

Student Evaluation of Management Courses During the Covid-19 Pandemic

O Ensino Teórico em Cursos Superiores de Administração: Possibilidades a Partir de Uma Pedagogia Hermenêutico-Filosófica

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to understand teaching practice in Business and related courses through theoretical reflection and experimental practice. As a theoretical-epistemological basis, we support our argument from the perspective of Philosophical Hermeneutics, (re)thinking about the teacher-student relationship in university learning contexts. Therefore, we argue for the redefinition of this relationship based on the proposition of new bases for learning, centered on the dialogicity of interactions mediated by communication oriented towards emancipatory and democratic argumentative debate. In order to reflect on the practical dimension of the outlined theoretical model, during an academic semester at a university in Curitiba-PR, we experimented with a hermeneutic-critical pedagogical practice, recorded through interviews, observation and focus groups. In our study we were able to assess interesting aspects that point to the viability of the new proposal. It is clear that the teacher-student relationship is permeated by power relations in which students are the passive recipients of knowledge. As an onto-epistemological stance, we propose the debate of the academic community.

Keywords: Administration Teaching; Philosophical Hermeneutics; Freirean Pedagogy; Theory and Practice.

RESUMO

Este estudo busca compreender a prática docente em cursos de Administração e correlatos através da reflexão teórica e de uma prática de experimentação. Como pilar teórico-epistemológico, sustentamos nosso argumento na perspectiva da Hermenêutica Filosófica, (re)pensando sobre a relação professor-aluno em contextos de aprendizagem universitária. Assim, sendo, argumentamos pela ressignificação dessa relação a partir da proposição de novas bases para aprendizagem, cen-

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RESUMO

tradas na dialogicidade de interações mediadas pela comunicação orientada para o debate argumentativo emancipador e democrático. Com a finalidade de refletir sobre a dimensão prática do modelo teórico delineado, realizamos, durante um semestre letivo em uma universidade de Curitiba-PR, a experimentação de uma prática pedagógica hermenêutico-crítica, registrada por meio de entrevistas, observação e grupo focal. Em nosso estudo pudemos dimensionar interessantes aspectos que apontam para a viabilidade da nova proposta. Percebe-se que a relação professor-aluno é permeada por relações de poder em que os alunos são os receptores passivos do conhecimento. Como postura onto-epistemológica propomos o debate da comunidade acadêmica.

Palavras-Chave: Ensino de Administração; Hermenêutica Filosófica; Pedagogia Freireana; Teoria e Prática.

Introduction

Vocational education in the field of management faces different challenges, particularly regarding the ability to stimulate student learning and engagement. This becomes crucial in a scenario marked by increasing dropout rates and difficulties in the employability of higher education graduates. Reports from public and private institutions reveal critical figures in these indicators, such as the difficulty graduates face in finding employment in their field of study and the growing decline in enrollments for in-person courses. These factors are highlighted in the Higher Education Map (Instituto Semesp, 2023). Another key challenge in the sector is the high accumulated dropout rate, which reached 59% in 2021 (INEP, 2022). Researchers such as Nierotka, Salata, and Martins (2023) explain the current dropout problem as a result of a complex set of issues, particularly learning difficulties and the working conditions of faculty members.

To face this scenario from the perspective of educational institutions, new educational strategies have been developed to enhance student learning effectiveness. In this effort, the increasing adoption of active learning methodologies stands out as a pedagogical resource increasingly implemented in higher education to foster student engagement (Lima, 2020), especially with the rise of digital technologies. However, when examining the teaching-learning process from a broader perspective that accounts for the complexity inherent to human nature, it becomes

evident that learning in higher education involves deeper dimensions—subjective aspects and socio-historical contexts related to the teaching-learning process (Matos & Hobold, 2015).

A principal issue to consider is how the theory-practice relationship has been addressed in the analysis of management education. The assumption is that this relationship is complementary, meaning that management education should balance these dimensions (Van De Ven, 1989). It is argued that theory should not be disregarded in favor of practice, yet practical experience in the classroom is essential to enhance theoretical comprehension. Various perspectives contribute to this debate (Bispo, 2021). Despite the significance of these assumptions, there is still a gap in understanding how students assimilate theoretical perspectives to develop fundamental competencies for professional practice. In other words, there is a need to advance the comprehension of how teaching translates into practical competencies.

This study was conducted to contribute to this discussion. We aim to explore how an approach grounded in philosophical hermeneutics can foster a learning process that meets the demands of a university education capable of addressing contemporary social challenges in Business Administration and related fields. To achieve this, we conducted a study on the teaching practice of a Sociology course within a university-level Business Administration program. Our objective was to create an unconventional learning experience by incorporating a traditionally theoretical subject into four different business-related undergraduate programs at a private higher education institution.

Our approach was based on reflecting on the dialogical relationship between teacher and student, using philosophical hermeneutics as our theoretical-epistemological foundation. This perspective assumes that social relations are shaped by culturally situated and socio-linguistically mediated interpretative processes, where the world is simultaneously a reference and an intersubjective construction (Lara & Vizeu, 2019). The justification for this study lies in our central argument, inspired by Paulo Freire's perspective, that the teacher-student relationship must be shaped by students' world references. Consequently, teaching activities should incorporate communicative strategies grounded in arguments that are legitimate within the students' ontological frameworks (Habermas, 2012; Vizeu, 2005; 2011; 2024; Lara & Vizeu, 2020).

In this dialogical process, the teacher reinterprets theoretical teaching by mediating it with elements that are already meaningful to students, allowing them to build their learning through more effective interpretative frameworks. This approach aligns philosophical/critical hermeneutics with Paulo Freire's pedagogical proposal, which reimagines adult education through the pillars of emancipatory education—democracy, hope, and the student's autonomous citizenship.

This study was conducted in undergraduate programs at a Business School in a university in Curitiba, Paraná, where Sociology was taught to first-year students. The students were primarily young adults between 19 and 25 years old. The intervention spanned an entire semester, during which the study's authors acted as instructors. The analysis of the results was based on a textual corpus constructed through a focus group conducted with students at the end of the course. Next, we present a brief discussion of the theoretical foundations of this study, followed by a description of the methodological procedures and the empirical results.

Philosophical Hermeneutics with a Perspective on the Dialogical Relationship in Teaching

The historical roots of hermeneutics trace back to the mythological literature of ancient Greece, with the term itself originating from the God Hermes, who bridged boundaries and was responsible for transmitting messages between gods and mortals (Barrett et al., 2011). In brief, when we refer to hermeneutics, we are dealing with issues related to the study of interpretation and the ways in which it is associated with the concept of understanding (Heracleous, 2004).

Among the different branches of hermeneutics, we are particularly interested in Philosophical Hermeneutics, especially the one derived from Hans-Georg Gadamer's contributions. Gadamer was a key thinker within the modern hermeneutic tradition (Araújo, 2004) and understood language as a medium for mediating experiences between subjects (Gadamer, 1999). Hermeneutics enables understanding through 'symbolically mediated interaction' made possible by the human competence of language. This differs from the logic of the natural sciences, which, due to their technical orientation, seek to dominate language games by considering interpreta-

tion as universally objective knowledge (Habermas, 2011). Thus, hermeneutics can foster reflection and reveal “[...] the blindness and abstractions it imposes, which supplant and mislead natural consciousness” (Gadamer, 2002, p. 289) in a given historical context. It points to knowledge as interpretive possibilities with practical and emancipatory implications (Andrade et al., 2019; Gadamer, 2002; Habermas, 2011; Vizeu, 2005).

In this regard, the hermeneutic process carries the potential for creating shared communication spaces, that is, realms of mutual symbolic exchange where understanding can be reached. It is worth noting that Gadamer does not confine understanding to a cognitive process; rather, he considers it something applied to everyday life—what phenomenology calls the ‘lifeworld’ (Habermas, 2012)—meaning that understanding directly responds to practical implications. As such, this human faculty is closely related to how people participate in the world (Barrett et al., 2011).

Another important figure in the philosophical hermeneutic tradition is Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher and sociologist associated with the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School. His work is consolidated through the development of the Theory of Communicative Action, an effort to provide a social and historical analysis of our time, inspired by the linguistic turn (Araújo, 2004; Vizeu, 2005; Freitag, 1994; Lara & Vizeu, 2019). Unlike his Frankfurt School colleagues, Habermas seeks to overcome the historical limitations of analyzing instrumental rationality by introducing the concept of communicative reason (Lara & Vizeu, 2019). This expansion represents a paradigm shift, in which reason is constituted within social dialogicity, through communicative interaction (Freitag, 1994). For Habermas, communicative reason reflects the intersubjectivity of discourse participants, demonstrating how, through a hermeneutic-philosophical analysis of speech acts (Vizeu, 2005), mutual understanding can be achieved through argumentation based on ontologically valid claims (Habermas, 2012).

In the Theory of Communicative Action (TCA), the speaker aims to achieve mutual understanding—that is, a validity claim for their discourse—but their interlocutor may challenge this claim through reasoned argumentation that may or may not convince other participants (Andrade et al., 2019; Freitag, 1993; Habermas, 2012). For Gadamer, understanding can only be found when something becomes

common ground within a dialogical process (Barrett et al., 2011). It is through intersubjective agreement that the socialization of discourse participants takes place (Ferreira, 1998).

Habermas uses the concept of the “lifeworld,” which originates from Schutz’s phenomenology—the locus of convictions and ideas of everyday life—and complements it with the concept of communicative action. Thus, what was previously unquestionable can now undergo changes (Ferreira, 1998; Freitag, 1993). In other words, “[...] full communicative interaction is related to the construction and reconstruction of meanings and the essential social structure of a linguistic community [...]” (Vizeu, 2005, p. 15). This is because agreement presupposes the integration of “lifeworlds” (Ferreira, 1998).

The world only attains objectivity when it becomes valid as a singular world for a community of subjects capable of acting and using language. The abstract concept of the world is a necessary condition for subjects who act communicatively to reach a mutual understanding of what happens in the world and what should be done in it (Habermas, 2012, p. 40).

The comprehension of a text—understood as any interpretable symbolic object—is more of a dialogical, collectively constructed process than an individual process carried out within the cognitive dimension of an entity in the communication space. The reader-interpreter must be present in the dialogue with an open stance toward the tradition that constructs the meaning of the content being interpreted, offering a possible legitimate way of expanding understanding in the communication process (Gadamer, 1999; Lara & Vizeu, 2020).

Thus, problematizing the issue from the learning context, by being part of an educational process, the individual also shares a specific way of being in the world. From this perspective, the student is always inserted in a historical context that not only allows them to express themselves but also influences them, as their identity and understanding of the world are constructed through language, by which they are interpellated (Sichelero, 2018).

In this way, spaces for speech are places where interactions are oriented toward intersubjective understanding and, therefore, do not involve coercion, potentially making them emancipatory (Vizeu, 2005; 2011). This contrasts with communication in which manipulation is a central characteristic, which Habermas (2012)

conceptualizes as “communicative distortion.” Dejours (2006), a specialist in the psychodynamics of work, addresses Habermas’s concept of communicative distortion when referring to efficiency or technique in work—where the manager focuses on achieved results but trivializes the suffering caused to workers. In this sense, distortion can be a characteristic of contexts involving bureaucratic and power relations (Andrade et al., 2019; Dejours, 2006; Vizeu, 2005; 2011).

Communicative distortion refers to a language oriented toward success, linked to strategic action (Habermas, 2012; Vizeu, 2011). This language is conceptualized as a “system” and complements the “lifeworld” (Freitag, 1993). Habermas (2011) discusses technical knowledge, oriented toward calculation and limited in its scope, as an instrumental action characterized by a unilateral language that engages only “impartial observers,” to use a term from Gadamer (2002). Thus, monologue represents the inability for dialogue and, consequently, for symbolic exchange (Andrade et al., 2019; Gadamer, 2002). This means that technical language, which monopolizes space, does not allow for intersubjective connection between subjects.

While communicative distortion refers to rhetorical strategies that articulate performativity and the disposition of power to favor a partial interpretation, the fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1999) moves in the opposite direction. This stage of the communication process refers to the conditions that enable a dialogical encounter between parties who recognize some meaning in the symbol that conveys something from the world (Lawn, 2011). For Santos (2014b), language can be seen as the interpretive horizon of educational relations. In this context, the dialogue on which learning depends can be either facilitated or hindered, depending on the openness or limitation of language.

The concept of the fusion of horizons presented by Gadamer requires that the approach through language considers the presence of another and that an openness to understanding is built based on the notion of the existence of preconceptions. However, rather than isolating or testing these preconceptions, the goal is to challenge the limits of this horizon of understanding. Therefore, the dialogical space of fusion of horizons simultaneously engages with tradition and the present moment in which interpretation occurs (Gadamer, 1999). Thus, according to Sichelero (2018), neither the educator nor the student alone possesses all the knowledge transmitted

by tradition. Likewise, knowledge never fully reveals tradition. When the symbolic content of tradition re-emerges, it is reinterpreted and gains new layers of meaning in the learning process.

For this to be possible, understanding must be based on a dialogical agreement that involves suspending preconceptions in the act of communication (Lawn, 2011). To some extent, this understanding resembles a kind of translation of the lexicon that constitutes the interplay of traditions in question. In this sense, it is necessary to put words to things in the movement of making something distant intelligible to an audience. In this regard, any resource that facilitates approximation to what is familiar is used, such as employing certain previously known terms (Barrett et al., 2011).

Even this translation process, which aims at the fusion of horizons through dialogicity, does not allow one to speak about and fully know the object in question without some form of loss and/or distortion of the message in the communication process, considering that the very concept of “horizon” refers to something in constant transformation (Lawn, 2011). However, interpretation—the key term in the entire tradition that builds the field of hermeneutics—depends on language as the mediator of these possibilities. In this sense, there is no neutral communication, as it is assumed that the translation process as a whole contains biases and projections (Barrett et al., 2011).

Thus, in Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics, the very method derived from scientific thought is questioned due to the false premise of neutrality (Gadamer, 1999). In this regard, the objectivity of the method is not recognized as a guarantee of access to the truth of the matter. By pointing to this critical perspective, Gadamer (1999) assumes that if there is something constructed as truth, it is a subjective construction linked to the cultural tradition established among subjects interacting in the everyday relations of the world. Therefore, according to the assumption of philosophical hermeneutics, learning occurs through communicative interaction that considers the interlocutor’s own references of meaning and sense, in a non-manipulative argumentative process oriented toward/by such references. This challenges the logic of traditional teaching and aligns our theoretical model for structuring Management Education with Paulo Freire’s pedagogical approach.

Paulo Freire's Pedagogy as a Hermeneutic Model of Interaction

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian philosopher and educator, conceived the idea of “banking education” in 1968 while exiled in Chile under accusations of subversion. It is important to highlight that during this period, Brazil was experiencing a military dictatorship under the government of Artur da Costa e Silva. The critique of traditional education is presented by Paulo Freire in the book “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, originally published in Spanish and only published in Brazil in 1974. This text marks the philosopher-educator’s effort to establish a new pedagogy in the world, one capable of promoting social emancipation and aligned with the principles of democracy and citizenship (Andrade et al., 2019; Zitkoski, 2018). Since then, his work has been debated worldwide, influencing mainly Latin American countries.

The metaphor of “banking education” suggests that the educator does not recognize dialogue as the element that enables student awareness, as this teaching model is characterized by narration and the mere depositing of information in students (Freire, 1987). In this sense, banking education is not emancipatory; on the contrary: “it is domesticating because what it seeks is to control the life and actions of students so that they accept the world as it is, thus preventing them from exercising their creative and transformative power over it” (Gadotti, 1996, p. 721), since “the educator is the one who speaks the word; the students, those who listen meekly” (Freire, 1987, n.p.). Thus, traditional education is often oppressive because students are treated as passive objects of knowledge rather than active subjects in the learning process, occurring in a one-dimensional manner (Freire, 1987).

In traditional pedagogical practice, the student is seen as a “tabula rasa,” a blank slate that must be filled with information, without developing critical thinking (Freire, 1987; Gadotti, 1996). This happens because passive recipients in “banking education” do not have the opportunity to construct their own awareness. According to Freire (1987, n.p.):

[...] if for the ‘banking’ conception, consciousness is, in its relationship with the world, this ‘piece’ passively open to it, waiting for the world to enter, it will consistently conclude that the educator has no other role than to discipline the entry of the world into students. Their

work will also be to imitate the world, to organize what already happens spontaneously, to 'fill' students with content. It is to make deposits of 'communications'—false knowledge—that they consider true knowledge.

Thus, when students are considered mere “repositories” of knowledge by educators, they become susceptible to alienation from the educational process, which comes to be seen as something external and unrelated to their daily lives, leading them to a state prone to oppression and subjugation (Freire, 1987). This oppression occurs as the educator establishes control over students' thinking and actions, making it an authoritarian pedagogical practice (Gadotti, 1996; Freire, 1981; 1994). In other words, in this process, there is the figure of a teacher who transmits information and students who must memorize content to be tested later (Freire, 1987; 1994).

In the contemporary pedagogical context, learning relationships manifest asymmetrically, where those who hold knowledge and power impose themselves. This is reflected in gestures and symbols, the use of pedestals, pulpits, and even the arrangement of classrooms. Silence thus becomes an obligatory condition. These aspects reflect the lack of dialogue in education and materialize in teaching and assessment methodologies, planning, management, and curriculum—elements of the pedagogical field historically distorted by arbitrary and authoritarian practices. Such practices highlight and reinforce the absence of concrete subjects seeking autonomy, freedom, understanding, balance in relationships, mutual respect, and affection (Santos, 2014b).

An interesting point to note is that, historically, the “banking education” model follows the Jesuit tradition. This is why, in traditional church services, the practice of memorization and repetition of prayers by the faithful still exists. This practice dates back to the Catholic Church's efforts to prevent the development of the Protestant Reformation (1483–1586). Through the Council of Trent, a meeting aimed at reaffirming, confirming, and maintaining Catholic doctrines, pedagogical practices became instruments for “behavior molding” (Santos, 2014a). More specifically, this is due to the emergence of the Society of Jesus and the development of the Ratio Studiorum, a study plan with regulations designed to unify religious education (Santos, 2014a).

Another important point in historically situating the traditional teaching model is its connection with the positivist conception of knowledge construction. Similar

to the traditional scientific paradigm (Habermas, 2011), the traditional approach is based on scientific rationality, which accepts as legitimate only knowledge that is tested and developed through a scientific methodological process, considered, by this very link, as unquestionable truth (Dagnino, 2014). In this context, academics and social scientists produce the knowledge that forms the foundation of formal education, leaving students with no choice but to accept it, as this knowledge is scientifically constructed and proven. In other words, in the traditional pedagogical model, students passively receive scientific knowledge because they are not in a position to question it—either because the classroom is not a space for scientific debate or because they are not considered initiated subjects in academic-scientific practice. This leads to a teaching posture of transmitting scientifically established truth, detached from the lived world of the student.

However, this traditional approach to producing and reproducing science, particularly in the field of Applied Social Sciences, opens room for questioning, considering that there is not just one way of conceiving knowledge. As Freire (1987, n.p.) argues, “knowledge does not extend from those who consider themselves knowledgeable to those who are considered ignorant; knowledge is constituted in the relationships between humans and the world, relationships of transformation, and it is refined through the critical problematization of these relationships.” Given this possibility, we emphasize the role of the teacher in the (re)production of knowledge disseminated in universities, inviting them to abandon the linear format of teaching transmission (the transmission of scientific truths) in favor of exploring other formative possibilities—ones that can engage students in societal debates and foster social transformation through the educational process.

It is precisely in this sense that Freire (1981; 1994; 2002) considers education to be a liberating process, mainly because it encourages students to think critically about the world and actively participate in societal transformation. From this perspective, education should be seen as a dialogue between teachers and students, in an exchange process where both learn and develop together, opposing authoritarian and imposing practices. This is based on the idea that education is a social and political process that must take into account the lived reality of both teachers and students.

Freire’s pedagogy has achieved considerable relevance in the field of education, to the point that in 2012, Freire was recognized as the Patron of Brazilian

Education. Inspired by hermeneutics, the Brazilian philosopher and educator advocates for emancipatory communication in which individuals actively participate in knowledge construction (Andrade et al., 2019; Torres, 1996). In this sense, linking Gadamer and Freire, Santos (2014b) explains that education happens through dialogue. This is because, in the interaction between communicative agents and subjects, the revelation of critical consciousness in the face of social problems becomes possible (Andrade et al., 2019; Affonso, 1996). According to Santos (2014b, p. 3), dialogue is the essence of the educational process, “[...] without, however, ceasing to be recognized as its constitutive element; dialogue is both an end and a means. It is what makes education possible. School practices cannot renounce the power of dialogue, nor its reach.”

Driving the reflections proposed here, the key question under discussion is the idea that this traditional teaching-learning approach is alienating and dehumanizing. This perspective contrasts with the notion that education should be liberating and transformative, allowing students to develop critical thinking and questioning skills—not only to become active participants in the construction of their own knowledge but also to act as agents of social transformation, capable of analyzing social and political structures with a reflective approach to the possibility of change.

Finally, it is essential to highlight that Paulo Freire argues that education should aim at forming critical and reflective individuals capable of transforming the reality in which they live. For him, this is only possible through an educational process that values dialogue, active student participation, and collective knowledge construction. This is the foundation of what he calls “problem-posing education,” which seeks to problematize reality and build knowledge based on students’ lived experiences.

Thus, Freire (1987) proposes an alternative approach to traditional education, offering a vision opposed to the model in which the teacher is the sole holder of scientific knowledge. For Freire, the teacher should be a mediator of change in the student’s worldview, encouraging them to actively participate in the learning process to develop critical awareness of the theoretical and practical issues addressed in education. Within the paradigm of philosophical hermeneutics, the teacher-student relationship will only be emancipatory if it is based on the dialogical nature of communicative rationality. For Freire, dialogue involves open and equal communication between students and teachers, allowing students to share their experiences

and perspectives and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the subjects taught from a social and political dimension.

The perspective built by philosophical hermeneutics and linked to Freirean pedagogical proposals suggests that the issue of truth is established in a relational and intersubjective process, while also valuing interpretation as an approach. Considering this, in this study, we conducted a teaching-learning experience designed within the logic of the hermeneutic process, successively creating provocative scenarios that invited students to expand their interpretative horizons. In the next section, we describe in greater detail the methodological procedures of this study.

Methodological Procedures

This research, of a qualitative nature, as appreciated by Bauer and Gaskell (2002), was based on a teaching experience conducted at a private Higher Education Institution in the city of Curitiba, PR. On this occasion, we carried out a pedagogical intervention (Damiani et al., 2013) involving four undergraduate classes from the Business School, distributed across the courses of Administration, Economics, and International Trade, totaling 110 students. The intervention took place over an entire semester, covering one class in the morning and three in the evening. The target audience consisted of students entering higher education, with an average age ranging from 19 to 25 years. The authors of this study acted as instructors responsible for the course, providing an experience aimed at offering a pedagogical experience aligned with the dialogical approach and philosophical hermeneutics inspired by Paulo Freire's theory.

Thus, this paper aimed to carry out a pedagogical intervention (Damiani et al., 2013) with actions focused on teaching in a traditionally theoretical course, taught in a non-conventional manner. Pedagogical intervention research allows the study of real-life situations and aims to contribute to practical cases. In this way, it includes the planning and application of modifications or innovations within the educational field.

Furthermore, the intervention was guided by a hermeneutic pedagogical approach, which questioned and redefined traditional elements of teaching, often seen as obstacles to students' understanding in the current learning context. In

addition to materializing the theoretical arguments discussed, this experimentation allowed reflection on the way theoretical subjects are taught, highlighting the limitations of the conventional model, predominantly based on expository lectures and the reading of classical texts.

As a premise, we believe that the conception of knowledge as the means by which the world presents itself to the subject, and thus, can be said to be inspired by an [inter]subjectivist perspective (Hessen, 2012): the dialogue about knowledge that acts as a reference point for the construction of meaning. In conjunction, we assume that the indispensable condition for human action in processes of dialogical knowledge construction is the prior mobilization of symbolically situated objects, whether tangible or intangible, in such a way that the pedagogical action itself is determined by the meanings that constitute social interaction (Schwandt, 2000).

Drawing on the Gadamerian hermeneutic perspective, the construction of knowledge in teaching practice must take into account the approximation of interpretive horizons (Gadamer, 1999) between teachers and students. That is, during the teaching activity, the need to construct a procedure that enables connection with students in a fluid and practical manner must be addressed. In this sense, the way to operate in the classroom was based on the principles of the Theory of Communicative Action (Habermas, 2012), making the teacher take on the role of mediator of a rational and argumentative debate built from students' perceptions. As a result of this posture, it became necessary to adopt different procedures for carrying out the in-person meetings – classes, in the traditional pedagogical view – between the teacher and students.

Some premises for organizing the class as a teaching activity are presented:

- **Replace expository lectures with argumentative debates.** There is no way to achieve dialogicity in the hermeneutic sense without abandoning the traditional 'expository lecture.' That is, the content is not presented systematically through text, slides, and notes organized in a lecture by the teacher; it is provoked through an initial debate on everyday issues from the students' practical lives. To better visualize this procedure, we can say that the teacher's lecture is replaced by a class debate on an event or practical occurrence, preferably experienced by the students or widely known (a news story widely cited by the media).

- **Adopt activities for the real construction of meaning in practical life.** The theoretical content treated in isolation – as prescribed by scientific knowledge – is disconnected from the students' reference context. Therefore, it has no real meaning for them; hence, the need for connection between theoretical discourse and daily life, even if it involves communicative strategies for translating and simplifying the conceptual/theoretical statement, but also the adoption of practical experiences that involve the theoretical content.
- **Discard the traditional classroom layout.** In the hermeneutic pedagogical model, the arrangement of rows of desks and the teacher at the front of the students reinforces the asymmetry of roles that is to be avoided. Therefore, the seating arrangement was altered, abandoning the use of desks and forming large circles or, when necessary, small circles, ensuring an equal arrangement of places for dialogue.
- **Abandon the test as an evaluative practice.** As a premise of hermeneutic pedagogy, any practice that hinders the construction of real meaning by students must be abandoned. This is the case with individual, closed-book exams, which encourage students to 'learn to pass the test.' Thus, traditional assessment is replaced by processes of self-reflection and peer evaluation, where students take responsibility for self-assessing their progress, as well as that of their peers.

For this, the participation of two teachers from the IES and three PhD students from the postgraduate program in Administration at the same university was counted, who formally participated as teaching interns in the Sociology course. Together, the teachers and PhD students were responsible for preparing the lesson plan and learning strategies according to the content proposed in the course syllabus, as well as executing the classes. Weekly planning meetings lasting one hour were held, where the teaching strategies to be adopted for each class were discussed, always seeking to adapt the topics outlined in the syllabus to the students' reality and emerging social issues.

All meetings faced the challenge of exploring ways to mediate the content from a dialogical perspective, subverting the traditional model in the execution of

classes. Thus, in this adopted procedure, a reflective and non-imposing posture was sought, transforming what would normally be presented in an expository manner into debates guided by students' experiences and their connections with the concepts from the classics and references of Sociology. Therefore, rethinking how the aspects of teaching and learning would be worked required careful consideration of the evaluative aspects mandated by the course guidelines. In this context, traditional assessments, such as multiple-choice tests, were replaced by activities that required an active stance. Therefore, knowledge pathways, podcasts, interviews, and practical activities were proposed in which students were confronted with complex contemporary themes present in the local social context, such as interaction with "invisible" employees from the IES itself, debate activities on immigration from the perspective of immigrants and students' friends and relatives, and a 'visit, talk, and coffee' activity with homeless people.

To collect data for this research, focus group sessions (Freitas; Oliveira, 2003) were conducted to record students' impressions at the end of the learning cycle. The focus group application took place in person in the classroom of the studied IES, totaling 4 meetings – one for each class –, with a duration of approximately 3 hours per class, totaling around 12 hours. Operationally, it involved forming groups for prior debates on the investigated themes. These groups were organized by roll call, and the number of groups varied depending on the number of students in each class: in classes with more than 45 students, groups were made up of up to 10 participants; in smaller classes, with fewer than 45 students, groups consisted of at least 5 participants.

The application technique was structured in four stages, with 5 guiding questions posed by a mediator in each stage, totaling 20 guiding questions. In the first stage, (i) perceptions of how the classes were conducted were explored. The goal here was to understand students' prior notions about the topics covered in the lessons, examining how, based on the outlined pedagogical proposal, it provided – or did not provide – experiences that changed students' perceptions of the issues addressed in the mandatory curricular content.

In the second phase, the questions were aimed at (ii) perceptions of the methodology. This sought to capture students' perceptions regarding how the classes were conducted, whether it differed from other theoretical courses, how this diffe-

rentiation was perceived, and if there was an opportunity for dialogue and interaction during the learning process.

Once the answers from the second stage were saturated, the questions focused on (iii) activities that stood out the most. The goal of this third round was to understand what caught the students' attention, fostering a deeper debate on the details brought up in the experiences narrated by the students. At this point, discomforts were addressed, such as sensitive topics, structural issues, and naturalized problems in our social context that were often overlooked by students. Moreover, the questions addressed experiences outside the classroom, moments of interaction with external social groups, and the construction of shared knowledge, as well as students' involvement in course activities.

In the last block of questions, the focus was on exploring the (iv) application of learning in practice. Here, discussions turned to the realities experienced in the course and how they advanced, changed, or sparked understanding of a social issue that permeates contemporary society. Beyond this point, the application of these contents in students' work environments or organizational settings was explored, along with the ways in which students believed the content could materialize in practical reality. Finally, students were asked how the course contributed to their social interactions in general.

The final objective of these blocks was to analyze students' perceptions of the teaching-learning process and how this content made sense in their careers. To achieve this, all interviews were recorded and later transcribed, with the final aim of performing a free hermeneutic analysis, where the comments and dialogues were interpreted to gauge the meanings promoted from the lived experience.

Reflexivity on Empirical Experience

Based on the premises established in the previous sections, we move towards discussing the experience through the analysis of the data obtained, particularly those constructed by the accounts of the students who participated in the sociology classes. To better present the reflections and discussions pertinent to the theme, we grouped the main issues surrounding the learning of theoretical content in the field of

management, based on the accounts that emerged in the statements of the students participating in the focus groups, through the following key dimensions: (i) traditional teaching model; (ii) the meaning of content for students; (iii) evaluative mechanisms based on punishment; (iv) lack of connection between theory and practice.

Thus, we position ourselves within the criticism—as instructors of the taught course—seeking to debate the potential errors/successes perceived by the students, in order to organize how the teaching practice shaped a new learning experience, thereby allowing for democratic debate between the participants in the process (teachers and students) and on how they understand the manner in which theoretical courses in the field of Management are/can be taught.

The approach consistently mobilized in the reflective process of the experience reported here was a critique of traditional Administration courses and related content. At this point, it is important to highlight that the students who participated in the intervention did not stop experiencing, in the same semester, other teaching activities (with other subjects/teachers), where theoretical content was being delivered through lectures, using resources such as a chalkboard or projections, or even through case studies, most of which are based on situations disconnected from the students' lived experience. This led to the emergence, among the participating students, of an awareness of how the traditional model is demotivating, as Freire (1987) argues, detached from the reality of the actors immersed in the process. Thus, the class geared toward the exam becomes an end in itself and loses its meaning when placed in the context of the professional life in the field of Administration.

In other words, by experiencing the new theoretical teaching model, students realized how, in the traditional model, they participate in classes as passive listeners and, even when given the opportunity to ask questions after the teacher's presentation, they do not feel qualified to articulate genuine questions about the given content. Moreover, the passive posture in traditional classes mobilizes students to position themselves as 'task completers' without any meaning for themselves, such as delivering fragments of texts that replicate the slides of the classes or other support materials, or even producing responses through artificial intelligence apps, aiming to meet the 'assignment submission' goal rather than reflecting on the future utility of the learning. This is because, in this educational model, the focus is on controlling the students' actions, not on emancipating them (Freire, 1987).

Regarding the entire critique of traditional teaching in Administration classes and related subjects, we draw attention to a point that is often overlooked by teachers, pedagogical coordinators, and course directors, which concerns a communicative dissonance existing in academic practice, particularly regarding teaching strategies that do not engage or connect with the realities/social problems students face and/or witness, or will face in their work practice. In this regard, based on the students' statements, we could observe that there is a perceived link between this coercive posture of teachers in the established teaching method, which allows us to visualize the argument of banking education (Freire, 1987), as well as suggests that this current teaching model only persists due to the communicative distortion caused by power asymmetries aimed more at maintaining these relationships than at emancipatory teaching (Habermas, 2012).

Thus, to visualize how, at the end of the teaching process, the students of the sociology course positioned themselves on the points raised, we proceed with the presentation of three major arguments that seem to have structured the debate in the focus groups. These are presented in the form of assertives, followed by excerpts from the textual corpus and some comments.

Assertive One: Teachers and students are complacent with the positions occupied in the banking education model.

It is necessary to consider that a large part of active faculty members in higher education institutions reproduce teaching practices primarily based on the unidirectional transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, without space for dialogical and active participation. This condition in which the higher education model finds itself in some institutions reveals how the roles of the teacher and students are delimited by a comfortable relationship of 'who teaches' and 'who learns,' discouraging students' active participation in the classroom. Statements such as the following illustrate this complacent position: "[...] *we are used to being in a classroom with the teacher talking and us taking notes*" (A4), "*So, actually, we are used to getting everything ready, not used to looking for things ourselves because it's easier to just look at it, not doing any research*" (A34).

The students' statements (A4 and A34) highlight the naturalization of this model, in which learning is viewed as a passive reception of ready-made content. The

absence of an active search for knowledge reflects a lack of encouragement for autonomy and critical inquiry. Gadotti (1996) adds to this critique, stating that banking education is domestication, as it aims to keep students in a subordinate position, preventing them from developing their transformative potential on the world.

Complacent with the traditional model of “getting everything ready,” that is, students assume that it is also convenient at times to play the passive role of “not needing to do research.” Additionally, they recognize that the constant provocation by the teachers during class to encourage participation generates some discomfort. However, it must be acknowledged that in order for students to “leave their comfort zone,” it is important to remember the role of the university and the educators as learners, given that education is a form of intervention in the world (Freire, 1996). Therefore, it is necessary that, in addition to teachers stimulating students through debates and invitations to reflect on the content worked in class, the environment must be conducive to such an experience: *“Maybe the way the professors taught at the time made it so boring that it didn’t spark interest, maybe a lack of maturity back then, right?”* (A5). Thus, it is clear that once integrated into a dialogical teaching dynamic, the student occupies a critical position regarding their relationship with the content.

One of the key elements in Freire’s work (1987; 2002) is dialogicality, which is one of the elements that can make education a transformative act. The following excerpt reveals this shift in perception:

A very theoretical class, right, we were talking, talking the whole class, basically you just listen and do what the person tends to learn better, and in your subject [teachers] no, I felt like we had much more space to comment. You spoke, asked us, gave an activity, said... you have 15 minutes to discuss within the group, and then you talk to the class... [...] in my opinion, this is much easier to learn and retain the content because you are discussing, you’re not just listening and seeing slides, right... feeling with your group and then talking to the class, I think it’s a much easier way to retain and learn the content, not that situation where you memorize, memorized the context, memorized the meaning of a philosopher’s theory. You discussing, you learn in general, not just the concept, it’s much better (A36).

A central issue observed in this student’s speech relates to exams and the memorization of content as a method of evaluating the material learned in the course. According to Freire (1996), in the banking education model, evaluations are often based on standardized answers, requiring students to reproduce specific informa-

tion without space for reflection or creativity, without room to share the meaning of the content in their lived experience. The harmful effect of this mechanism is perceived by students, as in the following statement: “*I memorized for the exam, and as soon as I left the university gate, I forgot everything*” (A1).

As we have pointed out, it is from a dialogical class that this ‘banking logic’ is broken, because in it, it is necessary for students and teachers to exchange ideas, promote debates and reflections. By fulfilling this proposal, we open space for students to constantly speak, listen, and reflect, which leads to broader modifications in their symbolic horizon, reproducing what Gadamer (1999) understands as the fusion of horizons. However, the creation of a dialogical space implies the stimulation and involvement of the students, who need to be willing and inclined to deal with the disturbances and all the implications that a process of symbolic transformation represents.

Assertive Two: The content presented in the traditional teaching format does not make sense to students.

With the growing expansion of higher education courses in the field of Business Administration/Management, mainly driven by the commercialization of education, there is a trend that prioritizes aspects related to the market effectiveness of university education, focusing primarily on students obtaining a diploma. In this context, the pedagogical plans created by educational institutions are, in fact, marketing tools, outlining content to meet the minimum requirements set by the Ministry of Education (primarily aiming at course recognition) and to appeal to the market. Thus, it is evident that, in the design of educational plans within organizations, aspects truly related to the needs of organizations, professional demands, and – consequently – students, are not considered. This is how frustration with education and training arises.

Moreover, in this model, teachers are often hired with very low salaries, which demotivates or even inhibits them from building more engaging and dialogical lessons. As a result, they often merely repeat content from textbooks, assign excessive technical readings, and focus their lessons on oral/visual presentations without relating them to any practical activity and/or reflection, which also hinders students’ assimilation of the content. As can be seen in the following student testimony:

For me, it doesn't work to just put slides there with text, read the slide, not explain it in a way that connects to your daily life, just explain what's on the slide... and you try to study at home with the slide and can't learn from the slide" (A31).

The perspective presented in the student's speech points to an important issue: the mere presentation of slides without contextualization promotes a partial route of interpretation, as it does not consider the student's prior experience nor create connections between academic content and the lived world (Habermas, 2012). Since the technical expression without the conditions for a dialogical encounter does not allow space for connection between subjects and even objects (Gadamer, 2002). This reinforces the importance of connecting the information being presented to the student's experience in various life contexts. This point deserves attention, as the discursive tone adopted in banking education is unable to make the student-teacher interaction more personalized. It's as if there is such indifference in this relationship that both the teacher feels removed from the responsibility of teaching and the student feels removed from the responsibility of learning. The following account illustrates this claim:

Thus, for example [...] there's a subject I remember from the first semester to this day [...] It's very easy to remember the subjects I had in the last semesters, to remember which ones I learned from and which ones I really enjoyed having, right? And they [...] were always in different dynamic forms, right? I think the classic method, the monotonous method with just the teacher talking, served no purpose, I think in this same semester we had a subject here, guys, honestly, by the beginning of next year... we won't know anything (A31).

The student's testimony warns us that it's not about eliminating texts (books, articles, slides) and oral presentations in the classroom, but rather that it is necessary to create a connection between what is being said in books, slides, and manuals and the real world, which is socially experienced by the students. In other words, when teaching their classes, teachers should consider and promote the possibility of a fusion of horizons in the learning process, seeking to understand the presence of students in the classroom and their preconceptions (Gadamer, 1999). Moreover, what would be the purpose of a class where the teacher simply reproduces content without critical articulation or fostering reflection on the content, when, through the internet, we have access to an endless amount of free materials presenting the same

content as this traditional type of class? What competencies are we developing with our students in the classroom, lecturing, passing slides, requiring readings without reflection? The simple memorization of content?

Regarding the lack of meaning in the content-driven model, another point was raised by students. They mentioned that, increasingly, artificial intelligence will help in the search and synthesis of theoretical content; could this not be an incentive to develop competencies that surpass memorization? In this regard, this text strongly advocates that the position of the teacher, truly engaged in the production of education and supportive of the emancipation of the individual, is to recognize that their role in the didactic-pedagogical process is to assume the responsibility of guiding the transformation of language. By this, we mean that the responsibility for creating the necessary conditions for the fusion of horizons lies with the teacher. Furthermore, this can be achieved when we assume that it is possible and desirable to bring a distant or even mistaken speech from students to an intelligible field, privileging the familiarization of the audience and the desire to narrate something familiar that can impact the symbolic disposition of the listeners. (Barrett et al., 2011).

Assertive Three: Free debate as the main activity in class promotes the production of meaning and significance.

Finally, the students revealed in the focus group that they are aware that the meaning derived from debate, as opposed to the content-driven exposure model, is more effective. Even the dynamics of debate itself – which is built from a democratic speaking space that involves everyone in the room – helps in the comprehension or even the retention of arguments. As one student said:

I think an important part was our participation, when you hear [...] a lot of content, you think one way, even forget, the professor is talking, you get distracted, right? As he mentioned, when there's this interaction, when a colleague next to you talks about something, another also speaks, and so you want to be interested in knowing the point of view of the people around you and not just the professor's, and that enriches the content much more, we understand it much better (A6).

As a result, it is important to consider that by questioning the traditional teaching dynamics, and not just accepting ready-made content, the student indicates a search for more reflective education, which relates to the central concept of Frei-

re's pedagogy (1987), which is the students' awareness of their social, political, and economic reality, allowing them to assume an active posture, a stance favorable to transforming that reality:

And when you bring something to practice, or when you bring something for you to really think [...] you bring points, you study people, you do things differently, not just what we're used to in the classroom... you know? (A4).

By understanding how the content worked in class can be applied to a concrete situation in their lives, the student expands the content-driven perspective from mere information transmission to critical thinking.

[Archaic methodology] working only with slides, having to deliver an assignment, it can be individual or group, but you have to send it online to the professor, and the professor sees it, reviews it, etc., gives you the check, and it stays in that individual or group world, and then you don't have the opportunity to share the ideas you put into that content with more people, which I'm sure can add a lot to everyone's life (A55).

By making this analysis, the student emphasizes the importance of reflection and sharing about what is learned in class, which is directly related to the proposal of hermeneutic pedagogy. For them, education should not be limited to theory, but should connect with the student's reality. Furthermore, adopting an approach that limits the opportunity to share ideas with more people does not optimize the learning potential and enrichment that can come from a perspective of collaboration among students. Since knowledge, according to Freire (1987), is constituted in the relationships between humans and the world, and it improves through the critical problematization of those relationships.

Finally, one of the major problems that can be observed from the traditional logic of teaching refers to the isolated way in which knowledge is presented to students, without relating it to the experiences, problems, or challenges that students may face.

One basic thing that he [referring to Marx] talked about was the issue of profit, right, how we are exploited. As I brought up in class about companies not wanting to pay for inflation, right... that goes up every year, and they don't adjust. So this always comes up because they want to profit more and more. [...] And about the union, he brings that up, right? The union is still present today, and it's the only one that still fights for... our rights in

a way, right? Because if it weren't for them, nobody would stand up" (A1).

Mediator: But does this have any implication for your experience at work?

Of course, it does, right? I'm not getting the inflation adjustment that I should be getting for the work I do! (A1).

Mediator: And does this make you mobilize differently?

Exactly, I go after it, and not just for me, but for how many others, right?! (A1).

This analytical process aims to make clear that students' reflections go beyond the mere passive reception of content, effectively configuring a liberating process in line with Freire's ideas (2002). The article demonstrates that by producing a systematic intervention in education, we can promote in the classroom a dynamic space for the critical construction of knowledge, where concepts cease to be mere rhetorical accessories and are learned, gaining life in the everyday reality of those involved. Above all, our argument aims to highlight that we live in a period of extreme need to foster critical thinking, and that, simultaneously, it is our responsibility to rethink traditional teaching methods. Thus, we aim to encourage our peers to promote intersections between theory and practice, aiming for the intellectual and social emancipation of our students.

Final Considerations

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the possibilities of a hermeneutic pedagogy to guide teaching practices in administration and related courses. We conclude this journey recognizing that our effort is more focused on provoking debate within the academic community than on presenting a ready-made model. By positioning ourselves this way, we believe we maintain the onto-epistemological coherence of philosophical hermeneutics. We believe that teaching anchored in dialogicity and hermeneutics allows for a more critical and conscious perspective on what we know and how we construct that knowledge.

For this reason, we take into account that our text has the potential to initiate a discussion on how teachers in administration courses can rethink their teaching-learning practices, considering that this debate is still scarcely addressed in this area. It is worth noting that discussions in the field of administration regarding learning are

mostly linked to studies on the application of active methodologies, student engagement, and case studies on the actions of large organizations, aiming to disseminate content of a technical nature. Although these discussions maintain their relevance and credibility in the field, few, if any, of these studies seek to connect with a dialogic pedagogy that aims at the emancipation of students.

Moreover, the main aspect of this effort is related to the constant difficulty in positioning academic knowledge in administration for practitioners, as argued by Vizeu and Lara (2023) in their reflections on the usefulness of this knowledge. According to these authors, the academic community in administration needs to recognize that its greatest challenge concerns the urgent need to create bridges between academics and practitioners through new ways of constructing the meaning of knowledge and how it serves practice. Thus, aligning ourselves with the intentions of these authors, we see that reflecting on theoretical teaching in administration courses carries the same potential for critique of the academic community, which, in Brazil, assumes the role of producing knowledge and teaching future professionals/practitioners in the field.

In the traditional teaching format, certain power structures persist, mainly based on the hierarchy between teacher and student, where the teacher holds all the knowledge, and students are seen as passive recipients of that knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to consider that, in view of the hegemony of the traditional system despite the failures observed in the formation and motivation of administration students, we can assume that the community members themselves still defend it, either out of convenience, belief in its legitimacy, or due to the maintenance of power relations. It is easier for teaching practice to follow the banking model, where the content is already provided, where students do not question it, and where written exams serve as an objective – yet fictional – instrument to indicate performance in the teaching-learning process. Paraphrasing Vizeu and Lara (2023), if we do not mobilize against this, society will soon realize that the way we teach administration is meaningless and useless in the formation of professionals, rendering us dispensable to society.

Given this, we believe this article seeks to contribute to the discussion about the need to break away from the banking model of teaching and the importance of adopting a hermeneutic approach in teaching administration. The issue we iden-

tified in this study is not simply about creating new activities, but about creating conditions for students to participate actively in the learning process. However, we recognize some limitations, such as the fact that this paper focuses on only one educational institution and does not include longitudinal follow-up of the graduates from the administration course who participated in the classes described here. Future research can explore how this approach materializes in other institutions, analyzing concrete experiences of hermeneutic teaching and its impact on student learning. Additionally, new studies can deepen the relationship between teaching, student autonomy, and critical engagement, expanding the debate on pedagogical methodologies that promote a more meaningful and emancipatory education.

Ultimately, we believe that transforming the teaching of administration requires a collective movement of awareness and change. If we want education in the field to be more than just a technical transmission of content, we need to confront the structural and epistemological challenges that sustain the traditional model, which, being not neutral, is maintained by the current educational structures. This requires an articulation that goes beyond theoretical and critical discussions, but that resonates in legal decrees, which mandate and assess educational institutions also based on their teaching methodologies, which should be capable of preparing students to address contemporary issues in their professional practice.

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