Measuring and developing wellbeing at work with co-creation and positive approach

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the current action research is to assist one of the largest municipalities in Finland in co-creating a novel measurement and development tool for supporting and increasing wellbeing in the workplace.

The tool will be used by leaders and immediate supervisors whenever they want to have a snapshot of the current state of their workplace, further develop the workplace and enhance employee wellbeing.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

Co-creation

Good ideas concerning "wellbeing at work" and how to measure it are not just produced by personnel management or scientists; rather, they are created by immediate supervisors and employees.

Collaboration

Working closely with "end-users" of the tool will give real-life information about their hopes and needs and also offer a deep participatory experience, which in turn may increase commitment and the motivation to use the tool as well as enhance employee wellbeing.

Positive psychology

Using strength-based development and research methods, such as the Appreciative Inquiry, it will be possible to create a positive and safe environment, one which will enhance positive emotions. Positive emotions in turn will help municipal leaders be open to new people and issues that are essential for co-creation and collaboration (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2008).

Organizational culture

The developmental process itself can be seen as a baby step in changing an organizational culture’s basic orientation to one that is more possibility focused, participative, appreciative and positive (Cameron, 2008).

METHOD

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

– Was used as a philosophical stance as well as a co-creation and data collection method
– Is a collaborative, strength-based approach
– Is a process that inquires into, identifies and develops the best of what organizations have to offer in order to create a better future (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008).
– Is commonly used as an organizational change method, but not often integrated with co-creation.
– It consists of four steps

1. Discovery
2. Dreaming
3. Design
4. Destiny

DATA COLLECTION

1. Document analysis and background interviews
– The existing measurements (e.g. wellbeing at work questionnaires) and measuring processes were identified and analyzed.
– The personnel management group of the municipality was interviewed several times.

2. Facilitated workshop discussions

Discovery and Dreaming phases (AI)
– Three different facilitated workshops were organized for the above-mentioned participants.
– The workshops lasted for about 4 hours and they were organized by the authors.
– The workshops followed the idea of AI and focused on the following questions:
  – What do you appreciate about the current measurement system?
  – What does an ideal measurement and development tool look like?

Design and Destiny phases (AI)
– Immediate supervisors will use the tool at their workplaces.
– Immediate supervisors will use the tool at their workplaces in real-life settings.
– Their user experiences will be collected and analyzed.
– The tool will be re-modified based on the user experiences.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Immediate supervisor’s dream tool

– Aims to develop the workplace, not just to collect data
– Gives results, but more importantly, it gives clear advice about what to do with the data
– Is always available, easy and agile to use
– Is quite visual and gives graphical results
– Includes statements and questions that result in positive thoughts and individual responsibility and that help to enhance the strengths and positive aspects of the workplace

Co-creation process

– Immediate supervisors have a clear need for this kind of tool, and they are quite willing and capable to act as co-creators.
– The participants felt that the co-creation process together with its strength-focused approach (AI) was fulfilling and inspiring.
– We believe that AI can be meaningfully integrated with co-creation processes.
– We suggest that the developmental processes can support employee wellbeing and change the culture of the workplace if they are participative, meaningful and strength-focused by nature.

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KEY REFERENCES