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## DISCOURSE AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: WHAT CAN THE PRACTICE OF STUDENTS ENGAGED IN SOCIAL PROJECTS REVEAL?

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to understand, from the perspective of Critical Analysis of Discourse (CAD), the students' discursive conceptions on the practical experience of social projects in the Social Entrepreneurship (SE) class of the Business Administration course at UNIFEI-MG.

**Design/methodology:** As Norman Fairclough (2001; 2003) suggests, discourse was considered a social practice and the textual, discursive and social practices of the investigated students were analyzed. The discourses were collected through two focus groups and the results analyzed based on the CAD.

**Main findings:** The results show that there are divergences in the discursive productions of both groups of students, as the high academic performance group reveals a discourse based on a substantive rationality, with emotion, intensity and based on values directed to a collective well-being. In contrast, the low academic performance group is guided by an instrumental rationality, and by the need to work for a financial return.

**Theoretic/methodology contributions:** It became evident that the externalized discursive conceptions reflect the discursive practice of the SE, but at the same time they denote the hegemonic management discourse of Administration and its instrumental logic.

**Originality/value:** Kedmenec et al. (2016) and Shahverdi et al. (2018) reinforce the relevance of incorporating the discourse content of SE in traditional courses. It is verified that SE is capable of providing effective solutions to several social, economic and environmental problems, from the perspective of valuing the human capital and developing social emancipation (Shahverdi et al., 2018).

**Keywords:** Social Entrepreneurship. Critical Analysis of Discourse (DAC). Business Administration Course.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Critical Analysis of Discourse (CAD) is characterized as a theoretic-methodology approach to studies that consider language a social practice, as a constructor of identities, values, relationships, and perspectives about reality. Therefore, to undertake a study with the intention of using CAD involves also recognizing that the discourse creates, conditions and reinforces structures of power and domination, shaping ideologies and social hegemonies. In this premise, it is necessary to emphasize that a large part of the discourse is sustained by the hegemonic struggle in organizations that, through social interconnections and constitution of discursive orders, elaborate and strengthen socially preponderant matrices (Fairclough, 2001). Thus, the importance of CAD for social research in critical analysis proposals is emphasized, at a time when language has occupied the centrality of nowadays capitalism (Resende & Ramalho, 2004).

Universities, to a certain extent, do not escape the rule of hegemonic chains. The universities, funded by public or private capital, surrender to the function of productive logic, reproducing the ideas of the market (Chauí, 2001; Faria & Meneghetti, 2010) and the ideological discourses of the field. Hence, if on one hand, the university propagates mercantile logic and produces nothing more than “skilled labor”, on the other, it loses the ethical discrimination and social purpose of its production (Tragtenberg, 2004).

In this environment, teaching in Business Administration still focuses more on premises and discourses of efficiency and profit maximization than on the practice of social and human values. The courses, in general, produce tool-oriented and uncritical administrators, instead of agents who are aware of their political role (Ribeiro & Sacramento, 2009).

Few courses offer subjects that address social issues in the development of their students. This indicates that these subjects are not a priority, even though fundamental to the graduation in Business Administration (Aktouf, 2004; Oliveira, Sant’anna & Diniz, 2014; Shahverdi, Ismail & Qureshi, 2018).

However, as pointed out by Oliveira et al. (2014) and Kedmenec, Rebernik and Tominc (2016) this situation has been changing due to changes in market practices. There is a tendency for Business Administration courses to shift towards the development of actors committed to social causes and capable of acting in less favorable socio-economic contexts. This is due to the fact that organizations from



different sectors are investing in social projects, aiming at a social and/or sustainable management of their activity branches.

Weise, Quadros, Rocha, Trierweiller, Peixe and Barcelos (2014) point out that through adequate education it is possible to generate new businesses that provide socio-economic development. Thus, the concern regarding education of the administrator and their social-professional performance is a subject that has not only interested higher education institutions, but also researchers and scholars, because it is known how great challenging it is for Business Administration courses to develop critic and reflective professionals, prepared to deal with all the complexity of social life (Aktouf, 2004).

On that account, Kedmenec et al. (2016) and Shahverdi et al. (2018) reinforce the relevance of incorporating the discursive content of Social Entrepreneurship (SE) in traditional courses. It is verified that the SE can provide effective solutions to several social, economic and environmental problems, through the action of agents and organizations concerned with the challenges of society, in the perspective of valuing human capital and developing social emancipation (Shahverdi et al., 2018). Regarding this debate, Kedmenec et al. (2016) state that the courses that include this conception of SE seek to promote the awareness of students about social problems, as well as to develop competence and confidence so that they take initiatives in order to bring about the change they wish to see in the world.

From this perspective, the interest to research the practical and discursive results of a Social Entrepreneurship class arose from the enunciation of students, using the CAD as theoretic-methodology guidance. Considering the intimate and dialectic relationship between discourses and social practices, it was sought to answer the following question: What are the discursive conceptions of students about the practical experience of social projects in the Social Entrepreneurship class in the Business Administration course at UNIFEI - MG?

Thus, the central objective of this investigation was to understand, from the perspective of Critical Analysis of Discourse (CAD), the students' discursive conceptions on the practical experience of social projects in the Social Entrepreneurship (SE) class of the Business Administration course at UNIFEI - MG. Specifically, it was sought: (i) to unveil the predominant discourses on the undergone experience; (ii) to ascertain whether the hegemonic management discourse of Administration is present in the discursive practices of the students; and (iii) to



elucidate the discursive samples on the difficulties faced in the field. In order to operate this investigation, two focus groups were held with the students who attended the class from 2013 to 2017, with the purpose of extracting, from the enunciations, the discursive and social practices and other elements of the discourse.

In structural terms, the study is subdivided into five essential items, the first being emphasized up to this moment. The second item addresses the theoretic-methodology orientation of CAD and SE. The third item presents the method procedures followed by the research practice. The fourth item describes the results and discursive analyses and the fifth item contextualizes the final considerations of the study, followed by the bibliographic references that substantiated the study.

## **2 THEORETIC-METHODOLOGY SCOPE**

This item is destined to conceptual discussion on Critical Analysis of Discourse (CAD) and Social Entrepreneurship, briefly presenting the theoretical constructs that have guided the research hereby presented.

### **2.1 Understanding the CAD guidelines**

The CAD perspective was born in Europe around the 1980s from the studies of the linguist Norman Fairclough, who recognized language as an irreducible part of social life and focused on unveiling the relationships between social facts (social practices) and language (discursive practices). According to Fairclough (2001), CAD is a theoretical perspective that considers the relevance of the social-historic context for understanding the problems of social analysis and social change.

It is noteworthy that CAD has been potentially considered and used for the identification, appreciation and reflection of ideological elements that permeate discourses in social relationships and phenomena, especially those located within hegemonic positions (Rodrigues, 2009). This theoretic-methodology conception emerged initially to contribute to theories in the field of Linguistics, but along its development it has established theoretical synergies with Social Sciences, Language Philosophy, and Systemic-Functional Linguistics (Irigaray, Cunha & Harten, 2016), even being incorporated to organizational studies.

Due to its transdisciplinary feature, CAD not only offers possibilities of theoretical applications, but also operates and transmutes theories focusing on a social-discursive approach to social phenomena and facts (Ramalho, 2005). Meanwhile, Resende and



Ramalho (2011) argue that this strand breaks epistemological boundaries in favor of building a social-discursive approach, demonstrating how discourses are used as a mode of action over the world and over people.

For CAD, discourse is “the use of language, whether spoken or written, seen as a type of social practice” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 28), which modifies reality and is also modified by it. Thus, discourse is not simply understood as a way of communicating, but as a practice that affects and influences reality. Hence, “to understand society, it is necessary to understand the discourse that is produced and circulates within it, and to understand the discourse, it is necessary to understand the society that constitutes it” (Irigaray et al., 2016, p. 3).

In other words, the dialogical environment is established by a process in which, if on one hand, actions are governed by discursive tools, on the other hand, such actions discursively represent the social world (Magalhães, 2005). Moreover, discourse cannot be perceived as a set of social-historically constituted characteristics that occur in impassive scenarios. On that account, discourse, besides being historical, is ideological and constitutes society, culture and its relationships of power and domination and, as defined by Resende and Ramalho (2011), it represents an element that is both structured and structuring. Consequently, an analysis of discourse is also an analysis of social and discursive practices in specific historic-situational contexts.

In order to operate CAD, Fairclough (1989) establishes a three-dimensional model by positioning the discourse in three analytical dimensions: (i) text, (ii) discursive practice and (iii) social practice. The text represents the core of discourse through language, composing the different discourses of society. Discursive practice encompasses the process of production, distribution and consumption, both textual and discursive, in a given context. Meanwhile, social practice represents the set of ideological and hegemonic conceptions that bring together discursive and textual practices.

Resende and Ramalho (2004), when dealing with this three-dimensional analysis of discourse, indicate that the separation of these elements has only a didactic function, since these elements work articulately in a simultaneous way in discourse analysis. However, it is necessary to understand each element from its analytical categories, as described in Table 1.



Dimensions	Description	Possible analytical categories
Text	Discursive language contextualized in a discursive event, with analytical focus is in the sense and form of production.	Vocabulary Grammatical order Textual cohesion Lexical structure
Discursive Practice	Processes of production, distribution and consumption of texts. Interconnects the text to social practice and refers to the discourse order present in discursive contexts.	- Production: Interdiscursive Intertextuality - Distribution - Consumption - Strength - Presence and absence of elements -Conditions/Coherence
Social Practice	Situational, institutional and culturally contextualized practices, permeated by power and ideology.	-Ideology: Senses Effects Assumptions Metaphors Frames -Hegemony: Ideological, economic, political and cultural orientations. Power

**Table 1** – Discursive dimensions as per Fairclough  
Source: Adapted from Fairclough (2001)

As presented, the textual dimension corresponds to the vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and textual structure. In this sphere, the aim is to analyze how the textual elements are organized and combined and to what extent are established lexical selection, syntactic constructions, cohesive mechanisms and the mobilization of arguments that reproduce hegemonic discourses (Resende & Ramalho, 2004; Irigaray et al., 2016).

In the dimension of discursive practices, it is observed how the distribution, production and consumption of the text are given. This means that, in this sphere, the way the text is treated in the communicative process is observed. That is, the relationship established between the text and the context surrounding the discourse is analyzed (Andrade, Brito, Brito & Baeta, 2016). Resende and Ramalho (2004), when dealing with the discursive practice, point out that this dimension must contemplate the strength of the statements, the coherence and the connections with the ideological hypothesis. Also, according to the authors, two other components should be understood within this dimension: firstly, the relationship between the text and other texts within the dialogue (intertextuality); and the relationship between the orders of discourse (interdiscursivity) (Resende & Ramalho, 2004).

The dimension of social practice gives the discourse its identification as to ideological and hegemonic characteristics. In this category, observation is carried out



from a macrosocial perspective (Fairclough, 2001). It concerns, therefore, the relationship between the individual and universal level of discourses in their interconnections, revealing how constituent elements are legitimized (Andrade et. al, 2016). In this category, from the perspective of ideology, the meanings of words, metaphors and directions in which they are conducted must be taken into consideration. Under the aspect of hegemony, the political, economic and cultural orientations of the agents are considered (Resende & Ramalho, 2004).

In summary, as shown by Irigaray et al. (2016), the dimensions of the three-dimensional model are intimately connected. In this manner, textual practice derives from the representation and representativeness of interlocutors (discursive practice), which, in turn, entails the construction and legitimization of hegemonic ideologies and trends (social practice). Thus, “the distinction that is established between the dimensions has, above all, a theoretic and methodology nature” (Irigaray et al., 2016, p. 3), as already indicated by Fairclough (2003). On that account, the argument of Resende and Ramalho (2004) is also supported, by arguing that language (as a social practice) can be understood as a historically situated model of action, and that it can only be understood through the verification of the identities, relationships and codes that surround the social context.

Having understood these constraints of the CAD, it is necessary to enter the theoretical discourse on Social Entrepreneurship to compose the debate that underlies the presented study.

## **2.2 Social Entrepreneurship (SE) - essential concepts and approaches**

Social entrepreneurship (SE) as a disciplinary field emerges in the 1990s as an approach under construction, but with its own theoretical conceptions, signaling discursive differences between traditional entrepreneurial management and social entrepreneurial management.

Regarding the traditional theoretical conception, Schumpeter (1985) mentions that entrepreneurial practice destroys the existing economic order through the introduction of new products or services, with the creation of different forms of organization or the exploitation of new resources.

In addition, Shane (2002) defines entrepreneurship as the study of the sources of opportunities to create something new, be it products, markets, processes or forms of organization. Moreover, he also considers in the definition of entrepreneurship the



process of discovery, exploration and evaluation of individuals who discover and explore something new.

Hirish, Peters and Shepherd (2014) complement this by indicating that entrepreneurship is an action that creates new products, enters new markets and can occur in a newly created organization or within an established organization. On that account, it is noted that the theoretical-conceptual discourse on entrepreneurship reinforces hegemonic characteristics of an instrumental rationality. This rationality is also characterized as functional, finalistic and focused on results or calculated ends. Therefore, it considers economic aspects, besides relating to any conduct or event, recognizing them as a means to achieve a certain goal. In other words, in this rationality, social action is based on the rational utilitarian calculation (Ramos, 1989; Thiry-Cherques, 2009; Bolis, Morioka & Sznelwar, 2017).

Concurrently, the discursive notion of SE moves in another theoretical perspective, adding value to society, offering solutions to social problems and trying to ensure that all people have a decent quality of life (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2012; Rey-Martí; Ribeiro-Soriano; Palacios-Marqués, 2016).

In practical terms, SE involves carrying out activities for a community that presents economic scarcity, impacting on the human and social development of its members, as well as providing means to stimulate the emancipation of participants. Among the principles of SE is the performance of a role that would initially be attributed to the State (Campos, Martens, Resende, Carmona & Lima, 2012).

On that account, it is important to highlight that as the market and the government themselves do not act on social development, it becomes necessary to adopt projects that seek the improvement of less favored communities (Oliveira, 2004; Keohane, 2012). Consequently, social entrepreneurs consume this discourse and start having the search for solutions to such problems as their main objective. To Silva (2009), the social entrepreneur aims to help people and society, create collectivity, as well as implement actions that ensure self-sustainability and continuous improvement of the community.

Oliveira (2004) and Campos et al. (2012) point out that the discursive consensus in the definition of SE is in the essence of social benefit. Thus, social entrepreneurs are agents with visions of social change, who use management tools, innovation and, mainly, skills and characteristics of business entrepreneurs, such as determination, leadership and involvement to carry out actions that have social values and result in





high impact to an entire population (Oliveira, 2004; Campos et al., 2012; Kedmenec et al., 2016).

Contrary to the traditional conception, focused on instrumental rationality, SE is based on the discursive logic of substantive rationality. This rationality is focused on values, regardless of their expectations of success. It does not characterize any human action interested in achieving a result subsequent to it. (Ramos, 1989; Thiry-Cherques, 2009). Thus, substantive rationality can be considered as a value-oriented rational action without relating directly to the result, this type of rationality is therefore based on ethical standards (Bolis et al., 2017) and, sometimes, counter-hegemonic.

Oliveira (2004) highlights that a social entrepreneurship needs to present some fundamental characteristics, such as (i) be innovative; (ii) be feasible; (iii) be self-sustainable; (iv) involve various people and segments of society, especially the population served; (v) bring social impact and allow its results to be evaluated.

Austin et al. (2012) reinforce that SE can be identified in private companies, third sector organizations, hybrid organizations and groups of people who unite for a common cause and discourse. As an example of groups of people, there are the students. Kedmenec et al. (2016) point out that for students to practice SE, they need to be willing to leave the classroom and look for social problems in their communities. In terms of practical conditions, universities should encourage students to engage in volunteer activities so that they recognize that many organizations could directly benefit from their knowledge and skills. For these authors, students learn from the scarcity of resources, proposing solutions to current problems, combining business logic and social welfare.

On that account, Rangel (2010) considers that the main objective for a learning process is the content learned and understood by the student provided by the teacher. Candau (2012) reinforces that theory becomes more meaningful if classroom perception is associated with a context. Franco and Pimenta (2016) complement that teaching requires a consonance between actions and ways of teaching. Therefore, the act of teaching is a social practice represented by various interactions between teachers, students, institution and society, inserted in discursive, social-cultural and historical contexts.

In this respect, Kedmenec et al. (2016) point out that education in SE involves the training of professionals who combine management skills with concern for social impact. In addition, the same authors reinforce that SE courses aim to increase the



awareness of students on different social problems, as well as to develop competence and confidence so that they take the initiative to bring about social change, which, as Fairclough (2003) would say, involves practical and discursive changes. Shahverdi et al. (2018) highlight that universities that develop SE education have the opportunity not only to act as agents of change, but also to develop the human capital that can be used to transform the world and face social challenges.

Specifically, in the field of Administration, Hopkins (2007) considers that courses can provide students with teaching opportunities that involve collaborative networks in the communities and help in the formation of social entrepreneurs, emphasizing the possibility of learning about the subject. Santos and Galleli (2013) show that the teaching of SE in Administration is still in its infancy in Brazilian public universities. The authors point out that this formation depends on the interest of the students. However, some institutions use the flexibility they have in their curricula to approach social issues gradually (Santos & Galleli, 2013), using the theoretical and practical basis of SE.

In a complementary manner, Oliveira et al. (2014) and Kedmenec et al. (2016) point out that the Business Administration courses are increasingly turning to the formation of administrators who are leaders committed to social causes and capable of acting in less favored socio-economic contexts. This is because companies from various sectors are investing in social projects and are increasingly focused on social and/or sustainable management of their businesses.

Therefore, more than a theoretical knowledge and a teaching-learning concept, SE is a discursive practice that goes beyond ideological and hegemonic conceptions in the field of Administration, focusing on new understandings around a transformative, articulated and convergent management with the social and collective values of a given community.

### **3 METHOD PROCEDURES**

In theoretic-methodology terms, this study is based on CAD, due to its critical-analytical basis for the interpretation of social discourses. By seeking to understand the discursive conceptions of students of Business Administration who took the Social Entrepreneurship class, this study is classified as qualitative-descriptive, since it qualifies and describes the social and discursive experiences and practices resulting from engagement in social projects. The research practice took place at the Federal University of Itajubá (UNIFEI), based in the southern region of the Minas Gerais state,



and the interlocutors of the discourse investigated were the students of the course of Business Administration, who took the Social Entrepreneurship class from 2013 to 2017. This course takes place in the first semester of each school year for students enrolled in the 5th period and one of the activities consists of developing a social entrepreneurship project for non-profit institutions in the local community.

Regarding the collection process, it is necessary to point out that the discourses were apprehended by means of interviews in two focus groups, with the students who were willing to participate in the research. First, the students were selected for prior contact according to two criteria: (i) having shown superior academic performance in the social project of the class; and (ii) having shown a low academic performance.

From this cut-out, the two groups (high and low performance) were outlined. It is important to note that these criteria were established in an attempt to understand the discursive conceptions of both groups of students and to investigate the dominant narratives, ideologies and discourses. On that account, it was sought to distinguish the groups among the interlocutors who had, comparatively, higher and lower academic performance, in order to show whether the success in the SE class reflects nuances of rationalities relatively more subjective and focused on the social realm, or, contrarily, produces no effect.

It is believed that the option to investigate both groups tends to provoke reflections about the importance of offering subjects that have the purpose of awakening comprehension on actions that create value, not only market value, but also social and human value (Oliveira, 2004; Campos et al., 2012; Kedmenec et al., 2016), especially in the Business Administration courses.

The contact with the students of the focal group with a high academic performance was made by e-mail. The choice criteria was that the student be among the three best groups with the greatest commitment to the class. Ten students were contacted, and from these, nine were willing to participate in the investigative process, being, therefore, students from various working groups and who took the class in different periods, involving the years 2015, 2016 and 2017.

The group of students with a low academic performance was also contacted by e-mail. The choice criteria were that the students be among the last three groups with the least commitment in the class. Twenty-four students were contacted, and eight of these accepted to participate in the research, but only four attended the focus group. These were students from different working groups who participated in the class during



different periods between 2013, 2015 and 2017. It is worth mentioning that both focus groups took place in the first semester of 2018, at the university itself, on days and times previously defined.

As a collection tool, a semi-structured interview script was adopted to direct the discourses, containing questions that elucidated the experience of having participated in the subject of Entrepreneurship, including the facilities and difficulties of the experience. Along with the interview practice, observations were made on the discourse production process, considering both verbal and non-verbal language modes. According to Fairclough (2001), during the research process, essential elements of discourse emerge, besides grammatical choices, such as language, speech, intonation, pauses and moments of silence, as well as body language and non-speech. Therefore, during the narrative of the students, one of the researchers remained in the observation process, making the necessary notes in the field journal.

Hence, the focus group provided the opportunity to reflect on the undergone experience. In addition, the discursive space allowed for meanings to be revealed and for question to be raised regarding the differences in the experiences undergone by the students. The discursive productions were recorded on audio, with the consent of the students, and later the material was transcribed to proceed with the three-dimensional analysis of the discourse.

In this way, the corpus of analysis involved the focus groups, the description of the discourses given and the observations. In addition, it is important to note that in order to preserve the identity of the students, they received codes from G1.1 to G1.9 for the first group and G2.1 to G2.4 for the second group, according to the order in which they accepted to participate in the research.

The discourses were treated by the three-dimensional analysis of discourse, considering the production dimensions of practices (textual, discursive and social). The CAD operation was based on the focus groups, the observations of the researcher and the description of issued discourses. In this analysis, social discursive aspects were prioritized, as Fairclough (2003) suggests, over linguistic aspects, given the nature of this research and its contribution to social sciences.

In the analysis, the grammatical choices, the strength of the enunciations, the discursive style, the expressions, the tone of voice, the irony and satisfaction within the produced discourses were considered, in an attempt to understand the discursive and social practices of the students. This practice of guiding the analyses allowed us to



understand the experiences and the intertextualities and interdiscursivities of the discourses produced, as well as favoring the identification of ideological and hegemonic conceptions that permeate this field of studies.

#### **4 DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF ENUNCIATIONS – WHAT DO THE DISCOURSE REVEAL ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE WITH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP?**

In order to fulfill the objectives, it was chosen to discuss the experience of the students conjecturing: (1) the discursive practice of the predominant discourses; (2) the textual presence of the hegemonic management discourse of Administration; (3) and the difficulties faced in social practice.

It is worth remembering that CAD admits some data relativity in analysis processes (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), allowing researchers to choose texts according to the interests of the study. Therefore, the texts (extracts from the speech of the students) that best illustrated the experiences of the researched students around the entrepreneurial practice of social projects were selected.

By discursively unveiling the undergone experiences, some elements stood out for the effect of provoked meaning, such as: “For us it was awesome<sup>5</sup>” (G1.7); “[...] it is very rewarding” (G1.2); “We feel powerful, like, to be able to get there and....[...]” (G1.1)); “[...] it is a tremendous accomplishment, “cause ya” think it is impossible” (G1.8). These highlighted terms and expressions refer to adjectives related to greatness (“tremendous”), empowerment (powerful), and emotion (“amazing”; “rewarding”), allowing, therefore, for the interpretation that the students of the first focus group, who had higher academic performance in the SE class, perceive the undergone experiences as positive, even producing emotional feelings, these being reinforced by the intonations of the voices. In externalizing these expressions, the body language of satisfaction was unanimous. They produced smiles, gestures and looks that indicated how enriching the experience had been to contribute to the social environment in an entrepreneurial manner.

In the second focus group (characterized by students who attended SE and had a low academic performance), the notable discursive excerpts were: “So it was pretty cool” (G2.1); “Emmm, it’s... it was pretty hard, but it was pretty cool” (G2.2); “[...] it’s

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<sup>5</sup> The expressions in bold are intentionally highlighted in the text with the purpose of emphasizing the production of discursive senses.



very hard, it's very hard to give a hundred percent of yourself when "ya" don't earn anything to do it" (G2.3). The discursive style adopted shows that the experience of these students was interesting, but marked by difficulties, as they themselves emphasize.

It is evident that the groups of students present different perceptions and languages, related to the practical results of the experiences they have undergone. Students G2.1 and G2.2 used the discursive object "pretty cool", which refers to a positive perception of the undergone experience, but when compared to the interlocutors of focus group 1, it is noticeable that the adjectives used by them suggest greater intensity than those used by group 2.

In the case of student G2.3, it was a perception of difficulty, emphasized by the use of the adverb of intensity "very". He relates this perception to be doing a social project for a public school, without having any financial return. The background to this discursive argument denotes the ideological interdiscursivity consumed in the field of Administration, which refers to the logic of profit and capital gains in transactions. In these terms, there is a reproduction of the dominant discourse and practice on profitability, in addition to the ideology involving instrumental or functional rationality (Ramos, 1989; Thiry-Cherques, 2009; Bolis et al., 2017). This situation emphasizes Aktouf's (2004) statement about training reflective, critical and prepared professionals to deal with all the complexity of social life being a great challenge faced by Business Administration courses.

Another point that deserves emphasis in this discussion is related to the effects of senses and language styles used by each group to communicate their discursive conceptions. The first group has a different voice intonation, which brings excitement, vibration, euphoria, sentimentality. Repeatedly, the students interrupted each other during their lines in the euphoria of complementing, adding, reinforcing. So that when one of the students enunciated joy and pleasure as a feeling resulting from the experience in the social project, the others expressed conformity with these feelings, nodding positively, smiling in agreement and emitting glances of approval and participation.

According to Fairclough (2001), discursive production is built on arguments ordered by linguistic resources and styles that reinforce, confirm and contradict already stated discourses. In this specific case, there was more than one attempt to reinforce the discourse, there was a confirmation of the declared practice.



In the second group, the intonations in the voices do not show enthusiasm and satisfaction, nor do they share feelings, because while one spoke, the other listened without interacting. The nervousness in the tones of voices and gestures was noticeable, as well as the discomfort in remembering the experience. Therefore, not only the spoken discourse differentiates the groups, but the whole set of professed language, because while focus group 1 externalized a collective discourse of positivity, focus group 2 issued isolated discourses focused on individual desires.

Student G1.7 argues this perception and concern with the collective aspects by saying “The time when you deliver and see that it’s ready... not only the realization of it being ready, but having impacted and meant something to someone, it’s gratifying”. Student G1.1 points out that after having taken the Entrepreneurship class and completed the project he then began to worry about developing “[...]the environment around me, the people around me, worrying more about it, then... before it seemed that I didn’t worry about it”. These perceptions reinforce Candau’s (2012) proposal that theory, when associated with a context, becomes more meaningful. In addition, such productions bring about effects of practical change and social transformation.

Student G1.2 states that one of the most striking points of their experience in the class was to come across “[...] a reality very different from ours and there’s a world we sometimes can’t see, right?”. By using the expressions “ours” and “we”, students profess their speech in the collective, as if speaking on behalf of the whole group and, by enunciating this, the other students consent with gestures and looks. A kind of metaphor is used by students to say that, from SE classes, they begin to have contact with a reality unknown to them. The expression “we can’t see” denotes a blindness in terms of discursive practice that the students assume, even from the recognition of reality.

In general, this perception enables a connection with the importance that Business Administration courses provide students with opportunities, such as taking the SE course, to experience other contexts, focused, for example, on the development of social awareness (Oliveira et al., 2014; Kedmenec et al., 2016; Shahverdi et al., 2018).

Also considering the perception of the collective aspects in the experiences undergone by the students of focus group 1, student G1.4 highlights that “[...]sometimes a small thing we do is a big step forward for them [...]donation, something we, like, didn’t even need, for them it was already a... a huge gain.” The



student uses two adjectives (“big” and “huge”) that denote size, but were employed in a connotative sense to emphasize that their performance and the members of their group in the social context in which they were inserted, in this case an institution that cares for the elderly, presented positive results, benefits, and relevance to the field, corroborating the statement of Oliveira (2004) and Campos et al. (2012), about the relationship between SE and social benefit.

As G1.2, G1.4 also states in the collective sense and, in the argument, demarcates the discourse orders of social practice that elucidates the theoretical and conceptual notion of SE.

When considering the second focus group, a concern regarding the collective and the social was not perceived, but rather a concern regarding formal aspects of the project development of SE classes, such as difficulties in planning, besides concerns related to functional rationality, specifically the lack of motivation for not having a financial return for the work, as indicated in one of the passages:

“We would start to build lots of stuff, but we didn’t really know where we were going, I think that’s the thing for any entrepreneur, any enterprise that you’re going to do, it’s hard to have a goal, it’s hard to be in charge of the business and think “Where are we going now? It was hard to have this direction. One thing that was missing for me was also motivation. It’s very hard to do a job for free [...]” (G2.3).

This student’s discourse allows us to interpret that, in some students, the opportunity for a critical, reflective and social formation, as stated by Aktouf (2004), and provided by the Social Entrepreneurship class, is not fulfilled. This is because the student’s reading of the project is shallow in terms of its impacts and contributions to a transforming social practice. This discourse moves in the direction of the discursive logic of managerial entrepreneurship, not social entrepreneurship. In these terms, the presence of the hegemonic managerial discourse of Administration in the discursive practices of the students becomes evident. In addition, the absence of financial “motivation” pointed out in the speech clearly reinforces a discourse based on the premise of efficiency and profit maximization instead of social and human values, as highlighted by Aktouf (2004) and Oliveira et al.

This same financial aspect, still dominant in society and academia, is also emphasized by student G2.4, who resorts to interdiscursivity, i.e., the speech is related to student G2.3’s speech. By emphasizing that the colleague’s speech is “true”, he is also sharing the same dominant speech reproduced by the colleague about the financial issue and, implying that different perceptions, such as that of the students in





focus group 1, who highlight the importance of social aspects, is false: “[...] but what ‘ya’ said is true [...]”. Here it is explicit that the social practice of these students reflects the managerial discourses consumed via ideological and hegemonic discourse orders pertaining to the mainstream of Administration.

When talking about the experience in an institution of weavers, student G2.4 emphasizes, as well as the two colleagues mentioned above, a managerial vision, without focusing on social aspects. He says that the people inserted in the context in which they developed the Social Entrepreneurship class were used to “social handouts”, but that their function [students] was to be administrators “[...] our role there, even while administrators”. With this narrative, it is implied that it is not the administrator’s function to assist the social environment, denoting a rational, limited and instrumental understanding of the role of these professionals in the society in which they are inserted.

These last three discursive conceptions therefore confirm that the teaching of administration is still more focused on the premises of efficiency and profit maximization than on social and human values. There are still few courses and universities that offer classes that address social issues in the training of their students in Business Administration. This indicates that these subjects are not yet considered as priority, even though fundamental to the Business Administration formation of the country (Aktouf, 2004; Oliveira et al., 2014; Shahverdi et al., 2018). It should also be emphasized that, even if classes focused on social themes are offered, such as the SE class, some students still do not think in a reflexive and critical way, keeping the focus on traditional visions, and reproducing dominant discourses.

As Fairclough (2003) would say, there is a tendency for the texts and the discursive and social practices of agents to reflect the ideologies and hegemonic discourse orders of the field. As Santos and Galleli (2013) point out, the teaching of SE in Business Administration is still in its infancy in Brazilian public universities, and this training also depends on the interest of students.

Considering these, it is possible to stress the importance of students leaving the classroom and looking for social problems in their communities, and that universities encourage them to engage in voluntary activities so that they recognize that many organizations can directly benefit from their knowledge and skills (Kedmenec et al., 2016).



These would be some of the conditions for a practical change in social discourse around an instrumental rationality for the adoption of social discourse based on substantive rationality. The SE class offered at UNIFEI's Business Administration course is an example of incentive for this change, but students must also be willing to exercise, mainly, the reflection, the critical thinking and the social-professional side to present new discourses.

Discrepancies in the discursive perceptions of focus groups can reinforce the different performance of the groups. The group formed by students who achieved a high academic performance in the SE class experienced the project and underwent different rational substantive sensations, which provided the involvement in society and the identification of values inserted in different social contexts. Focal Group 2, constituted by students with a low academic performance in the subject, could not finish the project as planned and as a discursive strategy they preferred to point out the difficulties in the realization of the project and the lack of planning to achieve the expected results than properly assume their lack of engagement towards the practice.

To move forward in this debate, there is a specific discussion about the difficulties experienced in the process.

#### **4.1 Difficulties Experienced**

Based on the aforementioned, the students who participated in the two focus groups were asked about the main difficulties encountered in this process of insertion into a community, represented here by the experience in a social project.

In the speeches of the students who achieved a high academic performance in the SE class, these difficulties are manifested through key terms/expressions such as: "time", "inexperience", "various teams working" and "getting funds", as illustrated by the discursive excerpts of students G1.2 and G1.9.

According to student G1.2 "[...] one thing that makes it difficult is having several teams working. So, by the time you ask for help the person has already given to another team, and this is very difficult. It's a point that makes the job very difficult". The reason attributed by the student to the difficulty is related to the competition, which is very much emphasized in the Business Administration courses, the basis of Schumpeter's (1985) entrepreneur assumptions and which is also present in the context of SE. This same difficulty is emphasized by the employment, twice, of the



adverb of intensity “very”. This discourse also brings a criticism of the scarcity of agents willing to contribute with donations to organs, entities, institutions and people in need.

Student G1.9 emphasized “[...] time and inexperience, we had three months to plan and execute and close the project. And since the main part was getting funds, ours, mainly, needed a lot of money [...]”. The issue of reduced time to promote the actions devised by the group also presents itself as a difficulty. Proof of this is that other students in the group reinforced this argument, also indicating that this should be a more extensive project so that they could contribute more to the institutions in need.

Although the matter of seeking financial resources may lead to the interpretation that the student is emphasizing a vision of productive logic, reproducing an ideology of the market, which is still emphasized by the universities, according to Chauí (2001), it is necessary to consider the context in which he is inserted. Positioning the discourse in context is one of the basic ordinances of the CAD, as Resende and Ramalho (2011) state. Therefore, in this specific case, the student needed to seek resources to meet the financial demands of an institution that assists the elderly in their region and the student’s commitment, along with their group, provided improvements to the institution. In these terms, obtaining funds involves contributing more effectively to solving the problems of institutions.

Difficulties such as those pointed out by student G1.9 could implicate in a negative view of the undergone experience, but, as student G1.5 illustrates, when discussing financial resources too, such difficulties can also be seen as positive: “[...]this issue of funds is a difficulty point, but it ends up forcing you to be even more creative, which is a positive point [...]”. To show this perception, he resorts to the contrastive conjunction “but”, showing an opposition between “difficulty” and “positive point”. It is a strategy of language that provokes sense effects in which the difficulty experienced in the process is justified by the creative learning that is revealed in this dynamic.

Two other students, G1.1 and G1.4, also attribute a positive view to difficulties: “[...] while it is a difficulty point it is a point ... a positive point [...]”. To reinforce this positive view, the student uses the term “difficulty” and the expression “positive point” as if they were opposite, and perceived concomitantly.

In the case of student G1.4 he discourses that “[...] it remains as a positive aspect. Because then you have to go after it, do some networking, look for things [...]”. Such findings allow for the understanding that the students agree that the difficulties drove



them to seek the accomplishment of activities to finish the project. This search is emphasized through the connotative use of the expression “go after”, which in this context means to seek what is necessary for the execution of the project. The student is also using the term “networking”, widely used in Business Administration courses, specifically with regard to entrepreneurship, referring to the establishment of a network of contacts.

In these terms, the speeches bring interdiscursivity and intertextuality consumed in the management discourse of Administration, since several expressions characteristic of the area are enunciated. However, in meanings and contexts that focus more on substantive results than on instrumental ones. Moreover, the enunciation of student G1.4 allows us to interpret that in the case of the project developed by them and the group, in the same institution for elderly as of G1.9, the contact with people was important, such as sponsors, bricklayers, painters and managers of the institution itself, who were able to help in facing difficulties throughout the development of the project.

The involvement of other people is also highlighted by student G1.1 “[...] ‘ya’ involve people who ‘ya’ can’t even imagine”. Student G1.1 worked in a public school. This “involvement of people” also appears in the speeches as a language resource that justifies the difficulties presented. According to Fairclough (2001), textual and argumentative choices bring different effects of meaning according to each discursive structure. This third-party involvement corroborates the vision of Shahverdi et al. (2018) about SE being able to provide effective solutions to diverse social, economic and environmental problems, through the actions of different agents concerned with social problems (Shahverdi et al., 2018). In practical terms, it is highlighted that the involvement with third parties has solved tangible problems such as the lack of a library in a public school and the renovation of a ceiling in an institution for the elderly, solving social problems.

In the case of the second focus group, composed by students who achieved a low academic performance in the SE class, specific aspects of the planning process are placed as perceived difficulties: “[...] a negative point was the lack of planning, quite a lot, we didn’t have a schedule” (G2.1). In this case, the difficulty is considered a negative point, emphasized by the use of the adverbial expression “quite a lot” which conveys an idea of greater intensity. This difficulty is associated with the group’s lack of an established schedule to carry out the activities necessary to the project. It seems



there is an attempt to justify the lack of engagement and the failure to deliver a positive result by the discourse of denial of operational conditions, such as: lack of planning, lack of schedule (elements that constitute orders of the management discourse in the field of Administration).

Student G2.2 highlights that in the case of their group, which worked at an animal protection institution, there was a lack of planning “[...] too much lack of planning, it was 80% of the time mostly theoretical, too much “let’s do it”? It has to be done, it must be done”, then when we realized it was one month, three weeks away [...]”. To emphasize the lack of planning, the student uses the adverbial expression of intensity “too much”. Part of this lack of planning is explained by the absence of concrete actions, expressed in the student’s speech as “80% of the time mostly theoretical”. The theoretical term is used connotatively to predict actions that remain only on the level of ideas, without being concretized. In addition, the student uses manifested intertextuality to emphasize that they only kept saying that something had to be done, but it was not done. Here, he brings the voices of the other students involved to institute their criticism and blame others for the results delivered.

Franco and Pimenta (2016) point out that teaching requires a consonance in acts and ways of teaching, but according to Santos and Galleli (2013), for this to happen, there is a dependency on the interest of students. And, in the specific case, this “interest” did not become evident as a discursive practice by the students of focus group 2.

These difficulties reinforce a more managerial vision, compared to the perceptions of the students of focus group 1, only focused on the planning part, based on premises of process efficiency, as highlighted by Aktouf (2004). However, not all students in focal group 2 had this managerial vision, focused on instrumental rationality, approached by authors such as Ramos (1989); Thiry-Cherques (2009); Bolis et al. (2017).

Student G2.3 states that, although there have been difficulties “[...] a valuable learning that we had was to get out of that entrepreneurial logic and go to a social business, I think that it was a break [...] this experience that we have, makes us reflect a lot about our life [...]”. By using the expression “we”, the student assumes that all the students in the group had the same perception, which could be a mistaken statement, because the others did not agree with this speech. It is also important to point out that this student only brings this view at the end of the questions, when invited to reflect on



the feelings resulting from their practice. Student G2.3 uses the adjective “valuable” to refer to the learning provided by the change (“break”) from an “entrepreneurial logic” to a “social business”.

This change involves a shift from instrumental to substantive rationality (Bolis et al., 2017). Hence, there is a corroboration of the statement by Shahverdi et al. (2018) that universities that develop education for SE have the opportunity not only to act as agents of change, but also are in a position to develop human capital that can be used to transform the world and face social challenges. And this development can be evidenced in student G2.3’s speech through reflection (emphasized by the expression “a lot”) on the life that the change has brought about.

The analyses carried out in this category “Experienced Difficulties” made it possible to interpret, as in the first category “Undergone Experiences”, differences between focus group 1 and focus group 2, regarding discursive perception and social practice. The group of students with a high academic performance perceived opportunities for learning and personal growth in difficulties, while the second group identified barriers that were not overcome. At such pace, it was found that the speeches issued by the students, in general, except for some restrictions, allowed the resignification of their practices with respect to SE. Proof of this is that when the researcher turns off the recorder, two of the students in group 2 report to her saying that they regretted not making better use of this learning opportunity.

## 5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, as Fairclough (2003) suggests, the discourse of the students was treated as a social practice and as the materialization of their actions through the implementation of social projects in the subject of Social Entrepreneurship in the Business Administration course at UNIFEI - MG. The results show that the discursive conceptions externalized reflect the discursive practice of the SE and its collective values, but at the same time demarcate the managerial hegemonic discourse of Administration and its instrumental logic.

These findings are due to the choices of the subjects of analysis, since students were grouped according to the degree of academic performance presented in the teaching and learning strategy of the class and according to the result of the social project undertaken. It is believed that this choice favored the emergence of different discourses between focus group 1 and focus group 2.



About the experience, the presence of antagonistic discourses was perceived. The first focus group portrays the experience with intensity and greatness, while the second focus group highlights the difficulty. Furthermore, the predominance of group 1 discourse was based on a discursive logic based on substantive rationality, while the second focused on an instrumental logic.

Regarding the difficulties faced, there are also contradictory discourses. The first group reports on the difficulties followed by the positive perception made possible by them, while the second group stuck to the functional planning difficulties of the groups. One common point is that the groups, despite some contradictory denotations, recognize the opportunities for reflection provided by the class because, at various opportunities, the discourses of students, especially of group 1, pointed to practical and discursive changes from the experience with SE.

In short, it should be pointed out that the hegemony of instrumental discourse is not found in all groups. The first group reports the experience with emotion, intensity and is based on values guided by substantive rationality and the relevance of the project for a collective good. This perspective demonstrates how discursive practice is subject to remodeling from different experiences and contexts. This fact corroborates the criticism of several authors around a discursive change in the formation of the administrator.

As proposals for future works, emphasis is placed on the need to understand the learned meanings of the experience and to unveil the meanings of learning to students of Business Administration who have undergone experiences outside the mainstream before being immersed in this experience. It is also suggested the understanding of the discursive conceptions of students to elucidate the reasons that led to low and high academic performance. Finally, it is believed that academia needs to adopt transformative teaching-learning practices to allow students to (re)invent the ideological and hegemonic meanings around the discourse built in the field of management.

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