



Analysis of Critical Studies of Organizations in Academic Production

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Abstract: This article has the purpose of analyzing the organizational studies which undertakes a critical perspective, and due to these lines up with the critical theory and to the so called Critical Management Studies.

The critical theory from Marx even to the authors of the school of Frankfurt takes criticism, as a central theme, to the dominant capital system and the social emancipation referenced or not to the working category. The critical studies are not necessarily lined up to these objectives, but, offer alternatives to the dominant functional paradigm in organizational studies.

The scope of the study is the analysis of the academic Brazilian production of the National Meetings of the National Association of Post Graduates and Research in Administration - EnANPAD and of the Meetings of the Organizational Studies Division of ANPAD-EnEO between 2008 and 2012. The main results show that the critical studies, in spite of continuing below 10 %, develop studies of relevant themes for the critical analysis of the organizations and search increasingly more, for studies with empirical basis and case studies to update the reading of the practices and organizational reality.

Keywords: critical theory, organizational studies, Critical Management Studies in Brazil

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PRESENTATION

This article has the purpose to show an analysis of organizational studies which undertake a critical perspective and by this, are aligned to the critical theory and to the so called critical management studies.

The critical theory from Marx even to the authors of the school of Frankfurt takes criticism as a central theme to the capitalist dominant system and the social emancipation referenced or not to the working category. The critical studies inside the movement known as CMS – Critical Management Studies are not necessarily aligned to these objectives, but, offers alternatives to the dominant functional paradigm in the organizational studies.

The paper structure starts with an introduction to bring into context the discussion of the origins of the critical theory and its several implications. Next, a general vision tries to characterize the critical theory and the critical studies in the field of the organizational studies specifically in Brazil. The third part is directed to analyze and classify the articles associated to the critical studies published in the context of the National Meetings of the National Association of Post Graduation and Research in Administration – EnANPAD and that of the Meetings of the Division of the Organizational Studies ANPAD-EnEO.

Initially, as for the methodological proceedings, a bibliographical review is made about the theme and in the analytical part, a counterpoint is developed between amongst the analyzed articles and possible advancements and contributions of the organizational studies considered critical up to the present. The production of critical studies was selected in the period from 2009 to 2012 (EnANPAD) and the years of 2008, 2010 and 2012(EnEO).

INTRODUCTION

The critical theory of organizational studies has as its concern, the critical analysis of the organizations on two levels: theory and practice. In the theoretical field, the objective is to offer an alternative to organizational analysis based on critical theory, from Marx to the authors of the school of Frankfurt and others. With that done, it introduces in the field of the organizational studies, the perspective of dialectic materialism and the criticism to political economy to confront the resulting dominant paradigm of the functionalist, liberal and economic schools. Due to this, the reality of the organizations is brought up with contradictions and conflicts opening the field for transformational practices or alternative management. In other words, it tries to show the reality of the organizations and how things really are, from the perspective of how they should be as when it was stated by Vieira and Caldas (2006).

The critical theory was elaborated from Horkheimer texts that were connected with the Institute of Social Inquiry of Frankfurt, founded in 1923 in Germany which brought together well known authors such as Adorno, Habermas and Marcuse amongst others. The source of inspiration of this movement was the legacy left by Karl Marx and Friederich Engels, who in the 19th century launched the bases of historical materialism and the critical vision of the process of capitalist accumulation.

According to the Marxist literature, the Marx and Engels legacy is the result of the development of three main ideological currents in the 19th century: the classic German philosophy, the English economical policy and French socialism. These three sources allowed the preparation of the

philosophical and historical materialism, the dialectic and materialistic concept of history, the notion that history, is the history of the struggle amongst classes, the criticism to political economy and the understanding of the capitalist society as a goods producing society, exchange value and surplus value, bases of the capitalist accumulation and of the work exploitation. With that they formulate the theory of scientific socialism and of the notion of which the modern proletariat would be the last oppressed class of the history (Lenin, I. Chosen works 1, Sao Paulo: Alfa Omega, 1979).

A classic example of the materialistic doctrine of the history of Marx is in the famous preface of the work Contribution for the Criticism of the Political Economy, which quoted the following:

“In the social production of his existence, the men enter in determined, necessary relations, independently of their will; relations of production that correspond to a given degree of development of their productive material strength. The set of these productive relations constitutes the economical structure of society, the real base on which a legal and political superstructure is raised and to which they correspond to forms of determined social conscience. The means of production of goods establishes the process of social, political and intellectual life, in general. It is not the conscience of the men that determines his being, but, on the contrary, it is his social being that determines his conscience. In a certain stage of his development, the productive material forces the society enters in contradiction with the existent relations of production or, which is nothing more than the legal expression of this for the relations of property in the core of what it had been up to that time. In the forms of development of the productive strength that had been, these relations become its own hampers. As a result, an opening for social revolution. The transformation in the economical basis revolutionizes, rather quickly, the entire enormous superstructure.” (MARX, Contribution for the criticism of the political economy. In Lenin, ditto)

Based on these principals, Marx and Engel’s criticism to the dominant ideology and to the means of capitalist production, repression and social control were revealed and exposed in search of a just, free and democratic society. In a certain way, critical theory is based on these premises (Faria, 2011).

The founders and the first generation of the School of Frankfurt were aiming to retake the Marxist tradition to restore an identity as an alternative to the concepts that were dividing Marxism at the time. Marxism was going through a fragmentation crisis as a result of several internal disagreements amongst the social democrats and communists, which were split into Leninism, Trotskyism and Stalinism and also including the ways to reach power, if by the revolutionary or reforming path.

The forerunners of critical theory: Korsch, Bloch and their followers Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, being that their contributions to critical theory was a result from their criticism to positivism and ideology. Horkheimer states in his work “Traditional Theory and Critical Theory” (1937) that “will produces critical theory those who shall continue the work of Marx”.

Through another angle of analysis, it was interesting to notice that the critical theoreticians of the School of Frankfurt were more worried about the Marxist notion of superstructure, while at place, of the political, cultural and ideological life rather than with the notion of structure, strongly

connected with material life (Paes de Paula, 2008).

The individual as the autonomous subject inserted in the perspective of the philosophy of conscience:

Critical theory also confirms rationalism, but tries to renew it, relating it to the real praxis, in other words, to human action, emphasizing the philosophy of the conscience, which affirms the freedom of an autonomous subject, establishing reason centered on this subject, in a clear shift from the object to the subject (Paes de Paula, 2008).

Here surfaces the main point about the emancipation of the individual in history through explanation and not anymore the emancipation of the proletariat centered in the working category. In a certain way, this is one more division of critical thought and distancing regarding MARX (REPA and TERRA, 2011; MELLO, 2011).

What would it be to continue the work of Marx in the context of contemporary capitalism and of real socialism in the twentieth century?

While fordism and mass production marked the economical and cultural power of that time, real socialism was incompetent to promote the emancipation and the freedom of the oppressed classes. In these aspects, critical theory was maintaining its strength due to the distance that these contexts implied to the issues of the emancipation of work and of the individual.

Still in the transition of the 20th century to the 21st century, with the fordism crisis, the collapse of socialism, the emergence of China and the climb of flexible accumulation, critical theory maintained its strength in the articulation of financiering and the process itself of flexible accumulation pointing to crisis of the work and the social crisis as marks of the new context. China remains to be the great difficulty for critical analysis because it maintains the ideology of socialism and communism, but economically it promotes the biggest expansion of capitalism.

In parallel, the neo-positivistic theories, neoliberals and post-moderns establish positions they have in common, the maintenance of the system or to the disbelief in any form of change.

How to maintain the critical analysis in moving unto the predominance of these “neos” theories and of such disillusionment with the reality?

In this sense, you can fit Michel Foucault’s proposal, which made the critical perspective enrichment in social sciences and organizations as a counterpoint to the functionalist paradigm with his critical look upon power and its constant reproduction. Though, there is controversy about the classification of his work about Foucault as post-modern, this does not interfere on the issue of critical studies, given the broadness of his work other than the critical theory of Marxist orientation (Alcadipani and Motta, 2004).

It is important to point out that Foucault’s work has amplitude of analysis that stretches out to other areas of the knowledge besides the social and hard-working sciences, such as the judicial and the arts. On either side, the incisive denouncing character of the mechanisms of oppression and of the search for the emancipation of the individual is marking in his work.

In an intentional jump, the critical theory gained space in the organizational studies on account of the disappointment about the capitalist modernization, the courses of the modern times and of post-modern times. The illuminist idea of liberation when using reason is substituted by the reality of the technological progress based on science, which was turned again into an instrument

of control and domination of the individual and that of labor. The capitalist organization, the enterprise and other institutions exert the control of reducing the individual and of the work to the category of thing or merchandise. (Souza, Saldanha & Ichikawa, 2004).

Adler (2009) brings an important contribution to contextualize the Marxist organizational studies in the conflicting aspects of the relations of labor, as a counterpoint to the functionalist approach

“Marxist research on organizations has focused primarily on the conflicting aspects of the employment relation and the ramifications of the structure and functioning of organizations. Marxist organization studies are thus counter opposed to the traditional functionalist, organicist concepts of organizations and society and to scholarship that obscures the fundamental divergence of interests that shapes organizations.”

Another important contribution is that of Bauman (2001), with the discussion of the notion of liquid modernity and all its applications which brings it near to the post-modern theory in a pessimistic and critical tone, as if the world had not more way out for illuminist reasoning.

“Is the freedom a blessing or a curse? A disguised curse of blessing, or a blessing as a curse? Such questions astonished the thinkers during most of the modern era, which were putting the “liberation” at the top of the list of political reform and “freedom” at the top of the values list – when it was sufficiently clear that freedom would take time to arrive and those who should have liked it were reluctant to welcome it.”

Here, critical theory and post modern approach get mixed up in spite of the essential differences between them in the critical reading of the dominant functionalist paradigm in organizational studies. For the reason of small presence towards post modern studies in organizational studies, this will not be the bibliographical production selection and it can still confuse more than explain critical theory itself (Vieira and Caldas, 2006).

In this debate, it is important to point out the important contribution of the Critical Management Studies (CMS) movement initiated in the 1990's by Alvesson and Willmott through the publishing of the book with the same name. The effort of these authors unleashed a movement of the same name again, with significant impacts in terms of relevant academic production and with an alternative approach to dominant functionalism in the organizational studies. (Paes de Paula, 2008).

The contribution of the CMS movement is emphasized by the so called exhibition of the hidden faces, the structures of control and domination and the inequalities in the organizations exposing to real dimension the problems connected with the organizations and, that in fact, they do not turn up to be such as they really are through the rationality extolled by the traditional theories. The Critical Management Studies movement does not embrace generalized criticism and does not fight against the capitalist organizations or against management. Its aim is partial criticism, in other words, situated in the context of practices, theories and speeches of the everyday, in organizations. It is a counterpoint to the classic vision of the School of Frankfurt, as it goes, upon which the focus of analysis starts to look only at the organization and not the society and its inherent problems. Likewise, there is no claim of ideological overcoming or radical change of

society (Davel and Alcadipani, 2003).

CRITICISM IN ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES

One of the most important aspects when approaching critical studies in Administration is a definition of criteria that could support the classification of a study or work as a critic or not.

Other possible approaches are indicated by Paes de Paula (2008) through the examination of the annals of the Conferences of the Critical Management Studies Movement at which, the limit, is everything that is not considered functionalistic. Another possibility of definition of criticism is in Foucault's definition (1978): "the art of the non servant volunteer and reflected restiveness"

In the famous work of Burrell and Morgan: Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis (1979), we also see the possibility of the classification of critical studies in counterpoint to bureaucracy, when Critical Theory based the concept of subjectivity is situated in the quadrant of the Humanist Radical Paradigm, while the Functionalist Paradigm is positioned in another quadrant identified with the objective vision.

In the work published by Fournier and Grey (2000), three basic parameters are indicated to classify a study as critical: the promulgation of a denaturalized vision of administration, unlinked intentions of the performance and reflexivity. The same classification was used by Paes Paula (2008) for the classification of a work as a critic in his findings.

In Davel and Alcadipani's article (2003), the same parameters are also used works, to select works through the following questioning:

Denaturalized vision of administration: the organization and / or are they treated as being inserted in a specific historical-partner context, like relative entities? Is the organizational speech presented as being open to faults, contradictions and incongruence? The aspects of domination, control, exploitation and exclusion in theory or in practice are revealed and / or questioned?

Intentions unlinked from performance: the concern about the improvement of financial profits, performance, profitability, and / or does productivity orientates the research? Is the produced knowledge subjected to the questions of improvement of the performance, efficiency, and / or profitability?

Emancipating intention: the ways of exploration, domination or of control that inhibit the accomplishment of the human potential are identified, denounced or taken into account? Do the emancipation of the people and the humanization of the organization make part of the objectives of the article?

Next, the same criteria is used for the classification of the academic production developed in the investigated period, in order to permit a comparative analysis, with the research carried out by Davel and Alcadipani (2003) and Paes de Paula (2008).

There is also a proposal of the deepening of the analysis through the classification and indication of the subjects investigated by the critical organizational studies, to better understand his contribution in the field of applied social sciences.

The Critical Studies in Brazil

According to Davel and Alcadipani (2003), critical studies in Brazil already had significant relevance before the movement Critical Management Studies:

Nevertheless, the Brazilian critical studies do not originate, or are even a simple consequence, of the Anglo-Saxon movement. On the contrary, we have available, in Brazil, critical scholars of great depth and recognition – such as, Warrior Branches, Mauritius Tragtenberg and Fernando Prestes Motta – who submitted to Administration and the Organizational Studies critical sieve well before the decade of 1990, when the critical Anglo-Saxon movement surfaces in an articulated manner.

Paes de Paula (2008) also defended the hypothesis that there is an independent tradition of critical studies Brazil, when stating the important contributions of the authors such as Mauritius Tragtenberg and Guerreiro Ramos, who anticipate in their works concerns about the individual in the organizations, yet one with a humanistic outlook, while the production of the Critical Management Studies movement is predominantly post-structural.

Though each one of these authors positions themselves in a specific field, Tragtenberg in the defense of the auto-management and of the criticism of the bureaucracy and of the co-management and Guerreiro Ramos proposing an organizational paradigm leading to emancipation (equalities and self satisfaction), both are critics of the natural order imposed by the functionalist and bureaucratic vision and they have followers who continue in their lines of research, such as: Ramon Moreira Garcia, Mauritius Roque Serva de Oliveira and Fernando Guilherme Tenório, followers of the Guerreiro Ramos's thought and Fernando Cláudio Prestes Motta and José Henrique de Faria, followers of Mauritius Tragtenberg.

It is worth emphasizing that, according to Paes de Paula (2008), there are no declared authors in Brazil followers of the Critical Management Studies Movement, being that the quotations to this academic production is done in the subsidiary form, only as a complement to the citing of Brazilian national authors.

ANALYSIS OF THE CRITICAL STUDIES

The previous research carried out by Davel and Alcadipani (2003) and Paes de Paula (2008) including the period from 1980 to 2004, considered a different universe to be researched from the proposal of this work, being that only 6,7 % of the presented articles were of critical nature as shown in the Chart1:

Table 1 : Total of critical articles according to Davel, Alcadipani (2003) and Paes de Paula

Period	Total	Criticisms	%
1980-1989	1175	75	6.4%
1990-1999	1990	88	4.4%
2000-2004	1731	165	9.5%
Total	4896	328	6.7%

Source: DE PAULA, Ana Paula Paes. *Theoretical Criticism about organizations*. Thomson, 2008.

The study carried out by these authors are a reference for this study that boards the production of Critical Studies in Administration in the National Meetings of the National Association of Post Graduation and Investigation in Administration - EnANPAD from the period of 2009 to 2012 and of the Meetings of the Division of Organizational Studies of the ANPAD – EnEO in the years of 2008, 2010 and 2012. Through research carried out near the site of ANPAD, we identified 85 articles of critical nature in a total of 984 published articles, representing 8.6 % of the total. It was found that in both Meetings there was a light reduction along time in the publication of articles according to Chart 2 below:

Table 2: Production of Critical Articles at National Encounters of ANPAD and Organizational Study Encounters

Event	Year	Critical Articles	Total Articles	%
Eneo	2008	20	161	12.4%
Eneo	2010	10	179	5.6%
Eneo	2012	9	132	6.8%
Subtotal		39	472	8.3%
Enanpad	2009	9	131	6.9%
Enanpad	2010	16	127	12.6%
Enanpad	2011	11	127	8.7%
Enanpad	2012	10	127	7.9%
Subtotal		46	512	9.0%
Total		85	984	8.6%

Source: Self Elaborated

The 85 articles that were researched in this study were classified according to the themes proposed by Davel and Alcadipani’s article (2003) and those considered the main topics: domination, ideology, control, discipline, type, social exclusion, citizenship, psychological and physical suffering, among others.

Studied Themes

The following is a chart is showing the groups of the most relevant subjects found in the articles:

Table 3: Distribution of articles according to the themes

Themes	N.	%
Domination & Ideology	29	34%
Control & Discipline	23	27%
Social Exclusion & Citizenship	7	8%
Type, psychic suffering, theory review and Other themes	26	31%
Total	85	100%

Fonte: Self elaborated

As pointed out in Davel and Alcadipani's article (2003), the themes connected with domination and ideology in the practices and in organizational theories are the ones that most appear in the organizational studies (34 %). In second place, a grouping of classic and emergent themes of applied social sciences, from the psychological suffering up to the type issue can be represented in the critical studies, but not necessarily discussed in a unitary and orthodox way (31%). In third place, the theme of the control and discipline, very relevant in the critical discussion from Marx up to Foucault, continues with distinction in the organizational studies within a critical perspective (27%). And last, but not less important, the theme of social exclusion and citizenship which occupies 7% of the studies as a tendency perhaps ambiguous, due to the dialog in the field of the social responsibility and sustainability in the organizations, also present in the functionalist studies. Next in Table 4, is an unfolding of sub themes of the critical studies that will be able to allow a more detailed analysis of the subjects that are being approached.

Table 4: Article distribution according to sub-themes

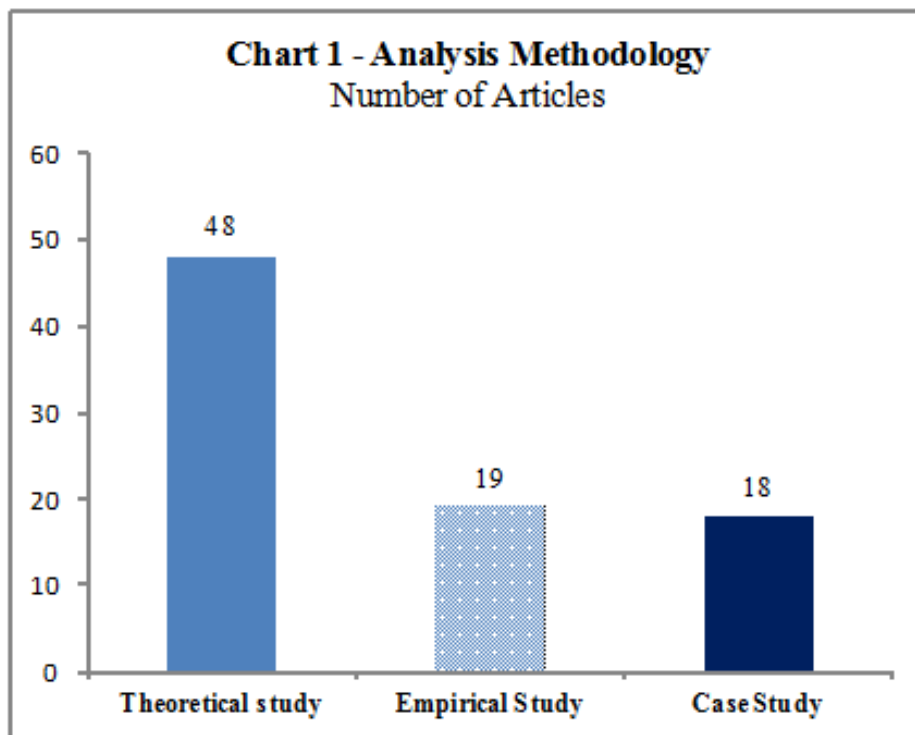
Themes	Qtde.	%
Theoretical Analysis	20	23.5%
Discourse Analysis	19	22.4%
Power and Ideology	12	14.1%
Self Management	9	10.6%
Domination / Control	8	9.4%
Participation & Citizenship	4	4.7%
Type, psychic suffering, industrial culture and Other themes	13	15.3%
Total	85	100.0%

Source: self elaborated

As it can be observed, the opening in sub themes brings a rich apprehension of the problems that are studied and what it sends straightly and indirectly to the micro and to a macro context where organizations insert themselves. For example, the sub-theme of the self management is particularly relevant because it represents an alternative manner in search of the autonomy versus to the predominant heteronomy as a reality of the organizations. Self management from the anarchists versions, autonomists and also present in Motta and Tragtenberg's concerns can be confronted by the denouncing of power, ideology, domination and control in the organizations.

Methodological Procedures of the critical studies

Another dimension analyzed in the Davel and Alcadipani's article (2003) that deserves distinction is the type of methodology used by the investigators. In the analysis of this article account three parameters of methodological procedures were taken into account: 1) theoretical studies, 2) empirical studies and 3) case studies.

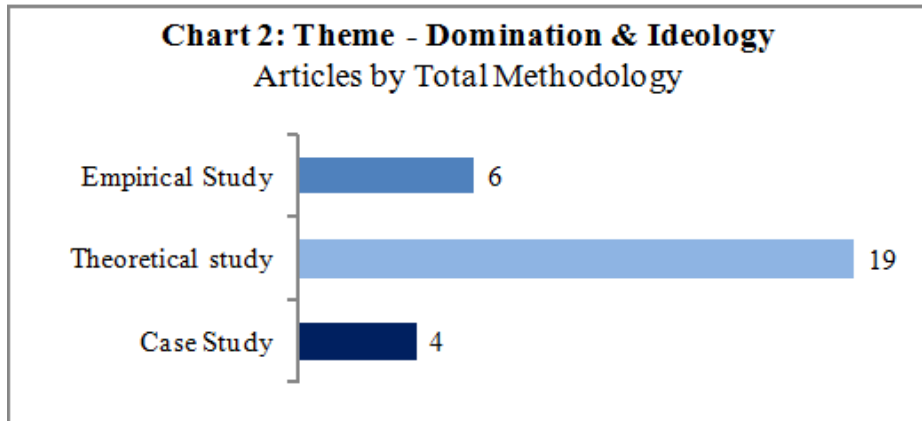


Source: SelfElaborated

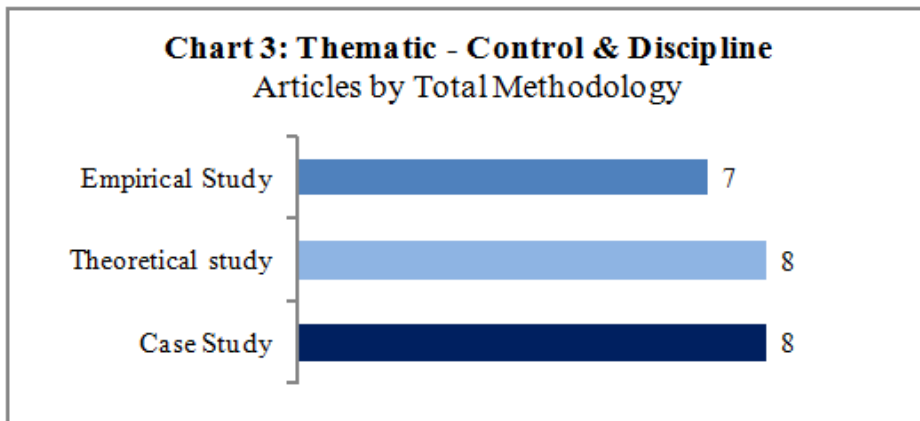
In this research, it was noted that the increase of the empirical studies and case studies, allowed inferring to a bigger concern with the organizational practices and an intention to change these practices. It also opens a type of research-action with the wish of intervention towards the daily routine of the organizations, in its several areas.

Next, the methodological procedures are shown according to the most obvious group themes in

terms of subjects shown in the Chart: Domination and Ideology and Control and Discipline which represent 61% of the analyzed articles:



Source: Self Elaborated



Source: Self Elaborated

Differently from what was pointed out in Davel and Alcadipani's study (2003), there is a noticeable tendency in Management Researches with preference for studies that are based on empirical studies and case studies exceeding in both cases the theoretical essays. This demonstrates enrichment in the organizational studies taking as a basis, daily life, the practices and the desire to change organizations. In other words, within the critical spirit, to show the organizations as it is in fact.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article had like purpose to analyze organizational studies which adopted a critical perspective and due to this, is lined up with the critical theory and to the critical studies of administration.

The objective of the study was the analysis of the Brazilian academic output of the National Meetings of the National Association of Post Graduation and Research in Administration - EnANPAD and that of the Meetings of the Division of Organizational Studies of ANPAD-EnEO between 2008 and 2012.

The main results show that critical studies in spite of continuing below 10 % develop studies of relevant themes for the critical analysis of the organizations and more and more, search for studies with empirical basis and case studies to update the reading of the practices and organizational reality.

Marx's critical theory, even to the authors of the school of Frankfurt takes criticism as a central theme to the capitalist dominant system and the referenced social emancipation or not of the working category. Critical studies are not necessarily aligned to these objectives, but, offer alternatives to the dominant functionalist paradigm in the organizational studies. A relevant example is the contribution of Bauman (2001) which in his analysis of the liquid modernity demonstrates a new difficult paradigm to overcome leaving an open issue about the possibility of the social and individual emancipation.

The same thing can argued as for the context of the 21st century which is in full fordism crisis and the rise of the flexible accumulation, shows the paradigm of Chinese development which has more to do with the pre-ford practices of strong growth with low wages and deregulated work relations dating to the times of the people administration and bureaucratic organizations. The collapse of the socialism and the Chinese paradigm put the critical theory in question reducing its ideological strength and provoking a fragmentation and loss of ground for the neo-positivist and neoliberal theories and also for the post modern concepts. In this scenery, self management can gain ground within the predominant heteronomy in the organizations independently of the social or political regime.

With all the existent difficulties resulting from the "neo" theories, of the growing individualization, of the maintenance of the power and of the control of the organizations and of the disappointment with reality, what is realized is that critical theory survives as a place for reflection in search of a new paradigm in organizational practices.

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