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The Functions in an Air Unit

Ana Telha^{a,b*}, Miguel Monteiro^a, Carlos Páscoa^{a,c}, José Tribolet^{b,c}

^a*Department of Education, Portuguese Air Force Academy, Sintra, Portugal*

^b*Department of Information Systems and Computer Science, University of Lisbon, Portugal*

^c*CODE – Center for Organizational Design & Engineering, INOV, Rua Alves Redol 9, Lisbon, Portugal*

Abstract

The Portuguese Air Force, like any other organization, is a dynamic system, and like all other systems, they attain better results when their components are designed to accomplish the same objectives. If any change occurs in the organizational reality, there must be an adjustment in the organizational description, to assure the organizational alignment. The purpose of this document is to ascertain the level of alignment between what is defined in the publications of the organization and the business processes which represent the organizational reality. In this context, it is important to verify if “WHAT” is needed to be done is aligned with “HOW” things should be done. In order to obtain conclusions about the level of alignment between the organization and its processes, it is necessary to study the connection between organization and processes. In this document, the focus of the study will be the alignment in Air Force Units, which represent a small part of the organization.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +351-214-726-137.
E-mail address: actelha@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Organizations are social entities, consciously coordinated, which operate on a relatively continuous basis, with a view to achieve goals. Considering that there are two ways to specify what the Portuguese Air Force does (“WHAT” and “HOW”), it is important for them to be aligned, in order to accomplish a higher level of effectiveness and efficiency. The WHAT emphasizes what needs to be done and HOW emphasizes how things should be done [1].

In order to be able to answer to WHAT, manuals of the organization were created. The HOW is identified in the processes in which members of the organization are involved in their daily basis.

Therefore, it is considered that there is alignment, when WHAT and HOW are coherent, relating the characteristics of the organization with the processes.

In this context, it is essential to analyze if, in fact, there is coherence between the organization and its processes.

The Portuguese Air Force (PRT AF) faces, nowadays, the following problem: the lack of proper alignment, shown in Figure 1, between the functions defined in the manuals and the organizational reality. This happens due to several factors, processes are represented in the organization; the organizational reality suffers adjustments in the course of time, and processes change accordingly.



Fig. 1. Misalignment between Organization and Processes (source: authors).

However, the organization remains unchanged, thus contributing to the misalignment.

According to Pereira et al [2], alignment is how to determine the level of coherence between two concepts. As a result of this definition, it is understood that in the existence of alignment, the following benefits are verified in the organization:

- Better balance and coordination of the division of labor;
- Optimization of processes, more oriented towards the objectives for which they were created;
- Faster and better quality of organizational decisions;
- Better use of skills and resources available.

Considering that the processes represent the organizational reality, in case there is a lack of alignment between the organization and processes, we are led to conclude that the processes are prevalent over the organization, given that they guarantee the fulfillment of the objectives in favor of the mission. However, it is known that if the organization and processes are aligned to the same goals, these are attained more quickly, with less waste of time and resources. As far as the need for the existence of organization is concerned, there is a legal requirement, whereas the processes are necessary to represent the organizational reality. Since it is necessary for the PRT AF to have both organization and processes, it leads us to a conclusion that it is important to analyze the level of alignment that the PRT AF holds.

This paper describes a connection between the organization and its business processes with the purpose of drawing conclusions concerning their alignment, and then, a case study in the Air Force Units is shown, in order to see if the functions defined in the manuals of the organization and the role played by individuals in the processes in which they are involved, are in fact aligned.

Although they represent a small part of the organization, the goal will be to transpose the problem found in the Air Units for the entire organization.

It is therefore important to allude and understand the principles prevailing in the area of Organizational Engineering.

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