



Research Paper

## Professional Competences: An Integrative Approach for Defining The Training Competences for Business Administration Professionals

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper offers an integrative proposal for Business Administration curricular programs. For that purpose, we have carried out a survey with teachers from upper Business Administration courses so as to select a group of key competences for the contemporary Administrator, which has allowed us to elaborate an integrative proposal of curricular program for the Business Administration scholars in Brazil. As a qualitative research, it consists of a multiple case study with empirical approach and a triangular analysis based on Moraes (2014). Its main objective has been to analyze the curricular programs from five higher education institutions in the state of Rio Grande do Sul and two other foreign institutions in South America. At first, we have asked ourselves the following question: How to adapt the Business Administration curricular program to the contemporary needs as far as the vocational training competences of Administrators are concerned? In order to answer it, we have analyzed the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCN) and the Political-Educational Projects of Business Administration Courses (PPC/CA). After that, we have compared the Curricular Components (CC) of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) under analysis. After performing the triangular textual analysis of the DCN, PPC/CA and CC of all HEIs under study, we have carried out a survey with 35 teachers from Business Administration upper courses through a computerized online questionnaire. We have sent a **Survey Monkey** link for a total of 40 teachers, however, only 35 answered it (87.5%); we have considered 100% valid answers. Previously, based on the doctrine of competences and curriculum according to the most renowned authors – such as Vygotsky, Freire, Sacristán, Piaget, Saviani, Bloom, Libâneo (curriculum); Fleury & Fleury, Zarifian, Perrenoud, Lisboa (competences), among others – we have concluded that implementing the integrative proposal will provide more well-prepared graduates from the Business Administration course right to the competitive and globalized labor market.

**Keywords:** Professional competences. Curricular program. Higher Education. Business Administration course.

### Resumen

Este artículo trae una propuesta integradora de currículo para los cursos de Administración. Para ello, se realizó una investigación con profesores del curso superior de Administración, de la que se pudo extraer un grupo de competencias-clave para el Administrador contemporáneo, lo que permitió la elaboración de una propuesta integradora de currículo para los académicos de Administración en Brasil. La investigación realizada es del tipo cualitativa, y consiste en un estudio de caso múltiple con enfoque empírico y análisis triangular, conforme Moraes (2014). El objetivo principal de este trabajo es analizar los programas curriculares de cinco instituciones de enseñanza superior en el Estado de Río Grande del Sur y otras dos instituciones extranjeras en Sudamérica. Preliminarmente, se buscó formular el siguiente cuestionamiento: ¿cómo adecuar el currículo del curso de Administración a las necesidades contemporáneas en relación a las competencias de formación profesional de los Administradores? Para responder a esa cuestión, se analizaron las Directrices Curriculares Nacionales (DCN), así como los Proyectos Políticos Pedagógicos de los Cursos de Administración (PPC/CA) y se compararon los Componentes Curriculares (CC) de las Instituciones de Enseñanza Superior (IES) investigadas. Tras realizar el análisis textual triangular de las DCN, PPC/CA y CC de las IES, se elaboró una investigación con 35 profesores del curso superior de Administración, utilizando un cuestionario en línea

informatizado. Al total, se envió un enlace en el modelo **SurveyMonkey** a 40 profesores, sin embargo, solamente 35 respondieron a la encuesta, representando el 87,5% de retorno, considerándose el 100% de las respuestas válidas. Previamente, teniendo como soporte la doctrina de competencias y currículo, concentrándose en los más renombrados autores – tales como Vygotsky, Freire, Sacristán, Piaget, Saviani, Bloom, Libâneo (currículo); Fleury & Fleury, Zarifian, Perrenoud, Lisboa (competencias), entre otros - se concluyo que la implantación de la propuesta integradora propiciará un egresado del curso de Administración más preparado para el mercado de trabajo competitivo y globalizado.

**Palabras-Clave:** Competencias profesionales. Currículo. Enseñanza Superior. Curso de Administración.

## **Resumo**

Este artigo traz uma proposta integrativa de currículo para os cursos de Administração. Para tanto, realizou-se uma pesquisa com professores do curso superior de Administração da qual foi possível extrair um grupo de competências-chave para o Administrador contemporâneo, o que permitiu a elaboração de uma proposta integrativa de currículo para os acadêmicos de Administração no Brasil. A pesquisa realizada é do tipo qualitativa, consistindo em estudo de caso múltiplo com abordagem empírica e análise triangular, conforme Moraes (2014). O objetivo maior deste trabalho é analisar os programas curriculares de cinco instituições de ensino superior no estado do Rio Grande do Sul e duas outras instituições estrangeiras da América do Sul. Preliminarmente, buscou-se formular o seguinte questionamento: Como adequar o currículo do curso de Administração às necessidades contemporâneas em relação às competências de formação profissional dos Administradores? Para responder a essa questão analisou-se as Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais (DCN), bem como os Projetos Políticos Pedagógicos dos Cursos de Administração (PPP/CA), e comparou-se os Componentes Curriculares (CC) das Instituições de Ensino Superior (IES) pesquisadas. Após realizar a análise textual triangular das DCN, PPP/CA e CC das IES, elaborou-se uma pesquisa com 35 professores do curso superior de Administração, utilizando-se um questionário online informatizado. No total, enviou-se um link no modelo **Survey Monkey** a 40 professores, contudo, somente 35 responderam ao questionário, representando 87,5% de retorno, sendo consideradas 100% de respostas válidas. Previamente, tendo como suporte a doutrina de competências e currículo concentrando-se nos mais renomados autores – tais como Vygotsky, Freire, Sacristán, Piaget, Saviani, Bloom, Libâneo (currículo); Fleury & Fleury, Zarifian, Perrenoud, Lisboa (competências), entre outros – concluiu-se que a implantação da proposta integrativa propiciará um egresso do curso de Administração mais preparado para o mercado de trabalho competitivo e globalizado.

**Palavras-chave:** Competências Profissionais. Currículo. Ensino Superior. Curso de Administração.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Higher education expands every day and the number of mercantilist higher education institutions (HEIs) is constantly increasing (HELENE, 2013). In addition, a problem arises from the dissatisfaction of entrepreneurs, according to which the curricular programs do not meet the requirements of the labor market. High cost HEIs are increasingly striving to remain competitive. Since the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) define the skills and competences in four axes of training content, we have asked ourselves whether the curricular competences meet the needs demanded by Business Administration students. The elements we have seen led us to the following research question: **How to adapt the Business Administration curricular program to the contemporary needs as far as the vocational training competences of Administrators are concerned?** Professional competences have been a convergent subject for the articulation of a curricular program with an appropriate profile for graduates from Business Administration upper courses – which have already been classified by surveys as the most sought upper course in Brazil.

Nowadays, however, there are a great number of evasions from Business Administration courses, which has been happening due to the difficulty of guaranteeing a job vacancy after graduation. Recent studies have shown that students who have evaded from the course have also found difficulties in getting back to the labor market. This paper resulted from a survey carried out with Business Administration upper course teachers under the following general and specific objectives, respectively: a) to analyze the curricular programs from five higher education institutions in the state of Rio Grande do Sul (RS) and two other foreign institutions in South America; b) to learn about the Business Administration course's Educational Projects (PPCs) as offered by the chosen HEIs, as well as their curricular Learning Programs (PA); to compare such curricular programs with the DCNs; to analyze the PPCs and the PAs from Business Administration upper courses; to verify how teachers and coordinators organize the learning means for teaching students; and to learn what teachers think about the use of active methodologies in the classroom.

In their four levels of training, the DCNs define the curricular components through which HEIs – within a minimum of 3,000 class hours and 200 credit hours, considering a flexibility proposed by the DCNs – create a professional profile for the job market. In the HEIs' Strategic Planning, the Institutional Political Plans (PPIs) guide their development policies. Once the HEIs have a plan for what they intend to accomplish,

concepts, philosophies and guidelines are then established. Each area is responsible for its undergraduate or postgraduate courses, by elaborating the Political Educational Project (PPC) of each course. The PPC is the most important document of a department or area as it represents certain line of academic training. For instance, the Engineering area is responsible for all engineering courses: civil, electrical, electronics, agronomy etc, and plans the competences that will be developed among its students. All Business Administration courses aim at serving the business organizations, both public and private or other. The Business Administration course's PPC is a HEIs document that provides the professional and organizational competences focused on the development of the individuals who are expected to fill the labor market.

Such competences are developed throughout the semesters taken by the undergraduate students, by mainly considering what is determined by the DCNs according to the Resolution nº 4, from July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005, article 4, which defines the Skills and Competences for the vocational training of Administrators. Curriculum and competences are two variables that are inserted in the social, philosophical, moral, economic and cultural contexts and – besides constituting a conceptual framework, or of added value to power or public policies – they define the paths of the most human values in a constantly changing society. Appreciating the human being, the professionals, the minds open to a still imaginary future, far beyond the terrestrial, planetary space, is to question to what horizons companies and professionals are headed. The companies of the future will be those that seek to reach undiscovered horizons, focused on knowing how to think, to reflect and to value the human being in the contemporary society.

### **Competences**

The types of competences approach starts in the various labor activities produced and executed by the human being during the relevant processes in economic, social, cultural, technological contexts, as well as in the academic context, which educational trajectory is imperative for the evolutionary business management of the so called knowledge society.

Many authors interpret the types and concepts of competences at several determinant levels in order to constitute a professional profile. According to Fleury & Fleury (2001), there is a threefold interpretation of the concept of competences: at the personal level, where the individual's competence is discussed; at the state level (countries), where educational systems and the competence training are discussed; and at the organizational level, where the so called *core competences* are discussed. The number of authors who have addressed this subject is beyond calculation. Among them, there are Breiter and Clements (1996), Sacristán and Pérez Gómez (1998), Richards and Demo (1998), Perrenoud (1999), Fleury and Fleury (2001), Xiao (2000), Zarifian et al (2001), Bocchesse (2002), Queiroz (2008), and others. Amatucci (2009), for instance, in his doctoral thesis, has made a significant contribution that culminated in a method for the construction of a competence profile for Business Administration graduates. His study can be followed up by the reading of his Brazilian publication called "Método para a Construção do Perfil de Competências do Egresso do Curso de Administração". In the different approaches, interpretations and discussions of different levels, the debate about competences held in seminars, forums and congresses is long and fierce.

Understanding the meaning of professional or organizational competences is therefore not that easy because of the multiplicity of interpretations from a large number of authors. However, in order to make it easier to understand the concept, we have taken it in the most fundamental way as possible so as to read the doctrine in the most plausible and simplistic way as possible: Competence is action. To better recognize a competence of certain action, it should be noticed that it always starts by a verb in its infinitive form; that understanding is as essential as it is important to understand competence in its different organizational contexts.

The competences focused on the Business Administration graduates' profile can be related to the activities, purposes and means of organizations, which administrative functions once inspired by the classic and scientific schools are still today predominant in the management of the vast majority of companies – whether public, private, or service-oriented – such as: to strategically plan, to undertake innovation and entrepreneurship actions, to make use of information technologies, to exert people's and teams' leadership, to carry out logistic actions, to manage both financial and budget processes, to promote communication actions, to manage the organizational memory, to perform digital marketing actions, and so on. Competence translates into the attitude of wanting to put acquired knowledge into practice, that is, the move of acting; the action itself. Skill, on the other hand, is the act of knowing how to do, that is, how to build, through a knowledge coming from theory and practical training. One can own the theoretical knowledge of how certain software works, however, one may not know how to manipulate it. In that case, that is the missing skill. Yet the attitude is intrinsic to the person; the move of acting, wanting and feeling is widely related to the individual's cognitive actions. It is the will, the determination of putting both the acquired knowledge and skill into practice. Attitude means putting knowledge into practice so as to improve it, therefore is related to professional performance, which can be good or bad, efficient or effective. Attitude is individual and independent of group.

Reflecting on a competence development model in order to contextualize a curricular program for a higher education school is, at a minimum, to bring together different knowledges in the construction of meaningful and multiple learning.

In this context, monologue is a complex thing. But, by dialoguing with teachers and students and motivating them to map their different needs so as to promote a humanized education and transform it into pedagogical practice therefore producing knowledge in the environment in which they are inserted with their different resources and techniques, we have been lead to reflect on an alternative to find an innovative learning model for Business Administration upper course programs. At the European level, with regard to competence training, Richards (1998), in line with others (STEAR, RUNER, RYAN, 1993; COOPER et al, 1992), has redesigned the need of creating a European network for discussing learning programs and obtained satisfactory results. Redesigning training needs had also been studied by Xiao (2000), whose study on tourism and administration education in the 21st century China has indicated that the main objective must be to provide curricular programs with a broader managerial orientation. Xiao suggests the “9 + x” formula, which means that nine (9) central courses in the field of Business Administration and four (4) other centered on Tourism Management should be afforded. (The subjects related to tourism that are already afforded refer to economy, geography, planning, impact study and culture.) Xiao’s approach demonstrates a trend towards the interdisciplinarity.

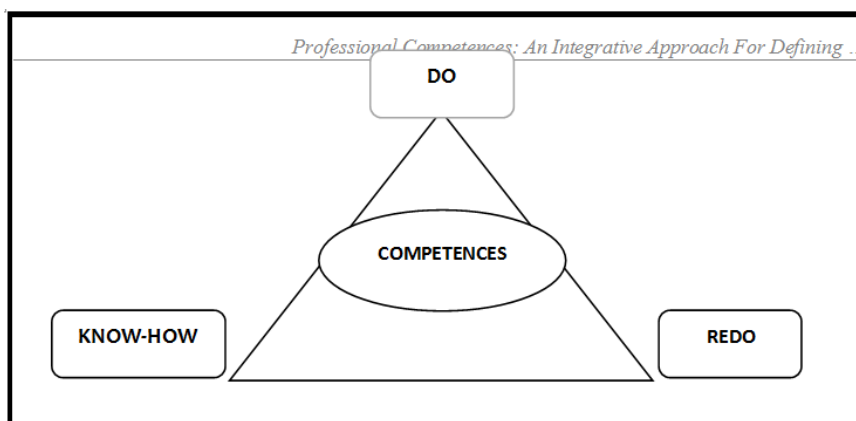
About China’s educational reform, Xiao (2000) explains the four objectives to be achieved: to expand the disciplinary bases, to redesign curricular programs, to create a standard model of training practice in tourism, and to establish the Tourism Management as an area of study incorporated into the Business Administration school. The expected result is to reach a greater interdisciplinary basis, a hierarchically balanced knowledge directed to creation with a great innovative skill for both national and international labor markets. Xiao highlights the importance of sustainable development in training, which means to apply the Anglo-Saxon model in an extremely way. Amatuucci (2009) also highlights the competences for training, by postulating that training competences are feasible and relevant human attributes and qualities obtained through the learning of the professional which the HEI wishes to graduate, in view of an attitude with both conscience and knowledge of the facts regarding a future work situation.

The objective of assigning competences to individuals is to make them competent, that is, ready for acting consciously and with knowledge of the facts. Breiter and Clements (1996 apud BRASIL, 2006, p.13) wonder if the educational programs are preparing students for a future characterized by the following trilogy: a) competition growth; b) more demanding customers; and c) variable labor force. According to the authors, educational programs vary widely and are constantly being re-evaluated in order to meet the needs of students and industries. In this context, the variable workforce, the demanding clients and the growth of increasingly competitive markets should be considered by education programs and their curricular basis (BREITER and CLEMENTS, 1996). Breiter and Clements (1996, p 57) also mention the existing discussion among educators about what skills should be taught. They point out that changes in the expectations of managers, investors, customers and employees indicate that administrators should be flexible, creative and sensitive to the different market needs. By referring to Hersey and Blanchard (1988), Breiter and Clements (1996, p.57) claim that they describe the management process as a necessary mastery skill in three distinct areas: technical, human, and conceptual. They ensure, for example, that restaurant chains look for candidates who demonstrate organizational skills. It is said that abilities are associated with know-how, mental action or physical action (BOCCHESI, 2002 apud BRASIL, 2009).

### **1.1 Competence Development**

Competence is understood as the condition of not only doing, but knowing how to do, and, above all, constantly renewing our relationship with society and nature by using innovative knowledge as a crucial tool. More than making opportunities, it is about making an opportunity to redo (DEMO, 1998a, p. 13 apud BOCCHESI, 2002). Demo (1998a, p.30 apud BOCCHESI, 2002) defines that: “The formal quality – taken as constant innovation of knowledge – and the political quality – related to the ethical intervention of reality and the construction of citizenship – are elements that combine true competence” (my own translation). According to the author, Competence is the act of doing, knowing how to do and redoing, as shown in Table 1.

**Table1:Competences Trilogy**



Source: From the author's personal collection, adapted from Demo (1998).

- a) Interpreting Demo (1998), Bocchese (2002) highlights that he mentions a competence-based program, which is justified by the need of “fostering the interaction among students and between students and social actors and institutions” so as to encourage them “to learn a social practice that will be permanent in their life as citizens [...] the construction of collective intelligence”, as well as to the ethical dimension (p.3, my own translation). It seems that Bocchese (2002) has anticipated the new models of student training through a curricular program with competences and emphasis on active learning methodologies, when noticing that “It is necessary not to lose sight of the ethical dimension emphasized by Demo and Mello, since the improvement of human beings is what best suits a society ruled by ‘labor market laws’” (BOCCHESI, 2002, 34, my own translation).

Market laws require not only technical and professional competences, but also those followed by principles and values of ethical conduct. Organizations are driven by people with technical and behavioral experiences that generate and produce knowledge, but, above all, know-how about doing and redoing, which are not only products but the final products resulting from the Administration field. In this direction, Queiroz (2013, p.22 apud LISBOA, 2015, p.85) postulates that knowledge is different from skill, which reflects the know-how, and attitude, which reflects the will to do. The skill is the technical competence; the attitude, however, is the behavioral competence, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Distinctions

Knowledge	To know		
Skill	To know how		Technical competence
Attitude	To know to want		Behavioral competence

Source: QUEIROZ (2008, p.22 apud LISBOA, 2015, p.85).

This idea of competence is focused on knowing how to build, how to do, and on labor. On one hand, business organizations have a look at competences, which are seen not only as knowing how to do – which is a tangible product – or wanting to do – attitude, which is intangible – but also as knowing how to be – cognitive/feelings/behavior. On the other hand, in their curricular development programs, HEIs present the competences according to the curricular guidelines, considering the flexibility allowed by the Ministry of Education (MEC), as Amatucci (2009) states: Training Competences should be expressed in a standardized way in terms of

- b) Skills, which represent the (generic) actions in their potential state, understood as “should be able to”, or “able to”; b) Attitudes, that the individual develops regarding work situations; and c) Generic and flexible knowledge (that is, theoretical knowledge).
- c) According to the author, it is also necessary to take into account along with these attributes the concern with feasibility and relevance.

As stated before, to strategically plan, to held marketing actions, to make use of information technologies, to exert people's and teams' leadership, to carry out logistics actions, to manage financial and budget processes, and to promote communication actions are seen as some examples of competences. Competence is therefore the attitude of being willing to put acquired knowledge into practice, which is the

move of acting, that is, the action itself. Yet the skill refers to the act of knowing how to do or how to build; it is a knowledge that arises from both theory and practical training. As already said, it is possible to own the theoretical knowledge on how a software works and however not knowing how to make it work – one must develop that skill. The attitude, as explained, is intrinsic to the person, it translates a person's determination to act and feel; by putting into practice the acquired knowledge, it is therefore related to professional performance.

- d) Training professionals fulfilling the right competences has generated a lot of discussion among educators. Perrenoud (2000) states that: "Reflective practice; professionalism; team work and projects; increasing autonomy and responsibility; differentiated pedagogies; centralization over devices and learning situations; and sensitivity to the relationship with both knowledge and the law delineate a script for a new trade" (PERRENOUD, 2000, p.11, my own translation).

Sacristán and Pérez Gómez (1998), as well as Demo (1998), add the dimensions of ethics to such attributes, by considering it as an essential factor for training professional competences.

Therefore, a synthesis of this doctrinal support and its main precursors is listed below so that one can follow their time line and capture the viewpoints and notions that have guided the vocational training skills and competences:

**Curriculum:** Authors and the evolutionary, interpretative process

Socio-interactionism and constructivism (the influence of cognitivism and constructivism aspects) – Vygotsky (1937), Levi (1948) and Piaget (1937); Objectives – Johnson (1967) and Bloom (1918); Experiences – Wheeler (1976); Liberation/Critical pedagogy – Freire (1974); Instruction Plan – Taba (1983); Practice Analysis – Stehouse (1984); Popular Culture – Libâneo (1985); Progressive view (training critical individuals) – Saviani (1986a, b); Taxonomy (cognitive development) and Educational Objectives – reviewed by Bloom (1987); Culture and practice – Sacristán (2008); Constructivism and French structuralism – Piaget and his genetic epistemological study (1955, 1980) and Lévi-Strauss; Domination and the critical theory of the curriculum – John Franklin Bobbit (1), (1918); Behavioral – Tyller (2), (1949); Content – Sperry (1973, 1979, 1993);

### Interpreting professional competences

Competences inventory and the realignment of activities – Perrenoud (2000); Designation of the one qualified to accomplish something, a responsible and recognized knowledge about acting that involves to mobilize, to integrate and to transfer knowledge, resources and skills able to add economic value to the company and social value to the individual – Fleury and Fleury (2001); To take initiative and to assume responsibility when facing professional situations, focusing on action and result – Zarifian (2001); Individual knowledge, personality skills or traits that directly influence people's performance – Becker et al (2001); Knowledge = to know + Skill = to know how = Technical Competence + Attitude = to know to want = Behavior Competence (= KSA) – Queiroz (2013 apud LISBON, 2015).

HEIs and their PPCs have met the Ministry of Education's law regarding the training of curricular competences. Their learning programs therefore cover what is established by the DCNs with respect to the curricular components.

## II. CURRICULAR TRAINING

According to the Ministry of Education (MEC) and to what is determined by the National Education Board (NEC), the so called Administration minimum curriculum must offer contents related to: a) basic training (25%); b) vocational training (45%); c) technologies and quantitative studies (10%); and d) complementary training (20%), thus making a minimum of 3,000 class hours or 200 credit hours, in accordance with the NEC/MEC Resolution 04, from July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005, which has established the National Curricular Guidelines for Brazilian Administration Courses (DCN/CSA).

Brazilian CSA's DCN support the development of a professional profile for the graduates and is based in a four-level bachelor's degree training curricular structure, as follows:

**Table3:** Areas of Knowledge and Training Content

	CONTENTS	CREDITS	HOURS	%
I	Basic training Related to anthropological, sociological, philosophical, psychological, ethical-professional, political, behavioral, economic and accounting studies, as well as those related to communication and information technologies and legal sciences.	50	750	25%
II	Vocational training Related to specific areas that involves both	90	1.350	45%

	management and organizational theories and the administration of human resource, market and marketing, materials, production and logistics, financial and budget, information systems, strategic planning and services.			
III	Quantitative studies e their technologies Optional cross-sectional and interdisciplinary studies to enrich the operational trainee's profile, game theory, mathematical and statistical models, and the application of technologies that contribute to the definition and usage of administration strategies and procedures.	20	300	10%
IV	Complementary training Optional cross-sectional and interdisciplinary to enrich the operational trainee's profile.	40	600	20%
❖	Total hours	200	3,000	100%

Source: From the author's personal collection, adapted from BRAZIL/NEC/MEC – Resolution n.4, from 7/13/2005.

### III. Metodology

- e) Gómez (1998, in KOPS, 1999 apud BRASIL, 2006) states that all scientific research is carried out within a platform, a conceptual matrix or a paradigm. According to Dencker (1998, p.23), however, three elements are necessary to support the scientific inquiry as they characterize knowledge as science: theory, method and technique.
- f) In Triviños view (1997, 2001), in the academic world theory means a set of concepts that aim to describe, interpret, explain and understand the phenomena of reality. According to the author, the most widespread theories in the research field are: the positivism theory, the social constructivism theory and the critical-materialist theory. Method depends on the type of research, which can be phenomenological, dialectical etc. Yet the technique refers to the process by which one intends to gather research data.
- g) However, research is not just about applying a method or a technique, which is in accordance to Dencker, who states that: “Research, however, is not just about collecting data and information. It is about thinking, reflecting, interpreting and understanding it as one of the elements that compose the society, and considering the interactions of actions that may be proposed from the prospect of the society as a whole” (DENCKER, 1998, 266).
- h) In order to accomplish our goals, it was necessary, as a first step, to identify, in the existing literature, the most appropriate methods or models for our research process so as to define it as a second step. Hence, it was considered necessary to carry out a survey in the academic segment, in particular, with upper Administration course teachers, in order to identify the teachers' perceptions regarding the phenomena involving both the competences and the curricular program as far as Administration courses are concerned.

#### 3.1 Multiple case studies

Multiple case studies are simultaneously conducted by several institutions, colleges, schools, or by several people, such as teachers developing the same project. The individual case study technique, which refers to an isolated study, seeks to investigate whether the different cases studied share differences or similarities that may result in analytical categories. Then, the Multiple Case study is defined by a data triangulation. Yin (2005) defines the cross-data synthesis as an analytical technique that applies to the multiple case analyses.

According to Minayo et al (2005 apud FÍGARO, 2014), the characteristics of triangulation as a methodological resource are:

- Dialogue among different parts;
- Methods, technics and sources;
- Experience of those under study;
- Consensus and dissent in the scenarios.

Fígaro (2014) points out that the triangulation of different data source requires the researcher to go deep in several approaches in order to obtain the content, so as to:

- Identify intersections and discrepancies;
- Present results as a challenging step;
- Consider that the traditional fragmentation of speeches and/or observation notes may compromise a complete understanding of each studied case.

Thus, it is possible to choose to perform an analytical description of each individual case from the triangulation of data in each scenario. The interpretation of all studied cases is subsequently based on the cross-case synthesis strategy proposed by Yin (2005). According to the author, the cross-case synthesis is an analytical technique that applies specifically to multiple case analyses. Its technique treats each individual case

study as an isolated study and seeks to investigate whether the different cases share similarities that might reflect analytical categories. After that, a cross-sectional reading of the cases is carried out and thematic categories related to the research problem and objectives are then identified.

Such technique greatly contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon under study, since it allows the establishment of relations between different contexts so as to reveal both particularities and common aspects. Thematic categories are discussed according to the articulation between data and related scientific production (FIGARO, 2014).

The qualitative textual analysis proposed by Moraes (2003) is another model for holding multiple case studies to be considered.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

A total of 40 undergraduate teachers from Brazilian HEIs and foreign universities were selected, but only 35 have participated. Data analysis instruments and means were held as follows:

- 1) Contacting the HEIs by asking for their Administration course's PPC and sending by e-mail an invitation letter for participating in the study;
- 2) Reading, analyzing and interpreting the CSA's DCNs– Resolution nº 4, from July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005;
- 3) Reading and analyzing the PPCs from each chosen HEI;
- 4) Reading and analyzing the Administration course PPCs sent by each HEIs – five from RS and two from South America.

Data have then been collected and, as a procedure, the qualitative triangular textual analysis has been applied in accordance to Moraes (2003). After reading and analyzing the data, the DCNs and the teaching programs, a Survey Monkey questionnaire has been elaborated in order to learn the Administration upper course teachers' opinion about the necessity of changing its curricular program. An invitation letter for participating in the research has been attached to the questionnaire under the promise of confidentiality and commitment to the study in accordance with the research's code of ethics.

### **The following five categories have been elaborated for creating the questionnaire:**

Category A –Teacher's Profile, aiming at learning their sociographic data, in three stages: 1) gender, marital status, age group; 2) job position, length of service, monthly income, education; 3) courses they intend to attend in the coming years, how many books they read a year, whether they have any professional record and whether they have written/published: books, reviews, technical papers, scientific papers; Category B –Methods and techniques applied as teaching strategy, such as classroom resources, learning resources, complementary resources and learning methods. All qualitative, open questions; Category C–Teachers' thinking about the curricular program, management competences, and cognitive and behavioral developmental attributes. All qualitative, open questions; Category D–Institutional evaluation: what do teachers think about the National Institute of Educational Study and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP) assessment and whether they have been interviewed before. What do they think about the National Exam of Students' Performance (ENADE)? All qualitative, open questions; Category E – Reflection on the Administration course graduates. All qualitative, open questions.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

Triangulation is a way to help the investigator to perform his/her analyzes when there is evidence of much data to be analyzed. This term originates from the triangle between segments A, which joins B, which joins C. Triangulation is a method for determining the position and range of a reference point, a certain point C; as long as there is enough information between A and B able to locate it. It's the angles between the points that form a triangle.

Triangulation had been first used in the area of Psychology, by Campbell and Fiske (1959 apud FIGARO, 2014). Quoting Duarte (2009), Figaro postulates that the triangulation method has been used in quantitative researches of different methodological approaches based on tests and empirical results. Data triangulation is a resource that guides the analysis process. Yin (2005) supports this method by stating that the logical rationale for using multiple sources of evidence relies on data triangulation. According to Minayo et al (2005), triangulation as a methodological resource is processed through a dialogue among different methods, techniques and sources.

Figaro (2014) highlights several areas of knowledge that make use of triangulation for scientific research purposes. According to the author, triangulation had been used in a study about the role of stakeholders in the sustainability of companies, held by a social scientist in the Administration field. Figaro also mentions a paper published in 2009 by the researchers Lyra, Gomes and Jacovine, in which case study, interviews with employees, documentary research and analysis of the company's internal newspaper had been conducted. These researchers have stated that: "The main goal of applying a technique for data collection and treatment is to

develop convergent lines of investigation, providing more convincing and accurate conclusions about a phenomenon” (LYRA et al., 2009, p. 45 apud FÍGARO, 2014, p. 129). Researchers’ experience allows us to state that data triangulation is also useful to reveal the consensus and dissent in the scenarios.

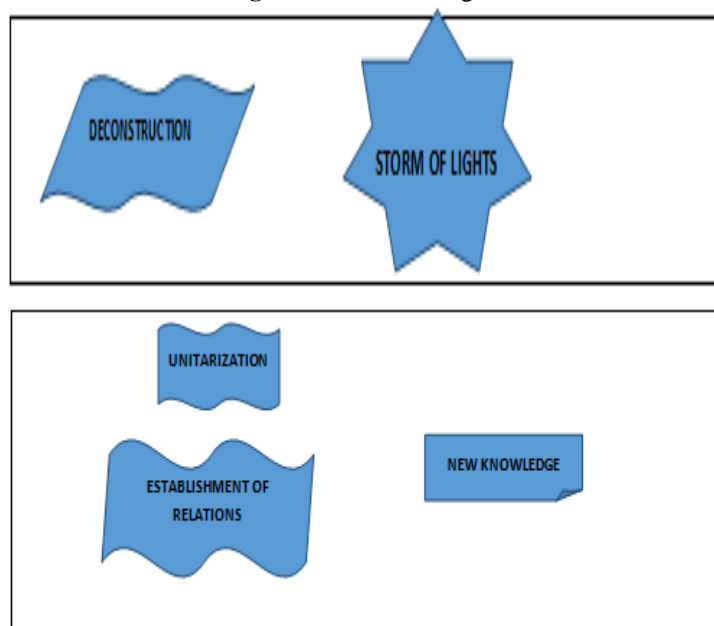
In addition, in order to perform the triangulation of different data sources, it is necessary to go deep in by looking at several approaches to understand the content so as to identify intersections and discrepancies. Presenting the results is a challenging step, since the traditional fragmentation of speeches and/or observation notes may compromise the comprehension of each studied case. We have therefore chosen to perform an analytical description of each individual case through the triangulation of the data of each scenario. Subsequently, the interpretation of all the cases studied has followed the cross-case synthesis strategy proposed by Yin (2005), which is an analytical technique specifically applied to multiple cases analyzes by treating each case study as an isolate study.

### 3.4 Textual Analysis

The qualitative textual analysis, also defined as discursive analysis, covers three key points: unitarization, categorization and communication. According to Moraes (2003), the textual analysis presents itself as a movement that leads us to the understanding of self-organization. Moraes (2003) explains that the use of discursive textual analysis leads us to the production of an image or effect of new understandings during the analytical process (he metaphorically talks about a “storm of light” for producing an image or effect, as shown in Figure 1). In textual analysis, the production of new understandings enables us to generate new orders or disorders.

According to the author, in textual analysis it is necessary to consider four basic cycles or phases: a) texts are first disassembled, through Unitarization, which observes fragmented units; b) relations are then established, through a process called categorization, which aims to relate basic units by combining them (like a game) and classifying them in order to understand their elements and gather them in sets from the most to the least complex so as to create categories; c) the emerging new is finally captured, which means an intense impregnation of the analysis’ materials; it is time to unite the understanding from the two previous phases and make a communication between what have been found through a renewed reading of the analyzed data; and d) understanding and criticism are finally the last element of the analysis cycle. This process results in metatexts consisting of complex and self-organized systems, therefore bringing into focus the cycle as a whole. Results cannot be predicted, but even so we considered as essential the preparation and impregnation effort so that the emergence of the new take place.

**Figure 1:** Storm of Lights



**Source:** From the author’s personal collection, adapted from Moraes (2003).

Moraes (2003) states that the first step of the qualitative textual analysis is the deconstruction of texts and their unitarization; it is like disassembling a car, separating its parts and placing them in a particular order, by groups, and then bringing the groups together and categorizing them. Several categories delimited with rigor

and prediction can be used. Method might be inductive or deductive. If the researcher owns a specific tactical knowledge, then EMERGENT categories are defined; the emergingnew is captured as a form of understanding, which is then communicated and validated. Moraes (2003) has defined such a process as Storm of Lights. The analytical process therefore consists in creating conditions for the formation of this storm in which, by emerging to a chaotic and disordered environment, fleeting flashes of light beams are formed in order to illuminate the investigated phenomena.

Regarding the specification of methodology, Lakatos (2011) states that it includes a greater number of items as it answers, at the same time, the following questions: How? With what? Which one? Where? How much? Such instigating questions correspond to the format by which the researcher will guide his/her scientific study in the searching of plausible results. What is the object of investigation? It answers to which research problem characterization? According to Triviños (1987), the formulation of the research problem denotes the researcher's theoretical conception and determines the line of work intended, by configuring the methodological trajectory of the investigation as described below.

### **3.5 Research Subjects**

Preliminarily, the subjects of investigation, which are the target population of the universe to be investigated, have been defined: upper Administration course teachers from HEIs of several Brazilian states and two foreign ones.

### **3.6 Research Tool**

A Survey Monkey questionnaire has been formulated and sent by email to 40 teachers; however, only 35 have answered it, corresponding to 87.5%. All answered questions were considered valid.

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaire**

- i) The questionnaire consisted in 40 questions distributed among the five previously mentioned categories: 1) Category A – Teacher's Profile; 2) Category B – Methods and techniques applied as teaching strategies; 3) Category C – Teachers' perception of the curricular program, management competences, and cognitive and behavioral attributes; 4) Category D – Institutional evaluation; and 5) Category E – Reflection on the graduates. All four last categories were based on qualitative, open questions.
- j) 3.7 Survey Analysis
- k) 3.7.1 Category A – Teacher's sociographic data
- l) Step 1 – Gender, marital status and age group
- m) The survey respondents consisted of 35 undergraduate and postgraduate teachers from upper Administration courses working in five Brazilian HEIs and two foreign ones. Their preponderant age group is over 60 years old, corresponding to 31%, of which 56% are male. The majority of teachers who have answered the survey are married (56%).
- n) Step 2 – Job position, length of service, monthly income and education
- o) It is worth mentioning that 15% of respondents are not only teachers, but also course coordinators. A total of 75% of respondents work only as teachers and 69% have from 11 to 15 years of professional experience, of which 50% have been working for over 16 years. 42% get around 7 to 10 minimum wages of monthly income. 34% own a master's degree; 31% own a doctorate degree and 9% own a postdoctoral degree. One can notice an extremely suitable profile for Administration courses, considering both professional experience and academic education, since there are post-doctors, as well as financially stable, expert teachers working for over 16 years (50%) with a great scientific production, as demonstrated below.
- p) Step 3 – Intended courses, reading and scientific production
- q) 58% of the respondents are registered in the Regional Board of Administration. It is noteworthy that 32% intend to undertake a doctorate course and 35% a post-doctorate course in the next two years. A total of 50% read from 4 to 8 books per year. 93% have published scientific papers, 63% have published technical papers in journals, 70% have published book chapters and 48% have published book reviews. The teachers' knowledge profile is therefore in agreement with the Brazilian education policies.
- r) 3.7.2 Category B – Methodological resources applied in the classroom and the organization of learning means
- s) Case studies and expository classes are the instructional resources most used by teachers, corresponding to 96%, followed by movies and videos (85%) and text reading (82%). 92% of teachers claim to use seminars, while 81% conduct technical visits and 54% give a priority to business games. All teachers claim to make use of multimedia projectors; 86% work with videos and texts; and 72% make use of the blackboard, while 17% prefer interactive whiteboards. 42% of the respondents do not apply text analysis grids and 34% do not take advantage of the monitoring resource usually performed by fellow students.
- t) As for the organization of learning means, we have asked teachers what means do they make use of as learning resources for their students. 86% make use of technical and scientific journals, as well as technical

books, 83% search online and 38% make use of computer labs. When asked about the teaching plan, 77% claim to update it every six months.

u) 3.7.3 Category D – Curricular program and competences

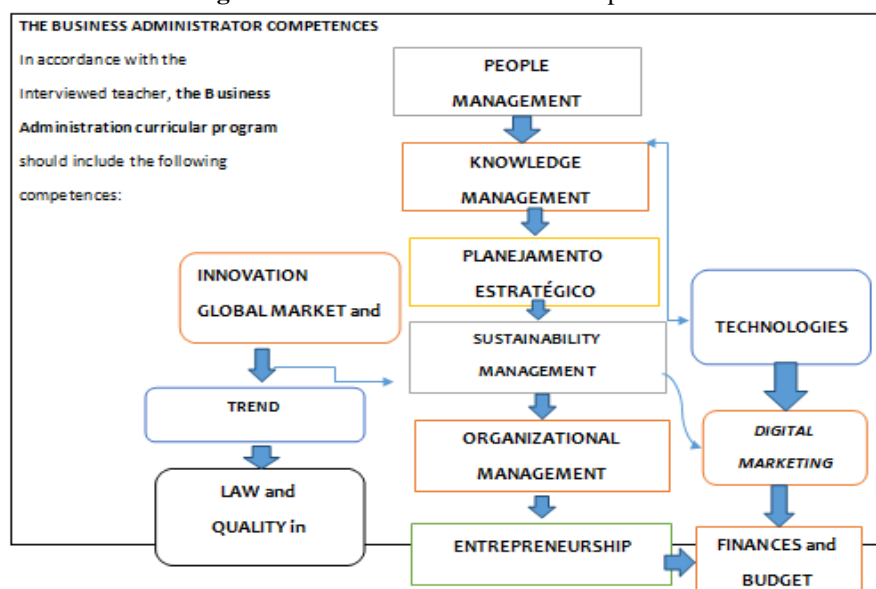
Regarding the teachers' perception of the Business Administration curricular program, 93% of the respondents state that it should include international parameters, 59% argue that it should be modified and 44% consider that it needs to be globalized.

**With regard to the administrator competences, teachers have answered which management competences should be included in the curricular program, as follows:**

- 90% indicated People Management and Knowledge Management;
- 87% pointed to Strategic Planning, Organizational Management and Sustainability;
- 83% said Entrepreneurship, Management Technologies and Software, Logistics and Trading, and Finances and Budget;
- 76% answered Innovation, Global Market and Trading;
- 70% pointed to Trends;
- 60% indicated Digital Marketing; and 53% said Law, Quality in Management and International Policy.

(It is known that management models are applied by companies due to the need of optimizing processes, so they gradually arise from the evolution of organizations.) Figure 2 demonstrates the Business Administrator competences in accordance to the research subjects' opinion.

**Figure2:** Business Administrator Competences



Source: From the author's personal collection.

The curriculum theory has tried to conceive a support platform for justifying the importance of developing Business Administrator competences. Bloom's work presents a configuration aiming at shaping competences in order to interpret and understand them, as in developing professional skills (BLOOM, 1918). Competences understood and related as the capacity for ethically interfering on reality and for building citizenship combine principles and values understood and related not only as ethical intervention, but also as the constant innovation of knowledge (QUINN et al, 2015). As stated before, competences are conditions for not only doing, but also for knowing how to do and, above all, for permanently renewing our relationship with both society and nature, by taking innovative knowledge as a crucial tool. Theories for training a professional profile should be aligned with sociocultural, philosophical and economic values of current times. Bloom's work still effectively contributes for developing learning programs, as its proposals are described through a taxonomical view in which the elaboration of verbs helps formatting the curricular program's objectives, by creating it and innovating it. Bloom (1984) has studied Taxonomy for decades, taking the lead of a cognitive development project for teaching and learning. His work is often reviewed without losing its value, as it is very significant for

the dimensions of knowledge and knowing how to be and how to do, of which the qualification degrees allow us to draw skills and competences for an always innovative curricular proposal for the next generations.

The challenge of training people for a new *Ygeneration* requires a special look at the Business Administrator's profile; he/she can be the Administrator of the future, or of the contemporary society, or perhaps living on Mars or any other planet. Looking through a few decades ahead makes you realize that the *Ygeneration* is the generation of creation and innovation. The Business Administration of the future must be guided by differentiated principles and values.

Today, it is known that the so called *thinkers* designers, i.e., the creators, thinkers of new ideas – collaborative work methodology –, observe the young people, the queues, the products, their colors and layouts, the environment and, in the most significantly simple way, they design an innovative project and create a new need that no one had previously thought of, and, very quickly, the new product emerges and becomes something that depends on the entire generation of innovation protagonists (BROWN, 2010). Table 3 shows the contemporary Business Administrator key competences, in accordance with the research subjects' opinion: a) individual competences: ethical behavior, leadership, assistance to stakeholders, continuing education, respect, engagement, determination and humanities; and b) management competences: people management, organizational knowledge management, strategy and organizational management, sustainability, entrepreneurship, innovation and information technology.

**Table 3:** Contemporary Business Administrator key competences

Individuals	Management
Ethical Behavior	People Management
Leadership	Organizational Knowledge Management
Assistance To Stakeholders	Strategy Organizational Management And Sustainability
Continuing Education	Entrepreneurship And Innovation
Respect, Ethics	Information Tecnology
Engagement, Determination E	Operation And Logistics
Humanities	Economyand Finances

Source: From the author's personal collection.

#### 4 Proposal ofan IntegrativeCurricular program for Business Administration courses inBrazil

The management competences identified by the teachers as essential for defining a new curricular program for business administration courses, adapted to the contemporary world reality, have motivated us to propose an integrative curricular program, as shown in Table 4:

**Table 4:** Proposal Ofan Integrativecurricular Program For Business Administration Courses In Brazil

Curricular Components For The Administrator's Professional Training	Credit Hours	Class Hours
Formação Profissional		
1. General Business Administration Theory	6	90
2. Organizational Management	8	120
3. Sustainability	6	90
4. Entrepreneurship And Innovation	8	120
5. Economy And Finances	8	120
6. Strategy	6	90
7. People Management	6	90
8. Marketing Andsales	6	90
9. Operationsand Logistics	8	120
10. Organizational Knowledge Management	6	90
11. Course Completion Work /Supervised Internship	28	420
Total Credit/Class Hours	360	1.440

Source: From the author's personal collection.

According to the table above, due to the growth of the technological poles in Rio Grande do Sul, as well as to the number of HEIs, results obtained from the survey with the teachers have suggested an integrative curricular program for the Business Administration course with a structure based on 11 curricular components needed for the Administrator's vocational training in order to meet the needs of the contemporary business world. his curricular program gives prominence to the following curricular components: Organizational Management, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Economy and Finances, and Operations and Logistics, corresponding to 120 class hours each; followed by: General Business Administration Theory, Sustainability, Strategy, People Management, Marketing and Sales, and Organizational Knowledge Management, corresponding to 90 class hours each. It is also proposed a course completion work or a supervised Internship of

420 class hours. In addition, the individual competences indicated by the teachers should be part of the management curricular components as follows: Ethical Behavior and Assistance to the Stakeholders – Sustainability; Leadership -People Management; and Information Technology (applied) and Continuing Education – Organizational Knowledge Management. Such an integrative curricular program seems to be more aligned with the globalized markets features, as well as the increasing influence of technology and the permanent demands for a knowledge that ensures both the survival and the growth in an expanding capitalist world.

#### **4.1 Strategies for implementing the integrative curricular proposal**

It should be noticed that the present study diverges from the current proposal of the analyzed HEIs as it directs 1440 class hours of the Business Administration course to the vocational training level, corresponding to 45% of its total time, as recommended by the DCN. We would like to suggest some strategies to implement this integrative proposal: 1) to offer quality education, since the survey has demonstrated (item 3.7) a high level of qualified teachers owing both doctorate and postdoctoral degrees, as well as to integrate theory and practice in real projects so as to develop competences; 2) to apply teaching methods and techniques by making use of vanguard technological resources; and 3) to internationalize the program, by attracting students from other countries through marketing campaigns, agreements, exchanges, events and interaction with the technological poles of neighboring countries.

### **IV. CONCLUSION**

- v) The Business Administrator professional competences consist in standing by an integrative model for a new curricular program by integrating prepared, renowned and communicative teachers, as well as adopting active and dynamic methodologies guided by the satisfaction of students inserted in projects that conciliate both theory and practice with real cases, as teaching strategies focused on the students' involvement and effective participation at all stages of their vocational training.
- w) Therefore, students' activities would be more flexible, creative and innovative, by resulting from more practical training for the Business Administration course's graduates to be able to effectively face the labor market.
- x) Developing the undergraduates' interpersonal intelligence as the HEIs' key priority to remain competitive will be the great differential of the future. The most viable strategy starts with a dynamic and creative curricular program. Internationalization will be a second unbeatable resource for the HEIs survival. As shown before, our results obtained from the teachers survey have suggested a structure based on 11 curricular components needed for the Administrator's vocational training, which are aligned with globalized markets features, as well as the increasing technology and demands for knowledge, so as to adjust to the expanding capitalist world.

Studying competences is to review philosophies, concepts, law, conceptions, norms, guidelines, and the most different epistemological conceptions and lines of thought; to reflect on and discuss about curricular competences by looking at the training of ethical and committed professionals with a view over the future and capable of exercising their skills so as to go beyond their own limits and knowledge. Studying competences is to deepen the experience shared in the classroom and throughout a constructive trajectory analysis in education. Education is a legacy that is left for today and future generations. Research is the expectation of bringing innovative resources for present generations and strengthening the processes of transformation and changing in both organizations and education, overlapping the interests and objectives of people whose ideas are configured to competitive strategies and paradigms.

From this perspective, the relevance found in the study trajectory relies on building a threefold knowledge based on the opinion of upper Business Administration course teachers, as well as on what is determined by the DCN and the PPCs as they are offered to students by HEIs. It should be noticed that the teachers' opinions have been decisive for elaborating the competences matrix, which aims to contribute for training professional/organizational and individual competences in a continuous development process. Building competences for the Management of Business Organizations is more than a social-sustainable commitment; it is a commitment to both the citizen and the country. Our study has allowed us a broader knowledge on redesign a curricular matrix constituted for the vocational training level only. However, it should be considered as a preliminary analysis so that the possibility of more significant excellence results does not be discredited.

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