Master's Thesis Review "What (Who) is public governance for? An analysis based on the implementation of the governance policy at Funasa"

Resenha da Dissertação de Mestrado "Para que(m) serve a governança pública? Uma análise a partir da implementação da política de governança na Funasa "

Reseña de la Tesis de Maestría "¿Para qué(quién) es la gobernanza pública? Un análisis a partir de la implementación de la política de gobernanza en Funasa"

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I. Introduction

This review refers to the master's thesis entitled "What (Who) is public governance for? An analysis based on the implementation of the governance policy at Funasa", by Daniel Aguiar Espínola. The research, published in 2021, was guided by Professor Fernando de Barros Filgueiras, from the Professional Master's Program in Governance and Development of the National School of Public Administration (Enap).

The research aimed to analyze the design and dynamics of the public governance policy in Brazil, questioning its purposes and possible effects on the management of public policies and on the daily life of servants. The author researched the implementation of the public governance policy at the National Health Foundation – Funasa from 2017 to 2021 from the perspective of Decree No. 9.203/2017 (BRASIL, 2017) and the advisory documents produced by the Federal Accounting Court (TCU) and the Interministerial Governance Committee (CIG), seeking to understand aspects of the policy's plan, its organizational environment, its actors, and the role of control agencies in the process.

The thesis is organized in six chapters. The first chapter discusses public governance and how it has been the object of dispute not only in theoretical or conceptual terms, but also regarding its arrangements and instruments and the different correlations of actors, interests, and forces during its implementation. The author also emphasizes the role of control agencies in defining the term by specific guidelines and in presenting the "problem" of governance to public agencies, outlining its limits and contents as well as possible solutions, arrangements, and instruments. This leading role is seen in the publication of Decree No. 9.203/2017 – which provides for the governance policy of the direct, autonomous, and foundational federal public administration – and in the instruments adopted by the policy.

The second chapter discusses the implementation of public policies and the guidelines of the TCU and the CIG, reflected mainly in the Basic Governance Framework (BRASIL, 2020a) and in the Public Governance Policy Guide (BRASIL, 2018).

The third chapter presents the research methodology. The research was qualitative and based on a documentary analysis about the governance instruments implemented by Funasa and on interviews with Funasa and TCU servants.

The fourth chapter addresses the implementation of the public governance policy in Funasa, detailing the agency, its history, its strategic importance in the basic sanitation policy, its administrative particularities, and its governance and integrity problems. The author states that Funasa was chosen for these peculiar characteristics and for being used by the TCU as a "pilot" for a set of audits and training sessions for several years to strengthen the Court's governance. This section is divided into analyses of the policy plan internalized in Funasa and its main instruments, its administrative device, and the actors involved in its implementation.

The fifth chapter then presents discussions about the collected material, analyses about the plan, the environment, and the actors involved in the implementation of the governance policy at Funasa. Finally, the sixth chapter shows the results of the research, summarizing its main findings, its limitations, and recommendations for future research agendas.

II. Governance and implementation of public policies – Chapters 1 and 2

Chapter 1 presents the concept of governance from different perspectives, showing that governance assumes different modes of application according to the objectives of public agencies and their functions within the governmental structure and to different views about the role of the State, the market, and society. In this sense, the research mentions Baptista's (2017) understanding that public governance is not and will not be a neutral management model. According to the author, public governance is socially constructed according to the intentions and purposes of the reality which it affects and is part of. The meanings and implications of the concept of governance are therefore often disputed (LEVI-FAUR, 2012; CAVALCANTE; PIRES, 2018).

The first chapter also summarizes the trajectory of public governance in Brazil, which has intensified in recent decades, concretizing different representations, beliefs, and interests and creating a specific translation of the term in Brazil which relates mainly to a prescriptive-formal perspective that seeks to structure guidelines for the best and most effective administrative performance (PESSOA, 2019; CAVALCANTE; PIRES, 2018). Moreover, the chapter emphasizes that in recent movements to promote

governance, control agencies have been leading the establishment of public governance standards in Brazil, differently than in other nations (NOGUEIRA; GAETANI, 2018).

The end of the first section mentions that public policy instruments are not neutral but have representations and meanings based on theories and preconceptions about the actors whose relationships they seek to organize (PIRES, 2016). Ollaik and Medeiros (2011) also affirm that the choice of instruments is an eminently political theme since it structures the process and results of the policy, letting actors determine how these public policies will be implemented.

Chapter 2 discusses the implementation of public policies and their predominant strands. The more traditional strand, known as top-down analysis, studies the process of policy formulation, its variations, and gaps in its execution, focusing on the rules that structure the policy, the specification of its objectives, and the control of its agents. The bottom-up analysis strand, in turn, emphasizes the contexts in which the policy is implemented, focusing on local spaces and the discretion of implementing bureaucrats.

The author mentions the analytical model exposed by Lima and D'Ascenzi (2013, p. 105), who emphasize the importance of having a more current and fluid view of implementation actions which is influenced not only by normative and superior efforts to comply with the plan but also by the material conditions at the time of implementation and the various world conceptions of the actors responsible for the implementation.

Regarding implementation in Brazil, Chapter 2 highlights some of the premises and guidelines that indicate the main objectives, characteristics, and content of the public governance policy, the actors involved and their roles, and which products are expected from the perspective of the TCU and the CIG. These characteristics are described in the Basic Governance Framework Applicable to Public Organizations of the TCU (BRASIL, 2020a) and in the Guide to Public Governance Policy (BRASIL, 2018a), documents which, in short, indicate the minimum content (or "plan") of the public governance policy in Brazil.

However, the author argues that to better understand the implementation of the governance policy, looking only at the ideas set out in theoretical models and references is insufficient. These docu-

ments are initial elements of analysis of the implementation "plan" for public governance and should be later internalized and adapted to local circumstances in each organization, relating to institutional contexts and respective functional agencies.

III. Methodology and research – Chapters 3 and 4

Chapter 3 details the design of the research, which follows the qualitative method and proposes to analyze the implementation of the public governance policy in Funasa from 2017 to mid-2021 from the perspective of Decree No. 9.203/2017 (BRASIL, 2017a) and advisory documents produced by the TCU and CIG (BRASIL, 2018a, 2020a) and the role of control agencies in this implementation, seeking to understand aspects of its plan, its organizational environment, and its actors according to the analytical model of Lima and D'Ascenzi (2013).

The author selected Funasa as his object of study because of the agency's strategic importance for the national basic sanitation policy, allied to historical problems related to governance and integrity. Because of these characteristics, TCU chose the agency as the target of a "pilot experience" in 2017, in which the TCU and partners with the senior management and other servants developed a set of actions to implement governance instruments and practices.

The documentary analysis of the research sought a sample of the most representative regulations and internal documents produced by Funasa from 2017 to mid-2021, aiming to organize its governance instruments and related activities such as management reports, formalization of internal policies, creation of boards and internal control agencies, etc.

Furthermore, 17 semi-structured interviews were conducted – 16 with Funasa servants and former servants and one with a servant from the Federal Accounting Court. The interviewees were divided into three groups to highlight possible distinct characteristics and perceptions regarding the implementation the governance policy within the organization. Group A included agents directly responsible for the implementation and/or external monitoring of the governance policy at Funasa – members of the Funasa Presidency, of CGRC (Governance, Risk and Control Committee), of SubCGRC (Governance, Risk and Control Subcommittee), and of the TCU. Group B included agents who followed the meetings of the CGRC and servants in the areas of Internal Audit, Customer Relation's Office, Specialized Federal Prosecutor's Office, Ethics Committee, and Integrity Management Unit. Group C, in turn, gathered the agents who conduct the final policies of Funasa – Presidency and State Superintendent (Suests), who were in contact with some of the governance instruments implemented.

Categories were created from the interviews to support the analyses based on elements of the political-administrative environment of the institution (number of servants, technical qualification of servants, operational and administrative routines, political interferences, budgetary issues, changes in senior management, and participation of Suests) and on perceptions of its actors (differences in organizational culture, perceptions on governance, engagement with the theme, and motivation of servants).

Chapter 4 includes the identification, in the local context of Funasa, of subsidies to analyze the implementation of the public governance policy using the elements indicated by Lima and D'Ascenzi (2013): the policy plan, the organizational environment (institution) in which the plan is executed, and the actors responsible for its implementation, according to the scheme in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1 – REPRESENTATIVE SCHEME OF THE RESEARCH
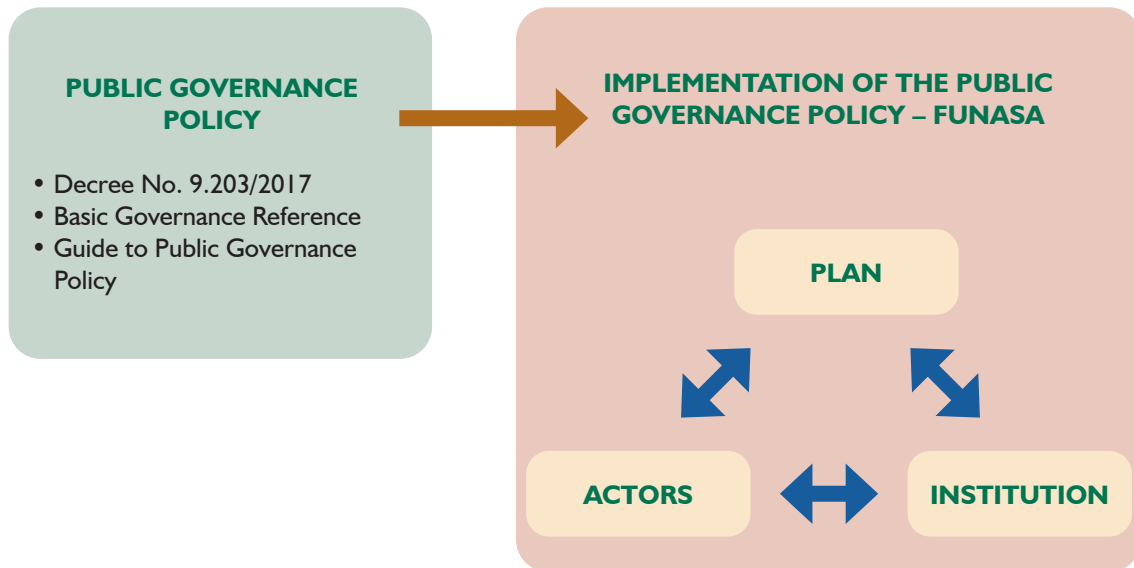
Source: Espínola (2021), p. 47.

IV. Discussion of results and conclusions – Chapters 5 and 6

In Chapter 5, in discussing the research results, the author states that the set of instruments that characterizes Funasa's plan for implementing the governance policy in the daily life of the organization faces structural difficulties and various political interferences.

Using a documentary analysis and interviews, the research shows that since the implementation of governance policy instruments at Funasa seems to focus on purely formal elements, the policy is poorly incorporated by the agency's servants – especially some of the agents who conduct the agency's final policies (group C interviewees), who stated being unaware of the actions implemented and having a partly negative view of the respective instruments.

Furthermore, the areas of Funasa that most handle topics such as strategic planning and management, risk management, internal audit, and Ombusdman's office benefited the most from the implementation of governance instruments. Most servants of the other areas observed residual benefits or even expressed discredit on the subject.

The public governance policy plan implemented by Funasa showed a strong prescriptive connotation of standards, focusing on the creation of the CGRC and SubGRC, the organization of a Strategic Planning, the structuring of internal audit, Ombusman's office, and internal affairs areas, and the creation of risk and integrity management policies. It therefore expresses an eminently top-down view.

The governance policy was thus implemented in Funasa in an unfavorable institutional environment regarding stability of senior management and fragile internal controls, objects of constant attention by the control agencies. In the case analyzed, even with all the resources and efforts spent, the implemented "plan" seems to have been insufficient to significantly alter the reality of Funasa. However, the research shows that some of the problems that Funasa currently faces come from the agency's creation, such as the diversity of organizational cultures of its staff, or are independent of the agency's senior management, such as the need to replace staff or the profusion of parliamentary amendments intended for them.

Moreover, the CGU acts somehow distant regarding the theme of governance within Funasa. Although the CGU was responsible for the "pilot" work of the TCU – at least regarding the monitoring of the CGRC and other actions with the senior manage-

ment of the institution – it apparently did not seek to promote with the organization more robust studies which it has greater technical competence to assist, such as studies on the implementation of Risk Management and the Integrity Plan of the entity.

One of the author's considerations about the research is that the "remedy" of governance, as outlined by the public governance policy, can be very effective, but likely for those organizations with greater capacities previously arranged or with a highly qualified and motivated technical staff. On the other hand, organizations with bottlenecks and greater structural barriers, as in the case studied, have more difficulty to internalize certain instruments, with residual positive effect.

The author concludes that in an ideal scenario, Funasa, supported by the TCU, could have sought a governance model better suited to its potentialities and limitations. The CGU, however, proposed instruments inadequate to the needs of an agency such as Funasa and which the agency's actors internalized and appropriated differently than planned by the external control agency.

V. Final considerations

The research presents relevant results so as to show, considering the reality studied, that efforts to implement a public governance policy in environments with low institutional capacity such as Funasa can have negligible or unsustainable effects, mitigating potential benefits of the instruments. It also shows that the control agencies guide timely governance instruments which encompass essential elements for management but which could be more effective and viable if they were proposed in greater cooperation with the institutions, considering peculiarities, difficulties, and alternatives.

Discussing a relevant and current theme, the research calls for a more accurate and critical analysis about the implementation of a governance policy in public administration, especially regarding the concepts on which it is based, the effectiveness of its instruments, and its effects on organizations and on the provision of public services in Brazil.

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