

INTRAPRENEURIAL COMPETENCE OF THE PUBLIC SERVANTS OF IBGE AND IFSC FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THEIR MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT

The view that common sense has of the Public Administration is very critical in regards to its inefficiency, bureaucratic aspects and unmotivated agents. Thus, the current profile of the public servant is seen in a very stereotypical way, averse to entrepreneurship, risks and change. With this background, this article aims to answer the following research question: how is the intrapreneurial competence present in public servants? To answer this question, a qualitative and bibliographical research was conducted, complemented by a case study in two institutions of the Brazilian federal government, which included interviews with three managers from each agency. As main results, it was found that the institutions have intrapreneurs servants, who seek to assume roles and challenges, that take risks and are innovative. There are also those inert agents that are entitled to the stereotypical profile of public servant. However, contrary to what is inferred a priori, the entrepreneurial competence is present in newcomers just as it is in veterans, as well as the stereotypical profile is also present in the two strata. Finally, it was concluded that the presence of intrapreneurial competence in public servants can result in improved citizen service, with fewer costs and more efficiency.

Keywords: *Corporative entrepreneurship. Intrapreneurship. Public service.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Intrapreneurship and competency-based management are extensively discussed themes today. In addition, they are seen as responses to the growing demand of improved services to the population, through improved processes and greater efficiency of public administration (SADLER, 2000; BORINS, 2001; DIEFENBACH, 2011).

The current profile of civil servants is seen in a very stereotypical way, averse to entrepreneurship, risks and change (RIBEIRO; MANCEBO, 2013; MATIAS-PEREIRA, 2012). However, in recent years there has been a fairly substantial inflow of new agents in the various public bodies, which, in a way, may change this scenario.

It is in this context that arises the initiative to study the following questions: how is the intrapreneurial competence present in public servants? Do they join the institutions with an entrepreneurial profile? And finally, how can intrapreneurship impact activities developed by agents and services provided to the population?

To answer these questions, this study looked at how intrapreneurship is treated in two very prestigious public institutions in Brazil, namely, the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE, the Brazilian institute of geography and statistics, and the Instituto Federal de Santa Catarina – IFSC, the federal institute of education located in the state of Santa Catarina. According to data from the institutes themselves, in the Santa Catarina

branch of IBGE 35 new servants were admitted over the past 5 years (approximately 25% of the permanent staff). In IFSC, of a total of 1,871 servants, distributed throughout the state, 360 joined in 2013 (approximately 20% of the permanent staff).

With this, the current body of agents is investigated in order to detect whether or not they have intrapreneurial skills that help facing new challenges of public administration. In addition, it is expected to determine, in the view of the managers, whether these skills, if any, come with the new servants or are acquired or even developed in the institution.

2. METHODOLOGY

As to the objectives, the research is classified as exploratory, involving literature review and interviews with managers that integrate the direction of the surveyed institutions. One of the goals of such research, according to Gil (2009), is to provide greater familiarity with the problem in order to make it more explicit to the public outside the research environment.

Following the concept of Merriam (1998), according to which qualitative research helps to comprehend and explain the meaning of social phenomena with less possible intervention of the natural scenario, the present study may be classified as qualitative and it will be a case study (two, actually), since it will delve in the analysis of two unique and specific cases in a universe that comprehends the entire Brazilian public system.

In order to try to interpret what the managers of said institutions think about the topic of this article, as a collection instrument, interviews with the managers will be used. Three managers of each institution will be interviewed. In the case of IBGE, the respondents were the head of the state unit in Santa Catarina, the state research manager and the administrative assistant of the head of the state unit. Regarding IFSC, the interviewees were the dean, the director of institutional development and the director of personnel management.

In order to avoid association between the response and the respondent, all will be referred to as "managers" throughout the discussion and presentation of the results, keeping the necessary confidentiality of the research.

The qualitative interviews, which, according to Taylor and Bogdan (1997), are flexible, dynamic, non-directive, unstructured, semi-open and with no fixed pattern, occurred between the months of July and August, 2014, on the premises of the surveyed institutes and carried out by two researchers, who are employees of both institutions.

In this sense, Merriam (1998) proclaims that, in a qualitative study, the researcher is the main instrument for data collection and analysis, and thus can help collecting peculiar information of the researched environment. On the other hand, the author is also emphatic in stating that the investigator, as human instrument, can make mistakes and rely on personal biases that may interfere in the results. Therefore, in order to avoid eventual bias, both researchers participated in the interviews, but, in the case of the agents of IBGE, the researcher that works at IFSC led the interview and made the transcriptions. On the other hand, to collect the interviews of IFSC managers, the researcher working in IBGE headed the meetings and made their transcripts.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will present the concepts of public service, skills and intrapreneurship in public service. All concepts are based on the theoretical framework listed for this research.

3.1 Public Service

It is important to understand that public service is different from the private sector in various aspects, making its scenario more challenging and somewhat delayed when compared to the private sector, especially when it comes to issues related to management.

In regards to its concept, Di Pietro (2008, p. 94) defines public service as

[...] all material activity that the law assigns the State to execute, directly or through their delegates, in order to concretely meet the collective needs, under full or partial public legal regime (translated by the authors).

Souza Júnior (2005), when addressing the ways of providing this important activity, states that the public service can be provided in two ways:

- a) centralized service: provided by the direct public administration;

- b) decentralized service: granted to the indirect public administration (the government creates an entity and transfers the service by law) or delegated to the private sector (by contract or act, in the form of concession, permission or authorization). In this study, the form of service of the surveyed institutions fall within the decentralized service category.

The need for a change in the current scenario of the public service in Brazil is recognized even by the public bodies and government schools. The Escola Superior de Administração Fazendária, the school of finance administration, linked to the ministry of finance, supports this idea and realizes that the public service in general (centralized or not) needs reforms. In an analysis of the national scenario the school says that¹:

The challenge that the country faces at the moment is to articulate a new development model that can bring the whole of Brazilian society the prospect of a better future. It is necessary to take a leap forward in terms of a government administration with less bureaucracy and more management, based on current concepts of administration and efficiency, aimed at the control of results and decentralized, closer to the citizen, which, in a democratic society, is who grants legitimacy to the institutions (translated by the authors).

This change may be linked to the concept of competence in public service. The term, here, is not in a matter of legal competence, widely used in public administration in regards to actions that are allowed or not by the law. It is referred to as a set of knowledges, skills and attitudes that help in the development of an occupation. That issue will be addressed in the next chapter.

3.2 Competences and the Public Service

With all recurring changes and the challenges posed by society, servants - actors of change in the public service - need to develop new skills, knowledges and attitudes, which, articulated, form skills (DURAND, 2000). The competent subject, therefore, is one that has attitude/initiative and knows how to apply knowledge(s) and/or exercise skill(s) to meet both individual and collective goals.

Corroborating Durand (2000), Fleury and Fleury (2000) say that the term competence means the set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that an individual has, and go beyond, emphasizing that this set, called competence, is expressed in the development of the work, affecting performance. In this sense, the three individual knowledges are implicit in the term: the knowledge to know (knowledge), the know-how (skills), the knowing how to be (attitude) and also the way in which each individual applies these knowledges in his work.

Mendonça (2013), on the other hand, summarizes knowledge as the information load required to perform a function; ability as the dexterity to exercise this knowledge; and attitude as the behavior to put it into practice with skill and at the right time.

Thus, competences represent synergistic combinations of knowledge, skills and attitudes, expressed by professional performance, within a certain context or organizational strategy (DURAND, 2000; NISEMBAUM, 2000).

Hipólito (2001) adds to this triad delivery, ie, for him, competence associates knowledges, skills and personal experiences to the results and individual opinions of the individual, built inside one's personal social network. He considers the production and delivery due to mobilization, that is, incorporates the value added by the employee to the business (HIPÓLITO, 2001; FLEURY AND FLEURY, 2000).

Thus, it is not enough to have knowledge, skills and attitude, it is necessary to produce and deliver results that create value.

This competency-based management view is already being applied for some time in private institutions, having proven contributions to the achievement of organizational strategy and consequent achievement of proposed objectives. In public administration it was introduced by Decree No. 5707, of February 23, 2006, which established the Política Nacional de Desenvolvimento de Pessoal - PNDP, a national policy of staff development. However, according to Camões (2013),

despite efforts, there are indications that the implementation of the policy did not occur as planned. The fact that a decree exists does not imply that the policy has been put into practice. As stated in the annual report of training plans, a policy

1. www.esaf.fazenda.gov.br

instrument, in 2010 only 20% of the organs of SIPEC - Sistema de Pessoal Civil da União, the federal civil personnel system, had started the implementation of competency-based management in their units. The various changes in the political figures involved, excessive fragmentation and disconnection between the organs, the great heterogeneity of public administration hinders the implementation and analysis of possible outcomes of the policy (translated by the authors).

Still, an enormous effort persists among researchers, administrators and managers to break this paradigm and insert competence management into public service. It can be inferred that intrapreneurship is also a competence, and in the next section there will be more references to this concept.

3.3 Intrapreneurship in Public Service

The term intrapreneur was coined in the 80s by Gifford Pinchot and was complemented by others in the following decades to name workers who have peculiar characteristics, such as commitment to goals, willingness to take risks and responsibilities, proactivity, vision and will to transform. In addition, workers who seek efficiency, innovation and are persistent. Despite all these positive features, these workers, for various reasons, prefer to work in an existing companies, regardless of the need, common among entrepreneurs, to open their own business. Besides intrapreneur, some authors call it corporate entrepreneur, precisely because they act in an existing corporation (WHITE, 2011; COELHO, 2010; DIEFENBACH, 2011; DRUCKER, 2008; PINCHOT, 1989).

Although the the consequences of innovation and intrapreneurship in the private sector are researched extensively, in the public sector such studies are still rare. Nevertheless, it is already possible to see that the public and private sectors have plenty of differences, which makes simple transposition of practices complex, even inadequate (DIEFENBACH, 2011; GOMES; LAPOLLI, 2014).

In any case, despite the fact that intrapreneurship is an idea used primarily in private sector organizations, the notion that such thinking can be used in the public service in order to improve the quality of services provided the population has been growing in recent years. In a study in prefectures in Greece, Zampetakis and Moustakis (2007) show that public entrepreneurship should be used as a tool for effective management in the public service.

In this same vein, the authors studied for this article demonstrate that, despite the difficulties in the deployment of intrapreneurship in the public service, the topic has gained strength among scholars and government managers. Thus, public entrepreneurship and red tape reduction initiatives in the public service, as suggested by the New Public Management – NPM, are important to improve services provided to taxpayers and to the population as a whole (ROWE et al., 2004; DIEFENBACH, 2011).

Ribeiro and Mancebo (2013), on the other hand, have a very critical view of entrepreneurship in the public service. According to the authors, in an attempt to overcome the crisis that the traditional model of work organization has been going through, new forms of management are being experimented. In this new model, it is required a new employee profile, which is more qualified, participatory and multi-purposed. Still, to the authors, this new organization model and requirements go beyond private organizations, extending to the public service. Thus, the apology to the entrepreneur worker reveals a model that caters primarily to market rules.

It is skeptical, too, the view of Valadares *et al* (2012), who claim that caution is needed with exaggerated expectations towards entrepreneurship in Brazilian public administration. According to the authors, public service is marked by a hybrid model of administration, in which management, patrimonial and bureaucratic practices coexist, making the adaptation of entrepreneurship complex. However, to the authors, at least in discourse, there is effort from the Brazilian government to meet the demands of society by transforming the state, using the implementation of management practices for public organizations.

Thus, although there are critical views, most authors surveyed for this paper present the intrapreneurship as a way to increase the efficiency of organizations. That is how this initiative is perceived, as an opportunity for the public service, which suffers from lack of efficiency and effectiveness. Coelho (2010) agrees with this position, stating that entrepreneurship in public management translates into gradual improvement of administrative methods and procedures, and this can be found by increasing the effectiveness.

In this context and with this background, this article aims at developing an empirical study on the perception of the subject by the managers of two renowned public institutions, given the existing lack of a practical data on the matter.

Next, the studied institutions are presented, as well as the main results obtained in the field collection.

4. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Presentation of the Institutions

4.1.1 IBGE²

IBGE is an organization focused on research capable of revealing identity aspects of the plural Brazilian population. Acting on a reality in constant mutation, handling this public organization requires an active and efficient management team, which is why the organization was chosen for this article.

Established in 1936, IBGE is a public foundation headquartered in Rio de Janeiro, under Ministério do Planejamento, Orçamento e Gestão, the ministry of planning, budget and management, and has, as its mission, "To portray Brazil with information necessary to know its reality and to exercise citizenship".

The institution is present in the 27 units of the federation and in 581 cities, where it keeps the so called municipal agencies.

With a contingent of more than 10,000 public servants divided between staff and contractors, IBGE covers all 5,570 Brazilian municipalities, where it applies its main social, demographic and economic researches, such as PME, PNAD, PNAD Contínua, PMC, PMS, PIM, INPC, IPCA, PIB, Agricultural Production Research, PNS, among others.

4.1.2 IFSC³

IFSC is a federal public institution linked to Ministério da Educação – MEC, the ministry of education, via Secretaria de Educação Profissional e Tecnológica – Setec, the secretary of professional and technological education. It is headquartered in Florianópolis, with autonomy on matters such as administration, patrimony, finance, education, pedagogy and discipline.

The mission of IFSC is to promote inclusion and instruct citizens, through professional, scientific and technological education, generating, disseminating and applying knowledge and innovation, contributing to socio-economic and cultural development.

The vision of IFSC is to be an institution of excellence in professional, scientific and technical education, based on participatory management and the indivisibility of teaching, research and extension.

Additionally, the institution is based on the following values:

ETHICS, based on principles of transparency, social justice, solidarity and responsibility towards the public good.

SOCIAL COMMITMENT, guided by recognition of the historical, economic, cultural and social differences.

EQUITY, ruled by principles of justice and equality in social relations and in management processes.

DEMOCRACY, based on the principles of freedom, participation, responsibility and respect for the community.

SUSTAINABILITY, guided by social and environmental responsibility.

QUALITY, based on the principle of human dignity, through work, knowledge and the improvement of individual and social relationships (translated by the authors).

Through distance education courses, IFSC overcomes state geographical boundaries and offers technical courses of undergraduate and graduate degrees in education centers spread over the states of Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná and São Paulo.

2 <http://www.ibge.gov.br>

3 <http://www.ifsc.edu.br/>

In recent years, with an internationalization process, IFSC sealed partnerships with several foreign education institutions to exchange students and servants. Currently, there are agreements formalized with 23 institutions from 12 countries: United States, Sweden, Canada, Austria, Portugal, Belgium, France, Spain, Germany, Slovenia, Italy and Chile.

The institution is undergoing a process of profound transformation, keeping its social commitment to offer quality public education for free. It has 16 thousand students and two thousand servants on 21 campuses in operation, in addition to the Dean's Office.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF THE INTERVIEWS

The main objectives of this study were to determine whether, in the opinion of the managers of the surveyed institutions, there is the intrapreneurial vision and, also, if such a term was known in the organization. In addition, it was planned to see if the public servant joins the institutions with an entrepreneurial profile or if this competence is developed in the institution. Finally, it aimed to assess, still in the opinion of the managers, if intrapreneurship assists in the activities developed by the agents and if it brings improvements to the services provided to citizens.

So, when evaluating the results of the interviews, it was possible to notice some patterns in the answers, which are presented below:

4.2.1 About intrapreneurship: what was noticed in the responses of managers that were interviewed was that, in general, everyone had heard of entrepreneurship, but usually associated with the private sector or with starting a business. In the case of IFSC, one of the interviewed managers mentioned that entrepreneurship is part of the *curriculum* of some courses. In relation to the term corporate entrepreneurship, some of the respondents had heard about it, but also related to private sector. Finally, about the terms intrapreneur and intrapreneurship, none of the managers knew them. One of them even said that the first contact with the term was with the invitation to the interview. When asked about these terms and initiatives in the public service, in turn, managers also reported that, at least under that name, there is no such construct in the institutes which they serve.

One of the factors that drew a lot of attention was that one of the interviewed managers said there is even a kind of prejudice in the organization over the term entrepreneurship, because, due to ignorance, it is associated with the private sector. This statement is in line with the speech of one of the managers interviewed in another institute, who said: "talking about entrepreneurship here is still a *taboo*" (translated by the authors). Thus, these positions make the issue still very complex, therefore evidencing a number of obstacles to be overcome in order to have entrepreneurship in public service.

4.2.2 About the characteristics of the servants: when asked if the entrepreneurial competence was present on the servants, there was a split. One respondent said that there is a kind of "anti-entrepreneur prejudice" and that it is hard to find this profile on agents. On the other hand, other managers said that, even without knowing it, some servants are intrapreneurs, as they have all the features and act as such. Despite that, there was a consensus that this set of features can certainly assist in the development of the activities of servants. Respondents also said they believe that the characteristics of intrapreneurs can bring higher quality in meeting the demands of society by optimizing processes and resources.

Another important factor highlighted by respondents, and that somehow broke some paradigms, is that this list of features depends on the "seniority" of the public servants. There was an initial inference that the newer agents would be more enterprising and accepting of challenges. This was confirmed in the view of one of the managers, when pointed that elders often question changes. However, other respondents stated that there are as many new agents with this profile as are older ones. Similarly, managers reported receiving servants that even in the first months of work, already display the stereotypical characteristics of public agents, that "only do what they are told and work strict hours" (translated by the authors), do not accept risks, challenges etc.

On the other hand, some of those that come influenced by the public servant stereotype realize that reality can be different, challenging, where labor demand is high. With that, they end up "working harder than they did before, in the private sector" (translated by the authors).

However, some new servants with entrepreneurial characteristics, when faced with "closed doors" (translated by the authors), be they related to legal barriers or management issues, end up discouraged and adopting the public servant stereotype, using their entrepreneurial characteristics to their personal activities, in their personal life. Thus, one of the managers said it is essential that the organization creates conditions for the development and strengthening of the entrepreneurial potential of the agents.

4.2.3 Importance of intrapreneurship for managers and the big picture: all respondents, once they fully understood the characteristics of intrapreneurs, said that such traits are fundamental not only for managers, but for all agents, for it is from collective ideas, by thinking as a whole, that it is possible to optimize public resources without losing quality of service.

It is important to highlight the speech of one of the interviewees, who made a very peculiar and unusual statement about public service. According to this manager, the need to be intrapreneurial is due to the possibility of assuming and leaving management positions at all times:

here we have something very different from the private sector. In the private sector, in a company, the worker either goes up or gets out. One doesn't go down. Here, in the public sector, we go up and down. Today I am here as a manager, tomorrow I'm at the campus teaching again. So, the servant of today is the manager of tomorrow. So he also must have this characteristic to be a good manager later on (translated by the authors).

This statement leads to believe that it is indeed in the public sector where entrepreneurship should be encouraged.

4.2.4 Barriers to intrapreneurship: In the interviews, there were many reports related to work routine, operational bureaucracy and current legislation, as in the case of Federal Law No. 8666/1993, which governs purchases, sales and contracts in the public sector, as impediments to entrepreneurship and to attract intrapreneurs.

In addition, there was reference to the fact that, due to the legal framework of the servants being statutory (covered by Federal Law No. 8112/1990), agents have stability. This, in some cases, cause certain complacency, which, in the view of managers, prevents servers from seeking more responsibility and innovating in their posts, their careers and the organization. This assertion can be evidenced by the speech of one of the managers, transcribed below:

we have a different bureaucracy from the private sector, which also puts certain limits. Perhaps a manager that comes from the private sector would say that he can't manage in the same manner. So the way to reward servants for their work, for their attitude, especially, of more proactivity, is very limited (translated by the authors).

Complementing the legal issues listed above, the position of management in its various spheres can be verified as an obstacle to intrapreneurship, coupled with the need for improvement of communication and conflict of generations. One of the managers portrayed this scenario of difficulties in dealing with high management and exemplified by saying:

one moment because the manager doesn't want to discuss the issue, then again because soon the direction will be changed, so we will wait until the next one. Then they don't to deal with it right away, because they need to ascertain the situation. So these things start making people settle down and that entrepreneurial spirit, since it's not finding fertile grounds to develop, eventually disappears (translated by the authors).

In relation to other levels of management, hierarchically lower, the same manager mentioned that he considers communication and generation gap to be large problems that may halt intrapreneurship.

I have agencies that we have there an older technician, this older technician became the manager there because there was no one else to put, because most retired, so it is you, get on to it. And the person is giving his best, but he was not prepared for that and now I have two more people there, also technicians, but with higher education, which will propose changes. If that manager takes that as a threat, he will thwart these proposals, not giving openness to possible intrapreneurs (translated by the authors).

Therefore, it is noticed that a possible conflict of generations in the two institutes can be one more obstacle in order to develop the intrapreneurial vision in the surveyed organizations.

4.2.5 Results for Society: the inference which was made when proposing this article was that intrapreneurship can bring better quality in the delivery of services provided by public agencies to society. So, there was interest in knowing whether the vision of managers pointed to the same direction. And when questioned on the subject,

they were emphatic in saying that yes, the presence of an environment that fosters greater freedom for entrepreneurship and for the entrepreneur, as well as attracts these professionals, may represent an improvement in public services. In the statement made by one of the interviewees this is very clear, when stating, by the end of the interview, that:

If we can capacitate, train or attract people with this profile of not being settled down, we'll have an institution much closer to what society needs, to what we need in order to transform the country. If we have servants with this profile of management and of spreading among the team, we will have an institution that serves much more the interests of society (translated by the authors).

With that, an interesting factor about these interviews is that even though intrapreneurship is not held with a very high esteem in the studied institutions, it is still very clear that, in the view of their managers, it represents a great opportunity to improve the quality services and the efficiency of public administration.

5. FINAL THOUGHTS

The present study addressed the intrapreneurial competence in public service by identifying how that competence is present in civil servants and whether it can impact in any way the quality and efficiency of services provided by institutions.

The objective was achieved successfully and it was found that the surveyed institutions have intrapreneur servants, seeking to assume roles and challenges, who take risks and are innovative, even when not occupying management positions and despite all the bureaucratic, political and budgetary obstacles to which they are submitted.

It is also important to note that all of the interviewed managers, when asked, said they consider themselves to be intrapreneurs and that this profile may benefit the quality of service and the efficiency of public administration.

On the other hand, the managers said that there are also those accommodated servants that are entitled to the known stereotypical profile. However, contrary to what was inferred *a priori*, the entrepreneurial competence is present in newcomers as it is in the ones with a longer career time, just as the "stereotypical profile" is present in the two strata.

Paradoxically, this amount of obstacles is what raises the certainty that it is indeed the public administration and the public service the places where the presence of entrepreneurship and intrapreneur agents is most needed. This contrasts the "taboo", still recurrent in these organizations, when it comes to terms related to entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship. By the way, to eliminate this "prejudice" one realizes that it is necessary an approach between the academy and the institutions, in order for these concepts to be better understood by the public corporate environment, by governments and by rulers.

The differential of this study lies in the fact that there was research *in loco* in two prestigious institutes of the federal government, so that it could establish an empirical reference.

The contribution brought by this study focuses on the idea that it shed light over a subject that is still little explored and not much discussed in the public corporate environment.

For future studies, it is suggested the holding of statistically significant research, so that the results can be generalized to the entire sector. It is also suggested that research is carried out with the public servants, as to verify if, as with managers, they feel themselves as intrapreneurs.

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