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Corrêa, Roberta Silva de Camargo Corrêa; Martins, Cibele Barsalini
Martins; Snoeijer, Enio Snoeijer; Silva, Altieres de Oliveira Silva
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The Influence of the Precariousness in the Practice of the Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance and Housing for the Development of a Rio Grande do Sul's Municipality

A Influência da Precariedade na Atuação da Secretaria Municipal de Assistência Social e Habitação para o Desenvolvimento de um Município do Rio Grande do Sul

Roberta Silva de Camargo Corrêa¹

Cibele Barsalini Martins²

Enio Snoeijer³

Altieres de Oliveira Silva⁴

Abstract

This study seeks to present contributions about one of the issues that influence in municipal development from the perspective of public management: the precariousness. Thus, elects as goal to evaluate the actions of the Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance and Housing of a Rio Grande do Sul's municipality, during the administration period from 2009 to 2016, and observe how the condition of precariousness influences the achievement of proposed plans for this city during this period. It is a qualitative research, descriptive, case study strategy, and found that the secretariat is subject to the precariousness, which influences the municipality's development from the actions of the secretariat and can overcome when enables the scope of proposed results.

Keywords: Precariousness; Municipality Development; Public Management.

Resumo

Este trabalho busca apresentar contribuições acerca de uma das questões que influenciam o desenvolvimento municipal sob a ótica da gestão pública: a precariedade. Assim, elege como objetivo avaliar, a partir de ações do secretariado no período correspondente às gestões de 2009 a 2016 da Secretaria Municipal de Assistência Social e Habitação de um município do Rio Grande do Sul, de que forma a condição de precariedade influencia na consecução de planos propostos para esse município nesse período. É uma pesquisa qualitativa, descritiva, estratégia de estudo de caso e constatou que o secretariado está sujeito à precariedade, a qual influencia o desenvolvimento municipal a partir das ações do secretariado e pode ser superada quando possibilita o alcance de resultados propostos.

Palavras-chave: Precariedade; Desenvolvimento Municipal; Gestão Pública.

¹ rsc.consult@gmail.com, Brazil. Specialist in Public Management from the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina – UFSC. Campus Reitor João David Ferreira Lima, s/n, Trindade, CEP: 01504-000 – Florianópolis, SC – Brazil.

² cbele.martins@ufsc.br, Brazil. Professor at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina – UFSC. PhD in Management from the Universidade Nove de Julho – UNINOVE. Campus Reitor João David Ferreira Lima, s/n, Trindade, CEP: 01504-000 – Florianópolis, SC – Brazil.

³ enio.snoeijer@ufsc.br, Brazil. Specialist in Administration, Public Management and Social Policies from the Faculdades Dom Bosco – FDB. Av. das Torres, 500, Santo Inácio, CEP: 85806-095 – Cascavel, PR – Brazil.

⁴ altibart@gmail.com, Brazil. Master student in International Management from the Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing – ESPM. Rua Dr. Álvaro Alvim, 123, VI. Mariana, CEP: 04018-010 – São Paulo, SP – Brazil.

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Introduction

In the last three decades there were intense transformations in capitalism in Brazil that impacted the world of work and led to multiple ways of informality, as well as a structural precarization of work in public and private organizations. In general, it can be concluded that this is due to the process of flexibilization in labor relations, intensified from the 1990s.

According to Antunes (2012), flexible workforce hiring practices in organizations have triggered an increase in the deregulation of social rights for workers in general. As an example of such practices, one can cite the extension of outsourcing, flexibilization of the day and remuneration and temporary work contracts. Krein (2013, p.27) points out that a large part of the measures that enabled this flexibilization came from governments, in accordance with market expectations, and that this process "contributed to the loss of reference in the structuring of the labor market and society".

First, though, in the same sense, Rodgers (1989, cited in Leite, 2008, p.10) identifies elements that conceptualize precariousness, such as "instability, lack of protection, insecurity with regard to social protection and economic or social vulnerability". Alves (2011) stated that the precariousness of labor could be understood as the deconstitution of the standard and harmonic format of the labor force for the state of merchandise or, in other words, what Antunes (2012) called dismantling of the legislation that treats of social work.

In the context of global economic, political and social crises, with the redefinition of the role of the State and with the emergence of new organizational forms, it becomes important to understand the role of public agents and the implications of their activities, as well as the policies implemented in municipalities, states and the Union.

In this scenario, the municipal secretaries of government are appointed by the mayors of the municipalities to respond to specific thematic areas or sectors of the municipal administration, also known as "pastes", such as, for example, education, culture, health, social assistance and tourism.

Considering that these professionals do not have any labor relations with the bodies for which they are appointed, since they are invested in positions with

commission based on the law of free appointment and exoneration (Federal Constitution, 1988), this reality raises the following question: which is the influence of precariousness in the work of government secretaries for the development of municipalities?

In this case, the Municipal Department of Social Assistance and Housing of a municipality in the State of Rio Grande do Sul (RS) was elected. The purpose of this article is to evaluate, from the positions and actions of the municipal secretaries, responsible for this folder in the 2009-2016 administrations, how the precarious condition exerts influence in the achievement of the plans and objectives proposed for this municipality.

This work is justified because it tries to understand how the precariousness, based on the insecurity caused by the lack of stability in the employment, affects the municipal development, since its agents, the municipal secretaries, are exposed to such situation. It is hoped, therefore, to contribute to deal the challenges imposed by this condition, in order to allow the expansion of theoretical discussions about the precariousness and the provision of the public service.

This article is structured, in addition to the present introduction, in four other sections: Theoretical referential - section divided into 3 subsections called Public Management, Unicipal Development and Precariousness -; Methodological procedures; Analysis and discussion of results; and Final considerations.

Theoretical Reference

The first step in the search for the proposed understanding is in the apprehension of what public management actually is.

Public Administration

The concept of public management is applied to the various spheres of administration in the public sphere and can be understood as an administrative process, whereby entities transform popular desires or needs into reality (Catelli, & Santos, 2004) or otherwise, it is through this that it seeks to overcome difficulties and problems encountered by a given population by managing (and therefore managing)

public goods and policies for development with efficiency and effectiveness (Carneiro, & Menicucci, 2013).

Still, for Carneiro and Menicucci (2013), this process leads, in summary form, to the emergence of issues that must be evidenced in order to reach desired and even demanded solutions for the populations. Once the issues are recognized, they become part of the political agenda, which in turn becomes public policy and must be implemented through public or private agents, in a constant cycle.

For a better visualization of this cycle, known as the policy cycle, Figure 1 presents the scheme proposed by Rua (2012, p. 34).

Figure 1 – Public Policy Cycle



Source: Rua (2012).

In this cycle, it can be briefly observed how the basis of public management is given, which management must follow the constitutional precepts of Legality, Impersonality, Morality, Publicity and Efficiency, according to the dictates of article 37 of the Federal Constitution of 1988, as well as as must follow other precepts, such as the fundamental principles of Planning, Coordination, Decentralization, Delegation of Competence and Control, provided for in Decree-Law n. 200/1967 (1967).

These events contain the peculiarities that express the desire of the people, as Motta (2013) demonstrates, by pointing out that, in the practical aspect, we want better services and immediate solutions to urgent problems, for which the public expects social demands are treated quickly by the public administration, since public resources

come from the population, and want transparency and efficiency in governmental administrative acts.

In other words, in addition to respect for constitutional principles in all its acts, public management needs managers with entrepreneurial characteristics, willing to deal with the new administrative scenario with the commitment that society expects, whose objective is to increase citizen participation in all public policy processes (Santos, & Santos, 2017).

It is noted that, due to state reforms in different national contexts, especially since the 1990s, the process of rationalizing public management has led to characteristics such as results-oriented management, competition with the private sector, outsourcing services and the opening of bureaucracies to the demands and demands of users (Oliveira, 2015).

It is worth mentioning that Buarque (1999, p.21) has contributed to the development of such a discussion, arguing that "decentralization and the municipalization of public management may lead to strengthening and strengthening economic concentration" and, in this way, the responsibility of each municipality, a situation that shows a tendency towards the emergence of "political-administrative" decentralization actions. It can be verified from this discussion that the public management is effectively the responsibility of the Union and permeates Federal, State and Municipal levels.

Municipal Development

The concept of development has been evolving. It originated from a synonym of growth, with an exacerbated economic scope, went through a transitional phase, in which it integrated multidisciplinary issues, with emphasis on social issues, and then, connected to the sum of environmental issues, gradually gave way to the term sustainable development (Conterato, & Fillipi, 2009) and establishes that the desired additions must last, maintaining the basic conditions of development for future generations (Camargo, & Barcelos, 2009).

This concept of sustainable development can be observed according to the definition given by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 2004, when vernaculating the term with the descriptive:

Sustainable development seeks to integrate and harmonize ideas and concepts related to economic growth, justice and social well-being, environmental conservation and the rational use of natural resources. Therefore, it considers the social, environmental, economic and institutional dimensions of development. To be sustainable, development must mean an improvement in the quality of life of the entire population, ensuring dignified living conditions for all and social justice. ... It also proposes the preservation of significant samples of the natural environment, in order to guarantee the maintenance of the environmental services that these areas provide and the quality of life of the surrounding population. ... As for the economy, sustainable development postulates growth based on increased efficiency in the use of energy and natural resources. Sustainable development also posits changes in society's patterns of consumption and production, reducing waste and increasing awareness of the impacts caused by the use of natural resources (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics [IBGE], 2004, p.101).

In view of this, sustainable development has become an integral part of organizational policies that have found themselves without alternatives to the development of a competitive market. Sustainable actions started to occupy spaces in the mission, vision and corporate values, so that all employees are aware of and participate in these processes with a focus on sustainability, as well as demonstrating the concern of the ecologically correct format in all its products and services (Oliveira, Oliveira, & Paula, 2014).

The concept of sustainability and its application reflect directly on the country's development in all spheres, both federal, state and municipal. Regarding the municipal sphere, in a study on sectoral mapping with the use of sustainability indexes in Juruá (AM) region, Mattos and Fernandes (2017) verified that there is an urgent need for close communication between the public authorities and the population, to improve the quality of life of the community and sustainable municipal development.

When it comes to the importance of communication between the population and the municipal body, in order to create a beneficial context for the harmonious development of a given region, Cavalcanti (2004) mentions that each municipality has an impact on national socio-political development and symbolically represents, since the arrival of Portuguese colonization in Brazil, the opportunity of men and women in the development of new territories.

According to the author and in colonial context, the municipalities are extensions of the State, which comprise intermediary instances that make possible the communication between settlers and metropolis, in order to solve several social issues, and still remain as a public service agency for the achievement of sustainable and integrated development.

From such information, it can be deduced that the municipality is the key element for development and, in turn, public management, at the municipal level, is the key to achieving this goal. Meirelles (1995, cited in Klering et al., 2011), recalls that the mayor, the representative of the executive branch, is responsible for the local management of the municipality and receives advice from the municipal secretaries.

Such a quotation reflects on what is sometimes overlooked, that public management is exercised by people who have needs, interests, dreams and ideals, not always aligned with the needs of the municipality.

These municipal needs, in turn, may not be aligned with the mayor's plan of government or electoral promises, incurring the subjection of precariousness, a subject that will be addressed in the next subsection.

Precariousness

More than a characteristic of the precarious state, precariousness represents a complex social, political and economic concept that comes from the Social Sciences, which reflects the restricted and unpopulated work in which people face realities without guarantees or social benefits (Cappai, 2015). According to Vargas (2016), a subjective situation of precariousness within the sociology of work may be associated with the worker's sense of insecurity, the lack of social and social security protection, the reduction or significant loss of economic retribution, informality and the relations of tension and conflict at work. The so-called flexibilization of protective social legislation at work means an increase in the exploitation mechanisms of overwork, an increase in precariousness and the destruction of social rights (Jordão, & Stampa, 2015).

In this sense, precarity is a process in which there are pressures and experiences, imposing conditions on people and producing fragil situations in life and

uncertainties about the future, as insecurity and lack of possibilities for keeping the work and lifestyle, in a general form (Cuervas Valenzuela, 2015). The authors, Jordão and Stampa (2015, p.6), add that the term precariousness, besides being used to describe losses in labor rights that occurred in the context of the the world of work transformations, refers to the "return to the liberal ideals of defense of the minimal state".

For Valenzuela (2015), precariousness is also the result of two processes considered as revolutionary: globalization and neoliberalism, characteristics of financial capitalism and that apply to migrants, women, youth, disabled people, criminalized persons, older workers, retirees with low incomes, as well as including few or very highly qualified people, without distinction. The author further complains that precariousness consists in both satisfied subjects that conceal a part-time work, as well as in unsatisfied subjects who complain but do not find the option to modify this situation. These behaviors, however, show, among other aspects, the anxiety of permanent exposure to job insecurity, coupled with lack of motivation and need for social respect.

Standing (2009) combines the concept of citizenship with work, establishing among them a fundamental relation for the formation of the citizen-worker who, according to the author, is purposely left out, but which is increasingly evidenced in the world labor market, under the inclemency of globalization.

It is interesting to note that, in Standing's view (2009), the characteristics of capitalism's flexibilization directly reflect precariousness when workers submit to it while satisfying themselves with the relative freedom it provides. Also when they generate serious insecurity, with disorientation and loss of the sense of identity, sometimes added of a sense of non-citizenship which, in turn, will reflect in the line of actions and practices that they will carry out.

It should be noted here that the informality of the government municipal secretaries, object of this study, finds a clear similarity to the condition of precariousness, considering that their employment is devoid of labor rights, carried out on a temporary basis and without the guarantee of stability and registration in professional portfolio. According to art. 39, paragraph 4, of the Constitution of the

Federative Republic of Brazil, the municipal secretaries, among other public agents, "shall be remunerated exclusively by a fixed amount in a single installment, with no additional gratuity, bonus, other kind of remuneration ..." (Federal Constitution, 1988).

Methodological Procedures

The methodology of this work includes, besides the field exploration phase, the definition of the instruments and procedures to be used, both in data search and in its treatment and analysis (Minayo, 1994). It is presented, according to Fröhlich and Dorneles (2011), as a tracing of the alternatives that the researcher possesses, according to the theory he uses.

This study was oriented by a qualitative approach in order to have a standardized methodology. According to Silva and Menezes (2005), this study aims to analyze the data obtained with the research, without presenting any statistical character, looking only at the results of the research, rather, understand the behavior of a particular group of people.

Still regarding the method, this study proved compatible with what is called applied research; (Gerardt, & Silveira, 2009), as is intended to be applied in the municipality of Rio Grande do Sul under study.

Following the classifications presented by Gerhardt and Silveira (2009), the objectives of this study can be classified as descriptive, which, in turn, are classified as a case study that, according to Yin (2001), performs the investigation of a fact or events inserted in the current context through direct observation, in which there is no clarity of the boundaries between fact and context. In this research, the specific environment to be analyzed is the Municipal Department of Social Assistance and Housing of a municipality in Rio Grande do Sul, where it is investigated how the precariousness is affecting its development.

Carrying concepts to practice, this study was developed from the bibliographic research that was elaborated by scientific articles, books and other materials, found (Gil, 1996) in the search for preliminary information on the subject under study (Fonseca, 2002) and , in this way, to produce the theoretical framework necessary for this research.

To do so, it was initially investigated the material and works on the subject precariousness pointed out in previous reading as a secondary source of social sciences theory, using the words precariousness and municipal public management. At that time, it was clear that the theme, as intended, had not been the subject of works published until then in Portuguese, only in English and Spanish and with the focus of the groups of people defined mainly by age, gender and other social conditions that influence their employability, without, however, relating it to public management.

Advancing the development of this information base and with the objective of producing data or sources of information (Marconi, & Lakatos, 2008), interviews were carried out between January 10 and 20, 2017 with five of the six people who held the position (the last person was not included in this study because it couldn't be found), from 2009 to 2016, with the aid of an interview script containing ten questions, divided into two parts: in the first one, the interviewed discussed on the position of secretary that he would have occupied then, establishing links with their training, professional experience and obtained results; and in the second interview, there were reported aspects of precariousness, with emphasis on their influence.

With an average of 45 minutes lasting, the interviews aimed to confront the theory with the practice, in order to achieve the proposed goal of establishing the relationship between the precariousness and the development of the municipality studied in Rio Grande do Sul, during this Secretary.

After the information was collected, the data were analyzed, comparing the theory and the practice exposed in the interviews, in order to approach the empirical to the academic to ascertain the whole and, at the same time, maintain a certain distance from the object under analysis (Camargo, 2011).

At this point, the objectives proposed for the secretariat were compared with those effectively achieved, as well as the area of academic training and professional experience of the interviewed with Social Assistance and Housing (object of this study), so then to evidence the effects of precariousness and to establish the relation between its effective successes (evidenced by the achievement of proposed goals and awards granted to this secretary).

The ethical issues were respected, omitting the names of the interviewed ones, who were referenced only according to its listed position in interview and citing sources and authors in accordance with the dictates of law n. 9,610 of February 19, 1998.

Analysis and discussion of results

From 2009 to 2016, the municipality target of this study was managed by two distinct political fronts, with almost opposite political platforms. From 2009 to 2012, the Municipal Department of Social Assistance and Housing counted on two in charge of the portfolio. The first remained in office for only three months, when he gave way to the second of that government, which remained there until the end of the term of the mayor-elect.

These personalities did not have specific training in the area of social assistance or public management, and the former represented only a recognized political position. It is recorded that the adjunct of this first secretary came to become the definitive secretary in that government. Although, without specific training in the areas in question, it had broad interest and involvement with social assistance issues.

As reported by interviewed 1 and 2, many difficulties were encountered in that period, which revealed that, although there was knowledge about goals and objectives proposed at the municipal level, these were partially aligned with the proposals at the federal level due to the incompatibilities between the proposed programs at the federal level and the local reality, which made many of these programs impracticable for this municipality of Rio Grande do Sul.

According to Interviewed 1, "government was political, with a party proposal, ideologies and constant pressures due to the lack of technical knowledge on the part of those involved (users, municipal manager, secretaries), who, because they did not understand the functions of social assistance, pressed through actions that were often illegal and impracticable".

The influences of precariousness were then denounced, when they were admittedly subject to this force; it was possible to disengage from its influence, manifesting itself according to its personal beliefs and precepts, opposing the plans proposed by the manager that were not in fact legally attributable to the portfolio.

These positions were also verified in the statements of respondents 2 and 3, who share the position of Silveira and Garces (2002), revealing that, with the evolution of the Real Plan from the Multi-year Plan of the federal sphere from 2000 to 2003, public management transformed into a model of entrepreneurial public management. This, in turn, originated in the mirroring of the state as an "emulator of the business world, adopting not only its ideas and practices, but also its organizational model: flexible bureaucracy" (Paula, 2007, p.30).

The actions were recognized in a partisan context, which showed the suitability and transparency of the work carried out, as well as other political agents and the community who praised the action and encouraged these people to engage more in this folder to the present day.

However, municipal goals and proposals were only partially achieved. They reached Social Assistance approximately 50% and Housing, close to 70% effectiveness, according to information provided by the interviewed.

The subsequent period brought significant changes to the municipality that changed the legend of its management. Between 2013 and 2016, the portfolio had four secretaries, two of whom were trained and experienced in the area of social assistance and two were politically motivated. One of them remained in office for only six months, which corresponded to the removal, for legal reasons, of the person responsible for the portfolio to run for the elections held in 2016.

In that period, in addition to the difficulties faced by the previous government, other challenges were identified. Although everyone was aware of the goals and objectives proposed to them and recognized in the state and federal spheres, the lack of resources, either financial (due to lack of funding, transfer or pulp, is not considered a priority for the use of available resources) and humans were the complicators of the situation.

Precariousness was recognized as an influence and even considered as "having to do with the practice of the state model in which we work, inherent in current politics", in the words of the interviewed 3.

Another dilemma faced by such managers was the misalignment between the political project and the personal perspectives of the employees, which reflected the

lack of autonomy, lack of prioritization for solving pulp problems, lack of political understanding of social assistance according to the legal precepts by secretaries, users and the mayor-elect for that period, which reflected in constant pressures, according to the assumptions of Standing cited by Cuervas Valenzuela (2015) above.

In this period, another deal was that, upon assuming management, the mayor decreed a moratorium, which made the budget procedures even more difficult, since the secretaries were prevented from carrying out financial transactions. Allied to this fact, the Municipal Department of Social Assistance and Housing was deprived of human resources, mainly of technicians affected to the area.

Two of the three interviewed, in charge of the portfolio, acknowledged that they did not have much autonomy for decision-making on partisan, political or mayoral issues, as opposed to the other interviewed who, in opposing the manager's positions, faced precariousness and obtained, in response, the support and respect of both the manager and his staff and government colleagues, a fact that corroborated once again with what was said by Cuervas Valenzuela (2015).

Nevertheless, about 70% of the goals and objectives proposed were achieved, which represents the fullness of social assistance (100%) as opposed to the 35% reached in the area of housing. These data were obtained by calculating the mean between the values reported by the interviewed.

A differential of this management concerns recognition. Although all the interviewed considered to have had recognition of their work as managers of the social assistance and housing portfolio, one of them was highlighted and received 12 awards, six of them nationwide, among them the Social Responsibility, Social Sustainability, Social Consciousness Medal and Commenda Grande Gestor.

It should be noted that, in general, Social Assistance has always had priority over Housing in the period studied, and this was little mentioned by the interviewed.

Final Considerations

Social Assistance as a public policy, even though it is guided by federal normative principles, faces serious implementation difficulties at the municipal level, due to the difficulty of apprehension both by users and some of its implementers, who

sometimes confuse its precepts and objectives, distorting, due to lack of understanding, their real purposes.

In accordance with the guiding principle of this research, it was pointed out by all the interviewed, of both administrations, that they were subject to precariousness, which, in turn, influenced the results obtained, both directly and indirectly, and that better results were obtained by those managers who combined specific knowledge inherent to the portfolio, whether technical or empirical, as well as managerial knowledge, in order to overcome the difficulties imposed by the precariousness with seriousness and commitment.

It was found, therefore, that the precariousness, as conceptualized by the Social Sciences, exerts influence in the municipal development. In other words, by not letting go or by submitting to their prerogatives, managers may not achieve the proposed goals and consequently not achieve the desired development.

As this is a case study and therefore not generalizable, it is proposed the need for further studies to complement its efforts, in order to overcome the barriers of specific local delimitation, in the expansion of its horizons, both at the local level, by promoting the transposition of a secretariat from one government to the government as a whole in all its secretariats, as well as to the application in terms of positions in commission, subject to the same premises of precariousness, in order eventually to reach other governmental spheres.

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