point in trying to eliminate all their weaknesses but one can deploy them where their weaknesses don't play a role.

- Key qualifications as analytical problem solving skills, communication and social skills, flexibility, independence and the readiness to take on responsibility are inherent characteristics. It is highly questionable if these interpersonal skills can be learned from personnel development programmes – therefore this can't be the aim of structured learning frameworks. Personnel development strategies which take this view see people in a very optimistic way – and these strategies are usually not successful.

- Nevertheless it is an important management task to make sure that specialists and executive staff have the best possible knowledge by giving them the opportunity for further training continuously. Tasks must be designed in a way that people with ordinary skills are able to fulfill them.

- It's not the job of a chief executive to motivate and engage all employees constantly. People who are waiting to be motivated and inspired by others won't come very far. They are particularly dependent – they'll always be lacking in independence.
- It's not the managers responsibility to change people, in particular not their personality and character. If it turns out that one has been mistaken in a person – no matter how careful the choice might have been – a manager must remove the person from his or her task.

Organisation development

- A lot of people think there is a friction-less organisational structure and consequently invest a good deal of effort into changing the structure. I'm convinced that there is no such thing as the perfect organisation. Therefore it's wasted energy to look for organisational modifications every time problems, conflicts and errors are occurring. It's a complete illusion to believe changing the organisational structures eliminates all problems. All organisations are bad, all of them cause conflicts, require a great amount of coordination, have problems with the flow of information, are a potential cause of interpersonal friction and all organisations have their weak points and interfaces.
- It's better to act on the assumption that we can't choose between good or bad organisation structures but only between organisations that are not good or worse. All organisations require compromises.
- Teams are tools as is working individually, too. One must neither factor out one of these forms of work nor should one put it on a pedestal. The way in which to work – which form of work is the best – must be determined by the task and not by dogma.

Innovation

- Innovation has to begin with giving up the old ways systematically otherwise there's no room for new improvements – they're covered with "rubbish". So one need to have "refuse collection" in the organisation regularly: The fastest, most radical and – in comparison – easiest way of intoducing innovations is: Stop doing the wrong things! This principle is added to the second rule. If it

- isn't possible to eliminate the old ways of doing things, one has at least to separate old and new wherever possible.
- You need the best members of staff for innovations – the ones who have no time since they're under to great a strain anyway.

Participatory Management

- A lot of things aren't put into practice because we believe we've to win erveryone over first. That seems to be the consequence of a sense of participation that is misunderstood and has it's origins in the '68 movement. It might be laudable to attempt to include people. In a great many cases this is necessary and useful but it has definetely clear limits. As a manager one can never expect to win everyone over for the own plans, only if they are harmless.

Siebert, 19.06.2006