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Praxeology and critical performativity in management: a review of doctoral research in Colombia

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Summary: The praxeology recognized by some theorists as the relevance of the results of the research process for managerial and academic practice, is evidenced by others as absent. The purpose of this paper is to propose an evaluation of the results of the research process in management considering the critical performativity, particularly in the "doctoral theses", from a reflexive approach as the epistemology of human sciences that allows to answer the question: How could the level of praxeology of the knowledge generated in the doctoral theses in administration in Colombia be evaluated? The research in management when approaching its object of study, collective action in the organisation, should minimize the spaces of doubt that exist between practice and academia so it can concentrate on offering valid management knowledge with adequate transfer to practitioners from a critical performativity.

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This document aims to present the importance of the praxeological approach in the generation of knowledge in management starting from the Sciences of Man (Dilthey, 1949) and the critical performativity (Spicer, Alvesson, & Kärreman, 2009) to understand the phenomenon of research in management, organisation and collective human action in it, presenting a preliminary proposal of observation of the praxeological approach in the doctoral theses based on Bédard (19995).

The document is structured as follows, first, the **theoretical background** is presented around the generation of knowledge in management and his praxeology, the human sciences and critical performativity; then the proposed methodology and ends with the results and preliminary conclusions as a document in development.

The praxeology recognized by some theorists (Whitley, 1984; Avenier and Gavard-Perret, 2012; David, Hatchuel and Laufer, 2012; Hatchuel, 2017) as the relevance of the results of the research process for managerial and academic practice, is evidenced by others as absent (Cannella and Paetzold, 1994; Le Moigne, 1997; Marchesnay, 1999; Rynes, Bartunek and Daft, 2001; Hodgkinson and Rousseau, 2009; Van Aken and Romme, 2012).

The idea is to present a preliminary proposal of observation of the praxeological approach in the doctoral theses results given by research process in management considering the critical performativity (Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman, 2009) and the social injustice of the economic systems that managers serve and reproduce (Adler, Forbes and Willmott, 2007; Aktouf, 2009) going beyond instrumentalism, in the "doctoral theses", from a reflective approach.

1. Theoretical background: This absence of a praxeological approach based on an epistemology in the human sciences (Marchesnay, 1999; Rynes, Bartunek and Daft, 2001; Hodgkinson and Rousseau, 2009; Avenier and Gavard-Perret, 2012) is related to excessive and almost exclusive use of the methods from the Natural Sciences in management research (Avenier and Gavard-Perret, 2012; Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013; Thomas and Avenier, 2013), generated by the influence of the American-dominated school that privileges the use of such model and its methods (Bédard, 1995; Chanlat, 2002; Aktouf, 2009; Avenier and Gavard-Perret, 2012) and leads to confuse the epistemology of the human sciences with the epistemology of nature sciences at the moment of generating knowledge in management, ignoring the characteristics of the object of study (Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron, 1978; Le Moigne, 1997; Starkey, Hatchuel and Tempest, 2009; Muñoz Grisales, 2011).

It is stated that the crisis of legitimacy of management is constituted by the lack of impact (Pettigrew, 2011), lack of rigor / relevance in research (Starkey and Madan, 2001; Hodgkinson and Rousseau, 2009; Kieser and Leiner, 2009), gap between academia and practice (Rynes, Bartunek and Daft, 2001; Mingers, 2015; Anderson, Ellwood and Coleman, 2017; Nenonen *et al.*, 2017), lack of new ways of thinking organisations (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013), that economic crises have led academy to reflect on management education (Starkey, Hatchuel and Tempest, 2004, 2009; Aktouf, 2009; Starkey and Tempest, 2009; Mingers, 2015; Romme *et al.*, 2015; Birkinshaw, Lecuona and Barwise, 2016) and the social injustice of the social and economic systems to which managers and companies serve and reproduce (Adler, Forbes and Willmott, 2007; Aktouf, 2009).

Knowledge in management and praxeology
Knowledge in management is the result and motivation of human action with the object (Audet, 1986). The legitimacy of knowledge in management, is given by its scientific rigor, social relevance and the use that is given to an organisation if it finds practical utility (Whitley, 1984; Bédard, 1995; Hatchuel, 2017), or by a researcher if there is a possibility to expand their discipline (Ghosh *et al.*, 2010; Macintosh *et al.*, 2017).

If the result of human action with the studied object generates the knowledge in management, according to Audet (1986), this will refer to something beyond the action, beyond its foundations and that is why we are going to understand this result from Bédard (1995) to explain **praxeology** as what surrounds human actions and highlights **epistemology** as criteria of validity to guide, **axiology** as social and cultural values that circumscribe choice and preferences, and **ontology** as founding principles.

The praxeological approach is where the phenomena are perceived by the subjects to design a logic for the action, the perceptions are supported by concepts so that the action is useful and generate good for all in the context where it is developed, what is good for man, a practical evaluative rationality (Flyvbjerg, 2017).

Therefore, the epistemology is a criteria of validity which guide the human actions in order to generate the knowledge in management that Dilthey (1949) denominates as **the epistemology of of the human sciences,** that is configured to understand social phenomena and have as object, spiritual facts, the human being, the society and its history where the events are particular, historical and subjective considering the organisations in the environment where humans develops its teleological activity and a great part is shaped by nature with a fundamental base in the natural sciences to help in its study. These facts are to be understood using procedures with historical-critical criteria, of a comprehensive nature, without excluding tools and explanatory methods of the epistemology of the natural sciences (1949).

The proposed approach to analyze praxeology in this work goes beyond instrumentalism, from the epistemology of human sciences, that Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman (2009) denominates as **critical performativity** that considers that the research results in management should have an impact on administrative practices, but not necessarily in terms of an instrumental rationality in a positivist way, as was treated by Habermas (Adorno *et al.*, 1973), or terms of efficiency, but in reflexive and critical terms (Alvesson, 1985) about the prevailing forms of domination in organisations, understanding the complexity of the organisational reality, revealing hidden undesirable situations in a way that can transform and generate happiness to the human being and society (Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman, 2009).

2. Research design and preliminary findings and contributions: Colciencias (2016) states that scientific knowledge can be made visible through the products of activities related to the training of human resources such as doctoral theses, which is the unit of analysis for this proposal, since for a doctorate they are the main visible products in the generation of knowledge in management in Colombia. The work will be limited to doctoral theses in administration in Colombia over the last 9 years that are 72 up to date and all will be analyzed, considering that the first doctor in administration graduated in 2009.

By understanding knowledge in management as the result of human action, it is recognized as part of the epistemology of human sciences, where man develops knowledge with practical sense, thus configuring the praxeological approach that is based on the epistemological reference framework that Avenier (2010), Glasersfeld (1981), Le Moigne (1995) call **pragmatic constructivist epistemological paradigm** (PCEP) under the pragmatic philosophy of James (2000) that starts from a knowledge hypothesis phenomenological where human experience is knowable and knowledge is seen as an intentional process of human actions.

The PCEP in Avenier & Cajaiba (2012) enables the generation of knowledge derived from a process of conceptual generalization based on an empirical review of the theses using a sequential exploratory approach (Creswell, 2014), it will review, describe, compare and evaluate the praxeological approach of the theses, their categories, their components, their relationships.

In this order of ideas it is structured a strategy (Hevner *et al.*, 2004) that allows to interpret the existing elements and evaluate the praxeological approach according to Bédard (1995) to establish the categories of praxeological approach in literature and doctoral theses with the interrelations of praxeology, epistemology, axiology and ontology that could be established as four orienting categories, using an analysis strategy based on grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2008); then, propose a quantitative evaluation of the observable aspects in the theses; finally, apply the analysis to the theses and document the results according to critical performativity.

The categories allow to create items (observable in the doctoral theses), these items are generated by the researcher or may emerge during the documentary observation process. Then, proceed to generate two rubrics of evaluation: one to evaluate praxeology in the academic field and another one to evaluate praxeology in the organizational field; two instruments made up of items that allow to scale what is characterized as observable categories. Subsequently, quantitative tools are used in order to bring these items to numbers so that a level can be generated for the evaluation of the praxeological approach. A consensus is sought through the review of experts and focus groups to avoid the researcher's bias and be able to generate knowledge objectively.

By exploring and describing, we could interpret the praxeological approach of doctoral theses in management and evaluate them by means of objective tools such as the model with latent variables (categories), observables (items), scales of measurement constructed with the support of experts and focal groups, analyze the data with a possibility of generalization for the group of units of analysis would highlight the praxeological approach to the knowledge generated.

This is an ongoing investigation, part of the observation tool designed with the preliminary categories of analysis in Table 1 as guiding categories and research axes, that will serve as a guide for the revision of theses is preliminarily counted, built according to Bédard (1995) and the observable aspects thereof in the theses.

Table 1. Guidance categories and preliminary research axes.

Orienting categories	Observable aspects in theses
Ontology	Problematic of the investigation and problem in concrete
	Object of study
	Research question

Orienting categories	Observable aspects in theses
	Objective of the investigation
Epistemology	Methodological approach or epistemological paradigm
	Methodological tools
	References
Axiology	Justification
	Work object
Praxeology	Title of the thesis
	Results of the investigation
	Conclusions

It is revealed in the primary analyzes of the theses that there is an important use of epistemology of Natural Sciences in research. The current scope of the document is limited to the information that will be collected in the observation of the doctoral theses, so the results should be interpreted considering this restriction.

The research gap that is addressed: this proposal presents an approach to analyze and interpret the praxeological focus from the functionalist explanatory to the comprehensive with radical humanism considering the critical performativity in doctoral research in management where the traditional predominant scheme has been positivism. And it is proposed to contribute specifically to management research methodologies.

How you plan to develop the paper prior to discussion at the conference: I plan to give the members of the round table a summary of the work to be presented, exposing during the stipulated time, starting with a guiding question about the work to be done, its motivation, relevance, problematic, theoretical foundation, methodological approach and possible expected results supported in the summary that will be given to the members, ending with the observations of the members and the necessary clarifications.

How the paper links with the track: The paper links with the track Research Methodology in dealing with the relevance-gap of management research from an approach of radical humanism, particularly the philosophical rhomb of Bédard (1995) and the critical performativity of the praxeological approach in the doctoral research process where the lack of social and theoretical relevance is manifested of their results, using some philosophical ideas that could help strengthen management research.

There is a call to deep and critical reflection on the purpose and content of management education, the world is facing problems such as climate change, financial / economic crisis, poverty, diseases, famine, religious and political conflicts, terrorism, dubious corporate behavior. Businesses and management are causally implicated in many of them; global warming caused by fossil fuels; financial crisis due to executive greed and lack of control; diseases on many occasions for the sale price of medicines (Starkey, Hatchuel and Tempest, 2004, 2009; Aktouf, 2009; Starkey and Tempest, 2009; Mingers, 2015; Romme *et al.*, 2015; Birkinshaw, Lecuona and Barwise, 2016).

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