

Article

Using Creative Problem Solving (CPS) to Improve Leadership in a Non-Profit Organization

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) method in improving the leadership process in a non-profit organization. The research was designed around an intervention and structured in three stages (pre-consult, intervention and follow-up), with a team designated by management, in order to bring leadership cohesion to both departments of the organization and also between the board and executive management. The results, expressed in the tasks performed and in the interviews to team members, allowed us to conclude on the effectiveness of the CPS method to improve organizational leadership, by establishing a stronger relationship between departments, as well as, in the long term, between the board and executive management. These results highlight possible solutions to improve the leadership of non-profit organizations.

Keywords: creative problem solving; team facilitation; organisational innovation; collaboration in organisations

1. Introduction

This study aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) method to improve the leadership of a non-profit organization. The research was designed around an intervention, structured in three stages (pre-consult, intervention and follow-up), with a team selected by management, the purpose being to develop a greater unity in the leadership of the two departments into which the organization had been structured.

As Pearce (2003) stated, social enterprises are organizations whose purpose goes beyond the delivery of goods, services or social facilities, trying to spread values of solidarity in other sectors of society. According to Barros (2003), the Private Institutions of Social Solidarity (IPSS), in Portugal, may be classified according to its associative nature (taking the form of charitable associations, voluntary associations of social action, mutual aid associations or mutual associations, or the “Santas Casas de Misericórdia” [Holy Hospitals of Mercy]), foundational nature (legally adopting the form of foundations of social solidarity and parish social centers), or religious organizations. They are regulated by law, independent from the Government, and managed by a professional administration, together with voluntary management, fiscal and general boards. These organizations adopted the legal status of public interest and pursue general interest objectives in collaboration with the Government. The latter grants them access to many benefits, mostly of a fiscal nature. According to the General District Attorney of Lisbon, in 2006, 4634 IPSS were recorded at national level, whose main social responses are aimed at the well-being of the elderly, children and youth, family, drug addiction, homelessness and healthcare.

The intervention effectiveness was evaluated using qualitative indicators. As Drucker (1990) stated, non-profit organization management do not have quantitative indicators that allow them to plan in terms of specific results and therefore have to rely on qualitative measures. According to this author, non-profit organizations are not usually short of ideas, but they sometimes lack the will and ability to convert these into concrete results, thus requiring an innovative strategy to focus its analysis on the external environment and to introduce changes that should be interpreted, not as threats, but as potential opportunities. Likewise, as expressed by researchers like Bradshaw, Murray, and Wolphin (1992), and Carver (2006), the governance of board and

executive management sometimes pursue different goals. It is therefore important to improve their alignment. This was achieved through this intervention and based on the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) methodology.

The goal of the study was to answer the research question: What would be the effectiveness of CPS in improving the leadership of a non-profit organization? To address this, we decided to solicit participation from an organization that would bring managers and personnel to work on the same project in a non-profit setting. The participant organization was the *Centro Social Paroquial de Sao Cristovao*, which is an example of social support in its region, in a city near Lisbon. Due to its management structure and the absent leadership of the president of the board, the Centre faced difficulties in its leadership and organizational practices, which could harm the final service delivery to its clients.

1.1. The effectiveness of Creative Problem Solving (CPS)

The effectiveness of CPS techniques has been the subject of investigation by several researchers, as reported by Puccio, Firestien, Coyle, and Masucci (2006). Sidney Parnes and Ruth Noller (Parnes & Noller, 1972), for example, worked on CPS in an extensive program - The Creative Studies Project - devoted to the enhancement of creative thinking in students and to assessing its effects. The educational and training implications of CPS were the main focus of the Parnes-Noller work, as was the case in many other studies (see, for instance, Stein, 1994; Ellsperman, Evans, & Basadur, 2007).

Regarding structure, CPS evolved from Osborn's (Osborn, 1957; 1963) original three-step model to the Osborn-Parnes (Parnes, 1967) five-step model, comprising *Fact-Finding*, *Problem-Finding*, *Idea-Finding*, *Solution-Finding* and *Acceptance-Finding*. The steps were also defined in terms of three broad categories: *Understanding the Problem*, *Idea Generation*, and *Planning for Action*. Later, the sixth stage of *Mess-Finding* was added (Isaksen & Treffinger, 1985), and organized into three broad categories: *Understanding the Challenge*, *Generating Ideas*, and *Preparing for Action* (Isaksen & Treffinger, 2004). These categories and the six-step version formed the basis of the "Ecological Approach", designed by Isaksen, Puccio, and Treffinger (1993), and the "Thinking Skills Model", by Puccio, Murdock, and Mance (2005), where the categories were: *Clarification*, *Transformation* and *Implementation*.

With the goal of increasing efficiency by reducing the session time, and following Min Basadur's model (Basadur, 1987), we designed a four-step model, shown in Figure 1, comprising the steps of *Objective-Finding*, *Problem-Definition*, *Action-Planning* and the *Action* itself. However, as the *Objective-Finding* step is completed during a pre-

consulting stage with management, and as implementation occurs after the CPS session, the process reduces to only two steps: *Problem-Definition* and *Action-Planning*. Using this new cycle the time taken for team meetings is cut by more than half, with a typical session taking four hours or less. Another positive outcome is that the new model focuses team members on implementation (including development of an execution plan), with management control measures, as well as communication and acceptance-related tasks. This approach provides an initial structure for the group, during the divergent phase of *Problem-Definition*, followed by an emotional linkage between members, as efforts are focused on reaching consensus during the convergent phase of *Problem-Definition*. Another structuring step follows during *Action-Planning*, when team members' creativity is expressed during the "how to?" development of each task in the plan.

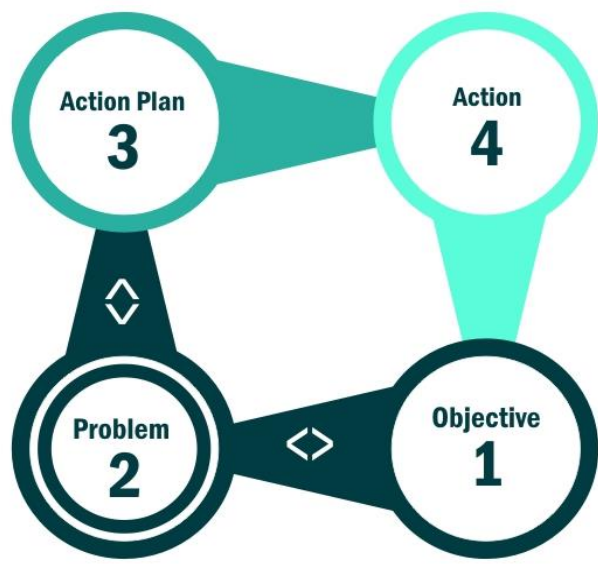


Figure 1. The four-step CPS method

The sequence of divergence and convergence is maintained only during Objective-Finding (with the client) and Problem-Definition steps. During Problem-Definition, the team enumerates all possible barriers to reach the objective, and then selects a final problem definition to work with, beginning with the expression, *What are the steps necessary to?* This question focuses the team on seeking concrete tasks instead of more esoteric solutions.

During *Action-Planning* the team starts by listing all actions needed to achieve the goal and then puts them in order of execution. For each task, the "how to?" question is

defined in such a way as to include any actions necessary to overcome resistances that might arise. Each task is assigned to a sub-team, which defines deadlines as well as the person or entity responsible for evaluation of the final output.

The establishment of an effective communication structure (e.g. Google groups; Wikis), within the team, facilitates the collective awareness of what each team member is doing. Also, advertising the project within the organization (e.g. via an intranet newsletter or internal marketing supports) reduces organizational resistance to task accomplishment and increases peer pressure for the team to comply with the project's milestones and goals.

The acceptance plan, aimed at overcoming resistance from non-team members (sometimes considered the most likely reason for failure [e.g. Buijs, Smulders, & Meer, 2009]), is included in this approach. But the most important factor in resistance reduction is that the team should include those who may be affected by the results of the project, have the power to help it, may block the project, or possess relevant information or expertise (Strauss, 2002).

2. Methodology

2.1. Selected NGO – The Parish Social Centre of Saint Christopher

The Parish Social Centre, here designated by *Sao Cristovao*, is a private, non-profit institution of social solidarity (IPSS), located near Lisbon. Founded in 1961, in order to provide assistance to the parish's deprived people, the service was provided exclusively by volunteers, under the guidance of the parish priest. In 1984, the organization was established legally as an IPSS, continuing to provide assistance within the social values of the catholic church.

This Centre has played a critical role in supporting families in the sixties, when the rural exodus moved them to the major urban centres. The changes in families' structure, mostly due to the aging population and urban concentration, led the Centre to expand its response to the elderly, opening the first Care Centre in 1992 and inaugurating, in 1998, the Day Centre, providing the first Home Support Services. The staff expanded, adding to the professionals working with children, others specialised in services for the elderly, as social workers, animation teams and family assistants. As a consequence of this evolution, the administrative building and the technical offices were inaugurated in 2005.

The Institution's governance consists of a board of directors, presided by the parish priest, a general assembly board, and a fiscal committee, in a total of twelve volunteers, serving a three-year term. Two professional managers are accountable as executive management; one responsible for the administrative and finance department, with 17 co-workers, and the other in charge of the technical, social and pedagogical departments, with 62 co-workers. The organization also includes a body of volunteers who do not have a formal contract and contribute to the daily activities such as crafts, computers, cooking, choir, hairdressing, nursing, relaxation, English lessons, literacy, and psychology, without remuneration. These volunteers work closely with the professionals, in the existing structure and following the annual activity plan. Another source of collaboration relies in partnerships and internship protocols, negotiated with different institutions.

The activities are decentralized over five units in different locations, providing a diverse set of social responses (Nursery, Pre-School, Leisure, Home Care, Day Care and Social Centre) to almost 600 users, some of which responses developed in partnership with other local and national organizations.

The Institution has three distinct sources of funding: the State (59%), the customers (38%) and its own income (3%); it does not rely on any contribution or donation from companies or individuals.

2.2. Procedure

Using the CPS method over a period of eight months, different interventions were executed in order to introduce changes, following a management-defined objective. The interventions made may be segmented into three distinct periods: the actions preceding the intervention - *Moment 0*; the intervention itself - *Moment 1*; the actions related to the implementation of the projects - *Moment 2*. The first began with a pre-consult session with the Centre's management, both the Technical and the Administrative Directors, in order to establish the goal of the intervention and the composition of the team. Three diagnostic interviews were held with co-workers identified by the management, and used the question, *How can we work more in tune for a whole?* In *Moment 1* the CPS process was implemented, using the approach described earlier, gathering together a team of ten members (designated by management as experts in the problem to solve), the facilitator, an outside observer (who recorded the entire session and helped to analyse the dynamics of each team), and the client, i.e., the two professional managers who participated in the pre-consult session. *Moment 2* was dedicated to the implementation of the action plan, set during the previous phase. Four follow-up sessions were organized with a planned structure: the first follow-up session was dedicated to the assessment

of the actions undertaken and the analysis of the resistances to change, in order to define the most appropriate ways to overcome them; the second follow-up session, aimed at redefining the action plan; the third intended to synthesise the work done; and the fourth, to make the final evaluation of the results. At the end of this last session, the interviews conducted at *Moment 0* were repeated, using the same question (*How can we work more in tune for a whole?*), and their discourse was content analysed and subjected to a factorial analysis of correspondence, using DTM software (Lebart, Morineau, Becue, & Haeusler, 1993).

3. Analysis and results

In order to address the purpose of this study, namely to evaluate the effectiveness of the CPS process in improving leadership, a joint interview with the Administrative Manager and the Technical Manager (called M and C, respectively, and will play the role of "client") was undertaken at first - Moment 0. During this interview (the pre-consult), the initial goal of the intervention was set and the team was designated. The dynamic began with a divergence phase in order to find a goal for the intervention. The managers agreed to concentrate on the non-involvement of the IPSS governance board in daily management, and on the need to overcome the problems of interaction between both departments. These difficulties were initially defined in terms of teamwork, time management and communication, reflecting the existence of two distinct realities within the same organization.

The reflection that occurred during the pre-consult allowed us to reach consensus on the need for harmony, and on the question, *How can we work more in tune to a whole?*, which became the selected goal for the intervention.

Having agreed on the goal, the next step addressed the definition of the team, which followed some important criteria, for instance, the functional and hierarchical heterogeneity, and the diversity of knowledge and experience in the organization. Having explained the project to the whole organization, ten members were invited to be part of the problem solving team.

3.1. Moment 1- The intervention

In this phase the CPS process was implemented, focusing on problem definition and its resolution. The designated team, the facilitator, the outside observer charged to register data, and the two managers assuming the role of the client, were present.

Starting from the goal proposed by the management, *How can we work more in tune for a whole?*, the team members diverged actively to find the most relevant problems. Some of them are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of the problems related to the objective

A more fluid communication (**) Cooperation Discipline Self-responsibility Autonomy in decision making Lack of staff Lack of resources The main customer is not always present in decisions (*) The management is not aligned We must work for the same purpose, as a whole Personnel needs to like their work Absence of dedication Absence of pride Lack of incentives There are no meetings for decision making	Missing links between the sectors (***) Lack of communication with the hierarchy A lack of communication between the managers (*) No links between the personal and the professional Separation between stated values and practice Lack of flexibility Little time to do the cleaning (*) The workload has peaks Problems in the transition from volunteer to professional activities (*) Lack of recognition of the colleague's work Some workers need to update (training) Lack of assertiveness in evaluation Nobody wants not wants to hurt feelings
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(*) Shows the number of votes

In the active divergence phase, the team produced 40 problem definitions, reduced to six in the active convergence phase:

- ✓ Communication not fluid enough
- ✓ The main client is not always present when decisions are taken
- ✓ Lack of coordination between the sectors
- ✓ Lack of communication between managers
- ✓ Problems in the transition from volunteer to professional activities
- ✓ Lack of time for cleaning

The client was then invited to join the team to hear the justifications of the choices made by each team member, in order to choose the main problem. The client's choice relied on, *What steps are necessary in order to improve the coordination between sectors?*

In order to address the formulated problem, the next step consisted of finding actions that should integrate the action plan. The results are shown in Table 2. For each task a reflection allowed to specify how it could best be implemented, how to clear any

resistance, who would integrate the sub-team responsible for it, what will be the deadline for implementation and what entity (or criteria) should evaluate the quality of the execution. A project coordinator, responsible for executing the plan was designated, in order to guarantee the coordination between the sub-teams.

Table 2. Action Plan

Task	How	Who	When	Standard check
1. Define the problems underlying the lack of coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the sample and an interview guide • Interview the representatives of the different sectors • Analyse the information 	J R	26 November	R
2. Define the activity peaks in cleaning (and other areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterise the peaks in the activities and the existing resources. • Assess the gaps • Propose some alternative solutions 	C S	26 November	C. V.
3. Promote mutual knowledge of the different sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select the activities/sectors • Write a Reception Manual • Elaborate the Exchange plan 	B R F	15 December	M. da G.
4. Define the routine or unexpected procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the quality certification procedures, involved in sectors coordination 	M C	15 December	A. M.
5. Define the internal communication system 6. Integrate the interdisciplinary teams created now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the communication tools, guarantying the information about the project flows through the different teams • Build interdisciplinary boards 	G M	26 November	A. M.
7. Guarantee periodical coordination meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define an articulation plan for the coordination meetings • Define the coordination teams together with the different sectors. 	M C D	15 December	M. C.

3.2. Moment 2 – Follow-up

The first follow-up session

This session followed the defined standard structure, consisting of two distinct phases. Initially, the group was invited to come up with a synthesis of all the work done (comparing what was done with the tasks defined in the previous section) and reflect about the main difficulties and challenges the team had faced. This session registered an important change in the team, with the entrance of an element of the IPSS board, representing the president, thus assuming the role of the client.

When dealing with the need to overcome resistance and difficulties in the second phase, the team generated a list of problems and obstacles related to the problem of the previous session, thus resuming the previous goal.

Having made the point about the on-going projects, the group proceeded to reformulate the existing action plan. Therefore, the problem, *What steps do we have to take in order to improve the coordination between sectors?* became the new goal. A problem solving cycle, in order to review the action plan in progress, was undertaken.

After a phase of active divergence (to find the problems) and of active convergence (to make the final selection of the most important ones), the intervention of the new client (board member) turned out to be decisive with respect to the choice of the new problem, *What are the steps needed to engage people over the client?*

The resolution steps were described as the following tasks:

- ✓ Prepare the new employees
- ✓ Get the sectors' awareness of its contribution to the client's satisfaction (make of an institutional video)
- ✓ Brief description of the existing functions (make of a welcome manual)
- ✓ Work on the logo and its message (make of an institutional leaflet)
- ✓ Work on common procedures and assign a member to be responsible for the implementation

Due to the lack of time, the integration of this information into the existing action plan was required, although it was impossible to make it during this session,. Therefore, it was suggested that the group coordinator would assure the integration of the two projects and propose an integrated action plan. A new meeting of the group was scheduled to validate the proposed action plan.

The second follow-up session

This session started with the reformulated action plan and was validated by the project team. The synthesis presented included some tasks listed in the initial plan, which were not formally included in the reformulation presented:

- ✓ **Influence the new employees or sectors to their contribution to client's satisfaction.** A video was produced internally, in order to enable all the departments to see themselves in the presented images, as well as to communicate a common message, capable of preparing the new employees and representing the institution externally.
- ✓ **Brief description of the different existing functions.** Based on examples from other companies and making an effort to understand the expectations of someone new entering this institution, the team presented a welcome manual, which also described the mission and all jobs in the Centre.
- ✓ **Work on a logo with a message.** This task, part of the communication plan, proposed a symbol adopted as the institutional image of the Centre.
- ✓ **Work on common goals.** This task addressed the need to define the routines and unexpected events, in order to solve cross-sector problems. For instance, in order to improve the communication between the secretariat and the operational rooms, they set up some registration forms. Similar procedures were adopted for the treatment of telephone calls, repairs and constructions, repair sheets for various suppliers and the procedures regarding the opening and closing of the Centre.
- ✓ **Projects not implemented.**

The cleaning project was presented as not executed, with the justification that the administration had run a parallel task. The same happened with the definition of the coordination teams, representatives of the sectors. These facts led to some tension related to the delimitation of power zones.

The session ended with a compromise to make a new follow-up session within a month.

The third follow-up session

This session took place as scheduled, in the presence of a team of 15 elements: the ten initial members, three board members and two new co-workers (one of the Administrative Department and a senior educator). The session was focused on the redefinition of the action plan, based on the reflection made in the previous follow-up session.

From the objective previously redefined, *How could we define proposals for improving the customer service?*, and from the search of the most relevant problems, it was possible to reach a new consensus on the choice of the following problem, *What steps must be taken to engage the teams in task performance?*

The next step consisted, again, in the search of concrete solutions, and the tasks were subsequently ordered by execution sequence, culminating in the construction of a new action plan (drawn from the redesigned previous plans. See Table 3)

Table 3. Action Plan

Task	How	Who	When	Standard check
1. Define common tasks	Schedule Assessment of needs, priorities and resources	C CS G MR	28 March	Direction
2. Define the composition of the teams to implement	- Who works on the tasks? - Who is affected? - Who can block? - Volunteers? - Invite, decide on included and excluded	M C D	5 April	Team
3. Define the working method for the teams	Draw the template Designate the team coordinator Define the sponsor	A F G	5 April	R
4. Communicate the actions of the team	Posters, choose the location, meetings, bulletins	J L D	20 April	A M
5. Share the results	Formalization, presentation methods, place local, date	R A C G	14 July	Direction

As a result, five sub teams were made and a new project manager was designated to coordinate the implementation in the next period. The next follow-up meeting was scheduled within two months.

The fourth follow-up meeting

The action plan designed in the previous session gave birth to ten sub teams, each one responsible for one for the following projects:

- Create an entrance gate keeper schedule, to ensure a nonstop functioning
- Streamline the internal emergency plan, gathering information, consulting three designers, receiving and analyzing the proposals, submitting them to the board, monitoring the plan implementation, presenting the plan to the National Authority for Civil Protection, implementing and promoting it.
- Structure training in personal and social areas, requesting a budget to three different companies.
- Communicate the organizational mission, vision, values and main principles, through an essay written by the children and the elderly, and published in the parish journal, in flyers distributed inside the organization and in the local community, and in posters in the parish's hall and in the co-workers' room.
- Study the costs of changing the location of the toilets in the daycare centre (the group presented a proposal in which one of the team members had designed the plant).
- Acknowledge the birthday of each employee by building a tree whose leaves match the form of the hands of all employees, making it so that each one of the 15 rooms would be responsible for preparing the birthday presents for the employees, starting in the next school year.
- Share the work experiences carried out in the classes, with the participation of teams from different sectors. For instance, involve the auxiliary personnel, leading them to share the experiences obtained in their classrooms and playgrounds, and invite other sectors to participate in this sharing.
- Submit "A day in ...", in a documentary about the institution's functioning of all sectors and social services.
- Create the "employee's day", to promote team spirit, joy and fun, and organize a shared lunch and a souvenir distribution to mark the occasion.
- Search for the cost of hiring a nutritionist, by establishing partnerships with other institutions (e.g. School of Hospitality) and prepare awareness activities for seniors, based on the organization's existing knowledge.

Finally, the group responsible for the communication project, common to all the projects, made the point of the activities, mentioning some conflicts that occurred at the implementation level, dealing with different positions and the questioning of past practices. This new dynamic, marked by a greater participation, was positively evaluated by everyone and contributed to the abolition of some stereotypes differentiating the organizational sectors.

Approximately three months after the first intervention, the same subjects were interviewed again, using the same open question, *How can we work more in tune for a whole?*, in order to identify any attitude changes after the intervention.

Globally, the three interviewees verbalized changes showing a greater involvement and cooperation. They manifested some skepticism in their discourse, essentially induced by the fear that the observed changes would not be internalized, thus assuring its continuity.

As Table 4 shows, the frequency of the categories with a negative tone decreased from the first to the second interview, thus demonstrating the changes introduced by the intervention.

Table 4. Registration units' frequency, by category and subject, in Moment 0 and Moment 2

Category	Registration Units in Moment 0	Registration Units in Moment 2
Silos	18+12+7	0+0+0
Involvement	12+0+0	7+3+1
Non involvement	11+0+0	0+0+0
No cooperation	7+14+9	0+8+0
Lack of client focus	8+5	0+0+0
Rigidity	7+1+0	0+0+0
Frustration	11+0+0	0+1+0
Participation	1+2+1	4+4+7
Change	0+0+2	5+7+2

This trend is also visible in Figure 2, in which the two axes organize the participants' perceptions in two dimensions, the horizontal axis opposing *change* to *rigidity*, and the vertical axis, *participation* to *isolation*. Knowing that the odd numbers represent the three interviews conducted initially, and the even numbers, the interviews conducted with the same interviewees in Moment 2, the graph reflects the changes in perception. Undeniably, the subjects 1-2 and 3-4 became more open to change and participation (subject 1-2). Even the subject 5-6, who did not have such a negative view as the others, evolved positively towards participation after the intervention.

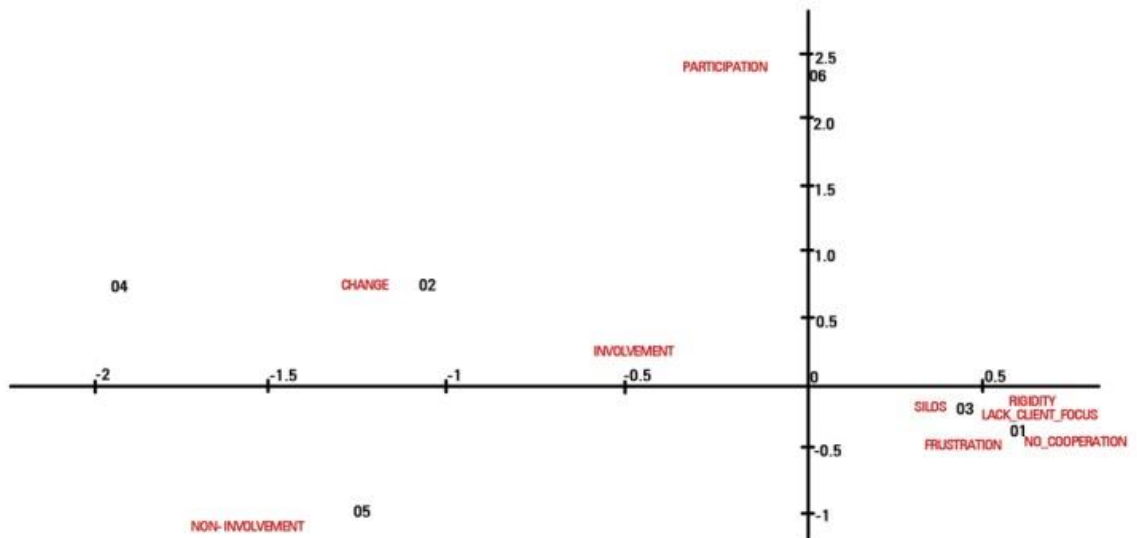


Figure 2. Perceptual map of the three interviewees, in Moment 0 (numbers 01, 03 and 05), and in Moment 2 (numbers 02, 04 e 06)

4. Conclusion

In this research we decided to use a team work methodology designated as CPS, as part of a global model of action-research, like the work undertaken by other authors (e.g. Sousa, Monteiro, & Penalver, 2012). We tried to understand till what extent this methodology produced results in the optimization of processes and management methods, as well as in the services provided to customers. Therefore, an intervention was planned with three different moments (before, during and after the application of the method). The results will be discussed next.

For a better presentation of the results, it is important to recall the organizational context in the period before the intervention, summarizing the existing representations and perceptions of the various subjects involved. The perceptions expressed by management, concerning the operation of the Centre, were anchored in the absence of a united leadership and a unifying strategy that could bring a clear direction to the organization, and the mutual perception that the other side did not collaborate in the building of a common project. The goal initially selected for the intervention reflected the need to find answers to the two central issues identified: non-involvement of the board and the difficulty of interaction between the technical and the administrative areas. The Centre management was made based on a context where difficulties in teamwork, time management, and communication, emerged as obstacles that reinforced the coexistence of two different realities within the same organization. The vision of the problem, expressed by management before the intervention, was coincident with the existing view of the other layers of the organization, as evidenced in the interviews: the employees of a department accused the ones of the other department of not doing their job, in a daily conflict between individuals and groups, reinforcing the hypothesis of a widespread perception of operation in silos, one department being seen as of low importance than the other.

In this particularly adverse context to the development of innovative behaviors, the intervention identified 93 problems, 40 during the intervention and 20 and 33, respectively, during the follow-up sessions. All of them contributed to the transformation of tacit into explicit knowledge, thus expanding the understanding of the organization.

These results seem to contribute to validate the proposition, i.e., *CPS methodology revealed itself effective in improving the leadership of a non-profit organization*. Working in silos, with communication difficulties and little knowledge sharing and learning, became salient during the early phase of the intervention.

During the intervention a new awareness was created and expressed, regarding the way internal conflicts were preventing the organization from focusing on its real mission. Alongside with the knowledge that was being produced, the team revealed autonomy and initiative to reinvent itself, thus unlocking a significant number of organizational constraints.

In the end, the method and the facilitation skills extended themselves to the team's action, persisting beyond the dynamics generated during the intervention, and giving rise to a system of organizational innovation, combining the formal structure with a matrix structure, at least during the period of the project implementation.

The implementation phase covered a period of seven months and included several reframed statements of the initial action plan. The progresses and setbacks, occurring while the team and the individuals dealt with the obstacles and resistances, were acknowledged, as well as the observed group dynamics during the four follow-up sessions.

The first follow-up session began with the sharing of the obstacles found, highlighting the resistance of the colleagues from the other sectors to talk openly about their problems and to accept criticism. At first, the co-workers had not been informed, thus enhancing the resistance and, at the same time, revealing the malfunctioning of the team responsible for the communication project. These findings led the researchers to conclude that the major challenge was to change this mindset, and get people to believe that there were things to improve and problems to solve. Hence, we established a dynamic in which the group could criticize its own functioning, through the "eyes of the other". During the course of this session, the frontier between the administration (client) and the group (participants) was getting thinner and thinner, given the mobilization provided by the ongoing projects. Gradually the barriers broke up and changes became visible in the relationship between team members. The absence of a shared vision, uniting both departments, prevented people from focusing on the ultimate organizational goal (the care of children and elderly), and the angry feelings were stopping them from seeing the other's side point of view.

These facts, as expressed by Sousa, Pellissier, and Monteiro (2012), lead to the reflection that the ability to introduce changes in the organization requires individuals to step out of their comfort zone and challenge beliefs and rationalities. Somehow the group expressed this capacity, representing a significant change when comparing with the observations before the intervention. This session ended up with the reframing of the initial problem, which changed its focus from the relationship between sectors (logic of efficiency) to the need to concentrate on the institution's customer (logic of effectiveness).

In the second follow-up session, both executive managers began working together and with a third element, from the IPSS's board. This allowed a broader vision and more enthusiasm about the project, due to a feeling of being contributing to the fall of the interdepartmental barriers.

As some projects were not achieved, the situation demanded a more active role from the facilitator; questioning the group and encouraging the participants to verbalize some of the difficulties met during the execution. The analysis of the expressed blocks brings us to the management of influences and power relations (e.g. the failure of the cleaning project, justified by the fact that management had run a parallel job). Asked about what

might be missing to achieve the coordination between the sectors and to provide a better service, the group began to react, seeking for an answer. This gave rise to the expression of various feelings that may be summarized as "fear of innovation": on one hand, organizations want new ideas and new products but, on the other hand, they try hard to prevent anything different to happen (Dughigg, 2012).

At this stage, the dynamics observed were mainly focused within the team, showing more participation from the members of the technical area. The team coordinator also demonstrated some difficulties in leading the group to unblock some situations appeared during the implementation phase. As a way to relieve the tension, the facilitator stressed the need to redefine the project and to list the problems that hindered the action, thus indirectly motivating the replacement of the project coordinator during the following session.

In the third follow-up meeting, the team was enlarged and the goal of the session was reframed in the search of organizational effectiveness (aiming at customer service improvement). During this session, the choices made expanded, as well as the interaction between employees from different functional areas. As mentioned, a new coordinator was designated.

During the period between the third and the fourth follow-up sessions, the five projects previously defined eventually lead to ten, and were defined and executed in a completely autonomous way by the several teams. Answering the question put by the facilitator, about the reasons why this had happened, they told: "*People stopped, sat down and there was a lot important things spoken between them ... so when people started talking about the different sectors, they came to the conclusion that they were very closed in their sectors*".

The identification with the new dynamics was reinforced by the results of the interviews repeated at the end of the intervention, even though some skepticism persisted regarding its future sustainability. Such unexpected changes needed time to consolidate and to earn the individuals' belief in its continuity.

One of the major limitations in this intervention had to do with the fact that the president of the board did not accept to engage himself at any stage of the process. Another limitation was related with the management of communication during the intervention process. When the pre-consult with management was completed, a specific communication plan, transversal to the whole organization, was defined but did not come into reality and, furthermore, the communication projects settled during the process of implementation proved to be ineffective. This feature limited the intervention's success, as the whole organization was not informed. Thus, the

innovative potential produced by this methodology and facilitation, and its ability to reach the majority of the organization's members was significantly restrained.

Finally, let us mention some limitations related with the design chosen for the intervention. The fact we have only dealt with a single case study does not allow for any generalizations. On the other hand, despite the intervention has occurred during eight months, we are convinced that a longer longitudinal approach would allow us to evaluate and monitor, in a most sustainable way, the observed changes. We know now, a year after the end of the intervention, that the administration has designated a vice president to work closely with management, thus ensuring greater unity between the two departments. We also learned that the "Co-worker's Day", the video and the reception manual are still in use. Despite the development of the website and the construction of shared projects areas, the only feature detected previously that still deserves to be addressed relates to internal communication.

To conclude, we have seen that, at team level, the CPS method created an organizational microstructure, in a real context, in which it was possible to observe the effects of a more participatory management and project engagement, encouraging the individual to contribute to a common goal. The project undertook were mostly short-term projects, whose observable results produced new inputs (transformation of implicit knowledge into explicit), new practices (greater interaction between the departments; a more participative leadership; new communication channels), and attitude change (greater capacity for self-criticism; greater ability to make diagnosis).

The main implications for practice are related to the fact that the new dynamics created, characterized by greater participation and involvement of all in the organizational objectives, allowed the stereotypes to be reframed, and the emergence of a wider openness to change. The CPS methodology stimulated knowledge sharing, interaction and a focus on common goals, which had a positive impact in attitudes and behaviours, influencing directly customer service quality and producing concrete tools, such as the reception manual, video and corporate image. Finally, the simplicity of the method implementation led the team to a fast appropriation of the process, incorporating CPS in the activity, without the help of a facilitator.

Regarding the implications for theory, it is considered that the methodology, designed to assess the effectiveness of CPS in developing an organizational development process, by using a model of action-research and a systemic approach, allowed us to evaluate in a real environment, the impact of the produced changes. By involving management, from the beginning of the process, and allowing for a deeper interaction between different hierarchical and functional levels, this methodology

fosters the reflection on power, leadership and communication systems, thus acting on the factors that may cause entropy and resistance to change.

As to the recommendations for practice, we think that this institution should continue to re-evaluate its leadership system, and to develop a vision and a unifying strategy. Although we have acknowledged the appointment of a vice president, for this purpose, we think that if no other structural changes are introduced, there is some probability that the changes and the matrix structures created with the intervention will fade away.

Finally, it seems imperative that a considerable effort be put on the communication strategy, which must be the central part of the whole strategy. And this must be done, not by management or even a project team, alone, but by the whole organization, including representatives of clients, suppliers and partners.

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