

MATURITY MODEL MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY IN VERY SMALL BUSINESSES OF THE FURNITURE SECTOR

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Abstract

The article aims at proposing an evaluation method of the level of very small business maturity management. For doing so, a study of multiple cases in the furniture sector of Caxias do Sul/RS was conducted. The model developed was based on several methods of maturity evaluation such as CMM, KMCA and KMMM. Structured interviews were performed and the model was applied in order to identify the level of the businesses maturity. The method for measuring the management maturity behaved suitably and three companies were identified as being of the Defined Level, while one business is in the Managed Level.

Key-words: Maturity model. Management small businesses.

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INTRODUCTION

When discussing the real role of management inside the organizations, it is possible to establish several concepts applied by specialists on the issue, whereas sometimes this term gets confused with the meaning of the Administration itself. Knowing the meaning and importance of the way the management is conducted inside the corporations, it is possible to analyze the management research in the organizations as to characterize maturity models, identifying so some concepts. It is possible to affirm that a maturity model is a structure in which processes are established previously so that, then, the organization has capacity of reaching the goals in a planned and systemic manner. (COSTA et al., n.d.).

It is pointed out that the vision of management maturity of organizations, besides representing an evolution in processes, may signify proposition of improvement in products and services. This way, after the establishment of business management through maturity models, it is possible to deepen the research and study about this theme in the many types of organizations, from big to very small businesses, being these last ones observed in this research. Despite the importance of the great businesses powers, Dornelas (2008) says that 99,2% of all formal businesses existing in Brazil are very small or small businesses, being these ones responsible for 57,2% of total employments and 26% of the salary mass.

In Brazil, for defining an organization as very small or small, the official institutions, financial organizations and the sector representative organs use heterogeneous factors, among them issues such as sales or number of employed people, or both.

In the legal point of view, according to the Law N.9.841 of 10/5/1999, very small business are those that have income up to 244 thousand reais a year and small business are those which annual sales reach values between 244 thousand reais and 1.2 million reais (BRASIL, 1999). That criterion will be used for defining the organizations involved in this work, that is, very small business.

The scenery of which the development of this work is part is very small businesses of the furniture industry in the city of Caxias do Sul, situated in the mountain range of Rio Grande do Sul. In this state, the businesses of this sector are 2.7 thousand, of which around 42% are small businesses, with sales revenue up to R\$ 600thousand/month. The area of the mountain range in Rio Grande do Sul represents 33% of the state's sales revenue (MOVERGS, 2009).

The general goal of the article is to propose a model of measuring the maturity management in very small businesses in the furniture sector of Caxias do Sul. Within this

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context, the models of management existing in the very small businesses analysed and also the levels of maturity in their functional areas are identified.

As to justify the proposal of identifying the existence of maturity models in those very small businesses cited in the present research, the affirmative of Silva (2009) is considered. The author defines that in order to get the improvement of its products and services permanently, the organizations need to reach maturity. We add that these policies of management are fundamental for the success of the organizations, since they propose methods of continuous improvement.

2 CONCEPTUAL BASIS

2.1 Management models through the contingency approach

When a definition of management model is proposed, as it is one of the goals of the present article, it is possible to establish them in a line of studies and researches developed by experts in Administration. So, the management models are pointed out through the approach defined as contingency. According to Chiavenato (2004), such approach is not characterized by defining a specific management model as the ideal for a specific organization, on the contrary, according to this author, the organizational excellency is reached in a way that the variation of own goals and the environment in where it is inserted is considered.

Ferreira et. al. (2006) defines the term contingency is based on the idea that in a business environment many factors may or may not happen. When one takes into account the goals of a company, the author says that this perspective “[...] explains that there is a functional relationship between the conditions of the environment and the administrative techniques appropriate for the effective reach of the objectives of the organization” (FERREIRA et. al., 2006, p.101). Essentially, the attitudes related to the everyday administration of a business depend on the situations that are established in order to get to the objectives of the organization. Among the many authors that produced research material and literature with emphasis on the contingency approach in administration, the present paper shows the research of Burns and Stalker that came up during the 1960's and that presented as purpose “[...] to verify the relationship between the administrative practices and the external environment of the industries” (JUNIOR, 2010, p.64).

Having in mind the ideas of the authors cited above, it is possible to define that, in order to verify the relationship between administration and external scenery of the organizations, they classified the different attitudes in mechanistic and organic organizations

(CHIAVENATO, 2004). In the first case, that is, in a mechanistic system, the functional characteristics, duties, responsibility and power have a rigid classification. On the other hand, it is considered to be an organic system that one which presents a more significant flexibility as to communication existing in the organization and in which the responsibilities, duties and power are considered more adaptable (FERREIRA et. al., 2006).

2.2 The maturity management: its concepts and applicability

The beginning of the applicability of the term “maturity” within the perspective of management occurred in the development of software. However, this has been more and more searched and used by managers, since the management of projects up to the management of knowledge (COSTA et. al., n.d.). In practice, the use of maturity as a way of evaluating the management of an organization is justified by means of the affirmative of Bruno (2008), which points out that it provides the organization with an oriented posture of management, since it is searched the continuous improvement of processes and procedures. The idea of the method is to highlight the businesses' deficient activities and elucidate its potentialities in relation to its competitors.

The model of maturity management that marks the beginning of its applicability is the CMM (*Capability Maturity Model*), developed during the 1990's by the Department of Defense of The United States due to problems in hiring software. Valle and Barbará (2004, p. 20) define CMM as:

[...] a normative process model which facilitates the activities of development and maintenance of software by an organization, through the definition of basis for the continuous improvement and enhancement of the process. It is expected, when adopting it, that the organization evolves through a process of implementation and maturation of its productive capacity. Even starting from a chaotic phase of software development, the organization must go through a gradual evolution sustained by its processes until it gets to the last level of maturity.

Apart from the improvement and enhancement of the inner processes, Kerzner (2006) states that the appearance of CMM helped the creators of software to identify specific refinements. This would allow that their products became more competitive in a sector with an already high level of competitiveness. Using the main idea of maturity through CMM, one may then affirm that a model of maturity consists in a structure of well-defined characteristics, essential factor for reaching a wanted future situation (COSTA et. al., n.d) .

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According to the concept developed by the author, one may realize that for an organization to achieve a superior level of maturity, development is essential in its structure as well as in its processes.

According to Moore (apud ALBINO et. al., 2008, p. 3), “[...] a model of maturity is a structure for characterizing the evolution of a system, from a state less organized and less efficient, to a state more organized and highly efficient [...]” This statement provides a basic perception of the main idea when developing a project of this kind in certain segment of work.

Still applying the main concepts of model of maturity management model in the case of very small businesses of furniture industry, one establishes the fact that “A model of maturity provides an important starting point for identifying priorities and for defining a roadmap of implementation and evolution of BPM inside an organization [...]” (ELO GROUP, 2009, p.2).

The management through the maturity in the processes and structure is justified through its results, however, by means of Kerzner’s (apud. ALBINO et. al., 2008) statement, one may verify that those factors alone are not guarantee of success. The application of it involves other indicators, such as common language, common processes (in which the definition of processes appears), singular methodology (control implementation), search for continuous improvement and evolution of the same processes.

2.3 Maturity Model Management

Some authors of Quality (Deming, Ishikawa, Juran) said that the organizations need to reach maturity and quality for its enhancement. They must go through many stages of maturation in order to achieve its goals. So, the maturity models came up to evaluate the processes applied in an organization and they are also related with improvements in products and services (quality approach).

One of the first works in maturity was developed by Greiner (1972), in which its model focused the study of the management practices evolution. In relation to the area of Information Technology, one of the first works was developed by Nolan (1973), being based in the use of technology and budget of IT and in 1979 the same author added the variable organizational learning to its model.

From the literature analyzed on the study of the the development of maturity management, one can establish models that help the application and from the literature analyzed on the study of the the development of maturity management, one can establish

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models that help the application and attendance of it. In relation to the management maturity models, Bruno (2008, p. 20) states that “ the basic goal of a maturity model is to help the organizations to evaluate and understand its present level of organizational maturity, providing a path for improvement by means of acknowledging the skills that should develop”. Considering this line as main goal of such tools, it is possible then to develop methods to be applied in certain situations or to use methodologies already developed by expert authors in the area.

Amongst the main models acknowledged in this area of study, there are the CMM(*Capability Maturity Model*), the KMCA (*Knowledge Management Assessment*) and the Siemens KMMM (*Siemens Knowledge Management Maturity Model*).

The KMCA was developed in 2003 by Uday Kulkarni and it is represented by the criteria of Perceptive Evaluation (PE) and Infrastructure Evaluation (IE), whereas the perceptive aspect takes into consideration factors existing in the organization such as leadership, vision, strategy and culture in the knowledge sharing, while the infrastructure is directed to methods, systems and processes (COSTA et. al., n.d.).

According to the author of the KMCA method of maturity management, the perception of one of the five maturity levels of the subjects involved must be verified through a questionnaire with about 100 questions, which are separated by subjects such as culture, learned lessons, expertise, knowledge data and documents. It is important to notice that this method is composed by generic goals to be reached in order to define each level of capacity.

The CMM has the purpose of evaluating and certifying the process of software development and it is based on concepts of maturity levels and structural requirements of the processes key-areas.

The Siemens KMMM was created by Karsten Ehms and Manfred Langen and developed during the year 2002. According to Costa et. al. (n.d.), this maturity level evaluation method is composed by an analysis model, a development one and another of evaluation.

The existing levels of maturity in this method are divided in five (Costa et. al., n.d.): Initial, referring to the moment in which there is no effective control over processes; Repeated, where the acknowledgment of the mature management importante emerge; Defined, where the stable initiatives come out still isolated; Managed, there is common strategy with the existence of efficiency indicators; and at last Optimizing that indicates if the

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organization already behaves in an efficient manner even when going through changing situations, being then mature and flexible to new necessary requirements.

So, it is understood that after the results obtained in this method of maturity evaluation, being qualitative or quantitative, a plan of action is developed and validated by everybody inside the organization.

Through the years many models of measurement and management maturity evaluation emerged in different functional areas or the organization as a whole. Every model shows different levels of maturity that normally end up in 5 levels or derive from these 5 levels. These models use several methods of evaluation and, many of them, are little explored and it is predominant the qualitative and not standardized. Many models present evaluation of processes in IT.

3 METHODOLOGY

The research was characterized by the exploratory method, by means of study of multiple cases. As to the approach, it was a qualitative-quantitative research, due to the management models that were defined in the analyzed organizations and the identification of the maturity by means of standardized tools. The subject of study in this work was made of four very small businesses from the furniture sector located in the city of Caxias do Sul, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. They belong to a sector group made of 12 companies. All the areas of activity from the organizations were considered, including the participation of their owners, managers and workers. It is highlighted that due to the anonymity guarantee, there was not the identification of the companies involved and because of that they were named Company 1, Company 2, Company 3 and Company 4.

The research was divided into two phases as follows: one qualitative phase that intends to identify the management models of the companies as organic or systemic under the perspective of the contingency approach; and the quantitative phase for identifying the management maturity in the organizations.

For the first phase, the data collection was made by the performance of deep interview with a structured schedule (also known as standardized), in which there was the use of not only closed questions but also open questions, in a total of seventeen questions. The analysis of the data was made by means of content analysis.

For the quantitative phase interviews were performed as a standardized collection tool based on the maturity models already existing. The structure of the questionnaire was divided

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into 6 functional areas about the Structure and the Organizational Proposition namely: People Management, Sales and Marketing, Financial and Costs, Logistics and Purchasing, Product and Manufacture and Environmental Management summing up 115 questions, closed with multiple choice. The score of each one varied from 1 to 5, being 1 the non-occurrence of the related item and 5 represented the full occurrence of such item. With the result of the average of all questions, it was possible to identify the level of maturity in the functional areas of the company in the maturity model developed.

4 ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

4.1 Evaluation Maturity Management Model

For the development of the proposed model, the main Idea was applied as well as the levels integrating the CMM, KMCA and KMMM models. This way, the developed model is divided in five levels, which characterize the existing management as follows:

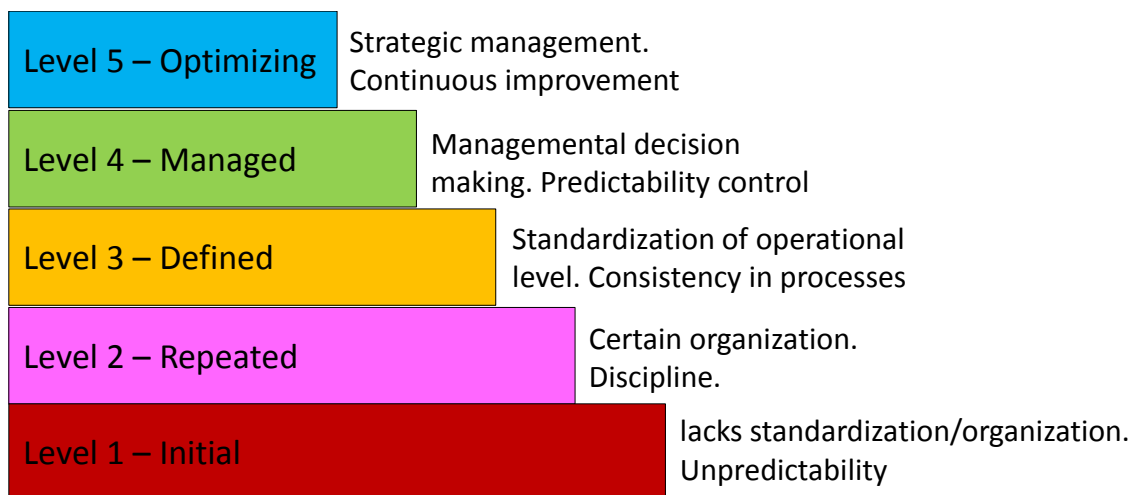
- a) **Initial (level 1):** management happens with lack of organization for standardization. Such scenery occurs in management of processes, people, decision making, amongst other factors. Because it is an indefinite management level, belong to it characteristics like unpredictability, lack of control and lack of definition of the attitudes taken in the various aspects of management.
- b) **Repeated (level 2):** the changes of this maturity level in relation to the previous one is that in this second level organization already happens in certain way. In the performance of a process or decision making, a posture of “experience” is identified. It is as if the company used its previous knowledge about processes for performing present actions. A certain level of discipline in the organization of the company is identified.
- c) **Defined (level 3):** the main characteristic of this management maturity level is the verifying of standardization in the organization that fits in it. Being basically in operational level, the existence of certain patterns provides the consistency of tasks and processes. However, this characteristic still does not apply to superior levels of management, therefore, the company does not count with attitudes and decisions taken in a fully management manner.
- d) **Managed (level 4):** the novelty of this management level is that the organization residing here already applies specific techniques, mainly on the management

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decision making. Applying to this level tactic characteristics, control and predictability are already part of the daily life of the company.

- e) **Optimizing (level 5):** considering that the organization that is found in such level of maturity already reaches satisfactory levels as to the daily life of the company's management, strategic characteristics of management apply here. Starting from this point, it works with the continuous improvement in processes, people management, definition of goals and decision making, amongst other pertinent factors for constant development

Picture 1 represents the levels of the maturity model developed and its characteristics



Picture 1. Maturity Management Model

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

For the determining of Maturity Model level, a structured questionnaire was elaborated containing 115 questions divided into six functional areas. For each question, a score of 1 to 5 was given, namely:

1. Not Apply/Use (0%)
2. Applies/Uses partially (up to 40%)
3. Applies/Uses moderately (from 40% to 70%)
4. Applies/Uses (from 70% to 90%)
5. Applies/Uses intensely (from 90% to 100%)

Bellow there are some fragments of the questionnaire applied with some of the questions, Picture 2.

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| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Structure and Organizational Proposition | | | | | |
| 1. Does the company have formalized Strategic Planning? | | | | | |
| 2. Does the company use IT (hardware, software, internet, net of communication, data management, etc.)? | | | | | |
| 3. Does it have official papers (permit, Registry of Commerce, etc.)? | | | | | |
| 4. Does it have organization chart? | | | | | |
| People Management | | | | | |
| 5. Are recruitment and selection made internally? | | | | | |
| 6. Is the payroll elaborated in the company? | | | | | |
| 7. Does the company perform integration? | | | | | |
| 8. Does it attend the disconnection processes of employees? | | | | | |

Picture 2. Fragments of the questionnaire

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

For the establishment of the maturity level the general average and the one of each functional area were calculated. Thus one gets to the level of maturity in each functional area as well as the level of the organization as a whole. For calculating the average, the rounding system was used in order to obtain whole numbers. Para a determinação do nível de maturidade foi calculado a média de cada área funcional e a geral.

For each establishment of maturity management level, one radar chart is elaborated aiming at identifying the functional area that has the higher and the lower level of maturity and also at verifying whether the maturity is homogenous or heterogeneous. So, it is possible to determine specific actions for future improvement in processes.

The questionnaires used can also serve as source of information to verify, in each of the areas, the weak and strong points and improvement points in order to reach the maturity level wanted in the company.

Other than that, the interview consisted of seventeen open questions, which function was to provide the information needed for identification of the existing management models in the interviewed companies, according to one of the goals of the present paper. In the case of multiple choice questions, the scale used had the occurrence of the approached items as determinant factor.

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In order to determine the management models existing in the analyzed companies, it was decided that these would be fit into one of the forms proposed by Burns and Stalker, inside the contingency approach in management, namely: mechanic or organic system.

4.2 Analysis of the results of the very small businesses in the furniture sector

This section has the objective of presenting the results obtained by the application of the management maturity model adopted. For that purpose, the information for each company will be presented separately and, at the end, a whole analysis presenting a summary of the evidences and situations analyzed in the research.

4.2.1 Company 1 analysis

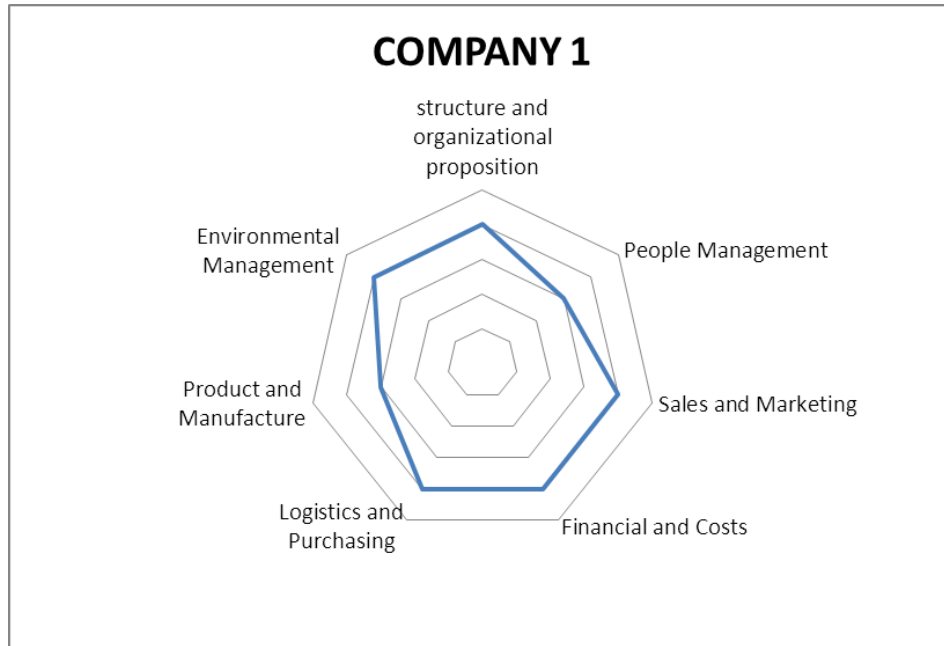
The first researched company is a furniture industry located in the city of Caxias do Sul that counts with 12 employees and develops its activities for about 16 years.

Firstly, the management model identified is analyzed in such undertaking. After the evidence of the main characteristics exposed by the qualitative analysis of the developed research, it was verified that the Company 1 showed relevant skills for businesses with an organic system. Among the main items for such determination, one may cite the adaptation of the organizational structure throughout the periods of the company's action. Even with the definition of tasks, an interfunctional interaction was noticed among the employees involved, once the need defines these situations and the knowledge sharing allows such occasions. An authority delegation was also identified in departments lower than the administration of the company, as in the production area for instance.

Another item that can be considered is that about the way how the communication happens in the company, once that, besides the formalization through personal reports, the direct and more horizontal contact is validated in there. This way, the consideration of what is dealt by the people involved and of the informal communication also characterizes an organic management model.

As to the maturity level identified in the functional areas of the focused business, Picture 3 is presented containing the variation of the averages reached by the analyzed sectors. It provides a view that allows a comparison between the various functional areas in Company 1.

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Picture 3. Maturity Management by functional areas in Company 1

Source: Data collection

Knowing that the average obtained in Company 1 was 4, it is possible to delimitate management in this organization in the level of maturity called Managed. As this level is characterized by the application of management techniques for decision making, the existence of predictability and the use of control interconnect with the general results of the company. First, the management posture of this business identified through particularities from situations that are not part of the small businesses everyday life.

According the averages reached in each functional area, one can observe that the predominance of methods established in the departments like Sales and Marketing, Environmental Management and Financial and Costs made them stand out in relation to other factors. Among the various factors exposed before, it is possible to affirm that the existence of goals to be reached, attendance of rates and control of results justify this level reached by Company 1.

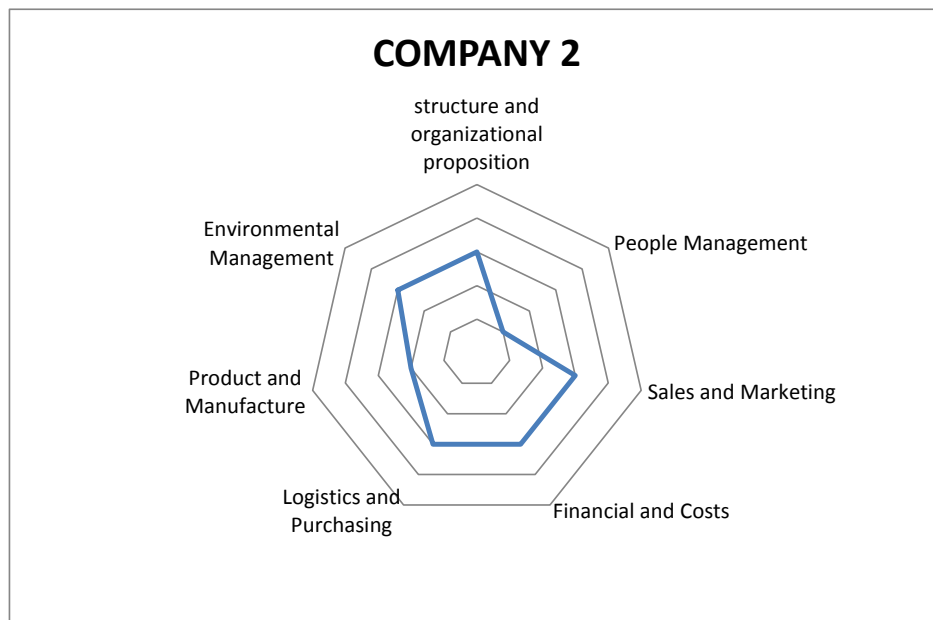
The fact that areas like People Management and Productive Process show certain instability, in relation to the level of the other departments, show that the organization always has something to enhance and, many times, this need of development is verified in the basic areas of a business functioning.

4.2.2 Company 2 Analysis

The second company analyzed is characterized as resale of accessories used in the furniture industry and does not have employees. This company presented characteristics of a mechanistic organization, whereas the factor of major impact for such conclusion is the one related to its organizational structure, since, even with its small size, it is clearly of a rigid, bureaucratic and, up to then, definite character.

It is important to highlight that such analysis has a certain limitation in relation to the considerations referring to people management, authority practice and determination of posts, since the business did not have any employee hired in the period of the research. The stability of the operation environment of Company 2 during the period of activity performance and acting in the market in which it is inserted also mean that its posture fits a mechanistic organization.

In relation to the quantitative aspect of the research applied and considering the main aspects exposed on the maturity management level of the functional areas in Company 2, Picture 4 is present in order to provide the general view of the maturity level variation.



Picture 4. Maturity Management by functional areas in Company 2

Source: Data Collection.

At the end of the analysis of the functional areas and knowing about the obtaining of the general average in level 3 of maturity, the Company 2 is classified as Defined. This level

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of maturity presents a certain identification of standardization in a basically operational level, thus presenting limitation in some performed tasks.

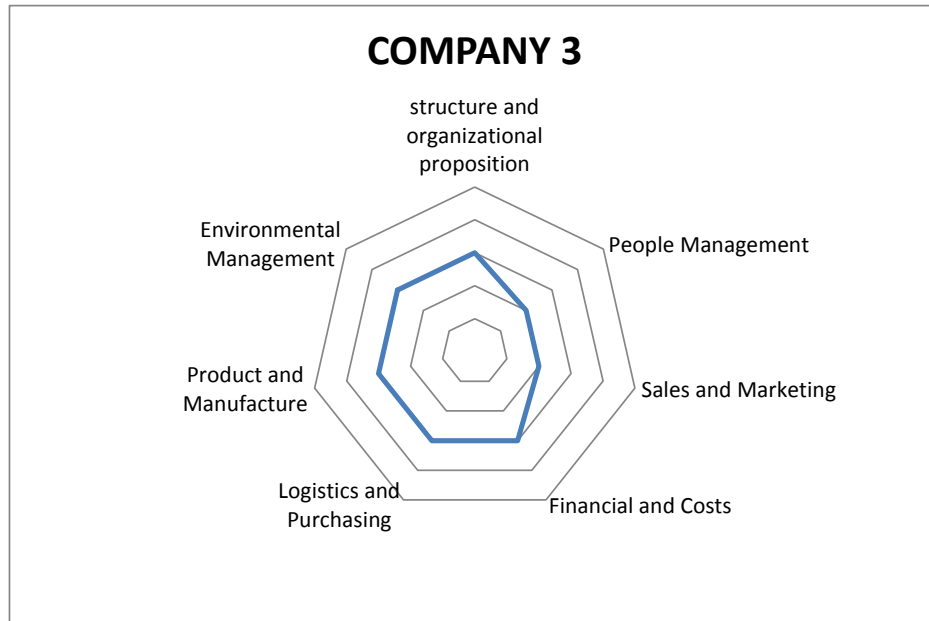
It is also highlighted the evident variation among the different departments of this organization. The absence of activities related to People Management and Productive Process can be considered as the most determining factor for such variation. On the other hand, the adopted methods, and in a way standardized, for the performing of tasks related to the commercial activities of the company, its financial control and activities as well as the criteria adopted for performance of sales of the commercialized products represent more significant factors in relation to the general average obtaining .

4.2.3 Company 3 Analysis

As to the third business analyzed in this work, a factory of made to measure furniture, with management performed by its owner and that counts with four employees in the production area. Company 3 fits as a mechanistic organization, because, once more, the definite and bureaucratic characteristic in the operations and hierarchical relationships, in this organization, make that conclusion evident. This way, the decision making process is centered in the only manager of the business. Even without the existence of formalization through written records of the laws and rules applied in the organization, the determined and little dynamic imposition of such factors are part of the management model identified in this subject of analysis.

In relation to the data analysis through the quantitative perspective in the study, the grouping of all averages reached in each functional area of Company 3 is analyzed according to Picture 5, from what is possible to perceive the reflex of little variation between each of them. This fact originated the general average 3 obtained by the analyzed organization. It was classified in level 3, named Defined.

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Picture 5. Maturity Management by functional areas in Company 3

Source: data collection

One may consider that there is a significant discrepancy between the general average and what was identified in the area of People Management and Sales and Marketing, once the rates reached by the business in these areas show that Company 3 can improve its performance with a better management and application of management techniques for the development of the business as a whole.

The average and equated areas of Product and Manufacture, Logistics and Purchasing and Environmental Management are more associated with the company's general management and, this way; it confirms the affirmative that most of the processes existing in the business have qualification in operational level. It is not possible yet to identify such quality in the management stage of the business.

4.2.4 Company 4 Analysis

Company 4 is characterized as resale of upholstered and made to measure furniture, in which management is performed by its owner and the activities count with the collaboration of three employees. From the analysis of the qualitative data, this organization is considered as a mechanic model. Just as happened in the case of the companies analyzed before, the fact that the identified structure strongly shows the qualities of a bureaucratic, determined and rigid system, that is, avoiding variations or significant changes, was fundamental for this statement do be declared.

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Taking into consideration the authority management identified in Company 4, the existence of hierarchy characterized by definite command and, up to then, permanent, is the basis for this definition of mechanistic management model. Another significant item for that definition is that about the decision making performed in the company, which is basically centered on the manager.

The fact that the workers refer to straight to the company's manager in the case of questioning, suggestions or complaints, shows the existence of an essentially vertical communication in the activities of the undertaking. This factor is a predominant characteristic of mechanic systems.

As to the diagnosis of the levels of maturity management in the functional areas in Company 4, Picture 6 shows the individual grades.



Picture 6. Maturity Management by functional areas in Company 4

Source: data collection

As the quantitative analysis in Company 4 verified a general level of maturity management of grade 3, the level of maturity management in which this company fits is the Defined. It is characterized by standardization and organization of the processes, operations and decision making belong to operational level, without a more detailed management activity.

When analyzing Picture 5, a variation in the Environmental Management of the organization is identified, whereas the other departments analyzed are equated in average 3. It is considerable that the fact that Company 4 is a store, which constantly serves general public,

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was fundamental for the highest rate for Environmental Management. Like that, the averages of the other analyzed areas mean that the business management happens mainly in the operational level, once the existing attitudes do not represent those of an organization that has a fully management posture in the development of the existing activities.

Table1: Comparison between averages of the functional areas of the companies

| | structure and organizational proposition | People Management | Sales and Marketing | Financial and Costs | Logistics and Purchasing | Product and Manufacture | Environmental Management | General Averages |
|---------------------------|--|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Company 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| Company 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Company 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Company 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Averages/Functional Areas | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | |

Note. Source: Data collection

Analyzing the variation of the general averages of each functional area, it is noticeable that the area of People Management got maturity rates relatively low if compared to the other departments of the analyzed companies, whereas this situation provoked a general average of level 2 in all research. It means that even being a fundamental area for any business, in the case of the organizations analyzed in the present study, the way they deal with human capital is still far from being ideal.

With more standardized rates, but still not of in management or strategic level, the areas such as Organizational Structure, Sales and Marketing, Financial and Costs and Logistics and Purchasing stood out in relation to the rest of them. Despite the analyzed companies in this work did not present the approached items in a formal way, it was possible to observe and identify the practice of certain management techniques. Therefore, the rates of the areas cited above, in a general way, are found delimited in operational level, whereas this situation may be common in great part of the small businesses in general once the characteristics as informality of operations and processes occur in most part of them.

The fact that the functional area of Environmental Management presents a superior rate in relation to the other approached items is due to the factors such as environment of work, possession of licenses and use of security equipment.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study about maturity management, even not yet very explored, represents a significant opportunity for evaluating situations in certain organizations and for planning alternatives of development. That could be seen through the work done on such subject.

It was verified that the main authors existing in the literature based on maturity management, defend that this is a differentiated way of performing management of the activities in a business, from the strategic hierarchical levels up to performances of operational level.

When obtaining the data by means of the collection tool, the proposed analysis was carried out. It is highlighted that the identification of the management models existing in the companies was possible due to the qualitative questions applied on the companies' administration, taking into consideration items referring to organization, planning and control of the business.

As a result of this research, a model derived from a combination of the main models of measuring maturity management, in four very small businesses of the furniture sector in the city of Caxias do Sul, was applied. It is important to notice that the development of the maturity management model was based on models developed by authors in the area that had already applied such methods in a satisfactory manner. Having in mind that this model has levels in which the company is classified according to the level of standardization, organization and application of management techniques (or according to the lack of it), the situation in each analyzed company was established.

It is also important to highlight that the model of maturity management evaluation, presently in enhancement stage, is also inserted in a program that searches qualification in the companies, whereas the model is in the initial step for improvement of the management techniques and enhancement in organizational indicators. The issue of how to create programs of improvement based on the maturity management levels is still open. Besides, the model contributes for a little explored knowledge area that has also great potentiality for further research. Still, it contributes as a measuring model that takes into consideration qualitative and quantitative factors. However, it is noticeable that the measuring occurs with standards that can be considered subjective, making it difficult for giving grades and sometimes, having the evaluator to decide such issue.

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