

MKB Adoptie Project (MAP) Netwerkproject in Leiden

Hieronder vindt u een uitgebreide beschrijving van het MKB Adoptieproject Holland Rijnland. De vragen en de bijbehorende teksten (met een maximaal aantal woorden per antwoord) is onderdeel van een nominatie voor een prijs: de IBM Award for transformation in government, uitgelooft door een instituut behorend bij de Harvard Universiteit in de Verenigde Staten.

Het woord 'transformation' slaat op het innovatieve deel van het project: enerzijds een essentieel andere kijk op het werken met multiprobleem jongeren, anderszijds de wijze van financieren: de overheid durft het aan te betalen voor een prive initiatief om zo te komen tot een betere, bij voorkeur ontkokerde dienstverlening aan jongeren.

1. Describe your transformation. What significant problem does it address? How exactly is your transformation innovative? How has your transformation changed previous practice and/or organizational culture?

Cases instead of policies

Cases instead of policies are central to our approach, for example: girl aged 19 has not completed her education up to level basic qualification due to family problems. The family has a bad reputation among agencies in the public sector. The girl has problems accepting authority and displays aggressive behavior. This has led to her being dismissed on several occasions, even from a program initiated to cater for youngsters with this sort of behavior. Appropriate professional help is not available to her as she is 'in crisis'. The benefit office wants her to address her 'attitude' and to work as a volunteer as she seems unfit for anything else. If she does not comply, her benefits will be docked. But the girl simply wants to work: money is her way out of a lot of problems. She is in a deadlock.

Activating informal networks

Traditional ways of addressing problems such as these have centered on the perspective of institutions and professionals. The MKB Adoption program is a publicly financed private initiative and aims to organize help in a different way. It mobilizes social capital through putting together youngsters and adults in meetings designed to temporarily expand the informal networks available to the youngsters.

Supply and demand

Meetings are attended voluntarily by young people out of work and school, adults from different domains of society and two moderators, also the initiators of the program. Before a meeting, youngsters are briefly trained in presenting themselves to an audience. They are asked to consider what they want out of the meeting and how contacts can be put to use. Stories are screened for problems that should receive more help than can be offered during a meeting.

During the meeting all youngsters tell their story. Adults react, for example by asking questions, making suggestions, offering to find information, thinking about how to go about interviews, by simply showing genuine interest or by 'adopting' a youngster for a short while, allowing him or her to make use of informal networks.

Solutions instead of problems

To prevent people from blaming clients for their situation, moderators ask so called 'solution focused questions'. These questions aim to establish what has gone well so far, instead of what has gone wrong. This is a very powerful way of moderating a meeting as by doing this, everyone is poised for the positive instead of the negative and can build the next step towards a solution.

Bypass bureaucracies

The program does not aim to be a mentoring project: adults are no more selected for skills, specific experience or professional positions than youngsters are. Nor are there given periods of time in which an adult sees a youngster. Instead, adults permit youngsters to make use of their knowledge and if needed, their informal networks, while attempting to ease or solve (some of the) problems, thus putting them in a position to bypass traditional public sector or combat red tape. The program is a network project.

Sometimes, an adult finds he or she has gone in expecting too much or too little from a youngster. The programme does not aim to have adults providing professional help. If necessary, one of the moderators assists the adults in helping a youngster.

Self expertise

Young people often have a pretty clear idea as to what needs to be done for their problems to be eased or solved, but find their needs unmet by the help available. This self expertise represents the MKB Adoption Project's core value. Working from the client's perspective, the transformation implements a bottom up, tailor made solution focused approach. Through aiming to put to use self expertise, the project finds (unorthodox) ways to help overcome obstacles preventing young people from joining society.

Innovation

The transformation is innovative as local, regional and national government are funding a private program that works outside regular government institutions and public services.

It is innovative because it challenges a mind set as to the approach best used for dealing with multi problem youngsters. It is innovative as the program mobilizes social capital from industry and commerce, a sector which, as a general rule, is not known for their compassion with the less lucky. It is also innovative as the target population is viewed as self expert, an element that up until now has not been part of public service delivery. Lastly, the transformation is innovative as the project operates mainly without predefined goals and targets, works on small steps instead of the achievement of big goals and works on delivering processes rather than products. It is a true tailor made approach.

2. What is the single most important achievement of your transformation to date?

The project is succeeding in promoting an alternative way of thinking and working with multi problem youth out of school and out of work or any other group that represents a problem to society. The program offers an alternative in the sense that it presumes self expertise in youngsters, and that it strongly advocates and demonstrates the power of collaboration between individuals and between organizations, and that it literally pays to focus on the possibilities instead of the negatives.

The program is gaining recognition as a highly effective method of solving multi problem drop out and youth unemployment. This recognition provides opportunities to expand and transfer the program into other sectors, as the basic method is applicable to other groups in society.

3. Please describe the target population served by your initiative. How does the transformation identify and select its clients or consumers? How many clients or citizens does your initiative currently serve? What percentage of the potential clientele does this represent?

Experience teaches that drop out often is a result of underlying problems and that drop out in turn exacerbates the situation. The MKB Adoption programme serves drop outs who experience great difficulty getting back into school and/or work. The program has no selection criteria, as selection tends to exclude. However, given the service the project provides, clients are predominantly drop outs aged between 16 and 26 years of age.

In many cases these young people often lead complicated home lives and are no longer seeking or receiving professional help. In other cases young people are confronted with the opposite: a multitude of organizations each trying to provide help for part of the problem, often failing to effectuate an integral solution due to bureaucracy and pillarized delivery of services. Many youngsters display behavior that is testing: failing to turn up, failing to read social code, failing to show initiative, inappropriate behavior on the shop floor. There are also young people who's submissiveness has led to being treated unfairly by education or benefit organizations.

All but a few youngsters have come to a halt in their search for a place in school or in the workplace, usually as a result of the same problems that

caused drop out in the first place. The project has named this mechanism the entry-exit paradox: the very reason for entering an institution or receiving help after a while becomes the reason for expulsion or termination. Traditional institutions have no answer to this as their services are usually based on internal motivation as a motor for change and a willingness to take on responsibilities specified by people other than the youngster him/herself.

Most youngsters are referred to the project via the benefit office, social services, information services on training and education, the labor exchange, or on recommendation by people who have already attended a meeting, through ex-teachers, friends, family, occasionally parents.

To date the programme has served 71 youngsters (cijfer ingevoegd d.d. 1 juni 2007) Based on a tentative estimate published in April 2007, regarding drop out in the region of Leiden, this represents just over 16% of the target population.

4. Please describe the outcome(s) that the transformation has achieved. Describe the goals of the transformation and the most important measures you use to evaluate your initiative's success. *In qualitative or quantitative terms for each measure, provide the outcomes/ results of the last full year of operation and, if possible, at least one prior year. If your initiative has been formally evaluated or audited by an independent organization or group, please summarize the principal findings of the evaluator(s) and/or auditor(s).*

Meetings as a general rule cater for 3 to 5 youngsters. The majority of clients attend once. To date, the project has catered for 71 young people during 15 meetings. 43 of those youngsters are known to have gained a place in school and/or labor market since, or 60%. So far, 43 adults from all walks of life have attended meetings, some twice, some three times. 23 of those came from industry and commerce, 6 from government, 6 from education, 6 from health and welfare organizations, 2 from political parties.

Gaining recognition as a highly effective method has led to the moderators of the project being able to 'spread the word' through meeting with others, writing papers, doing workshops and presentations. The moderators of the project are 'giving the method away' as innovation can only be of real value if it is shared. As a consequence, the MKB initiative is now informing government employees how to reach out and help those who have been maneuvered into a corner by bureaucracy and pillarized service delivery.

The transformation has been able to demonstrate the power of collaboration between organizations from different domains, central, regional and local government, education, health and welfare, industry and commerce, and political parties, using a bottom up, case oriented approach.

The method has proven to be attractive to members of the commercial community, raising their awareness of the problem and their potential roles in solving or easing it.

The method has been able to demonstrate conclusively the effect of working from the youngster's perspective, leading the way as to how government should address the drop out and youth unemployment problem.

The program has been researched by the Center for Government Studies, part of the University of Leiden in April and May 2007. Their main conclusions are that:

- the program succeeds in mobilizing social capital to work on solutions for youngsters who are in an unfavorable position in terms of bureaucratic processes;
- the program successfully uses the client's perspective as a basis for organizing help;
- the program is extremely flexible due to its use of informal networks;
- the program succeeds in helping youngsters where traditional agencies have failed.

5. Please describe the most significant obstacle(s) encountered thus far by your program. *How have they been dealt with? Which ones remain?*

The first challenge is getting workers in the public sector to take on board the project's way of thinking about working with the target population. As a general rule policy makers are more likely to see the effects and the potential of the transformation than those operating services on a daily basis. This results from time to time in youngsters not being referred to the program whereas they might well benefit.

In true solution focused style the moderators look at the positive: the program has achieved a lot thus far. By keeping on doing what works (working from the youngster's perspective, showcases, papers, workshops, presentations, asking people to attend meetings) the value of the approach will become clear.

The second challenge relates to funding. The project is researching ways to become financially independent without becoming part of a government pillar and without going commercial. The first would invariably lead to a loss of independence, the second is undesirable as it demands profit maximizing behavior. The obstacle is being addressed by looking at the requirements needed to become a charity.

6. Describe when and how the transformation was originally conceived within your organization. What individuals or groups are considered the primary initiators of your initiative? Please describe how one or more government institutions played a formative role in the program's development.

The transformation was originally conceived by three people, Clara Pels, Tjomme van Norden, and Henny Werter.

One night having a drink, these three people thought up a different way of helping young people out of work and out of school. All three felt that many youngsters were not being served well by the public sector, in some cases leading to Kafka-esk situations.

It was felt that the system of service delivery was the cause of grief. It was concluded that if that was the case, then the best way of disabling that system was to introduce 'live' people, e.g. youngsters and adults to one another. It was decided to do so in small groups as humans have a tendency to 'start listening once it's in their face'. To stimulate the 'in their face' element further, it was proposed to facilitate short term 'adoptions' whereby adults would allow young people to make use of their knowledge, experience and informal network.

Shortly afterwards, two trial sessions were organized. During the trial, the program was picked up by the MKB Leerbanenplan Rijnland, a subsidized project aiming to find small and medium sized local businesses to take on young people as trainees. It agreed to slot the transformation within their project so as to be able to support it financially.

The transformation derives its name from here: MKB Leerbanenplan Rijnland and MKB Adoption Project. MKB stands for Midden en Klein Bedrijf. MKB is a national organization promoting the interests of small and medium sized businesses.

7. Please describe what other individuals or organizations have been the most significant in (a) initiative conception and development, and (b) on-going implementation and operation. *What roles have they played? To what degree does the agency administering the transformation collaborate with outside entities? What individuals or organizations are the strongest supporters of the initiative and why? What individuals or organizations are the strongest critics of the initiative and why? What is the nature of their criticism?*

Mr. Vincent Molkenboer of ROC Leiden, a large vocational college with a large number of drop outs, has been a staunch supporter and advocate of the project since its conception. He has been a great friend, committing time and effort to moderators and youngsters alike. Through his efforts ROC Leiden has from the start been collaborating in the project by sending

representatives to meetings, striving to put things right where they have gone wrong.

Representatives from local industry and commerce (MKB) have been supportive in the ongoing operation of the project by attending meetings, committing time and effort and by providing a bookkeeping service for the project.

National, regional and local government all support the project by subsidizing its operation, its innovative development and knowledge sharing activities.

The Center for Government Studies (GCS) has turned out to be a great advocate of the project among peers and policy makers, putting the program up for nomination for IBM Innovation Award in Transforming Government. It has also put the moderators into contact with people working in positions close to central government who may be able to help oiling the wheels of change. GCS is interested in the project as it is an innovation in public management. Public management defines the scope of GCS's research activities.

Criticism has come from some local government officials and health and welfare professionals. They feel that the informality of the project can be not conducive to solving problems of a complex and multifaceted kind.

8. Please identify the key milestones in program or policy development and implementation and when they occurred (e.g., initiative authorization enacted by legislature in June 2001; initiative accepted first clients, September 2001; expanded initiative approved by legislature in July 2002). *How has the implementation strategy of your transformation evolved over time? What are the long-term goals of the initiative?*

First sessions:	April 2005
Regional project aiming to combat youth unemployment commits money:	May 2005
Sessions begin, at least 10 times a year:	May 2005
Local and regional government commits money for 2 years:	January 2006
Break in sessions due to the death of Mr. Tjomme van Norden:	May 2006
Resumption of sessions:	October 2006
Local and regional government commits money for 1 year:	January 2007
National government commits money for 1 year:	January 2007
Research by CGS:	April/May 2007
Nomination IBM Innovation Award	May 2007

The transformation will hopefully be implemented by many more agencies as its it is being spread to all those who are interested. By sharing the method and inviting recipients to put in

their experiences and make it their own, the project becomes a 'work in progress', catering for many more young people.

9. Please describe the current operating budget. What is(are) the funding source(s) of the initiative (e.g., local, state, national, private)? What percentage of annual income is derived from each? Describe the sustainability of funding in the future. Please provide any other pertinent budget information, and include form of currency used.

The current operating budget is:

25.000 euro. Province Zuid Holland (Regional government). This money pays for the operation of the program and the sharing of knowledge with other agencies.

26.000 euro. Leiden City Council (Local government). This money pays for the operation of the program as a 'best practice'.

90.000 euro. Ministry of Internal Affairs (National government) and the G27, an organization of 27 medium sized cities. This subsidy was extended as a confirmation of the project's innovative qualities. The money pays for further experiment and development of the program into other areas, groups, and sectors.

The project is researching ways to become financially independent without getting into constraining subsidy relationships and without going commercial. The first would invariably lead to a loss of independence, the second is undesirable as it demands profit maximizing behavior.

A third option, becoming a social enterprise in the traditional sense, entails becoming an employer, creating in effect a second core activity besides helping young people.

To date, becoming a charity presents the project with the best 'fit'. It would allow the transformation to help youngsters, remain independent, receive money, share knowledge and experience, develop the method for other groups and sectors and promote the power of collaboration between individuals and organizations from different domains.

Given the multi-domain character and the successes of the transformation, it expects to find medium term funding. Moderators and advocates of the project are actively researching avenues to do so.

10. What would you characterize as the program's most significant remaining shortcoming?

The program's strength is also its weakness. Given the core value of the project (self expertise) and given the informal nature of the project, the precise effect of the project on actually getting a place is in some cases difficult to determine. Quantitative accountability in programs such as the MKB initiative presupposes measurable interventions. The project does not have those.

Sometimes an individual has already decided to 'try something else' and doing the meeting is part of that. In some cases the meeting generates self confidence in youngsters leading to better self presentation and improved school/job hunting skills. In some cases, attending a meeting creates a sense of urgency, propelling youngsters and adults to put in extra effort. These combined qualitative factors make it difficult to assess exactly what led to what.

The project's main challenge then, is to remain informal but to address this issue in ways that do not scupper its nature.

Clara Pels
Coach en Advies

P: Postbus 11140
2301 EC Leiden
T: +31 (0)6 1437 4893
E: info@coachenadvies.nl