

Public Policy and the Institutional Role of the Ministry of Health in Brazil

This article discusses the role of the Brazilian Federal Executive in the provision of public goods and in the articulation of federal entities in the health sector. The articles present an exploratory review of the public policy for extremely vulnerable social groups and analyze the functions of the Ministry of Health (MOH) in sectorial development.

This thematic option was based on the observation that there is a veritable lack of studies that present and analyze the role of the MOH throughout the process of constitutionalizing the issue of health in the country. This abdication is particularly worrisome because in the New Democracy the MOH increased its sphere of institutional influence and power, assuming the ownership of the policy of assistance to individual public health previously pertaining to the Ministry of Social Security. In addition to this broadening of decision-making power, the MOH consolidated its historical competencies in health surveillance and the capacity to provide individual goods, such as high-cost drugs and vaccines.

The growth in scale and scope of the performance of the Federal Executive in health care is reflected in its effective capacity to ensure the right to health, to promote collective well-being, and to use public resources with effectiveness and quality. This task is especially relevant because Brazilian intellectual production has undergone socialization in relation to the constraints that affect the action of the Central Government throughout the process of consolidation and democratic development. The few works on the MOH's work remain focused on defending the guidelines of the Unified Health System, abdicating the exercise of criticism about the contradictions, dilemmas and possibilities of Federal Executive action.

It is considered that, by disseminating intellectual production on a relevant set of interventions at the federal level, this Edition contributes to a understanding of the contemporary experience of public policy for the health sector in Brazil.

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