

Prácticas académicas exitosas en áreas administrativas en modalidad virtual

Successful Academic Practices in Administrative Areas in Virtual Modality

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Resumen

Las prácticas académicas exitosas fomentan de manera precisa, eficiente y didáctica el aprendizaje de los estudiantes. En este sentido, la presente investigación tuvo como propósito identificar aquellas prácticas académicas que son consideradas exitosas por docentes y estudiantes de las universidades del departamento de Norte de Santander en Colombia que ofrecen programas virtuales en ciencias administrativas, así como también conocer los imaginarios colectivos que se crean en torno a ellas. La investigación respondió a un enfoque cualitativo de tipo teoría fundamentada, empleando como técnicas de recolección de información la revisión documental, entrevista semiestructurada y grupo focal. El análisis de resultados se realizó mediante el uso del software Atlas ti, donde emergen las siguientes categorías: gestión del conocimiento, emprendimiento, relación universidad-empresa, innovación en las prácticas académicas y aprendizaje organizacional en entornos educativos. Los resultados mostraron un variado número de prácticas catalogadas como exitosas que, si bien constituyen un acercamiento a la realidad del trabajo, la implementación de nuevas tecnologías o la intervención para dar solución a situaciones empresariales, requieren de una planificación y ejecución desde un currículo inclusivo construido con el apoyo de la empresa, la comunidad y los entes gubernamentales, así como procesos anticipados de investigación y desarrollo regional.

Palabras claves: Aprendizaje organizacional, ciencias administrativas, experiencia educativa exitosa, innovación.

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Abstract

Successful academic practices foster student learning in a precise, efficient, and didactic manner. In this sense, the purpose of this research was to identify those academic practices that are considered successful by teachers and students of the universities of the department of Norte de Santander in Colombia that offer virtual programs in administrative sciences, as well as to know the collective imaginaries that are created around them. The research responded to a qualitative approach of the grounded theory type, using documentary review, semi-structured interview and focus group as information collection techniques. The analysis of results was carried out using the Atlas ti software, where the following categories emerge: knowledge management, entrepreneurship, university-business relationship, innovation in academic practices and organizational learning in educational settings. The results showed a varied number of practices classified as successful that, although they constitute an approach to the reality of work, the implementation of new technologies or intervention to solve business situations, require planning and execution from an inclusive curriculum built with the support of the company, the community and government entities, as well as anticipated regional research and development processes.

Keywords: Organizational learning, administrative sciences, successful educational experience, innovation.

Introduction

According to UNESCO a successful educational practice contains the following attributes: A strong component of innovation because it starts from a problem to provide a new or creative solution. An effective result, insofar as it has a positive and tangible impact. A sustainable component, because it can be applied in the mid- and long-term and a replicability character because it serves as a model for similar cases [1]. In the case of virtual education, educational practices must also make appropriate use of information and communication technologies [2]. It is considered relevant that successful academic practices accurately, efficiently and didactically promote student learning, since they help to develop multiple competencies in students in different contexts, which is one of the objectives of virtual higher education [3]. From a theoretical perspective, educational practices explain their success in the fruitful interactions that result between student - student and student - teacher [4]. Similarly, success is based on tangible improvements to real situations in the area of study [5].

However, there is controversy over who is responsible for the success or otherwise of educational practices. On one side, some

authors [6], point out that is the student the main actor, and most of the success depends on the commitment assumed in the process of building knowledge in a pedagogical practice and the use of the elements available to him. On the other hand, it is considered that in the academic processes, the impact of the planning and orientation of the teacher to reach the expected competencies is undeniable [7]. In this sense, the actors involved are equally responsible for achieving favorable results in the application of a pedagogical practice.

In addition, when it comes to education for future entrepreneurs, there is a demand for specific results from their practices, so that their training allows them to reactivate the entrepreneurial mindset, being able to develop projects such as business incubators, knowledge transfer and innovation to the business sector, communities and regions. One of the strategies to achieve this is the socialization of advances in the application of administrative and business theories in different events and the exchange of students between different universities. It also seems appropriate to undertake relations between university-businesses and promote academic mobility, as well as the integration of teachers and students in research practices, research clusters and research groups [8]. Similarly,

the administrative discipline must be integrated with other disciplines that nourish it and allow it to reinforce the processes with the community and businesses [9]. Studies those carried out by various authors show how entrepreneurship and social innovation are created from interdisciplinarity [10].

In accordance with the above, the students training in administrative science programs demands compliance with the requirements of the productive sector as well as the development of competencies to achieve this goal. In this sense, it is important to know which educational practices are developed in universities that train professionals in the administrative areas and especially those in the virtual modality that are reinvented and reconstructed every day with new strategies; it is also important to know which of these practices are considered to be successful and what factors should be implemented to enrich them and fulfill the expected competencies. This knowledge will generate an impact on existing practices, on curricular improvement and on university-business integration.

This article initially presents the methodology used, the results found and the discussion based on similar authors and experiences in order to reach conclusions for the area under study.

Methodology

In order to know the characteristics of the educational practices that teachers and students consider successful in higher education institutions with a virtual modality, a research with a qualitative approach of a grounded theory design was used. The data collection tools were based on documentary review and semi-structured interviews. For the selection of articles, the academic google database was used, for a period from 2000 to 2019, taking into account the central category of successful educational practices.

In interviews teachers and students were selected from the six universities that offer virtual programs in administrative areas in Norte de Santander. The analysis of results was carried out using Atlas Ti software. To determine the categories and subcategories, a comparison was made using open, axial and selective coding, and then each category was described. The analysis was carried out until theoretical saturation occurred, that is, until repetition or absence of data occurred. The results were triangulated by means of a focus group to strengthen the knowledge achieved, to finally build the substantive theory. For the selection of experts who participated in the focus group, six teachers were selected from the six universities that offer virtual programs in administrative areas, different from those surveyed, with master's or doctoral degrees in education and/or in the area of administrative sciences. Six students from the same institutions also participated.

The grounded theory design contains the procedures and methods necessary to interpret the observed facts and apply the qualitative approach in an effective and coherent manner. Therefore, if learning is built on networks and through social connections, grounded theory is very compatible, with this theorization. The semi-structured interview allowed knowing the beliefs and perceptions of the interviewees. The analysis of results through the use of Atlas ti and the comparison with the theory allowed the researchers to understand the phenomenon and then make it known to a group of experts who, by participating in a focus group, added useful concepts and forceful ideas from a collective about the object of study.

Results and Discussion

According to the analysis of the responses of the informant subjects about the characteristics of a successful practice, we see the results in Figure 1.

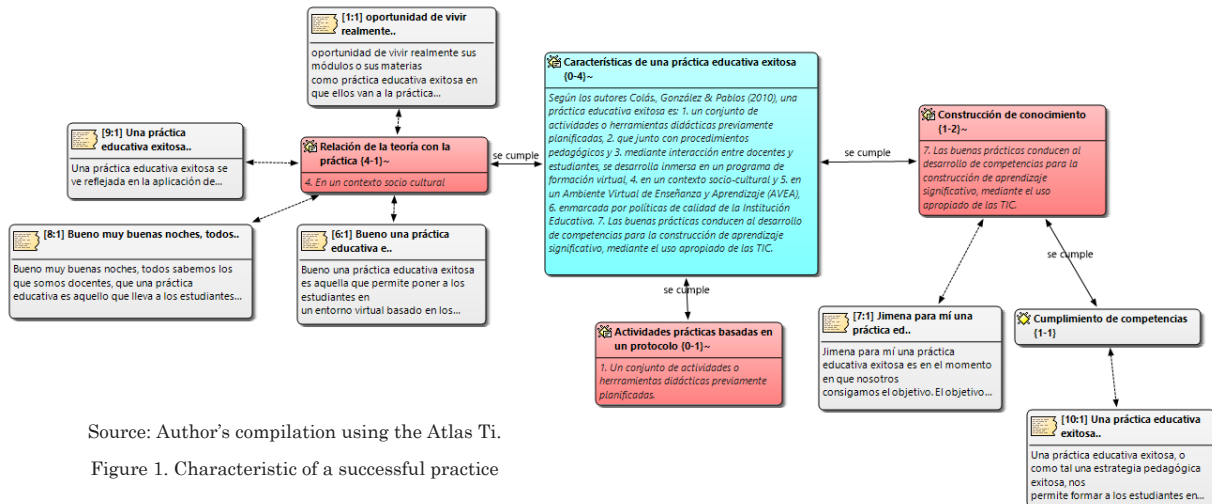


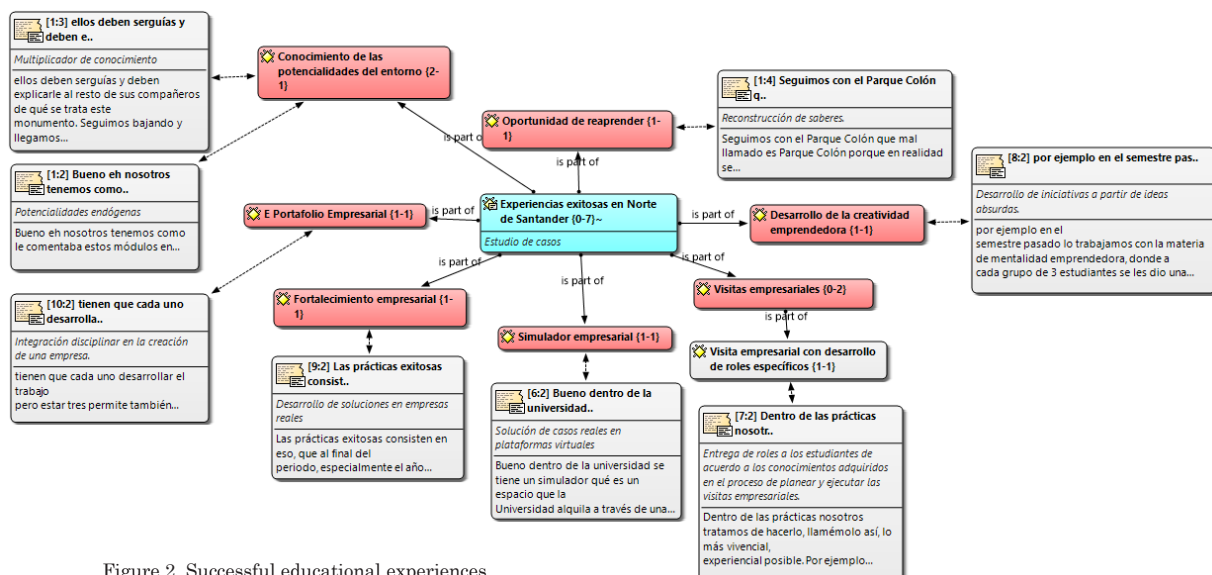
Figure 1. Characteristic of a successful practice

When reviewing Figure 1 obtained with the Atlas Ti software, the interviewees construct and guide their definition of what is a Successful Educational Practice, based on three general categories: a theory-practice relationship, a protocol of previously planned pedagogical activities and a construction of meaningful learning through the development of competencies.

Consequently, we observe that the presence of the planning of pedagogical activities and the development of professional competences in the process of acquiring

knowledge of the students becomes evident. However, the definitions analyzed did not find the appropriate use of information and communication technologies (ICT), as stated by Colas y González [11] who affirms that good educational practices must be innovative, replicable and use ICTs appropriately.

On the other hand, when inquiring about the experiences in successful educational practices that the participants had in the last year, the results that can be seen in Figure 2 were obtained.



Source: Author's compilation using the Atlas Ti.

According to the analysis of the views of reporting subjects about the educational practices that they consider successful, 5

categories and 8 advances in these categories emerged as shown in Table 1.

Emerging Categories	Progress of practice to reach the category	Definition
Knowledge Management	Reconstruction of knowledge	The reconstruction of knowledge is considered the first level in the process of theoretical construction, through which experiences are transmitted between teachers and students [12]
Entrepreneurship	Development of entrepreneurial creativity	Developing the entrepreneurial skills in the students means allowing them to transform their own environment through the generation of ideas [13].
University - Company relationship	Business visits	The business visits establish a relationship that provides an interaction with the labor market [14].
	Business enhancement	The solution of real cases in a work environment has a direct relationship with the labor needs that companies expect from their graduates and the curriculum of the universities [15].
Innovation in academic practices	Business Simulators	The use of simulators is one of the educational innovations using information technologies that impact on cognitive learning through practice [16].
	Creating case solutions from interdisciplinarity	It constitutes a new curricular structure that integrates different disciplines into a unit of thought allowing innovation in creating practical solutions [9].
Organizational Learning in Educational Settings	Knowledge replicator	Knowledge of the surrounding environment as a fundamental element for development must be created but also transmitted for effective decision-making [17].
	Development of endogenous potentialities	The integration of knowledge into skills is part of organizational learning, constituting learning by doing, and favors the management and internal capacities [18]

Table 1. Categories and their advances in the practices that are carried out in the training of professionals in administrative areas.

Source: Author's compilation based on the emerging categories using the Atlas ti.

Knowledge Management

From the analysis of the results, the category of **knowledge management** arises, which constitutes a competence that the professional who is educated in administrative areas must know and apply in the development of his or her discipline. This competence involves two moments. The first is the combined construction of knowledge and is achieved by reflecting on social and community culture as well as on the related knowledge found in micro-enterprises, entrepreneurs and other actors where academic practices seem to take place. Retaking the observation made by Jeri [19], from his perspective of knowledge management, it is understood that experience is that which has been acquired over time through one or several tests or trials, and which is accumulated in people through different experiences. This accumulated expertise is used in actions that require a position in a new or previously unmanaged situation.

The intention to document the expertise and generate techniques or procedures from it is reflected in the following educational experience: *We had the opportunity to visit the University of Magdalena... There we made some academic interchanges, our students made their presentations, and at the same time the students from the University of Magdalena, it was a very interesting interchange... communication links were created between the two Alma Mater. From that moment on, our academic coordination and the academic coordination of the Universidad of Magdalena started to be in constant communication, and that is a very important achievement from the institutional point of view.*

Educational practices are constituted as base cells that generate social changes, which allow the construction of knowledge,

its diffusion and implementation [19]. Similarly, good practices generate a cultural and educational impact on people, which has a social impact.

However, according to Romero [12], the single reconstruction of knowledge is not enough to theorize, it is recommended to go beyond knowledge and to build knowledge what is reached from scientific research that teachers and students have to contribute to their pedagogical practices. In this respect, this category shows advances in the reconstruction of knowledge, but both the planning of practice and the involvement of research processes must be strengthened in order to complement the competencies that future professionals must acquire.

Entrepreneurship

The elements required to develop the entrepreneurial spirit in students, according to Duarte and Ruiz [20] and Suárez [21] are the following: to start with a university policy for the development of entrepreneurship, which includes the setting needs and the knowledge that the students possess at the time of the internship, to nourish the curriculum and the curriculum being transversal to all the contents of the courses offered, to create seedbeds of entrepreneurship and research that allow the development of the key competences of the entrepreneur such as leadership, teamwork and management skills. Frydman considers that the factors that allow the success in the enterprises are the knowledge and analysis; along with the creativity of these variables combine in a special way, besides the capacity to execute or to know what to do to execute the suitable combination.

According to the story told by the professor at one of the universities, the enterprise is born at the moment when the student is placed in a situation of challenge and

search for opportunities or resources, as she says: *“Something that they suddenly believed could never been developed could never been carried out, but... they realized that those absurd ideas that they sometimes have or that we have can be carried out. At the end of the semester... we actually realized that the students’ creativity was excellent”*. On the contrary, according to Robles and Pelekais, quoted by [21], the creation of research seedbeds around entrepreneurship allows the development of competencies by integrating creativity to real situations, as expressed by a teacher of the Business Administration program *“Not only has the program been strengthened in research, but the student, based on the strategy, has looked for a way to belong to the research seedbeds, that is, they already look for research through the seedbeds and also look for a way to integrate other processes, so all this has been born through the process of the pedagogical strategy”*. The seedbeds for entrepreneurship represent an opportunity for students to face the reality of the business world, where proposals are followed up not only for them to transcend the academic field, but to get into the real world [22].

The development process of the enterprise is supported by the teacher who provides the guidance to include it as a transversal axis of the curriculum in the different courses. In this respect, research seedbeds, forums, competitions of ideas, business plans, analysis of the situation and competitive advantages are the starting point for the formation of an entrepreneur [21]. The successful educational practices collected presented elements of creativity and unconventional thinking, to the extent that students opted for alternative decisions to solve problems, managing an intentional attitude of change, which goes beyond routine problem-solving actions. Moreover, it is necessary that the student goes beyond identifying opportunities,

building projects where he or she develops management, leadership and teamwork skills. In this sense, it is recommended that the entrepreneurship practices transcend towards the creation of business models.

University-Company Relationship

In the university-business relationship there are three elements to consider, the first of which is the need for the company to hire, at low cost, professionals in training to carry out operational activities. The second element is the need for the university to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the training of its students according to job requirements and to provide the curriculum with new knowledge that can be acquired in companies. Finally, the third element is the student’s need to strengthen theory with practice [23]. In order to achieve these objectives, business visits, case studies and business practices are carried out. According to the authors, the objectives of both the student and the company are fulfilled, however, the universities are not receiving the transfer of knowledge from these internships, therefore, it is necessary not only to inquire if the student accomplished the tasks assigned in the company but also for the student to provide information on business developments that can be part of the curriculum.

This situation is evidenced by the assessment of one of the participants who stated *“A great deal of the reason for the student’s training as a business administrator lies in the development of his working skills”* From this point of view, students undoubtedly achieve to practice their skills and abilities turning them into strengths or competencies for their work performance. Some of the skills they develop are cognitive, methodological, linguistic, as well as interpersonal or specific.

In educational practices, the competencies that are most developed are those of teamwork and the development of adaptive skills, as well as the cognitive ones that come into play when applying knowledge. The company manages to achieve its goals because the operational activities are carried out, but in no case do the interviewees express the transfer of knowledge from the company to the university. In this sense, the practices of university - company nature require a planning supported in the compliance of the triad University - Student - Company, where everyone benefits.

Educational practices in the university-business relationship must be consistent with changes in the environment and the needs of applied knowledge in organizations. As well as technological and innovation advances and the existence of policies that favor their implementation. For this, there must be alliances that are strengthened and renewed in knowledge and actions while being based on mutual trust and solid relationships in the long term [10]. In the same way, internships in companies achieve greater effectiveness when the university and company binomial are aligned for an adequate planning of the student's work [15].

Innovation in academic practices

The process of innovation requires planning and then applying, reviewing, adjusting, understanding and evaluating its benefits and making the necessary changes. The innovation results rely on the investigation and the investigation contributes to the innovation so it can be considered as a cyclical process. In this respect, and as stated by various authors [24], in a successful educational practice, innovation is present when intentional pedagogical processes are introduced, all of which are impacted by novelty and pertinence criteria

and focused on the solution of problems that were already evident. Likewise, there must be a close relationship between scientific activity and the innovation proposals made in the courses, which means that they are not implemented out of innovation but out of necessity [25]. With the massive use of technology, new forms of academic practices have been implemented to provide solutions to business problems, including the use of simulators [26]. Its use has had a growing tendency, because it raises interest in the student, develops critical thinking, keeps him/her in the vanguard with the updates of the working world and strengthens the results analysis [16]. Similarly, through simulation it is possible to achieve greater cohesion in the collective [26].

Thus, simulators are a very useful tool and in the field of business management are often distinguished with the names of business simulators, management simulators, business games, allowing a learning based on experience from the methodology "Learning by doing" that combines collaborative and competitive learning and helps to have a better organization and distribution of time, improve communication skills and enhance teamwork [27].

Despite being a very useful resource, business games have a complex process when it comes to measuring the effect on learning because the results obtained in the simulator can be the result of the student's previous knowledge. This is why, as it is a group activity, in most cases the success of its use is measured by the degree of satisfaction of the participants (teachers and students) with the experience and their perception of its contribution to their professional training [27].

It can be understood that ICT are tools on which the construction of knowledge is dynamized and where the student can face

new challenges [28]. In this regard, says a teacher interviewed *“Among the issues addressed by this simulator, students are faced with production issues, are faced with issues of recruitment, marketing, inventory management, strategic decision making ...”*. Similarly, access to data, local and extended interactions are present in the innovation of these educational practices, not being the students, teachers and companies the only protagonists, as suggested by [29].

According to Montoya and Aguilar [23], internships in companies are more effective when the university and the company plan in advance the areas and problems to be solved by the student during his visit or internship. In order for innovations to be sustainable, it is important that they comply with the principles of depth, to promote lasting learning; length, by sustaining practice over time; width, by integrating more and more people; justice, in terms of not intentionally harming anyone; diversity, by integrating and respecting the ideas of others; efficiency, in managing existing resources; and conservation, by identifying practices with their institutional or program mission [30].

However, educational practices, because of their approach to real situations, allow for interdisciplinarity. This is how a student brings out all the learning he or she has acquired while developing complex thinking. Interdisciplinarity goes beyond simple integration, since this is less elaborated, it is produced more by necessity than by planning, while to achieve interdisciplinarity, it must be included in the learning processes in a programmed way and with a clear objective or goal and in a way that the student can transfer the learning to other contexts, developing critical and propositional thinking and achieving a developing learning [31]. It seems that the challenge to achieve interdisciplinarity in

educational practices is in the construction of integrative projects, seeking adequate levels of convergence between courses, starting from the competencies to be achieved and the problems to be solved, and a methodology to integrate knowledge when developing practice [21]. Interdisciplinarity prepares the student for an investigative approach with members from other disciplines and to the integral solution of problems [32].

In this regard, an interviewed teacher said *“... We see this practice as interdisciplinary, because we integrate the whole microcurriculum in this process, then we see that students can interact in all subjects in such a way, that those theoretical processes that exist in the classrooms become practical through these pedagogical processes “just as an interviewed student gives his reflection on this subject, by saying “... at the end of the semester, certain results are given from many aspects, such as the creation of web pages, infographics, ongoing research project, completed projects and many other activities that form us in an interdisciplinary way...”*

According to the above, it can be stated that for innovation to occur in a successful educational practice, adequate planning is important in relation to the institutional mission, the program and the needs of both society and organizations. This planning must be done in the long term and comply with the principles of sustainability and replicability. Likewise, innovation must be accompanied by an adequate use of ICTs and to integrate complex thinking.

Organizational Learning in Educational Environments

Organizational learning is broadly related to meaningful learning in that the student must be able to scan or collect data to interpret it, acquire knowledge and then distribute it, or what is known as multiplying knowledge

to be used by others. Likewise, it focuses on systemic learning, since working groups or learning communities share knowledge and manage it in order to reach common conclusions and build a shared vision. The process of organizational learning implies then to develop endogenous potentialities in the students to face complex situations of the organizations.

It is remarkable that educational practices are very relevant to the social environment where they are developed, since, in the case of strengthening Mipymes, students must be able to make internal diagnoses but also understand the evolution of the environment, in that sense, the pedagogical material must be designed in such a way that it can integrate the evolution of the environment to the needs of the companies, as well as, allow the previous knowledge of the student that he brings from the theory to be transformed with the knowledge acquired in practice [33]. On the other hand, to generate systemic learning it is necessary that the student can find significant and lasting improvements for complex situations [34]. In this sense, teachers must encourage collaborative work so that, through the sharing of contributions, reflection and evaluation, higher order skills are developed and innovative solutions are promoted [35]. Thus, in order to close social gaps and solve critical factors in the business sector from the academic perspective, there must be a shared leadership among teachers, students and businesspeople that allows them to empower themselves with possibilities for managing change [36].

Success in this type of strategy will allow the multiplication of knowledge to other companies or regions and the development of internal potentialities. In that sense, a teacher explained it: *“The impact is that they know places living in the city, having grown up in this city, had no idea*

that they existed, much less, its history and so for them it is also incredible that stepping outside their environment make them see the city in a different way and so it creates culture, creates values, creates a real sense of belonging to their city”. Similarly in this regard, one student states *“to lose the fear of facing the challenges that the working world and the problems of the community will present us with later on.... we must take into account those aspects that help to clearly transform a society that is being created and that the generation is leaving us...”*.

From this perspective, managing the required transformations not only requires knowledge, but also the ability to project into the future, establishing a series of clear scenarios, which demands skills such as creativity and innovation from future leaders [37]. Likewise, Gamboa, García and Ahumada [38], state that learning environments are a key element that must be observed from an interdisciplinary perspective, leaving behind rigid and predictable learning practices, offering a more dynamic climate that facilitates formation, making use of available tools and information and communication technologies.

Conclusions

Five categories of analysis emerged from the research according to the characteristics of the educational practices that teachers and students consider successful in higher education institutions with a virtual modality, which are: Knowledge management, understood as the reconstruction of knowledge through knowledge transfer; University - Company relationship as a result of business visits; innovation in academic practices with the use of simulators; development of entrepreneurial capacity and organizational

learning in educational environments.

In the categories and advances of practice to reach the category, the construction of knowledge from the business sector predominates, being necessary the transference of knowledge towards the curriculum and the curricular grids that allow the development of an entrepreneur with leadership, teamwork and interest in research.

A successful educational practice requires that it be innovative, aligned with the institutional philosophy and planned for the long term. It was possible to evidence in the documented academic practices, the intensive use of technologies such as simulators, e-portfolios and virtual platforms; that allowed giving solution to business problems. In these practices, due to their proximity to the business world, interdisciplinarity is required and it becomes the appropriate scenario for students to demonstrate all the skills developed in their formation.

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