THE QUEST FOR A PROFESSIONALIZATION PROJECT: CHALLENGES FOR THE CONSOLIDATION OF A STRICT SENSE PROFESSION MODEL FOR MANAGENENT IN BRAZIL

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1 INTRODUCTION

Profession, in its classical sense, refers to a set of activities characterized by the systematic application of predominantly scientific knowledge used to perform specialized tasks linked to society's essential needs. According to the classical approach of the Sociology of Professions, this concept denotes a distinct category of occupation, in which members maintain a high degree of control over performance criteria and evaluation of their own work, alongside other characteristics such as a relatively homogeneous body of scientific knowledge and high complexity ('esoteric' nature), jurisdictional monopoly over practice, control over admission of new members, collective identity, visibility, and recognition, which ensures them a privileged position in the social structure. Such activities are also referred to as 'true' professions or professions in the strict sense. (ABBOTT, 1988; MUZIO; AULAKH; KIRKPATRICK, 2019; BONELLI; NUNES; MICK, 2017).

Lately, due to advancements in the study of professions, new perspectives for their understanding have emerged. This paper aims to discuss professional Management in Brazil, emphasizing the issue of legitimacy as an important element for its consolidation, taking into account the particularities of managerial professions. This work, thus, addresses Management from an institutionalist perspective, as a *sui generis* professional field with peculiar characteristics, often distinct from so-called professions in the *strict sense*, which makes the acceptance and legitimization of a professional model similar to those professions challenging.

In Brazil, there is a distinct hierarchy among different professional groups, with some categories enjoying higher status, remuneration, and influence than others, especially those with a longer historical tradition, such as the professions in the strict sense. In Brazil, 'true' professions like Medicine, Law, and Engineering established their institutionalization process during the Empire era in Brazil (1822-1889). This is ther reason because they are therefore also referred as "imperial professions" by some national researchers. Motivated by the belief that the consolidation of a regulatory model reflecting the same structure and granting the same privileges as professions in the *strict sense* is the safest path to defend their interests, associations representing various occupational groups pressure lawmakers to regulate numerous other activities, mostly seeking to replicate the model of traditional or *strict sense* professions (COELHO, 1999; VARGAS, 2010, CÂMARA DOS DEPUTADOS, 2021).

The scenario discussed above reflects the belief that increased regulation necessarily implies greater protection, employability, and a better position in the hierarchy of professions. This belief has influenced the professionalization model of Management in Brazil, as will be demonstrated further through the analysis of Law n. 4.769/1965, which regulates the profession of Manegement in Brazil (BRASIL, 1965; MORAES SOBRINHO, 2010).

Management, as a profession, in Brazil is a stricted regulated activity that adopts a 'jurisdictional' model of professionalization. A jurisdictional model of professions aims to control a field of activities by a representative set of actors from a certain class of workers who create mechanisms of restriction and control for that professional realm. Only those professionals duly qualified and endorsed by their respective professional associations can operate in those fields (ABBOTT, 1988). This is precisely the format outlined for Management in Brazil, as its regulation seeks market reservation by defining exclusive fields of practice for Managements who posses the bachelor degree and the profissional license.

There is data regarding the integration of administrative professionals into executive positions that seem to indicate a low effectiveness of this jurisdictional model (CFA/USP, 2016). These data suggest that the jurisdictional model has not been effective in ensuring market reservation for professionals in the field of Management. Legislation alone is not capable to ensure a secure path to conquer space and social legitimacy for a profession. Laws, as every social construct, also require legitimacy to be able to regulate social relations. A law only becomes legitimated and institutionalized when its principles are broadly recognized and accepted by the most relevant actors in society (ABBOTT, 1988; WHITTINGTON; ANDERSON, 2019; MAIELLO; BRITTO; VALLE, 2018).

This paper, it should be clarified, does not aim to advocate for a market reservation for Management professionals. Such arguments are used here only as a starting point to demonstrate the need to undertake a debate regarding the effectiveness of the current professionalization model adopted in Brazil for the Management field. The current model proposes market reservation as one of the elements capable, in the view of its proponents, of ensuring greater integration and employability. This debate is closely related to the theme of legitimacy and, consequently, aligns with Institutional Theory. The relatively low integration of Administrators, even in areas where their participation is mandatory due to the adopted model for the activity in Brazil, as it is a regulated activity by Law (4.769/1965), which provides exclusive fields of practice for administrators, may indicate inadequate prestige and social recognition, stemming from low legitimacy of the profession.

There are several studies dedicated to examining the professional phenomenon of Management in the international context, among which the works of Byrkjeflot and Nygaard (2018), Barker (2010), Mintzberg (2006), Spender (2007), Fellman (2018), and Segon, Booth, and Pearce (2019) stand out. However, few studies relate the profession of administrator to the legitimacy topic. In Brazilian context, there are no records of studies that analyze, through the lens of Institutional Theory, the factors affecting the legitimization of Management in Brazil, as searched in the main databases in November 2021, making it timely to develop investigative endeavors to fullfill this gap.

Based on the presented context, the research problem guiding this investigation was proposed as follows: What are the main challenges for the consolidation of a *strict sense* profession model for Management in Brazil? This work aims, therefore, to identify the main challenges for the consolidation of a *strict sense* professionalization model for Management in the Brazilian context. The specific objectives sought are: to analyze the format and structure of the legislative model adopted for the professional Management field in Brazil; and to understand the implications of market logic on the institutional environment of professions, particularly on the profession of administrator in Brazil and its regulatory model.

The institutional approach opens new perspectives for the study of organizational phenomena, including professions, by emphasizing fundamental symbolic elements for the process of structuring relationships among various actors in the organizational field. Byrkjeflot and Nygaard (2018) argue for the relevance of an analytical perspective that takes into account institutional dynamics to achieve a deeper understanding of the constitution dynamics of Management as a professional field, as viewed by these authors, in development. According to Rutgers (1999), values and meanings are inseparable parts of administrative rationality, considering that organizational goals and strategies need to be socially shared and legitimized.

From a theoretical standpoint, this debate can stimulate the development of new explanatory models capable of articulating the various elements that enhance or condition the institutionalization process of professions and the factors that affect their legitimation. From a practical perspective, these new models can serve as a starting point for formative and regulatory spheres to improve standardization processes towards a profession model consistent with the new context of professions and the needs of organizations, administrators, and society,

contributing to greater appreciation, greater legitimacy, and consequently, greater integration of the Management professional.

The innovative character of this work lies in addressing the phenomenon of Management professionalization from a perspective that seeks to move away from a rigid model of professionalization, based on the pursuit and reaffirmation of characteristics inherent in other professions, especially those classified as stricto sensu. This debate aims to contribute to the search for a professional identity more consistent with the current socio-organizational context, thereby allowing greater recognition of professional Management in contemporary society.

2 ORGANIZATIONAL INSTITUTIONALISM

Institutions are enduring social constructs that provide structure to social groupings. They do stabilize and support social relations through normative, cultural-cognitive, and regulatory elements (MEYER; ROWAN, 1977). Despite their structuring nature and relative stability, institutions, according to Scott (2014), undergo changes and transformations, influencing and being influenced by other processes inherent in the dynamics of the social systems to which they are closely intertwined. Organizational Institutionalism, more than just a perspective, functions as a theoretical lens capable of unveiling the structures that influence and condition social phenomena in society and, concerning administrative elements, within and between organizations (GREENWOOD et al., 2017; SUDDABBY; MUZIO, 2015).

Several concepts stand out within organizational institutionalism, such as the concepts of organizational fields, institutional logics, and legitimacy. The notion of organizational fields plays an important role in institutional understanding, as these are spaces derived from broader social systems that project values, norms, beliefs, and other symbolic elements that mediate actions, organizational structures, and the behavior of their members (SELZNICK, 1996; WOOTEN; HOFFMAN, 2017). Organizational actions, under the influence of organizational fields, are not mere results of rational processes aimed at achieving predetermined objectives. Organizational strategies are influenced by constraints and injunctions of the institutional environment through regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive systems that structure fields and provide meaning and legitimizing support to organizations. Thus, actions of social organizations under this perspective are not simply outcomes of rational and conscious choices among numerous available options, but rather a well-defined set of legitimized options (MACHADO-DA-SILVA; GUARIDO FILHO; ROSSONI, 2006; WOOTEN; HOFFMAN, 2017).

Institutional logics, according to Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury (2012), are socially constructed patterns of material practices and symbolic elements that reflect beliefs, values, and rules produced and reproduced by individual and organizational actors to give meaning to their social reality. For Reay, Goodrick, and Hinings (2016), they refer to homogeneous values and beliefs influencing the behavior of a specific set of actors sharing them within a particular organizational field. Understanding this concept is crucial as a given organizational field may be imbued with multiple conflicting logics due to the diversity of organizational actors linked to various institutional reference frames. Such logics affect and condition the dynamics of organizational life (COSTA; GUARIDO FILHO; GONÇALVES, 2013). The concept of institutional logic thus expands the understanding of institutional phenomena, considering that organizational dynamics are not solely the result of isomorphic and deterministic pressures (GÜMÜSAY; CLAUS; AMIS, 2020; OCASIO; THORNTON; LOUNSBURY, 2017).

Legitimacy is a central concept in Organizational Institutionalism. Organizations, as members of social systems, require more than technical and informational resources from their environment. They need acceptance and credibility from the various entities that comprise the system. Scott and Meyer (1983) present legitimacy as the search for congruence between the

organization and its cultural environment, emphasizing the cognitive aspect over the outcome aspect. Suchman (1995) presents a broader concept of legitimacy that encompasses cultural dimensions, outcome dimensions, and the role of the social audience in the dynamics of organizational legitimation. Legitimacy stems from the degree of alignment of an organization with the norms, values, and beliefs systems of a particular social system. An organization is considered legitimate when its elements are grounded in and supported by socially accepted "structural principles." As organizational practices align and harmonize with the prevailing values of social systems, they gain attachment and support, thus legitimizing themselves. Legitimacy is an important predicate capable of enhancing an organization's survival capacity, as the incorporation of socially legitimated elements and practices facilitates the acquisition of resources and social support from the environment in which the organization operates (MEYER; ROWAN, 1977; ROSSONI, 2016).

3 PROFESSIONS UNDER A SOCIOLOGICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

Professions are recognized as dynamic institutions of great relevance to modern society (MOURA JUNIOR; HELAL, 2014; SANTOS, 2011). Concerns about occupations and the phenomenon of professionalization emerged in the wake of the development of market economies and their progressive industrialization, which demanded an increasingly skilled workforce equipped with specific knowledge and abilities. Added to these events were the creation and adoption of new technologies and innovative work processes, which consequently brought about profound changes in work forms, organizational structures, and society at large. These events, alongside the specialization resulting from the implementation of rational work organization, led to the emergence of numerous new occupations and notable challenges for existing occupations and professions (BONELLI; NUNES; MICK, 2017; DRUCKER, 2001; MOTTA; VASCONCELLOS, 2006).

An occupation refers to a grouping of similar tasks and activities assigned and performed by individuals with relatively homogeneous skills and training levels (MUZIO; AULAKH; KIRKPATRICK, 2019). On the other hand, according to the classic approach of the Sociology of Professions, a profession pertains to a distinct category of workers. These are differentiated workers whose work and level of education are distinct from those of other social occupations. For certain social segments with higher social recognition, their professionals are seen as members of a select club: they work in areas of higher status and social prestige, such as Medicine, Engineering, and Law. In addition to being repositories of knowledge in their respective specialties, such occupations share common characteristics: entry barriers, high qualification requirements, the need to submit to qualification and professional licensing tests, and a monopoly over knowledge and its practical application (ACKROYD, 2016). Brante (2011) defines professions as occupations whose practices are guided by structured scientific knowledge, operating within defined mechanisms, structures, and contexts. Evetts (2003) views professions as occupational groups based on technical and tacit knowledge that typically require extensive training and practical application for the development of experience, ideally aligned with a vocation. Freidson (2001) also lists autonomy and jurisdictional monopoly as distinctive characteristics, enabling members of a particular professional body to legitimately control their field. This monopoly sets established professional groups apart from "ordinary occupations" that make up the "common" job market.

The social transformations of the last century have had repercussions on the structure of professions. New forms of production and service provision have emerged, giving rise to new occupations as well as conflicts over competencies or jurisdictions. In countries with regulated professions, legal changes have been necessary to accommodate new occupations that have

emerged. Even the classic ways of performing the most traditional jobs have undergone changes.

At the root of all these transformations, Leicht and Fennell (2008) highlight three major events that have impacted the dynamics of professions. The first was a significant change in the composition of professional groups; the second major event was institutional change resulting from shifts in technological paradigms, which altered organizational structures and pressured for deregulation in different economic sectors; the third transformation stems from changes in societal values themselves, closely related to access to information and greater transparency, reflecting all the aforementioned events.

Muzio, Aulakh, and Kirkpatrick (2019) add that in addition to technological revolution and increased access to information (which have contributed to the client/professional relationship, reducing information asymmetry), the growing process of cultural delegitimization of some professions due to market logic has influenced changes in legal frameworks, weakening professional associations and reshaping the relationship between professionals and organizations.

All these phenomena contribute to a progressive reconfiguration of the concept of professions as originally conceived. This reconfiguration stems from the loss of legitimacy of some traditional professions in the face of all these social transformations. This work assumes that professions—even those with higher levels of tradition and institutionalization—have lost part of their legitimacy and status, due to declining public trust, reduced power of certain professional groups, and other factors discussed below (ACKROYD, 2016; EVETTS, 2003).

4 METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

In this section, the methodological approach that guided the development of this research will be presented.

4.1 STUDY CHARACTERIZATION

The choice of a method or set of methods for conducting qualitative research is not only based on objective assumptions. Such choice is also influenced by factors such as epistemological concerns and the researchers' worldview, in addition to the nature of the research object itself (BUCHANAN; BRYMAN, 2009). This work is grounded in interpretivist and constructivist paradigms. These orientations stem from the researchers' worldview, which posits that reality is socially constructed and evolves from the (inter)subjective experience of individuals (BERGER; LUCKMANN, 2003). Based on these factors and considering the nature of the research object, this investigation was designed as a qualitative study, descriptive and exploratory in nature (STAKE, 2011).

Qualitative research is characterized by predominantly using textual material as its empirical corpus and relies on social constructions of the studied realities, with a special interest in the practices, processes, and perspectives of participants regarding the study's theme. All these characteristics are present in this work. Qualitative research has an inductive character, where researchers move from specific observations towards theoretical construction, as opposed to the deductive method typical of quantitative approaches, where researchers follow the opposite path (FLICK, 2009).

4.2 CONTEXT AND SUBJECTS OF THE STUDY

The selection of subjects in qualitative research is a central element to ensure the quality and validity of its results. It is essential that the selection of subjects can be guided by their

ability to provide an expanded view of the phenomenon of interest, thereby offering a substantive contribution to its understanding. Therefore, selecting representative subjects who experience a particular research interest situation is indispensable. This is what makes a subject representative and suitable to participate in social research (CASSELL; SIMON, 2004; FLICK, 2009).

Based on this premise, the selection of subjects for this research was guided by their representativeness, namely: professional organizations such as professional associations, entities representing education, research, and practice in Management, or entities from the business sector and holders of positions where the use of administrative knowledge predominates. The organizations involved have national scope.

For this study, and in line with its established objectives, relevant actors with influence in the professional field of Management in the country were included as research subjects, such as: representatives from the Board of the Federal Council of Management/CFA; representatives from the national research association in Management (ANPAD); representatives from the national association of undergraduate professors in Management (ANGRAD); a representative from FEBRAD (Brazilian Federation of Administrators); representatives from national business segment entities: one linked to the National Confederation of Industry (CNI), representing large corporations; one from SEBRAE, representing micro and small business owners; and finally, executives holding managerial or leadership positions in nationally operating organizations.

4.3 PROCESS OF ACQUISITION AND ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL MATERIAL

To gather empirical material, semi-structured interviews and documentary research were used. The objective of any qualitative research interview is to view the research topic from the interviewee's perspective and to understand how and why they obtained that particular perspective (CASSELL; SIMON, 2004; SILVERMAN, 2009). According to Collis and Hussey (2005), documentary research involves the analysis of documents that have not yet undergone analytical treatment or that can still be reworked according to the research objectives. As inclusion criteria for documentary research, legal provisions with potential to affect the activities of professionals, organizations, and consequently, the institutional structure of the field, were selected and analyzed. Therefore, constitutional norms, laws, and bills of interest to the field comprised the documentary corpus.

The interviews were conducted remotely between October 2020 and April 2021 (via videoconference, using Google Meet), due to the health situation affecting the country during the empirical material gathering phase (SARS-CoV-2 – COVID-19 pandemic). The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed with prior and express authorization from the participants, in accordance with current ethical research parameters involving human subjects, ensuring participant anonymity. Table 1 below presents the list of interviewed subjects and their respective codes.

Table 1 – Subjects codification.

Subject	Code
CFA member	RCFA
ANPAD member	RANP
ANGRAD member	RANG
FEBRAD member	RFBA
CNI Member	RCNI
SEBRAE member	RSEB
Executive staff	EXEC

	TOTAL	-

The empirical material from the transcribed interviews and documents was subjected to the technique of qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is a flexible yet systematic method for analyzing verbal data such as text and speech, allowing for advancement and deepening in the analysis of empirical material by considering the complexity of meanings and the context of communications, facilitating an analysis that goes beyond what is explicitly stated (MAYRING, 2002; SCHREIER, 2014).

For this study, qualitative content analysis was operationalized through the following stages: defining the research problem; selecting the empirical material; developing a categorization framework and coding (which included segmentation, category and code testing, and final evaluation of the category and code system, with potential modifications as needed); main analysis; and finally, presentation and interpretation of findings.

5 DISCUSSION AND RESULTS ANALYSIS

5.1 ANALYSIS OF THE LEGISLATIVE MODEL ADOPTED FOR THE FIELD OF PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT IN BRAZIL

A systematic analysis of Law 4.769/1965 reveals the presence of requirements such as qualification (requirement of higher education) for the Management professional, professional registration, the stipulation of sanctions applicable in case of non-compliance with the legislation, and finally, the so-called exclusive competences, that is, areas of exclusive action of the administrator. These elements are regulated in articles 2, 3, 14, and 15 of the mentioned law and constitute the central elements of the profession's regulatory legislation, allowing for the visualization of the desired professionalization model. By observing the highlighted terms, one can perceive the legislator's intention to outline a closed professionalization model (or social closure model), also known as a jurisdictional model, aiming to establish "jurisdictions" where only duly qualified and registered professionals with the appropriate endorsement from their respective professional associations can enter and operate (ABBOTT, 1988; WHITTINGTON; ANDERSON, 2019). Article 3 of Law 4.769/1965 addresses qualification requirements: Art. 3: "The exercise of the profession of Technical Management is exclusive: a) of graduates in Public Management or Business Management, graduated in Brazil, in regular courses of higher education, official, officialized, or recognized, whose curriculum is fixed by the Federal Council of Education, under the terms of Law n. 4.024/1961".

After the law clarifies that Management is a profession that can only be practiced by those who have legal qualification – that is, higher education in the area according to the mentioned criteria – it also establishes another requirement: the professional registration. Such requirement appears in Article 14, main paragraph, transcribed below (authors' highlights): Art. 14: "Only those duly registered with the R.T.A. may exercise the profession of Technical Management, and a professional card will be issued. § 1 The lack of registration renders the exercise of the profession of Technical Management illegal. § 2 The professional card will serve as proof for professional exercise, as an identity card, and will have validity throughout the national territory."

As clarified by the aforementioned provision, professional qualification, that is, obtaining a diploma according to the parameters of the country's educational legislation, is not sufficient for the practice of the administrator profession. The law also stipulates another requirement: professional registration. According to Muzio, Aulakh, and Kirkpatrick (2019), although the system of access control to the field may positively affect professionals'

remuneration due to the market reservation it stipulates, registration can restrict consumer choice and increase their costs, without guaranteeing that such requirement necessarily translates into higher service quality. Combining the wording of Article 3, which presents the qualification requirements, with Article 14, which determines registration for the exercise of the profession by qualified professionals, it is concluded, according to Law 4,769/65, that the exercise of the administrator profession is exclusive to the registered bachelor in the respective state section council where they will perform their activities. The exercise of the activity by an unqualified professional is considered, according to § 1 of Article 14, illegal. The sanctions and penalties provided for illegal exercise of the profession are listed in Article 16 of Law 4,769/65. It is possible to perceive that the articles of Law 4,769/65 that regulate the requirements for qualification, registration, and performance of the Management professional have a close connection with the postulates of Trait Theory, one of the first theories developed to investigate phenomena related to the dynamics of professional work and occupations, dating back to the early 20th century (CARR-SAUDERS; WILSON, 1933). Among the most striking characteristics of this model are standardized training requirements and specialized knowledge for use restricted to members of a specific professional group (GOODE, 1957; MUZIO; BROCK; SUDDABY, 2013).

Lastly, we turn to the final legal provision of interest for this discussion: Article 2 of Law 4.769/1965, which lists the exclusive activities of the administrator. Here is its wording (emphasis added): Art. 2: The professional activity of Technical Management shall be exercised, as a liberal or non-liberal profession, by means of: a) opinions, reports, plans, projects, arbitrations, expert opinions, general consultancy, intermediate Management, senior Management; b) research, studies, analysis, interpretation, planning, implementation, coordination and monitoring of work in the fields of Management, such as personnel Management and selection, organization and methods, budgets, material Management, financial Management, public relations, marketing Management, production Management, industrial relations, as well as other fields to which these are related or from which they stem; c) VETOED. (BRAZIL, 1965).

Note that the legislator made a point to classify administrative activity as a "professional activity," with the clear intention of differentiating it from other trades or occupations that do not have the same status and level of social recognition as "true professions." A profession in the *strict sense* is an eminently intellectual form of work that differs from an ordinary occupation, requiring a higher level of education. Its members have managed to consolidate in the collective imagination the perception of being socially more important activities than others, which ensures them a privileged position and status compared to those conferred on other activities. In theory, they belong to a privileged group. Accordingly, their members are more likely to obtain better pay and working conditions, as well as greater independence in carrying out their activities, considering that these professionals are considered holders of highly specialized knowledge, also referred to by some researchers as "esoteric knowledge" (WILENSKY, 1964; MOSKOVSKAYA, 2018; MUZIO, AULAKH; KIRKPATRICK, 2019). Based on these assumptions about the true nature of a profession, the mere classification, even if by legal definition, that a certain activity is a profession is not sufficient to legitimize it as such, as the social construction of legitimacy is the product of negotiation processes and articulation of collectivities (SCOTT, 2014; BERGER; LUCKMANN, 2003). Powell (1996) emphasizes that the law cannot be an overestimated element in institutional analysis, as it is also subject to mechanisms of negotiation, interpretation, and contestation. The power of the law is not absolute and depends heavily on the legitimacy conferred by various social segments.

Table 2 - Comparative summary between the legislation of Management profession vs professions in the *strict sense*

Field	Law	Descrição
Management profession	4.769/1965	- Market reserve through the definition of activities under private jurisdiction: art. 2nd; - Stipulation of sanctions in case of irregular exercise: art. 16; - Estipulation of mechanisms for the control, registration and supervision of professional practice by peers, according to arts. 6th to 15.
Medical profession	12.842/2013	- Market reserve through the definition of activities under private jurisdiction: art. 2nd; - Stipulation of sanctions in case of irregular exercise: art. 16; - Estipulation of mechanisms for the control, registration and supervision of professional practice by peers, according to arts. 6th to 15.
Law profession	8.906/1994	- Market reserve through the definition of activities under private jurisdiction: art. 1st; - Stipulation of sanctions in case of irregular exercise: art. 4, without prejudice to the provisions of art. 47 of the Criminal Misdemeanors Law; - Provision of mechanisms for the admission and accreditation of new professionals and standards that guide the control, registration and supervision of professional practice by peers, according to arts. 8th, 10, 28, 30, 33, 34, 44 and 46.
Engeneering profession	5.196/1966	- Market reserve through the definition of activities under private jurisdiction (arts. 1 and 2); - Stipulation of sanctions in case of irregular exercise: art. 6 and 71, without prejudice to the provisions of art. 47 of the Criminal Misdemeanors Law; - Provision of mechanisms for the control, registration and supervision of professional practice by peers, according to art. 55.

Fonte: Reserch data (2021).

At this point, there is a clear and intentional alignment of Law n. 4.769/1965 with the defining parameters of the traditional model of professions, which aims to create mechanisms to ensure the monopoly of practice only by members of the profession, establish requirements and accreditation systems that serve as barriers to entry for new members, and naturally, adopt mechanisms for control and sanctions by peers in case of deviation from defined standards (ABBOTT, 2015; MUZIO; AULAKH; KIRKPATRICK, 2019).

However, modernly, the concept of professions has evolved and expanded, encompassing new characteristics and assumptions beyond those already mentioned. In the current debate on professions, there has been a progressive loss of authority – or even a relativization of the monopoly – of some professional groups, even the most consolidated, such as the professions in the *strict sense*. This phenomenon arises from factors such as technological evolution, emergence of new professional categories, and increased dissemination of information technologies and knowledge (BROCK, 2006; LEICHT; FENNELL, 2008; PRING et al., 2019).

Additionally, one must consider the significant difference between Management and professions in the *strict sense* mentioned above. The administrator's activity is essentially a means-to-an-end, which makes it peculiar and distinct from the so-called 'true' professions that inspired the professionalization model of Management, as highlighted in Figure 3 (item 4.1.4). RANP 1 emphasizes this characteristic of the administrative function: "The administrative function is essential, yet often invisible. It is a middle function, often unnoticed." (RANP 1).

According to Drucker (2001), Management is one of the basic institutions of modernity that is less understood by society. The author argues that even within organizations, there is often not a clear understanding among other collaborators about the nature and functions

performed by administrators. This configuration is another obstacle for professional Management to gain greater recognition and social support, which hinders achieving the same status as professions with more direct contact with the public. RANP 2's statement illustrates this reality:

> Those with administrative knowledge are not in the spotlight. This is true in the public sector as well. When we look at some examples from the past of managerial changes, administrative reforms... it is the political agent who gains visibility, not the administrative function that effectively brings about that change. It's the same in the business world. (RANP 2).

To understand correctly the work performed by these professionals, one must understand the roles that administrators play in the organization. The most relevant roles played by administrators, including interpersonal roles, especially leadership, informational roles, and those related to decision-making, reveal that a significant portion of the administrator's activity involves managing the work of other professionals (SOBRAL; PECI, 2008; MINTZBERG, 1990). RCNI recognizes that the lack of understanding about the administrator's activity affects recognition of this professional:

> I still see a deficiency in recognizing that the administrator must await their participation in each area. I see that in many institutions, in many places, there is not this respect and valorization for the area of Management. Perhaps because they do not fully understand, as we do, the tools and techniques that we can use to develop work, to reduce costs. Perhaps the lack of knowledge about the profession leads to a lack of recognition for the professional (the administrator). (RCNI).

Therefore, the administrator's activity is mediate. This means that these professionals do not typically have direct contact with the final recipient of their function, as is the case with traditional professions such as Medicine and Law. According to RANP 2, this configuration affects the visibility of Management:

> Management does not have the same visibility as Engineering, as Medicine. There is an imagination that these mentioned professions are the professions of greater relevance. Note that, often, these professional activities, which have closer contact with users in people's daily lives, end up having this differentiated image and placing in the imagination that the administrator would be a second-tier profession. (RANP 2).

Administrative activity is mediated by the organizational structure, which does not always accurately reflect the direction of its decisions, given the multiplicity of actors and levels that make up its structure. The perception of the effectiveness of decisions made by an administrator takes considerably longer to consolidate compared to typical professions, where there is direct contact with the client/recipient. Even if an administrator develops dedicated Management work, the multiple layers and levels of the organizational structure can greatly mitigate the effectiveness of their decisions and the perception of stakeholders. RANG 2 highlights how social perception is influenced by the bureaucratic structure of organizations:

> I couldn't tell you how much people know about the vast field of administrator activity. Not only in the public sector but also in the private sector. I believe it's much more of a job seen bureaucratically. The highlight given is more to the big CEOs of large corporations, who occupy more space in the media. (RANG 2).

These are factors not considered by proponents of the current model, who wish to replicate for Management the same assumptions as professions in the *strict sense*, aiming to

achieve a social mobility project catalyzed by a higher position in the social hierarchy of professions.

5.2 THE IMPLICATIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES ON THE PROFESSION OF ADMINISTRATOR IN BRAZIL

The convergenc point among regulated activities in Brazil is the defense of a jurisdictional model, based on the stipulation of privileges and prerogatives for few professional groups protected by the force of law. The current professionalization model in the country is self-directed, sidelining market and societal demands. This model is grounded in defending the status quo and pursuing corporate interests, even if this negatively impacts broader social interests, as illustrated by excerpts from the interviewees' statements below:

> I compare our council with the Veterinary one here. It's another madness. Fighting for market reservation and posting on social media: 'We are penalizing cheese maker X because there's no veterinarian.' The cheese maker who earns only 3 thousand reais per month! Instead of thinking about valuing the profession and educating, it's just about market reservation. And the practice of punishment as education. How do you win society with this? (RANP 2).

> They don't have a representative function. They only have a monitoring function. This has generated and continues to generate, over the years, a great dispute between administrators and councils. Because they don't see representation. (RANG 3).

This so called 'closed model' shows low adherence to social and professional demands, facing new injunctions from the institutional environment in Brazil. Freidson (2001) highlights changes in work contracts across various professions, affecting payment methods, salary policies, work hours, and work conditions, stemming from changes in organizational structure, workforce composition, outsourcing processes, changes in the regulation of various professions, among other transformations. In Brazil, changes in the institutional environment tend to affect the classic assumptions of professions, posing threats to the jurisdictional model of Management in Brazil. Besides social and technological changes affecting general professional assumptions, there are other economic and political changes pressing for legislative changes for professions in Congress.

RANP 3 emphasizes the inadequacy of the professionalization model of Management facing the current situation:

> Its regulation is also outdated. And the world is changing. And things are changing, right? (...) So I think we are still at a moment where we can reflect to maintain this recognition and perhaps even create greater recognition, keeping up with the modernity and contemporaneity of Brazil in Management. (RANP 3).

A social structure becomes legitimate when sustained by structurally shared social principles. As alterations occur in social principles and values, organizations within this social system need to change their practices, values, and structure to remain aligned; otherwise, they become inappropriate and may lose social support (ABBOTT, 1988; DEEPHOUSE et al., 2017). This lack of alignment in legislation is one of the factors affecting the legitimacy of Management and makes the professional model particularly vulnerable to institutional changes.

Despite all these phenomena occurring, the CFA representative believes that the field of professional Management in Brazil is properly aligned with social transformations:

> Now Management, where is it heading? It's heading where it has always been. Where geopolitical, geoeconomic, technological, social, demographic, and organizational contingencies demand. (RCFA).

RCFA's statement supports that professional Management in Brazil aligns with changes in social, technological, political, and economic paradigms. However, the current professional model of Management in Brazil is based on a legislative structure from 1965 that has not undergone significant changes. The lack of alignment of Management with the governing principles of society and its demands tends to worsen the problems of low adherence to legislation and the legitimacy of the administrator compared to other professionals. According to Freidson (1984), changes over the last century have affected the context and content of various professions.

RANG 3, in his following statement, highlights that resistance to changes by professional associations is one of the factors explaining the progressive distancing of the professional field of Management from major societal transformations. This is due, in his view, to the conservatism of the professional bodies:

> It seems there is a virus in all these representative institutions. Management has become a conservative area, excessively conservative. There's no social, political, or economic interaction with society. Management is closed in on itself. (...).

The jurisdictional model, which governs administrative activities in Brazil, emphasizes the legal dimension, sidelining other dimensions and their relationship with social transformations. In organizational contexts and other social groups like professions, its dynamic interrelation with norms, rules, rituals, ideologies, customs, and practices of social systems that affect, restrict, or condition the actions of its members and guide their social relations must be considered. This means that normative and cultural-cognitive dimensions, which have significant repercussions on the behavior of actors, occupy a marginal place in a model that emphasizes legislative elements as the main structural pillar of the field of Management in Brazil (EDELMAN, 2004; SCOTT, 2014). This situation increases the likelihood that the activity is less in line with the demands of contemporary society and organizations, and consequently, its legitimacy.

In the North American context, some studies indicate that professions, as social institutions, face a legitimacy crisis due to organizational, political, and economic changes, precisely because of the lack of alignment with new social values (EVETTS, 2003; FREIDSON, 1994; GREENWOOD; LACHMAN, 1996; REED, 1996).

In Brazil, empirical evidence suggests that a similar phenomenon is already emerging and tends to affect more intensely those professional groups with lower levels of social recognition and support, as they are more susceptible to legislative changes due to their lower political capital. The statement by the CFA representative, who also integrates the National Council of Regulated Professions, with highlighted excerpts, illustrates this new reality:

> Paulo Guedes (Brazilian former Minister of Economy) wants to deregulate the 32 (higher education) professions with PEC 108. There he put in the third paragraph of a specific article (Art. 174-B of the CF, added by said amendment), which says the following: 'professional councils are prohibited from adopting anti-competitive practices in their area of operation.' This means that I cannot prevent an engineer, a graduate in Engineering without a license, from working in Engineering, for example. (RCFA).

The statement by the CFA representative shows concern with political, social, and economic changes that increasingly affect the interests of corporate groups concerned with maintaining the status quo. According to Brock (2006), increased competition, technological changes, changes in consumer habits, and the development of new service delivery alternatives are forces that have affected the institutional environment of professions. For the author, even the most established professions, protected by tradition and longer-standing legislation, suffer from processes of flexibilization and deregulation.

The reported transformations alter the dynamics of the institutional environment and the field of Management, impacting the landscape of regulated professions in Brazil. Currently, the National Congress is discussing several bills and constitutional amendment proposals aimed at changing the legislative model of regulated professions. One of these proposals is PEC (constitution amendment proposition) n. 108, intends to flexibilize the governing legislation of various regulated activities, making professional registration optional and opening opportunities for professionals from abroad to work, showing a clear legislative intention to mitigate market reservation, a central element of the jurisdictional model of professions.

In addition to PEC 108, there are other movements signaling a change in the landscape of regulated professions in Brazil, such as the progress of Bill 816-A/2011 in the Chamber of Deputies, which aims to create mechanisms to hinder the regulation of other occupations and ensure the principle of professional freedom (CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, 2021).

This emerging scenario in the field of professions in Brazil stems from the growing influence of market logic on governmental agendas and policies. Market logic plays a predominant role in capitalist economies, considering the economic power of corporations and their influence on the political dimension (THORNTON; OCASIO; LOUNSBURY, 2012). Organizational fields are formed by different groups of actors and are, consequently, imbued with various institutional logics, generating conflicts of interest and disputes (LOUNSBURY et al., 2021; OCASIO; THORNTON; LOUNSBURY, 2017). RCFA's statement highlights the conflict of interests between market logic and the logic of professional groups:

> But where does this (the proposed changes to Brazil's professional model) come from? It comes from Paulo Guedes' Liberal School, who wants to unleash everything (national competitiveness). In this unlocking, he also wants to end the trade boards and professions. In other words, free market. Who will regulate the market? He said the market self-regulates. Well, I don't know if that's possible. (RCFA).

Leicht and Fennell (2008) argue that policies primarily aligned with market logic have profound implications for professions, especially those structured through strict social controls. Governments oriented by such policies are more susceptible to lobbying from organizations aiming to reduce regulation on economic sectors and productive activities, under the argument of increasing competitiveness, cost reduction, and other business environment restrictions affecting economic activity and commercial transactions. This situation ends up affecting the assumptions of professions based on the jurisdictional model. Although the representative of CFA attributes such changes to the current government's orientation, the literature indicates that this process of institutional erosion of professional structures occurs globally (BROCK, 2006; MUZIO; AULAKH; KIRKPATRICK, 2019; LARSON, 2018).

These processes of change act as forces capable of leading to processes of delegitimization and deinstitutionalization, affecting the archetypes of existing professions, characterized by a rigidly controlled and closed structure and expertise, and tending to favor the structuring of new, more flexible archetypes that value a more generalist education, oriented towards new market configurations and social values (BROCK, 2006).

All those transformations have implications for Management as a professional field which, according to Barker (2010), occupies an intermediate position between a true profession and an occupation, thereby increasing the challenge of achieving greater social relevance and legitimacy. This underscores the need for the field to update its legislative structure and educational model. The statement by the ANPAD representative illustrates these arguments:

> First, this thinking must change. We must redefine what a council is. The council cannot remain in the 1960s. The profession has changed. The field of work has changed. The world has changed. This fight to only struggle for market reservation leads nowhere. (RANP 2).

North (2018) argues that particularly in developing countries, institutional environments are structured in ways that negatively affect entrepreneurial activity, due to political and economic restrictions that can hinder organizations' ability to seize opportunities, their efficiency, and competitiveness.

> Indeed, it's not easy to reconcile these two elements, the imperatives of a company's competitiveness with regulation. Because fines will come, which generate higher expenses. I believe these are not easily alignable objectives. (RCNI).

> The legislation is very stringent and stiffens Management. (EXEC 2).

That phenomena bring repercussions for the very concept of professions, as highly structured constructs characterized by rigid assumptions that distinguished them from other forms of work, which become increasingly difficult to sustain in contexts like the current one. Muzio, Aulakh, and Kirkpatrick (2019) list three determining elements in this process, termed by Freidson (1994) as deprofessionalization: (i) cultural delegitimization; (ii) technological revolution, which has rendered some forms of work obsolete and attacked the assumptions of some professions in the *strict sense*, such as "exclusive knowledge"; and (iii) new political agendas, of a liberal nature, influencing the regulatory pillar of society. The process of deprofessionalization results in a reduction in the power of professional associations to regulate and delimit access to their respective fields of activity, demonstrating the loss of autonomy and reduction of political power of these actors.

In the Brazilian context, these three phenomena are observed, but with a prevalence of the latter, considering the predominance of the jurisdictional model of regulated professions. This phenomenon affects assumptions dear to professions in the *strict sense*, such as their autonomy and the regulatory power of professional associations, which allow them to control their jurisdictions and the labor market of their professionals. Less legitimized fields, with professionals having lower levels of preparation and training, tend to suffer more intensely from these changes (DELACRUZ, 2018), in addition to losing space to other professions.

The legitimacy crisis has also affected more traditional professions, which adopt extensive mechanisms of social control (jurisdictional model) and are therefore more vulnerable to institutional environment transformations (BROCK, 2006; LARSON, 2018; LEICHT; FENNELL, 2008). When the very assumptions that served as the basis for professions in the *strict sense* are questioned, the implication for Management, which draws inspiration from such principles and has not yet achieved a position in the social hierarchy similar to true professions, is clear: it needs to find a model of professionalization, in a broad sense, that supplants the defense of assumptions that no longer fit a dynamic society, in order to consolidate a truly distinct professional identity, consistent with the characteristics and peculiarities of the field.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This paper has aimed to analyze the challenges for consolidating a *strict sense* of profession model for Management in Brazil.

The first specific objective aimed to analyze the regulation model of Management as a profession in Brazil. The structure of Law 4,769, dated September 9, 1965, which regulated the profession of administrator in the country, was clearly inspired by the regulation model of strictly regulated professions such as Medicine, Engineering, and Law. It sought to establish, similar to these professions, fields of exclusive competence, qualification requirements, professional registration, and sanction mechanisms to penalize those who practice Management contrary to legal commands. These assumptions demonstrate the choice of a "jurisdictional" model of profession (closed model), which is based on strict control of the activities exercised by members of the professional corporation, under the belief that this model is the path to achieving social mobility and obtaining higher status, similar to strictly regulated professions.

The second specific objective was to understand the implications of institutional changes on the profession of Management in Brazil. Changes in social, cultural, political, economic, and technological dimensions are phenomena that alter collective consciousness and trigger changes in the structuring of social relations, leading to a reconfiguration of the institutional environment, which affects all professions, particularly those that adopt rigid parameters and assumptions that may hinder their ability to respond and adapt to environmental demands. In the research context, there was a predominant influence of political and economic dimensions, driven by market logic, affecting the assumptions of traditional professions and specifically Management, as it seeks to align itself with the model of those professions.

As implications of choosing a jurisdictional model for a dynamic area like Management, the legitimacy crisis stands out, resulting from the low acceptance of this model in the field and the questioning of its assumptions. From the market perspective, this model is predominantly self-oriented, also harming the interests of organizations and their pursuit of competitiveness. Hence, there are several legislative proposals aimed at changing the professional models in Brazil currently under consideration in Congress. The main proposal aims to make professional registration optional and facilitate the entry of foreign professionals to work in Brazil.

Maintaining a closed professional model based on legislation from the 1960s, which has low adherence to contemporary demands of other social actors, could place the profession of Management in a vulnerable position in light of new institutional demands in Brazil. This extreme dependence on legislation also complicates the ability to respond to changes by class organizations and Management professionals themselves.

If market logic prevails over the corporatist logic of the professional Management field, it is possible to foresee a scenario with new challenges for these professionals. Ongoing changes in the institutional environment act as vectors that, over time – if this trajectory is maintained – will press for the reduction of regulatory power of professional corporations. This could stimulate competition among these professionals due to reduced barriers to the entry of new administrators and professionals from other fields, resulting from market openness and the mitigation of jurisdictional controls, thereby increasing competition for executive positions. Such a scenario, if realized, will pose greater challenges for the integration of Management professionals, as they become less dependent on legislation and market protection and more dependent on their own skills to occupy prominent positions in organizations and establish themselves as excellence professionals in managing managerial and strategic issues. Employability, the development of new competencies, and career Management, crucial factors for professional success today, will assume even greater importance for the success of administrators in the coming years.

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