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Best practice

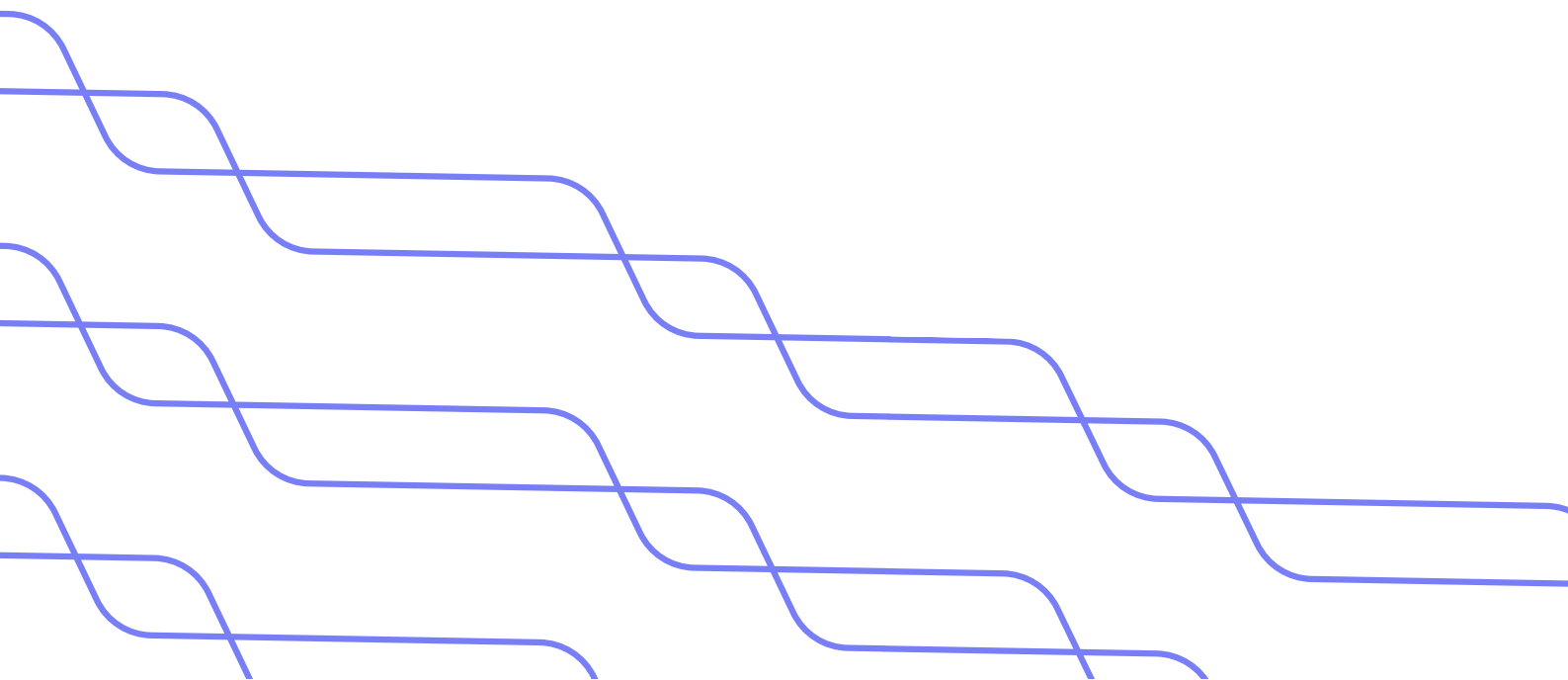
ERASMUS+KA2 - SMALL SCALE PARTNERSHIP "LAILA"

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Phase 1: Comparing good practices and approaches to the effective process of innovative educational leadership

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Presented by
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Leadership of Work Teams - Transforming a hierarchy into a network base organization

Objectives

Leadership is a complex process with the ultimate goal of improving organisational performance, fundamentally related to the **personal characteristics of the leader** who influences the behaviour and attitudes of the followers (Fischer, 1992). The process of leadership is based on principles of governability that are associated with behaviors and attitudes that interact in a **collective dimension** where the collective motivation, collective self-esteem and the principles of cultural identity interfere in the cohesion of the group and influence the involvement and participation of those who lead and those who are led. The main challenge is to understand the organizing principles and the regulation of the system through the involvement and participation of all actors, no longer seen as "machines" but people who think, feel and behave, with the aim of feeling integrated and becoming active elements within the organization where they work. Based on this principles, the Good Practice described below was put in place by **SINCOF**, Portugal.

One of the main challenges facing organisations is competitiveness, which requires a permanent updating of the ability to identify critical points and design appropriate solutions for the challenges to be overcome.

The main constraint we see in the search for new opportunities/solutions is in the sharing of information among those who contribute to the final product/service. In fact, **information is not neutral** when it is transacted between the sender and the receiver, as it is charged with knowledge, experiences, interests, anxieties and uncertainties. This is a world where emotions, mistakes, paradoxes are transacted. Communication always carries a level of instability that propagates through the system. One way to overcome this dysfunction is to create an internal network of information transaction that is accessible to all actors of the organisation. If internal networks are easy to design, their operability is a greater challenge, because people are the fundamental and critical element of the communication process. This supports the collaboration, sharing and mutual help that makes it possible to get involved to achieve new challenges.

SINCOF identified 3 main dysfunctions in its internal communication:

1. delays in the execution of tasks
2. communication failures between those who plan the tasks and those who execute them, and
3. failure to complete the quality management process.

The training process proposed in response to these issues, consisted of **developing and implementing teamwork** with the purpose of answering the questions of people's involvement, the identification of the organisation's and groups' objectives and putting into practice people's skills that are reflected in gains in efficiency.

The implementation of teamwork had 2 purposes:

1. to identify problems, design and implement solutions;
2. to create the conditions for the sustainability of efficiency improvement through the training of technical and relational skills.

The first corresponds to the set of actions aimed at sharing the knowledge of the company's employees; the second is sustained by actions reflected on people's behaviour and attitudes, through practices of cooperation and resolution of situations of conflict.

Organisational learning aims to "train" as many people as possible in the operability of day-to-day actions, in order to reduce the dysfunctions that are reflected in errors and delays on site. It is necessary to create **spaces for practice**, in the different groups, in the "sharing of knowledge" and the purpose of this action is to operationalise the ways that lead people to share their knowledge.

An internal training plan was defined according to the organisational development objectives; the following themes were defined:

- A) Entrepreneurship Sector
- B) Projects Technical Aspects
- C) Construction Site
- D) Equipment Sector
- E) Financial and Human Resources Sector

Stakeholders and Partners

The activities outlined here can be implemented in any organization as a new way of looking into organizational changes and Leadership. The social dynamics is an important issue to understand the collective power of people in organizations. With this in mind we join forces to overcome the problems, in everyday life, and transform the problems into an organizational learning process, by application of Emotional Intelligence theory and practice and implementation of appropriate training. A new way of looking at the reality can transform the way how people face the changes in organization.

What was the process?

Phase 1: The first step has been to ask participants to identify the most critical situations in their daily lives. The purpose was to identify the most critical situations so that together they could discuss, analyse, evaluate and identify paths to action. Participants' involvement was remarkable and showed a great willingness to take the work forward.

Phase 2: the same methodology was applied to a second group of technical staff, where each person identified the worst problems of the company. By successive voting phases, problems were eliminated until the company's biggest problem was identified: "lack of organisation". In separate and alternate sessions, the same methodological path was followed with a group of 15 team leaders, who identified the same organisational failure as the greatest issue with the company, the consequence of which was a delay in the execution of tasks.

The final meetings were preceded by visits to the construction sites, in order to accompany people in their daily work and to **create bonds** that would allow an open atmosphere to talk about problems. The identification of the problems on site was done through reports, but mainly through photographs that were taken on site; the aim was that all elements of the working group could visualise the "same" problem to avoid deviations. The purpose was to create a space for open dialogue where everyone could identify, analyse, criticise and suggest solutions. This method led to a great understanding between all the members of the group and allowed the space to talk openly and at ease about the problems and the way they saw them. The aim was to create ways of sharing problems in order to evolve into **participative forms of action** - people stopped blaming others or each other and, together, found solutions.

The training for changing people's attitudes and behaviours, the most critical area in the company, had just begun. It should be noted that although the process of opening people up went better than expected, the work of applying and/or putting into practice knowledge and skills for implementation of given solutions proceeded at a much slower pace. Not everyone was at the same level and the challenge was to develop a process of participation where no one was left behind. Empirical knowledge, which was mainly held by older people, needed to be complemented with technical-scientific knowledge, which was "owned" by the younger people - the technical staff.

Validation

The work developed has proven that all workers had an important role in the organization performance. This means that when we join all the forces to a common goal and people understand what the purpose is in the process, they are motivated, like to participate and are involved in the organizational challenges. To change a vertical hierarchy into a network is a way to improve the proficiency of organizational performance and its efficiency.

Impact

The reported impact of this methodology shows a great increase in number of staff meeting, minutes and project evaluation sessions (i.e. meeting went from beign held once a week to everyday, translating in more agile and consistent communication between sectors). The strenghtening of communication is paralleled by the dropping numbers of conflict reports, and a greater degree of **team tolerance** in the face of emergencies. The impacts registered so far are of course sustained by continuing the internal training actions on Organisational Learning (on a weekly basis).

Success Factors

The main change was to train and implement team work and make sure everyone (each member in the team) felt very important in the development of the global team performance. Looking into any organizational context, the **relational dimension** can change the way as people (workers) face the challenges. We must involve all workers in all dimensions (technical and relational) that edify the general balance between formal and informal ways of organizing.

Constraints

The relational dimension supported by EI soft skills was the main challenge of the entire process. Workers needed to have a new attitude and behave differently with the peers. In this **transforming process**, empathy, humility, integrity and compassion were the key issues to change the enterprise into an innovative one. The whole transformative process affected cultural aspects that included and valued the norms and rules that workers accepted in practicing all technical and emotional aspects that constituted the real life of the enterprise.

Lessons learned

Integration of behavioural and technical aspects together is the base for a consolidative process. Workers are the supporters of the organizational learning process, where skills, knowledge, know-how and wisdom are the main support to a more efficient organization.

Replicability and up-scaling

Considering people as the main asset in any business is the big challenge for the XXI century.

By including the employees and highlighting their importance in the decision-making process, company leadership will boost engagement and interest, and pave the way for crucial reskilling and upskilling training that will translate into greater capacity and efficiency at all levels of the enterprise, as well as into a greater resilience to technological and social transformations.

