Undergraduate programs in administration:
development of socially responsible leaders

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1. INTRODUCTION

The administration programs have changed over the years to update curricula as a result of demands and trends in society.

On the other hand, some of the most relevant recent emphases in the context of training administration students are on developing citizens, leaders to work in grassroots social projects. This finding can also be associated with the fact that, even more so in recent decades, the contribution of institutions to society now has a significant connotation of value. Included in this context are, for example, the social responsibility programs run by various companies.

It is necessary, therefore, to introduce innovative practices in conducting the disciplines in administration courses in order to meet current demands. The role of higher education institutions (HEI) must be to train ethical, political-social elements fit to produce the minimum conditions for their survival but at the same time committed to society. University not only helps acquire skills that guarantee the training of capacitated professionals for the labor market but also must form the social consciousness of their students, who will work as researchers, teachers and professionals in the social context.

Many of these professionals will work in public and private businesses, third sector organizations, committed to business ethics and questions affecting socially responsible practices. These practices aim to improve the condition of individuals, organizations and society, and generally present many challenges for which apparently administration professionals have received no training.

In the light of the above, the key objective of the study was to analyze whether undergraduate administration courses have adopted disciplines and methodologies focusing on developing in the students a profile of socially responsible leadership, especially for work in social projects. The contribution of administration courses in training sensitive professionals committed to social projects was therefore assessed and practices and methodologies identified, which were adopted in the courses that can expedite the development of individuals engaged in social issues.

From this viewpoint, the intermediary objectives guiding the study were defined as follows:

- To identify practices adopted in undergraduate administration course leading students to reflect and engage in social issues.
- To analyze the structure and level of importance attributed to the social topics in the administration curricula of learning institutions nationwide.
- To describe the practices adopted by the teaching staff to encourage students to interact and work in social projects and assess these practices from the student and teacher viewpoint.
In methodological terms, a qualitative-quantitative study was undertaken, using as collection tools the script of the interview applied to teachers/coordinators of administration courses in Brazil and 130 questionnaires given to students in the last period of the course. The choice of institutions was based on the criteria of concepts in the Ministry of Education ranking, length of the target course in the study and access to the interviewees in order for the investigated questions to be substantially in-depth. Moreover, the study endeavored to accommodate all Brazilian regions.

The contributions of the study were divided into three perspectives: academic, educational and socio-political. From the academic viewpoint, the results of the survey contributed to advancing scientific research regarding the role of administration schools to form leaders committed to social responsibility, and to challenge HEIs to make changes in the quality of teaching administration. In relation to the educational aspect, the findings provide subsidies to enhance teaching methods and extracurricular activities within the social perspective in the organizations. Lastly, the study created insights that can back up the institutions regulating higher education in administration in Brazil (Ministry of Education, National Association of Undergraduate Courses in Administration (ANGRAD)) when drafting policies for administration courses.

In addition to this introduction, the report addresses the theoretical review of the topic under study, methodological aspects, and analysis of empirical data and study conclusions.

2. THEORETICAL BENCHMARK

The theoretical review of this article was based on three chapters: (i) Socially responsible leadership; (ii) Administration training – including disciplines and methodologies associated with corporate social responsibility and social projects; (iii) Assessment in administration.

2.1. Socially responsible leaders: profile and skills of administrators with focus on social development

2.1.1. Corporate social responsibility
Before discussing the profile and characteristics of a socially responsible leader, it is essential to understand constructs behind this theme, including corporate social responsibility. This means that to understand if the administration courses are contributing to training students for attributes of social entrepreneurs it is necessary to understand what social responsibility practices mean. They are, therefore, interwoven constructs.

Corporate social responsibility is an old concept, since the role of organizations toward society has been discussed ever since businesses began. However, it was only in the early 1990s that this theme gained new contours and was raised in widely discussed topics in literature and increasingly present in organizational management. (SOUZA; CARVALHO; XAVIER, 2003; BARBERO; BRITTO, 2004).

There are different reasons to explain the rise of the topic of corporate social responsibility. Souza, Carvalho and Xavier (2003), for example, suggest that the measures of economic liberalism taken by the hegemonic countries have lessened the involvement of the State in the economy and, consequently, companies have been assuming the tasks of regulating social relations. The role of organizations in society has increased, therefore, while the question is whether they have in fact contributed to minimize social problems.
From this viewpoint, there are stronger external pressures from various agents (community, consumers, associations and unions, public agencies) for companies to act correctly and sustainably, while at the same time, providing benefits for society. Thus, in addition to endeavoring to maximize the company’s income, the administrators now have to be concerned with the environmental, political as well as social impact of organizational actions (BARBERO; BRITTO, 2004; SILVA; MANTOVANI; BATISTA, 2009).

The increase in academic discussions on the topic is also a result of the return that adopting socially responsible practices has generated for companies. These in-company actions have an impact on improving the quality of life in the workplace, increasing productivity and motivating the employees. Outside the workplace, it contributes to adding value to the company’s brand in the market and improving its relationship with its various audiences, which can be translated into increasing sales and the company’s financial income (ALVES, 2003; BARBERO; BRITTO, 2004; MARQUES et al., 2006).

While it gained importance in business administration, social responsibility studies have also increased significantly. Thus, various theoretical models and approaches emerged, adding a multidisciplinary character to this field of study. Contributions from literature cover a wide range of topics, from concerns with the workers’ wellbeing, social commitments to communities in the vicinity of the firm, environmental impacts of organizational actions and so on (ASHLEY; COUTINHO; TOMEI, 2000; BARBERO; BRITTO, 2004; MEDEIROS et. al, 2007).

Andrew Carnegie was one of the forerunners on the subject, when he stressed that social responsibility is based on the concept that organizations are social institutions. The author considered two premises to be fundamental: the principles of charity and zeal (ALVES, 2003).

Bowen’s study, in turn, marked the start of a more thorough investigation. To justify the social role of a company, the author identified dimensions inherent to the organizational activity: the personal dimension, since the company consists of people; social dimension, since the firm is part of society; political dimension with regard to public-private interaction; and lastly, the economic dimension. Based on these dimensions it is apparent that the company influences and is influenced by various agents and, therefore, its operation must consider the responsibilities of all these stakeholders (ASHLEY; COUTINHO; TOMEI, 2000; ALVES, 2003; CRUZ et al., 2010).

In this direction a number of authors now conceive social responsibility considering the organization’s interrelation with its stakeholders. Socially responsible projects are programs and actions adopted to meet the expectations and interests of different groups that are influenced by the company’s operation. Marques et al. (2006, p. 3) specify that “responsible companies are those that go beyond their legal obligations in fair treatment of their employees; the transparent and ethical relation with stakeholders; minimizing any environmental damage or impact caused; and supporting local communities”.

The Ethos Institute (2011), major Brazilian organization in publishing social responsibility guidelines, registers that the concept of sustainability involves three pillars: economic, social and environmental. From this viewpoint, it is essential that the company assess its performance based on such dimensions. To do so, the Institute created indicators that assess the degree of a firm’s social responsibility: values and transparency; in-company public; environment; suppliers; clients; community; government and society.
It is worth mentioning that there was a time when literature would discuss corporate social responsibility with focus on the firm’s in-house (employees, workplace), while at other times the emphasis was on the external variables (environmental issues, community relations, etc.) (BARBERO; BRITTO, 2004). This study will give greater emphasis to social responsibility from the external viewpoint; that is, the focus will be on social actions and projects that can be undertaken by administrators in order to contribute to reducing certain social problems.

Bearing in mind the above, the following section addresses the leadership construct and profile of socially responsible leaders.

2.1.2. Profile and skills of socially responsible leaders

Leadership is a widely studied topic in organizational studies. There is, therefore, a large volume of theoretical proposals to help understand the theme. Nevertheless, research on leadership has still created obstacles to its evidence and generalization (BERGAMINI, 1994).

On this point, a critical understanding of these theories is important in the current context, in which a diversity of environmental and organizational factors requires new leadership profiles. As examples of such factors, importance may be given to socially responsible actions and the need for leaders to be able to address such questions (YAMMARINO; DANSEREAU; KENNEDY, 2001).

Therefore, the ‘society’ dimension now is part of the ‘leadership’ theme. This implies understanding leadership, considering the social angle, that is, taking into account the actions of leaders to build fairer societies. This perspective includes themes such as leadership and social responsibility, and leadership in the third sector. So the profile and skills of socially responsible leaders are discussed below. First, it is important to mention that studies in this field are recent and therefore the theoretical contribution on this line is by no means vast.

Ethos Institute (2011) argues that a socially responsible leader has different attributes to a traditional leader. However, a large number of executives in Brazil have trained in classic administration, which emphasized technical skills, giving priority to concepts such as efficiency and maximum profits. These skills are not very suitable to what is expected from those who should manage socially responsible businesses.

One important skill of the socially responsible leader is to have a holistic view of the organization and understand that it is part of society and it is therefore important to consider the effects of the organizational actions on the firm’s audiences.

Scorsolini-Comin, Inocente and Matias (2008) call attention to other skills of a socially responsible leader: behavioral and attitude skills, which include cooperation, initiative, entrepreneurialism, ethics and ability to relate and cooperate with various social groups.

Converging with the notion of socially responsible leaders, Melo Neto and Froes (2002) introduce the ‘social entrepreneur’. This is a leader ready to work in third sector organizations – firms with a social mission – or even a professional who runs socially responsible projects in a certain company. Social entrepreneurialism seeks to develop goods, services and projects to solve social problems, and is focused on disadvantaged sectors of the population.
In these terms, distinctions are perceived between skills required for the social entrepreneur and those for the conventional administrator. While the former’s measure of success is social impact (the number of beneficiaries in the social program), the conventional entrepreneur is assessed by the firm’s financial result (MELO NETO; FROES, 2002).

According to Oliveira and Barbosa (2004), an entrepreneur’s required skills when working for a social cause are: (i) to know how to adopt a business outlook to solve social problems; (ii) be sensitive to social problems; (iii) to have skill to interact with different sectors of society, from grassroots to public agencies.

In this context, the question is whether and how the undergraduate administration courses have prepared the student to work as social entrepreneurs. This is based on the premise that the administration course plays a key role in training these professionals (MIRANDA et al., 2007).

2.2. Training in administration: inclusion of disciplines and methodologies associated with social responsibility and social projects in undergraduate administration programs

2.2.1. Legislation and the Administration Course Curriculum: Analysis of its social relevance

Amidst these discussions, the role of the administrators in the organizations is now questioned and, in a broader framework, the role of the higher education institutions that are responsible for training these professionals (MEDEIROS et al., 2007). If, on one hand, the topic has become increasingly present in academic studies, on the other there are doubts how it has been addressed in undergraduate administration courses. Indeed, since there are signs that administration training has favored technical in detriment to behavioral skills (SCORSOLINI-COMIN; INOCENTE; MATIAS, 2008).

When analyzing teaching administration legislation established by the regulatory agencies, the above evidence was corroborated. It was found that administration training is mainly based on the development of the students’ instrumental rationality, which in turn is based on premises such as efficiency and maximum financial results. Substantive values, however, which presume actions guided by ethical judgment, human and social values, albeit constant in some parts of the texts, are addressed to a much lesser degree in administration courses (SOUZA; CARVALHO; XAVIER, 2003).

Administration courses in general favor technical capacity building, reinforcing clear concern with the professional market. Ethics and social values, when considered, are not presented as a guideline for the curricular content. Therefore, “training appears from the viewpoint of a possible separation between the working and living world.” (SOUZA; CARVALHO; XAVIER, 2003, p. 1).

The analysis resembles the preceding analysis in relation to the profile of those graduating from the administration course. According to the group of behavioral and attitude skills, which address questions such as cooperation, entrepreneurialism, social responsibility and ethics, little emphasis is given to them in the administration courses in Brazil. Technical skills are clearly prioritized, which shows how important it is to reflect on the administration training process (SCORSOLINI-COMIN; INOCENTE; MATIAS, 2008).

Medeiros et al (2007) add that administrators are trained to be able to undertaken administration tasks of planning, management and control, backed by the premises of efficiency and maximum profit. Thus, emphasis is given to technical and rational aspects rather than human skills.
In conclusion, one evident fact is the need to rethink the training of administration professionals in an attempt to train people aware of the ethical and human component and role of administrator in society (SOUZA; CARVALHO; XAVIER, 2003; XAVIER et al., 2006; SILVA; CHAUVEL, 2011).

2.2.2. Disciplines and methodologies associated with social responsibility Corporate and social projects in undergraduate administration programs

In this context where it is necessary to rethink the training of administrators, it is considered important to address practices adopted by university courses that can contribute to developing a socially responsible profile in graduate students. The traditional methodologies used by institutions no longer meet contemporary sociocultural demands (OLIVEIRA, 2003; LEAL; MEDEIROS; BORGES, 2006; MIRANDA, et al., 2007; MEREGE; ALVES, 2011).

It should be emphasized, however, that literature has made little progress in investigating teaching methodologies that can broaden the students’ experience in social projects.

Nevertheless, it is found that some universities have looked closely at such issues and, as a result, have developed appropriate teaching strategies to train students in leadership skills committed to social problems. Two of these strategies are worth mentioning: (i) the social internship/social project and (ii) the junior company (PESSOA et al., 2005; SCORSOLINI-COMIN; INOCENTE; MATIAS, 2008).

Inclusion of these methodologies in administration courses can generate various benefits. One of them is to bring the university closer to third sector firms. Moreover, such methodologies enable social intervention, contributing to training citizen professionals committed to building a fairer society (OLIVEIRA, 2003).

In relation to internship, the National Education Council provides compulsory supervised internship to complete the administration course. However, such an activity could be done in any public or private institution (SCORSOLINI-COMIN; INOCENTE; MATIAS, 2008).

Social internship, in turn, is more suited in this context by enabling students to attend institutions that provided community services, such as day nurseries, hospices or NGOs, contributing to an ethical and humanist training of the administrator. It also permits the student to have a deeper understanding of social problems based on personal experience. Thus, the intern has the opportunity not only to learn about the different realities but also to be involved, sharing and contributing (PESSOA et al., 2005).

It should also be mentioned that in social internship the student tends to develop skills, such as affectivity, facilitating communication and other social skills. This practice breaks therefore with the traditional view of the professional in administration, generally linked to a more technical role (SCORSOLINI-COMIN; INOCENTE; MATIAS, 2008).

Leal and Medeiros (2006), in turn, suggest the inclusion of social projects in undergraduate administration courses. As in the social internship, these methodologies help bring students closer to the entities that have a social mission, providing an intervention with the disadvantaged publics. At the same time, it enables students to experience social problems under supervision.

In addition to social internship, the junior company in the administration course can be a valuable initiative to include the students in situations involving social problems. Oliveira (2003) defines a ‘junior company’ as an organization linked to a higher education institution, administrated by students who are supervised by teachers.
Through the junior company, students can approach third sector organizations and provide social services. There is a trend for junior companies to work closer with the firms with a social mission. Therefore, it may be a way for students to deal with social risk situations and be able to contribute to a more humanist and citizen training (OLIVEIRA, 2003).

When creating the junior company, the university is adopting the university tripod (learning, research and extension). Learning is achieved to the extent that teachers, who create a theoretical and practical relationship when planning and undertaking projects, supervise the activities. This is, then, a form of learning by actually ‘doing’. The junior company also involves research, since the students investigate, collect and analyze data. Lastly, it considers extension as engaging the local community. Moreover, the junior company is non-profit, with its main mission to serve the community by providing specialized services (OLIVEIRA, 2003).

2.3. Assessment in Administration

The potential for assessment is evident to help guarantee the quality of courses, curricula and programs. Assessments being done by the Ministry of Education have shown a lack of symmetry between onsite assessments and performance assessment, which led us to propose this appraisal study focusing on the opinion of students, teachers and coordinators of administration courses in some Brazilian universities.

Appraisal studies sensitive to the characteristics of the contexts are characterized as key practical projects that can use their theoretical basis in indicating relevant aspects that deserve the attention of the administrators, teaching staff and student body in the contexts considered. Suitable appraisal information can be used to valorize efforts and obtain effective results.

Concepts, principles, procedures and their developments will be the foundation of the planning and executive actions of this study, contributing to the due study of key aspects of projects and programs of administration courses. The results may also help in improving existing programs and in the quality of others to be created, implemented and assessed.

The administration course accompanied an upward trend in the number of courses. In 2008, of the 24,719 undergraduate classroom courses, 1,809 were administration courses, representing the professional category with the largest number of courses in the country. In 2006 there were 1,684 administration courses, therefore in these two years there was an increase of 125 courses; that is, in Brazil approximately five courses were opened every three months.

Of all administration courses in 2008, 203 were provided by public institutions and 1,606 by private institutions. In percentage terms, this means 11.22% of the administration courses were offered by public and 88.78% by private institutions. Bearing in mind that the national average of courses offered in private universities during the period in question was 73% (considering the various training areas), the supply of administration courses in private universities outweighed the aforementioned national average.

The administration course had the highest number of first year students and graduating students, both in public and private universities, to a total of 215,213 and 103,344, respectively. Fischer (2008, p.2) states that:

Given this scenario, concern with the organization and curricular development of these courses is a matter of concern, since the problems increase in direct ratio to a greater degree of awareness of the students’ need

These data confirm the need for studies that analyze and assess the administration courses from different viewpoints.

The creation of appraisal mechanisms as a way to regulate and control the new HEI, while at the same time with a view to guaranteeing the continuing quality of those already existing, has become a matter of concern as the scenario spreads throughout Brazil. It is important to effectively set up a follow-up process in this new organizational context in order mainly to keep the focus on quality of education offered by such higher education institutions, including both the public and private HEI.

When well implemented, the assessment of courses and teachers moves away from a solely punitive character and becomes a mirror of feelings and reflections that can be used to compile new educational strategies and management of university courses.

Hence the need to create assessment criteria and listen to the people involved in the teaching and learning process, in order to detect and measure results of the teaching production, identify possible conflicts and valorize good results.

Assessment is also an opportunity for the teachers to perceive the scope of their work within society and contribute even further to its transformation and development.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Considering the purposes of the research, it was decided to undertake a qualitative-quantitative survey. The qualitative study is a suitable method when intended to understand the phenomenon in depth, considering the context in which it occurs. This approach contributes to the holistic understanding of the problem under study and the relations that are formed within this context. It is possible to perceive, for example, how contextual variables influence the occurrence of the phenomenon. (YIN, 2005; GODOY, 1995; EISENHARDT, 1989).

Another benefit of adopting qualitative studies is that their results are essentially descriptive, since the intention is to thoroughly understand the phenomenon as a whole. Therefore, it is a suitable method of data analysis when there is ambiguity in the existing theory about the topic or even when the variables are closely interwoven (YIN, 2005).

The main sources of evidence in qualitative studies are the data collected from interviews, documents and files, physical artifacts and direct and indirect observation (YIN, 2005; EISENHARDT, 1989). Adopting these premises, data collection was based on in-depth interviews and direct observation with 16 teachers of administration courses in various Brazilian learning institutions. It should be emphasized that the interview is a source of valuable evidence in the qualitative study, especially when the intention is to understand in depth a complex social situation from the viewpoint of the players involved (EISENHARDT, 1989).

It should also be stressed that the choice of institutions was based on the criteria of the Ministry of Education concepts in the latest assessments, length of the target course in the study and access to the interviewees, so that the questions could be investigated in considerable depth. Moreover, the idea was to consider all regions in Brazil (South, Southeast, Midwest, Northeast and North).
To complete the qualitative analyses a quantitative study was also done with the students in the last period of the administration course. The purpose of the quantitative stage is to observe the perception of the student body in relation to the disciplines focusing on the areas of social projects. In this way the student opinions were systematically examined and their perceptions compared with those of the teachers. In all, 130 self-applied questionnaires were completed.

To undertake the quantitative stage, a questionnaire was structured on closed questions and applied to the students from USP, EBAPE, UFBA, UFSC, UNB, PUC-Minas and EAESP. The choice of these HEIs was also based on the length of the target-course of the study, tradition and access to the students.

Concerning the profile of the students participating in the quantitative survey, 60.8% come from Southeast Brazil from institutions such as USP, EAESP and EBAPE. Although women are the majority in undergraduate courses in Brazil, with regard to the students’ gender, the administration courses were found to be predominantly male, with only 37.3% female respondents.

Lastly, with regard to the age of the interviewees, we found that mostly young people attend the administration courses. Among the trainees 44.5% are 22 years old or under and 46.1% between 23 and 30 years old. Students over 30 years old are all concentrated in UNB, the Midwest region of the country; the youngest are concentrated in USP, EAESP and EBAPE.

The combined use of several sources of evidence – interviews, questionnaires and direct observation – helped supplement the information obtained from each source. This technique of coordinating multiple sources of evidence for analyzing the same phenomenon is a type of triangulation (EISENHARDT, 1989; YIN, 2005).

For treating the data from the interviews, a research method was used which is very often employed in qualitative studies: content analysis. It consists of a set of techniques for systematizing, interpreting and describing the information content. The researcher looks to clearly understand the text, examine its dimensions and build up inferences from it (YIN, 2005). To facilitate this stage, categories of analysis were created based on literature and reviewed in the light of the evidence of the survey, using the qualitative data treatment software N-vivo 8.0 (EISENHARDT, 1989; GODOY, 1995).

The Likert scale analysis (1961) was used to check the data from the questionnaires (1961), trend measures, dispersion and correlation that helped assess the students’ perception of this study’s objectives.

4. DESCRIPTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Disciplines on Social Themes

In the qualitative study, the data disclose that most of the administration courses surveyed, the disciplines addressing social themes are optional or special topics, as some institutions prefer to call them (Interview 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 11). Thus, the learning institution transfers to the student the decision to study social topics or not during the course, a sign that they are not yet considered priority disciplines in Brazilian administration courses.
With regard to the students’ perception of the social disciplines, two interesting patterns are noticeable. First, as in the case of the teachers, the most mentioned disciplines are those in the administration area. Graphs 1 and 2 highlight the administration disciplines as some of the most mentioned for the topics of corporate commitment to the community and assessment methodology of social projects and research design, with 11% and 10.9%, respectively. Secondly, a high percentage of students stated that there was no discipline on these topics; 28.4% and 52.5% in graph 2. It is possible that the students are not associating the existing disciplines with these two topics.

According to the students, the social topics are addressed superficially in several disciplines during the course, especially those linked to the area of human/social sciences, such as ethics and sociology (Interview 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 14). Accordingly, it is understood that it is not a fundamental condition to include specific disciplines on social topics in the administration course. In this case, a more adequate approach to the content is also necessary.

Several disciplines touch on these topics superficially ranging from the introduction to administration, the anthropology of organizations, administrations, to the actual discipline that I’m working on, which is a seminar on special topics focusing on environmental management with an approach to ecological sustainability (Interview 5).

Concerning the proper approach to the social topics by the teachers, the students are divided in which way the contents are presented in the classroom. The topic with most approval is corporate social responsibility, with 50% of the students stating that it is very adequately addressed. On the other hand, 30% of respondents said that the area of public policies is not well addressed by the teachers. The students were also not very impressed by the assessment of social projects, with 20% saying that the content is not well presented.

The inclusion of social topics in the disciplines depends heavily on the interest and professional/personal training of the teachers on the course. In other words, if some of the teachers on the course have more experience in quantitative content and do not give due relevance to such topics as corporate social responsibility, it is likely that these subjects are not considered in the curriculum of disciplines on which they lecture (Interview 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 16).

Furthermore, some interviewees suggest that the knowledge of these social topics can be gained through supplementary activities, such as for example, from the junior company in the course, from lines of research involving undergraduate students, and other academic practices (Interview 2, 3, 15). The Institutional Program of Scientific Initiation Scholarships (PIBIC) of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) helps include graduating students in different types of research, including in third sector organizations. However, yet again, conditioned by the interest of the teachers and students, which may or may not request funding for studies of this kind.

Forty-one point five percent (41.5%) of students mentioned the junior company in the course as an opportunity to gain experience in the social projects area. However, it is important to note the high percentage of students who were unable to answer on any activity that enables this type of experience, stressing that they are students who have been some years in the HEIs, since they are in their last term. Moreover, few mentioned the PIBIC institutional scholarships.
In the light of the above, it can be inferred that the inclusion of disciplines relating to commitments to the community, social projects, environment and other issues is still not institutionalized since it depends on the students’ interest in studying optional disciplines and/or the academic background of the teachers on the course. On analyzing the data from the qualitative interviews, it was possible to note that only two institutions include a number of several compulsory disciplines that address these topics, in addition to the optional (Interview 3, 6).

Mention should also be made that various curricula of the surveyed courses favor a functional outlook and emphasize traditional administration disciplines (financial management, marketing, production and so on), with little mention of compulsory disciplines addressing social topics, as Interviewee 9 stressed. Added to this is the fact that the assessment process adopted for the administration courses is still conventional (test, work, seminar), evidencing that few innovative teaching methodologies are adopted. If there is a profile, it is of the administrator within the traditional model. There is nothing, we don’t have any other variation in it. You will find some monographs concerned with the environmental topic, but following the same model, from the same perspective of an economic model (Interview 9).

Despite this current situation, the interviewees disclose that there is a favorable trend to including disciplines with a social focus in the administration courses. This movement to valorize actions of social responsibility within the Brazilian organizations is relatively recent and should reflect in the administration courses (Interview 4, 6, 9, 10, 14, 16), findings that converge with the theoretical review of this survey. Therefore, the interviews already indicate a movement to revise the administration curriculum to include such topics, as the reports below explain.

4.2. Room for social topics during the course
The interviewees reveal that it would be possible and appropriate to broaden the discussion of the social areas during the administrator’s training, although they acknowledge there is a movement to valorize these topics and progress on this matter (Interview 3, 7, 10, 11). Interviewee 13 emphasizes that administration is a field of quite dynamic knowledge and, as new demands continue to emerge, it is possible to review the educational project of the course to adapt it to the new context (Interview 13).

Nevertheless, some interviewees point out that some processes and requirements from the legal (regulatory agency requirements) and institutional (university guidelines) viewpoints may cause impediments and delay in curricular change. Therefore it is necessary that the institutional and legal policies are considered in this process.

It is worth mentioning the perception of Interviewee 11, which points out that the social topics are not increased in the administration course because the students give them little value. This point is quite interesting when we look at the students’ views of their course. For 56.3% of the students, the administration course gives more emphasis to knowledge of exact sciences, discarding the behavioral areas.

These answers raise the following question: Are the students, in fact, not giving value to the social disciplines? Judging by the results of the previous section, it is possible to conclude that both students and teachers and also coordinators of the courses undervalue them, to some extent, and still attribute more value to contracting professionals linked to the more traditional administration areas (marketing, finance, production, etc.).
4.3. Key disciplines for the social areas

The interviewees were also asked about which discipline(s) they consider the pillar of the training in the areas of social projects, social responsibility, citizenship and environment. The teachers mentioned a variety of disciplines. However, all have in common the fact that they belong to the field of human/social sciences.

Can such findings indicate that the disciplines in the field of human sciences play a leading role in the humanist and systemic formation of the students, in the sense that they develop a more critical view of society? In fact, some interviewees understand that these contents should be the foundations of any higher education (Interview 3, 9).

All areas of knowledge have to have a solid knowledge of philosophy and sociology. I think that we need to, before learning about our specific discipline, administration, economics – whatever - we have to have an understanding of the world (Interview 9).

Attention is also called to the emergence of a number of disciplines in the public sector such as formation pillar in social projects, and may indicate that the institutions are coherent with their public natures.

From interviews with the students, attention is also called to the diversity of disciplines mentioned culture, citizenship, environment and social responsibility as being the most important for social projects areas. Strongest emphasis was given to the “administration” area, with 14.7%; however, among the students the term relates to the environment, people, business, project, etc., rather than the public area. Social science-related disciplines (sociology, politics, anthropology, culture, philosophy, etc.) were considered the most important by 13.7% of interviewed students. Also worth mentioning is the course on “ethics” mentioned separately by 8.8% of the students.

With regard to including leading disciplines in the administration courses, the interviewed teachers say that this line is considered key to the student’s training and is studied throughout the course. The disciplines that provide most development of this profile in the students are: people management, psychology, leadership, entrepreneurial culture and other names given to these topics (Interview 1, 3, 6, 2, 13). Some teachers add that the leadership aspects can also be developed by practical projects and activities, such as, for example, in the sphere of the junior company (Interview 9, 10, 16).

The survey was designed specifically to analyze the question of the discipline of public administration, since it generally brings to the fore social topics, such as political culture and citizenship. It was found that in some of the surveyed institutions, namely the Federal University of Bahia and Maranhão State University, public administration involves compulsory disciplines in the curriculum and, according to the interviewees, plays a key role in training the students (Interview 4, 6, 10, 13).

Also, interviews with the teachers revealed that there is a tendency to valorize the ‘public administration’ topic in the institutions surveyed, generally coherent with the profile of the schools, which are mostly public. This is because there is concern of some interviewees with the Brazilian administration courses giving emphasis in the business context of private companies, that is, on the financial and market rationale. The courses offered do not give the student subsidies to understand the country’s legal, political and social issues.
Endorsing the above comment, very few students listed the discipline of “public administration”. Administration disciplines mentioned by the students were related to human resources, the environment, organizations, market, finance and so on. So we observe in the students’ perception that the administration area is more closely linked to the traditional administration disciplines when compared to the public sector.

4.4. Valorization of disciplines in the field of human/social sciences

Another studied aspect in this survey concerns the degree of valorization of the disciplines in the field of human/social sciences by the teacher and students of the administration course. It is found that a considerable part of the courses surveyed consists of disciplines linked to the field of human sciences, with a larger share of qualitative content (Interview 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16).

The teachers emphasize that some of the reasons justifying the strong humanistic emphasis of the courses in this study is that the disciplines in the field of human/social sciences contributes to a critical and humanist formation of the students (Interview 4, 9). Moreover, such topics are more systemic and general, enabling the student to gain a worldview to later understand more specific matters.

But the basis for me to check these more specific disciplines, I think that having some discipline that would be a guideline, to do with values, with ethical questions (Interview 9).

Nevertheless, some teachers suggest that the predominance of qualitative disciplines could cause deficiencies in the administrator training, which could be incomplete (Interview 11). Along this line they perceive that there is a movement to include technical contents in the administration course, in order to fill this gap of competence in the exact sciences.

Interviewee 9 adds that the longer timetable of the social disciplines in the administration course is an instruction from the higher education regulatory agencies (Ministry of Education and Higher Education Department). Furthermore, within the scientific studies of the administration field, the quantitative survey is more appreciated by the academics than the qualitative studies.

The opinions are more divided however in the opinion of the students. Some teachers understand that the emphasis of the administration course on human sciences is strongly criticized by the students, since they do not perceive value in these subjects (Interview 2, 11). One of the reasons given is as Interviewee 11 suggests that the students only valorize knowledge that they can apply immediately.

On the other hand, some teachers understand that the students prefer disciplines in the field of human sciences, since they find it hard and resist against the quantitative content of the exact sciences (Interview 6, 10, 11). Lastly, Interviewee 5 suggests that there is a balance, as in the following excerpt from an interview:

Some of the students valorize these elements that they think are important for the administrator to think more critically, making it compatible between a profit outlook and a values viewpoint. And other students think that in fact these things are a waste of time (Interview 5).

The quantitative study with the students showed that they do not give much value to the social disciplines. Graph 12 shows that only 14.6% said that the students normally give more value to these areas, while 25.2% replied that the vast majority disregards these disciplines.
In the preceding sections it was found that the teachers generally give little importance to the topics relating to social projects, social responsibility, the environment and so on. Also, the institutions that regulate higher education also show greater concern about including disciplines from the fields of exact sciences in the administration courses. In this case, it is possible to infer that the lack of interest of the teachers and funding agencies has an impact on the students who seek to mirror themselves on their masters.

4.5. Behavioral Skills versus Exact Sciences
Considering the higher number of social disciplines in the area of human sciences in administration, it may be inferred that the course tends to prefer the behavioral/social skills than the skills relating to exact sciences. In fact, a large number of the interviewees of the qualitative study suggest that the courses of the surveyed institutions put more emphasis on behavioral skills (Interview 1, 7, 13). Even more so, converging with the teachers’ statements that indicate that the leadership axis is considerably valorized in the administration area.

Administrator training covers behavioral questions of sociology, psychology, and much emphasis is given to this question of training administrators, not only the technical administrator focusing on technical decision-making issues but a citizen administrator, an administrator who can understand the company and the people as a result of this balance (Interview 13).

On the other hand, Interviewee 3 suggests that the administration course is able to contribute to a well-balanced training of the administrator, enabling development of behavioral and technical/exact skills.

On this topic, divergences were found between the teachers’ and students’ opinion. As mentioned earlier, 56.3% of the students believe that the course that they attend gives more value to the knowledge of exact sciences. However, this perception is more accentuated among the students from Southeast Brazil. In this region, 70.3% perceive greater emphasis of the course on the field of exact sciences, while this percentage among the HEIs in the South is 38.9~% and only 7.1% in the Midwest.

4.6. Methodology: Compulsory Internship
Regarding compulsory internship, most of the interviewees in the qualitative survey reveal that there is little incentive by the learning institutions for the student to work in third sector organizations. Since the administration courses have generally a business bias, there is no incentive to undertake research and internship in entities that provide community services, such as day nurseries, hospices, shelters and NGOs. Thus, students can use their own initiative to choose the social area, which is not very common in Brazilian universities (Interview 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 15, 16).

I think that the question here is a little more cultural, this view that the administration student has to go to companies and then formal, public and private companies, and there isn’t further perception or interest in encouraging these other things. It is more common in other undergraduate courses, namely social service (Interview 6).

Culturally, our course was designed for companies, and is being regarded as such, which is not totally wrong but doesn’t need to be for companies alone (Interview 6).
In this aspect there is ample convergence between the teachers’ and students’ view, since the latter also agree that there are very few incentives to do internships in the third sector. Only 2.4% of the interviewees in the quantitative survey answered that there is strong incentive from the teachers for this activity, while 63.5% said that the teachers do not encourage third sector internships. When compared to the other regions, the Southeast again stands out with 76% of students stating that they have no incentive whatsoever to do this type of internship; in the South this is 56% and in the Northeast 50%. We can see that, even in the Midwest 70% of the students say that there is little incentive from the teachers.

It is, therefore, seen that there is no institutionalized policy in the universities in this study that encourages this involvement in the third sector. Although many educational projects in the administration course valorize social topics, this is not put into practice and stays only in discourse and on paper. An example of this reality is the fact that the working in third sector organizations is not considered a compulsory internship in a number of Brazilian learning institutions, which are the compulsory internship hours to be completed before graduating (Interview 1, 6, 10).

This question is also closely bound to the degree of teachers’ involvement with social topics who can or cannot dedicate their time to doing activities/studies in that area and consequently can or cannot include the students in these practices (Interview 6, 10, 11, 15).

Something does exist but very hesitantly by one or other teacher on their own initiative, but it’s not something institutionalized. (Interview 6).

Another factor that inhibits student involvement in the social sector is the student’s own lack of interest (Interview 1, 6, 10). Some of the reasons explaining this situation are as follows: (i) a cultural aspect of being an intern in a private company; (ii) the private organizations in general offer better remuneration to students compared to third sector organizations; (iii) the students’ concern with employability after completing the course.

As a result of the above reasons, few students work in third sector organizations, and most students are interns in private companies or government agencies, as confirmed in the Interviews 5, 6, 10, 11 and 16.

On the other hand, Interviewee 4 points out that this prejudice by the students is diminishing with the growth trend of the third sector, as the report below evidences. There is a sign, therefore, of the start of a process to encourage internship in the third sector as a possibility for the student’s work, although still in the early stages.

4.7. Capacity of the graduating students to undertaken social projects in the companies

Since the inclusion of social topics is not yet institutionalized in administration courses and there is no student culture to work in third sector organizations during their undergraduate course, it can be inferred that the graduating students are little prepared to deal with social problems. In fact, most of the interviewed teachers confirm this reality (Interview 1, 5, 7, 9, 13).

Moreover, the concept of Brazilian administration courses was based on a private business rationale, with little room for public sector issues and, even less, for the modus operandi of third sector organizations, since it is, after all, a recent movement. Thus, students have little support and knowledge about this segment, which is quite different from the others.
Its whole theoretical foundation is built on private administration. But it’s not the students’ fault; they had no course subject to give them the opportunity, let’s say, for this discussion. I have been such a bore in my group and in fact, defending that in the next curricular review we change this discipline to Public and Social Administration, Public Administration and Social Management, something compulsory along those lines (Interview 9).

On the other hand, the students who are interested in the topic and do some specific activity during the course (social studies or activities in the junior company) are ready to work in social projects, as revealed in the following excerpt of an interview. However, it should be stressed that this is a small percentage of students (Interview 2, 3, 6, 10).

4.8. Practices to encourage experience in social projects
In general it was found that a large part of the methodologies contributing to a social training of the graduates is the result of initiatives that coordinate undergraduate teaching and extension learning or undergraduate teaching and research. The interviews indicate that several universities have gone along this road, in tune with one of the basic premises as a university, which is: a link between teaching, research and extension learning. Moreover, it has been found that studying interdisciplinary projects in the undergraduate teaching field, involving various departments and areas of knowledge is a way for students to acquire knowledge in the social field (Interview 1, 6, 9).

A relevant experience mentioned in the interviews involving theoretical and practice learning was the curricular review of the administration course at the Federal University of Santa Catarina with the idea of valorizing practical, extension and research activities in undergraduate courses, based on the university premise of connecting learning, research and extension. It is worth mentioning some of the changes made, such as a longer timetable for extra activities to be done by the students, especially in three areas: research; extension; citizenship and teaching (Interview 2).

Three interviewees mentioned research by the administration students on social topics as an important way to enable graduating students to come in contact with the questions permeating the third sector. Projects such as the CNPq Institutional Program for Scientific Initiation Scholarships (PIBIC) and of other research funding institutions (FAPERJ) represent an opportunity for the student to become involved in research and social projects, as shown in the experiences reported below (Interview 2, 10, 13). On the other hand, few students mentioned the institutional scholarships as a way to gain experience in social research.

We have third sector research. We have in fact communication in the third sector, and scientific initiation; I think that they are two formal projects for funding from CNPq to do research in third sector organizations (Interview 2).

Another possibility that was mentioned would be to link teaching and extension by involving the administration students in extension projects undertaken by the department and/or university. In this context the interviewees raised three relevant projects: the Center of Solidarity Economics (Interview 1), the Extension Project and Retail Management (Interview 9) and the Rondon Project (Interview 10).
In addition to these extension practices, some interviewees reinforced the important role of the junior company in the administration course as a way to enable student involvement with social experiences, converging with the theoretical review of research (Interview 4, 9, 10, 15). As already mentioned, the students often mentioned the junior company: 41.5% believe that it offers an opportunity for experience in social projects. Although the scope of many junior companies focuses on projects with private companies, it was possible to note the existence of actions with emphasis on social topics, as reported below.

Ação Junior is a company that operates here in our Center and works with economics, accounting administration students. (…) So that fact that it won an award for social responsibility is because the projects with which it works with our regional business sector, is not local, more regional, lean more to the social question (Interview 2).

In this context, mention should also be made of FGV Foundation’s experience, in which the role of the junior company consists of two axes: public (government and third sector entities) and private (Interview 10).

In addition, the teachers mentioned the existence of interdisciplinary projects in the surveyed institutions, involving different departments and areas of knowledge, as in the case of the Solidarity Economics Incubator developed in the sphere of the Regional University of Northwest Rio Grande do Sul. At the same time as they can be run by the administration course involving other institutes, they can also be undertaken by another area, but with the collaboration of administration students and teachers (Interview 6, 9, 10).

These projects are important for training the students, since they provide cross learning, in order to coordinate and permeate knowledge from different fields of learning.

Lastly, other experiences for developing social-related skills emerged during the qualitative interviews:

- Exchange with countries in the southern hemisphere, especially, those with serious social problems (Interview 10).
- Technical community visits: more specific methodology, but which facilitates student contact with disadvantaged communities (Interview 10).
- Seminars with focus on solidarity economics and cooperatives (Interview 3).

Some of the students mentioned voluntary social internships, incubators and specific extension projects. However, it is striking that percentages of the graduating students who said “no activity” and “did not know the answer” were 6.9% and 32.3%, respectively. This means that among the student interviewees, 39.2% are finishing the course without at least knowing practices that encourage experience of third sector social projects.

Despite the various possibilities of academic practices with a social focus, it is important to demonstrate how difficult it is to consolidate them. One of the obstacles relates to the students’ lack of interest and permanence in social studies, projects and activities. As seen above, internships in private companies tend to provide the student with better remuneration than internships in third sector organizations, and possible scholarships from funding institutions (Interview 1, 4).
Another obstacle, also already discussed above, is the dependence on teachers for developing projects and studies on social topics. If these topics do not belong to their academic and personal life, possibly the teacher will not encourage doing projects in this area. It is therefore clear that it is not something institutionalized (Interview 1, 3, 10).

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Returning to the purpose of the study – to assess the undergraduate administration courses with regard to adopting disciplines and methodologies focusing on developing in the students a profile of a socially responsible leader –, the findings show that this movement in higher education institutions in Brazil is still in the early stages. Since valorization of topics such as social responsibility, social projects and the third sector is relatively recent, it is understandable that this trend in administration courses should be reflected in the next few decades.

In fact, it was found that the disciplines addressing social topics are still not part of the compulsory curriculum of the administration course. From this viewpoint, the teaching institutions transfers to the student the decision to study or not social topics during the course, also indicating that they are not considered fundamental in administrator training.

Furthermore, it was found that teachers in general attribute little importance to social topics while at the same time the agencies regulating higher education in Brazil have instructed universities to extend the timetable of quantitative disciplines in administration courses. In this case, it can be inferred that the lack of interest in the teachers and funding institutions influence the students’ opinion and who also tend to give little value to social disciplines.

The study also reveals that a functional perspective prevails in the curriculum of administration courses, which means more room for traditional disciplines in the area (financial management, marketing, production and so on). Added to this is the fact that the design of these courses is based on a private company rationale, with little room for the study of public affairs. In view of the above, it is concluded that inclusion of disciplines relating to social topics is not yet an institutionalized practice in the universities in the study.

A variable that influences the importance given to social topics in the administration course is the interest and training of the teaching staff in the course. In other words, if a large number of teachers have a more quantitative background it is likely that the social topics would not be a major subject in their lectures on the disciplines in the course.

In relation to university practices to encourage students’ experience in social projects, it was found that various methodologies can contribute to this training (namely, research, extension projects, internship, junior company) but that sometimes they are not used for this purpose.

Nonetheless, the study discovered some practices that, if used properly, could contribute to training social leaders: (i) participation in studies on social topics; (ii) administration student involvement in extension projects undertaken by the university; (iii) the junior company in the administration course working on social projects. One of the obstacles, however, is the lack of interest and continuation of students in social research, projects and activities.
Another finding is the poor incentive of universities and teachers for the student to do an internship in third sector organizations. Since administration courses generally focus on the business context (private) there is no incentive to do research and internships in organizations providing community services, such as day nurseries, hospices and NGOs. The conclusion therefore is that there is no institutionalized policy in the universities in the study to encourage this involvement in the third sector.

In the light of the above, the conclusion is that undergraduate administration courses in Brazil still leave a lot to be desired in terms of disciplines and methodologies for developing in the students a profile of a socially responsible leader. Consequently, it is found that students finishing the course graduate with little preparation for dealing with social problems.

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**BIOGRAPHY**

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Graph 1 – Disciplines relating to corporate commitment to the community (%)

Graph 2 - Disciplines relating to assessment methodologies of social projects and research design

Graph 3 – Degree of value attributed by students to the disciplines in the social field (%)

**GRAPHS**