



**Business Administration Education and the Professionalization of Cooperative Management: a bibliographic-documentary study in the Amazonian context**

*Formação em Administração e profissionalização da gestão cooperativista: um estudo bibliográfico-documental no contexto amazônico*

*Formación en Administración y profesionalización de la gestión cooperativista: un estudio bibliográfico-documental en el contexto amazónico*

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**Abstract:**

Brazilian cooperatives bring together more than 23 million members and generate nearly R\$ 700 billion in revenues per year. In the Amazon, they structure the market insertion of family farmers and forest-product harvesters and sustain communities in territories of difficult access. Despite this presence, smaller cooperatives face persistent deficits in qualified management, and Business Administration programs rarely prepare graduates to work in organizations with a logic, values, and decision-making structure fundamentally different from conventional firms. This article examines how the competencies established in Brazil's National Curriculum Guidelines for Business Administration can contribute to the professionalization of cooperative management in the Amazonian and Rondônian context. The central argument is that planning, financial management, governance, people management, and sustainability have concrete application in cooperatives, provided they are adapted to their participatory and democratic logic. The study proposes the Cooperative Competency Adaptation Cycle (CACC), a conceptual model with four articulated moments, and presents a modular curriculum roadmap for incorporating cooperativism into Business Administration programs.

**Keywords:**

cooperative management; managerial competencies; Business Administration education; Amazonian cooperativism; management professionalization.

**Resumo:**

As cooperativas brasileiras reúnem mais de 23 milhões de associados e movimentam quase R\$ 700 bilhões em ingressos por ano. Na Amazônia, elas estruturam a inserção de agricultores familiares e extrativistas em mercados e sustentam comunidades em territórios de difícil acesso. Apesar dessa presença, cooperativas de menor porte enfrentam déficits persistentes de gestão qualificada, e os cursos de Administração raramente preparam seus egressos para atuar em organizações com lógica, valores e estrutura de decisão radicalmente distintos de uma empresa convencional. Este artigo examina como as competências previstas nas Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais de Administração podem contribuir para a profissionalização da gestão cooperativista no contexto amazônico e rondoniense. O argumento central é que planejamento, gestão financeira, governança, gestão de pessoas e sustentabilidade têm aplicação concreta nas

cooperativas, desde que adaptadas à sua lógica participativa e democrática. O estudo propõe o Ciclo de Adaptação de Competências Cooperativas (CACC), modelo conceitual com quatro momentos articulados, e apresenta um roteiro curricular modular para incorporar o cooperativismo na formação em Administração.

**Palavras-chave:**

gestão cooperativista; competências gerenciais; formação em Administração; cooperativismo amazônico; profissionalização da gestão.

**Resumen:**

Las cooperativas brasileñas reúnen a más de 23 millones de asociados y movilizan cerca de R\$ 700 mil millones en ingresos por año. En la Amazonia, estructuran la inserción de agricultores familiares y extractivistas en los mercados y sostienen comunidades en territorios de difícil acceso. A pesar de esta presencia, las cooperativas de menor tamaño enfrentan déficits persistentes de gestión calificada, y los programas de Administración rara vez preparan a sus egresados para actuar en organizaciones con una lógica, valores y estructura de toma de decisiones radicalmente diferentes de las empresas convencionales. Este artículo examina cómo las competencias previstas en las Directrices Curriculares Nacionales de Administración pueden contribuir a la profesionalización de la gestión cooperativista en el contexto amazónico y de Rondônia. El argumento central es que la planificación, la gestión financiera, la gobernanza, la gestión de personas y la sostenibilidad tienen una aplicación concreta en las cooperativas, siempre que se adapten a su lógica participativa y democrática. El estudio propone el Ciclo de Adaptación de Competencias Cooperativas (CACC), un modelo conceptual compuesto por cuatro momentos articulados, y presenta una ruta curricular modular para incorporar el cooperativismo en la formación en Administración.

**Palabras clave:**

Gestión cooperativista; competencias gerenciales; formación en Administración; cooperativismo amazónico; profesionalización de la gestión.

## INTRODUCTION

Cooperativism constitutes one of the oldest forms of economic organization based on solidarity and cooperation among people. Unlike companies oriented towards the remuneration of capital, cooperatives bring together individuals who voluntarily associate to meet common needs, through collective ownership and democratic management (ICA, 1995; BRAZIL, 1971). This specificity is not accessory: it defines the logic of operation of cooperatives, their governance and the values that guide their decisions, a dimension that the literature on solidarity economy calls substantive rationality, in contrast to the instrumental rationality that characterizes conventional companies (TENÓRIO, 1998; FRANÇA FILHO; LAVILLE, 2004).

In Brazil, the sector brings together more than 4,500 cooperatives in the agricultural, credit, health, transport and labor sectors, with 23.45 million members and R\$ 692 billion in revenue in 2023 (OCB, 2024). In Rondônia, cooperativism has a significant presence in

production chains such as coffee, açai, Brazil nuts, milk and fish farming, and in the rural credit sector (OCB/RO SYSTEM, 2025).

Despite this, the discussion on cooperative management still occupies a limited space in academic training in Administration. Curricula tend to privilege the conventional business environment and disregard other equally relevant organizational forms (NICOLINI, 2003; BARCELLOS; DELLAGNELO; SALIÉS, 2011). Bialoskorski Neto (2012), Crúzio (2001) and Barasuol et al. (2015) point out, in parallel, recurring technical deficiencies of directors and managers in strategic planning, financial management and governance.

This gap is particularly relevant in the Amazonian context. As documented by Silva et al. (2019), Delgado and Leite (2011), and Witkoski, Rezende, and Fraxe (2020), cooperatives play a strategic role in the organization of rural communities and in the conservation of socio-biodiversity. Geographic dispersion, price volatility, and limited access to technical assistance services make the presence of qualified managers sensitive to cooperative logic even more necessary. Ostrom (1990) demonstrated that the sustainability of collective organizations depends on the capacity to build legitimate rules of participatory management, a competence that training in Administration can contribute to developing.

Given this context, the article poses the following problem: what competencies from a Business Administration degree can contribute to the professionalization of cooperative management, considering cooperative identity and the Amazonian context?

The overall objective is to analyze how training in Administration can contribute to the development of skills necessary for the management of cooperatives in the Amazonian and Rondônia context. The specific objectives are: a) to characterize cooperative identity and its principles; b) to identify the managerial skills foreseen in the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCN) for Administration; c) to analyze the articulation of these skills with the needs of cooperative management; d) to propose the Cooperative Skills Adaptation Cycle (CACC) as a guiding conceptual model.

The study's relevance is simultaneously academic, professional, and territorial: it brings business administration training closer to an organizational reality that is underrepresented in curricula, guides the administrator's performance in cooperatives, and responds to a concrete demand from Amazonian cooperatives for professionals trained to work in this unique context.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative and exploratory approach, with a bibliographic-documentary design (GIL, 2002; MINAYO, 2001). To answer the research problem, a

triangular approach was chosen, combining sources of different natures so that the legal framework, the institutional reality of the sector, and scientific production would mutually illuminate each other. The analytical corpus thus brings together three sets of sources: normative documents (Law 5.764/1971, ICA Declaration of 1995, and CNE/CES Resolution No. 5/2021), which establish the identity, the legal regime of cooperatives, and the profile of Administration graduates; institutional documents (publications of the OCB, the OCB/RO System, and technical reports of the sector), which dimension the sector and situate the context of Rondônia; and academic publications, selected through an integrative literature review, which provide the theoretical and empirical support for the analysis.

This integrative review aimed to map, in a structured and transparent way, what recent scientific production records about cooperative management. It was conducted in six electronic databases—Google Scholar, SciELO, SPELL, CAPES Journals Portal, SAGE Open, and REVESCO—using descriptors in Portuguese, English, and Spanish related to the five analytical categories of the study, applied to the title, abstract, and keyword fields of peer-reviewed journals (Qualis CAPES, SCOPUS, or Web of Science). The search covered the period 2000–2025.

Table 1 presents the consolidated results of the search by database group:

*Table 1 — Search results by database group (2000-2025)*

Database	Results identified	After duplicate removal	Selected by title / abstract	After full reading	Included in the corpus
National databases (Google Scholar, SciELO, SPELL, CAPES Portal)	218	134	41	14	14
International databases (SAGE Open, REVESCO)	52	52	18	9	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>

Source: prepared by the authors (2026).

The inclusion criteria were: publications from 2000 to 2025, in Portuguese, English, or Spanish, with full text available, published in peer-reviewed journals or proceedings of recognized events, directly addressing at least one of the central themes of the study. Excluded were undergraduate theses without journal publication, articles that only peripherally address

cooperativism, duplicates, and studies prior to 2000, except for foundational theoretical works (ICA, 1995; OSTROM, 1990; PUTNAM, 1993; TENÓRIO, 1998).

The screening eliminated duplicates from the 270 identified references, resulting in 186 unique records. Reading titles and abstracts selected 59 works for full reading, of which 23 articles were included, among them international sources such as Novkovic (2008), Jamaluddin et al. (2023), and Monzón and Torres-Ortega (2021). To these were added, through direct selection and snowballing, foundational theoretical works and normative and institutional documents that support the analysis.

The treatment of the material was based on the thematic categorization logic of Bardin's (2011) content analysis. The five analytical categories were defined a priori, before the exploration of the material, as they derive directly from the specific objectives of the study and the framework that supports it—a procedure consistent with thematic analysis, in which categories can precede coding when the research problem already delimits the dimensions to be observed. Each category answers a question of the study. Cooperative identity translates the objective of characterizing the principles that distinguish a cooperative from a conventional company (ICA, 1995; SINGER, 2002). Administrative competencies stem from the objective of identifying the competencies foreseen in the National Curriculum Guidelines for Administration (BRAZIL, 2021; FLEURY; FLEURY, 2001). Professionalization of cooperative management and governance and participation organize the central axis of the problem—the articulation between these competencies and the real needs of cooperatives (BIALOSKORSKI NETO, 2012; BARASUOL et al., 2015). Territorial development and Amazonian cooperativism define the regional scope that justifies the research (WITKOSKI; REZENDE; FRAXE, 2020; SILVA et al., 2019). In practice, the categories functioned as a filter for reading the corpus and structured the presentation of the results in the following sections.

The main limitation of the study stems from this design. Due to its non-empirical nature, the absence of primary data prevents generalizations about concrete management practices or about the curricula actually implemented in courses in the region.

## **Cooperativism as a form of organization**

### **Origins and foundations**

Modern cooperativism has its origins in the Rochdale Pioneers , founded in 1844 in England. The consumer cooperative created by English weavers established principles that remain the foundation of the movement: democratic management, economic participation of members, and commitment to the community (VEIGA; FONSECA, 2001; OMAR; ROSALEM; CISSÉ BA, 2019).

The tradition of the solidarity economy offers a complementary perspective to legal-institutional approaches. For Tenório (1998) and for França Filho and Laville (2004), cooperatives are understood not only as economic organizations regulated by law, but as social practices that express a logic of reciprocity and solidarity irreducible to the mercantile logic. In Amazonian cooperativism, as observed by Delgado and Leite (2011) and Silva et al. (2019), this community dimension frequently precedes and underlies the economic dimension.

### **Cooperative identity and principles**

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) defines a cooperative as an autonomous association of persons who voluntarily unite to meet common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a collectively owned and democratically managed enterprise (ICA, 1995). This definition expresses the dual nature of the cooperative: association of people and economic enterprise, dimensions that need to coexist in balance.

Cooperative identity is operationalized by seven principles established by the ICA (1995) and reaffirmed by the Guidance Notes (ICA, 2015): voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; cooperation among cooperative members; and concern for community. These principles configure an organizational logic distinct from conventional companies and guide managerial conduct and internal decision-making processes (SINGER, 2002; BARASUOL et al., 2015).

The uniqueness of a cooperative is not a rhetorical issue: it is a concrete management requirement. For Omar, Rosalem , and Cissé Ba (2019, p. 175), cooperative identity exists as long as the economic, social, and environmental dimensions are preserved in balance: it only takes one of them to be sacrificed for the cooperative logic to begin to unravel. Singer (2002) highlights that self-management is the central element that differentiates cooperatives from capitalist companies: while in the latter, decision-making power is concentrated in the owners of capital, in cooperatives it belongs to the group of members, exercised democratically.

This identity fragility is not merely theoretical. Ouro-Salim, Fanho, and Cissé Ba (2025), investigating Coacal in Catalão (GO), identified that the absence of marketing planning led to the progressive loss of members to capitalist competitors, a process that the authors characterize as an identity crisis. The study concludes that maintaining cooperative principles and values is a condition for preserving cooperative identity and achieving organizational equilibrium. Identity, therefore, is a dynamic achievement, constantly contested by market pressures.

Novkovic (2008) expands on this perspective by demonstrating that cooperatives play roles that conventional economic literature rarely recognizes: internalizing externalities, functioning as laboratories for social innovation, and promoting ethical business practices. For the author, the emphasis on ownership and control structure as the source of cooperative difference paints an incomplete picture: the very principles of cooperation explain why cooperatives thrive in contexts of low labor mobility, market failures, and labor-intensive sectors (NOVKOVIC, 2008, p. 2169). Birchall (2011) reinforces this conclusion based on extensive historical evidence: cooperatives that maintain a balance between managerial efficiency and democratic participation exhibit greater longevity and resilience.

### **Cooperative management: specificities and challenges**

Cooperative management faces challenges without direct equivalents in conventional organizations. Bialoskorski Neto (2012) and Crúzio (2001) identify the main difficulties as: reconciling economic efficiency and participatory democracy; managing internal stakeholders with differing interests (members, elected directors, and contracted employees); and ensuring financial sustainability without losing the social commitment that justifies the cooperative's existence. Cornforth (2004) adds that cooperative governance is structurally different from corporate governance: while the latter minimizes agency costs between shareholders and managers, the former needs to represent heterogeneous collective interests in democratic structures.

Professional management is necessary, but it must be sensitive to the specificities of cooperatives. Barasuol et al. (2015, p. 152) distinguish two distinct paths:

When discussing the professionalization of cooperatives, it is important to highlight two fundamental aspects: the first is related to the professionalization of the cooperative's elected leadership, and the second to the hiring of specialized professionals to provide decision-making support to the leaders. For the cooperative's



internal management to meet the complex needs demanded by the competitive market, amateurism cannot be allowed within the organization. (BARASUOL et al., 2015, p. 152)

The distinction matters: cooperative professionalization encompasses distinct paths for different performance profiles. Rodrigues (2008 apud BARASUOL et al., 2015, p. 152) precisely summarizes the limit of this process: one cannot professionalize the management of a cooperative like any other company, because it is not. Rosalem et al. (2009) reinforce this inseparability by demonstrating, in a study with members of a farmers' cooperative in Minas Gerais, that the lack of professional training of managers drives the loss of motivation and low commitment of members: when cooperative training is neglected, managerial efficiency and democratic participation deteriorate together.

In the Amazonian context, these challenges take on additional dimensions. Geographic dispersion, price volatility of socio-biodiversity products, and limited access to credit amplify the complexity of cooperative management (SILVA et al., 2019; FONSECA et al., 2022). Ostrom's (1990) theory of the commons is particularly relevant here: Amazonian cooperatives frequently manage resources for common use, such as forest management areas, fishing grounds, and extractive territories, and the design principles that Ostrom identified for the sustainable governance of these areas converge with cooperative principles of the ICA—for example, the clear definition of who belongs to the group is closer to free membership, and the arenas of collective choice are closer to democratic management.

## **Training in Administration and Managerial Skills**

### **National Curriculum Guidelines and Graduate Profile**

Resolution CNE/CES No. 5/2021 establishes that graduates of undergraduate courses in Administration must integrate knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes to work in diverse organizational environments (BRAZIL, 2021). Among the expected competencies, critical and systemic thinking, strategic planning, data-driven decision making, people management, organizational communication, innovation capacity, and commitment to sustainability stand out.

However, historically, business administration training has been oriented towards private enterprise and the state, incorporating other organizational forms only marginally. Silva, Teixeira, and Magalhães (2006) refer to Andion (2001) to document this trend: cooperativism and the solidarity economy only entered organizational studies with the emergence of the so-

called Third Sector, and even then only peripherally. According to Nicolini (2002 apud SILVA; TEIXEIRA; MAGALHÃES, 2006, p. 6), faithful to a standardized minimum curriculum, business administration education turns schools into machines for producing bachelor's degree holders without any connection to the diversity of the Brazilian organizational fabric. Barcellos, Dellagnelo, and Saliés (2011) confirm that this gap persists: the relationship between university and society in business administration courses still does not fully incorporate the organizational forms present in Brazilian reality.

For courses located in the Legal Amazon region, the consequence is immediate. Graduates without knowledge of cooperativism, solidarity economy, and the management of community organizations have a reduced capacity to contribute to the territorial development of a region where these organizational forms play a primary economic and social role. As Silva, Teixeira, and Magalhães (2006, p. 7) observed, the expansion of solidarity economy organizations generates job opportunities for administrators who are simply not being prepared to fill them.

### **Concept of managerial competence**

The concept of managerial competence adopted in this study is affiliated with the European tradition, which understands competence as the ability to mobilize, integrate, and transfer knowledge, resources, and skills in concrete work contexts (LE BOTERF, 1995 apud FLEURY; FLEURY, 2001; ZARIFIAN, 2001). This perspective differs from the North American tradition, centered on measurable individual attributes, by emphasizing the relational and contextual dimension of competence. Fleury and Fleury (2001, p. 188) summarize: competence is a responsible and recognized know-how that mobilizes knowledge, resources, and skills, adding economic value to the organization and social value to the individual.

The unique organizational structure of cooperatives imposes specificities on the very concept of managerial competence in this field. Stecca et al. (2021, p. 3), when investigating credit cooperatives in Southern Brazil, highlight that the choice of cooperatives as the object of study is justified by the dispersion of ownership among members, not investors, by the principle of one person, one vote, and by the strong doctrinal and historical aspects that characterize these organizations. This structural uniqueness implies that the human resources subsystems cannot be uncritically transposed from the business model: they need to be redesigned to respect the participatory logic, community ties, and cooperative values.



European evidence reinforces this urgency. Monzón and Torres-Ortega (2021), in analyzing vocational training programs in the Basque Country, where the Mondragon model of industrial cooperativism has become a global benchmark, demonstrate that training in social entrepreneurship incorporated into curricula significantly increases young people's intentions to create social economy enterprises. Raising awareness of cooperative entrepreneurship from basic and technical education onwards is essential to expanding the pool of professionals oriented towards organizational forms distinct from conventional capitalism, an argument that reinforces the relevance of incorporating cooperativism into Business Administration curricula in Brazil, with particular urgency in the Legal Amazon region.

For the purposes of this study, a classification of managerial competencies is adopted, articulated with the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCN) (BRASIL, 2021) and the framework of Fleury and Fleury (2001), organized into six dimensions: strategic planning, financial management, people management, governance, organizational communication, and sustainability.

## **ARTICULATION BETWEEN ADMINISTRATIVE COMPETENCIES AND COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT**

### **Convergences and structural tensions**

The articulation between administrative skills and cooperative management is neither straightforward nor free of tensions. Bialoskorski Neto (2012), Barasuol et al. (2015), and Fonseca et al. (2022) agree that professionalization is a necessary condition for the sustainability of cooperatives, but warn that it cannot be reduced to the uncritical transposition of tools developed for conventional companies.

Identity and professionalization are inseparable dimensions of cooperative management: the latter cannot advance without the former. The study by Barasuol et al. (2015, p. 160) on COTRIJUC, a Rio Grande do Sul agricultural cooperative, notes that employees understand that managing a cooperative is different from managing other types of organizations, and that hired professionals need to know the unique characteristics of the cooperative system and take into account the cultural aspects of the organization where they work in order to perform effectively.

However, there is a paradoxical dimension to this relationship that the literature rarely makes explicit. Bialoskorski Neto (2007) constructed regression models that demonstrate a negative correlation between economic performance and member participation in general assemblies. The finding reveals a structural dichotomy:

Participation in collective ventures, such as cooperatives, is of fundamental importance for generating transparency in corporate governance, and thus there is a dichotomy to be discussed, because the better the economic performance of the cooperatives, the lower the participation and, therefore, the less transparent the management and governance process will be, requiring additional costs to overcome this deficiency. (BIALOSKORSKI NETO, 2007, p. 119)

The paradox has direct implications for the training of administrators: professionalization that improves economic performance can simultaneously reduce the democratic engagement of cooperative members, compromising the legitimacy of management. Maciel et al. (2018), Omar, Rosalem and Cissé Ba (2019) and Oliveira Junior and Wander (2022) identify related structural tensions: between technical control of financial management and participation in decisions about surpluses; between efficient executive leadership and mechanisms that limit the concentration of power; and between operational efficiency and the cooperative principle of education, which requires continuous investment in the training of cooperative members.

A recurring risk in this field is the progressive technocratization of management: the concentration of decision-making power in the hands of technical managers to the detriment of the democratic participation of cooperative members (CORNFORTH, 2004; BIRCHALL, 2011). Management education can both prevent this risk, by sensitizing managers to the importance of participation and transparency, and exacerbate it if it transmits an instrumentalist view of management. This ambivalence is the strongest argument for incorporating content on solidarity economy, participatory governance, and cooperative identity into management curricula.

### **Administrative skills applied to cooperative management**

Table 1 summarizes the six managerial competencies analyzed, their contribution to cooperative management, and the specific characteristics that distinguish their application in the cooperative context.

**Table 1 — Administrative skills and contribution to cooperative management**

Competence	Contribution to cooperative management	Specificity cooperative
Planning strategic	Structure objectives, priorities, and monitoring indicators.	Linked to the seasonality of socio-biodiversity and the rules for the collective use of resources; it requires a participatory formulation process.
Management financial	Cost control, transparency of results, and data-driven decision making.	The surplus belongs to the members; its allocation is decided in assembly, requiring accessible financial communication.
People management	Team development, leadership, and work environments.	It includes owner-members, hired employees, and elected directors, with distinct ties and expectations (STECCA et al., 2021).
Governance	Transparency, internal control and accountability	Legally defined structure: general assembly, board of directors, and supervisory board; requires strengthening of democratic control.
Communication organizational	Relationship with members, community and partners	In the Amazonian context, adaptation is necessary to address cultural diversity, geographical distances, and limited access to communication technologies.
Sustainability	Linking economic, social, and environmental outcomes.	It encompasses socio-biodiversity chains and good living as a development paradigm (WITKOSKI et al., 2020).

Source: prepared by the authors based on ACI (1995), Fleury and Fleury (2001), Bialoskorski Neto (2012), Brasil (2021), ICA (2015), Stecca et al. (2021) and Witkoski, Rezende and Fraxe (2020).

Financial management in cooperatives requires not only technical expertise but also communication skills. As Fonseca et al. (2022) and Abrantes and Albino (2019) show, results need to be translated in an accessible way for cooperative members with different literacy levels, because the allocation of surpluses is decided in assembly. People management, in turn, involves distinct relationships: hired employees, owner-members, and elected leaders with leadership roles who do not necessarily have managerial training (BARASUOL et al., 2015; STECCA et al., 2021). The social capital of Amazonian rural communities, a concept that Putnam (1993) helped to consolidate, is simultaneously a resource—the networks of trust and cooperation that facilitate collective organization—and a fragile element that inadequate management can deteriorate.

Cooperative governance is a field in which training in Administration has a direct and proven contribution. Santos, Santos and Silva (2020) and Maciel et al. (2018) demonstrate that cooperatives with better governance practices show greater capacity for sustainability and resilience. Cooperative democracy is not an abstract normative ideal: it is a daily organizational practice that requires technical support. For Omar, Rosalem and Cissé Ba (2019, p. 177), democratic governance is the mechanism that maintains cohesion between the cooperative and its members, articulating different interests, skills and experiences around a common project.

Fontes Filho, Marucci, and Oliveira (2008), in research conducted with 1,199 credit cooperatives, conclude that cooperatives require mechanisms for participation and representation in their governance to confer legitimacy on managers. In the context of Rondônia, cooperatives where members do not perceive themselves as represented in decision-making bodies tend to lose engagement, a process that, as Bialoskorski Neto (2007) demonstrated, paradoxically deepens during periods of good economic performance. As the cooperative grows, the principle of one member, one vote, becomes increasingly complex to operationalize (OMAR; ROSALEM; CISSÉ BA, 2019), which requires administrators to develop methodologies to maintain significant participation even in contexts of scale and geographical dispersion.

Organizational communication takes on a strategic dimension in Amazonian cooperatives. As Silva et al. (2019) and Fonseca et al. (2022) note, extractive communities can be hundreds of kilometers from the cooperative headquarters, accessible only by river, and access to communication technologies is limited.

Amazonian cooperatives are not merely economic agents: they are instruments of community-based social transformation. The study by Silva et al. (2019) on the Sardinha Mixed Agro-extractive Cooperative (COOPMAS), in Lábrea/AM, documents that the cooperative overcame the oligopsony that had dominated the municipality's extractive market for decades: after its creation, prices improved, production expanded, and extractivists gained access to credit and new markets. Witkoski, Rezende, and Fraxe (2020, p. 88) generalize this experience by arguing that Amazonian peoples have built social reproduction strategies centered on well-being, and that cooperativism is one of these strategies, aimed at ends distinct from those of capitalists. Competence in sustainability, in this context, is not limited to conventional environmental management: it encompasses the capacity to articulate socio-biodiversity chains with community development, overcoming historical structures of dependency (DELGADO; LEITE, 2011).

## **The Cooperative Skills Adaptation Cycle (CACC)**

The central problem this article addresses is not the absence of technical skills in administrators, but the difficulty of adapting them to cooperative logic without distorting either technical efficiency or democratic participation. Based on a synthesis of the analyzed evidence, especially Bialoskorski Neto 's (2007) paradox between economic performance and participation, the Cooperative Skills Adaptation Cycle (CACC) is proposed: a conceptual model with four articulated moments that structure the professional performance of administrators in cooperatives. In each moment, administrative skills are read, adapted, and returned to cooperative practice; in this sense, the CACC specializes, for the cooperative field, the logic of organizational learning cycles—diagnose, act, evaluate, and provide feedback—with democratic participation as a criterion that runs through all stages.

The starting point is participatory diagnosis. Before proposing any tool or intervention, the administrator needs to systematically read the organizational and territorial context of the cooperative, and this reading is not done unilaterally: it is constructed in dialogue with the members, valuing local knowledge about resources, markets, and community relations. Ostrom 's (1990) design principles offer a reference for identifying the institutional elements that support or weaken governance. In Amazonian cooperativism, this phase necessarily includes an understanding of good living practices and community patterns of sustainable territorial management (WITKOSKI; REZENDE; FRAXE, 2020).

The second stage, that of contextual adaptation, is when management tools are reinterpreted for the cooperative logic. This does not mean rejecting conventional tools, but subjecting them to critical scrutiny: strategic planning becomes participatory; financial analysis incorporates social and environmental indicators; and personnel selection and development processes consider pre-existing community ties and the organizational uniqueness of cooperatives (FLEURY; FLEURY, 2001; ICA, 2015; STECCA et al., 2021).

In democratic implementation, the administrator acts as a technical facilitator: providing the cooperative with information, analyses, and proposals without taking the place that belongs to the members gathered in assembly. This distinction is not only ethical but also operational. Decisions made without the real participation of the members lose legitimacy and generate disengagement, deepening precisely the paradox that Bialoskorski Neto (2007) described. Barasuol et al. (2015) and Fonseca et al. (2022) document experiences of administrators who managed to exercise this balanced role, contributing to professionalization without technocratizing management.

Collective evaluation completes the cycle. Unlike conventional managerial control, which focuses on economic indicators, it incorporates the perspectives of cooperative members on the social, environmental, and community outcomes of the organization. This moment is crucial to counterbalance the paradox of Bialoskorski Neto (2007): even during periods of good economic performance, collective evaluation keeps participation mechanisms active and governance transparent. By providing feedback to the participatory diagnosis, it transforms the cycle into a continuous practice of organizational learning (PUTNAM, 1993; CORNFORTH, 2004; JAMALUDDIN et al., 2023).

The CACC (Cooperative Accreditation Course) is a pedagogical and professional proposal, not a description of how cooperatives function. Its application requires the administrator to possess, in addition to technical skills, ethical training and an understanding of cooperative identity as a constitutive dimension of management practice (SINGER, 2002; ICA, 1995; NOVKOVIC, 2008). In the Amazonian context, this also means understanding specific territorial dynamics: relationships with family farming, community governance patterns, and the particularities of management in remote territories (SILVA et al., 2019; DELGADO; LEITE, 2011).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Professionalizing the management of a cooperative without turning it into a business is a real challenge, not just a rhetorical one. This tension runs throughout this article and, in a way, summarizes the problem that business administration education needs to learn to address, especially in courses located in regions like Rondônia, where cooperatives are central instruments of territorial development.

Based on an integrative literature review and document analysis, the study demonstrated that the competencies foreseen in the National Curriculum Guidelines for Administration have concrete relevance for Amazonian cooperatives. Strategic planning adapted to the seasonality of socio-biodiversity, financial management that communicates with cooperative members from diverse backgrounds, governance that supports the real participation of members, people management sensitive to community ties: these are not competencies to be built from scratch, but to be redefined.

The central argument can be summarized on two levels. On the level of identity, a cooperative is not a conventional company with democratic management added as an accessory element: its constitutive principles define an organizational form with its own logic, which imposes specific demands on managerial practice (ICA, 1995; ICA, 2015). On the level of



competence, cooperative professionalization depends on the administrator's ability to adapt tools to the cooperative context, respecting the principles of the ICA and the sovereignty of collective decisions. The CACC proposed in this article offers a framework to guide this adaptation in Amazonian contexts, responding to the paradox identified by Bialoskorski Neto (2007): the more efficient the management, the greater the risk of democratic disengagement. The four stages of the cycle are precisely the antidotes to this risk.

For business administration programs, the practical implication is clear: cooperativism needs to be included in curricula as a legitimate field of professional activity. It is suggested that this be organized into six interconnected modules: fundamentals of cooperativism and the solidarity economy; cooperative governance and democratic participation; financial management for cooperatives; participatory strategic planning; organizational communication and community mobilization; and Amazonian cooperativism and territorial development. These modules can be implemented either through the cross-disciplinary incorporation of cooperativism into existing subjects or through the creation of specific subjects, linked to internships and extension projects in cooperatives in the region. The European experience documented by Monzón and Torres-Ortega (2021) suggests that this incorporation is even more effective when it begins before graduation, preparing the ground for cooperative entrepreneurship in higher education.

The study's main limitation is the non-empirical nature of the research. The propositions developed are based on bibliographic and documentary sources, without primary evidence on effective management practices in cooperatives or on the curricula used in courses in the region. Natural avenues for advancing the research agenda include case studies in cooperatives in Rondônia, interviews with managers and directors, and systematic analysis of the pedagogical projects of Administration courses in public institutions in the Legal Amazon.

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