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Changing Organizational Culture in Family Business Succession: A Case Study of a Brazilian Mining Company

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Abstract

Brazilian family businesses represent 90% of national businesses, employing 75% of the workforce. However, only 30% surpass the third generation. This study analyzes the process of change management and organizational culture in the family succession of a Brazilian mining company. To this end, qualitative exploratory research involving a literature review and a single descriptive case study was conducted. Using the Competing Value Structure (CVS) model, this qualitative research revealed a migration from clan culture to market culture post-succession. The results highlight the complexity of the succession process, requiring integrated solutions to overcome resistance to change, cultural challenges, conflicts, leadership transition, and separation between family interests and business objectives.

Keywords:

Change management; Organizational Culture; Succession Process.

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Introduction

Family businesses in Brazil represent 90% of Brazilian companies, employing about 75% of labor. Interestingly, only 30% of these survive to the third generation (SEBRAE, 2024; 2018). According to Vancil (1987), the process of transition of companies can be compared to horse racing, when the process is highly competitive, and passing the baton, when the process is planned and organized to avoid conflicts and preserve the company's culture and strategic identity.

Therefore, change management in the succession process of a Brazilian family business is analyzed from the point of view of the transition of organizational cultures before and after succession using the Structure of Competing Values (Cameron&Quinn, 2011).

The Brazilian dolomitic limestone mining family company, located in Goianésia, in the center-west of Brazil (Dias, 2024; Dias & Davila, 2018) went through a succession process to be analyzed in this work as a unit of analysis, according to Yin (2015). It is a process of family succession with the living founder, described by Vancil (1987) as the passing of the baton. It turns out that the founder and historical leader created a clan culture and respect for authority and family ties. Over time, the founder has difficulty passing effective control of the company to successors (children), indicating resistance to change and fear of losing power. The company is an extension of the family, which can generate conflicts between family interests and business objectives. Therefore, the case investigates the challenges faced by the company that culminated in the change in the mining company's organizational culture to accommodate the succession process successfully.

Here, the model used to conduct the investigation is the Competing Value Structure (Cameron & Quinn, 2011)), which identifies four types of organizational cultures: 1. Clan: emphasizing cooperation, participation, and personal development; 2. Adhocracy: valuing creativity, flexibility, and experimentation; 3. Hierarchy: prioritizing efficiency, stability, and control; and finally, 4. Market: focused on results, competitiveness, and success.

This article addresses topics such as resistance to change, cultural management challenges, conflict management, leadership transition, overcoming resistance to change and establishing new leadership, development of a market culture focused on expanding activities and professional management, and the separation of family interests from business objectives.

Finally, the present work aims to analyze and evaluate change management and organizational culture in the family succession process of a Brazilian mining company (Dias & Davila, 2018) by applying the Competing Value Structure (CVS) model of Cameron & Quinn, 2011) to ensure the company's strategic and cultural continuity.

In addition to the introduction, the work consists of the following sections: Methodology, Analysis of Findings and Discussion, and Final Considerations.

Methodology

The methods used to obtain data and analyze the research results were qualitative and involved multiple methods of data collection, including a literature review on Organizational Cultures and published case studies, which complied with the rules of the Institution. To this end, a published case study (Dias & Davila, 2018) was selected on the family succession process of a Brazilian mining company based in the state of Goianésia (GO), hereinafter just "mining company," for ethical and compliance reasons. All data regarding the identification, both of the participants involved in the case and the name of the company, were omitted for ethical reasons by the rules of the Institution.

Specifically, the work was carried out opting for inductive, interpretive, and subjective logic, as the study's relevance was considered more important than its quantity, according to Saunders et al. (2009).

The chosen case, described below, has a character of novelty and replication, as the frequency of succession processes in family businesses in Brazil is too expressive to be ignored (SEBRAE, 2024). In this context, the methodology used here can be replicated for other companies in the same segment and for other segments, whether industrial, commercial, or services. In this case, the family succession of the mining company was chosen (Dias & Davila, 2018) for access to public information since it is a published case study and knowledge of the academic environment.

The model to be applied for analysis is the Concurrent Value Structure (CVS), or Competing Values Framework, by Cameron & Quinn (2011) because it is easy to understand and fits the case. Note that the application of the same took place by direct observation and analysis of the content of the case. The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI), or Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument, was also developed by Cameron & Quinn (2011) because it would imply direct contact with the participants in the succession process, which is not part of the research objective.

Descriptive Methodological Objective 1: To achieve this objective, the succession process of a Brazilian family business will be investigated, presented as a unique and descriptive case study (Dias & Davila, 2018), as a unit of analysis (Yin, 2015). To this end, the Competing Value Structure [CVS] model of Cameron & Quinn (2011) will be applied to the case in order to analyze the organizational culture change management process presented in a literature review on organizational culture models in order to answer the following research questions: 1. What is the predominant organizational culture in the company before succession? 2. How has family succession affected organizational culture? 3. What change management strategies were employed during the succession? These questions were answered in the discussion section. Initially, however, a bibliographic review of organizational cultures is presented - to present the CVS and a summary of the case with the purpose of contextualizing it. Soon after, the case analysis through the application of the model is presented and discussed in light of the existing epistemology on the subject.

Literature Review: Organizational cultures

According to Schein (2009), the culture of a group can be defined as "its accumulated and shared learning, as this group solves problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid" (p.5). Organizational culture involves rituals and formal celebrations (Deal & Kennedy, 1982); Values exposed and made public to the group (Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014); identity and self-image (Hatch & Schultz, 2004); formal philosophy (Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014; Ouchi, 1981); group standards (Homans 1958, 2017; Kilmann & Saxton, 1983); symbols of integration (Morgan & Frost, 1983), and shared meanings (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984).

In short, an organizational culture has as its basic premise shared learning, or the DNA culture (SCHEIN, 2009, p.6). Over time, however, especially throughout the 1960s, they developed comprehensive studies on groups and problem-solving, through the presentation of the "Managerial Grid," which studied organizations with a focus on the task or focus on the individual (BLAKE and MOUTON 1969), illustrated in Figure 1, below:



Figure 1. The managerial grid. Source: adapted from BLAKE and MOUTON, 1969

Subsequently, Harrison (1972) classified organizational cultures into "corporate tribes," presented in Figure 2, below:

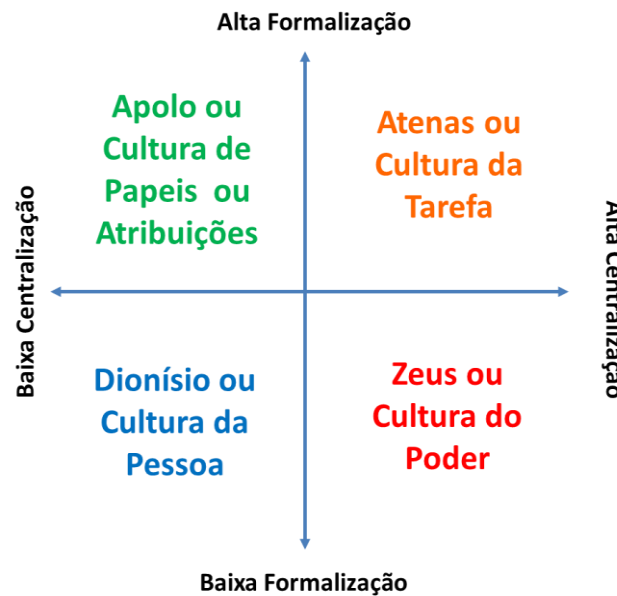


Figure 2. Corporate Tribes model. Fonte: adapted from Harrison, 1972

Harrison (1972) identified four types of organizations: 1. power-oriented; 2. Achievement-oriented; 3. Function-oriented, and 4. Oriented to the support, drawing parallels with Greek mythology, as seen in Figure 2. Hofstede (1980) proposed a model based on the following dimensions: distance from power, masculinity/femininity, risk aversion and tolerance, and individualism/collectivism. Deal & Kennedy (1983) proposed the model illustrated in Figure 3:

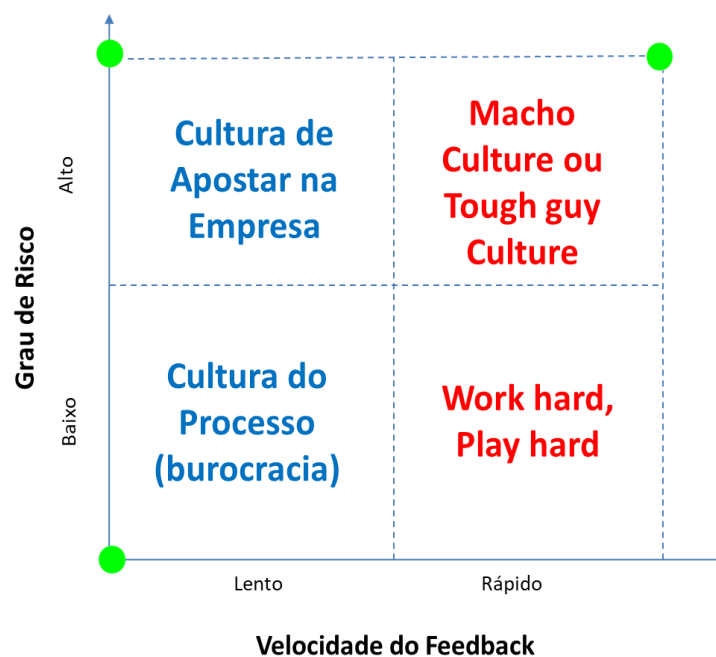


Figure 3. Corporate culture model.
Source: adapted from Deal & Kennedy (1983)

In the model of Deal & Kennedy (1983), cultures are organized by the degree of risk and speed of feedback (see Figure 3). Arnold & Capella (1985) proposed a two-dimensional model, strong and weak, and internal or external focus. Goffee & Jones (1998) developed a study that classifies organizational culture into four distinct types, exemplified in Figure 4:

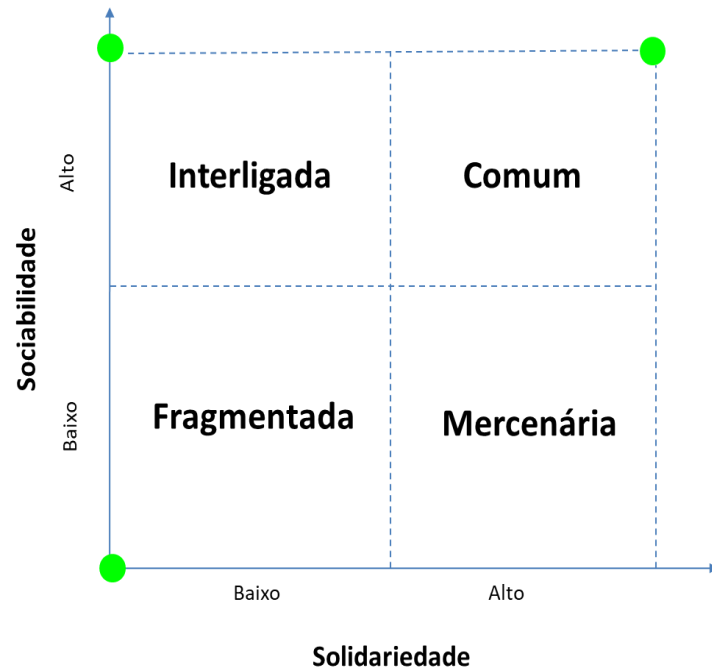


Figure 4. Organizational Culture Model.
Source: adapted from Goffee & Jones (1998)

This model is based on two dimensions: Solidarity, which observes how united the group is and how important cooperation and interpersonal relationships are within the organization. Flexibility: It has to do with the organization's ability to adapt to change and innovate, which leads to four types of cultures. Interconnected, characterized by strong personal relationships, collaboration, and mutual support. 2. Fragmented: Low solidarity and low sociability. Focused on results, competitiveness, and efficiency. 3. Mercenary: Low solidarity and high sociability. Characterized by rules, procedures, and hierarchy. 4. Common: High sociability and low solidarity. Focused on freedom, creativity, and specialization.

Schneider (1994) presented a model of organizational cultures with two dimensions: 1. dedication, which can be the individual's or the groups, and 2. Decision Level, which can be personal or impersonal, results in four organizational cultures: 1. collaboration; 2. Control; 3. competence, and 4. cultivation, as illustrated in Figure 5 below:

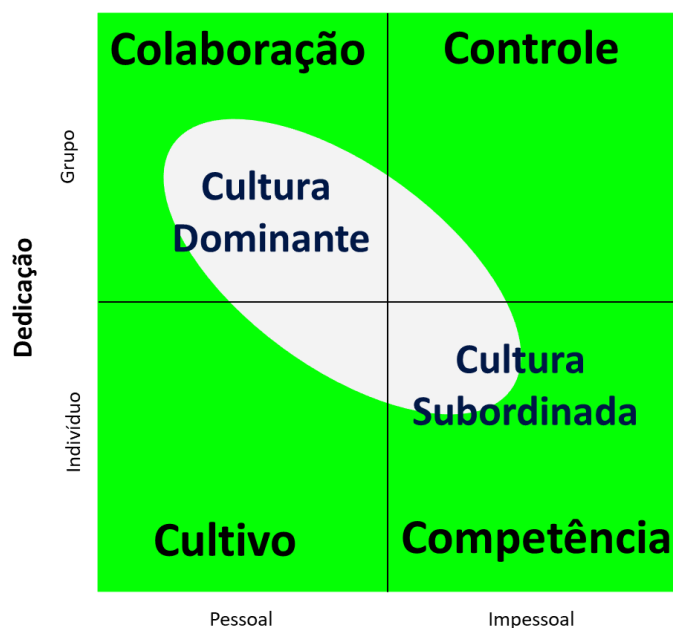


Figure 5. Schneider model.

Source: adapted from Schneider (1994)

Schein (2009), in turn, proposed a model based on three levels of organizational culture: 1. artifacts, which encompass visible and palpable structures and processes and observable behaviors; 2. beliefs and values exposed, represented by ideals, goals, values, aspirations, ideologies and rationalizations and 3. underlying premises, which are unconscious and naturalized beliefs and values, determining factors of behavior, perception, thinking and feeling (p.15).

Cameron & Quinn (2011) proposed the Competing Value Structures model (Competitive Values Framework) based on two dimensions: internal focus and integration, external focus and differentiation, and flexibility, as well as freedom, stability, and control. However, before detailing the CVF, presented in the following section, it is worth noting each model's multiplicity of dimensions. This issue is because organizational cultures are very comprehensive and inclusive in scope, comprising a great complexity that is impossible to capture in models.

Although we know that all models have their importance and relevance, no model can absorb all the nuances in organizational cultures. However, for the chosen models to be reliable, they must capture the reality they propose to study, be valid instruments, organize the proposed dimensions, and be based on empirical evidence (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). For this reason, the CVF was chosen to analyze the case in question. It is a widely tested model that meets all the parameters mentioned above. The CVF serves, therefore, to diagnose and facilitate change in an organizational culture, the objective of this work. In the following section, the model is detailed.

Competing Value Structures [CVF] Model

Cameron & Quinn (2011) proposed the Competing Values Framework model based on two dimensions, namely: internal focus and integration, external focus and differentiation, and flexibility and freedom and stability and control, resulting in four types of cultures: Clan, Adhocracy, Market, and Hierarchy as shown in Figure 6, below:

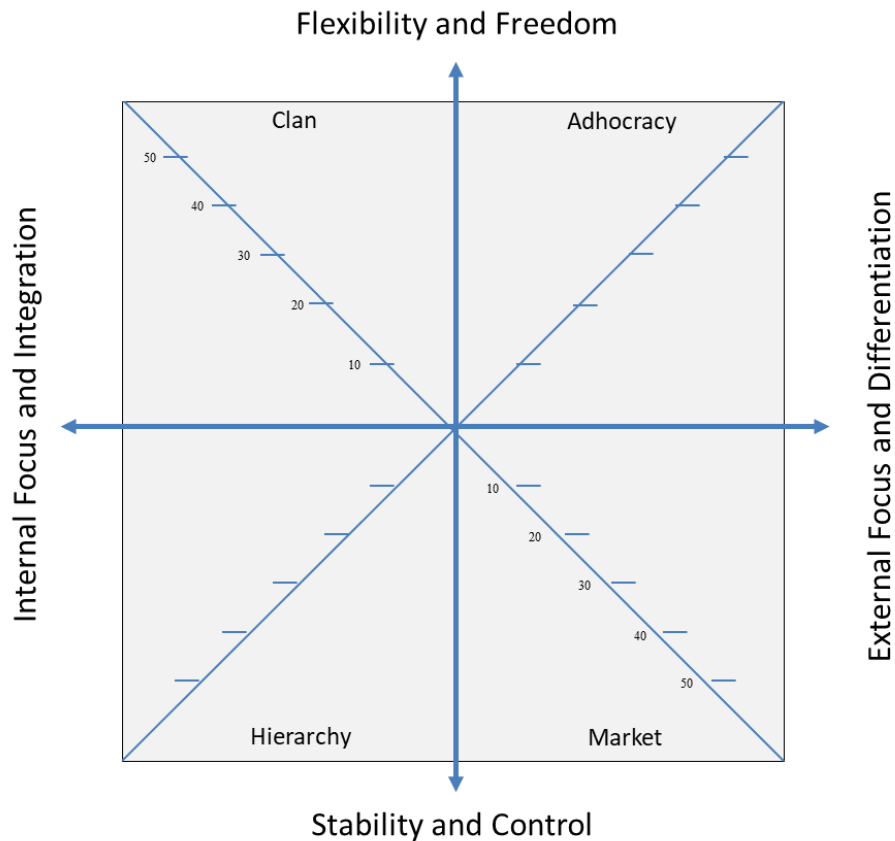


Figure 6. Competing Values Framework
Source: adapted from Cameron & Quinn (2011)

Figure 6 shows the four cultures. Each has the following characteristics: Clan (Collaboration), Flexibility, and internal focus. Characterized by collaboration, mutual support, and strong personal relationships. Adhocracy (Innovation): Flexibility and external focus. Focused on innovation, creativity, and rapid adaptation. Market (Competitive): Stability and external focus. Focused on results, competitiveness, and efficiency. Hierarchy (Control): Stability and internal focus. Characterized by rules, procedures, and hierarchy.

In this scenario, elements in the succession process chosen for analysis corroborate each of the representative cultures. These will be analyzed after the presentation of the case below.

Brazilian Mining company family business succession process

The case in question (Dias & Davila, 2018) deals with a company in the dolomitic limestone sector in Goianésia, Goiás. Founded in 1986 by a visionary entrepreneur from

humble origins with little academic training, the company has grown and expanded its operations to different regions. However, with the arrival of the second generation, internal conflicts arose that put the stability of the business at risk.

The family dynamics within the company reflected a typical clash between generations. The new generations arrived with solid academic training and little professional experience, suggesting changes with a more modernizing bias; however, the founder, with a centralizing and traditional management style, resisted the changes suggested by his sons. The clash of expectations resulted in constant disagreements, which not only impacted the family relationship but also affected the company's productivity. In addition, the absence of structured planning for succession aggravated the scenario, as the successors were not fully prepared to take over the management. Without clear rules, disputes between the brothers emerged, generating an environment of organizational instability.

The emotional and financial impact of this transition became evident. Uncertainty about the future of leadership has compromised the company's financial stability, while internal tensions have shaken the company's reputation in the market. Faced with this critical scenario, the family decided to adopt strategic solutions to avoid the collapse of the business and preserve family ties.

Immediately, the first measure was hiring a consultancy specialized in conflict management and business succession. The consultancy was essential in mediating disagreements and structuring a transition plan. Meetings and counseling sessions were held to map the problems and identify viable solutions. At the same time, the company's organizational structure was reformulated with the creation of a holding company, allowing for the separation of strategic and operational management and reducing the direct interference of the family in the day-to-day business.

Another relevant measure was the implementation of a board of directors. Composed of family members and external experts, the board began to oversee the company's strategic decisions, ensuring more professional and impartial management. In addition, the successors were subjected to training and qualification programs, including courses in business management, finance, and corporate governance, to adequately prepare them for their functions.

Finally, considering the emotional burden involved in the succession process, psychological counseling sessions were introduced to improve communication between family members. Initially resisted, this approach proved to be fundamental in reducing tensions and strengthening family bonds.

The company's experience addresses how succession in family businesses should receive structured planning, specialized mediation, and adequate preparation of successors. The combination of administrative measures and emotional support allowed the company to overcome the challenges and consolidate a sustainable management model for the future. However, there was still a question: How should the mining company solve its succession problem?

Critical analysis of the data

Here the CVF model was applied to the succession process, divided, for analysis purposes, into before, during and after the process that occurred, as follows:

Scenario before the succession process:

The mining company faces a succession conflict between the founder and his children. Lack of trust and effective management are the main problems. There is evidence in the case that suggests a strong clan organizational culture (see Figure 7), namely:

1. Strong sense of family: The company is led by the founding family, with strong emotional bonds.
2. Collaboration and cooperation: Family members work together to achieve common goals.
3. Loyalty and commitment: Employees and family members demonstrate loyalty to the company and the founder.
4. Tradition and heritage: The company preserves the history and values of the founding family.
5. Informal communication: Close personal relationships facilitate communication.

There is also evidence in the case that negatively impacts the mining company's organizational culture, namely:

1. Resistance to change: Difficulty adapting to new ideas and processes.
2. Lack of objectivity: Decisions are based on personal relationships rather than objective criteria.
3. Conflicts of interest: Personal and family interests may conflict with business objectives.
4. Difficulty delegating: The founder has difficulty delegating responsibilities to his children.
5. Lack of professionalism: Family relationships can outpace professional management.
6. Accumulated operations and strategy: The founder's constant interference, contradicting the orders of the children/managers, was hindering operations. In addition, the case highlights the difficulty in transferring power and responsibilities, a generational conflict, resistance to change, lack of strategic planning, and a marked risk of losing talent to the mining company due to the abyss caused by the conflict between the founder and their sons.

Scenario during the succession process:

It proved crucial for the development of the succession process to hire an outsourced company that specialized in transitions of this nature. The consultancy adopted the following procedure: first,

1. Psychologically assess all participants in individual and group sessions;
2. Invest in the continuing and formal education of the parties;
3. Diagnose the organizational culture and value propositions that each party would like to see implemented in the company;
4. Summarize all learning;
5. Propose solutions with the endorsement and consent of all those involved (founder and heirs).

Scenario after the succession process:

All the work carried out reached solutions to be implemented in the company by mutual agreement. It was decided:

1. Adopt the market culture, redirecting the company's focus from internal to external, that is, according to Cameron & Quinn (2011), from clan culture to market culture (see Figure 7);
2. It was decided to create a holding company to separate operations from strategy. The family would be on the company's board of directors, and the founder would be president.
3. The company's focus was on diversification, adopting work not only with dolomitic limestone but also with Portland cement.

To achieve the goal of changing the organizational culture from clan to market, the following measures were adopted:

4. Market research criteria were adopted, not only organizational climate.
5. Focus on results: Prioritize business goals and objectives.
6. Increased competitiveness: Stimulation of innovation and continuous improvement.
7. Professionalism: Separating personal and professional relationships
8. Data-driven decision-making: Objective analysis for strategic decisions.
9. Flexibility and adaptation: Respond quickly to market changes.
10. Hiring market professionals to be directors of each controlled company.

In the transition period, estimated at one year, the following measures were decided:

1. Organizational restructuring: Define clear responsibilities and hierarchy.
2. Development of performance indicators (KPIs): Measure and evaluate results.
3. Management and leadership training: Enable leaders to make objective decisions.
4. Implementation of innovation processes: Foster creativity and experimentation.

5. Transparent and objective communication: Avoid favoritism and subjectivity.
6. Talent recruitment: Hiring professionals with specific skills.
7. Regular performance evaluation: Continuous feedback and adjustments.
8. Development of a strategic vision: Long-term planning.

Figure 7 shows the result of the family succession process based on the organizational culture of Cameron & Quinn (2011) migrating from internal and clan focus to external focus and market, as illustrated below:

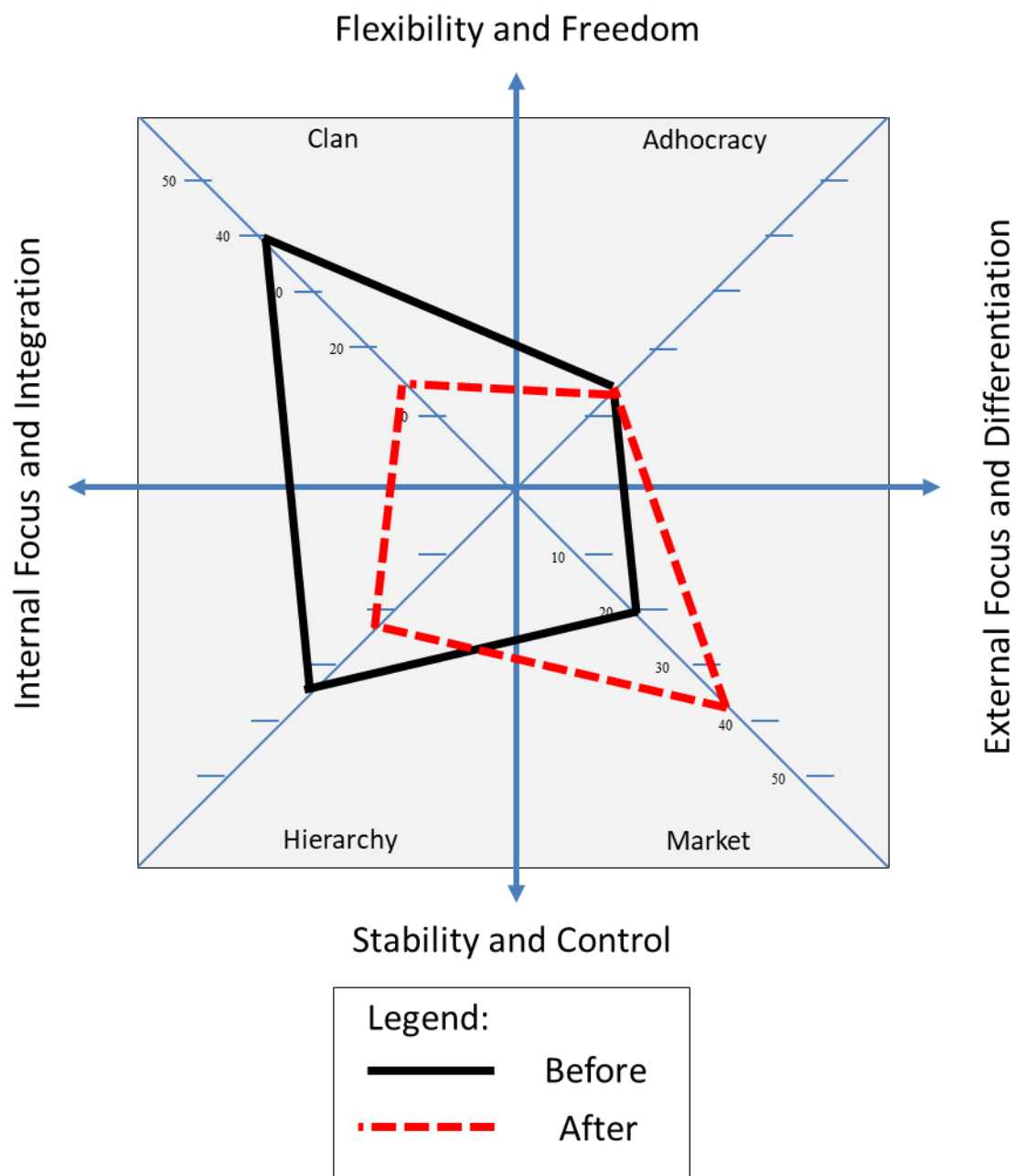


Figure 7. Analysis of the case, before and after the succession process.

Source: adapted from Cameron & Quinn (2011)

Implications and Discussion

The discussion began with the answer to the three research questions formulated in the Introduction, moving on to lessons learned and recommendations for best management practices:

1. What is the predominant organizational culture in the company before succession? The answer to the first research question is that the analysis of the application of the CVF model (Cameron & Quinn, 2011) evidenced the predominance of the clan organizational culture (see Figure 7), marked by a strong sense of family, collaboration and cooperation, loyalty and commitment, tradition and heritage, and informal communication.

2. How has family succession affected organizational culture? The answer to the second research question is that family succession has caused problems related to the effective management of the three limestone mines (administrative units), which were previously managed exclusively by the founder and were now in charge of each of the heirs. It turns out that the founder, even "passing the baton" to them, continuously interfered in his children's decisions, bypassing many of them and causing confusion and loss of effectiveness among employees. Therefore, loyalty was divided between tradition (founder) and innovation (heirs). The absence of formal communication caused employees to be divided and confused, directly impacting production and, consequently, revenue. Therefore, the foundations of the clan culture mentioned above were broken, making it unfeasible to maintain the clan culture in the succession process.

3. What change management strategies were employed during the succession? The answer to the third research question is that ten strategies were adopted, redirecting the company's focus from internal to external through the adoption of the market culture, more accustomed to the new management model proposed, formed by the creation of a holding company and professionalization of the executive positions of each of the operational units (mines). In the holding company, the family would be on the company's board of directors, and the founder would be president. The company focused on diversification, adopting the work with dolomitic limestone and Portland cement. The following measures were also adopted: Market research criteria were adopted, not only internal evaluations of productivity and organizational climate, focusing on results, increasing competitiveness, adopting professionalism as a basic underlying premise (SCHEIN, 2009), with the decision-making process based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of data, hiring market professionals, able to adapt to the rigors and changes of the market.

In short, the case analysis revealed important lessons to be learned and recommendations for best practices. In general, the study showed, as lessons learned, that succession planning is essential, as its lack can lead to disruptive conflicts in family businesses, which significantly affect affective ties and can lead to the rupture of the family relational base. Effective communication is essential in order to avoid rework and disruptions in relationships. Separating family and business interests and people from problems (fisher, Ury, and Patton, 1994) is essential for maintaining a good organizational climate. Working

with professional leaders proved essential: developing managerial and leadership skills was key. Finally, a lesson learned was that cultural change requires the acquiescence of all involved, planning, and time to adapt. A process of transition to a market culture requires strategy and patience. It was noted that the choice of strategy for adopting the market's organizational culture resulted from qualitative research and intense debate among all parties involved. It was not a solution that appeared out of nowhere but resulted from a joint construction involving third professionals hired as facilitators of the family succession process.

As managerial contributions, it is recommended to define clear rules for succession before the situation is unfeasible and disruptive to avoid harmful family disputes. It is also recommended that heirs be prepared through the development of soft skills, such as management and leadership skills, in addition to hard skills related to the technical area of the business. It is also recommended that clear limits be established and agreed upon by all, professional and personal relationships should be separated, the market culture strengthened, and a close look at the market and innovations should be encouraged.

This case has implications in different fields and subfields of study, including: (i) Family Succession Conflict (Dias, M., 2024; Pereira, L., Dias, M., 2024); (ii) conflict administration (Schmitz, T. and Dias, M., 2024; Aylmer, R., Aylmer, M., & Dias, M., 2024); (iii) conflicts and dispute boards (Quintão, H., & Dias, M., 2024); (iii) conflicts and socialization process (Aylmer, R., Aylmer, M., & Dias, M., 2024); (iv) conflict and national cultures (Lafraia, J., & Dias, M., 2024; Aylmer, Rodrigo., Aylmer, R., Aylmer, M., & Dias, M., 2024); (v) leadership and project management (Pan, J. Dias, M., 2024; Stech, P., Naves, B., Coelho, C., Dias, M., 2024); (vi) virtual negotiations (Santos, M. and Dias, M., 2024); (vii) civil construction

Conclusion and Future Research

The present course work investigated the succession process of a Brazilian mining company in the city of Goianésia (GO). The company, of family origin, had a strong clan organizational culture, and the change process took place through the intervention of third parties and professional mediators hired to help in the transition process. The need for a change in organizational culture was diagnosed during the investigative process. The new organizational culture model chosen was the market model, and efforts were made for the transition, including creating a holding company and professionalizing management. The company's focus became external and market. The discussion of the results highlighted the need for succession planning and conflict management with the utmost advance and care. The objectives proposed in three research questions were duly elucidated, evidencing the transition from clan culture to market and revealing the strategies used for the transition process. Finally, the case analysis was marked by the novelty of applying the CVF model to the family transition process of a Brazilian mining company at different times, before and after the process. Usually, the investigative process diagnoses and reveals the prevailing organizational culture without observing the transition process.

Finally, for future work, it is recommended that the models be applied in companies in other segments and that the best practices listed here be adopted in similar transition processes, the end of safeguarding the family links and the cultural identity of the companies concerned.

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