



RAM. Revista de Administração Mackenzie

ISSN: 1518-6776

ISSN: 1678-6971

Editora Mackenzie; Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie

Barbosa, Fernanda P. M.; Davel, Eduardo P. B.
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RAM. Revista de Administração Mackenzie, vol. 23, no. 4, eRAMG220108, 2022
Editora Mackenzie; Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1678-6971/eRAMG220108.en>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=195473057002>

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Teaching and learning of organizational improvisation: The value of theater in management learning

Ensino-aprendizagem da improvisação organizacional: O valor do teatro na educação em administração

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Abstract

Purpose: This article aims to understand the implications of theatrical improvisation in the teaching and learning processes of organizational improvisation.

Originality/value: Management constantly deals with changes and unforeseen events, as research on organizational improvisation has shown for more than two decades. However, managers are still trained to face stable situations and not those of organizational turbulence. Management educators lack teaching and learning options aimed at developing organizational improvisation skills.

Design/methodology/approach: The research is based on theories about organizational improvisation, theater improvisation, and management teaching-learning. Several teaching and learning practices of organizational improvisation based on theatrical improvisation were analysed – practices of a curricular component of a Management undergraduate program carried out during six academic terms. The qualitative methodology was based on an artistic approach and several sources of information (short stories, theater, direct observation, press conferences, and documents).

Findings: The results are categorized into organized implications between four synergies (logic of practice, practice of the narrative, the creativity, and corporeality) and three entropies (shame to practice, fear of making mistakes, and habit of dispersing) of the use of theatrical improvisation for teaching and learning organizational improvisation in the training of contemporary managers. The research results contribute to the advancement of knowledge about organizational improvisation, as they unfold a proposal for a more precise understanding of teaching and learning of organizational improvisation. This study also enhances the linkage between fields of knowledge (theater and management), increasing of the knowledge that contributes to the advancement of research and practice of teaching and learning organizational improvisation.

Keywords: theater improvisation, organizational improvisation, teaching-learning, theater, contemporary management



Resumo

Objetivo: O objetivo deste artigo é compreender as implicações da improvisação teatral nos processos de ensino-aprendizagem da improvisação organizacional.

Originalidade/valor: A gestão lida, constantemente, com mudanças e imprevistos, como as pesquisas sobre improvisação organizacional revelam há mais de duas décadas. Entretanto, os gestores ainda são formados para enfrentar situações de estabilidade, e não as de turbulência organizacional. Carecemos de opções de ensino-aprendizagem voltadas para o desenvolvimento das habilidades de improvisação organizacional.

Design/metodologia/abordagem: A pesquisa ancora-se em teorias sobre improvisação organizacional, improvisação teatral e ensino-aprendizagem da administração. Investigaram-se empiricamente várias práticas de ensino-aprendizagem da improvisação organizacional a partir da improvisação teatral, realizadas durante seis semestres letivos em um componente curricular de graduação em Administração. A metodologia qualitativa baseou-se em uma abordagem artística e em diversas fontes de informação (contos, teatro, observação direta, entrevistas coletivas e documentos).

Resultados: Os resultados são categorizados em implicações organizadas em quatro sinergias (lógica da prática, praticar a narrativa, criatividade e corporeidade) e três entropias (vergonha de praticar, medo de errar e hábito de dispersar) do uso da improvisação teatral para o ensino da improvisação organizacional no contexto de formação de gestores contemporâneos. Os resultados da pesquisa representam uma contribuição para o avanço do conhecimento sobre improvisação organizacional, na medida em que inauguram uma proposta de compreensão mais precisa do ensino-aprendizagem da improvisação organizacional. Contribuem também para relacionar dois campos do conhecimento (teatro e administração) em prol de uma construção de conhecimento que colabora para o avanço da pesquisa e da prática do ensino-aprendizagem da improvisação organizacional.

Palavras-chave: improvisação teatral, improvisação organizacional, ensino-aprendizagem, teatro, gestão contemporânea

INTRODUCTION

Managers are increasingly required to manage complex and unpredictable situations and uncertainties (Cunha, 2002; O'Toole et al., 2020). Permanent, continuous, dynamic action, with a strong component of unpredictability, is one of the elements that compose the concept of organizational improvisation (Aranha & Garcia, 2005). It is the moment when intuition guides spontaneous action; a way to improve the quality of actions taken at the time (Crossan & Sorrenti, 1997), with the resources available in real time, to instantly meet the requested demand (Aranha & Garcia, 2005). Improvisation occurs when the idea and execution of an action converge in time (Moorman & Miner, 1998a). It is within simple structures that improvisation occurs, but in a complex way, showing the creativity expressed (Hatch, 1999; Fisher & Barrett, 2019) in the capability to simultaneously have the idea and execute it (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001).

Indeed, improvisation manifests itself during the planning of actions, while turbulence and uncertainties, arising from the external environment, create tensions and resistance to its implementation (Nisula & Kianto, 2016; Malucelli et al., 2021; Wiedemann et al., 2021), causing new, creative and original actions, different from those planned, to appear and to be executed (Aranha & Garcia, 2005; Nemkova et al., 2015). The potential of improvisation is related to the discovery of the future that the action creates as it unfolds (Barrett & Bolt, 2007; Ciuchta et al., 2020; Cunha & Clegg, 2019), generating innovation (Orlikowski & Hoffman, 1997; Kyriakopoulos, 2011; Liu et al., 2018), considering the context of shared awareness in group performance (Bastien & Hostager, 1998) and evidencing the spontaneity of action with a high degree of intuition (Crossan & Sorrenti, 1997; Crossan, 1998; Orlikowski, 1996).

Several significant activities of the contemporary manager demand improvisational skills: entrepreneurship (Balachandra, 2019), marketing (Borah et al., 2020), reflexivity (Abrantes et al., 2021), and the elaboration of strategies (Falkheimer & Sandberg, 2018). Furthermore, improvisation is an important ally for organizational learning (Crossan & Sorrenti, 1997; Fernandez & Kullu, 2019; Flach & Antonello, 2008; Miner et al., 2001). However, managers training is still predominantly oriented toward dealing with routines and not with unexpected situations, which are underestimated or ignored as sources of learning (Vera et al., 2016; Pereira et al., 2016; Mannucci et al., 2020), changes and innovations (Kyriakopoulos, 2011; Liu et al., 2018). This orientation is even more problematic considering

that the demand for approaches to the development of managers and leaders that embrace complex, dynamic, chaotic, highly subjective, and interactional organizational environments is long-existing (Sutherland, 2013).

Studies on teaching-learning aimed at the development of organizational improvisation skills are scarce. Some research on organizational improvisation does not focus on a structured and systematic way on how to teach and learn the ability to improvise organizationally. The partnership with arts professionals (Katz-Buonincontro, 2015) has been supporting the teaching and learning of management (Baruch, 2006) and helping to better understand the manager's processes, contexts, and actions (Diochon et al., 2019). In this direction, the arts provide a significant contribution (Taylor, 2007). Arts-based learning encourages creativity and originality (Nissley, 2010). Thus, the arts can contribute to the training of managers who seek to develop their improvisational skills.

Since, on the one hand, we are devoid of research on how to teach and learn organizational improvisation, on the other, in the field of arts and, specifically, in the field of theater, many experiences and research exist on the teaching-learning of theatrical improvisation. The theater is a powerful means to develop narrative creation skills (Clark & Kayes, 2019), using the acting to enhance social, physical, creative, and reflective challenges (Leberman & Martin, 2005). It is an anchor for reflective learning, being able to promote innovative pedagogy in management education (Leberman & Martin, 2005). Thus, why not use this field of knowledge to innovate and develop more effective teaching and learning of organizational improvisation in management education?

This article aims to understand the implications of theatrical improvisation in the teaching-learning processes of organizational improvisation. The research is based on theories about organizational improvisation, theater improvisation, and management education. We empirically investigated several teaching-learning practices of organizational improvisation based on theatrical improvisation, executed in a curricular component of an undergraduate program in Management during six academic semesters. The qualitative methodology was based on an artistic approach and on several sources of information (stories, theater, direct observation, press conferences, and documents).

The results are categorized into implications, with four synergies (logic of practice, practice of narrative, creativity, and corporeality) and three entropies (shame of practicing, fear of making mistakes, and the habit of dispersing) regarding the use of theatrical improvisation for teaching organi-



zational improvisation in the context of managers training. The research outcomes contribute to the advancement of knowledge about organizational improvisation, as they inaugurate a proposal for a more precise understanding of teaching and learning in this field. They also contribute to linking two fields of knowledge (theater and management), favoring a construction of knowledge that contributes to the advancement of research and the practice of teaching- organizational improvisation.

THE VALUE OF THEATER IN MANAGEMENT

In the field of research in Management, theater helps to unravel several issues: differentiated management structures (Orlikowski & Hoffman, 1997), customer interaction in service delivery (Carvalho, 2007), coercion and control of organizational spatiality (Vergara & Constant, 2004), debate on power and resistance (Boje, 2001), and creation-management dynamics (Davel et al., 2007). The partnership between theater and management brings up several discussions on innovation (Christopher et al., 2017; Vera & Crossan, 2005; Crossan, 1998), paradigm shift, managerial sustainability, responsibility, ethics (Christopher et al., 2017), practice, collaboration, spontaneity, positivity (Vera & Crossan, 2004, 2005), and error (Flach & Antonello, 2008).

Theater can be understood as technology (Clark & Mangham, 2004) and a pedagogical device that engages and educates (Fernandez, 2019). Training in theatrical improvisation (Vera & Crossan, 2005) provides the necessary basis for building narrative skills (Meisiek, 2002) and leadership (Clark & Kayes, 2019), considering organizational roles (Clark & Mangham, 2004), promoting learning (Crossan, 1998; Fernandez & Kullu, 2019; Flach & Antonello, 2008; Miner et al., 2001), and raising the debate on organizational behavior (Fernandez, 2019). Theatrical improvisation helps us understand how to improve the time management (Vera & Crossan, 2005; Flach & Antonello, 2008), when there is little time for planning and pondering (Crossan et al., 2005). The practice of theatrical improvisation guarantees a space where the learner can channel their energy and emotion in a structured environment (Fernandez & Kullu, 2019), experiencing the power of transformation through theatrical catharsis (Meisiek, 2004).

Theater operates as a powerful metaphor (Mangham, 1984, 2005; Crossan et al., 2005) to understand and describe our everyday activities as citizens and workers (Mangham, 2005; Meisiek & Barry, 2007). Indeed, theater allows us to mobilize forces for the development of dialogic (Cavedon,



2007), creative, relational (Chasserio & Gosse, 2007), and trust (Coopey, 1998) skills. Although the theater is a powerful source of knowledge and learning in management, and despite appearing in research on teaching and learning for some time, no research has focused centrally, robustly, and fully on the mobilization of this art for teaching organizational improvisation.

Based on a historical point of view, much was lost on theatrical improvisation (Chacra, 1983), which integrates improvisation into the show, combining aesthetic traits with political and social aspects (Meyerhold, 1968). The emergence of improvisation occurred in Dionysian representations (dithyrambs) in Ancient Greece, with ritual structures and religious characters, integrating a series of improvised mimodramatic expressions (Chacra, 1983). The mimes were improvised shows presented at public squares where the actors exercised their artistic principles. In these shows, the impersonator only provided the immediate experience of contact with the audience, exposing their opinion on politics and behavior (Hauser, 1972). With the *commedia dell'arte*, the improvised theater was considered art (Moussinac, 1957). As long as there is theater, there will be improvisation. Based on improvisation, it is possible to bring innovations to scenic creation (Chacra, 1983). It is a practice that helps both professional actors (Berthold, 2001; Roubine, 2003) and non-actors (Moreno, 1977; Spolin, 1970; Johnstone, 1979).

Theatrical improvisation brings vitality to the field of theater as it activates a sense of the here and now, as each performance is a collective event that differs according to the spontaneity of the moment (Boal, 2003). Generally, all names in modern theater make use of improvisation, to a greater or lesser degree, whether in the preparation of shows or in their presentation (Chacra, 1983). Antonin Artaud (1897-1948), Meyerhold (1847-1940), Brecht (1898-1956), Stanislavski (1863-1938), and Augusto Boal (1931-2009) are some examples of people that made theater a language of improvisation, breaking with formality. A central dimension in research on theater improvisation is spontaneity (Moreno, 1977; Spolin, 1970; Johnstone, 1979; Boal, 2003; Chacra, 1983; Meyerhold, 1968; Hauser, 1972; Berthold, 2001; Roubine, 2003; Moussinac, 1957), which frees people from more mechanized patterns – most frequently presented in adulthood – that stopped the stimulus of senses and observations of the world in people (Moreno, 1977).

Spontaneity is a central axis of theatrical improvisation theories as it emphasizes its main dynamics: the logic of practice, corporeality, creativity, and narrative. Spontaneity is natural in children, but it is lost with aging, and it is related to the senses and their reactions to sensations (Moreno, 1977). The exercise of this spontaneity occurs by continuous experimentation, which finds acceptance in theater and in theatrical improvisation. The logic of



practice within the theater presupposes monitoring the change in the world and the ability to relate to this change on a daily basis. We learn through experience. What we call talent can be translated as a greater individual capacity to experience spontaneity, ensuring involvement at an intellectual, physical, and intuitive level (Moreno, 1977; Spolin, 1970; Johnstone, 1979).

The corporeality associated with spontaneity is evidenced when we encourage the freedom of physical expression (Spolin, 1970). The impersonators create theatrical reality, physicalizing their idea with their bodies. When working with actors and non-actors, it is possible to perceive the same difficulty: getting close to oneself and exploring their creativity until reaching a spontaneous condition (Spolin, 1970). We only reach it after making a lot of mistakes. The path to spontaneity is not a solitary one, as it is the result of relationship building (Johnstone, 1979). It is the aspects linked to corporeality that permeate the performance, expanding the repertoire of actions and solutions. This capacity is not only absorbed in the mental field, but in the way they are expressed with the body. Theatrical improvisation, driven by its game characteristics (for example, division into groups), dismantles the idea of competition by stating that everyone has their own way of doing things. Thus, the theater enables spontaneity and lightness, which, consequently, stimulate the spirit of cooperation (Spolin, 1970) and the appropriation of personal safety in accepting risks.

THEATRICAL IMPROVISATION IN LEARNING ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVISATION: A UNIVERSITY TEACHING PRACTICE

The educational practice

The empirical dimension of the research anchors in an educational practice that occurred at the School of Management of Federal University of Bahia (Universidade Federal da Bahia – UFBA) and aimed at learning organizational improvisation. Daily educational activities involved three axes: content, organizational practice, and theatrical practice. In the content axis, students read theoretical material on three themes: organizational improvisation, theater improvisation, and cultural project management. In the organizational practice axis, students held a festival of entrepreneurship in the arts (Entrepreneurial Arts Festival – EAF), which required the ability to improvise during the process of creating and managing this festival. In the theatrical practice axis, students regularly practiced theatrical improvisation in the



classroom, taught by one of the teachers (the first author of this article). These exercises were diverse, embracing a warm-up and improvisational activities. The curriculum component involved a series of assignments and assessment activities (Table 1).

Table 1

Works and activities of the curricular component

Work or activity	Definition	Description
A1	Theater practice	Warm-up exercises (games, spatial relationship, and diction) and theatrical improvisation (14 lessons).
A2	Organizational practice	Theoretical classes on production and planning (seven classes), practical exercises on individual and group planning (eight classes), holding the event (two extra days), and evaluations (two classes).
A3	Artist for programming	Composition of the EAF program with artists: each student is responsible for inviting at least two artists.
T1	Organizational practice	Definition of concepts, creation of a fundraising project, visit to potential sponsors, elaboration of a cover letter, and creation of an action plan.
T2	Organizational improvisation tale	To narrate in the form of a short story that registers and communicates the essence of the learning performed in the curricular component. The student has as a source of fiction: themselves as characters and the experience of the organization and management of the EAF as an environment of the story. Engaging, the short story should describe how the character integrates and relates the ability to improvise in theater and in organizations.
T3	Learning logbook	Regular and detailed description of how each student experiences and learns from the activities, focusing on challenges, planning, creativity, improvisations, innovations, behaviors, personal transformations, and collective work.
T4	Collaborative assessment	Collaborative critiques about the work of the colleagues, choosing the ten most significant critiques and reflecting on their value in the personal learning process.
A4	Semi-structured collective interview	Collective assessment of the experience and learning of each student during the last class of the entire process in the curricular component.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.



The Entrepreneurial Arts Festival as an arena of practice

EAF is a cultural meeting that brings together artists, universities, and society. It is a temporary, project-based organization in which improvisation is intense and always requested by its managers. It is the ideal arena for practicing and learning organizational improvisation – a space for aesthetic appreciation and reflection that provides learning, knowledge, and discoveries. Students, family members, teachers, employees, and citizens of the city were components of the public. The program features artists from the city who exhibit their art and explain their entrepreneurial efforts.

EAF occurs over two days in five predefined spaces within the university:

- *Innovative flavor*: space for gastronomy and research on different taste experiences, on prices, nutritional values, creative sales, logistics, and distribution solutions.
- *Circle of ideas*: space for debate circles with artists, culture managers (public and private ones), and communication professionals focused on the area of culture with reports of successful experiences.
- *Experiential art*: space for sewing, graffiti, dance, and exhibitions.
- *Revealed show*: space for dance, theater, and circus performances, ending with a conversation between the artists and the public.
- *Entrepreneurial sound*: space for the presentation of solo artists and local bands with their own pieces and songs.

For the organization of EAF, the first activity was to arrange the program and each student should invite an artist or a professional in the field of culture. Then, the class was divided into three teams that carried out the management planning, structured in three stages: preproduction, production, and postproduction. Each team had a defined role in each of the steps.

Research methodology

With a qualitative tradition, this research adopted the artistic methodological approach (Barone & Eisner, 2012), which enhances processes and results, contributing to the generation of knowledge. There are six main characteristics that distinguish art practice as a methodology: ideas, identity, history, structure, space, and scope (Sullivan, 2010). An important aspect for the methodological debate is the liberating character of the arts, which provides new means of expression, and, with that, new ways to generate ideas.

The empirical field consists of an educational practice in a curricular component of the undergraduate program in Management of the School of



Management of the UFBA, which took place for six consecutive semesters. Two professors led the process: one with a background in Theater and the other in Management. The answers to the planning were given by the students through works and activities that guaranteed the evaluation and grade for approval in the curricular component (Table 1), while operating as sources of information (direct observation, documents, press conferences) for this research (Table 2). All students involved were informed of the research and the confidentiality of the data. Consequently, students provided free and informed consent to participate in the research. Each academic semester represents a teaching and learning experience, which we named with the following terms: Exp#1, Exp#2, Exp#3, Exp#4, Exp#5, and Exp#6. Students were identified by capital letters of the alphabet: A, B, C, D etc. In each experience, we will cite press conferences (example: Ent-Exp#1), documents and logbook, (example: DbEstC-Exp#1), short stories (example: CoEstH-Exp#6), and observations (example: Obs -Exp#3).

Table 2

Techniques of interaction with empirical material

Technique	Work or activity	Definition	Type of narrative
Direct observation	A1	Theater practice	Artistic
	A2	Organizational practice	Expository, reflective, descriptive
	A3	Artist for programming	Descriptive, reflective
Documents	T1	Organizational practice (classroom and virtual environment)	Descriptive, reflective, artistic, expository
	T2	Organizational improvisation tale	Artistic, reflective, descriptive, expository
	T3	Learning logbook	Reflective, descriptive
	T4	Collaborative assessment	Reflective
Interview	A4	Semi-structured collective interview	Reflective

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

- *Direct observation:* Art is a rich source of information and knowledge, as attested by the first three activities of the curricular component. Activity A1 is the practice of theatrical improvisation, essentially practical and artistic, which was regularly practiced in the classroom. By theatrical



improvisation, students experienced and commented on the improvisations made by their colleagues and on their own. A2 was developed in a group, in which students needed to plan and manage actions to perform the EAF. The debates, agreements, and negotiations between teams were a constant exercise in internal organization of objectives and narrative. All plans were discussed between the teams, emphasizing the improvisations that occurred and that were identified. In A3, it was necessary to go out and invite an artist to compose the EAF schedule. It was the first personal experience in which students would need to improvise. Direct observation (De Ketele & Roegiers, 1993) of the students was conducted in moments of theatrical and organizational improvisation. All manifestations related to spontaneity, creativity, and narrative were observed and described in a diary.

- *Documents*: In T1, the students detailed the planning of the EAF. These details were observed during the activities (A1, A2, and A3). The logbook (T3) constitutes each student's detailed record of their learning, reflections, and experimentation process. The short story (T2) is an artistic exercise of transforming some logbook notes into a piece of literature. In this activity, the students should consider themselves characters going through the different situations they were exposed to in order to perform the EAF. T4 was the record of collaborative critiques that students made about their colleagues' works.
- *Group interviews*: On the last day of class, with the whole group together, a conversation guided by the teachers was carried out, in which each student would assess their experience (theatrical and organizational) and learning (A4). One's commentary was a stimulus for others to take a stand as well. The guiding questions were: after living this experience, what did I learn and how did I change? How did my learning of theatrical improvisation affect my learning of organizational improvisation?
- *Narrative analysis*: All empirical material (observation reports, documents, and identification) was analyzed based on narrative analysis (Bogdan & Biklen 1994; Bueno et al., 2006; De Ketele & Roegiers, 1993; Maitlis, 2012), which, in turn, was based on an inductive and recursive logic. The first stage of analysis consisted of identifying and describing the main narratives that related theater to theatrical improvisation. Then, all the material was again analyzed from the main narratives that emerged in the first stage of analysis. In the second stage, the focus was the categorization, in order to explain the main contributions of theater to organizational teaching and learning. The emerging categories were



grouped as follows: synergies and entropies that theater generated in the teaching and learning of organizational improvisation. In the third stage of material empirical analysis, the constructed categories were refined, described, and reflected in the light of their main repercussions.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the empirical research are organized into two categories: synergies and entropies. The synergies of theatrical improvisation represent positive effects that theater presented in the teaching and learning processes of theatrical improvisation. Entropies are the difficulties and challenges generated by theatrical improvisation in the context of teaching organizational improvisation.

Synergies of theatrical improvisation in teaching and learning of organizational improvisation

Logic of practice

In the classroom, students regularly practice theatrical improvisation with warm-up exercises (Appendix 1) and scene-building games (Appendix 2). Students should stand up and fully mobilize their bodies. Organizational improvisation occurred in the practical activities of organization and management of the EAF. The practice goes from the classroom to the external environment, integrating the practice of theatrical improvisation in the classroom into the practice of organizational improvisation in the event. Then, when theater is integrated into teaching, the logic of practice that commonly governs theater culture begins to permeate the culture of management education. The logic of theater practice produces a learning practice that is very complex, as it influences the students' body, senses, and emotional practice. Theater provides an integral involvement between the objective of the improvisation exercise, the body, the senses, and the emotions (CoEst# H-Exp#6).

In the theatrical logic of practice, it is first necessary to do something and, then, reflect on what happened, since what moves the theatrical scene is the action (Obs-Exp#4). In teaching and learning of organizational improvisation, practice becomes a predominant logic. The students – used to reading and discussing theoretical texts, sitting in front of the teacher –

report a cultural shock when they are under the logic of theater. They confront the logic of theory-reflection with the logic of learning something by practice, involving the body more intensely and broadly (Obs-Exp#4). In their previous traditional teaching and learning experiences, students report that the possibilities of experiencing the present time in a practical activity that mobilizes the body and stimulates interactions, sensations, and transformations were rare (Obs-Exp#3). Practice adds dimensions beyond mental activity.

Indeed, the practice involves the body's synapses, moving the body and mind, instigating different emotions and sensations. As practice became routine in classes, in each class, students learned by practicing, interacting, and feeling different experiences (Obs-Exp#4). The logic of practice stimulates sensations as it unfolds the possibility of feeling. The image of a runaway train is suitable to explain the students' feelings when practicing theatrical improvisation (Obs-Exp#2). For artists, this is the energy of creation that materializes an aesthetic concern (CoEst#F-Exp#4).

Practice of the narrative

Narrative is commonly associated with the speech, but, in theatrical improvisation, the individuals do not speak only with their voice, but with their body. Narrative requires organizing ideas, events, and actions in a sequence so that stories are told in a meaningful and engaging way. In theater, narrative requires an integration between voice, body, and mind that guarantees strength and precision to what is being done in practice (Obs-Exp#1). During theatrical improvisations, the narrative is always stimulated and performed in real time, with the actions being performed almost at the same time as they are created (DbEstB-Exp#2). For improvisation to happen, it is essential to accept the situation and be positive. The basic rule for theatrical improvisation is positivity, since, based on the acceptance of an idea or proposal, associations become possible and this acceptance is translated into the collective construction of narratives. Denial causes blocks and impediments to the association of ideas and the improvisation sequence (Obs-Exp#1). Theatrical practice strengthens the collective narrative that explains the complementary relationship between planning and improvisation. When the action is devoid of planning, one can only rely on luck (CoEst#H-Exp#6).

Narrative is as essential in the practice of theatrical improvisation as in the practice of learning organizational improvisation. The theatrical practice provides an exercise in narrative practice that offers a collective dynamic of

cooperation. When there is not a good integration between the students and what they need to do, a competitive and defensive narrative emerges (Obs-Exp#2). Some mistaken competitive postures appear in the sense of defending themselves from something (Obs-Exp#2). Considering and respecting the existence of the other in the organizational environment develops a sense of team perception and cooperation that can be observed in the positive and collective construction of the narrative. It is a counterpoint to the idea of dispute, affecting the perception of oneself in front of the other. This expands the ability to learn in environments that respect diversity and cooperation (Obs-Exp#2) and that are the cornerstones of organizational improvisation.

In theatrical and organizational improvisation, the practice of a narrative based on the denial of the contribution of others harms the creative process that underlies improvisation (CoEst#G-Exp#6). The spirit of cooperation arises from the acceptance of the problem and its incorporation as an initial idea for transformation (Obs-Exp#2). It is necessary to face the problem in a positive way, solving it creatively and seizing the moment to build individual and collective trust. During theatrical and organizational improvisation, competition should be against time and not between people (CoEst#G-Exp#6). Cooperation guarantees the complementarity of actions and thoughts that culminates in the creation and exhibition of different and surprising narratives. This is the way to increase the repertoire of solutions to deal with future unforeseen situations, whether in the personal, professional, or collective journey (Obs-Exp#2).

In the practice of theatrical improvisation, synergies happen when we are positive and embrace imperfection. It is necessary to be connected with the present time, stimulating the full presence of body and mind (Obs-Exp#6). Through creative narrative, it is possible to illustrate the overconfidence that neglects planning – the excessive caution that prevents people from taking risks and taking more significant steps – and the positive inexperience that allows concentration and involvement (CoEst#H-Exp#6).

Practice of creativity

Theatrical improvisation games are initially presented as games, but, then, they reveal a potential that not every student knew they had. Students are constantly surprised throughout the learning process (Obs-Exp#4). Playing is a little-explored field of learning in the organizational environment, but it is revealing in the actions and involvement of students. The game is firstly related to the rules. Every game has rules that guarantee the organization

and autonomy of everyone in that defined period of time. Thus, everyone knows their limits and their companions (Obs-Exp#2) of improvisation.

In the organizational world, knowing the rules is the same as knowing the planning and the limits (CoEst#A-Esp#6). Lack of knowledge of limits causes rework and fatigue. As improvisation is a deviation from the path, planning is the limit of this path, thus knowing it is essential. So, before deviating from the path, knowing the established paths (improvisation) is also necessary (Obs-Exp#2). Rules are the necessary limits for creativity to act, as it is a response of the body when a limit presents itself and requires transposition (Obs-Exp#4).

The rules guarantee justice in a game and knowledge of them is what validates the freedom to play. The real freedom is to know and relate to the rules (Obs-Exp#4). Being able to respond to a practice of theatrical improvisation characterizes an exercise of freedom, in which the answer provided will be a synthesis between the question and the student's ability to reflect and to bring an answer almost at the same time the question is asked (Note-Exp#2). Students highlight, both orally and in writing, the positive perception of freedom related to creativity (Obs-Exp#1-6).

Providing an inviting environment where students feel free to awaken and exercise creativity is a challenge in the classroom that already presupposes, on the part of students, a fear of what will be done in the curricular component (Obs-Exp#4). In this context, playing helps in the contact with the other and assimilating the rules for building the courage to expose oneself without searching for right and wrong (Obs-Exp#2).

Practice of corporeality

Theatrical improvisation reveals that the classroom is a piece of the world composed of different people who bring a lot of information about their lives and how did they develop up to that moment (Obs-Exp#1). When practicing theatrical improvisation, we transform the reported actions into sensations not only perceived by the mind, but represented with the body, in its internal exercise of annulling movement and action (Obs-Exp#2). This bodily activity helps to break down prejudices based on reflections on the events experienced and observed (Obs-Exp#1). The theater artist uses the transforming power of art as an interactive and resistant practice and as a means of individual, collective, and cultural change. The consequences achieved are perceived by the body, with each new experience of emotional involvement. This is exactly what guarantees new possibilities: theater is

open enough to relate to other practices and trigger synergies and entropies that complement each other.

Teamwork does not happen simply. The issues that arise from it reflect the lack of the habit of making decisions and aiming in the classroom. This happens because there is already a marked understanding in the body that establishes that the teacher is the one who makes the decisions and, when the student is invited to be the protagonist of their learning, they need to develop a relationship with the present time different from the one they knew. This causes a significant impact (Obs-Exp#4). The absence of practice in people's lives makes them need a guide. In the practice of the curricular component, this was evident (Obs-Exp#4). The search for experimentation with organizational improvisation provided an exercise of autonomy and concentration on the activity to be performed. The cycle of organizational improvisation was continuous: plan, execute, improvise, replan, rerun, improvise, and constantly evaluate the work and the improvisations practiced. Regardless of whether the planning was coherent or not, it was necessary to have a full focus on the practice (Obs-Exp#2).

Some students present a visible disarticulation with their own bodies, whether in the perception of the physical abilities they have – speed, rhythm, and reflex, as well as in the interactions with the colleague – strength, connection, or acceptance. Most of them are young and sedentary (Obs-Exp#2). The student quickly understands that improvising is not just doing something randomly. One must be prepared to improvise. Regardless of the professional area, usually, there is a predefined plan of action, and, when there is an unforeseen situation, the improvisation must take place. All body parts must be interconnected to accomplish the improvisation (CoEst#I-Exp#6). Practicing requires optimism, positivity, and a sense of security (CoEst#F-Exp#6), habits that can be learned and practiced.

Beliefs, blocks, happiness, and doubt are not only noticeable from what is said, but are ingrained into the body and reflected in the way students deal with the events that arise. A previous tension already exists even before starting any activity, whether practical or theoretical (Obs-Exp#5). There is a big gap between what we want to do and what we do. And this can be evidenced by the distance between students and their bodies (Obs-Exp#2), which is reduced by the practice of theatrical improvisation.

Entropies of theatrical improvisation in teaching and learning of organizational improvisation

Shame of practicing

Theater is a powerful articulator for the appropriation of mechanisms of the body itself. However, sometimes, the practices inhibit participation. Some students reported trauma from previous experiences (DbEstL-Exp#1) and difficulty in accepting theatrical dynamics in the classroom due to shame (DbEstC-Exp#5). Conducting the EAF was the turning point for many students as they challenged their personal limits (Obs-Exp#2). Some students even experience a certain panic when they needed to interact with a classmate in order to carry out an activity in the classroom (DbEstC-Exp#2).

The conductor of the work must not give vent to this feeling that may arise, as it is a defense. In one narrative, a student said she has never felt so embarrassed as when she was doing the warm-up exercises in which everyone had to make faces at each other. It was a playful dynamic of disinhibition. The room was easily driven by laughter, which caused a change in the environment and relationships. So she described what she felt physically: goosebumps, dry throat, and a desire to run away. Then, she reported the joy of having gone through that experience and freeing herself from the shame of being in front of her classmates (DbEstD-Exp#2). Individuals who have little habit of exposing themselves in front of others or those who are not prepared for this are usually ashamed (Obs-Exp#6).

Shame can be induced by ridicule, insults, or public exposure of a person or group's vulnerability or weakness. It provokes a sense of diminished human dignity. Trying to avoid this condition, people often miss important experiences and learning (Obs-Exp#3). The practical work highlights the significance of providing a moment of prominence. At the university, the type of class in which the student goes unnoticed is common, encouraging shyness for several consecutive semesters. This fuels the students' shame in exposing ideas and desires (DbEstC-Exp#2). Shame is an emotion perceived by the body. Feeling secure in front of the other, without worrying about what the other is thinking about them, makes the individual take risks and build from one's ideas, responding creatively to external stimuli (CoEstH-Exp#5).

Fear of making mistakes

The fear of making mistakes in theatrical improvisation appeared several times and, in some moments, it was possible to talk about this subject. The

speech was always about overcoming fear (Obs-Exp#4). It is necessary to take advantage of the play environment that theater brings up to involve the students and encourage them to take risks. The arts are not part of the complete educational process, leaving a painful gap in integral education, because every time someone has to expose themselves, they face difficulties due to the fear of making mistakes (Obs-Exp#2). The fear of making mistakes, speaking, and acting, the concern with one's gaze, the difficulty of listening, accepting proposals, and being positive are the biggest obstacles to the practice of organizational improvisation (Obs-Exp#5).

Assuming that you made a mistake or that you failed at a certain point in the process constitutes an experience of freedom and a bridge to the understanding that mistakes lead to different situations, and that it is possible to learn from them and also take advantage of them (Obs-Exp#2). The error causes failures in communication and understanding. This entails little recognition of the small daily achievements, in addition to making it difficult to take regular advantage of the classes, due to the excessive distrust of what the experimentation will lead to.

The habit of dispersing

Theatrical improvisation involves the students with themselves and requires an exercise of full presence between body and mind. It is very common for students to use the classroom to think about other things. The exercise of organizational improvisation represents a shock for students who have already internalized a course culture. Other curricular components begin with milder activities, with their work intensified during the semester. In the practice of executing an EAF and organizational improvisation, the student begins to have an accelerated dynamic in the classroom and outside (DbEstG-Exp#2). The curricular component affects the students when they realize that they must be present from the very first moment (Obs-Exp#4).

Dispersal is often involuntary and happens as a daily habit (CoEstI-Exp#4). Many thoughts and feelings compose the emotional state when the student is in the classroom (Obs-Exp#4). It is very common that, at the beginning of classes after a vacation, the topics discussed are about the progress of activities and assessments. In this case, some students were shocked when faced with a practical activity (CoEst#G-Exp#6). They were those who showed a certain nostalgia for curricular components that provide written content and that demand knowledge through a written test (DbEstK-Exp#1) as a way to ensure low commitment (Obs-Exp#1).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When theater is applied in management education, we observe that the logic of practice constitutes the value that guides the theatrical activity and that it is transposed to the learning dynamics. Theater practice is central to the teaching and learning of performing arts. In the classroom, theater students are always practicing staging, mobilizing, and experimenting the various dimensions of theatrical art with their bodies. It is by practicing that you learn the theatrical trade. The second value emphasized is the centrality of the body: learning is much more than a cognitive exercise. Creativity and constant experimentation in the narrative constitute two other values to be highlighted in this implication of the practice of theatrical improvisation for the teaching and learning of organizational improvisation.

Thus, the research results significantly contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of research on management education by helping us to understand the implications of theatrical improvisation in the teaching and learning processes of organizational improvisation. This is unprecedented, innovative, and interdisciplinary knowledge that meets the demands of the moment to rethink the classroom as an active space for practice and learning by experience. Theater, as an aesthetic expression, acts in the recovery of students' sensitivity in the process of becoming active and proactive subjects in the learning, organization, and management.

Furthermore, the research results generate a discussion about potential repercussions for research and practice, involving theoretical and methodological issues. The theoretical repercussions for future research on Management education can be inspired by the results of this research in three directions:

- *Spontaneity*: spontaneity, creativity, and sensitivity are resources that human beings possess (Boal, 1975; Spolin, 1970). However, in some cases, they need to be activated, as adulthood mistakenly presupposes the annulment of these essential principles in the exercise of any professional activity (Moreno, 1977; Spolin, 1970; Johnstone, 1979). Spontaneity and creativity, although associated with each other, are not synonymous. Spontaneity refers to a psychic state that integrates mechanisms of action that release repressed feelings, emotions, and tensions (Chacra, 1983). Creativity is activated to elaborate and build new ways of being in the world (Vera & Crossan, 2004, 2005). Playing is manifested during the practice of spontaneity and creativity in the classroom, as a way to engage (Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006) and relax students. Improvisa-

tion stimulates the relationship between spontaneity and creativity, bringing individuals closer to their internal and external conflicts, providing a moment to resize their relationships and their ways of perceiving the world, transforming them (Berthold, 2001; Roubine, 2003).

- *Reflexivity as a practice*: the reflective use of the arts shapes regulation and organizational development (Sutherland, 2013), which promotes learning at transformative levels. Reflection is often seen as a systematic thought process, concerned with simplifying the experience. Reflexivity, in turn, a complex thought or experience, exposing contradictions, doubts, dilemmas, and possibilities. In everyday experience, reflexivity is inseparable from aesthetics (Sutherland, 2013). If we have to be highly adaptive, as we are constantly challenged by new perspectives and circumstances, the bridge to this adaptation is permanent reflections (Crossan, 1998; Fernandez & Kullu, 2019; Flach & Antonello, 2008; Miner et al., 2001). Aesthetic reflexivity is the creation of knowledge through the appropriation and the transformation of the sensory-emotional characteristics of our experiences (Sutherland, 2013). It is a means of reassessing the way problems have been raised and their orientation to perceive, believe and act. Arts-based learning environments – as with theatrical improvisation – provide aesthetic workspaces and engagement in aesthetic reflexivity (Sutherland, 2013). Engagement with theatrical arts can establish a process of reflection that leads to the construction of improvisational skills and competencies of managers.
- *Expansion to other educational contexts*: research with an arts-based methodology produces caring and positive energy, capable of contributing to a policy of hope, love, care, compassion, community, spirituality, relational practice, and social justice (Chilton, 2013), as well as aiding in the ability to construct narrative practice (Bogdan & Biklen, 1994; Bueno et al., 2006; De Ketele & Roegiers, 1993; Maitlis, 2012). The practice of creativity and corporeality are also achievements of this methodology, which still appears timidly in the field of management. This research can guide future researchers who wish to use an arts-based methodology that has a practical theme as a foundation for the development of actions that strengthen the perception of the present time and emotions.

In terms of practical repercussions, this research has the potential to contribute to the improvement of teaching practice, with better student engagement, the training of managers, and with a debate that alerts and guides curricular changes and renewals. It offers a viable and original way for undergraduate programs in Business Administration to align themselves



with Brazilian national curriculum guidelines, which value active teaching methodologies.

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APPENDIX 1

Example of warm-up activities for theatrical improvisation

Name	Description	Goals
Answering in the dark	The student stands in the center of the blindfolded circle. Everyone can ask him a question, one person at a time. The student should respond in the direction of the voice that asked, making an effort to look into the person's eyes, even while blindfolded.	Reflex activation, trust, and listening.
Walking in the dark	The class is divided into pairs. Everyone does the activity at the same time, but each one must pay attention only to their partner. One of the two is outside and must enter blindfolded. The student in the room must modify the space and define goals: make the classmate sit in a chair, get a pen from the table etc. The blindfolded student can only listen to verbal commands.	Reflex activation, trust, and listening.
Singing and moving	In a circle, everyone looks at each other, but no one can speak. Anyone who wants to start sings a song looking at everyone in the circle. When the person has finished singing, they should say a single word that expresses the feeling or emotion that the person experienced when singing. When silence sets in again, someone else starts to sing.	Disinhibition, attitude, trust, and listening.
Waking up the voice	In a circle, we make chewing movements. Students should imagine eating very tasty things and also very bad things, being able to express themselves only with the sound of the letter m for three minutes. Then, we follow a vibration sequence, with the tongue or lips, doing a search in the resonance boxes.	Articulation, vocal emission, and disinhibition.
Continuing the story	With the class in a circle, one person begins to tell a story and, when the instructor claps the hands, the person next to them should continue the story. Everyone in the circle contributes to the story. Up to the middle of the circle, people bring up conflicts and different characters. Halfway through people should bring up resolutions and consequences. The last person must finish the story.	Memory, creativity, and playfulness.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

APPENDIX 2

Examples of theatrical improvisation activities

Name	Description	Goals
Tragedies and comedies	Divide the room into groups of three. Each group must imagine a tragic and a comical situation that could happen during the event. The situations must be told in the form of a scene and each participant can assume as many characters as they want.	Disinhibition, creativity, and memory.
ABC	Two students are chosen. The group defines which environment they will meet: a market, an amusement park, the pharmacy, the living room etc. When setting the location, they have five seconds to define what character they are and start a dialogue. The lines spoken by them must follow the alphabet sequence. The first character to speak must begin its sentence with a word starting with the letter A. When the other character responds, the first word in the sentence must be the letter B, and so on, until the last letter of the alphabet.	Disinhibition, creativity, memory, and readiness.
Actors, narrators, and audience	The students are divided into three groups: actors, narrators and audience. The actors will interpret the story created by the narrators and will be watched by the audience. This exercise can be used in preproduction to imagine situations that may occur in the event and also in postproduction as a situation in which they expose their points of view. The narrators define the story and tell the actors which characters they will be, but they do not say what will happen. The story is told at the time of the performance and the actors must execute everything that is narrated. The exercise must be repeated three times, so that everyone goes through the three groups.	Disinhibition, creativity, and memory.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

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