

Organizational improvisation: challenges and perspectives for management education

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Abstract

Organizational improvisation has been researched for over 30 years as it emphasizes the importance of improving the practice of managers and leaders dealing with unpredictability, increasingly stressed in contemporary times. An updated view of academic production in organizational improvisation is necessary, and a reflection on integrating it in management education. This research aims to systematize the advances in academic production on organizational improvisation and discuss its integration in management education. The research methodology consists of a systematic survey of academic production. The research results include: (a) a set of actual relevances and themes related to organizational improvisation, (b) a discussion about the importance of organizational improvisation for management education research, and (c) a set of educational approaches, barriers, and perspectives that help research and future practices to better integrate improvisation in management teaching and learning. The main contribution of this research is to inaugurate a new research orientation: the teaching-learning of organizational improvisation.

Keywords: Organizational improvisation. Management education. Teaching improvisation. Teaching challenges.

Improvisação organizacional: desafios e perspectivas para o ensino-aprendizagem em administração

Resumo

A improvisação organizacional é pesquisada há mais de 30 anos, pois ressalta a importância de sofisticar a prática de gestores e líderes frente às imprevisibilidades cada vez mais marcadas na contemporaneidade. Carecemos de uma visão mais atualizada da produção em improvisação organizacional e de uma reflexão sobre de que modo integrá-la na formação do gestor. O objetivo desta pesquisa é sistematizar os avanços na produção acadêmica acerca de improvisação organizacional e discutir sua integração no ensino-aprendizagem da administração. A metodologia de pesquisa consiste num levantamento sistemático da produção acadêmica. Os resultados da pesquisa fornecem um conjunto atualizado de relevâncias e temáticas relacionadas à improvisação organizacional, uma discussão sobre a importância da improvisação organizacional para a pesquisa em ensino-aprendizagem em administração e um conjunto de abordagens educacionais, barreiras e perspectivas que ajudam pesquisas e práticas futuras a melhor integrar a improvisação no ensino-aprendizagem em administração. A principal contribuição deste estudo é inaugurar uma nova orientação de pesquisa: o ensino-aprendizagem da improvisação organizacional.

Palavras-chave: Improvisação organizacional. Ensino-aprendizagem. Ensino da improvisação. Desafios do ensino.

Improvisación organizacional: desafíos y perspectivas para la enseñanza-aprendizaje en Administración

Resumen

La improvisación organizacional ha sido investigada durante más de 30 años, ya que enfatiza la importancia de sofisticar la práctica de gestores y líderes ante la imprevisibilidad cada vez más marcada en la actualidad. Necesitamos una visión más actualizada de la producción en improvisación organizacional, así como una reflexión sobre cómo integrarla en la formación de los directivos. El objetivo de esta investigación es sistematizar los avances en la producción académica sobre la improvisación organizacional y discutir su integración en la enseñanza-aprendizaje de la Administración. La metodología de investigación consiste en un relevamiento sistemático de la producción académica. Los resultados de la investigación son: (a) un conjunto de puntos relevantes y temas relacionados con la improvisación organizacional, (b) una discusión sobre la importancia de la improvisación organizacional para la investigación en enseñanza-aprendizaje en Administración, (c) un conjunto de enfoques, barreras y perspectivas educativos que ayudan a las investigaciones y prácticas futuras a integrar mejor la improvisación en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje en Administración. El principal aporte de esta investigación es inaugurar una nueva orientación investigadora: la enseñanza-aprendizaje de la improvisación organizacional.

Palabras clave: Improvisación organizacional. Enseñanza-aprendizaje. Enseñanza de la improvisación. Desafíos de la enseñanza.

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INTRODUCTION

Organizational improvisation (OI) is not a new phenomenon and has been recognized in organizational theory (Lewin, 1998) for being related to advances in studies on leadership, collectivity and flexible networks (Hatch, 2002). These are the basis of the business of the future, which requires changes in the profile of the manager, who behaves as a morally neutral technician, engaged in a world of solving rational problems and ignoring emotions. The difficulty in recognizing emotions as part of organizational practice hides the difficulty in realizing that organizing is made by human beings with limitations, impulses, creativity and emotions (M. P. Cunha, 2002). Emotion is inseparable from individual and collective OI, which considers error to be an important part in the development of an idea, which requires negotiations, continuous dialogues and performance (Flach & Antonello, 2011; Weick, 2002). Research on OI does not yet reflect the impact of its existence on day-to-day organizational life. Most of the published articles are theoretical, and the few empirical ones work with qualitative methodologies, with an emphasis on observation (Barrett, 1998; Flach & Antonello, 2011; Miner, Bassofoff & Moorman, 2001). The articles reflect the positive aspects related to learning in the practice of OI, but they do not explain about how to teach it. No reference was found to OI education. The few reviews of academic production integrate and systematize content that is still dispersed and fragmented, promoting a widespread understanding of the power of OI (M. P. Cunha, 2014).

The academic community expresses a growing concern with issues related to management education that lack dialogue, interdisciplinarity and integration (Gagliardi & Czarniawska, 2006). The problems pointed out range from the gap in teacher training to outdated methodologies, coupled with the lack of clarity such as to the meaning of competences and skills (Nunes, 2010). The debate about power (Clegg & Ross-Smith, 2003) and the little space that managers have to reflect on their experiences (Mintzberg & Gosling, 2003) show the contradictions between theory and practice in management education, which faces many challenges, such as the lack of capacity to bring the quality of learning together with the expansion of teaching (Oliveira, Loure & Castro, 2015) and their assessment systems (Bolzan & Antunes, 2015). Despite the substantial body of research on improvisation as a fundamental phenomenon in organizations, empirical studies on the application of improvisation training in the workplace are scarce (Ratten & Hodge, 2016). In all academic production, only few articles related to OI learning were identified (Barrett, 1998; Falkheimer & Sandberg, 2018; Flach & Antonello, 2011; Miner et al., 2001). More serious than that, there is no reference to education of this much-needed skill in the training of managers.

Our article seeks to discuss and systematize the advances, perspectives and challenges in academic production on OI and its integration in management education for the training of contemporary managers. The research methodology consists of a review of academic production not only in the field of management, but also in the field of social sciences, humanities and art. An extensive survey of the main national and international bases was conducted (Spell, SciELO, Sage Publications, Routledge, Web of Science, Capes Journals, Teses Capes, Library of Congress, Emerald, Academy of Management), focusing on the production of OI and its relations with educational issues. The search terms were “OI”, “improvisation”, “management”, “management”, “education”, “learning” and “teaching”.

In parallel, after identifying the academic production, we analyzed the references cited to identify new references, such as articles, books, book chapters, theses, dissertations, etc. Such references were researched, analyzed and integrated into the repertoire of our study. After a first selection stage, the consistent and coherent productions that approached with OI and their relationship with learning and teaching issues were verified. We mapped their bibliographic references in search of other relevant productions. That is, the review process took place within a snowball logic, which ended when no reference on the topic emerged as new and relevant. Academic productions on OI were selected and analyzed, which included a few productions on learning issues. The analysis of academic production sought to identify and categorize the main relevances, themes and lack of current research in OI. A second stage of analysis was conducted based on the lack of identified research, generating a categorization focused on (a) educational approaches in management, which are in line with the OI; (b) barriers to integrate OI in management education; and (c) perspectives for integrating OI into the management education.

This article is divided into three parts, in addition to this introduction. In the first, the analysis of academic production in OI is presented based on a set of relevances and themes. Moreover, in this section, a lack of research is identified and discussed as a challenge for future research on OI education. In the second, we analyze, present and discuss the educational approaches

related to OI teaching of OI and the barriers and perspectives for integrating OI in the OI education. In the last part, we discussed the results of the research in terms of theoretical-conceptual, methodological and practical implications for future research. These results are discussed to generate a conceptual contribution to guide research and practice on OI, emphasizing the importance of renewing and updating teaching and learning within the scope of management.

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVISATION: RELEVANCES, ADVANCES AND NEEDS

Academic productions on OI were analyzed and generated two major axes of knowledge: the relevance of OI to management and the main themes that guide research. In addition, we will also present the main definitions and methodologies adopted by the research.

The definition of OI falls on complex processes that range from quick responses without prior preparation to organizational choreographies carefully designed with a focus on organizational changes in highly competitive environments (M. P. Cunha, 2005). Improvisation is the deliberate fusion of design and execution in a new production that involves the cognitive, rational and intuitive interpretation of prescribed rules and standards of conduct at various levels (Giustiniano, M. P. Cunha & Clegg, 2016). It is directly linked to the three areas of organizational activity: internal (structure), external (environmental turbulence), and the articulation between internal and external areas (M. P. Cunha, Kamoche & R. C. Cunha, 2003). Improvisation involves the re-elaboration of unforeseen ideas that arise and are conceived in the course of a situation of adaptation and deviation. An open organizational project is needed, which considers the creative capacity of managers and their power of improvisation, since accepting the human condition of constant transformation is an inherent component of the work (J. V. Cunha & M. P. Cunha, 2008).

OI is defined as the conception of action its development based on the cognitive, affective, social and material resources available (Kamoche, J. V. Cunha & M. P. Cunha, 2003). It happens when the planning and execution of an action converge (Moorman & Miner, 1998); it has short periods of stability and a high level of uncertainty, dynamism, systemic complexity, heterogeneity and speed of innovation (J. V. Cunha & M. P. Cunha, 2000). OI also happens in opposition to a systematic routine that no longer works (Weick, 2002), requiring immediate responses (Flach, 2010; Flach & Antonello, 2011) and allowing overcoming (Moorman & Miner, 1998) within an imperfection aesthetics (Weick, 2002). OI as a theme in the area of organizations and management emerged associated with the jazz metaphor (Hatch, 1998). However, due to the broadening of the theoretical and empirical work base, it has been acquiring prominence in academic production and a progressive instrumental value (M. P. Cunha, R. C. Cunha & Kamoche, 2014). The practice of improvisation works as a training for imagination, creativity, collectivity, leadership and learning (Koppett, 2013).

There are several theoretical essays on OI, but few address the theme of organizational learning through improvisation by metaphors (Barrett, 1998; M. P. Cunha, 2002; Flach & Antonello, 2011). The three empirical studies that address the theme of learning related to OI used a qualitative approach. The first is based on multi-cases, with semi-structured interviews, direct observation and documentary analysis (Flach, 2010). The second is inductive and based on observation (Miner et al., 2001). The third consists of 25 qualitative interviews with a strategic selection of successful communication professionals, identified as typical strategic improvisers (Falkheimer & Sandberg, 2018).

Relevance of Organizational Improvisation in the Management Area

In our research on OI, we can identify eight reasons that explain why improvisation is highly relevant to the area and practice of management. The *first relevance* is that OI allows a positive direction in the management of changes in turbulent contexts. Change management is an articulation between the organizational structure and the turbulence of the external environment (M. P. Cunha, 2002). OI is seen as a useful skill for this management in the context of dynamic or turbulent businesses (Leybourne & Sadler-Smith, 2006). OI happens in day-to-day practice in the management of problems, generating an internal pressure that needs to be managed. When an OI happens, it involves everyone and remains alive in the organizational

memory because it is associated with a decrease in the level of turbulence (Moorman & Miner, 1998). Accepting turbulence is accepting improvisation; it is rejecting habitual behavior with a predictable result in favor of experimentation and progress (Barrett, 2012). In environments marked by constant uncertainty, which involve dynamism, hostility, discoveries, competitiveness and changes, companies are obliged to recognize OI as a useful skill for change management (M. P. Cunha, 2002), which helps to understand and question the organization as a continuous flow of people that communicate and organize each other (Weick, 1989), providing insights into improvements for change management (Crossan, 1998).

The *second relevance* is that it allows formulating and implementing strategies in changing scenarios. It is a characteristic of improvisation that the constant elaboration of strategies to identify paths that support the resolution of conflicts (Bernstein & Barrett, 2011), considering the limits (Moorman & Miner, 1998). At OI, information is quickly shared, serving as a basic strategy to coordinate complex ideas that happen simultaneously (Bastien & Hostager, 1988), bringing people closer to their jobs and expanding their ability to articulate in the search for solutions (J. V. Cunha & M. P. Cunha, 2008). The practice of OI is a strategy for the development of skills (Crossan, 1998) and raises important themes to create future organizational policies (Nicholls, 2012) based on practices (Crossan, 1996).

The *third relevance* is to allow rethinking the organizational structure. OI expands the concept of organizational structure (Crossan, 2005; Hatch, 1999, 2002) and develops the notion of minimal structure, which combines organizational, cultural and technological aspects with information and control systems. Management within the minimum structure can focus on the important aspects of the work, allowing the members of the organization to do what was not foreseen, instead of only what is explicitly allowed (M. P. Cunha, 2002) and deliberate. The balance between structure and improvisation is the appropriate form of management in very competitive environments (Kamoche & M. P. Cunha, 2001). It is necessary to better understand the actions of administrators, in contexts in which more bureaucratic structures and formal processes “compete” with the dynamics of events and with the fluency of reconstructive processes in organizations (Cavalcanti, 2004).

The *fourth relevance* is to enable the administrator to make decisions under time pressure. Even though there is no total control over planning, decisions need to be made (M. P. Cunha, 2014), and they happen in a planned or improvised way. Improvisation reveals that it is not always possible to have the time to consider things before making important decisions (Hatch, 1998). Improvising requires a high degree of concentration, which mobilizes the body and mind at the moment of decision making. Making decisions expands the repertoire of solutions and the ability to learn according to circumstances, developing learning about the environment and about oneself (Weick, 2002).

The *fifth relevance* is to promote creativity in the work environment, which is a human characteristic that is developed and practiced throughout life. However, it tends to be repressed in the organizational environment. The idea that creativity arises only from talent and individual expressions must be transformed, because it can be learned and practiced (Hallam & Ingold, 2007). The search for objective solutions in a short time is what provides the body with the impetus to generate ideas. This impulse is creativity (Fisher & Amabile, 2009; Hallam & Ingold, 2007; Weick, 2002), which works as a stimulus for organizational transformation (Barber, 2007). OI provides a creative practice in the search for solutions, causing some disorder that is subsequently reorganized (M. P. Cunha & J. V. Cunha, 2000). If we look at the characteristics associated with the organization of the 21st century, we will see that creativity is one of these pillars (Hatch, 1998; Leybourne & Sadler-Smith, 2006; Montuori, 2003).

The *sixth relevance* is related to the impulses it promotes towards innovation. Creative practice is the path to innovation, and the organizational environment is ideal for creative practice due to the constant search for solutions. The impulses needed to innovate are: short periods of stability, high level of uncertainty, dynamism, systemic complexity and heterogeneity (M. P. Cunha & J. V. Cunha, 2000; Chelariu, Johnston & Young, 2002). When improvising, the manager experiences these same impulses in practice. Thus, OI is driven to seek solutions and some of them innovative. Successful companies differentiate themselves from less effective organizations in their ability to improvise and exploit opportunities, innovating (Barrett, 2000; Bastien & Hostager, 1988; Kamoche & M. P. Cunha, 2001; Kirchbaum, Sakamoto & Vasconcelos, 2014; Koppett, 2013) and renewing themselves (Crossan, 1996, 1998; Kamoche et al., 2003).

The *seventh relevance* is related to learning to undertake. The ability to deal with an uncertain world requires a degree of improvisational skill from all entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs start with an idea or direction; however, many obstacles – limited

resources, unexpected market conditions or conflicts with team members – can prevent them from executing their initial plans. That is, they need to find a way to adapt to the circumstances, think about their desires and create new plans to concretize their vision. Entrepreneurs with OI skills show better performance (H. Neck, C. Neck & Murray, 2018). Associations with personality, motivation, cognition and social models and a positive relationship with the performance of new ventures (Hmieleski & Corbett, 2006, 2008) emerge from the relationship among improvisation, intuition and entrepreneurial intentions (Leybourne & Sadler-Smith, 2006).

The *eighth relevance* is in its ability to regenerate the practice of leadership. Improvisation contributed to create an experimental model of leadership in an OI context (M. P. Cunha et al., 2003), in which events are the generators of action (M. P. Cunha, 2014). Improvising is a leadership exercise that points to new paths (Flach, 2012), working with a new awareness and a new collective leadership capacity (Scharmer, 2010). Mock improvisation practices for managers have been able to expand learning about leadership by creativity and teamwork (Crossan, 1998; Koppett, 2013).

Research Topics on Organizational Improvisation

In OI research, some themes are expressed more frequently, such as organizational structure, creativity, innovation, leadership and organizational learning. Others appear less predominantly, such as time, organizational change, technology, marketing, entrepreneurship, project management, conflict and resistance. In our study, the themes are combined or addressed separately.

Organizational structure

When OI appears, it seems to be immersed in an absence of structure. However, it is actually immersed in a creative process shaped by structural elements (M. P. Cunha, 2002). It is the moment when the consequences of the actions unfold and are analyzed and understood simultaneously by the actors involved, such as managers, members of the organization, shareholders, customers or any other interested party. This can change the structure of functioning by experience (Barrett, 1998). OI makes it possible to rethink the organizational structure based on emotional, temporal and relational dimensions (Hatch, 1999), showing a set of technical and social elements that facilitate innovative action, instead of constraining it (Kamoche & M. P. Cunha, 2001). The minimum structures do not presuppose a negotiation, since they complement each other without the need for constant articulation (Barrett, 1998). Improvisation offers a unique combination of minimal structure and freedom that can reveal new understandings about the essence of the organizational structure (Hatch, 1999; Kamoche & M. P. Cunha, 2001). Like a jazz musician, the manager needs to find new answers in his area, dialoguing with the structure and, often, without the benefit of certainty regarding the paths and the quality of the solutions (Barrett, 1998).

Time and organizational change

Organizations work based on a simplistic understanding of time: that of the clock (linear perspective) and that of the event (cyclical perspective). The linear perspective is related to the passage of time and the maturation of ideas and procedures. The cyclic, in turn, deals with the time that the organization would like to have and that will give rise to goals, plans and procedures. With the concept of improvisation, it is possible to bring these 2 perspectives closer together, overcoming the idea that one opposes the other (Crossan & Sorrentti, 1997). In practice, OI offers analytical-conceptual support to understand the dynamics and subjectivity of the relationship between the 2 temporal perspectives in the organizational routine, since it can establish elements of analysis and identify contradictory aspects between them (Aranha & Garcia, 2005). In improvisation, we do not have the desired time to find the solution and we mature with the question presented.

Technology and marketing

Improvised marketing interventions (IMIs) are social media actions composed and executed in real time, close to an external event. The focus is on the concept of quick thinking, promoting humor, punctuality or unpredictability. It is by IMIs that we can see evidence about the value of the organization. These findings point to the potential of IMIs on social media and the resources that organizations must invest to reap the perceived benefits of online sharing (Borah et al., 2020).

Creativity and innovation

Every innovation originates from a creative practice, but not every creative practice leads to innovation. Creativity is a recurring theme in all academic productions that deal with OI, as it is an inherent characteristic of improvisation. However, it must be understood as an emergent property of the relationship between order and disorder, involving aspects that are more social than individual (Montuori, 2003). The manager's capacity and availability to give up what was planned to follow a solution created at the moment emphasizes collaboration and can bring innovation to those who know how to cooperate (M. P. Cunha, 2002).

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs constantly face unexpected and unusual situations. Those who thrive are improvisers. Entrepreneurial mindset can be promoted based on the principles developed in the practice of improvisation. By improvisation, entrepreneurs can learn to pay attention to the interpersonal conditions of the present and the future to adapt potential limitations to the success of the enterprise (Balachandra, 2019; H. Neck et al., 2018).

Leadership

Leaders can adopt a mindset that maximizes learning, remains responsive to emerging short-term opportunities and strengthens the organization's dynamic capabilities (Bernstein & Barrett, 2011). The leadership must think of the group as creative, within a well-distributed system, with decentralized control, in which going for ideas that are not supported by research, but that follow the group's reasoning and attempts it will often be necessary (Barrett, 2012).

Project management

Improvisation is an organizational attribute that promotes the practice of improvisation and adaptation in management (Hatch, 1998; Lewin, 1998). The practice of improvisation involves management (Crossan, 1998), understood as a social, collective and creative learning (Sawyer, 2000). Organizational adaptation happens as one improvises, innovates and adjusts the work routine over time (Orlikowski, 1996). OI helps explain new ways of organizing management practice (Orlikowski, 2000) in an emergent and timely manner (Orlikowski & Hofman, 1997), expanding listening (Caines & Heble, 2015), exercising resilience (Weick, 1993) and being able to achieve originality (Leybourne, 2009). Contemporary organizations are located in a complex and changing world, in which OI can become a precious tool for project management (M. P. Cunha, 2002).

Conflict and resistance

The relationship between competition and cooperation within the organizational environment can be a conflict-generating combination. At OI, competition and cooperation are generators of creativity in conflict resolution, improving their management capacity (Kirchbaum et al., 2014). More than people with a repertoire of varied solutions that know how to compete, some situations require, above all, people with the capacity for quick learning to cooperate, that is, capable of choosing a solution adjusted to the circumstances, breaking resistances (Weick, 1993). The process of resisting something, as in war, presupposes a framework of continuous change, since it is not known for sure the next enemy's steps. The construction of resistance is an act of improvisation, since it is the moment when rules and structures can be temporarily suspended.

Organizational learning

Research on OI and organizational learning provides a vision on entrepreneurship learning, technological innovation and the fusion of unplanned changes and orders (Miner et al., 2001). The OI process has proven implications for organizational learning, since it emerges to deal with problems that are not premeditated and require immediate resolution. Thus, it provides a direct link with the previous and later learning process in the attempt, the success and the mistake (Flach, 2010; Miner et al., 2001). Leaders can adopt a mindset that maximizes learning, taking advantage of the short-term opportunities that arise and, at the same time, strengthening the dynamic capabilities of the organization (Bernatein & Barrett, 2011).

Challenge for Future Research: Organizational Improvisation Education

Learning to improvise

Improvisation shows a distinct type of real-time learning, both short and long term (Miner et al., 2001). It is possible to observe the OI, focusing on the role of the information flow and the action-learning interaction, since the organization responds to an environment of changes or a crisis (Chelariu et al., 2002). Learning can occur before – knowledge of minimum structures, rules previous experiences –, during – the real time in which new paths, shapes and structures are created, and there is a search for the solution of the problem within a short period, promoting experiences, actions and changes that converge in time – and after improvisation – with permanence in memory and the possibility of reflecting on mistakes and successes in the search for other possible solutions (Flach, 2010).

Teaching to learn to improvise

The teaching and learning of OI appears to be a lack in academic production. The skill of improvisation can be taught to the members of an organization by mock training, which promotes behavioral changes both in the individual and in the organization (Vera & Crossan, 2005). However, nothing was found about OI education. This lack also shows the lack of practice in educational institutions, since OI is an implicit resource for those who are practicing an action for the first time. The adjustments between the body and the mind at the moment of learning are the essence of OI.

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVISATION EDUCATION: APPROACHES, CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

Educational Approaches in Management in Tune with OI

The educational process and the interaction between teachers and students in higher education involves planning and learning interaction, inside and outside the classroom, and performance evaluation as part of the construction of learning (Beni et al., 2017). The positioning of universities, aspects of management, the profile of the student and the relationship between curriculum and teaching action compose the structural and institutional dimension of the learning environment of management (Lima & Silva, 2017). Despite the importance of practice in professional training in management, there is weakness in studies on issues focused on practice (Cassundé, 2017).

Professional education is paradoxical and presents discontent on the part of students and teachers (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Scholars criticize the overly analytical emphasis on teaching, which stifles creativity and little integration between teaching and research, leading to a disconnection between theory and practice, between knowledge and action (Wankel & DeFillippi, 2006). The field of management has been marked by a conflict, in which the manager is seen as a technician whose practice consists of applying principles and methods derived from the science of management to the daily problems of his organization (Schon, 1983). Higher education in many parts of the world has ignored that practices can contribute to our knowledge base in an interactive way, different from classroom education. That is, making a synthesis between theory and practice is possible by combining tacit knowledge, critical reflection and mastery (Raelin, 2007).

Studies point to a need to restructure paradigms in a constant assessment of educational practice in management and the development of management, promoting reflection on organizational practice (Czarniawska & Gagliardi, 2003). There is an urgent need to incorporate a reflective dialogical practice to develop professionals more critical, responsible and connected to tacit and explicit knowledge (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004). Active methodologies seek to help achieve complex levels of thought and commitment by having principles based on promoting autonomy, discovering potential and improving the quality of teaching and learning. The development of autonomy is a fundamental part of this process, since it is the ability to self-govern within a moral or intellectual freedom or independence (Berbel, 2011).

We live in a period of defense of interdisciplinarity (Paiva, Esther & Melo, 2004), in which the attitude is part of the development of actions (Bresler, 2002) in the search for this to become a transformative experience (Dewey, 1938). If education is a practice of freedom (Freire, 2005), the absence of practice (H. Neck et al., 2018; Steyaert, Beyes & Parker, 2016) characterizes the danger of educating managers according to linear principles almost nonexistent in a complex world and with non-linear processes (Aram & Walochik, 1997).

We show four educational approaches to management that are in line with the principles of OI (Box 1): experiential, humanistic, artistic and entrepreneurial.

Box 1
Connections between educational approaches and organizational improvisation

Educational approaches	Description	Connection with OI	Main References
Experiential	The principle of all pedagogical action is to provide the student with the curiosity in which manual and intellectual actions promote a continuous construction and reconstruction of experiences. In this approach, the concept of learning represents a framework for understanding students' learning styles and the institutional learning environment. Multidisciplinary experiential learning based on team and in practice is common in professional development situations. Practice puts the mental in connection with the body and with the tools in the jobs to which it applies. Experiential management learning faces resistance from both academics and managers, although it is an alternative for learning social and political values in the educational and organizational context.	Body as part of the development of actions. Practice as a transformative experience. Closer approximation with work tools.	Bruner (1996); Kolb (1984); Kolb and Kolb (2005); Reynolds (2009); Vergara (2003).
Humanistic	The humanistic approach to management education contributes to changing the instrumental to a more transformative approach to teaching and learning. The debate on the future of business education, especially regarding the integration of humanities and social sciences, influences the general acceptance of business schools and on the improvement of managerial education. Critical pedagogy, approach and reason appear in all this as a path to possible changes, which can bring more humanism to the managerial elites.	Transformative approach. Critical approach.	Faria, Meneghetti and Stefani (2016); Landfaster and Metemann (2019); Maranhão and Paula (2011); Paula and Rodrigues (2006); Steyaert et al. (2016).
Artistic	In the past decade, countless business schools have started experimenting with art to solve problems and innovate with the aim of educating managers by practice. The arts enhance educational changes with a play, for teaching and learning skills; with literature, to address complex and delicate subjects; with an aesthetic experience, such as films, for the debate on organizational behavior and social learning; or as a path to creativity, for developing the capacity to know and feel. The arts are an inexhaustible source of pedagogical resources and inspirations with their transformative energy applied to studies on management education that have a multidimensional, highly complex environment, fueled by objective and subjective issues. Artistic practices assist in learning and experimenting with dimensions that revolve around conflicts, emotional tensions and uncertainties.	Innovation. Stimulating creativity. Enables changes Addresses complex issues naturally. Development of the ability to know and feel. Dialogue between objective and subjective questions.	Amaral and Leite (2016); Barry and Meisiek (2015); Bureau and Komporozos-Athanasion (2017); Davel, Vergara and Ghadiri (2007); Dewey (1938); Fisher and Amabile (2009); Irgens (2014); Mack (2012); Oliveira et al. (2015).
Entrepreneur	Improvisation learning offers a promising bias for investigating entrepreneurial processes, since many of them do not formulate careful plans when starting their businesses, but respond well to sudden opportunities, such as the definition of improvisation. The improvisation structure can illuminate entrepreneurial organizations by creatively using available materials or bringing positivity to the effects caused by the transition and the implementation of new concepts and procedures.	Unpredictability. Innovation. New uses of different types of materials. Strengthening positivity. Adaptation to new concepts and procedures.	Miner et al. (2001).

Source: Research data.

Barriers to Integrating OI in Management Education

Institutionalization of education as an essentially mental reflection practice, with superficial practical activities

In general, teaching staff of management courses in teaching expository classes do not develop possibilities for student involvement in a plural environment. The practice of a reflection, essentially mental, with superficial practical activities does not provide experiences and characterizes only theoretical references. The separation between theory and practice is a reason for the lack of logical sequence of content with excessive lectures and little exercise in autonomy and decision-making (Cezarino & Corrêa, 2015). Actions, goals and paradigms of complexity are needed to keep the body in real connection with the mind. The debate ranges from the history of management and the study of the lives of its masters and institutions to the legacy of teaching and programs developed, including curricula (Fisher, Waiandt & Fonseca, 2011). A constant historical review of the challenges and trends of management education (Oliveira et al., 2015) indicates that the use is greater when learning takes place in an environment in which discursive plurality is accepted and recognized and in which differences are tolerated (Clegg & Ross-Smith, 2006).

Educator intimidation in relation to artistic language applied in education

A delicate challenge in the management education relations is the absence of paradigms of complexity and an excess of strictly positivist lines of research. A more refined study in the management learning processes points to the importance of subtlety and the emotional aspects found in the arts. The adoption of artistic methodologies brings to light the aspects related to the complexity and emotional dimension necessary to understand the dynamic action that management requires. However, teaching still underestimates the power of art or feels intimidated when using it due to the numerous doors it opens. Artistic methodologies, when used, present a differential in learning and take advantage of approaches related to the field of management education. This intimidation may not only be linked to little knowledge of artistic methodologies, but also to disbelief in their effectiveness, even with so many proven and published cases. Art helps to better position students, stimulating the creation of bonds between them and favoring a convivial relationship with the teacher. This teacher changes from being a simple transmitter to being a co-producer of knowledge, anchoring learning in experience, reciprocity and interactivity (Davel et al., 2007).

Perspectives for Integrating OI in Management Education

The observation of improvisation in the arts for the theoretical construction of OI, whether with jazz (Barrett, 1998; M. P. Cunha, 2002; Hatch, 1998, 1999; Zack, 2000), or with the theater (Crossan, 1998; Koppett, 2013; Vera & Crossan, 2004, 2005), has been discussed in international literature and sheds light on how the phenomenon of improvisation can contribute to new interpretations of organizational learning (Barrett, 1998; Flach & Antonello, 2011; Miner et al., 2001). We can think of 2 perspectives to integrate OI in the management education: the musical and the theatrical.

From a *musical perspective*, jazz has in its structure a combination of improvisation and a set of highly precise rules (Barrett, 1998; Hatch, 1999; Zack, 2000), in which musicians live in an unstable environment, interpreting vague tracks, processing information, simultaneously formulating and implementing strategies, inventing responses without well thought out plans and without guarantee of results (Barrett, 2000; Weick, 1998). It is a collective and integrated work (Bastien & Hostager, 1988), which has implications for the field of management and broadens debates on subjects ranging from organizational design (Barrett, 1998) to innovations in marketing strategies (Moorman & Miner, 1998). The professional with knowledge in OI can transform a problem into a solution (Caines & Heble, 2015), experiencing a logical leadership also known as the jazz mentality (Bernstein & Barrett, 2011) and discovering the future that his action creates at the same time as it unfolds (Barrett, 2000).

In practice, the teacher does not need to be a jazz musician or play an instrument to propose a dynamic that mobilizes music in improvisation. It is possible to unfold the musical experimentation and to emphasize different characteristics, such as the rhythm. To improvise, you need to be fully connected to those around you. The rhythm exercises are good for everyone to perceive themselves within the same time. Another possibility of mobilizing music is motor coordination with small

choreographies (free gestures) that are created at the time of the class and with the participation of everyone. When the class is more connected, music creation can become a fruitful activity for the learners to express everything that happened in their day until the moment of the class.

In the *theatrical perspective*, it is possible to bridge the gap between theory and improvisational practice in management through theatrical improvisation (Crossan, 1998). Theatrical improvisation for management appears as a theoretical model and has a positive effect on innovation, emphasizing the principles of practice, collaboration, acceptance and presence (Vera & Crossan, 2005). The theater metaphor recognizes the equivocal and unpredictable nature of improvisation, emphasizing its contribution to the process, and not so much to the result (Vera & Crossan, 2004), like the Commedia Dell'arte, an improvised theater genre that emerged in Europe in the 16th century (Crossan & Sorrenti, 1997). With theater, it is possible to experience the risk, the leadership and the ambiguity that involve the present time and the information of the time spent in decision making (March & Weil, 2005). The arts have been helping the field of management education for a long time. However, it still finds resistance in being assumed as a fundamental dimension for the construction of knowledge.

The use of theater in the classroom helps in the bodily understanding of how we should be prepared for management. It is not necessary to be a theater person to ask the student to report a situation in the form of a scene. When reproducing on the scene a real situation that happened to the student, many details and reflections emerge. Instead telling that they had to resolve a team conflict, the person needs to represent it, from start to finish. The time you have in the classroom for such a dynamic is sufficient for its realization, since the time of combination between the groups to explain the situation to be staged, the distribution of roles and the spatial definitions cannot be long to develop readiness and quick thinking. After the scene, the debate is in charge of bringing up other details and other situations related to the theme.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research results provide an understanding of academic production on OI based on its various relevances, themes and needs. A lack that is marked is related to the OI education. Therefore, as a result, we also mapped four approaches to research on management education that have a connection with OI research and barriers and perspectives for integrating OI into educational activity. Among approaches and perspectives, the arts represent a fundamental link for improving management education and future prospects. Our study comes to seal the union of these two fields of knowledge – art and management –, pointing out fruitful directions for the research and the practice of OI teaching and learning.

Some implications emerge from the research results. The first is the *theoretical-conceptual* implication. The results of our studies stimulate new studies in OI to focus, theoretically and empirically, teaching, since the existing research deals only with learning (Barrett, 1998; Falkheimer & Sandberg, 2018; Flach & Antonello, 2011; Miner et al., 2001). Thus, future studies should deepen the understanding of how dynamic organizations require people to develop their improvisational skills (Mannucci, Orazi & Valck, 2020; Tabesh & Vera, 2020). It is necessary to rethink, theoretically and robustly, OI as an educational phenomenon, considering that theater and music are fruitful artistic fields to guide future research on OI management education. Management educational theories should be associated with those of educational and experimenting with music and theater, since they make the connection between the practices of the present and the future. When we reflect theoretically upon this set of theories, it is possible to find approximations and gaps, in which the field of the arts assists that of management, and vice versa.

The second implication is methodological. Art-based methodologies are little used in the field of management (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995; Boje, Rosile, Durant & Luhnian, 2004; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1995; Grisoni, 2006; Hardy, 1999; Hatch, 2002, 2008; Patien et al., 2003; Silva & Vergara, 2002; Sorensen, 2014). However, they could open new avenues of empirical, relevant and innovative research on OI education. They help to go beyond what can be seen in the foreground of understanding, since the experience with art is invariably sensitive, profound and captures subtleties (Chilton, 2013; Silva, 2000; Sullivan, 2010; Young, 2001). Thus, these methodologies allow the development of more sophisticated empirical researches regarding the education and training of managers (Gagliardi & Czarniawska, 2006). There is a latent need for empirical research focused on the education field with a focus on practice and OI. The empirical is stimulating for the

creation of new approaches and new reflections. This is because empirical research on OI is rare and addresses only aspects related to learning, working with qualitative methodologies, with an emphasis on observation and the use of metaphors (Barrett, 1998; Falkheimer & Sandberg, 2018; Flach & Antonello, 2011; Miner et al., 2001). We understand the concern about the limits of using an artistic methodology; both those of conducting and those of evaluation. This understanding can be softened by taking the methodology to the field of experimentation.

The third implication is practical. It is within the scope of practice that management learning and teaching are activated (Aram & Walochik, 1997; Berbel, 2011; Bresler, 2002; Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004; Czarniawska & Gagliardi, 2003; Dewey, 1938; Freire, 2005; H. Neck et al., 2018; Paiva, Esther & Melo, 2004). Practice is the path to the emergence and realization of improvisation, a fundamental component in the training of contemporary managers. By adopting theatrical or musical exercise as a teaching tool, students will be able to develop and improve them in a professional and organizational scope. Artistic action can improve students' ability to react and help teachers to refine their pedagogical experiences. Educators have a reflection upon the importance of including improvisation in their teaching concerns, in which everyone wins. There is an important difference between doing and thinking about doing something. The number of actions triggered to execute an idea is easily perceived in a practical dynamic. However, it is poorly understood in a theoretical observation if the student has not previously experienced something similar. Execution links objectives to actions and makes it clear if the individual is working for or against himself.

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