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Critical review

Weber's bureaucratic model in Brazil: The corruption of ideas as obstacles to the implementation of public policies

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ABSTRACT

The study identifies the role of ideas and the importance of bureaucracy, an institution leading the state administrative machinery of the Brazilian state, in the building and development of public policies. Further, it highlights the weaknesses of the Brazilian bureaucratic system, especially with regard to public policies, because there is a flaw in the interpretation of the Weberian model and constitutional principles due Brazilian political culture. Finally, it proposes actions to be taken by government leaders in order to allow a gradated rapprochement of the administration model developed in Brazil to that of the Weberian model, in order to guarantee the effectiveness of public policies.

1. Introduction

This article uses texts and data, as well as methods and techniques of qualitative research to analyze the influence of the abstract concept idea on the Weberian bureaucratic model for the operationalization of the reality of public policies. It aims to demonstrate that in Brazil, there is a corruption of ideas that has led to the failure in the application of the Weberian model for the implementation of public policies, thereby creating weaknesses in the bureaucratic system. This is the heritage of Brazilian political culture, influenced by historical, cultural, economic, psychological, and social factors. The State needs to take these aspects into account, if it is to achieve a rapprochement to the original model of administrative organization idealized in the constitutional text, so that it is able to ensure the implementation of fundamental rights within state institutions.

2. The role of ideas and Weberian bureaucracy in implementing public policies

In the formulation of public policies of a State, the intangible aspect idea is a relevant variable, which is similar to the bureaucratic model devised by Weber. Both these models when faithfully executed are facilitators in the implementation of such policies. Initially, it is possible to walk the path that demonstrates how ideas could operationalize the reality of public policies within the bureaucratic model—an analysis that would initiate with the understanding of the conceptual dimension of "ideas" that is adapted from Martins (2007:7):

> Ideas is a term that designates a set of convictions, beliefs, opinions, interests and motives, which, when individually or collectively adopted by the rational human agent, determines their act. (...) The perspective from which the ideas are dealt with here concerns their performance in the context of cultural networks whose results are forms of power in society and in the State that interfere in the formulation and practice of individual and social conduct. These actions include public policies defined by the States as institutionalization from society.

Hochschild (2006) points out that the connection between the elements' "ideas" and "action," in human history, occurs under three facets: *ideas create interests*, shaping a set of new actions; *ideas justify interests*, strengthening the personal preference for a certain type of action; and *ideas outweigh interests*, modifying the way individuals act. The abstract element "idea" therefore reflects a plurality of interests of the social group, which are materialized through action. Actions that seek to achieve the interests of a social group are nothing more than the search for power.

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State power can be seen not only as a "capacity to influence" but also in terms of resource allocation and public policymaking (Sarmento, 2005: 14; Russell, 2004). This is because they are the materialization of the needs, ideas, and interests of the people as a reflection of the evolution from a minimal state model to the model of the welfare state, and they are capable of correcting economic disorder and social inequalities, and redistributing wealth (Sarmento, 2005).

Goldstein and Keohane (1993) observe that it is not possible to identify which ideas of the social group are predominant, but it is known that they work as directives of the actors' actions. They defend that ideas, in the making of public policies, serve as *road maps*, while limiting choices among many interpretations of reality. Ideas also contribute to reach an outcome when an environment lacks balance, thus serving as points of focus in the definition of cooperative solutions and in the establishment of group cohesion. Finally, institutionalized ideas determine policies in a context of absence of innovation, because, even if they reflect only the interests of their creators, once institutionalized, they continue to reverberate over time.

The Weberian model of bureaucracy, thus, proposes to implement ideas, materializing them through state actions that concretize social anxieties. The core of this model, according to Oliveira (1970), consists of an administration that has the following characteristics:

(a) a structure of positions, with limits defined by the norms and organized hierarchically;
(b) specification of areas of competence, as a result of a division of labor and of the differentiation of functions, with an organizational unit with specific competence, called "administrative body";
(c) the existence of an administrative staff, which includes legally appointed and qualified officials, along with the bureaucratic specialization they perform, who should guide their behavior by the technical standards that guide the exercise of their position;
(d) manifestation of impersonality, with separation between the property of the organization and the personal property of the employee, as well as the collection of interests of the organization and the individual;
(e) documentary record of administrative acts, decisions, rules, and written orders;
(f) pursuit of a rational-legal authority.

Lotta (2010: 34), in an analysis of the Weberian model, emphasizes that the bureaucrat is a faithful enforcer of rules and procedures, abiding by hierarchies and their attributions, who renounces wills and personal values for legal commandments, thus creating a clear chain of responsibility and separation of tasks between bureaucrats and politicians. In other words, the bureaucrat is accountable to the politician and the politician is accountable to society. In Brazil, the bureaucratic model is not only misrepresented but also corrupted, a factor stemming from its historical and political heritage. This situation has triggered the current institutional crisis, despite the fact that the Federal Constitution of the country tried to avoid situations like this by including devices and principles in its text to help conduct state activities.

3. Corruption of ideas and the implementation of public policies in Brazil

The conflict in political institutions, including the bureaucratic model adopted in Brazil, goes back to the time of colonization, with the formation of a society submissive to a patrimonial authority. This conflict, in the political sphere, blurs the boundaries between family and public environment, and in the social sphere, it perpetuates the tradition of a condescending and over-conformed society that demonstrates an inability to use political institutions within the limits and purposes for which they were created.

Regarding the prominent ideational factors, Holanda (1995: 146-147) identifies cordiality and humanization of relations that make Brazilian people incapable of objectively meeting the rules of bureaucracy, thus moving them away from civility; this situation imposes the observance of coercive commandments. Faoro (2012) perceives the existence of a passivity, which keeps the population inert before the political demands. People value having possessions or power over doing what is legal, thus making empty political choices that do not address the real need of the community, but instead the needs of those who run the state machine.

Such characteristics of the Brazilian people have caused the exacerbated corruption perceived in the country, leading to errors in the application of the Weberian bureaucratic model because it preserves personal interests to the detriment of collective interests. Corruption is nothing more than the deviation of the public purpose through the use of public servants and/or administrative machine to gain personal advantage. The blame certainly rests less on the current form of constitution and more on the operators of state institutions. The text of the Federal Constitution of 1988, drafted in a context of re-democratization, inaugurated a new legal order and sought to ensure progress in public policies, which would be a way of promoting human dignity and the Fundamental Rights (Breus, 2006: 5).

According to Pires and Gomide (2014: 9–10), among these proposed advances are the possibility of involving political, economic, and social actors in the process of formulating and managing actions and the instruments of control as well as promoting participation and transparency in decisions on public policies. Thus, simultaneously, they represent a democratic advance and impose a difficulty for bureaucrats and politicians who are accustomed to a scheme of limits of competences and division of functions and hierarchy, and start to attend to the stimuli coming from the most varied agents.

Oliveira (2013) notes that the norm (article 23 of the Brazilian Constitution) envisions the distribution of the responsibilities of creation and implementation of public policies between the federative entities, with an aim to enable the simultaneous participation of all administrative spheres for the benefit of society. However, in reality, there is low interaction between the federative entities, little cooperation between managers and lack of intersectorality. It is seen, therefore, that the original legislator created the ideal apparatus for the accomplishment of affirmative actions in Brazil, by taking inspiration from the management model idealized by Weber. However, the managers of the administrative machine corrupted the idea contained therein to adjust the model according to their individual interests.

This distortion stems from the prominent offense against the principles of ***equality, legality, impersonality, purpose, efficiency, and morality,*** set forth in the Brazilian Constitution. These principles, if faithfully observed, would bring the administrative organization of the Brazilian state closer to the model proposed by Weber, thereby making the internal and external decision-making process more effective. There are four principles that need to be considered – of equality, legality, impersonality and efficiency. Taking each in turn, *equality*, corresponds to the conformation of rights between the State and its administration, while *legality* implies the need to apply the law according to the values of the constitutional provisions. *Impersonality* means that the Administration cannot treat any citizen in a way that is discriminatory, be it beneficial and harmful; and ideally aims to eradicate favoritism. Thus, the principle of administrative impersonality is linked to that of isonomy, in the sense that the citizen should not be treated differently from others, without motivation that meets their constitutional rights, thereby making them unequal. *Efficiency*, as a constitutional principle applicable to Public Administration, along with the other traditional principles of legality, impersonality, purpose, and morality, is not expressed in any form of sacrifice of individual rights, constitutional values.

The constitutional text imposes that the Public Administration of all political and administrative spheres should be guided by the principles already covered, and it is the administrator responsibility to seek a "compromise solution," where the principles are reasonably observed.

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