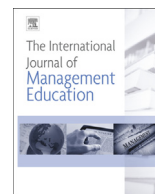




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## Research Notes

# Hidden curriculum in student organizations: Learning, practice, socialization and responsible management in a business school

Julio Cesar Borges<sup>\*</sup>, Tamiris Capellaro Ferreira, Marcelo Silveira Borges de Oliveira, Nayele Macini, Adriana Cristina Ferreira Caldana

School of Economics, Business Administration and Accounting at Ribeirão Preto – University of São Paulo, Av. Bandeirantes, 3900, Ribeirão Preto, São Paulo, 14040-900, Brazil

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## ABSTRACT

For many students, education does not simply mean obtaining a university degree and, consequently, a good job; rather, there is also a need to attain personal satisfaction and a sense of responsibility for the community in which one lives. In the business school that we studied, we observed that learning not only occurs in the formal education program but also is complemented by operations in the nine existing student organizations, which constitute much of the school's hidden curriculum. This research entailed a survey with a qualitative approach. Analyzing the keyword answers of the students, 91% affirmed that they dealt with ethical concerns, corporate social responsibility and sustainability in student organizations. Based on the content of the other answers of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that students are creating their own learning content in student organizations in varied subjects to meet demands unmet by the formal curriculum. The student organizations are a fertile field for reflecting on and practicing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and learning the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). The students of the surveyed student organizations demonstrated a predisposition to social impact actions, thus ensuring their responsibility, ethics, interest in sustainability and awareness of society.

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## 1. Introduction

Academic training for many students does not just mean obtaining a university degree and, consequently, good jobs (Bergenhengouwen, 1987); there is also the desire to attain personal satisfaction, the ability to solve local social problems (Lin, 2006; Talbert, Larke Jr., & Jones, 1999), and a sense of responsibility for the community in which one lives (Eklund-Leen & Young, 1997; Frieze & Blum, 2002), the environment (Shephard, 2008) and sustainable development in general (Winter & Cotton, 2012).

<sup>\*</sup> Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [juliorp@usp.br](mailto:juliorp@usp.br) (J.C. Borges), [tamiris.ferreira@usp.br](mailto:tamiris.ferreira@usp.br) (T.C. Ferreira), [marceloborges.rp1@gmail.com](mailto:marceloborges.rp1@gmail.com) (M.S. Borges de Oliveira), [nmacini@yahoo.com.br](mailto:nmacini@yahoo.com.br) (N. Macini), [caldana@fearp.usp.br](mailto:caldana@fearp.usp.br) (A.C.F. Caldana).

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The literature describes this hidden curriculum as a source of unintentional natural learning. This aspect should be highlighted and exposed by teachers whenever possible because, in this way, it may be better understood and new insights may be achieved (Portelli, 1993). This process contributes to the updating of formal educational programs, which unconditionally must accompany the dynamics of cultural and social transformation.

According to Blasco (2012), business schools are multilevel learning environments that comprise several spaces through which students engage in learning processes and moral socialization. A theoretical understanding of how moral learning and socialization processes occur within the hidden curriculum in business schools is needed.

This work shows the results of a survey conducted in a signatory business school of the PRME among undergraduate members of student entities. It looks for empirical evidence on the informal and implicit demands of student learning not present in the formal program, which are supplied by participation in student entities according to the concept of a hidden curriculum. The objective of this study was to identify the informal and implicit demands of learning by students not present in the educational program of business school during business courses, accounting and economics, which can be met by participating in a student organization and can be understood as hidden curriculum.

The studied business school is one of the top five in Brazil and is a signatory of the Principles for Responsible Management Education initiative of the United Nations (PRME). Two authors of this research work actively in the articulation of student organizations with the PRME principles and the dissemination of the Sustainable Development Goals. The school has approximately 1300 students in undergraduate courses in Business Management, Accounting, Economics, Business Economics and Controlling. These graduate students are self-organized, with no subject to the school management, into nine student organizations, also known as student entities, to engage in sports, entrepreneurship, consulting, social projects, financial education, etc. The student organizations are voluntarily created by the students themselves and are not part of the formal curriculum.

All work developed in student organizations is neither planned nor organized by the school nor inserted, requested or rewarded by the formal curriculum of the school, however, dozens of students go spontaneously to this environment of learning, practice, and socialization.

The intense participation of these students in student entities demonstrates that learning occurs not only in the formal education program proposed by the school but also during participation in student organizations. In these organizations, students can identify the informal and implicit demands (Bergenhengouwen, 1987) for their formation that an undergraduate degree does not provide, beyond the pursuit of personal satisfaction (Eklund-Leen & Young, 1997).

The identification of this hidden curriculum can contribute to improving educational programs in business as well as strengthening the activities practiced by students in student entities. In addition, this study can identify the principles of sustainable development contained in the PRME initiatives being practiced spontaneously by students in the student entities of this business school.

## 2. Theoretical foundation

### 2.1. Education for sustainable development (ESD)

Some authors have blamed recent global troubles, such as corporate scandals, corruption, the economic recession, and global warming, in part on management education and business schools (Alcaraz & Thiruvattal, 2010; Forray & Leigh, 2012; Ghoshal, 2005; Godemann, Haertle, Herzig, & Moon, 2014; Haski-Leventhal, Pournader, & McKinnon, 2015; Lourenco, Jones, & Jayawarna, 2012; Prandi, Martell, & Lozano, 2016; Rasche & Gilbert, 2015). In this context, management education plays a key role in the training of responsible leaders for sustainable development (Baden & Parkes, 2013; Barber, Wilson, Venkatachalam, Cleaves, & Garnham, 2014; Cornuel & Hommel, 2015; Gitsham, 2011; Lourenco et al., 2012; Sroufe, Sivasubramaniam, Ramos, & Saiia, 2014; UN Global Compact., 2007).

Economic growth and the creation of wealth have reduced global poverty rates, but vulnerability, inequality, exclusion and violence have increased within and across societies throughout the world, thus making it urgent to rethink the purpose of education and the organization of learning; sustaining and enhancing the dignity, capacity and welfare of the human person in relation to others and to nature should be the fundamental purpose of education in the twenty-first century (UNESCO, 2015).

Companies have great importance in the context of sustainable development. According to Jabbour and Santos (2008) and Jabbour, Santos, Fonseca, and Nagano (2013), the organizations that contribute to sustainable development are those that can weigh their production processes issues related to economic and financial performance with good performance on environmental and social indicators. The main challenge is finding qualified responsible managers to adopt an appropriate form of management that balances economic, financial and environmental benefits.

In this scenario, the training of managers and business leaders has emerged as one of the main challenges of this millennium because such individuals have proven to be extremely relevant and can serve as multipliers and mobilizers of this new paradigm of sustainability. According to Elkington (1998) and Adams and Petrella (2010), to fully meet the responsibilities of sustainability, future managers and business leaders, who have great decision-making power in today's society, must have as the basic premise of their decisions the understanding of social, environmental and economic elements.

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