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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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CAF'S IMPLEMENTATION BY PORTUGUESE MUNICIPALITIES

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Abstract

In 1980's, the theme of quality integrated the concerns of the public sector and Portugal didn't remain alien, assuming a paradigm change: from bureaucratic and centralized administration to a service administration, decentralized and oriented to total quality. Among various approaches, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) stood out. It is a European model that assesses organizational performance, with reference to the Principles of Excellence and focused on continuous improvement. In addition to being free, it is specific for the public sector and is implemented in Portuguese local authorities. It is important to reinstate CAF to analyse the results obtained by Portuguese municipalities CAF users and find out how these results and subsequent impacts interact and determine quality enhancement of organizations.

Accordingly, the research question was: What is the impact of CAF implementation on the quality of public services provision by Portuguese municipalities?

The main general objectives are based on the verification of the following: the effectiveness of CAF implementation; the level of integration of the CAF model (nine criteria of the model and eight Principles of Excellence); the results achieved and the perceived impacts through the implementation of the CAF; and the contribution of the CAF model in the perception of the overall quality improvement achieved.

The research strategy underlies a naturalistic paradigm, adopting a qualitative approach through semi structured interviews with those in charge for quality in the Portuguese municipalities CAF users (in 2018), adequate to obtain data on the reality of municipal quality.

In this context, and after assessing the impacts achieved by the Portuguese municipalities through CAF's users, confirming the theoretical assumptions, it was possible to achieve the seven objectives previously formulated and to execute the initial research question.

Actually, the implementation of the CAF has an impact on the quality of the public services provision by the Portuguese municipalities, highlighting the following evidences: CAF is mainly located throughout the municipal organization and in full; as results obtained via CAF stand out the actions and improvement plans, good practices, citizen/customer satisfaction and stakeholder satisfaction, continuous improvement and a quality assessment and measurement system; about the impacts achieved through CAF they emerge in the achieved results, in the improvement of the quality in the organizations, in the change of culture of the public sector centred on the citizen and towards the excellence, as TQM tool facilitator, in the practices of bench learning and benchmarking, however, the sustainable improvement of the organization and the CAF as a bridge between quality management models did not have the same unanimity; finally, the implementation of CAF model's requirements contributed to the improvement of the overall quality achieved in a large majority of Portuguese municipalities.

Despite the difficulties experienced, concerning the scarce existing research about CAF's impacts and the compression of the number of municipalities under study, it has been shown that - for the first time and from the present perspective - CAF contributes to the set of results and impacts listed in the revisited theory and with this study they were validated.

Keywords: public services quality; common assessment framework; municipalities; impact.