

## 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)

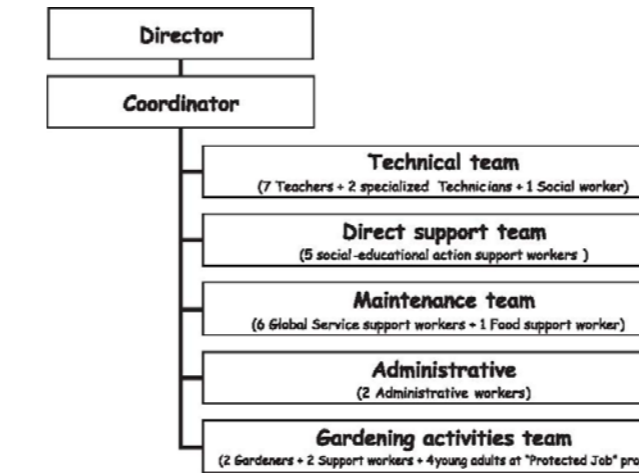
**Nature:** Redefined government structures with the purpose to develop adequate activities for young adults with severe mental disorder and handicap (prior Special Education Centers).

### 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

#### 1<sup>st</sup> 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

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 *Reflectional 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.**

