

Professional Management Field as a Linguistic Process: Understanding the Circulation of Ideas and the Theory-Practice Gap in the Field †

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PURPOSE

A professional field is constituted by the ideas that circulate within it, representing knowledge that is infused into concrete actions. The research provides an alternative explanation for an old debate, but one that still raises concerns for Management: the gap between theory and practice in this field of professional activity, discussed from the point of view of the vocabularies that circulate management ideas. Thus, this work sought to analyze how the understanding of the professional field of Management as a linguistic process – constituted by the circulation of management ideas – can explain the gap between theory and practice in the field.

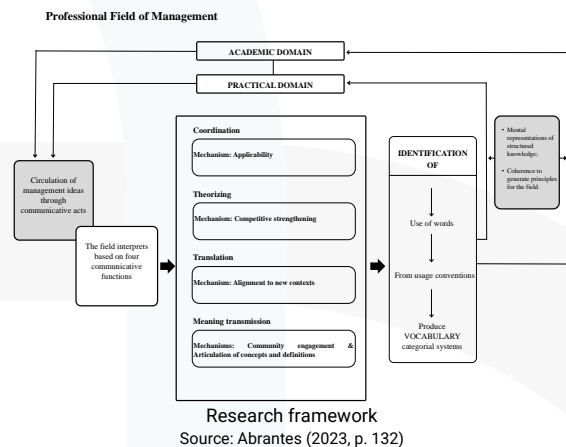
METHOD

Since business media are intermediaries between the academic and practical domains of the professional field of Management, secondary data from academic and commercial journals were used to analyze the circulation of 06 (six) management ideas throughout 22 (twenty-two) years, through two qualitative studies. The management ideas studied were: (i) Benchmarking; (ii) Organizational Culture; (iii) Lean Strategies; (iv) Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); (v) Project Management; and (vi) Core Competencies.

FINDINGS

Results indicate that, even though ideas spread dynamically, they do not distance themselves from the essence of their original meanings, but gain prominence to continue circulating in new guises. Furthermore, the degree of importance of the meanings generated by the vocabularies that mark them differs between academics and practitioners and are, therefore, structured differently, even if they come from similar linguistic repertoires. It was also possible to identify five (5) mechanisms underlying the circulation of ideas in the academic and practical domains of the field, which are used to form these vocabularies, namely: (i) alignment with new social contexts; (ii) involvement with the professional community; (iii) competitive strengthening; (iv) concepts and definitions; and (v) applicability. Finally, it was contended there is a

"language of Management" governed by particular labels and understandings, which are articulated and used by the actors in the field through the circulation of management ideas, representing meanings and standing in coherence with what is institutionalized in those domains.



MANAGERIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Assuming the existence of a proper language of the field of Management – which is governed by the specific interests of the actors in the field –, academics and practitioners can grasp the available usage and accessible vocabularies, which indicate ways of communicating with specific audiences. In addition, professionals in the field – whether academics or management practitioners – can understand and scale the power that the content consumed and generated in their daily lives has to support their ways of thinking and talking about management, and have repercussions on their concrete actions in this field. Hence, it is important for them to act on their critical professional sense, so that this can also be reflected in the training of new professionals, as these are the institutional actors that shape the future of the field.

SUPPORTED BY:



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