

RAP Editorial

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The second editorial for which I as Editor of the *Revista de Administração Pública* (RAP — Public Administration Magazine) am responsible, comes out at a time of major political upheaval in Brazil, the solutions to which appear as yet far from clear. It's not unusual during such periods for crisis to inspire a debate over the role of the public sector bureaucracy, its relationship with politics, its place within society and other issues that touch upon the very existence of the State and its complex administrative-political structure.

We know that crisis tend to lead to the emergence of comprehensive reforms whose effects are, more often than not, modest and questionable in the long-term (March and Olson, 1983). Nevertheless, as we already learned from previous works published in our journal (RAP), there is, in the case of Brazil, a historical tendency to opt for globalist/short-sighted reforms that promise to solve all the problems in the shortest period of time (Nascimento, 1967), instead of incremental but more sustainable negotiated reforms. It is, however part of the role of a public administration academic journal to look beyond the simplistic and often outlandish solutions so often a mark of political rhetoric. It is its role to question the potential effects of this rhetoric as well as to analyze the administrative phenomenon from multiple conceptual and methodological angles.

It is this kind of systematic and in-depth analysis, carried out by a community of researchers committed to the field of public administration that we seek to attract to the RAP. The Journal's second issue of 2016 includes a number of important topics which the present scenario has helped transform into sensitive issues, such as corruption, as well as other classics, such as the relationship between public administration and democracy.

It is precisely because the present scenario warrants it that I feel justified in making a few observations of a contextualized nature with regard to the articles published in this issue of the RAP. One of these articles warns us of the problems we face in relation to corruption and its important ties to government spending in areas such as education and public health-

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care. It thus allows us to better focus the debate on ways to fight corruption, discussing more concrete sectorial and institutional measures that could be implemented. Other papers further the discussion about important institutional mechanisms being gradually adopted in Brazil and abroad, such as those dealing with answerability, the quality of financial management of governments and the Law of Fiscal Responsibility in Brazil. Each one of these institutional mechanisms has gradually modified the dynamic of public administration and its relationship with society. It is this quality of gradual transformation in the relationship between State and Society that seems to me to be indirectly built into the results of the research that looks at the way that mechanisms of electoral accountability work in municipal elections. These appear to suggest that the preferences of voters are more in tune with those of the politicians, something that is common to more mature democracies. Finally, this issue offers readers a new theoretical-methodological perspective by looking at the potential of historiography in research of the field. I drew upon a RAP classic of historiography, by Kleber Nascimento (1967), to contextualize this editorial, in the belief that we can find a good proportion of the facts in history that partly explain, if not necessarily determine the future direction of public administration in this country.

The following is a descriptive chronology of the articles presented in this issue:

The first article, entitled *The process of implementing answerability in contemporary Brazil*, by Ana Rita Silva Sacramento and Jose Antonio Gomes de Pinho seeks to identify and analyze the formal institutional changes that took place in Brazil, on a federal level, and which favored the typical requirements of answerability between the years 1985 and 2014. Answerability, which typically requires a combination of information and justification, is seen as being part of accountability, another concept that doesn't translate well into the Brazilian political context, but which has experienced a steady penetration into the country's institutional structure. The article stresses that these institutional changes have not occurred suddenly, but have instead been implemented slowly and in stages during a number of recent government administrations.

The article entitled *A new history of Brazilian public administration: theoretical assumptions and alternative sources*, by Frederico Lustosa da Costa and Elza Marinho Lustosa da Costa, talks about the theoretical-methodological assumptions that could be used to develop a New History of Public Administration, based on the most recent progress made in historiography. The article identifies a number of existing sources, such as the Repertoire of laws on Government Organization; Speeches from the Throne and Presidential Messages; Federal Audit Court (TCU) reports; Statistics — historical data; Personal records; Life Stories — oral history and biographic sources, all part of a first step in making information fully available to researchers interested in revealing important aspects of this History.

The article entitled *Corruption and the composition of governmental expenditure: evidence from Controladoria-Geral da União's Public Random Drawing Inspection Program*, by Olavo Venturim Caldas, Cristiano Machado Costa and Marcelo Sanches Pagliarussi analyzes the relationship between corruption and the composition of government spending at municipal

level in Brazil, thereby contributing with certain important implications to the practice of public administration. Contrary to previous studies on the subject, the results of this research suggest that corruption is negatively associated with spending in the area of social services and positively associated with government spending in the areas of education and healthcare, pointing to the possible activities of rent-seekers in these areas, most likely due to the fact that it is easier to embezzle these kinds of resources.

The article entitled *The convergence of Central American countries to International Accounting Standards*, by Carlos Araya-Leandro, María Del Carmen Caba-Pérez and Antonio M. López-Hernandez also talks more about the efforts of modernizing the financial management of governments, in the hope of improving the processes of decision making, reducing corruption and keeping citizens informed. This work, which is of a comparative nature, analyzes the reforms adopted by Central American countries through the use of IPSAS (International Public Sector Accounting Standards) monitored by the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC). The results of the comparative study suggest that more attention is being paid in the case of financial indicators, to the detriment of non-financial indicators such as performance indicators, and that there is still a low level of convergence in terms of international standards in the case of most of the countries in the region.

The article entitled *Brazilian State debt sustainability: an analysis of net debt and primary balance*, by Alessandro Aurélio Caldeira, Marcelo Driemeyer Wilbert, Tito Belchior Silva Moreira and André Luiz Marques Serrano looks at the sustainability of the debt of Brazilian state governments, in the period between Dec/2001 and May/2014 and in the context of the new fiscal stance imposed by the Law of Fiscal Responsibility (Lei de Responsabilidade Fiscal). The work concludes that the aggregate public sector debt of the states was at a sustainable level in the period 2001 to 2014, although it also looks at the implications resulting from the fiscal relaxation seen in 2014, at the quality of the fiscal adjustment carried out by the states as well as at the recent economic slowdown, all of which pose a threat to future sustainability.

The article entitled *Fiscal performance and Elections in Brazil: a comparative analysis of local governments*, by Pedro Cavalcante, analyzes the relationship between fiscal management and the institution of reelection in the elections for municipal mayors in Brazil, from a temporal and broad ranging perspective and in a bid to answer the following questions: i) do the prospects of reelection of a mayor have an influence on the running of his fiscal policy?; and ii) do citizens reward or punish mayors based on the fiscal performance of their governments? Among the results discussed the theory that expectations of getting reelected might generate different fiscal performance is discarded while the theory that mayors who allocate more resources to public works are rewarded and those who raise taxes are punished is confirmed. This work suggests that the use of electoral accountability mechanisms in municipal elections does indeed contribute to better tuning the preferences of voters to those of politicians, a feature of more mature democracies.

Finally, the Practical Perspectives forum offers readers the article entitled *Objectives and*

challenges of sustainable public procurement policy in Brazil: the opinion of the experts, by Hugo Leonnardo Gomides do Couto and Francis Lee Ribeiro, which investigates how the experts understand, refute or validate objectives and how they choose the challenges that are priorities in the implementation of public policy related to sustainable procurement at a federal level of government.

Enjoy the read!
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Editor-in-chief

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