

**EXTENSION CURRICULARIZATION AND RESPONSIBLE MANAGERS'
FORMATION: AN ANALYSIS FROM UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS'
PERSPECTIVE**

ANANDA SILVA SINGH
UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE UBERLÂNDIA (UFU)

MAYARA ABADIA DELFINO DOS ANJOS
UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE UBERLÂNDIA (UFU)

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1. INTRODUCTION

From December 2018, it became mandatory that Brazilian public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) started to guarantee “at least ten percent of the total curricular credits required for undergraduation in ‘extension’ or ‘services’ activities, guiding its action, primarily, to areas of great social relevance” (Brasil, 2019). This made all public HEIs start to plan and implement the so-called ‘curricularization of extension’ and they all had to do within three years from its regulamentation.

From such modifications, it is expected that students can become protagonists in the learning process (Fros, 2017), participating in the choices regarding the extension activities they will carry out (Costa, 2019) and associating theory with practical experiences (Biazus, 2004) with society, exchanging knowledge with external communities and helping them solve problems they face (Pereira; Vitorini, 2019). Thus, it is expected that such actions contribute to the formation of future professionals and citizens that are more responsible and participative towards society (Costa, 2019).

In this scenario, HEIs from all regions of Brazil began, thus, planning and operationalizing such modifications in the curricula of its courses. Several studies have been conducted describing how such modifications took place. Pereira e Vitorini (2019), for example, analyzed the theoretical foundations for crediting extension and reported the initial studies to program this change at the Federal University for Latin American Integration (UNILA). Tesche (2021), on the other hand, focused on the process of extension curricularization’ development in the Public and Social Administration course at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). Rauski, Oliveira and Antunes (2022) also addressed the current state of extension curricularization in the State University of Ponta Grossa (UEPG)’ Administration course.

Although those – and other – studies have been contributing to better understand the challenges faced by the extension curricularization process and how it can be operationalized, "the theme needs to be explored in a more vehement and exhaustive way, in the possibility of bringing information that can contribute to insert extension in the curricular matrix of undergraduate courses and guide future research on the subject” (Oliveira; Tosta; Freitas, 2020, p.124). Furthermore, there are few studies (Imperatore, 2020; Lucas et al.; 2023) that discuss the curricularization of extension, from the students’ perspective, leaving room to answer questions such as: How are the proposed activities contributing for students to feel protagonists of the teaching-learning process? How are these disciplines contributing to align theory to practical experiences? How are these disciplines contributing to form more responsible, critical and participative professionals?

The answers to such questions aim at contributing to (i) operationalize the teaching curriculum, directing higher education teachers and other social actors’ actions towards students’ formation and to (ii) meet the gap evidenced in the literature, regarding the need to better explore this theme. The answers to such questions can also help mitigate challenges faced by teachers when operationalizing this process, with regard to the adoption of strategies and methodologies that are effective to stimulate the participation and interaction of students and also to evaluate the results obtained from the developed extensionist activities (Imperatore, 2020). This can also contribute to minimize the chances of school dropout, as the use of appropriate pedagogical approaches is known to be one of the main reasons for this (Wilson, Aagard; 2012).

Thus, given the challenges inherent to extension curricularization and its potential contribution to the training of more responsible managers who are able to deal with issues and demands of the society, this research seeks to answer the following research problem: How extension curricularization has been contributing to the formation of undergraduate students of undergraduate management courses of a Brazilian public HEI?

To do so, this research is structured in the following topics, in addition to this introduction: theoretical framework, in which are presented the concepts of extension actions and its insertion in undergraduate courses' curricula; methodological procedures, where the research's characteristics, data collection and sources of analysis are described; results, where the discipline in which the participants of the research are enrolled is presented, along with the results obtained from empirical data; and; lastly, the conclusions, where the main findings of the research, its limitations and contributions are described.

2. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES AND PUBLIC BRAZILIAN HEI'S CURRICULA

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are responsible for training not only future professionals but also responsible, critical and reflective citizens. To do so, they rely on three pillars, namely, teaching, research and services – or 'extension', being the latter, the term that is used in this study. 'Extension', the focus of this research, is the "activity that is integrated into the curricular matrix and the research organization, constituting an interdisciplinary, political, educational, cultural, scientific, technological process, which promotes interaction" (Brasil, 2019, p. 1). Extension activities can be included in the following modalities: programs, projects, courses and workshops, events and service provision (Brasil, 2014). Through such activities, HEIs can provide "service activities to their institutions, professional societies, and external communities" (Mamiseishvili; Miller; Lee, 2016).

University Extension has established itself as an important means of connecting the University and society, promoting the continuous renewal of the academic environment, the democratization of the knowledge produced in the university and joint construction of knowledge through dialogue with communities. This process is characterized as a two-way street, or, as described later, a form of 'dialogical interaction' that offers several opportunities to transform both society and the University itself (FORPROEX, 2012). Furthermore, extension aims to offer students a more civic education, promoting interaction with new realities that complement their academic experiences.

Despite having been institutionalized in 1988, with the constitutional definition of the inseparability of teaching, research and extension, the latter has only recently gained greater prominence as a means of transformation between HEIs and society. In this scenario, The National Education Plan (PNE) establishes the integration of extension as an essential part of academic training, promoting meaningful, interdisciplinary, creative and contextualized learning, in dialogue with different groups and communities. In addition to consolidating existing practices, it presents new challenges, especially with regard to articulation with the pedagogical projects of HEIs' courses. Thus, according to the authors previously cited, the incorporation of extension activities should be conceived as an educational, cultural and scientific process that integrates teaching and research in an inseparable way, enabling a transformative relationship with society.

Even though the concept of 'extension' activities is mistakenly understood as synonymous to 'services', universities' social responsibility goes beyond providing services to the community, requiring actions that directly contribute to its social development (Rauski; Oliveira; Antunes, 2022). Thus, the conception of extension and its practices, according to the Guidelines for Extension in Higher Education in the Brazilian context consist: (i) in the dialogical interaction of the academic community with society, (ii) in the integral and citizen

formation of students, stimulating them to develop a critical and responsible posture towards society, (iii) in the promotion of initiatives that express HEIs' social commitment with all areas, (vi) in the promotion of ethical reflection, (vii) in stimulating the academic community to help society deal with problems they face and (viii) in producing and constructing updated and coherent knowledge with the Brazilian reality, aimed at social, equitable, sustainable development (Brasil, 2019).

One aspect that used to limit students' participation in extension activities regards the fact that, many times, they are developed from teachers' or technicians' individual initiatives, and this makes many students unaware of such actions, either because they do not have easy access to them, or because of disinterest in such activities (Tesche, 2021). To minimize this issue, including extension activities in the curriculum was regulated in the National Education Plan (PNE) on December 18th, 2018. From that time on, it became mandatory for Brazilian public HEIs to ensure "at least ten percent of the total curriculum credits required for graduation in programs and university extension projects, guiding its action, primarily, to areas of great social relevance" (Brasil, 2014).

With the update of the PNE in the 2014/2024 edition, the need for extension actions to be linked to structured programs and projects is emphasized, instead of remaining as isolated and independent activities. This change aims to increase the effectiveness of university extension, making it more aligned with undergraduate curricula and educational objectives.

It is expected that 'curricularization of extension' in public HEIs in Brazil, there is a greater engagement of students in activities that aim at promoting interaction between the academic and the external community and, consequently, improving Quality of Education, by forming professionals that are not only committed to issues that will benefit themselves but also, to solving problems faced by society. Thus, more than meeting a constitutional requirement, the measure aims to strengthen the principle of inseparability between teaching, research and extension, consolidated in the academic environment and mediated by university management (Miguel, 2023).

The active participation of students in practical projects such as those developed in extension activities and also in disciplines of an extensionist nature are important to their learning process (Meyers; Jones, 1993). This is because, by actively participating in these extension activities, students are able to associate theory with practice more effectively (Biazus, 2004), creating learning opportunities for these future managers. According to Williams and Williams (2011), these pedagogical strategies also contribute to keeping students motivated and interested in the discipline.

The extension curricularization consists, therefore, of the integration between teaching and extension, incorporated into the pedagogical planning of undergraduate courses. This process requires a curricular restructuring, overcoming the traditional view that marginalizes extension as a welfare or commercial practice. Just as there are several approaches to university extension, there is also no consensus in the academic community on the best way to integrate it into the curricula (Lucas et al., 2023). This is so, due to the fact that operationalizing extension curricularization brings challenges to all actors involved in the process.

One of such challenges consist of the mistaken perception that it would reduce the workload of subjects considered essential. However, learning is strengthened when applied in real situations, allowing students, under teacher guidance, to use programs and projects to transform the reality in which they are inserted. That being so, extension curricularization makes learning more meaningful and can be integrated into the subjects or developed separately, promoting dialogue between different areas of knowledge and stimulating collaboration between different courses.

Nevertheless, the transition to extension curricularization must be gradual, since it involves negotiations with both the internal academic community and society, in addition to requiring time for adjustments, learning and redefinitions throughout the process (Santos, 2020; Rauski; Oliveira; Antunes, 2022). Furthermore, it must be reflective and adapted to the specificity of each course, considering its objectives, pedagogical project, curricular structure and teaching skills. Understanding the particularities and challenges of each area can facilitate the construction of extension policies aligned with academic training, promoting changes through a collective effort committed to learning and innovation (Rauski; Oliveira; Antunes, 2022).

Hence, to operationalize the curricularization of extension, it is imperative that the actors involved in the process – HEIs’ managers, teachers, technicians, students and the community – jointly develop actions to reach that goal (Assis; Bonifácio, 2011). Students of management courses, one of these actors, are the focus of this research, since it aims to analyze, from these students’ perspective, how a discipline with an ‘extensionist’ nature, of two management undergraduate courses of a Brazilian HEI has been contributing to students’ formation.

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This research was held under a qualitative approach, since it aimed at discussing the phenomenon studied, that is, the curricularization of extension, from the researcher’s interpretation (Merriam, 1998). The study’s nature is descriptive, since the researcher registered, analyzed, classified and interpreted the facts and data collected from the documents and questionnaires from the participants of the research, not interfering on them (Raupp; Beuren, 2003). The selection of the HEI analyzed in this research was intentional, non-random and by accessibility (Eisenhardt, 1989). This study’s institution is public and is located in the southeast region of Brasil. Students of the first period of both management courses – here called Course 1 and Course 2 - of the management faculty – here called Alpha Faculty – of the HEI were the focus of this research.

At Alpha Faculty, the modifications in the curriculum of undergraduate courses, due to the extension curricularization took place in 2021, through changes in the format of 8 subjects in the curriculum of Course 1 and of 4 subjects in the curriculum of Course 2. This was so in order to meet the previously mentioned regulamentation regarding the need to ‘curricularize’ at least ten percent of the total curricular credits in extension activities. At Alpha Faculty, such change consisted of transforming these disciplines into ‘extensionist disciplines’, that is, subjects in which students must develop curricular extension actions, in addition to learning theoretical concepts provided for in the syllabus of these subjects. These extension actions developed in these disciplines can be of any and all extension nature, such as: project, event, course, teaching material, consultancy, among others.

Data was collected from questionnaires sent to first period students enrolled in an extensionist discipline that is taught to students of two management courses of Alpha Faculty. These questionnaires were sent to the students by the end of the discipline, via email to the students, through a Google forms link that led to it. It comprehended eleven questions, guided by the following categories of analysis, defined prior to data collection: (i) knowledge exchange and dialogic interaction between students and the community, (ii) search for solutions to society's problems, (iii) association between theory and practice, (iv) students’ formation as a critical and responsible individual and (v) the role of the student as a protagonist in the teaching-learning process. Out of the 111 students enrolled in the discipline, of both courses, 26 of them participated in the research, answering the questionnaire.

Course 1 and 2 pedagogical projects and syllabus, as well as Alpha Faculty’s extension

plan were also analyzed as secondary data. Using different sources of data collection, such as questionnaires and documents helped assure data triangulation and contributed to validate the research (Yin, 2015). The data collected were analyzed through the content analysis' technique, following the three steps (pre-analysis, material exploration and data manipulation and interpretation) proposed by Bardin (2016).

4. RESULTS' PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Case presentation

The discipline in which the respondents of this research are enrolled was developed as follows: the teacher introduced the students to 'extension' and 'services' concepts and definitions and presented them extension activities that were developed in previous semesters. This was done in order to give them insights on potential extension activities they could develop themselves and help them have a better idea on how to operationalize extension activities. The teacher of these two classes of the same discipline - of first period students from both management courses – oriented the students to form groups and each group had a few weeks' time to choose and propose an extension activity they would like to carry out throughout the discipline. As long as the proposed activity contained aspects of 'extension', - such as allowing interaction with the external community, proving knowledge exchange between the University and society, among other, the activity could be of any nature, such as projects, consulting services, courses, booklets and others.

The choice of the extension activity to be carried out, was, thus, defined with students' active participation. This approach seeks to promote the co-creation of the teaching plan and stimulate a collaborative and participatory teaching-learning process. This methodological choice is in line with the Alpha Faculty Extension Plan, which encourages these activities to be developed in companies selected by the students themselves, in local and regional communities, as well as in social projects (Alpha Faculty Extension Plan, 2022). Thus, in Course 1 class, ten groups were formed and in Course 2 class, six groups were formed. All groups proposed an extension action to be developed through the semester, and after evaluation of the proposals, by the teacher of both classes, they were allowed to start planning, organizing, developing and controlling the status of the extension' activities. The extension activities that were developed by them were diverse and consisted of events, a mini-course, booklets, Instagram profiles and consultancies.

One of the events developed during the semester aimed at promoting awareness to 8 to 12-year-old students on 'bullying' (how to minimize it and deal with issues related to it), another consisted of lectures given by women who work with technology, in order to exchange knowledge with the participants regarding the challenges and opportunities of this sector and lastly, a lecture on entrepreneurship was also organized and held by members of another group. A mini course on Java Scrip was promoted by one of the groups and aimed at providing accessible knowledge on that programming language, to everyone who might be interested in learning more of it and who might not have easy access to that kind of knowledge. Moreover, three groups developed booklets, one of which was aimed at people who may be interested in learning English and the other two, containing tutorials and tips on how to improve small enterprises' finances and marketing through social network, respectively. All of the other groups chose to develop a consulting service as the extension activity of the discipline. The consultancies were aimed at: improving a bar's social networks, providing legal guidance to a non-profit organization and evaluating the business viability of a pet shop.

It is worth highlighting that in this discipline the students aren't evaluated through traditional tests. They are evaluated by: (a) reports they have to make and post them on Moodle

– a platform used to share material of the discipline -, every other week, describing how the theoretical content of the discipline – discussed during classes - can and are being applied to the extension activities they are developing, (b) attending and (c) participating in classes, (d) engaging and contributing in the extension activities, (e) presenting the final results of the project, (f) developing and submitting a final report, through which the teacher evaluates the students' learning, engagement, contribution and the role the project played on their personal and professional formation, as well as the efficiency of the didactic procedures used in the discipline and lastly, but not least, (g) the extension activity developed in the discipline.

4.2 Results and discussion

According to all of the respondents of the research, (i) knowledge exchange and dialogic interaction between students and the communities benefiting from the extension actions of each group occurred in a significant way, based on the respondents' perception. Furthermore, it was observed that this occurred in different ways.

Through social media, we will introduce programming into people's lives to help them adapt to society's evolution. This gives me a greater sense of responsibility towards the world, bursting the bubble I live in (Student A).

Knowledge exchange has been taking place through the development of lectures in public and private educational institutions. This project format brings us closer to communities that lack professionals who can discuss the topic. We are part of a society that needs proactivity from each one of us (Student B).

Given the above and other responses from the participants, students from all groups have been perceiving a positive knowledge exchange between external communities. These data are also aligned with the Unit's extension plan, which suggests that classroom activities be inserted into the real world through initial scientific investigations and extension actions. These activities should establish links with practical challenges faced by organizations, contributing to overcoming the difficulty, often observed, of the University expanding its reach and sharing its knowledge with society (Alpha Faculty Extension Plan, 2022).

Furthermore, it was observed that knowledge exchange and dialogic interaction with the community helped students of the discipline feel like they belong to the society of which they are a part.

By [participating in a project that seeks to] teach C++ [...], it makes me feel part of the society, as I am actively contributing to education and the current market. Seeing the direct impact that the project has on peoples' lives increases the feeling of integration and contribution to the community (Student D).

Moreover, as mentioned by another participant, “we met people from different socioeconomic levels”, which highlights the relevance of the extension action so that students have contact with realities that are different from their own.

In Course 1 and Course 2 syllabus it is highlighted that the objectives and methodologies adopted in the discipline must seek to strengthen the relationship between the demands of the community outside the HEI and the academic activities carried out within the institution. This connection occurs through the dissemination and application of the knowledge acquired by students at the university. In this process, the University's role as an integrator with society is concretized, functioning as a two-way street. This enables, on one hand, contextualized pedagogical practice and, on the other, society's access to the knowledge produced in academia, promoting a continuous and enriching knowledge exchange (Course 1 Syllabus, 2021; Course 2 Syllabus, 2019). Thus, actions such as those evidenced in the data collected

have proven to be conducive to achieving this objective, also meeting the Guidelines for the Extension of Higher Education (Pereira; Vitorini, 2019; Brasil, 2014).

Regarding the (ii) search for solutions to society's problems, among the 26 respondents, 24 of them believe that the projects in which they are involved contribute to solving problems faced by the community that benefited from the extension actions developed by their group throughout the discipline. According to the students, this was done by facilitating access to knowledge that was difficult or limited to access by certain segments of the community.

A student from a group that developed an Instagram profile about a programming language, oriented to everyone interested in the topic, affirmed that “our project aims to disseminate knowledge that is not easily accessible to everyone in the community” (Student F). Two other students, from another group that aimed at making another programming language accessible to everyone interested, through a Java minicourse, observed the importance of the project in promoting digital inclusion and the insertion of future professionals into the job market. Since these are problems faced by part of the Brazilian population, these projects helped mitigate, albeit in a simple way, such challenges.

Also, the students who were part of groups that provided consulting services to micro and small business owners called attention to the importance of the outreach action in which they were involved in solving problems faced by the beneficiaries. Students involved in consulting for a pet shop, for example, noted their contribution to improving the efficiency of the establishment's internal processes, and students from a group that developed a standard operating procedure for a sewing company pointed the importance of standardization to increase the company's productivity. Also, students from a group that provided consultancy to an animal non-governmental organization (NGO) noted the importance of helping the organization solve problems “that the government couldn't” or wouldn't, by various reasons. One of the services provided through the consultancy was training for the employees on legal issues and helping the NGO improve its image.

These primary data are also in line with Alpha Faculty' extension plan, since it emphasizes both the qualification of future managers for the job market and their human and social development. The goal is to train managers and leaders with solid technical skills, while at the same time being in tune with the demands of the communities in which they work (Alpha Faculty Extension Plan, 2022). Thus, due to the fact that most respondents of the projects that were developed believe that the extension actions that took place in the discipline are contributing to solve problems faced by society, these data are in accordance with Pereira and Vitorini (2019) and with Brazil (2014).

Regarding (iii) association between theory and practice, 25 out of 26 respondents were unanimous, answering the question positively, and of these, only 5 of them answered the question in a superficial way. They mentioned that associating theory and practice was positive due to the didactic procedures that were used in the discipline. Having to reflect on and describe how the theoretical content discussed in previous classes was applied to the extension activities they carried out contributed to associate theory to practical activities.

Some students even mentioned specific theoretical contents, such as ‘efficiency’, and that were easier to understand when being associated with the practical activities of the extension projects. One of the students in the group that provided consulting services to an animal NGO was able to see, in practice, the difference between the concepts of ‘effectiveness’ and ‘efficiency’. According to the student, they observed that “the NGO is effective, since it achieved the proposed objective, but not efficient [because it] does not do it in the best way”. Two other students also highlighted the importance of “planning and organizing tasks and deadlines” (Student G), and of applying theory “in all planning and execution of the project” (Student H) and of “being able to associate theory with practice, by applying management concepts, such as ‘planning’, ‘organization’ and ‘team management’,

in the development of the C++ mini-course” (Student I).

It is also worth highlighting the response of a student, who demonstrated that theoretical knowledge from other disciplines that they were taking in the same academic semester was applied in the practical actions of the extension project developed by his group. According to student C, “we used theories such as Value Chain Analysis and Agile Methodology [...] to identify inefficiencies and propose practical improvements” to the pet shop that they were assisting during the extension curricular activity.

In addition to (a) the theoretical content discussed during the discipline, (b) the assessment activities and reports proposed in the discipline, (c) the theoretical knowledge assimilated in other disciplines of the course, a participant also highlighted another aspect of the didactic approach used, as positive for associating theory with practice: (d) the teacher’s support and availability.

frequent monitoring [of the project] by the teacher, whether through email exchanges or small meetings in the classroom, helps to open our minds, support our ideas and [have] an open channel to solve a problem (Student C).

Moreover, (e) having to work as a team, since it has been helping them exercise good communication skills, discuss and analyze “how theory could be applied to the practical activities they were developing in the extension project” has helped them associate theory and practice. Thus, learning how to work in teams and developing such abilities help the students work jointly to reach a common goal, being in line with Assis and Bonifácio (2011).

These data are also convergent to the unit's extension plan, as in the document it is stated that learning becomes more effective when there is integration between teaching, research and extension. Therefore, the inseparable articulation of these three pillars is one of the fundamental principles that guide the Pedagogical Projects of the Unit's undergraduate courses (Alpha Faculty Extension Plan, 2022). Thus, it is possible to observe that the way the discipline has been developed has been positive to stimulate theoretical and practical association, in line with Biazus (2004) and Brasil (2019). Although the majority of the participants answered the question positively, one participant answered the question negatively. However, since the student did not provide justification for his answers, it was impossible to analyze such data.

In another category of analysis, that is (iv) students’ formation as critical and responsible individuals, 23 students answered the question affirmatively. Two students’ answers demonstrated that they didn’t understand or didn’t put effort into answering the question, since they weren’t related to what was asked; and one of them responded negatively. However, no justification was provided for the answers, thus, making it impossible to analyze such data.

The students who answered the question affirmatively pointed out that this is so due to the fact that they had to better understand society’s demands, in order to propose an extension project to develop during the discipline. Regarding that aspect, a student highlighted that the project in which he was involved “has contributed [to its more reflective, critical and participatory stance] by understanding society’s demands”.

Another aspect that was frequent in the students’ responses regards them feeling protagonists when it came to thinking of and proposing solutions to the problems faced by the beneficiaries of their extension projects.

The C++ mini-course project made me reflect on the lack of access to technological education for high school students and I became directly involved in solving this problem (Student D).

The interaction with the community and the real challenges we face encourage me to think about practical solutions and better understand their needs (Student F).

I realize that whenever I arrive at an establishment or a situation occurs where I can

identify a problem, I am more critical and feel prepared to help (Student G).

From the above, primary empirical data has shown that the students have been more critical regarding problems faced by themselves and by society, they have been seeking to better reflect on the themes they are approaching in the projects and they have been reflecting on the importance of helping those who don't have access to quality education and less privileged life conditions. In addition, they reflect on how to look for solutions to improve the environment in which they are inserted and on their own life conditions in relation to less privileged members of society.

Also, secondary data regarding this category are in line with these results, since in Course 1's Pedagogical Project, it is highlighted the importance of "the construction of a conscious, critical and reflective subject who is able to make choices in order to deepen his/her knowledge and, also, ensure a perspective that contemplates the whole" (Course 1 Pedagogical Project, 2021). Also, in Course 2 Pedagogical Project, there is a concern to form a professional who is "capable of generating employment and income opportunities, always considering the political, economic, social, environmental and cultural aspects within an ethical and humanistic vision" (Course 2 Pedagogical Project, 2019). Thus, both the primary data collected and those originating from the pedagogical projects of the management courses analyzed in this research are in line with Costa (2019) and Brasil (2019), since they highlight the importance of forming more responsible professionals and citizens.

When it comes to (v) the role of the student as a protagonist in the teaching-learning process, most respondents answered the question affirmatively. The students pointed out that this is so due to the (a) didactic methodology used in the discipline, such as active methodologies, (b) for having to appropriate the theory of the discipline in their projects, (c) for carrying out the projects "in their own way" – albeit the teacher's guidance and (d) for having to think of an extension project's proposal, by themselves, thus, helping them cocreate the teaching plan.

I feel more like a protagonist in this subject. The use of active methods, such as group discussions and case studies, encourages my participation and makes me more involved in the learning process. This contrasts with other subjects, where the focus can be more passive, such as lectures. The interaction and practical application of concepts make learning more meaningful and engaging. (Student A).

Just the fact that I have to do things on my own (with at least less help from the teacher), having to make decisions on my own, already shows that I have more control and am more active in my learning process (Student C).

Yes, because I have autonomy to make decisions, and with the teacher's support we feel more confident in what we propose to entrepreneurs (Student H).

We are the ones who decide what we want to do and how we think it can work (Student L).

Na escolha mesmo do escopo do nosso projeto já tivemos que adotar esta postura para identificar o que poderíamos fazer para este projeto atingir o que desejamos e o que a sociedade precisa (Student B).

Also, three students pointed out that (d) making decisions within their groups and participating in a collaborative project contributed for them to feel like protagonists of the teaching learning process in this discipline. From the previously mentioned, it is observed that the protagonism of students in this discipline is a feeling shared by most of them, in line with Fros (2017) and with the Extension Guidelines. Two students who responded negatively to feeling as a protagonist of the learning process didn't justify their answer.

Considering the five categories of analysis of this research, it is possible to observe that the discipline and the didactic methodology that's been used in it was contributive for students'

and external community's knowledge exchange and interaction (Brasil, 2019), for them to actively engage in society's problem solving (Pereira; Vitorini, 2019; Brasil, 2019), to associate theory and practice (Brasil, 2019) for them to act as protagonists of their own teaching-learning process (Fros, 2017; Brasil, 2019) and for them to develop a more critical, reflexive and participative posture towards society (Costa, 2019; Brasil, 2019).

All of these aspects contribute to form future responsible managers, concerned for both individual and society's interests and also to the literature of this research domain, since it discusses a theme that still needs to be deepened, which is the insertion of extension activities in the curricular matrix of undergraduate courses of Brazilian public HEIs (Oliveira; Tosta; Freitas, 2020).

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The objective of this research was to analyze how extension curricularization has been contributing to the formation of undergraduate students of management courses of a Brazilian public HEI. To do so, a qualitative and descriptive study was held, data were collected from first period students enrolled in a discipline of two management courses of a Brazilian HEI and also from institutional documents. Data analysis took place under five categories, being those: (i) knowledge exchange and dialogic interaction. (ii) search for solutions to society's problems, (iii) association between theory and practice, (iv) students' formation as a critical and responsible individual and (v) the role of the student as a protagonist in the teaching-learning process.

The results evidenced that the pedagogical approaches used in the discipline analyzed contributed to enhance (i) knowledge exchange between students and the external community. Knowledge exchange and interaction with the community was positive and took place through the extension projects developed, such as a mini course on a programming language, lectures for students of private and public schools and other actions. The students also perceived themselves as important change agents in (ii) solving or minimizing problems faced by external actors. The results showed that students realized the need to fill gaps in high school's curriculum, regarding important topics for young students' personal and professional development, the importance of contributing to improve needy people's life quality, by providing consultancy services to organizations that can assist them in various aspects and by exchanging knowledge that is, often, not easily accessible to everyone or cost-free. To do so, students aimed at developing actions that were viable – without financial resources -, that were possible to be concluded in one academic semester and that were appropriate to their knowledge. Thus, they helped solve problems faced by the community through lectures and minicourses with the help of specialists and on specific topics, though creating Instagram profiles on subjects they are aware of, through providing consultancy services on topics they have already learned in the first semester of their courses, among other things.

Regarding (iii) associating theory and practice, the results made it possible to observe that discussing the theoretical content and developing the extension action during the discipline helped make such association; the assessment activities and reports proposed in the discipline also contributed to optimize reflecting on this association; theoretical knowledge assimilated in other disciplines of the current academic semester also helped them broaden the applicability of theory and practice during the extension activity developed; and lastly, a participant also highlighted that the teacher's constant support and availability was positive for associating theory with practice.

Unlike more traditional approaches, where teacher-student interaction may be limited, in the extension curriculum this relationship tends to be closer. Continuous monitoring by the professor allows students to receive direct guidance on how to apply theoretical concepts in

practice, in addition to favoring a space for dialogue, where doubts, challenges, and advances can be shared and discussed. This greater interaction between teacher and student contributes to more dynamic, collaborative and contextualized learning, which represents a difference in relation to conventional disciplines, in which teaching can occur in a more theoretical manner and less integrated with external reality.

The results also evidenced the importance of the applicability of the theoretical content, in practical activities. Such content has been helping the students improve their projects' planning, organization, direction and control activities, in a systematic way, based on the concepts and management tools learned during classes.

This research's results also pointed that the extension projects helped the participants develop a more (iv) critical and responsible attitude towards society. The students perceived themselves as important change agents in solving or minimizing problems faced by external actors and developed a more critical, reflective and participatory posture towards society. Interacting with the external community in the minicourse, in the lectures and in other extension activities helped students be more aware of other realities, reflecting, for example, on the lack of access to technological education and other important topics for high school. Also, it made them realize their role in mitigating challenges like those, since they started thinking about practical solutions and better understanding other people's needs. Also, being able to actually do something for others during the project made them feel prepared to do so, in future situations.

The didactic approach used in the case here presented also contributed to (v) students' protagonism regarding their learning process, by encouraging them to seek external information, to learn how to work as teams, to make decisions and to work more autonomously than in traditional disciplines. Results showed that active methodologies, having to appropriate the theory of the discipline in their projects, carrying out the projects "in their own way" – albeit the teacher's guidance and having to think of an extension project's proposal, by themselves, were elements that helped them feel protagonists of their learning process.

The student's active role in the discipline not only favors their autonomy and sense of responsibility for their own learning, but also stimulates the development of essential skills, such as critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving. Furthermore, by taking an active role in extension activities, students expand their ability to connect with social reality, becoming agents of change within and outside the academic environment. Despite the 'presence' of this category in primary empirical data of this research, it is noteworthy that the documents analyzed in this research did not provide significant emphasis on the student's role in the teaching-learning process. However, this aspect is essential for the extension curriculum to fully fulfill its role of integrating theory and practice in a meaningful way, thus, leaving room for this faculty and others to review and eventually adjust their institutional documents, including this element. This can help to standardize the need to use methodological approaches that promote the protagonism of students.

From the exposed, this research's main theoretical contribution lies in deepening the discussion on how to operationalize extension curricularization, since the data here analyzed highlight activities and methodologies that can help other faculties and HEIs approach the aspects that are expected of extension activities in extensionist disciplines. Practically, empirical data also show how a discipline with an 'extensionist' nature can help encourage management students, from the first period of their courses, to develop a reflective and participatory attitude towards society. Moreover, this research contributes to the 2030 Agenda's SDG 4 - 'Quality Education' -, as it seeks to improve current education of future managers by forming professionals and citizens who are willing to and engaged with solving problems and issues faced not only by themselves, but also by society.

Despite its contribution, this study has limitations. One of them consists of the analysis

of only one discipline and thus, the perspective of a specific context and from a limited number of students. Also, there is an open field for future studies on the curricularization of extension, considering that this approach is still in the consolidation phase in many higher education institutions. Future research can explore the evolution of this strategy over time, analyzing its impacts on student education and the quality of teaching. In addition, there is room to investigate how curricularization can be inserted in a more structured manner into the pedagogical projects of universities, seeking to expand the scope of these activities and strengthen their role in the training of professionals who are better prepared to face social and market challenges. This in-depth study would contribute to the improvement of the methodologies used, as well as to the formulation of more effective guidelines for the implementation of curricular extension.

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