

BENEFITS OF WORKING NETWORKS FOR EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Glener Alvarenga Mizael

Master in Business Administration - Manager at University of Lavras - UFLA

E-mail: glener.adm@gmail.com

Flavio Monteiro de Oliveira

Master in Business Administration - Manager at University of Lavras - UFLA

E-mail: fmdo68@hotmail.com

Ana Alice Vilas Boas

PHD in Business Administration - PhD Professor, Department of Business and Economics, University of Lavras - UFLA

E-mail: ana.alice@dae.ufla.br

José Roberto Pereira

PHD in Sociology - Professor, Department of Business and Economics, University of Lavras - UFLA

E-mail: jrobpereira25@yahoo.com.br

"The authors acknowledge the financial support of FAPEMIG for publication of this article."

ABSTRACT

The network strategy has been widely adopted in organizations such as organizational performance improvement feature. Herein, this research aims at presenting the main proposals created by a collaborative working network managers of educational and scientific departments in a higher education institution. The adopted methodological approach was the documentary analysis of the minutes of meetings of directors from 2009 to 2011. The document analysis, according Cellard (2008), contributed to the monitoring of the maturation process or evolution of the group in sharing questions and creation of: information, knowledge, experiences, practices, among others. Working networks are considered a managerial resource capable of producing efforts and provide critical information to its employees, prospective, proactive and entrepreneurial. For the study, it was observed that collaborative working networks contribute to the improvement of organizational performance. Similarly, promotes efficiency and effectiveness of processes that directly impact the quality of education, considering that these administrative activities are considered activities that support teaching. The challenge for leaders and managers is to promote these networks within the public service.

Keywords: *networking; education; New Public Management; managers; public administration.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The social and work networks in the world today are essential to promote knowledge management, information and new work experiences. In organizations, social networks are helping to improve organizational performance and promote the dissemination of knowledge among members. Networking provides the sharing of information, knowledge, experiences, interests and efforts in pursuit of common goals. Social networks are considered a social structure consisting of individuals or organizations, connected by one or more types of relationships, sharing values and goals.

Working networks in organizations, especially in the public education institutions are essential to promote the increase of organizational performance and improving the quality of education, given that this strategy aims to add new knowledge and generate new results that impact on improving teaching. Therefore, this study aims to explore the proposals created by networking among administrators of educational and scientific department to improve the quality of education in a federal institution of higher education.

Initially, the proposed allocation of 10 managers in educational and scientific departments of the university in 2009 left the executive board of the institution, in order to promote the management of departments, the purchasing criteria of materials for practical classes of graduation, management budgetary, financial and patrimonial matrix. The priority focus of the work of managers in departments is the undergraduate education as a way to raise the quality of education through the practice of planned activities.

The departmental structure of the institution has a head by department, which before the allocation of the administrative professional, was responsible for the academic and administrative management. Marra and Melo (2005) emphasize that the functions of the department heads and coordinators of the surveyed university go beyond the activities related to the administrative process, ie, planning, organization, command, coordination and control. The accumulation of responsibilities assigned to heads contributed to the management of the day-to-day or to the method of "putting out fires", which hampered a schedule of activities and work carried out.

The innovative proposal of this professional institution created a challenge for professionals trained in business administration with a focus on conducting the work, because the processes of government are governed by laws, rules and regulations, which characterizes while distinguishes it from private organizations. In this sense, managers of department noted the need to form a collaborative network of work, considering that all were facing the same problems. From this perspective, these professionals began to meet in an organized manner, through meetings with preparation of minutes and formulation of job offers.

In considering the networks work, this study aims to answer the following question: what benefits and proposals created by the working network of educational and scientific department of a university administrators to improve the quality of education?

It is noteworthy that this study does not aim to evaluate the efficiencies of proposals created by the network but present the main strategies or actions created by the networking and at the same time monitor the process of maturation of those involved.

2. NETWORKS IN THE DESKTOP CONTEXT

The study of organizational structures had its heyday in the 60s and 70s of the twentieth century emphasis in this phase the pyramidal and bureaucratic vision, possibly as a result of a static organizational environment or liability to change in the modern world. For many years in organizations, these beliefs were unquestionable. The organizational changes before the 70 occurred only in the peripheral aspects, or as was common, sought to market adjustment to the processes or existing structures. Few businessmen or scholars who dared to question the mechanisms or traditional techniques based on the Weberian or Taylor paradigms. An evolutionary spectrum, organizational leaders had to adapt to the environment demanded answers, and today the organizational structures came to be seen not only as bureaucratic structures to enable the expected results, but also as dynamic structures capable of constant change, prioritizing the behavioral, environmental, strategic and organizational aspects, among others. In this context, there are new organizational concepts, defined as a network of structures and people who propose to relax the traditional organizational structure.

Castells (1999) states that the company itself has changed its organizational model to adapt to unpredictable conditions introduced by rapid economic and technological change; although the main change can be characterized as a change from vertical to horizontal bureaucracies company with lean and flexible hierarchical levels and the vertical descent replaced by horizontal relationship where the trend is to use cross-functional teams. According Candide and Abreu (2000), the application of networking concepts in the context of the business environment stems from two basic premises, the first refers to the constant and increased competition and business competitiveness, and the other to the fact that the companies operating in isolation are unable to obtain the necessary conditions for survival and development.

Candide and Abreu (2000) argue that the fundamental principles of the application of the concepts of networks in organizations are the interaction, the relationship, mutual aid, sharing, integration and complementarity. It can be said therefore that the network theory is directly related to the recognition of the importance of the organizational environment and lived contingencies and especially with the importance and need of others and their various forms of social interaction and integration to achieve the organizational and individual goals. In line with previous discussions, and that organizational knowledge is created from the interaction between individuals and their context, we seek this theoretical construction, extrapolate the concept of organizational networks for intra-organizational networks, where people and teams work can be considered as nodes in a network that comes from information and knowledge to its employees. In this sense, a collaborative working network administrators Departments Educational Scientific, must be understood as a set of professionals who relate and communicate seamlessly, in order to exchange experiences, disseminate information, knowledge, strategies, tactics and tools in support of a not only efficient decision-making, but above all managerial and effective.

3. NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

In recent years public organizations experience the transition from bureaucratic administration model for the hybrid model of flexible bureaucracy, administration or management, with emphasis on achieving results, goals

and objectives agreed. In this context, networking can be understood as tactics that enhance internal communication of employees and, in a broader sense, as strategies that contribute to the spread of institutional knowledge and professional of its actors.

The New Public Management or also known as "management" has emerged from the economic crisis experienced by Western countries, especially the UK. The need to reduce the costs and the search for effectiveness and organizational efficiency contributed to the managerialism arose as a kind of management to be adopted by organizations.

New and Clarke (2012, p. 7) state that the management "is an ideology that legitimized rights to power, especially the right to manage, built as needed to achieve greater efficiency in the pursuit of organizational and social objectives." And that gerencialização "is a process of managerial authority of establishment of corporate resources (material, human or symbolic) and process of corporate decision-making."

The new public management with a focus on results-oriented management has become a type of management to be adopted to promote public service efficiency, so that there is improvement in the quality of services provided and the results are oriented client / citizen .

Terto and Pereira (2011), in his research on the key trends of the Brazilian educational administration, observed that the new public management results-oriented requirement is to the decentralization of actions and accountability of the agents. Entretanto, the author points out that in the current model to be adopted is impossible to blame the agents of the school community without the allocation of sufficient resources, administrative and pedagogical technical support. Therefore, it is observed that the limits of new public management breaks the barrier to impose targets and performance indicators. The perspective goes beyond the performativity of factors, but a number of factors that enable the achievement of established goals.

According to Araújo (. 2010, p 145) are core ideas of New Public Management:

"[...] An administrative rule in the style of the private sector; contract management between units; performance evaluation; emphasis on results; reducing the power of the bureaucracy; focus on efficiency; Search regulatory mechanisms; systematic introduction of productivity concepts; flexibility; administered competitiveness; participation of social agents and tracking results; focus on the citizen, budget and evaluation results and performance; strengthening and increasing the autonomy of the bureaucracy; decentralization in the formulation and implementation of policies and ultimately greater autonomy to spending units "(emphasis added).

That is, the New Public Management is a set of guidelines, methods and techniques that seek to achieve the desired results. However, results-oriented management requires some fundamental features such as: agreeing on objectives and goals to be achieved; flexibility and autonomy of management for managers and servers. Without these basic requirements it is impossible to implement the new public management.

For success and quality of education is necessary to focus on the educational management on results through performance indicators and, in addition, responsible managers and teachers for the results. (Terto AND PEREIRA, 2011). Similarly, Cabral Neto (. 2009, p 197) says that a new model based on the principles of New Public Management seeks to establish educational administration: "[...] an organizational culture grounded on the principles of strategic management and control quality in order to promote rationalization, efficiency and effectiveness of education systems. "

Quality education can not be based only on the criteria of performance and accountability indicators, but based on an evaluation culture. In Vieira's view (2005) is not enough to get results, but we must interpret them and turn them, combining the planning to the implementation of public policies aimed at improving the performance indices. In Oak vision (. 2009, p 1151) assessment mechanisms in the neoliberal perspective would:

"[...] Voices and listen to customers in control of public services, revitalizing community participation; while disseminating the results and rewarding with more funding and resources institutions to present better performance in evaluative scale, stimulate accountability for school performance and competition between institutions. "

Terto and Pereira (2011, p. 8) emphasize that the evaluation arrangements set out by Carvalho (2009) lead "managers and teachers to obsessive search for results, as evidenced by national and international rankings,

regardless of working conditions to which these professionals are submitted. " Therefore, there is an intensification of the work of these professionals, considering that the meritocratic logic the receipt of funds is conditional on the management achievements of the institution.

In the search results, one should take into question another factor from the perspective of New Public Management: the role of managers in organizations. It is up to the manager and leaders mobilize and sensitize the community to achieve the results, motivating people to work, so that they have initiative and autonomy in their duties. When these conditions are not carried out, there is the feeling of frustration and blame for results when they are not satisfactory.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research is a qualitative approach that Minayo (2001) consists of deepening the world of meanings of human actions and relations and at the same time is concerned with a level of reality that can not be quantified. In his view it works with the "universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes, which corresponds to a deeper space of relationships, processes and phenomena that can not be reduced to the operationalization of variables" (p . 21 and 22).

3.1 Data Collection Technique

For this research we adopted the document analysis technique of the minutes of meetings of didactic and scientific department directors from 2009 to 2011. The group performed monthly meetings and, where necessary, extraordinary meetings. One reason for the adoption of this technique is that according Cellard (2008), document analysis contributes to the monitoring of the maturation process or evolution of individuals, groups, concepts, knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, practices, among others.

3.2 Data analysis technique

To analyze the data we adopted the content analysis technique, which according to Bardin (2006, p. 38) is "a set of analysis techniques of communications, using systematic procedures and description of objectives of message content." To Minayo (2001) content analysis comprises much more than a set of techniques. It is considered an analysis of information that portray about human behavior. The technique works with two approaches: the testing of hypotheses and / or issues and the understanding of what is behind the content.

Written documents or textual materials are considered as the more traditional / classic in the content analysis (BAUER AND GASKELL, 2008; FLICK, 2009). These materials can be manipulated by the researcher for an answer to the research question, regardless of the origin of the material, according Flick (2009).

For a good content analysis is important pre-analysis of the material, which is the document organization phase to be analyzed, systematizing the ideas in order to make it operational.

3.3 Organization of the material

For a good analysis of documents is fundamental to organize the material to perform the analyzes. Thus, the table below aims to organize the minutes according to the agenda or subject matter:

Table 1 - Organization of the material to be analyzed

Ata n°.	Objetivo	Pontos discutidos
01/2009	Discuss the roles and actions of managers in departments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Autonomy of trabalho; - Brought new routines (department Matrix); - Participation of administrators in departmental meetings; - Lack of information; - Lack of integration of city hall services; - Need to create consistent projects and proposals; - Improvement in the purchasing management process; - Need the position of design department administrator
02/2009	Define the duties and functions of department's manager.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Office design; - Autonomy to propose improvements and make decisions; - Forms of adoption in problem solving;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience sharing relevance among peers; - Creation of flow processes to improve communication; - Annual report to present the results; - Difficulty in assuming the new functions due to the position previously occupied;
03/2010	Approve the design of jobs and raise the difficulties of the procurement process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The exchange of experiences contributes to the position of ripening; - Change of function; - Cargo compared to a liquidator
04/2010	Create proposals and forward to the related administrative units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic importance of the safer management unit involved in the rector; - Proposals related to procurement management as: calendar, existing contracts, delivery times; - Financial management of departments.
05/2010	Forward the design proposal posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completion of the work and sending the document to pro-rector.
06/2010	Complete the flow of procurement information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of the purchasing process flow; - Next priority actions with the following units: support foundation; warehouse and heritage; campus Prefecture; people management; transport and safety. - Participation of events related to public administration
07/2010	present the flow of purchasing information, final version.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Closing Shopping information flow; - The importance of adopting the information network to exchange ideas, information and experiences that may be useful to everyone and reduce the "rework".
08/2010	Meeting with the foundation of support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sending statements and reports; - Process of recording of expenses; - Administrative fees; - Percentages of NFS; - Reimbursement rules; - Types of agreement.
10/2010	Discussion of the guidelines of the meeting of managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Election of the new president of the assemblies; - Public meetings to present, debate and discuss the new Institutional Development Plan - PDI.
01/2011	Guidelines for the meeting of the directors in the 2011 financial year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of objective proposals; - Discussions about the PDI.
02/2011; 03/2011; 04/2011	Meeting with the institution's purchasing department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting with the direction dretoria shopping; - Endemic diseases prevention actions on campus.
05/2011	Presentation and discussion of the ideas formulated by the groups in levels strategic management, managerial, operational and information technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to prepare a document showing the main difficulties faced by managers in the performance of their duties; - Structured document pointing bottlenecks, causes, consequences and suggestions for improvements.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initiative to form the group to hold meetings / meetings to discuss work proposals can be considered a collaborative working network, given that this action promoted interactions, relationships, mutual aid, sharing of knowledge, information and experience (CANDID And ABREU, 2000). In the minutes of meetings it was noted the importance of adopting the information network to exchange ideas, information and experiences that may be useful to everyone and reduce the "rework" (ATA 07/2010).

Before highlighting key benefits of networks is important to present some considerations on the context. The proposed allocation of the institution administrators in educational departments understand the characteristics of New Public Management, considering that there was a decentralization of budget matrix for the departments along

with a professional. However, the collaborative work of network it was found that only the decentralization of the budget does not guarantee the autonomy of work for administrators in their work environment (ATA 01/2009). The New Public Management assumes a working autonomy with management (or right to manage) and capacity for initiative (NEW AND CLARK, 2012).

Through the work of network members came to the conclusion that the roles and functions of the positions were not well defined and clear to the academic community. This fact contributed to the deviation function and the risk of associating the position to a purely operational assignment. The professional administration should have skills to plan, organize, lead and evaluate resources, be they order material or people management.

The first proposal came from the group was to submit a paper outlining a manager position design in educational departments. The proposal initially discussed with the department heads would then be forwarded for consideration of the advice. The aim of the proposal was to give autonomy to managers in their work environment, considering that a managerial perspective is not sufficient to establish the goals and results to be achieved, since also there is the need to link the necessary resources to achieve the goals, as indicated in the minutes 05/2011. Along with the supply of necessary resources, the evaluation process is essential, so that it can support the new planning for new projects (Terto AND PEREIRA, 2011).

By passing the ideological discussion to practice, the meetings of the directors encouraged the debate, arguments and counter-arguments, enabling the deployment of the demands and internal pressures in proactive actions, linking institutional assumptions into work processes in the administrative units of the university.

From this perspective, it can be inferred that the networking became managerial maneuvers convergence efforts to minimize the bureaucratic scheme of the studied organization and optimize the flow of information; in other words, networks can be perceived as support tools for the New Public Management, because it facilitates the management focused on the results, participation, involvement and sharing of professional knowledge as well as the alignment of institutional strategies to departmental objectives or sector.

In carrying out the documentary analysis of the minutes of meetings of directors, can be seen that the formalization of minutes was an important device to materialize and historically register the study of complex business situations, decisions and consequences of the planned actions by these professionals in a given period of time. Analysis of the material allowed us to observe the maturation of the managers in their work environment, in that there were exchanges of experience, knowledge, information and proposal (ATA 03/2010).

Similarly, the maturing of the group left the initiative thereof to relax the bureaucracy and anticipate unpredictable conditions by adopting the planning and preparation of proposals (Castells, 1999). These proposals that provide the agility organization processes and improving the quality of education, considering that the actions and activities developed are aimed at undergraduate teaching. These advantages contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives and consequently increases organizational performance through performance indicators.

Among the main proposals that were created by the collaborative work of network administrators we have:

1. Drawing positions: the positions of design proposal aimed to empower and legally for administrators in the performance of their duties. For the career administrator functions are well-defined. However, the reality and the demands of the educational department are quite different, segregating in: processes, tasks and activities to be performed. In performing its functions there was the need to make the design of positions not only the managers, but of all the positions of the institution. Thus, the positions of design allows the legitimacy of actions while accountability for the actions of the servers. Similarly, the proposal was intended to curb cases where there was difficulty in assuming the new functions due to the position held previously (ATA 02/2010). Along the same lines, curb job deviation of practice in public service and avoid post comparisons administrator to a liquidator (ATA 03/2010). The administrator post design proposal encompassed functions to prepare, plan, control and monitor activities such as: budget matrix and distribution of resources within departments; financial management by the union payment form; asset management; purchasing management; control the stock of materials; support and infrastructure paras didactic and practical classes; Town of services; advice to the head of the department; among others.

2. Flow of information: it was observed that there was lack of communication, the information did not reach their destinations. At the same time there was no standardization of information. The lack of information flow impeded the progress of work, given that the activities developed in the undergraduate departments depended on other boards, sectors and even pro-rectories. The elaborate information flow allowed check the sequencing of tasks and

activities necessary to that process and to identify those responsible for the actions, tasks and process activities (ATA 02/2009). The flow of information was to improve communication and efficiency in the following cases: campus Prefecture service order (works, repairs); scheduling vehicles for technical visits and field practical classes; Tipping goods; monitoring of purchase orders material for practical classes; maintenance and technical assistance in laboratory equipment; among other processes.

3. Mapping of the purchasing process: in minutes 04, 06 and 07/2010 was pointed out the difficulty in purchasing management process of departments, due to the flow of information that was inefficient and the lack of integration between sectors / administrative units. With the mapping of the purchasing process observed the critical points and the main obstacles preventing the process efficiency in order to avoid inconvenience to teachers as the lack of material for practical classes to graduate. The process of mapping checked agility procedures and consequently reflected in the final result - the quality of education. The mapping provided details of actions, tasks and activities involved, and the main actors involved. The map also possible to understand in detail every step of the process, which starts at the request of the order to delivery of the product to the requestor.

4. Proposals for improvement: with two years of effective work of the administrators in the same department created a document indicating the main bottlenecks that hindered the progress of work as well as the causes, impacts and consequences, and the improvement solutions. The proposal aimed to identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the institution together with the threats and opportunities (ATA 05/2011).

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The administrator's desktop in a federal university is complex because as it is specialized activity, its implementation will be based on a systems view, with methods, procedures and tools to the demands of management administration. Additionally, it is expected that the administrator has situational awareness and used the information to produce knowledge that will serve to get you to make good decisions.

In this context, the networking can be considered as a management resource capable of producing efforts and provide critical information to its employees, prospective, proactive and entrepreneurial. The study found that collaborative working networks contribute to the improvement of organizational performance. Similarly, promotes efficiency and effectiveness of processes that directly impact the quality of education, considering that these administrative activities are considered activities that support for teaching. It was observed that the proposals (process mapping, action planning, purchasing management, financial and budget) created by administrators aimed to give agility in the processes that support for teaching activity.

The collaborative work of the department network administrators promoted the sharing of information, experiences, knowledge and information relevant to the performance of the function. Similarly, the documentary analysis according Cellard (2008), provided to verify the maturity of the group and the creation of proposals and process improvements.

For future studies it is important to evaluate the success of the implementation of the proposals and evaluate the efficiency of the work of this network, given that this research aimed to identify only the main proposals created by the network.

The clear objectives and common this collaborative work between network administrators provided a solidification of the job duties while mutual cooperation between them. However, it is important to highlight the challenge of leaders and managers to encourage the formation of networks in public service, given that the government intends to relax the bureaucracy, implementing techniques or tools according to the principles of New Public Management. The lack of support for the formation of collaborative networks in the organizational environment will provide the motivation and the individualization of work, which is a negative point for institutional development.

REFERENCES

- ARAÚJO, MAD Accountability of public administration: limits and possibilities of public manager. In: Building a New Public Management - Collection of the texts I Clíco Lecture organized by the School donate Government of RN - RN Christmas: Searh / RN, 2010.
- BALL, SJ Professionalism, managerialism and performativity. Research notebooks, v. 35, no. 126, p. 539-564, mar. / December 2005.
- Bardin, L. Content Analysis (L. A. Rego & A. Pinheiro, Trans.). Lisbon: 70. Issues (Original work published in 1977). 2006.
- Bauer, M., & Gaskell, G. (Eds.). Qualitative researching with text, image, and sound. London: Sage. 2008.

- CANDID, G. A. ; ABREU, AF The concepts of networks and interorganizational relationships: an exploratory study. In: ENCONTRO NACIONAL NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN ADMINISTRATION, 24; 2000 Florianópolis, Anais. Florianópolis ANPAD 2000.
- CARVALHO, E. J. G. de. Economic restructuring, administrative reform of the state and management of education. In: Education & Society. Campinas, v. 30, no. 109, p. 1139-1166, mar. / December 2009. Available at <<http://www.cedes.unicamp.br>> access 15de July 2013.
- Castells, M. The era of information: economy, society and culture. London: Paz e Terra, 1999.
- Cellard, A. The document analysis. In: POUPART, J. et al. Qualitative research: epistemological and methodological approaches. Petropolis, Voices, 2008.
- DUARTE, Fabio and FREI, Klaus. Urban Networks. In: Duarte, Fabio; Quandt, Carlos; Souza, Keilah. (2008). The Time Of Networks, p. 156. Publisher Perspective S / A.
- FLICK, U. Introduction to qualitative research (3rd ed., JE Costa, Trad.). London: Artmed. 2009.
- MARRA, A. V. ; MELO, OL MC The social practice of university managers in a public institution. Brazilian Administration Review, Curitiba, v. 9, no. 3, p. 9-31, July / SET button. 2005.
- Minayo, M. C. S. (Ed.). (2001). Social research: theory, method and creativity. Rio de Janeiro: Voices.
- NEW, J. ; CLARKE, J. managerialism. Educ. Real., Porto Alegre, v. 37, no. 2, p. 353-381, May / August 2012. Available at: <http://www.ufrgs.br/edu_realidade>
- Terto, D. C. ; PEREIRA, RL A. The new Public Management and the current trends of the Brazilian educational management. Symposium National Association of Educational Policy and Administration. p. 10. 2011.
- VIEIRA, SL management for a community of learners. School management and quality of education. Fortaleza: SEDUC, 2005.