LEADERSHIP AS PRACTICE: A Bibliometric Study

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to present the developments made in the literature regarding leadership as practice. A bibliometric analysis was thus performed on articles published on Web of Science, SCOPUS, EBSCO and SCIELO between 2006 and 2016. A total of 11 articles have been selected, written by 18 authors affiliated to 11 institutions from 7 countries. It is important to highlight that no Brazilian or South American articles have been found in the Web of Science, SCOPUS, EBSCO and SCIELO databases in relation to these topics. This study has also enabled the identification of a profile of studies performed on these issues through a broad retrospective panorama of publications. Results found portray a continuous interest by the international scientific community in studying leadership as practice.

Keywords: *leadership; leadership as practice; bibliometric analysis.*

1.   INTRODUCTION

Research on leadership is an important and central part of the literature on Management and Organizational Behavior (Yukl, 1989), one of the phenomena investigated in the Social Sciences. This is a theme that accumulates more than a century of scientific research (Day & Antonakis, 2012). Burns (1978) found out that, until the end of the 1970s, more than 130 different definitions were presented for the concept of *leadership*, without any consensus regarding a definitive concept, since this is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon (Day & Antonakis, 2012), which is difficult to define in a precise manner.

Even though there are studies that explore aspects of leadership - with different perspectives that emphasize one or another specific factor of this process - (Yukl, 2006), there are recurrent essential elements that characterize leadership and from which there is a consensus. This involves: (a) a process of influence, (b) a dynamic interaction between leaders and followers, (c) the search for achieving goals or specific objectives, and (d) promoting any level of transformation in a certain social context. Therefore, leadership can be conceived as "an interactive process in which leaders influence their followers to make efforts and achieve transforming objectives from the contexts they act". (Turano & Cavazotte, 2016).

Recent research indicates a need for studying leadership under another focus. Such focus is on practice and it is named Leadership as Practice (Carroll, 2008). The proposal of studying leadership through this view comes

from a movement in which researchers suggest the analyses of activities, tasks, actions and interactions from various leaders as long as they perform their roles, instead of studying only the leader figure *per se*.

From this perspective, this article aims at investigating scientific research about leadership as practice (L-A-P) published in the Web of Science, SCOPUS, EBSCO e SCIELO database throughout ten years. This bibliometric approach will bring leading questions for deepening studies about the topic, such as: chronological distribution of publications, countries with publications on the topic, production of articles by individual authors since the first year, chronological distribution of population of research, quantity of articles by number of authors, composition of the main affiliations of authors, journals that publish the papers, list of journals and frequency of articles, number of citations of articles, relation between number of citations and the impact factor of the journal.

It is worth to register that few bibliometric studies have been noticed in Brazil in the last decade, particularly in the areas of People Management, Human Resources, Work Relationships and related areas (Vieira & Fischer, 2005). Nevertheless, this methodology contributes in a relevant way to academia work, due to its leading character as a tool for consolidating research on specific topics, on the identification of editorial tendencies and factors that promote citations, and also on gaps for future research. This methodology has been repeatedly chosen in Administration literature (Serra, Ferreira, Almeida, & Vanz, 2012; Sobral & Mansur, 2013; Turano & Cavazotte, 2016). Besides, research on leadership is still a brand new field in Brazil, where qualitative exploratory studies predominate (Fonseca, Porto & Borges-Andrade, 2015).

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The individual approach predominates mostly in research on leadership. However, an increasing body of research points out to the sharing, the emergence and to contextual aspects of this concept (Meier, 2015). The notion of shared leadership or distributed practices has been postulated to provoke more accurate reflections about division of labor in work environments and analyses according to real practice (Gronn, 2002), which is evidence to the relational and contextual nature of leadership processes (Chreim, 2010; Raelin, 2011). In accordance with this approach, there is leadership as practice - it calls one's attention to everyday practice, to routines and to relational aspects of leadership.

Chreim (2016) states that recent development of the literature on leadership includes a focus on leaders' practices (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2010, Denis *et al*., 2010, Spillane *et al*., 2001) and that this emphasis encourages researchers to supplant studies of leading traces and formally defined roles, which may not express what leaders effectively do. Thus, the literature on Leadership as Practice aimed at examining activities, tasks, actions and interactions of several leaders as they perform their roles (Chreim, 2015; Crevani *et al.*, 2010; Denis *et al*., 2010; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). Such studies emphasize the interpretations and interactions from organizational participants and highlight the social constructivist basis and the emerging nature of leadership (Bolden, Petrov & Gosling, 2008; Carroll, Levy & Richmond, 2008; Crevani *et al*., 2010; Raelin, 2011). The notion of distributed leadership finds resonance in studies based on practice (Denis *et al*., 2010).

Leadership as Practice relates much more to "where", "how" and "why" the leadership at work is being organized and carried out, than to "whom" is offering views to others to perform the work. Leadership as Practice also analyses the coordination effort among participants that choose, through their own rules, to accomplish a distinct result; it takes into consideration what people can perform together, instead of what the person thinks or does. This area is also concerned with the way leadership emerges and develops through daily experience (Railin, 2011).

Besides, Leadership as Practice resonates with a number of conceptions strictly related, as relational, distributed and shared leadership that all converge in leadership processes. These approaches share a field of investigation that recognizes leadership as a social phenomenon (Raelin, 2011). Shared leadership stands on the perspective of teams, in which all participants act as leaders, sharing the decision process among them and also sharing the actions needed to reach the objectives pursued. Since all members of the group are empowered and feel as leaders, a system of weights and counterweights is created. This system permits a balance within the leadership relations in group, reinforcing the multilateral relations and resulting in an infrastructure of leadership that is more robust, flexible and dynamic than that one represented by the several proposals of vertical leadership (Pearce, Manz & Sims Junior, 2008).

In this sense, shared leadership refers specially to the construction of teams, in which all participants feel and act as leaders, pursuing results of common gains to the whole group. As a result, it leads to a greater cohesion of the

group and to the accomplishment of common goals (Adriano & Ramos, 2015). About the distributed leadership, Chreim (2016) mentions that it involves a joint action of individuals (potentially in different hierarchical levels) that share their roles and their leadership practices (Bolden, 2011; Spillane *et al*., 2001).

On the other hand, relational leadership results from the interrelation of different dimensions: unidirectional (leader-follower), encompassing individual, organizational and societal levels. Its focus is on dynamic and complex interactions, underlying the dynamics of influence and change in different fields and levels (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Hence, the focus in a practical view can change traditional views of leadership, because it either depends on attributes of individuals or concentrates in the dyadic relation between leaders and followers that historically has been the point of departure to any leadership discussion. Instead, it portrays the immanent group action emerging from mutual patterns which are discursive, sometimes recurrent and some other times engaging in the moment and time among those committed in the practice. This definition suggests an universal approach of the practice, because, in times, it refers to routine activities; some other times, it suggests a permanent dynamic of developments (Railin, 2011).

3. METHOD

The development of the systematic review of literature to understand the state-of-the-art of *Leadership as Practice* (L-A-P) followed a process composed of three stages:

> a) Data collection;
> b) Data analysis; and
> c) Synthesis and representation of data.

In order to achieve this, scientific rigor was considered when carrying out each of the stages as a fundamental element for a qualified analysis (Crossan & Apaydin, 2009). These three stages can be summarized in the following steps:

- Identifying database – due to its national and international scientific recognition and also its access facilitation for researchers, database from Web of Science, SCOPUS, EBSCO and SCIELO were selected. Besides being currently the greatest research articles database, they integrate the most relevant sources for systematic bibliographical research (Freire, 2010), which allows a multidisciplinary view for the research;
- After identifying the bases of scientific data, the search criteria and the execution of research in the identified database were established. A string of search used in this study was "*Leadership as Practice*";
- The string of search aforementioned was applied in the search engine of the scientific database identified for the study. Thus, the string was used in the search field named TOPIC that encompasses the title, the keywords and the abstract of publications;
- The result of this search strategy found eleven publications. After that, filtering was established, such as English language, articles that were accessible for analyses and complete articles available, and the eleven publications remained. This initial set was then used as a basis for future analyses;
- The data analyses were carried out from the preparation of tables and graphs for bibliographical representations, which allowed the identification of the main authors, countries, keywords and chronological distribution of these publications on Leadership as Practice.

For the review, the steps determined by the Cochrane Foundation and by the NHS/YORK were followed in relation to the steps of planning, execution, analysis and reporting. The process of analysis of studies involved: reading titles, abstracts, keywords and after a selection by objectives, the reading of the entire texts.

So, the methodological approach adopted in the present paper characterizes a descriptive and exploratory study, conducted by means of a systematic review of literature and oriented by meta-research. Results from the bibliometric analyses are presented as follows, in the section "General Results", and the information analyses from the articles investigated is available in the section "Leadership as Practice: State-of-the-Art".

4. GENERAL RESULTS

By the bibliometric analysis performed, 11 academic papers indexed by at least one of the database searched (Web of Science (WoS), SCOPUS e EBSCO) were found. The database from the research papers at SCIELO

did not indexed any of the articles found in this research. These papers were written by 18 authors, affiliated to 11 institutions from 7 different countries, and they are published in 8 scientific journals.

4.1 Summary of main results
Table 1 presents the summary of general results obtained with the bibliometric survey.

Table 1 – Summary of results found in the systematic review about L-A-P

| Aspects	Quantity
Publications	11
Different authors	18
Publication sources	8
Institutions	11
Countries	7
Different keywords	38

Source: Authors.

In relation to the distribution of types of publications, it has been identified an absolute predominance of publication of articles in journals, with 11 occurrences (100% of publications). No occurrences were found in articles published in proceedings of scientific conferences (0,00% of publications).

4.2 Chronological distribution of publications
Figure 1 presents the distribution of publications throughout the past eight years. The first publication, found both in SCOPUS data base and in WoS, about Leadership as Practice, is from 2007, with a work entitled *Leadership as Practice: Challenging the Competency Paradigm,* from Brigid Carroll, Lester Levy e David Richmond. It can be noticed that from 2007 until 2016, the publications found are annual, except from 2008 and 2012 which were the only years without any publications. However, in 2009, 2013 and 2015 there are two publications in the same year.

Figure 1 – Chronological distribution of publications about L-A-P
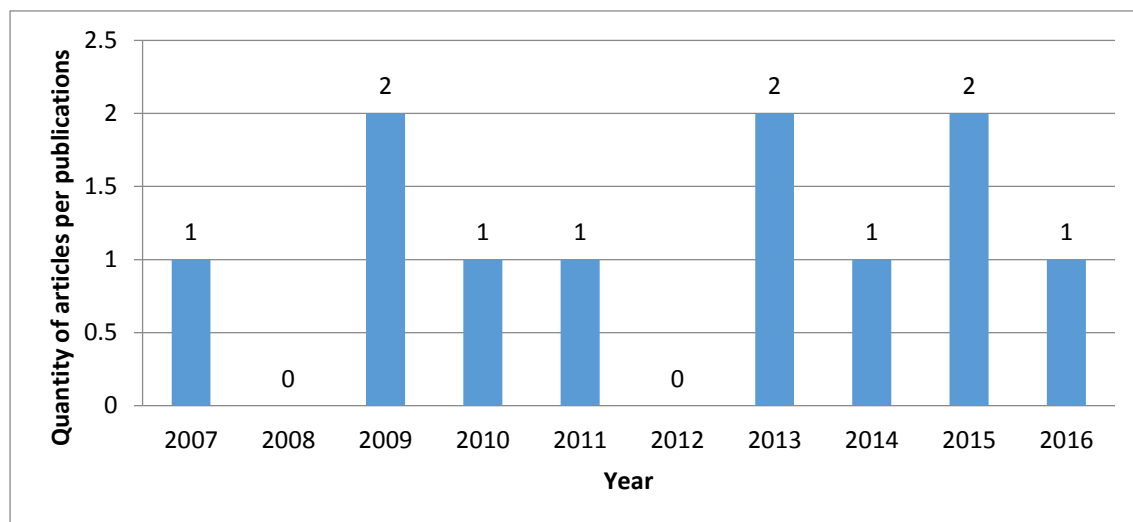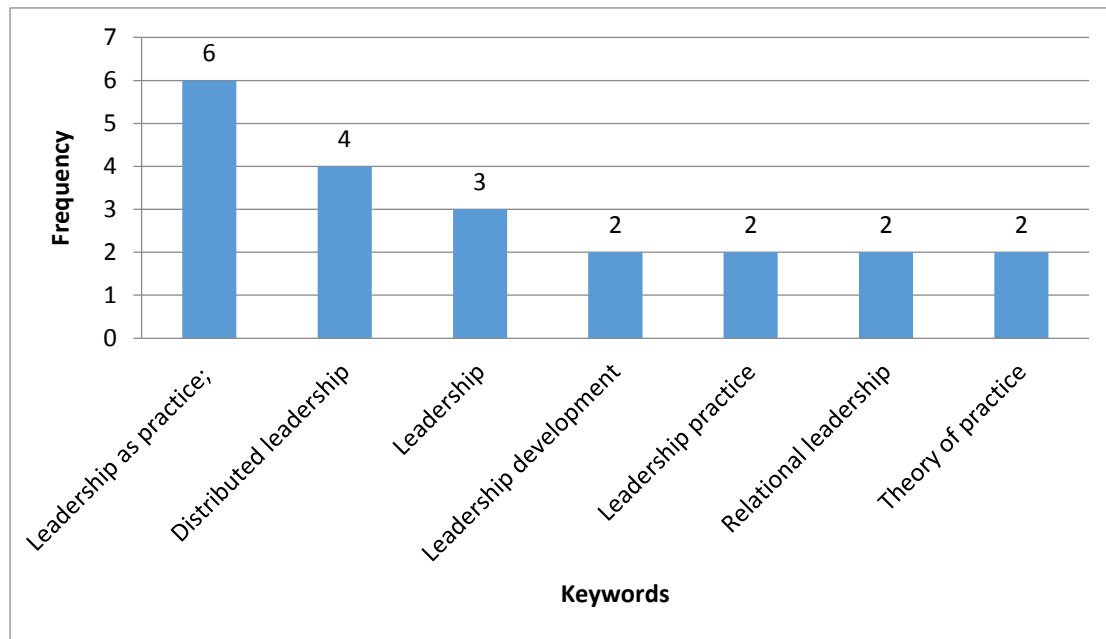

Source: Authors.

4.3 Quantity of articles per discipline/ field of study
In figure 2, keywords are presented with the frequency of use which is equal or higher than two, in a total of eleven articles analyzed, including the keywords that were applied to do the search in the database selected: '*Leadership as Practice*'. The words '*distributed leadership*' e '*leadership*' are the most used in papers about Leadership as Practice. In this context, '*Leadership as Practice*' was used six times, '*distributed leadership*' was used four times and '*leadership*' was used three times, and this generated a frequency of 13 occurrences, which corresponds to approximately 43% of the total of words used (38). Next, are the words '*leadership development*', '*leadership practice*', '*relational leadership*' and '*theory of practice*'. All of them were used twice, generating a frequency of eight occurrences.

Figure 2 – Most frequent keywords in articles about L-A-P
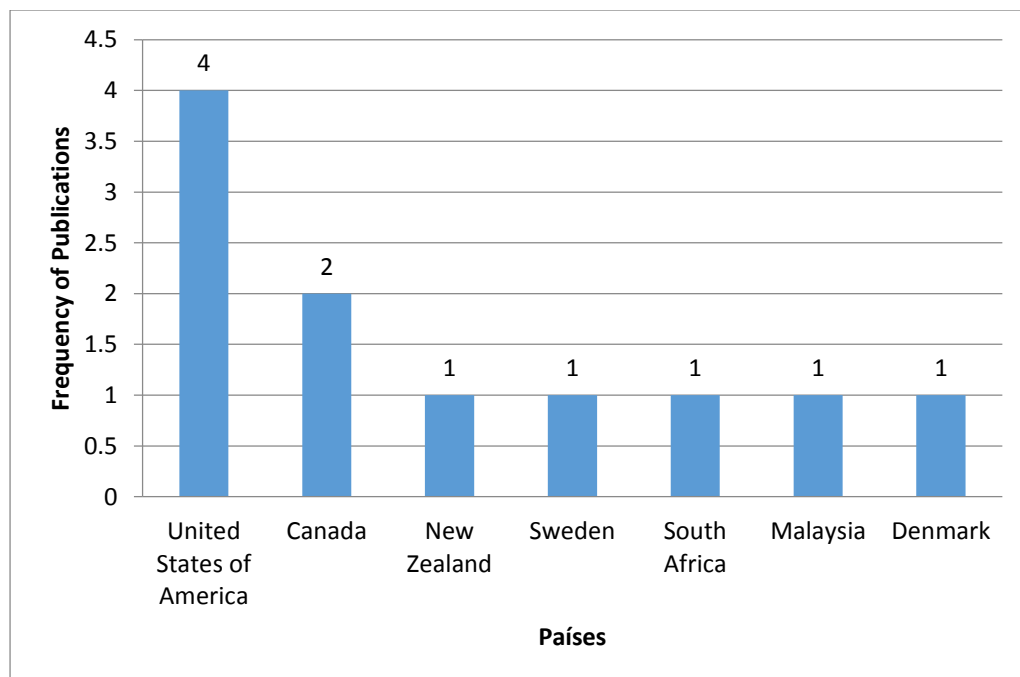

Source: Authors.

5. AUTHORSHIP

By the bibliometric analyses performed, it has been identified seven home countries from the scientific research papers about L-A-P, and the authors have the same pattern of authorship, as can be seen in the following sections.

5.1 Home countries of the publications

Figure 3 shows the home country of the publications. Normally, the searched database provides indexed articles written in English language. Such characteristic is a common aspect that can explain the linguistic similarity of these six publishing countries.

Figure 3 – Number of publications about L-A-P by home country

Source: Authors.

As can be seen in the previous figure, there are five continents, considering specifically the USA and Canada, that are countries from North America; Sweden and Denmark, that are countries located at the north of Europe; New Zealand, that is a country from Oceania; and Malaysia, which is a country from the Southeast of Asia, and South Africa. There are no articles originated in countries from South America.

5.2 Pattern of authorship
The analysis of compositions of authorship from these publications allows one to know their origins: if they are originated from research groups, from researchers that conduct their work independently, or even if the authors are used to publish together. Table 2 shows the positions of authorship within the authors that publish together. Column "Position of authorship" shows the quantity of publications that the referred author has in a certain position, and this is represented in parenthesis. For example, Carroll is the author of one publication among the selected ones. She is displayed as first author.

Table 2 – Positions of authorship within the authors that publish together about L-A-P

Most frequent author	Number of publications	Position of authorship
Carroll	1	1(1)
Levy	1	1(2)
Richmond	1	1(3)
Crevani	1	1(1)
Lindgren	1	1(2)
Packendorff	1	1(3)
Raelin	1	1(1)
Grant	1	1(1)
Singh	1	1(2)
Harris	1	1(1)
Haruna	1	1(1)
Endrissat	1	1(1)
von Arx	1	1(2)
Chreim	2	2(1)
Fisher	1	1(1)
Robbins	1	1(2)
MacNaughton	1	1(2)
Meier	1	1(1)

Source: Authors.

It is noticed that 17 authors have the same frequency of publications, with only one publication. Only the author Chreim has two publications and in both she is the first author of the selected article. Since the topic is recent and it is still in development, there is still a scarce number of publications. Nevertheless, the authors Brigid Carroll and Joe Raelin are still working with the topic and elaborated a book with other authors, entitled *Leadership-as-Practice: Theory and Application*. This book was published by Routledge in the first semester of 2016. Therefore, there is evidence that this is still a topic of interest and it is in current development by the scientific community.

Figure 4 exposes the list of authors in alphabetical order and the respective number of publications, among the selected work.

Figure 4 – Quantity of publications about L-A-P per author
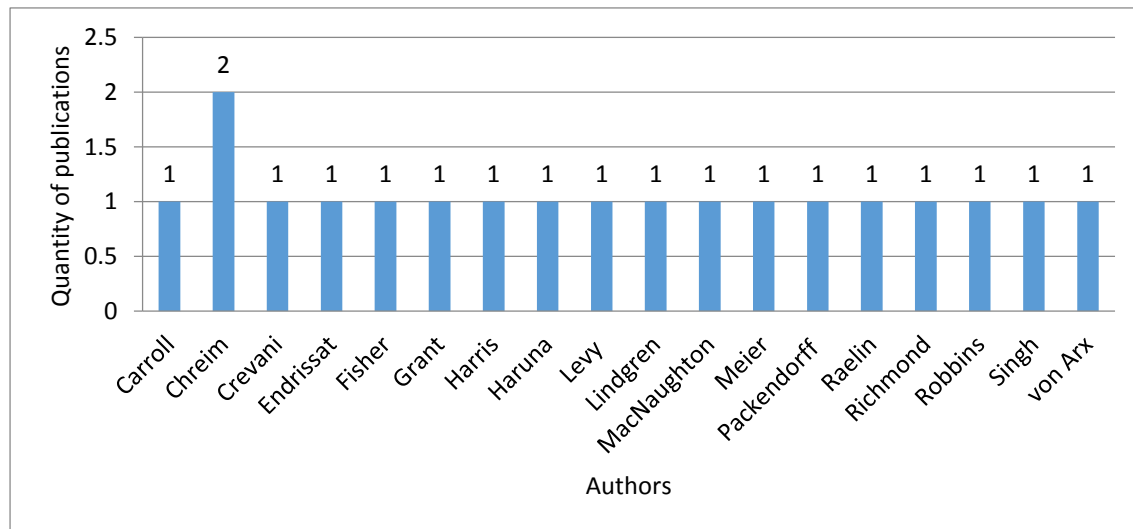
Source: Authors.

The heterogeneity of authorship, among the selected work, is highlighted by Graph 4. Only one author owns two publications, the others have only one.

5.3 Quantity of articles by number of authors

In this section, it is presented how the articles are distributed, in terms of quantity of articles by number of authors. For the purpose of the present study, eleven articles were selected, in which five were written by only one author, four were written by two authors and two were produced by three authors each. Figure 5 shows this distribution.

Graph 5 – Quantity of articles about L-A-P by the number of authors
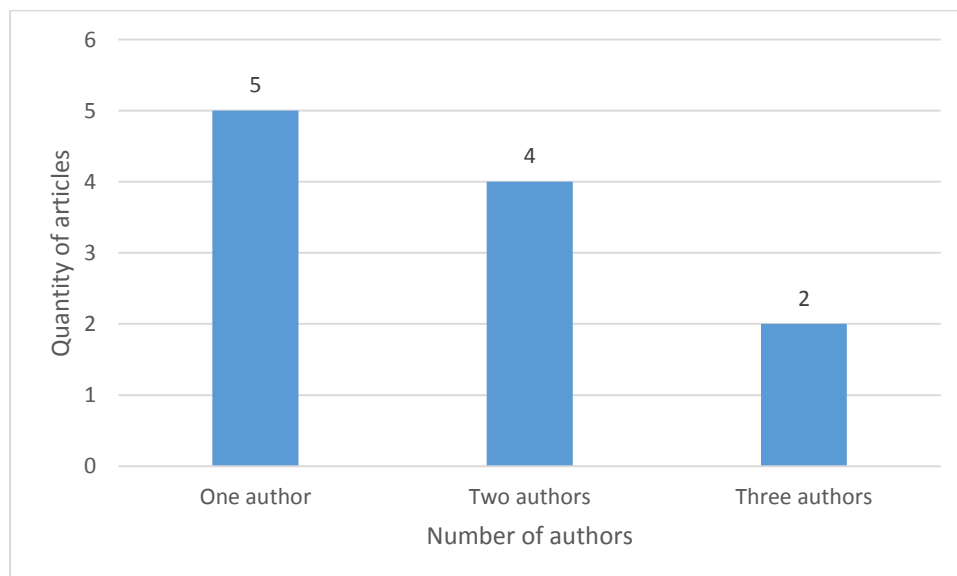
Source: Authors.

It can be seen above that most articles is written by one or two authors, with a total of 9 articles (81,81%). Two articles (18,18%) were written by three authors, respectively.

5.4 Productivity of institutions of the main authors

Table 3 shows the affiliation of the authors in the publications, as well as the productivity of the related institutions.

Table 3 – Productivity of the institutions of the main authors about L-A-P

Institution	Quantity of authors	Quantity of articles	Quantity of articles per authors
KTH – Royal Institute of Technology, School of Industrial Engineering and Management, Stockholm, Sweden	3	1	1/3
Northeastern University, Boston, USA	1	1	1
University of Auckland Business School, New Zealand	3	1	1/3
School of Education and Development, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa	1	1	1
Northlands Primary School, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa	1	1	1
Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 59990, Malaysia.	1	1	1
Texas A&M International University, USA	3	2	2/3
Lucerne University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland	1	1	1
Bern University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland	1	1	1
University of Ottawa, Canada	2	2	1
Department of Organization, Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen, Denmark	1	1	1

Source: Authors.

Among the universities with most cited work and authors with greater relevance, there are the University of Auckland Business School, New Zealand; a KTH Royal Institute of Technology, School of Industrial Engineering and Management, Stockholm, Sweden; e a Northeastern University, Boston, USA, respectively, affiliation of Carroll, that is the most cited author, followed by Crevani and Raelin. These are the authors with greater relevance, since they are pioneers on Leadership as Practice studies and also own a higher number of citations, though they are not necessarily the authors with greater productivity. The most relevant authors in Leadership as Practice are those from institutions related to Management and Business areas.

6. JOURNALS
From the bibliometric analysis performed, it was found that academic papers about L-A-P were published in 8 distinct journals. Remarks about these journals are reported on the following sections.

6.1 Journals that publish in the most cited articles
In the analysis of the most cited articles, two considerations can be made: in relation to general citations and to citations from the journals' database, as presented in table 4.

Table 4 – Journals that published in articles about L-A-P and the quantity of citations

Title	Journal	Citations SCOPUS	Citations WoS
Leadership as Practice: Challenging the Competency Paradigm	*Leadership Quarterly*	99	62
From leadership-as-practice to leaderful practice	*Leadership Quarterly*	53	27
Leadership, not leaders: On the study of leadership as practices and interactions	*Scandinavian Journal of Management*	75	No citation in the WoS na WoS
Passing the buck: this is not teacher leadership!	*Perspectives in Education Journal*	8	6
Distributed Leadership: Friend or Foe?	*EMAL Educational Management Administration &*	14	5

	Leadership Journal		
Revising the Leadership Paradigm in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Study of Community-Based Leadership	Public Administration Review Journal	4	5
Leadership practices and context: Two sides of the same coin	Leadership Quarterly	9	3
The (non)distribution of leadership roles: Considering leadership practices and configurations	Human Relations Journal	4	2
Embodied leadership: Moving from leader competencies to leaderful practices	Leadership Quarterly	1	1
Distributed leadership in health care teams: Constellation role distribution and leadership practices	Health Care Management Review	0	0
Configurations of leadership practices in hospital units	Journal of Health Organization and Management	0	0

Source: Authors.

It is observed that the most cited articles are in the *Leadership Quarterly* Journal. Concerning the quantity of citations per base, the most cited article is entitled *Leadership as Practice: Challenging the Competency Paradigm,* with 99 citations in the SCOPUS database and 62 in the WoS database. The second most cited is the *leadership, not leaders: On the study of leadership as practices and interactions* article, with 53 citations at SCOPUS and 27 at WoS. The third one is entitled *Leadership, not leaders: On the study of leadership as practices and interactions*, from the SCOPUS database, with 75 citations. It can be seen that one of the articles, besides being among the most cited, is not indexed at WoS database: *Leadership, not leaders: On the study of leadership as practices and interactions*.

6.2 List of journals and frequency of articles
The journal with a greater number of articles is *Leadership Quarterly*. This journal owns four out of eleven selected publications, which represents 36,365% of articles from this excerpt. Table 5 presents the journals with a higher number of articles in the selection and respective impact factor in the SJR (*Scimago Journal Ranking*)[1]. SJR uses the Elsevier Scopus database, which includes all scientific journals from ISI database (Institute for Scientific Information), among others. SJR uses a period of three years for the analysis and establishes different values for the citations, according to the scientific influence of the journal (for that, the algorithm *Page Rank* is applied. It was developed by Google).

Table 5 – Journals with a higher number of articles about L-A-P and their respective impact factor SJR

Journal	Number of articles	SJR
Leadership Quarterly	4	2,770
Human Relations Journal	1	2,117
Public Administration Review Journal	1	2,530
EMAL Educational Management Administration & Leadership Journal	1	0,982
Scandinavian Journal of Management	1	0,934
Health Care Management Review	1	0,806
Journal of Health, Organisation and Management	1	0,670
Perspectives in Education Journal	1	0,228

Source: Authors.

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[1] Available at: <http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php>

It can be stated that the journal with a higher impact factor is the one with a higher participation on the number of selected articles. The variety of articles is also characteristic of this selection, because 63,63% of articles are, approximately, published at one journal only. That is, they do not appear twice on the selection.

7. CITATIONS
From the bibliometric analysis developed, it was determined that the most cited article among the academic papers about was the one conducted by Brigid Carroll and collaborators (2007). The remarks about citations from these articles are portrayed in the next section.

7.1 Number of citations in articles
The number of citations in each article was collected in each database and compiled. Among the three publications with a higher number of citations at SCOPUS database, two belong to the same journal: *Leadership Quarterly*. All others are at one journal only, that is, they do not appear twice. The less recent article is from 2007 and it is the most cited. One of the selected ones (*Leadership, not leaders: On the study of leadership as practices and interactions*) is not indexed by a database (WoS) and, because of that, could not count for the citations accounted in this database. Graph 6 exposes the citations from each article, in each database used.

The most cited articles in the SCOPUS database are *Leadership as Practice: Challenging the Competency Paradigm, From leadership-as-practice to leaderful practice e Leadership, not leaders: On the study of leadership as practices and interactions*, that in graph 6 are displayed at first, second and third places. At WoS database, the most cited articles are displayed respectively at first and second places in the rank.

Figure 6 – Number of citations of articles about L–A–P most cited by database
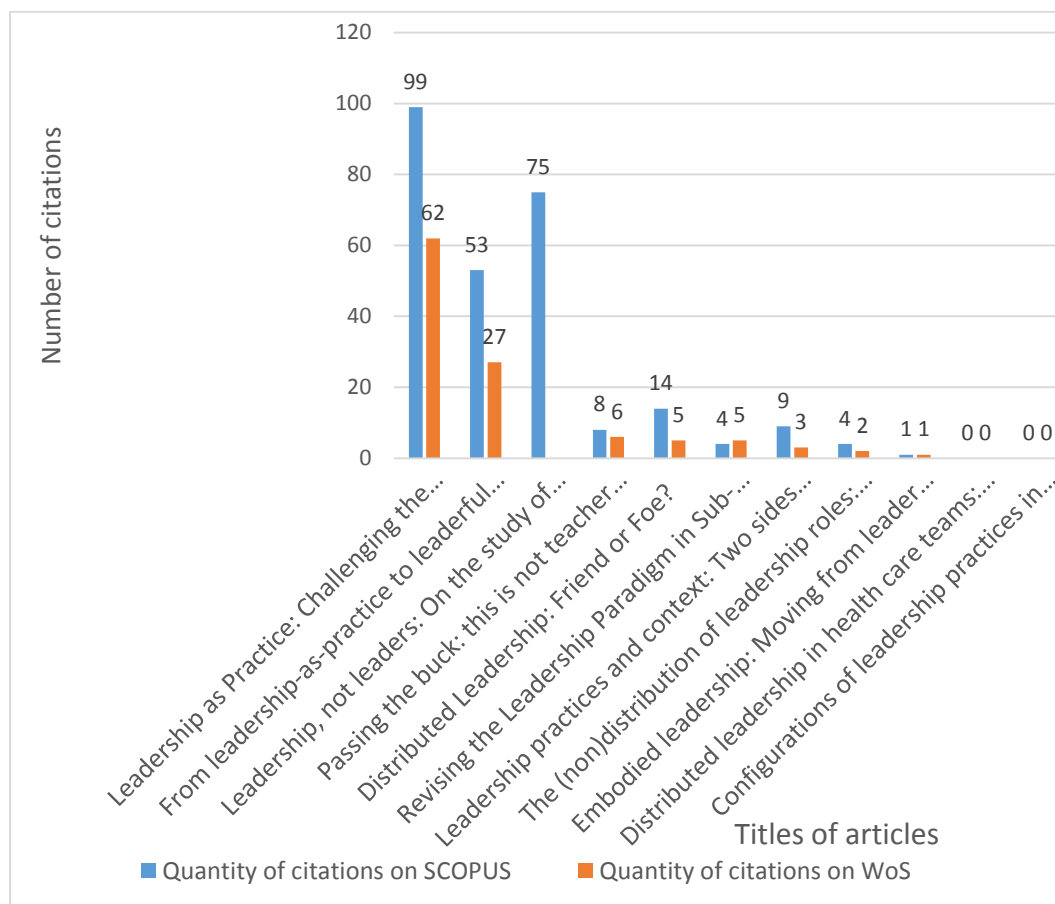
Source: Authors.

8. FINAL REMARKS
The present study contributes for the understanding of the development at *Leadership as Practice* as field of research. It aims at raising the profile of research developed regarding this topic, with current characteristics and a comprehensive and retrospective overview of publications. From the search and bibliometric analysis

performed at SCOPUS, Web of Science, EBSCO and SCIELO database, 11 articles were studied, characterized by 38 keywords and written by 18 different authors from 11 institutions in 7 countries.

The development of the literature on Leadership as Practice has started in 2007, establishing levels from up to two annual articles about the subject in the indexed journals at the database investigated. The keyword *leadership as practice* is the most used by the body of research articles published, which confirms that the articles analyzed correspond to the objective of the present study. Also, that the results and discussion are related to the *Leadership as Practice* topic. The second most used keyword, *distributed leadership*, allows one to interpret that Leadership as Practice is typically a theme that involves the joint action of individuals with the objective of reaching a common goal. This goal is related to leadership, which is the third most used keyword in the body of research articles selected for the study.

The Anglo-Saxon language countries are among those that originated the higher number of publications and South America is not present in the selection. The most relevant authors are those most cited and, in the case of Leadership as Practice they are the following: Brigid Carroll, Lester Levy and David Richmon. They own 99 citations at SCOPUS database with the article *Leadership as Practice: Challenging the Competency Paradigm.* However, Samia Chreim has the highest participation as authors at the publications, with double of publications from all the remained authors. One can affirm that heterogeneity in authorship predominates in this context, because from 18 of the authors only Samia Chreim has more than one article in the selection. Five of the articles present only one researcher as author, four articles present two authors and only two selected articles present three authors.

Leadership Quarterly is the journal that mostly published articles on the topic of Leadership as Practice and the most cited at the databases, which figures as the greatest impact factor (SJR). From this perspective, getting to know the development of the content on *Leadership as Practice* represents a relevant and appropriate to be conducted. Besides the fact that leadership as practice is a recent term, with its first publication in 2007, the publication pattern demonstrates a continuous interest on the theme. Conducting descriptive studies will permit expanding knowledge about research methods in Leadership as Practice, and in contexts which Leadership as Practice has been studied, gaps regarding, as well as identifying gaps derived from this topic. This will enable the development of new interlocutions on Leadership as Practice.

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