

Formulation and Monitoring of Strategic Plans in a public university: an analysis based on Strategy as Practice

Elaboração e Acompanhamento de Planos Estratégicos em uma universidade pública: uma análise baseada na Estratégia como Prática

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Abstract: This article seeks to analyze the strategic planning processes of four successive administrations of a Brazilian Federal Higher Education Institution (HEI). The roles of the Practitioners, Practices, and Praxis - concepts that constitute the Strategy as Practice view – are considered in each administration, in addition to organization's internal and external context for the analysis of each administration. An evolution on the development of planning processes throughout these subsequent administrations has been identified, which has gathered essential competences to implement such projects and customize the adopted practices to the studied institution's specific context. However, what is actually implemented is posture-dependent of the deans and their teams. The three constructs are interdependent and compose a meaningful whole in the context of each administrative cycle, and its application enabled the proposition of a strategic planning process analysis script of the four studied administrations, stating it as the core result obtained by the performed research.

Keywords: Strategic planning; Strategy; Strategy as practice; Processes monitoring; Strategy formation; Federal University.

Resumo: Neste artigo, procura-se analisar os processos de planejamento estratégico de quatro gestões sucessivas de uma Instituição Federal de Ensino Superior (IFES) brasileira. São considerados os papéis de praticantes, práticas e práxis no desenvolvimento e na implementação dos processos de formulação e acompanhamento dos planos, de acordo com a estrutura conceitual que constitui a Estratégia como Prática (ECP), além das principais características do ambiente externo (político) nos períodos das gestões da universidade. Identificou-se que houve uma evolução no desenvolvimento dos processos de planejamento ao longo das sucessivas gestões, tendo sido acumuladas competências essenciais para a implementação de tais processos e adaptadas as práticas adotadas ao contexto específico da instituição estudada. O que é implementado, entretanto, depende sobremaneira das posturas dos reitores e de suas equipes. Os três constructos são interdependentes e compõem um todo significativo no contexto de cada ciclo administrativo, e sua aplicação resultou na viabilização da proposição de um roteiro de análise dos processos de planejamento estratégico das quatro gestões estudadas, configurando-se no principal resultado obtido pela pesquisa efetuada.

Palavras-chave: Planejamento estratégico; Estratégia; Estratégia como prática; Monitoramento de processos; Formação de estratégia; Universidade Federal.

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1 Introduction

This article analytically approaches the formulation and the monitoring of adopted plans in four subsequent administrations of a Brazilian federal public university between 1992 and 2008. Analyses of planning and monitoring processes are rare to find in the literature, especially those that are somehow sustained by the Strategy as Practice theoretical background. This is still a relatively recent and low-used approach.

Processes of plan formulation and monitoring in non-profitable institutions and in public universities present significant differences in comparison to those utilized by private companies, which are the targets of administrative theories and their mechanisms. Amongst greater differences, apart from profit and financial return not being the main objective of public organizations, there are external and internal contexts of political (and legal) aspects that condition the administration and the actions of each institution.

External conditioners for federal HEIs can be exemplified by: the programs formulated and implemented by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCIT), by the Ministry of Education (MEC) and by research sponsoring agencies (National Board of Scientific and Technological Development - CNPq, Studies and Projects Financier - FINEP, Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel - CAPES and Research Support Foundation of the State of São Paulo - FAPESP); the 8666/1993 Law, which controls supplies, services, equipment and locations acquisition; the federal HEI budget and expenses control enforced by the Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management (MPOG); account inspection by the Federal Court of Accounts (TCU), and legal career regulation for administrative employees (TA) and professors. As for internal conditioners examples there are: the federal HEI functioning ruled under internally formulated statutes and controlled by the MEC; the hiring processes to fulfill posts and headships, once graduate and undergraduate courses coordinators, heads of departments and academic directors are chosen by the community to hold office for two up to four years, deans are also elected every four years; the federal HEI organizational structures that provide autonomy to the facilities and ensures that main decisions are made by collegium cells, providing representability to students, administrative employees and professors. The most severely perceived power relations arise from the existing scientific-academic acknowledgement among external and internal community members. This characteristic alone affects directly on the decision-making process of different hierarchical levels, distinguishing it from the protocol followed by private companies. The combination of such conditioners generates enough significant differences to consider and analyze

private and public organizations in non-equivalent organizational categories.

Facing such scenario, the necessity of developing a tool of analysis for strategic plan elaboration and monitoring that considers the specificities of federal HEIs had become clear. Thus, the main objective of this research is the proposition of an analytical script for elaboration and monitoring of strategic planning in federal universities, based on the analysis of the strategizing processes of the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) applied along four subsequent administrations (16 years). In order to identify and gather a set of elements that contributes to the improvement of strategic plan elaboration in federal HEIs, the analyses stems from the study of the utilized practices, the performed praxis, the outcomes, the practitioners and contexts.

UFSCar has several particularities that distinguish it from most of the federal HEIs. Since its creation, the university had been designed to act in the research area and to offer distinct undergraduate courses from other Brazilian universities. Historically, master and doctoral students have composed over 20% of its student's amount. In addition, until 2008 the amount of graduate courses (masters and doctorates) had always been higher than undergraduate courses, which outlines its distinct profile. The acculturation process experienced throughout the years has been supported both by qualification policies applied throughout its history and by the hiring process, that has always prioritized degree. It reflects on the high academic degree of the academic staff. In 1992, 89.6% of its professors had degree. In 2008, 99.9% of the degrees were doctoral. In that same period, the exclusive dedication contracts increased from 97.2% to 98%.

Unlike the majority of federal universities, UFSCar dean electoral process occurs through community poll, in a democratic and category-influence equivalent way, and the running teams for dean, vice-dean and pro-rectors disclose their Management Agenda for community evaluation. It proofs great value to this study once all administrations restrained by the analyzed period are ideologically aligned and base their Management Strategic Plan elaboration on the winning Management Agenda.

This research applied a descriptive-character Case Study method to the four analyzed cases. Semi-structured interviews have been performed, considering that the interviewees (deans and two pro-rectors) were contacted either personally or through telephone to be invited for data collection and for scheduling interviews dates, times and locations. In order to complement information or factual comprehension, documental research in management reports, strategic plans, meeting records, generated documents during

process of planning and monitoring of strategic plans and published university indexes have been performed.

In this article, themed after processes of formulation and monitoring of strategic plans in public federal universities, constructs of Strategy as Practice (SAP) have been used to analyze UFSCar strategizing processes between 1992 and 2008. Its objectives are to analyze the strategic plan formulation and monitoring processes of different administrations and the proposition of an analysis script of such processes in public universities, federal or not.

The following section explains the SAP, the core theoretical framework applied to the study. Section 3 presents the used method, each administration's strategic planning elaboration and monitoring processes and the conclusions drawn from the analyses.

2 Strategy as practice

Once this theory has based all performed analysis, it is necessary to make a short report about some of its characteristics and main structural concepts.

A strategy is defined and accomplished via execution of activities or actions, whether they belong to high, intermediate or operational hierarchical levels. Unlike mainstream broadly applied theories, this perception links itself to SAP, which adopts a microscopic insight to describe strategy creating, implementing and monitoring processes, for it intends to explain such processes through the relations among (1) practitioners, or strategists, (2) practices and (3) praxis. Under this perspective, strategy is not summarized into something that the organization *has*, but into what it actually *does* (Johnson et al., 2007).

The practice is related to the administrative tools, methodologies, systems, processes and procedures that, once consolidated, shared and accepted by all, are used to create strategies. They are the routines and rules that conduct the work of strategy or, more broadly according to Vaara & Whittington (2012, p. 11), they are “[...] shared behavior routines that dictates traditions, rules and procedures to be utilized to think, act and use things”. It can be cited as practice examples: the adopted models; planning “retreats”; the applied methodology and the utilized theories, techniques and technologies, such as Gantt's charts, Balanced Score Card, Porter's Five Forces Model, etc.

Johnson et al. (2007) highlight as institutionalized organizational practices, in which people engage in to execute their strategic activity, the procedures and systems, the strategic planning for instance, and the scripted rules or behaviors that happen due to the necessity of following an agenda.

Furthermore, praxis refers to the actual activity, what people actually do to create and implement strategies, whether they are formal or informal activities that occur either at the organization's core

as so peripherally. Jarzabkowski & Spee (2009) define praxis, according to that perspective, as the activity flow in which the strategy is executed. These and other authors cite as activity examples the presentations, projects and plan elaborations, decision-making processes, product price calculation, dialogues (formal or informal), speeches and other activities executed by and in different hierarchical levels that consumes organizational resources. For Whittington et al. (2006), strategic praxis aims towards the effective work of a strategy practitioner, which happens through searching for reference models, how to reproduce them and, whenever necessary, alter and adapt their strategic practices. Praxis is a transformative action; it is the act itself, necessary to perform an activity through application of one or more practices.

[...] it encompasses consult meetings, presentations, communications, document elaboration, among others that are required for strategy elaboration and execution. In other words, [...] all various activities involved in formulation and implementation [...] of strategy [...] (Whittington et al., 2006, p. 619).

Vaara & Whittington (2012) can be quoted to clarify the concept, to whom praxis refers to ‘strategy-making’ activities, such as activities involved in strategic planning processes.

The distinction between practice and what actually happens indicates the third concept, the practitioner, whose skills and initiative are indispensable for the activities. They are those people from different hierarchical levels that conceive, implement and monitor the strategies, in other words, the strategists. In the words of Maia (2010, p. 74), “[...] the actors of the strategic process are those who use practices to act and to produce praxis”. Acting as such, they can improve or replicate existing practices, or create new ones.

To elucidate the relations between them, Figure 1 presents an integrative structure of these three concepts. The elaborator, Whittington (2006), clarifies that strategy practitioners are placed at the base of the picture, represented by letters from “A” to “D”, which are typically companies' directors, their consultants and advisers, and other organization's actors such as intermediate management and headships. It is clear that three of these practitioners are internal to the company (“A”, “B” and “C”), while practitioner “D” is external, member of an organization represented by the larger external square. The picture focuses on five strategic praxis “episodes”, that, as previously mentioned, may be board meetings, analysis, calculations or ever-informal conversations. Whilst formulating strategies, practitioners utilize available practices in the organizational or extra-organizational context;

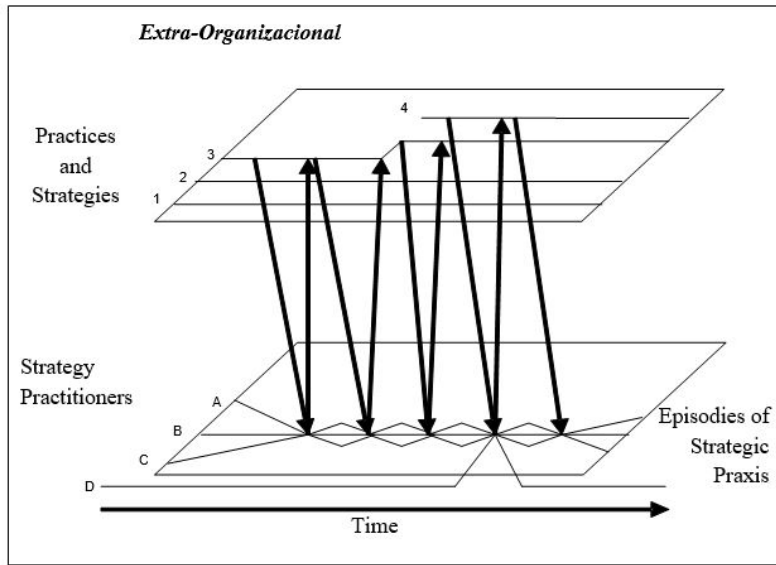


Figure 1. Integrating praxis, practices and practitioners.

those accepted as legitimate by this organization are presented at the upper parallelogram.

The vertical arrows represent practices application and feedbacks, according to its uses by strategists in various praxis episodes. They reproduce and, occasionally, alter the set of available practices.

SAP proposes the analysis of managing micro-activities and, therefore, refers to how managers actually perform strategy. For the author, the SAP perspective actually focuses on manager’s practice competencies as strategist rather than the own corporation’s core competencies.

It is noticeable that this theoretical background does not conceive the strategic process into distinct steps, being elaborated by one group and applied by another. The process is unified and its steps are interdependent. It results on the concept of “strategization”, a term used to encompass all continuous practices and processes that occurred since the moment that the strategy was conceived, maintained and renewed until it has been executed. That is the adopted perspective to the concept in this paper.

Therefore, and due to the fact that different administrators performed each analyzed administration in different moments, the presented proposal considers not only that perspective, but also the influence internal and external contexts had on directors and plans.

3 Administrations analysis

Before describing and analyzing each administration strategizing process, the methodology of the case study is going to be introduced, considering each administration as one case.

Each administration’s strategizing process has been described and analyzed in this research according to the following elements: administration context, plan formulation process and plan monitoring process. The contexts have considered external and internal matters, and formulation and monitoring processes have been split into the three SAP constructs. Administrations analysis results from the comparison of those three elements for each administration.

The developed model intents to allow comparability between the different processes of each administration. Such processes are highlighted in Figure 2.

The analysis has been structured into topics, which makes it modular and easy to comprehend. First, the contexts in which each administration happened have been analyzed, followed by the analysis of the practices, praxis and practitioners involved in the processes.

The variables have been assumed as not controllable, except for the applied practices. However, it is known that such variables influence on plan elaboration and monitoring processes and the outcomes. Both elaboration and monitoring processes depend on their practitioners, the applied practices and executed praxis, as well as their contexts.

3.1 1992-1996 administration

This administration was responsible for introducing the Strategic Planning as managing tool at UFSCar.

3.1.2 Context

Itamar Franco took provisional presidency in September 29 of 1992 and, after Fernando Collor de Melo had resigned, assumed actual presidency

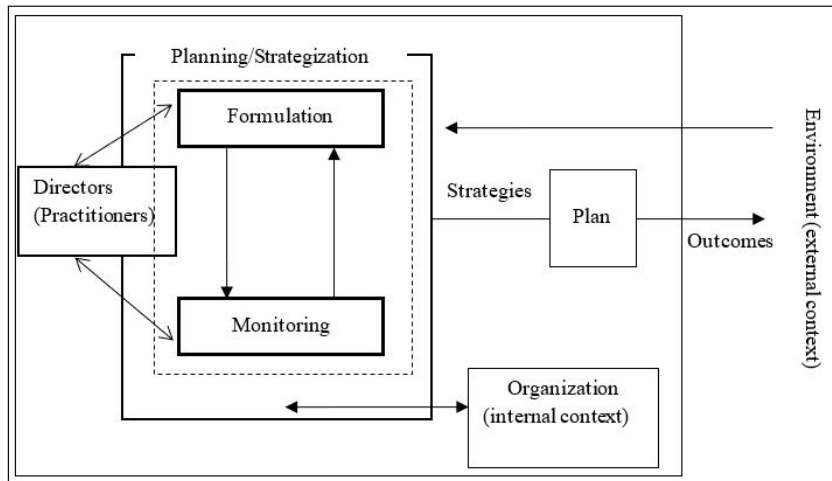


Figure 2. The existing interdependence in the strategizing process.

in December of that same year. On an economical scope, it was a hyperinflationary process, reaching the inflation rate of 1,110% that year and increasing to 2,500% in the following year. On July 30 of 1994, Plano Real had been implemented, when inflation indexes reached approximately 46.6%. Afterwards, Fernando Henrique Cardoso became president elected and, with haste, gave continuity to Plano Real's proposed actions.

The dominant context since the beginning of the administration has been summarized above. The adopted measures for public expenditures strongly affected federal HEIs, having their budgets restrained. In addition, there was a salary freezing for academic and administrative staff and the prohibition of staff replacement.

Internally, it is known that at the beginning of the term there had been some resistance to the democratically and competitively elected team. The university had practically been split into two to support one of the opposing teams, which implied in difficulties on the administration early months. Over time and because of the achieved outcomes, this picture had changed, and by the end of the term, the administration had the majority of community support.

3.1.3 Management plan formulation process

Implemented by the first time during the 1992-1996 administration, UFSCar Strategic Planning process applied different methods and procedures to its elaboration.

Characterized by the view that public administration

[...] could not decline meticulous managing methodologies compatible with autonomy, democracy, quality and criticality principles that would aid on the achievement of the academic goals [...],

the 1992-1996 administration started what intended to be

[...] the first step towards a solid and definitive implementation of strategic-planning practices in UFSCar's administration [...] (UFSCar (1996, p. 6).

The administration Strategic Planning started supported by the driving principles of the Plan of Actions (a government's proposal) presented to the academic community by the elected group on the succession electoral process. The Plan of Action consisted of eleven topics, which were exhaustively analyzed in meetings to define that administration's Strategic Plan.

A plan consisted of 76 objectives, 290 goals and 535 activities had been generated. For its development, an adaptation of the classic planning methodology was applied, in order to reach its potentialities and needs, considering background analyses of, positive or not, potential occurrences, which is similar to the SWOT precepts, basing analysis on strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T).

The proposal came to the University Board's knowledge on March 24 of 1994. *Goals* and activities priorities had been chosen by the superior collegium according to the volume of university available resources and the circumstantial needs and urgencies exam.

Under the Strategy as Practice perspective, it shall be highlighted the practices, praxis and practitioners of this plan formulation process.

- Practices

The following practices were applied during the plan formulation: a structure of planning meetings was adopted, in which freedom of speech and equality of opinion importance were granted to all of its

participants; the systematization of a biannual legal report for the community; the use of the elected team's Plan of Action to define the Managing Plan, once it would represent community's cravings; a traditional planning model, using a simplified SWOT; the adoption of a participatory focus in order to provide a wide representational process; the application of routines oriented to analytical texts elaboration and presentations regarding each unity's progress and what would be necessary to implement in order to enhance success possibilities.

- Praxis

During this phase, the dean's praxis was to define what, how and who would perform each role. Whilst coordinating each meeting, he also had acted as team member, debating on other managers proposals, elaborating his owns and participating on the process of defining which objectives, goals and activities would be inserted in the plan. Other of his praxis-composing activities were, for instance, contacting plan-making team members in order to convince them to assume the responsibility of some of the meetings supportive tasks, such as document elaboration, data collecting, etc.; requiring endeavor on task solution; and coordinating meetings along with academic and administrative departments and students.

Other members' praxis consisted on elaboration of objectives, goals and activities proposals, emphasized on SWOT analysis; all sorts of presentations to their planning team during plan formulation, besides participating on debates and decisions regarding the plan content.

- Practitioners

The practitioners were the dean and his staff, composed by the vice-dean, pro-rectors, general secretaries, rectory directors, university mayor and chiefs of staff.

3.1.4 Management plan monitoring process

The inexistent planning culture disclosed an intuitive process of managing and controlling activities in which the dean performed, at least annually, meetings with the team to collect information regarding the expected activities conducts of and the achieved outcomes. Each manager was responsible for the elaboration of their activities monitoring report, which would be used at the meetings. The progression towards the declared objectives and goals achievement were determined by their feelings, knowledges and

experiences, once they were not given formal criteria of outcome indicators.

Visits of the managing team to the academic and administrative departments were performed, in order to present theirs and administration's planned achievements. On such occasions, critiques and suggestions for the plan were collected from academic staff, employees and students. After a consolidating process, the produced material fed plan monitoring and updating workshops.

- Practices

The following practices were applied throughout the Management Plan monitoring: reports elaboration from each activity leader; visits to academic and administrative departments; visit-report elaboration with a systematization of critiques and suggestions to the plan; the adopted structure for planning meetings, in which free speech and equality of importance were granted to all participants; and the participatory focus to endow the process with broader representability.

- Praxis

The dean's praxis was coordinating the process, defining how managers should render account of their activities. Before the monitoring workshops, he received and analyzed each manager report, gaining a complete overview both on the report as so if its outcomes were aligned to the institutional strategy. In addition to a systemic demand of advances and results, as well of celerity on elaboration of individual performance reports. His praxis also proceeded externally, searching for opportunities offered by different ministries and submitting activity-sponsoring projects, whether or not forecasted by the plan.

Regarding staff members, their praxis were executing each goal's activity and, periodically, elaborating their development report. In addition, they participated on plan monitoring meetings, whereby they presented reports and engaged on debates and decisions about inclusion, alteration or exclusion of all plan activities.

- Practitioners

Apart from previously mentioned managing members, academic and administrative staff and students participated on this phase, attending to meetings for performance report presentations, and plan critiques and suggestions collection.

3.2 1996-2000 administration

This administration introduced the Situational Strategic Planning (SSP) into UFSCar.

3.2.1 Contextualization

The year of 1996 marks the beginning of a divergence deepening between federal HEIs and the MEC. Restrictive actions to federal HEIs expenses had been implemented through the enactment of Provisional Acts or Decrees. This context was still influenced by hiring prohibitions that had been current since the beginning of the government tenure. The Partial Managing Report, dated from May of 1999, phrases about the context that

[...] such measures as the staff hiring and replacement prohibition [...]; the drastic reduction of financial and budgetary resources [...]; the decrease of research scholarship quotas [...] are just a few of the major problems faced [...] (UFSCar (1999, p. 7).

by federal universities, and indicates the necessity of establishing an intention protocol among federal HEIs deans, proposing admission expansion in order to reach personnel quantitative balance within the federal system of higher education.

Internally, it had been a moment of unity, for UFSCar had been consolidated as an institution capable of successfully concluding its projects, this feeling flourished due to previous administration's achieved outcomes that, majorly, prevailed to the current one.

3.2.2 Plan formulation process

This administration opted to apply Situational Strategic Planning (SSP) instead of previously used model, in order to apply practices that would enable larger community participation in the process, involving specially the academic field into it.

An array of seminars alongside the managing team had been performed, which had as main objective the elaboration of the general plan for the four-year administration. It had been applied the methodological steps of the SSP, the ZOPP (Zielorientierte Projektplanung - Objective Oriented Planning Projects), and the Planning the Strategic Action (PSA) methods.

The plan development process relied on the participation of the managing team members and, occasionally, of two directors of Academic Centers, as well of two external advisers.

As subsidy of strategic analysis for this plan formulation, it had been performed and systematized a debate on the main social games that the university was involved in, such as Science and Technology and the perspectives of national economy; Law of Directives and Bases of National Education, LDB, and the paths of education; and the State Reform and Public Sphere Democratization.

Meetings among the managing team and different academic and administrative departments were made, aiming a gathering of problems and difficulties experienced by the community, which were taken into analysis by the planning team, enhancing their reality-perception abilities.

Furthermore, giving continuity to the SSP implementation to academic administration, various directing team members and their assistants participated on courses about University Administration and Conversational Competence methods, as well as software trainings aiming informatization of the process of Strategic Plan elaboration and management.

UFSCar facilitated several actions involved in the process, such as the restructuring of the General Planning Secretariat and implementation of a "Managing Group", responsible for assessing the rector's at defining priorities, performing analysis and solving problems.

- Practices

The used practices for the plan formulation were the SSP planning method; the ZOPP method in order to gain agreeing and orienting insights for the situation-diagnosing phase; the PSA, the Cognitive Mapping and Mobile Visualization methods; and also the Managing Agenda, containing team proposals for the community during the pleading period for the dean chair; the structure of planning workshops, where all had the right to speak freely and, if necessary, to vote, with inexistent distinction of importance between the roles performed by the participants; debates on relevant social articulations regarding UFSCar's future; planning workshops; and the use of a plan elaborating and monitoring dedicated software.

- Praxis

The dean-applied praxis on this phase was to delegate its technical development to the external planning advisers, keeping to himself the process' political coordination. He performed the role of team leader, also participated on debates, analyses, and on the development of the activities forecasted by the model with parity of conditions to the other members.

His praxis accomplished the restructuring of the Planning General Secretariat and of the contacts at ministries, aiming to facilitate financial or personnel resources-dependent actions. The team member's praxes were participating on PSA and other project and plan development supportive methods capacitating events, in addition to elaborating proposals and analyses, and deciding on actions and operations that composed the plan, as well as their priorities.

- Practitioners

This step's practitioners were the dean and his team (vice-dean, pro-rectors, general secretaries, university mayor, chiefs of staff and directly attached to the rectorate directors) that counted with the aid of two external assessors (from the School of Government of State University of Campinas - UNICAMP) for technical conduction of the activities.

3.2.3 Plan monitoring process

The plan monitoring process was effectively developed in integration to the periodic operation breakdowns. While workshops to define each quarter's major and minor actions had happened, it had been parallel processed the balance of achievements and obtained results regarding the previous administration, whilst plan-unintended actions were registered.

The situation survey and its processing proceeded via periodical interviews with the various managers. Two major plan revision and balance workshops were performed, in which general advance outlines for plan implementation and its difficulties were identified. It was also performed an assessment of the general institutional acting context, what generated punctual readjustments to priorities and previously taken strategic options.

Thus, throughout the planning period it was kept not only the plan's importance as a management-guiding instrument, but also an adequate form of strategic direction.

This administration incorporated to the plan activities that, even though unpredicted by the original plan, performed important roles in achieving the objectives. Therefore, "emergent" actions (Mintzberg & Quinn, 2001) were attached to the plan, in order to facilitate both deliberate strategies and those that were not formulated during the elaboration process.

The main plan monitoring and updating meetings always happened with full participation of the managing team members and, eventually, with two university Academic Centers directors, which also distinguishes this process from the former administration's strategic planning.

Internal courses of strategic planning for managers were offered and workshops with other managing supportive methodologies, such as "Cognitive Mapping".

At the end of the administration tenure, intending to provide continuity of activities taken as essential, meetings between the 1996-2000 and the 2000-2004 managing teams had happened in order to brief the members with latest updates of each operation according to the plan, their advances, difficulties, etc., allowing the execution of those activities during (or even afterwards) university management transfer.

- Practices

The following practices were applied during the monitoring process: availability of the computerized management system of the PSA method elaborated plans; the establishment of a problem-solving rectorate-supportive Managing Group; the application of a questionnaire to obtain perspective of each operation situation regarding what had been planned; interviews with managers and plan monitoring meetings (or workshops).

- Praxis

The dean performed praxis as political coordination and staff member, following the model of the plan formulation phase. It was composed by the result-demand and deadline-enforcing activities, the systematic demand of results and the establishing of an academic staff group responsible for aiding in decisive processes after performing analysis of potential and existing problems.

Other plan monitoring staff members had as praxis the participation in strategic planning workshop or courses; fulfillment of questionnaires regarding action operations and evolution; and presenting their advances and difficulties regarding the achievements to the planning group.

- Practitioners

The practitioners responsible for the execution of the pursued activities were the dean and his team, planning advisers, the Cognitive Mapping specialist, the Managing Team members and three fellowship scholars.

3.3 2000-2004 administration

The Institutional Development Plan (IDP) for UFSCar had been elaborated during this administration, involving representatives of all internal administrative and academic unities and categories and external entities.

3.3.1 Contextualization

The current dean, during the former administration, had occupied the vice-dean chair, composing another political-academic aligned administration.

From 2000 to 2002, in a macro perspective, there had been continuity of policies applied by the hitherto FHC administration, in which budget downsizing for federal HEIs and personnel hiring and replacement restrictions stood valid until the end of FHC's tenure and the beginning of Lula's.

Most of this context had been considered as current for the former administration. The year of 2003 was a

milestone for the federal HEIs deans' records. For the first time a Federal President promoted a hearing for all of federal HEIs deans, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education. At the hearing, the president enlisted, amongst educational priorities, the maintenance of the public system of higher education, expanding nocturnal courses and increasing undergraduate enrollments from 524 thousand to 1 million. Besides, increases for the 2004 and posterior budgets were discussed.

Internally, there had been certain community discouragement due to the federal government systematic neglecting towards federal HEIs. The salary policy also influenced on the academic and administrative staff humor, given the eight years of no salary adjustment. The changes at the federal government came to affect positively the community, once there had been an increase of expectations regarding policy changes for higher educations, such as a more adequate budgetary allocation and approval of federal HEIs managing autonomy.

3.3.2 Plan formulation process

In a first moment, it had been decided to project operations in order to reach significant results in the first six months of administration, and also to gather resources and support for future actions implementation.

It was also elaborated a two-axis based strategic plan for the administration that would define administrative team's action priorities, they were: (a) Integrated Academic Project and (b) University Planned, Participatory and Sustainable Management.

Apart from opting to give continuity to the theoretical guideline for the strategic planning, it was considered relevant to prioritize activities aiming towards increasing collective participation on the Institutional Development Plan (IDP) elaboration process, via a democratic, transparent and category-representative process.

Operationalizing axis (b) disclosed the elaboration process of the UFSCar IDP.

The presentation of adopted practices happened via conceived planning, maintaining also the time relation between them. As they were the same for the 180-Days Plan and the Management Plan, they will be commented under the same titles, as it follows:

a) Management Plan

- Practices

The following practices were applied to this plan formulation: a simplification of the SSP, the Management Agenda, the SSP, ZOPP, PSA and mobile visualization methodologies, in addition

to the previously mentioned planning workshops structures.

- Praxis

The dean praxis was coordinating the political planning process, delegating the technical coordination to the External Counseling and to the Planning Secretariat. His coordination achievements was stating the necessity of a broadly participative IDP designing process that would provide a harmonious university evolution, integrating organizational, academic, physical and environmental aspects.

- Practitioners

The practitioners are the same as previously described the dean and the members of the enlarged management staff.

b) Institutional Development Plan (IDP)

- Practices

The process of IDP designing seized from various practices, once that for each of the four analyzed aspects there had been the freedom to choose the most method-suited practices.

Practices regarding work methods conducted by aspect-to-analyze defined groups and coordinated by another one responsible for systematizing previous actions. Besides, a counseling specialized in research-action methodology and consensus-oriented techniques was hired. Once the project was elaborated, it had been submitted to the University Board, which approved it and made it corporative, or institutional, rather than a leading team project.

- Practices

For the coordination of the IDP formulation process, the practices were determining that Principles, General and Specific Guidelines should be defined by each analyzed aspect; defining each aspects' workgroup structure; debates regarding which methodologies should be applied; the composition of the Anchor Group, that had been established to manage the process and the monitoring and systematizing meetings.

- Praxis

The Anchor Group praxis was to read and systematize each group's documents and proposals, avoiding antagonist or repetitive principles and guidelines. The specific groups performed the following practices: meetings with departments and student entities attached to each course; large-groups work methods; Future Search Conference; meetings with academic,

administrative and union representatives along with former deans and former department directors; seminars, round-table discussions and conferences regarding the environment; and seminars regarding the physical planning of university campuses.

3.3.3 Plan monitoring process

For this administration, practices and praxes were equal to previously established ones, via plan updating meetings. As the IDP originated from an axis of the management plan, while the first one was being designed the other had been applied. However, the importance and prospect given to the IDP, both by the community and the by managing team, undermined the plan monitoring process, or even the plan itself. The dean's practice so far was not followed by an effective demanding praxis of rendering account and prioritizing such activity. Although they had had occurred, the mood in several workshops was different from the previous ones, when the plan adjustment was understood as essential to the plan success.

Regarding the planning as a whole, the dean praxis was coordinating the formulation and the monitoring processes, welding strong control over their progress through constant result demanding to his team regarding forecasted outcomes.

3.4 2004-2008 administration

3.4.1 Contextualization

Distinctly from former administrations, the current one starts to face federal government challenge to the federal HEIs: the enrollments expansion in the public higher education system. The disclosure of the Federal HEIs Internalization Project in 2005 was first step towards accomplishing it. The following sally was the Federal University Restructuring and Expansion Project, released in 2007, which intended to double the undergraduate student's number within ten years. Beside those projects, there was another directed towards implementing distance courses aiming licensee formation. Along with the funding for those governmental projects, there had been a gradual recovery of federal HEIs budgets and the approval of automatic replacement of academic chairs, guaranteeing the recomposition of the academic staff at the level of July of 2007.

Internally, the administration was marked by the dean's reelection. The budget improvement expectancies due to the government shift had begun to be attended, given the hitherto achieved growth.

In the first year of administration, in order to assume the one-year term headship of ANDIFES (National Association of Federal Higher Education Institutions

Deans), the dean had been partially withdrawn, had being replaced by his vice-dean during his tenure. By the end of the administration, there had been another dean withdrawal due to his candidacy to an elective municipal position in 2008.

3.4.2 Plan formulation process

The planning methodology remained the same, the SSP, even though it had been applied with simplifications regarding former administrations, suppressing part of the initial analytical process due to previously performed analysis, as in the IDP.

It had been casted, after the General IDP Guidelines, the Specific Guidelines for the following plan-structural identified areas: (1) Formation processes; (2) University expansion, access and permanence; (3) Knowledge production and spreading; (4) UFSCar staff qualification and (5) Adequate environment.

These areas' specific guidelines were assigned to workgroups, each one attending to three specific thematic. The group responsible for analyzing each theme worked with their specific guidelines to define operations to be concluded, aiming the intended achievements. There had been defined the actions of the management plan, their responsible, performance indicators, deadlines and involved priorities.

- Practices

The work had been developed with aid of facilitators, utilizing mobile visualization techniques and designing "problem trees" (Matus, 1993). The available practices at this step were the SSP, the use of the team's Agenda and the adopted structure for planning meetings.

- Praxis

The dean praxis in this second administrations differed from the previous one. After the appearance of opportunities provided by the Federal Government, his praxis turned to the viability of subscribing UFSCar in the MEC proposed projects.

There had been formed project-elaboration coordination and commissions to each of the federal projects, and they had been submitted to the University Board for approval.

The monitoring-team members' praxis resulted from the IDP analysis and the selection of Principles and Guidelines aligned to the Agenda to define, through workgroups, operations and actions that would compose the plan.

- Practitioners

The practitioners were the dean and his team. After this administration, external counseling was no longer required. The dean established an internal

advisor that, along with the Planning Secretariat, technically coordinated the activities.

3.4.3 Plan monitoring process

Large scale projects such as offering five distance courses to 19 poles and the opening of a Medicine course, alongside others of major social relevance, such as the Affirmative Actions, consumed time and resources to be successfully implemented, directly competing with other plan-forecasted activities. Due to an overcharge of activities by the leaders, plan monitoring and revising meetings happened through with no established schedule.

- Practices

The practices were the regularly existent for this step, such as the monitoring and assessment meetings, provision of mobile visualization and scenario analysis techniques.

- Praxis

Praxis turned mainly towards introducing UFSCar into governmental federal HEIs expansion, having the principles and guidelines established at the IDP approved *vis-à-vis* and incorporated to the plan, although the planning team had not monitored it. The operationalization of his praxis happened via routine meetings between the dean and project coordinators, monitoring them separately from the plan. He also performed visits to the MEC in pursuit of the necessary resources and assumed the planning activities general coordination.

- Practitioners

The dean and his team, and local large-scale governmental or institutional project coordinators compose the practitioners. They answered to the dean regarding their activities, which facilitated plan updating.

4 Conclusions

The performed analyses provided clear sight on the strategizing processes of each administration, allowing comparisons between them. Regarding the administrations as a whole, it has become clear the evolution when focusing on each of the used elements throughout the processes and SAP description and analyses. The importance of the application of this theory lies in the fact that one can systematically analyze each of the adopted structural elements, given that the variation in one of them can imply adaptations of others in order to reach the outcomes.

Basing on the performed study is possible to affirm that that practices while instruments entail low influences on outcomes. However, understanding practices as organizational culture, norms, rules and customs, for instance, grants them great importance, for they determine or interfere on the relationships amongst practitioners, as well as theirs with the structure, during strategic praxis.

A particularity of the presented proposal lies on the vision that strategies should be seen as social activity, and, therefore, that analyses performed during strategic planning ought to consider not only technical and economic aspects, but also sociological, given the connections and relations between practitioners, practices and praxis, and between them and the organizational structure and also the environment. Such conception affects, for instance, on the plan elaboration and assessment processes and on the choosing or adapting managing methods and tools throughout the entire strategic planning cycle. The incorporation of a planning culture by the managing team (dean, vice-dean, pro-rectors) enabled advances translated into successive adaptations in used practices for plan elaboration and monitoring, for instance.

Political and economic conditioners affected on the results of different UFSCar's administrations and, in order to reach them, practices, practitioners and praxis of plan formulation and monitoring process performed key roles. In an organizational environment whereby the academic community cherishes participatory processes, a conduction of the strategic planning cycle that enables continuous and reflexive assessment tends to enhance adaptations to effective implementation of outlined proposals and promote the best use of eventual opportunities.

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