

Editorial¹

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PUBLIC POLICIES ON FIGHTING POVERTY

Poverty is morally objectionable, socially costly and territorially striking. Poverty does not only qualify specific individuals or social groups, but overflows in a dynamic characterized by economic, social, educational and informational inequalities, among others, which deeply affect the welfare of the wider society. Poverty also entails costs of (good) governance and implies clientelism in the relationship between society and the political system — becoming a key object of research in public administration.

Fighting poverty and the social issues around it have been an objective of action — explicit or implicit — of the modern State. The success of eradicating extreme poverty reflected the agenda of the welfare state in many European countries, but it had never turned into a globalized agenda for public action. In fact, the nature of anti-poverty policies, when existent, have changed over time and according to different contexts. This happened especially due to the multiple causes that sustain and perpetuate poverty.

In the last two decades, Brazil was able to elaborate and implement a sophisticated set of strategies to fight poverty, which have been benchmark for several developing countries. Established as a priority goal of public policy, the fight against poverty had gradually set up a strong network of public administrators and management technologies that provided both content and strength to public management systems — which were poorly articulated until then, such as the system of social assistance.

Policies for fighting poverty have also been incorporated into the agenda of public administration research, as shown in this special issue of the *Brazilian Journal of Public Administration* (RAP). This issue brings together articles related to policies for fighting poverty, featuring scholars from almost every region of Brazil. This is an evidence of the importance of the topic across the country in recent years.

The so-called Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) are a common theme throughout this issue, addressed directly or indirectly in the articles presented. The inter-sectoral characteristic of CCTs —

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¹ Professor Alketa Peci is profoundly grateful to Professor Marcelo Neri for his contribution in editing this specific issue of RAP. Professor Neri is nationally and internationally well known for his direct contribution to the elaboration and implementation of conditioned cash transfer policies. The papers published in this issue were not selected through a special call for papers. They reflect a growing research agenda in Brazil, and deserved a careful evaluation by a renowned researcher in this field.

combining social assistance, education, health and labor, to name but a few, between different levels of government and with strong international knowledge exchange — makes the topic particularly relevant to a journal on public administration such as RAP.

The articles published in this issue bring up some of the most updated elements of technical literature, such as subjective and multidimensional indicators, which are critical for analyzing and operating Conditional Cash Transfer programs. The articles also add historical and cross-cultural perspectives about the subject. In addition, the relationships between income inequality and health and education expenditures are also explored, as well as possible alternatives for defining and updating the poverty line adopted by the Brazilian federal government. Finally, it is proposed a schematic view of the CCTs' operation channels and the results obtained by these programs, inspiring proposals that can improve their design and the analysis of their impact.

In the article *A next generation of conditional cash transfer programs*, Marcelo Neri evaluates the recent expansion of CCT programs and discusses their future by integrating previous empirical analyses on the theme. The author compares the performance of CCTs with other federal income transfers such as the Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC) and the Social Security benefit. In addition, the article analyzes the microeconomic mechanisms through which the CCTs operate, comparing the observed impacts on CCTs beneficiaries versus non-beneficiaries.

The article *Overall Life Satisfaction and Financial Well-Being: Revealing the Perceptions of the Beneficiaries of the Bolsa Família Program*, by Jéssica Pulino Campara, Kelmara Mendes Vieira and Ani Caroline Grigion Potrich, analyzes the relationship between subjective dimensions revealed by a survey conducted with 595 beneficiaries of the main Brazilian CCT program. The research shows that responses associated with a high satisfaction with life coexist with overdue bills, bad credit profiles and inability to save or consume beyond the basic needs.

In the article *Home services for children and adolescents: feedback effects, reflections, and current challenges*, Geralda Luiza de Miranda rescues the history of organizations dedicated to this socially vulnerable group. The author provides an analysis based on the national norms regarding children and adolescents at risk and on the current situation indicated by the 2014 census of the National Social Assistance System (Censo Suas). The article suggests that decisions made in Vargas Era made it difficult to adopt the innovations proposed by the Children's Code of 1979, in the 1990 Statute of Children and Adolescents, as well as in the initiatives emerged over the 2000s.

In *Evidences on multidimensional poverty in the northern region of Brazil*, Andréa Ferreira da Silva, Janaildo Soares de Sousa and Jair Andrade Araujo estimate the proportion of multidimensional poor living in that region of the country. Considering six dimensions of poverty based on the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), the authors suggest that this proportion of multidimensional poor has reduced among northern population between 2006 and 2013.

The article *Multidimensional Poverty in the state of Bahia: a spatial analysis from the censuses of 2000 and 2010*, by Eli Izidro dos Santos, Ícaro Célio Santos de Carvalho and Ricardo Candéa Sá Barreto, analyzes the spatial behavior of poverty in the state, finding evidence of clusters of regional poverty. The authors show that, when it comes to fighting poverty, public policies need to be more effective, going beyond focusing only on income.

The effect of allocation function in budgeting to reduce income inequality in Brazil: an analysis of spending on education and health from 1995 to 2012, by Giovanni Pacelli Carvalho Lustosa da Costa

and Ivan Ricardo Gartner, focus on the relationship between public expenditure on education and health, and variations in income inequality indexes in the Brazilian states and federal district. The study shows that, in the period under investigation, inequality has reduced more sharply in states that have applied more resources in basic care, hospital care, prophylactic and outpatient support, and early childhood education.

In the article *Poverty lines in the Brasil Sem Miséria Plan: a review and proposed alternatives in poverty measurement according to the methodology of Sonia Rocha*, the authors Giordano Benites Tronco and Marília Patta Ramos support the regionalization of the official poverty line, with its automatic indexation to the price of basic consumer goods found in different areas of the country.

Hemerson Luiz Pase and Claudio Corbo Melo address political and historical aspects in their article *Public policies for transferring income in Latin America*. The authors articulate the establishment of CCTs in 06 countries in the region – Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina — with its respective redemocratization processes, with the emergence of reformist political elites and coalitions inspired to fight poverty through welfare programs.

Finally, it is important to highlight that more sophisticated strategies to fight poverty require the strengthening of bureaucratic capacities and/or good governance (Grindle, 2004). However, strategies that are usually considered inseparable from “good governance” — such as reducing corruption, improving accountability, effective decentralization policies, better management of public resources, structure and quality of public bureaucracy — do not always impact positively on the strategies used to fight poverty. Decentralization, considered a good management practice, and “empowerment of part of the disadvantaged population” may lead to greater population inequalities; a strong public bureaucracy may tend to insulation rather than the achievement of results. There is also room for research that lies at the intersection of public administration with policies to fight poverty.

The aim of this special issue is to publish part of the knowledge accumulated in public policies to fight poverty. Much of what is discussed by the articles presented here has to do with the priorities established by governments to fight against poverty. These priorities can be better elaborated when based on evidence. Therefore, we hope that the articles gathered here will contribute to the base of evidence needed to support and refine the policies for fighting poverty in the near future.

Good reading!

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