

INTRODUCTION

This two year project involved the organizational redesign of a Social Security Center of Occupational Activities. Using an action-research methodology, within a systemic approach of organizations, we collected data about the Centre (history, structure, processes, worker's functions, etc.) and then implemented Galpin's model of organization redesign (2000).

1. ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT AND INTERVENTION REQUEST

Scope and Request

Request: to analyze the problems identified and felt by the organizational members in one of the Porto's Solidarity and Social Security Occupational Activities Centre.

Request origin: the Center's Director.

The context: An Occupational Activities Centre (CAO's)

Nature: Redefined government structures with the purpose to develop adequate activities for young adults with severe mental disorder and handicap (prior Special Education Centers).

CAO's objectives

To give its beneficiaries the opportunity to:

- Develop socially useful and strictly occupational activities;
- Permanent physical, mental and social technical support;
- Participate in cultural, sportive and recreational activities.

Organizational structure



2. INTERVENTION/ACTION PROCESS

PHASE 1: THE FIRST WORK JOURNEYS – MAKING A DIAGNOSE

Aim: Diagnose, in a collaborative way, the workers and organization's problems and needs, considering the new formal nature of the organization, imposed by law—CAO

Method: Action-research methodology, using Focus-group.

Procedure

The 8 hours session was organized in 4 specific moments. Following a script participants reflected about their job position in the Center and their perceived constraints.

Results

- Personnel development needs in mental disorder and handicap
- Personnel mental and physical burnout due to occupation
- Organizational communication problems;
- Implicit conflict between the existing professional groups;
- Organizational financial, material and human resources deficiencies.

PHASE 2: GETTING THE WORK DONE

1st step: Workers job analysis and Center's functioning

Aims:

- * Gather data about the organizational processes:
 - Workers' job;
 - Articulation between workers job and Center's objectives;
 - Identifying problems present in the Center's everyday processes;
- * Establish a strong relation between Intervention Team and organizational members.

Gathering data techniques: individual and collective interviews; diaries

Procedure: interviews where held at the Center; diaries where given to each workers and them returned when completed.

Results:

- * Existence in the Center of a autonomous changing dynamic ;
- * Disorientation and lack of knowledge about basic Center's process and objectives
- * Workers critical attitude towards the Center's structure and workflow

2nd step: Building a collective proposal of a new organizational structure

Moment A – Negotiating

1. Presenting to the Center's Direction a model of a specific process of intervention
 - Defining the organizational Vision
 - Teams were created: Improvement Teams and Coordination Team
2. Global Assembly to present and submit the planed intervention process model

Moment B – A collective elaboration of an organizational structure

Aims: Promote a collective knowledge of the Center's work reality and to elaborate a collective proposal of a new organizational structure

Procedure:

- * Improvement Teams met twice a month
- * Coordination Team met once every three month

- * Intervention team met twice a month

Results

* Improvement Teams proposals

1. Relating to the Center's beneficiaries:
 - Extensive list of "socially useful" activities to be developed
 - Beneficiaries Integration process in the Center's thematic developmental areas
 - Beneficiaries Integration process in external settings
2. Relating to the Center's workflow and processes:
 - Annual technical meetings plan;
 - Communication processes;
 - Cafeteria's reorganization.

* Coordination Team outputs

- Appropriate coping strategies related with Improvement Teams setbacks;
- Insights regarding the disbelief and scepticism of some organizational members;
- Creation of a specific group to discuss the Cafeteria's reorganization proposal.

Moment C – Renegotiating

The intervention structure was changed in reaction to workers tiredness and anxiety;

One unique team was created – a Work Team;

Global assembly to submit the redefined intervention model.

Moment D - A collective proposal of an organizational structure after renegotiating

Aims: Continue the Teams prior work and present an organizational structure proposal, following the renegotiated intervention structure

Procedure

Work team weekly meetings, with working dynamic similar to the prior teams
Intervention team weekly meetings.

Results

- Center's Coordination's role and model;
- A new work thematic structure (including a new area - Manual Activities)
- 2 multi spaces (beneficiaries pleasure and spare time activities);
- Daily registration of the beneficiaries' presence in the Center
- Rules in which to base the definition of the beneficiaries' activities schedule
- Center's annual meeting plan;
- Center's beneficiaries preliminary evaluation report;
- Creation of an Implementation Team to facilitate the introduction of changes;
- General assembly to present the new organizational structure and inform about the Implementation Team
- Monthly meetings with the facilitator to evaluate the implementation process.

The final proposal was well received.

But, Implementation Team received with suspicious — its perceived importance in the organizational change process was diminished.

3rd step: Implementing the approved organizational redesign proposal

Presently at course

3. REFLECTING ABOUT THE INTERVENTION PROCESS

The process of a collective construction of an organizational redesign proposal wasn't a pacific nor easy process as we initially supposed given the motivation and commitment showed by all organizational members towards change, considering:

- * We found distinguished positions, inflexible attitudes and individual interpretations of reality that sometimes collided and compromised a collective conciliation;
- * The Center's Director implicit objectives didn't correspond to the negotiated and explicit objectives – intervention manipulation attempt;
- * Organizational members concern in pointing those who, at the contrary of themselves, were allegedly opposing the change process – intervention manipulation attempt;
- * Parallel and autonomous introducing changes to the Center's functioning during the intervention process without considering or acknowledging the Intervention Team
 - Creating the *Reflection group* (after the *First Work Journeys*)
 - Initializing *pedagogical meetings* (during the Intervention phase);
- * Choosing Improvement teams representative;
- * Resisting to the Implementation Team.

"Change doesn't happen in great jumps" (Galpin, 2000: 24), it happens throughout a process that takes place during a considerable period of time.

