

Administrative science and public management: a criticism of the primacy of private over public

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Abstract

Public management is strongly influenced by scientific administration, and several models which are applied in the public sphere had their origin in the field of administration. However, that science has been developed in a neoliberal context that reinforced the pursuit of maximum efficiency and profit under a strictly instrumental rationale. These aspects have led to much criticism, especially concerning the incorporation of thoughts and theoretical models into public management. This theoretical essay aims to weave an analysis of such aspects, considering ideas of various authors who discuss the theme, in order to contribute to discussions and reveal positions to enrich the debate.

Keywords: Organizational theory. Public management. Private administration.

Ciência administrativa e gestão pública: uma crítica à primazia do privado em relação ao público

Resumo

A gestão pública possui fortes influências da administração científica, sendo que diversos modelos aplicados no viés público tiveram sua origem no campo da administração. Entretanto, essa ciência foi desenvolvida em um contexto neoliberal que reforçou a busca pela máxima eficiência e lucro sob uma lógica estritamente instrumental. Esses aspectos levaram a diversas críticas, especialmente no tocante à incorporação de pensamentos e modelos teóricos à gestão pública. Este ensaio teórico busca tecer uma análise de tais aspectos, considerando ideias de diversos autores que discutem essa temática, a fim de contribuir com as discussões e apontar posicionamentos para enriquecer o debate.

Palavras-chave: Teoria organizacional. Administração pública. Administração privada.

Ciencia de la administración y gestión pública: una crítica de la primacía de lo privado sobre el público

Resumen

La gestión pública posee fuertes influencias de la administración científica, siendo que diversos modelos aplicados en el sesgo público tuvieron origen en el campo de la administración. Sin embargo esa ciencia fue desarrollada en un contexto neoliberal que reforzó la búsqueda de la máxima eficiencia y el lucro siguiendo una lógica estrictamente instrumental. Esos aspectos llevaron a diversas críticas, especialmente en la incorporación de pensamientos y modelos teóricos de la gestión pública. Este ensayo teórico busca tejer un análisis de tales aspectos, considerando ideas de diversos autores que discuten sobre esa temática, a fin de contribuir con las discusiones y apuntar posicionamientos para enriquecer el debate.

Palabras clave: Teoría de la organización. Gestión Pública. Gestión privada.

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INTRODUCTION

The history of administrative science is recent in comparison to others, but its trajectory is not different; from Enlightenment, an almost unanimous view of how things in the world should be analyzed, interpreted, researched and demonstrated was created. Bacon, Newton and other scientists of the period, founded on a positivistic outlook, undeniably developed great advancements in sciences usually called natural. This “enlightened wave” influenced scientific thought, even social sciences and, in this field, administrative science. Although such advances are admitted, positivism has shown its frailties, as described Capra (1995). He argues that, despite all the technological progress afforded by this philosophical basis, such as, for instance, mankind’s landing on the moon, our planet still faces elementary problems, such as starvation, misery, deaths from easily treated diseases, environmental deterioration, among others. From such a perspective, that author explores the idea that other avenues and ways of thought should be brought to light for the development of a more substantial science, which seeks to consider causes in the sphere of a much wider reading than that established by “common science”.

On the other hand, the influence of public administration is not confined to the positivistic notions that informed the development of administrative science. As we shall see in this theoretical essay, the appearance of neoliberal policies preconized by States was, and still is, an essential element that limits not only topics, but also theoretical formulations in the public administration field.

The origins of scientific administrative thought have two names whose ideas became milestones in history. They are Henry Fayol and Frederick Taylor. Fayol (1841-1925) developed an applied theory of administration that had its focus on management principles derived from an executive reading of that art. It valued flexibility and adaptation, since the reality of organizations and their needs should not follow rigid criteria. This thinker idealized five elements or processes for good management, regarding rules for the application of his administrative doctrine: i) planning; ii) organizing; iii) coordinating; iv) commanding; and v) controlling. Taylor (1856-1915) sought to develop the bases for scientific administration considering employer’s and employee’s mutual prosperity. He believed that, for an organization’s maximum efficiency, time spent in production should reach its maximum performance, and salaries should reward such an effort, thus minimizing tensions and conflicts (FELLS, 2000).

* Image: Available at <http://www.wikiart.org/en/Search/procustes>. Accessed on 13 June 2016.

Despite the divergences between those contemporary thinkers' ideas, such as the necessity of observation in order to portray reality (Fayol), in contrast to a more mechanistic perception (Taylor), both left their marks, for their ideas are as yet points of discussion and divergence among researchers and professionals who work in the administration field, whether in its public or private spheres. Evidence of this premise is the reading by authors like Hales (1986), Archer (1990), Carroll and Gillen (1987), mentioned by Fells (2000), who tried to correlate models developed by other authors (such as Henry Mintzberg, John P. Kotter, and Colin P. Hales) with that which was proposed by Fayol, so as to show the interrelations that exist between those models. Peaucelle (2000) in turn started with Taylor's ideas concerning work efficiency and salaries in order to show that new administrative techniques (just in time, project reengineering, and management) adopted since the 1960s have strong interrelations with those conceived by that scientific administration precursor.

Without approaching in depth the merits of the analyses carried out by the authors previously mentioned, it can be noted that Fells (2000) did not care for going deeper into the causes for the proposal of new models alternative to Fayol's, or clarifying the historical moment in which they were built, so as to elucidate the search for new philosophical bases, even when applied to the same principles of administrative elements. Although Peaucelle (2000), in turn, supposes the existence of a post-Taylorist movement that brings new prerogatives or goals that must be taken into account in administration given the current historical context, which is characterized by an ever-more ferocious and competitive capitalism, he did not endeavor to develop the so-called new perspectives of the combination of capital and labor, characterized, amongst other things, by achievements in the legal sphere. Accordingly, the relationship between maximum efficiency and salary starts to be seen with certain limits, point at which organizations tend to consider achievements established by employees. In this perspective, both Taylorism and post-Taylorism tend to encounter barriers, yet fragile in some aspects, in order to implement their premises.

This introduction aims to exemplify the central elements that constitute this theoretical essay, which seeks to approach the fragility of the premises that inform the administrative doctrine, especially when applied to public management. According to Farah (2011), the origins of public administration brought scientific administration as a central element which, in turn, represented a whole line of thought that, in this case, focused on the mere education of technicians who should work with the government bureaucracy for the purpose of implementing public policies in an apolitical, unbiased way. This historical mark is still seen nowadays with regard to the establishment of several theoretical models formulated for public administration and which have their origin (or search for their foundation) in administrative science. However, it is important to point out that the premises for the construction of this formal science are associated with the neoliberal thought, thus prioritizing the quest for profit and maximum efficiency. If the field of administration, in that which concerns public administration, pursues this premise without a coherent maturity that takes into account society's complexity as well as public thinking, there is a risk that a vicious circle begins, in which those management models are not sufficient to overcome hindrances while aiming for a perspective of their own – as Capra (1995) proposes, to a certain extent, concerning sciences in general, including the so-called natural and social sciences – with a view to, for instance, the strengthening of democratic practice as well as citizens' and general society's happiness.

Therefore, we start with the assumption that administration science has brought elements of the development of public management, but, at the same time, under strong neoliberal influences, it imprisoned them, thus making it difficult to establish new bases and models, given the primacy of private over public.

ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCE AND PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

As to the study of public administration, Procopiuck (2013) points out that modern public administration, which he delimits between 1880 and 1920, occurred in the United States. Denhardt (2012, p. 56-57) explains that, even before the 20th century, "many theorists and professionals wrote comments on the role of administrative agencies in the execution of state functions". However, according to the author, it was with the essay written by Woodrow Wilson (1955), of 1887, that formal studies of the government's administrative operations started. One of the great legacies left by Wilson (1955, p. 26) was the attempt to separate politics and administration: "the field of administration is a field of apolitical activities". Thus, in the author's opinion, "administration does not belong to the proper sphere of politics. Administrative issues are not political issues" (WILSON, 1955, p. 27). One can notice that the onset of the formal study of public administration was derived from

business administration, since administrative science itself has its origins in a philosophical perspective of the logical positivism (DENHARDT, 2012, p. 98). Therefore, the study of public administration emerges from that same stream, in which not only a technical view, but also neutrality was sought for.

The separation of administration from politics has the Weberian rationality as backing, that is, the legitimacy of bureaucracy was not founded on politics, but consisted, according to Weber (1978, p. 27), of its technical knowledge:

Bureaucratic administration essentially means the exercise of domination based on knowledge. This is the trait that makes it specifically rational. On the one hand, it consists of technical knowledge which, in itself, is enough to ensure bureaucracy a position of extraordinary power.

An advantage of bureaucracy, mainly for public organizations, was that it represented a model which sought to overcome patrimonialism. This separation of the public sphere from the private sphere is one of the reasons why bureaucracy may be advocated as an important advancement for public organizations. According to Motta and Bresser-Pereira (1981), the growth of bureaucracy in modern world derives from its ability to provide organizations with efficiency. On the other hand, those authors do not deny the occurrence of bureaucratic malfunctions. It was from such malfunctions that the criticism of the Weberian bureaucratic model emerged. The influence of the use of management in the public sector slowly spread throughout the 20th century. Procopiuck (2013) highlights that the 1920s was marked by some important characteristics in public administration:

- (1) The establishment, in government administration, of proceedings divided in two stages: decision and performance;
- (2) Administration could be developed based on scientific premises;
- (3) The study of administration led to the discovery of scientific principles;
- (4) Cost-effectiveness and efficiency became the main goals, if not the only ones, in administration studies;
- (5) The teaching of public administration with a managerial emphasis (PROCOPIUCK, 2013, p. 87-88).

These characteristics show the expansion of the Wilsonian thought, which gains more and more scientific managerial outlines. In 1926, Leonard D. White published the work that was to be considered the first effort to systematize public administration studies. In it, the author affirms that public administration is not only an independent field of study, but one having management, and not legal premises, as basis (PROCOPIUCK, 2013). It is, therefore, during the 1920s that, in public administration studies, management starts to be given emphasis, thus drawing this field closer to that of business administration. Procopiuck (2013, p. 12) problematizes the issue by saying that:

In the context of public administration, attempts to adapt, at any cost, managerial techniques developed for private businesses ended up giving rise to deep crises due to the incongruence between the means operated and the ends intended by such techniques and the ends pursued by public institutions.

This closeness to private management derives from the necessity to pursue one of the major goals in administration: efficiency. Although the ultimate goal of public administration (public welfare) is very different from that of private management (profit), both spheres look for efficiency. Many scholars from the beginning of the 20th century advocated this quest: “the goal of public administration is to use, with maximum efficiency, the resources made available to directors and officers” (WHITE, 1948 *apud* DENHARDT, 2012, p. 87), and “in administration science, whether public or private, the primordial ‘good’ is efficiency” (GULICK, 1937 *apud* DENHARDT, 2012, p. 88).

Efficiency as one of the most important aspects to be aimed at in public administration also has to do with another idea supported by those scholars, which is that social sciences, including administrative studies, were part of the natural sciences (MOTTA and VASCONCELOS, 2008). The search for a logical positivism¹ made those scholars believe that efficiency was a

¹ Denhardt (2012, p. 98) explains that the logical positivist approach “maintained the possibility of determining the regularities in human behavior just as it was done with the behavior of physical objects: through the careful and objective observation of expressed (manifest) behavior – and that scientific theories could be logically derived from those observations. As it was possible to observe the behavior of molecular structures and thence develop theories about physical life, there was also the argument that it was possible to objectively observe human beings’ behavior – from the outside – and thence develop theories about social life”.

neutral quest necessary for the improvement of organizations. Accordingly, the effort to achieve efficiency in the employment of resources was the predominant outlook in the 1920s and 1930s, and it has been revived in the new public management (NPM) approach, which has come to consolidate the theory of public administration as chiefly focused on satisfying a neoliberal perspective.

If the beginning of the formal studies of public administration was characterized by the dichotomy between administration and politics, the theories that followed were not always able to overcome it. This can be noticed when, in the mid-1970s, the crisis and downfall of the welfare state commences. Trying to overcome the crisis, neoliberal proposals led states to a series of reforms that, according to Arienti (2003), had the purpose of reducing the size of the state bureaucratic apparatus.

In this context, public administration entered upon a process of transformation and adjustment to a new political/administrative order. Neoliberalism and social democracy came into play in the subsequent decade, proposing a reform of the State and its administration based on the principles that governed private business, which had a decisive influence on the public administration trajectory in Western countries. Efficiency was governments' main goal in view of the shortage of resources available. It is in this context that NPM arises as a product of neoliberal influences and the managerialist movements in private management (PAES DE PAULA, 2005).

In the 1990s, the wave of new public management reached the whole Western world², and countries that faced financial difficulties in their management started to adopt it, including Brazil. Therefore, it is in the 20th century, in a complex society, a social and economic State which gets bigger and bigger, that NPM appears as a model that aimed at overcoming the bureaucratic stage, bringing to the public management sphere a new way of managing. Vigota (2002, *apud* BEVIR, 2010) believes that, in bureaucracy, the State was not able to respond, neither was cooperative; on the contrary, it was characterized by the concentration of power and absolute control in the hands of the State. In this new structure, there are some changes in values and focus. Values are similar to those of companies' – managerial quality, productivity, and efficiency are required – but what is really different from bureaucracy is the greater importance given to results rather than to the process. The modernization of the State made public administration more corporate, less onerous, and generally more efficient, but less favorable to citizens (KISSLER and HEIDEMANN, 2006).

Therefore, NPM intended to represent “a post-bureaucratic normative model for public administration arrangement and management based on the values of efficiency, effectiveness, and competitiveness” (SECCHI, 2009, p. 354). This managerial movement leads David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, who idealized an “entrepreneurial government”, to prescriptively propose, as Secchi (2009) points out, ten principles that show the explicit will to draw public management near to concepts used in private business, such as competition, customer service, economic results, etc. Paes de Paula (2005) identifies contributions to the consolidation of the new public management in the “reinventing government” movement. Elements that stand out in this movement are: the criticism of bureaucratic organizations, the dissemination of management culture and “managerial fads”, etc. It was inspired by Peter Drucker's criticisms and the new administration “gurus”, who argued that bureaucracy was being replaced by a post-bureaucratic organization based on flexibility and participation. Thus, along with this focus on the managerialist movement appears the entrepreneurialist culture, which engenders a code of values and behaviors to ensure control, efficiency, and competitiveness in organizations. Moreover, that same movement contributed to the expansion of management culture, which is characterized by the production of artifacts, such as books, magazines, and other consumer goods present in the business world, as well as symbols that permeate organizations and the minds of individuals who associate with them. And with that appear the administrative tools and practices that supposedly lead to corporate excellence, such as: total quality administration, reengineering, etc. (PAES DE PAULA, 2005).

Nonetheless, by critically analyzing bureaucracy in post-modernity, it is possible to admit that it “has adapted to flexible capitalism by reinventing methods of control in order to ensure productivity and perpetuate domination” (PAES DE PAULA, 2002, p. 137). This is one of the conclusions reached by Paes de Paula (2002) when revisiting Maurício Tragtenberg's thought, so as to demonstrate that, although post-modern administrative theories are called new, they are branches of the old schools of administration and the bureaucratic model of organization. The warning by Motta and Tragtenberg (*apud* PAES DE PAULA, 2002), according to whom bureaucracy is a kind of domination and this is where the essence of the Weberian thought lies, is remembered here. Therefore, by analyzing bureaucracy as rationality, the logics of organizational action, and a form of

² Kettl (1998) states that the reform movement is a global characteristic, being present both in developed and developing countries.

domination (PAES DE PAULA, 2002), one can see that new organizational arrangements are actually reproductions of “administrative harmonies”.

In order to develop his argument, Paes de Paula (2002) starts with four premises inspired in Maurício Tragtenberg’s ideas: (1) administrative theories are a product of the social/economic structure of a historical context. Accordingly, they are dynamic enough to adapt to the requirements of the current capitalist model of accumulation and social regulation; (2) administrative theories express themselves both ideologically and operationally; (3) administrative theories are adaptable, but they obey a genetic principle, a cumulative heritage in which they are created and recreated; (4) bureaucracy means not only the ideological apparatus that collects administrative theories, but also the product and reflection/manifestation of the historical and social/economic context. Although there has not been a rupture, it is possible to assert that there has been an adaptation of the rigid bureaucratic model, which Paes de Paula (2002) calls “flexible bureaucracy”. Thus, it is her understanding that organizations have become more flexible in order to satisfy the requirements of the new social context; however, there has not been a debureaucratization, only an adaptation. This new social context is exactly the neoliberal advancement toward the matrix of State, market, and society.

The administrative reform of the State in Brazil, in the mid-1990s, took place in broad democratic regime (with the Master Plan for the Reform of the State Apparatus, 1995-1999). After the reform cycle, public governments became more like private governments; many of them instrumentalized themselves; and nowadays they have sophisticated mechanisms to produce public policies. However, one can notice that such a quest for efficiency and productivity, based on corporate values with public interest, has deviated state administration from its eminently public mission (KISSLER and HEIDEMANN, 2006).

Although there has been a great movement in favor of the NPM model, serious criticism of its premises has also been made. The most serious one, as is reported by Denhardt (2012), is the introduction in public management not only of techniques, but also of values borrowed from the private sector, such as competitiveness (instead of cooperation), and the adoption of market mechanisms for social decisions. Accordingly, those techniques heavily rely on “intellectual principles such as the theory of public choice, the theory of the agent-and-principal, and the transaction cost analysis” (KAMONSKY 1996, *apud* DENHARDT, 2012, p. 203). Another criticism comes from Mintzberg (1996, *apud* Denhardt, 2012, p. 207), who attacks the application of the label *customer* to citizens: “I am not my government’s mere customer, thank you!”; and goes on to complain: “What I expect of my government is more than just a distant and cold commercial transaction, and less than an encouragement to consume”. These reflections show us, as Madureira (2005) points out, that even considering the force of the law of markets and the closeness between private and public administrative sciences, one cannot ignore the set of differences that exist between them. In view of society’s complexity, as well as the complexity of its problems, new public management has not been able to respond to the latter, thus requiring larger and less reductionist public administration concepts. According to Costa (2008, p. 869), public administration has modernized, gaining in “efficiency, technical specialization, morality, publicity, and transparency”; however, it has left “the democratic issue and the teleology of reforms, as well as that of the public apparatus itself, in the background”. Bevir (2010, p. 104) in turn believes that NPM actually has transparency and legitimacy problems, after all, “actors of the private sector are not democratically elected”.

Paes de Paula (2005) also discusses the limits of this management model, and alternatives that indicate routes for building democratic public management. The author defines the foundations of the new public management by examining its background and elements, and showing how the neoconservative movement, neoliberalism, the third way politics, and the managerialist movement have joined in order to bring this management model about. Examining the Brazilian case, the author retrieves the history of national public administration and realizes that the recent reform of the State has been organized around two political orientations: the managerial orientation, which finds its inspiration in the international movement for the reform of the State and implements the managerial public administration; and the societal orientation, which seeks for new forms of organizing and managing the State in order to create a societal public administration. After analyzing the characteristics of these orientations, the author asserts that: a) the managerial orientation was not successful, since the matters related to the relationship between the State and society were not dealt with; and b) the societal orientation is an attempt to introduce a social/political dimension in management, thus bringing new possibilities.

Paes de Paula (2005) argues that NPM contributes to the maintenance of the dichotomy between administration and politics, for it does not face the complexity of public management and chiefly emphasizes government efficiency to the detriment of social/political aspects, which remain at discourse level. The author lists the limitations of the new public management:

a) creation of a bureaucratic elite; b) centralization of power in executive instances; c) inadequacy of using techniques and practices of the private sector in the public sector; d) difficulty in dealing with the complexity of the administrative systems and the social/political dimension of management; and e) incompatibility between the managerialist logic and the public interest. This criticism shows that the NPM model is not oriented towards the solution of issues that are essential for the evolution and development of public management, such as the generation of specific administrative ideas and practices for the public sector, the interrelation between administration and politics, and the democratization of the State. The new “managerial fads” suggest a transition to the model of post-bureaucratic organizations, which is nothing but a set of modern tools for maintaining the domination described by Max Weber, according to the analysis carried out by Paes de Paula (2005).

A NEW OUTLOOK ON THE THEORY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Denhardt (2012) endeavors to develop a criticism of the predominant literature in the theoretical field of public administration in view of its inability to make connections with the real experiences of those who work in public organizations. This reflection led the author to the conclusion that:

- (1) although there are different theories of public organization, the predominant work is focused on the “rational model of administration”, as well as on a dichotomous view of politics and administration;
- (2) the approach is limited by the positivist thought and fails to recognize alternative ways of looking at public organizations;
- (3) despite the predominance of the conventional approach, there are works with important arguments that introduce a counterpoint in the field. During roughly a century, private management has served as a model for public administration (DENHARDT, 2012, p. 3).

The author presents the predominant theories in the field, among which Weber’s bureaucratic model, Simon’s behaviorist perspective, and the so-called organizational humanism stand out. In a second group, the author retrieves theories that have not had, and still do not have, so much prestige; however, these theories are not confined to the positivist methodology, and resort to others, such as phenomenology and the critical theory, in order to build their knowledge of the field of public administration.

The formal theories are developed more diligently and reflect a variety of topics, thus providing a reference benchmark that enables the measurement of our own approaches to organizational life. According to Denhardt (2012), theory goes beyond the mere observation, and tries to provide more general interpretations and conclusions:

Theories add a symbolical dimension to our experience. A theory is not only an arrangement of facts or values; it is a mental rebuilding of the way we see ourselves and the world around us (DENHARDT, 2012, p. 14).

Both professionals and theorists seek for knowledge and methods to obtain it, which entails reflection.

We should harbor certain skepticism concerning theories of public organization (and also other theories). We should be aware that theories of public organization are products of human activity – particular constructions that may be more or less convenient to different purposes. Every theory gives emphasis to some things while giving little or no emphasis to others [...]. Therefore, as we consider different theories, we will see life “reflected” or mirrored in them. But we have to know that the “reflection” is imperfect, since it is filtered through the lenses of general culture and those of the specific choices made by theorists. Consequently, theories may either conceal reality or project it (DENHARDT, 2012, p. 14).

In order to create a complete and integrated theory of public administration, the same author proposes a combination of the choices made by theorists, because numerous important and convenient topics have been already studied by them. As to the scope of such a theory of public administration, Denhardt (2012, p. 16) identifies three premises:

(a) public administration has been considered as part of the government process, thus having some kinship with other studies of political science (therefore, the theory of public administration is part of a larger political theory); (b) public organizations have been seen as almost identical to private organizations; (c) public administration is a professional field which is very similar to law or medicine, and which draws on many theoretical perspectives so as to have practical impacts.

According to Denhardt (2012), there are other authors who argue that the basic interests in management are the same in any organization. Therefore, we should expect that lessons learned in one sector could be easily communicated to another, or that lessons learned in one context could contribute to a general theory of organizations. And this view, says Denhardt (2012), is still predominant in studies of public administration.

In Dwight Waldo's opinion, analyzing public administration as a profession, just as law and medicine, is a way to understand it. Interdisciplinarity, as in those sciences, can promote the kind of knowledge that is necessary for administrators in the public sector. Nevertheless, this interdisciplinarity is something hard to achieve. Accordingly, political science remains incomplete, because it does not contemplate the essential interests of management; on the other hand, organizational analysis is also incomplete, since it does not deal with the concern for democratic responsibility (DENHARDT, 2012), especially because it is plunged in a neoliberal context that is not convenient for the advancement of other rationalities than the instrumental one.

In order to overcome these limitations, the author suggests: "clarifying the perspectives of previous (political, general, and professional) approaches; recognizing public administration as a process rather than something that happens inside a specific kind of structure; and emphasizing rather the public nature of this process than its connection with government formal systems" (DENHARDT, 2012, p. 22). Proceeding to a redefinition of the field so as to create a theory of public organization, the author stipulates that public administration is interested in the management of processes of change that aim at attaining publicly definite societal values. This new definition of the object of study will provide for theories of public administration rather than only theories associated with public administration. Through this new outlook, Denhardt (2012) aims to transform the public manager into an individual who is sensitive to the impacts of organizations' processes of change while playing a special role in the implementation of societal values based on ethics. Then, remains the question: what ethics is to be the parameter for the field of public management oriented towards societal values? We believe Jürgen Habermas's concept of ethics, in his discourse ethics, may be the answer. In his theory of the communicative action, Habermas criticizes instrumental rationality and creates a concept of discourse rationality, which might be able to welcome the moral subject in the "world of life". This is so because, in discourse ethics, the moral subject intersubjectively forms their identity through communicative processes (MONTEIRO, 1995)³. Accordingly, the quest for consensus, combined with the disposition of the subjects able of language and action that compose the Habermasian discourse ethics, contributes, as argue De Mattia and Zappellini (2014), to a public administration ethics that preconizes values of public welfare coproduction. In this sense, Denhardt (2012) is of the opinion that the creation of a theory of public organization is not merely a matter of gathering a set of techniques applicable to specific situations. Talking about the meaning of experiences or the impact that they have on society's values means inaugurating a complex study – an effort that suggests we heed not only empirical matters associated with the management of change in complex systems, but also the larger social, political and ethical context that involves public administration.

It is worth highlighting that Denhardt (2012) does not ignore insights by theorists such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Sigmund Freud, since their contributions were indirect: these scholars' focus was not on public organizations. However, their contribution is a fuller understanding of the role of public organizations in our lives. In view of society's complexity, those three theorists were concerned with the relationships between individual and society, starting with the assumption that the individual is engaged in a battle against society's organizational forces, whether public or private. The central message is that we need a perspective in order to understand the world and our place in it.

Denhardt (2012) indicates a third reason for the quest for new knowledge: liberation from thought and action patterns that we have accepted, even if they do not reflect our true necessities, in order to see the opportunities offered by the future.

³ With Habermas, language is the chief means of social interaction.

Critical knowledge enables us to enlarge our perspectives, to see the cages that imprison us, and, in turn, to explore possibilities of expressing our potential in a more thorough way. These three theorists' insights give us knowledge through a critical self-reflection that incites us to action, meaning that there is more autonomy and responsibility.

Public managers carry a special burden: they have to help ensure that society's political commitments are expanded. Therefore, the study of public administration must comprise not only the social theory, but also the political theory, so as to help with the understanding of how public organizations contribute to the development of a democratic society (DENHARDT, 2012). This author points out that the political theory of public organizations has not been deemed a most important topic by scholars and has often stayed in the background as compared to topics such as efficiency, skill and control.

On the other hand, Denhardt (2012) analyzes the contributions by Dahl (2001), who made a criticism of the theory of public administration predominant in his days. Dahl (2001) identified three problems in the construction of a public administration science: first, that the field of public administration might be devoid of values, instead of placing efficiency on a pedestal, since, according to the author, the value of efficiency clashes with democratic values, especially those regarding democratic morality; second, the study of public administration has to be founded on the study of human behavior, because he admits that the main problems in management are centered on human beings. Dahl (2001) believed that it was impossible to succeed in that science by creating a mechanical "administrative man", as capitalism suggested. Thus, the author highlights that, in order to understand the "administrative man", it is necessary to understand the relationship between public administration and its social configuration. Nonetheless, political scientists assert that a principle of political organization created in one nation can be successfully adopted in another nation. This is the object of the criticism by Dahl (2001), who advocates there is no reason to suppose that a principle of public administration is also valid in any other State, or that practices of public administration in a country will necessarily be successful in a socially, economically and politically different environment. In the author's opinion, nowadays we are almost totally ignorant of a relationship between "principles of public administration" and their general configuration.

Dahl (2001, p. 11) comes to the conclusion that we are far from a public administration science, and suggests that:

[...] no public administration science is possible unless: (1) its normative values are clear; (2) men's nature in the field of public administration is better understood, and their conduct more predictable; and (3) there is a *corpora* of comparative studies from which it is possible to identify principles and generalizations that transcend national frontiers and peculiar historical experiences.

Therefore, the necessity to cause a rupture in the linear, uncritical, positivist administrative thought, and to replace it for a more creative attitude, is undeniable. This attitude will not be possible if we continue to depend on the traditional postulates of administration, whether in public or private management spheres, because, as we have seen, both rest on the cradle of the logic of markets. Accordingly, it resonates with the ideas by Oliveira and Sauerbronn (2007), who propose a debate capable of ensuring the original missions that distinguish each science, so as to achieve the necessary plurality for the advancement of the area.

As Tenório (2008), we come to no conclusions, since it is our intention to demystify the functional reason. Our purpose is to look critically at the administrative fact in order to examine other possibilities of analysis for administrative science.

Conclusion and Inquiry

This theoretical essay was motivated by the following question: what theoretical elements of the administration science contribute to the development of public management? Various authors' texts and ideas, which were previously indicated, point to the complexity of the answer. Moreover, they reinforce that administrative science applied to public management is a polemic field of study that requires deep reflection. Accordingly, let us present some insights for the conclusion of this essay, not with the presumption of exhausting the answers, but rather to add some elements regarding the question proposed in order to enliven the discussion.

From historical elements, one can notice that administrative science has a comparatively recent trajectory. Nevertheless, its development as a science has brought valuable aspects for its improvement, although it originated from a multiparadigmatic view (considered by some thinkers as restrictive of its more effective development, and extremely necessary in order to enlarge, for others, the reading of the field in question – a reading that resonates with ours) and polysemous. This fact is verified in Henry Fayol's and Frederick Taylor's ideas, which gave rise to this trajectory, and in all their derivations in the administrative science, such as i) the serious study of rationality, in order to better understand and overcome the absorption of aspects related to Max Weber's "ideal bureaucratic type" in the administrative science; ii) the post-bureaucratic movements; iii) the valorization of organizational culture and its symbology as relevant aspects for the formation of organizational identities; iv) the valorization of cognitive aspects so as to improve organizational learning; v) the understanding of organizations as institutions; vi) the importance of the economic field for management; vii) the critical thoughts on administration; etc.

These lines of thought produced a series of theoretical elements, founded on numerous sciences, and which should not be neglected. Such a rich collection of ideas can bring central elements to the field of public administration; however, it should not be analyzed as a chain of impassable links with respect to its adaptation and even its improvement, considering all the specific dimensions that should be taken into account when dealing with public administration, as we discussed in the previous topics. Furthermore, this precaution proves to be wise, since administrative science has been molded according to premises applicable to a private world under a neoliberal influence, thus demanding new readings in both pragmatic and philosophical directions.

Accordingly, there is a tendency to minimize the risk of laying this administrative area on what Burrell (1999) called a "Procrustean bed", where one tries to contort the paradigm because it is not "the right size" to fit the requirements – in this case, that which is identified as public management, considering its necessities and differences in relation to the private world. In this perspective, a question can still be asked as to whether the conservative forces at play in the field under analysis do not constitute numerous "Procrustes", in the sense that they constrict certain readings to make them fit that which they do not fit, or trim some of their parts for that purpose.

Besides these historical aspects, which mark the field in question, it is relevant to consider how this science is taught to administration students, and how it should be contextualized, in consideration to the complexity of organizations (whether public, private, small, medium, large, formal, informal, of the third sector, etc.) and social life. To search for foundations in other social sciences (a noteworthy characteristic concerning scientific administration, as already shown) without sticking to the bed previously described might prove to be a possible window that reveals more of the landscape, thus deriving plural interpretations for the development of the field under analysis, in order to avoid conceptual naivety, as shows Guerreiro Ramos (1983), regarding the administrative science. In this aspect, the current stage of advancements in the teaching of public administration in our country should be considered.

Coelho, Olenski and Celso (2011) collaborated on a valuable work that retrieves the teaching of public administration between 1952 and 1994, subdividing it in three cycles, the analysis of the third receiving stronger emphasis. According to the survey carried out by those authors, the subdivision can be thus summarized:

- i) from 1952 to 1965 – besides other elements, a strong influence of scientific administration can be noted in the field of study;
- ii) from 1966 to 1982 – besides other aspects, one can observe that the basic requirements for the business administrator's education were given enormous attention in public administration courses; and
- iii) from 1967 to 1994 – a process of lethargy, followed by a timid retrieval of the importance of public administration education, can be noticed during a conjuncture marked by the redemocratization process in our country, crises in the State, and the reformation of the Brazilian State, thus enlarging the locus of the public sector in our country since the mid-1990s.

Those authors assert that an agenda for the reformation of the Brazilian State helped reinvigorate the teaching of public administration in our country after 1995, culminating in the reappearance of certain courses in numerous educational institutions,

such as the State University of Santa Catarina (Udesc), in 2004; University of São Paulo (USP), in 2005; State University of Campinas (Unicamp), Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), University of Brasília (UnB), Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), and Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), in 2009; Federal University of ABC (UFABC), Federal University of Lavras (UFLA), Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), and Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), in 2010. This restoration and strengthening of the teaching of public administration in Brazil may be breeding ground, provided that the previously mentioned naivety is overcome for the sake of a better understanding of the field, including the development of robust research that aims at approaching all the complexity when dealing with public administration and public policies, with the creation of teams of researchers and technicians for the progress of the field. As an example of how to overcome that naivety, we can indicate the necessity to value, in research and teaching spheres, profound analyses of the lines of thought related to reason that should inform actions in the public administrative field, in order to improve the bureaucratic ideal type preconized by Max Weber.

It is as yet worth highlighting that this conjuncture of invigorating the teaching and research areas, besides its purpose of searching for the necessary advancements in the field of public administration, can lead, according to Ribeiro and Sacramento (2009), to the development of a project that may surpass models centrally created, which is identified with our national reality and the Brazilian social formation, thus laying the foundation of what a project of nation might effectively look like, as Paulo Emílio Matos Martins and Alberto Guerreiro Ramos already pointed out. However, such a movement must be aligned with a non-exaggerated xenophobia, in view of the complexity of public organizations, as well as the world relations now established between States.

Concluding the ideas and contributions of this essay, it is worth highlighting that, by the theoretical construct of administration science, from its beginning up to this day and age, the central contribution that this science has given to public management has to do with its “transdisciplinary” nature, which affords creative opportunities in numerous fields of scientific knowledge and practical experience in the construction of knowledge. Another theoretical element to be thus considered is associated with the private management aspect adopted by administration science, which might be contrasted to public management when one creates a dialectical communicative relationship between the two poles.

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