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# UMA PROPOSTA DE INSTRUMENTO DE PESQUISA PARA EXPLORAR AS INFLUÊNCIAS DOS STAKEHOLDERS NAS ORGANIZAÇÕES PÚBLICAS

## UNA PROPOSICIÓN DE INSTRUMENTO DE INVESTIGACIÓN PARA EXPLORAR LAS INFLUENCIAS DE LOS STAKEHOLDERS EN ORGANIZACIONES PÚBLICAS

### PROPOSING A RESEARCH FRAMEWORK FOR EXPLORING STAKEHOLDER INFLUENCES IN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

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#### **Palavras-chave**

Teoria dos stakeholders;  
Métodos de pesquisa;  
Agências governamentais.

#### **Palabras-clave:**

Teoría de los  
stakeholders;  
Métodos de investigación;  
Agencias  
gubernamentales.

#### **Key words:**

Stakeholder theory;  
Research methods;  
Government agencies.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo propõe um instrumento de pesquisa para explorar as influências dos stakeholders nas organizações públicas. Esta proposta é uma recopilación de paradigmas filosóficos e operacionais de outras pesquisas sociais: o qualitativo versus o quantitativo, o positivismo versus o construtivismo e o indutivo versus o dedutivo. O instrumento proposto aqui é um conjunto de dois estudos e uma combinação de perspectivas quanti e qualitativas. A metodologia foi testada, com êxito, em organizações públicas. O objetivo deste artigo é iniciar uma discussão a respeito da praticidade e o futuro emprego da teoria dos stakeholders, para explicar as relações entre organizações públicas e privadas do Brasil, nas quais pessoas, grupos e outras organizações estão aptas a exercer influência nos processos de tomada de decisões.

**RESUMEN:** Este papel propone un instrumento de investigación para explorar las influencias de los stakeholders en organizaciones públicas. Esta proposición es una recopilación de paradigmas filosóficos y operacionales de otras investigaciones sociales, como cualitativo versus cuantitativo; positivismo versus constructivismo e inductivo versus deductivo. El instrumento propuesto aquí es un conjunto de dos estudios y una combinación de perspectivas cuanti y cualitativas. La metodología ha sido testado con éxito en organizaciones públicas. El objetivo de este papel es empezar una discusión respecto la practicidad y el futuro empleo de la teoría de los stakeholders para explicar las relaciones entre organizaciones públicas y privadas de Brasil, en las cuales personas, grupos y otras organizaciones están aptas a ejercer influencia en los procesos de toma de decisiones.

**ABSTRACT:** This paper proposes a research framework to be employed for investigating stakeholder influences in the local government context. It proposes an overview on philosophical and operational paradigms for undertaking social researches, such as qualitative versus quantitative approaches, positivism versus constructivist philosophies and inductive versus deductive methods. The framework proposed here is a set of two studies and a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches which is carried out with cross sectional survey plus case studies and supported by interviews of validation. The methodology has been tested with public organizations elsewhere with success. The main objective of this paper is to start a discussion about the practicability and future of employing the stakeholder theory to explain the relationship between Brazilian public and private organizations, in which the people, groups and other organizations are able to exert influence upon their decision-making processes.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The stakeholder theory has been in the business agenda since Richard E. Freeman published his book "Strategic Management: a stakeholder approach" in 1984. From that time, papers, articles and books have been published contributing to its descriptive, normative and instrumental bases as an accepted theory (DONALDSON & PRESTON, 1995). Though the amount of work produced in the business literature, the stakeholder theory is still an unexplored field in the public sector particularly in the local government context.

According to Donaldson & Preston (1995), studies in the stakeholder theory field have been carried out attempting to improve its descriptive, instrumental and normative bases. Descriptive studies aim to depict the organization as "a constellation of cooperative and competitive interests possessing intrinsic value" (ibid., p. 66). Instrumental studies aim to exam "the connections, if any, between the practice of stakeholder management and the achievement of various corporate performance goals" (ibid., p. 67). Finally, normative studies aim to supply norms to regulate the organization's behavior and rules of conduct.

This paper proposes a research framework which is based on Oliver's (1991) literature review about the stakeholder theory. The framework proposed here results from the combination of investigations on stakeholder identification and salience in public organizations of difference nature, such as health services (DAAKE & ANTHONY, 2000), education services (ENZ et al., 1993) and public organizations in general (WINSTANLEY et al., 1995). Due to this, this paper is a substantive contribution to the debate of the feasibility and future of studying the stakeholder theory in Brazilian public and private organizations.

This paper starts briefly discussing philosophical and operational issues about research paradigms such as the dichotomy between positivism and hermeneutics, quantitative and qualitative methods and deductive and inductive approaches. After that, it presents a research design that combines qualitative and quantitative strategies. The research design proposed here is devised upon two distinct and complimentary studies: one quantitative carried out through survey and the other qualitative and inductive carried out through case studies and supported by interviews of validation. At the end of this paper two frameworks involving both the research rationale and research design are presented.

## 2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PARADIGMS THAT STEER SOCIAL INVESTIGATIONS

Philosophy is a set of thoughts, ideas and paradigms that help us to deal with situations or problems. The whole process depends on the scientist's world-views. This section attempts to discuss the rationales bounding scientific investigations with special attention to the Social Science field. It starts by discussing philosophical paradigms (KUHN, 1970) – systems of thoughts – in

order to justify the research design of this investigation. The overview starts by describing the types of paradigms that are likely to steer a scientific investigation.

## 2.1 POSITIVISTIC AND INTERPRETATIVE APPROACHES

Research is conducted according to philosophical paradigms (KUHN, 1970). These paradigms represent models by which human beings govern their existence. Paradigms are constructed upon a set of rules and beliefs (ibid.). Guba & Lincoln (1994) suggested four classes of paradigms: Positivism, Post positivism, Critical Theory and Constructivism, whose bases are summarized in table 1.

Delanty (1997) stated that positivism comprises the following five tenets:

- Scientism – the science is unique. It does not matter whether social or natural science there is no difference between them.
- Naturalism – progress is made from observation to verification through experimental methods.
- Value freedom – science is constructed upon value freedom and 'science does not make judgments on its subject matter.'
- Instrumental knowledge – science is made upon technical and useful knowledge.

**Table 1: Paradigms in social science**

	Positivism	Post positivism	Critical Theory	Constructivism
Methodology	Based on experiments, hypothesis and quantitative methods	Also based on experiments, falsifying hypothesis, and it can apply quantitative methods	Dialogic and dialectical. Based on interaction between investigator and the subjects of enquiry.	Hermeneutical and dialectical. Based on interaction between investigator and respondent.

Source: Adapted from Guba & Lincoln (1994, p. 109)

Denscombe (1998, p. 239) outlined the contribution of the Positivism to social research as the approach that "seeks to apply the natural science model to investigations of the social world. It is based on the assumption that there are patterns and regularities, causes and consequences in the natural world, just as there are in the social world".

In this vein, Amaratunga & Baldry (2001) identified within positivism an innate concern with simplification rather than with the whole. Causal laws are created by testing hypotheses through employing statistical and mathematical tools.

Conway (1999) suggested that hermeneutic paradigms are related to the following tenets:

- Anti-Scientism – the separation of the social sciences from science because the latter is not able to explain the former due to its dynamics;
- Interpretation – observation is not enough for explaining social life in its magnitude;

- Humanism – human nature permits human behavior to be interpreted and explained;
- Value-Freedom – relativism in explaining human behavior. This is a sort of self-defense to the researcher.

The process of carrying on research is oriented by paradigms ranging from observational (positivism) to interpretative (hermeneutic) approaches. The choice depends upon researcher's world-view. By using positivism as orientation, the investigator will be concerned with discovering rational explanation for every single phenomenon keeping a neutral attitude before the phenomenon. On the other hand, the interpretative approach permits the investigator to be involved with the phenomenon in order to depict its main characteristics.

Another issue about research paradigms is related to the approach through which data are gathered and analyzed, namely quantitative and qualitative approaches. Enquires based on positivistic paradigms are mainly quantitative (OSBORNE, 1996). On the other hand, interpretative investigations rely mainly upon qualitative methods and it only applies quantitative methods as an alternative for making data more reasonable (DENZIN & LINCOLN, 1994).

The literature does not provide a literal definition of quantitative methods. This approach is much more related to a data collection process than research styles. Quantitative approaches are those that use, in the process of gathering, organizing, and analyzing data, measurable concepts based upon scales, quantities, and statistical tools. Supporting this idea, Bryman (1988, p.12) argued that quantitative researches are conducted by applying the tenets of natural science, which are based on "variables, control, measurement and experiment" and it permits the researcher to be distant from the subject. By employing quantitative methods, the investigator uses statistical techniques in order to assess association, difference, and causalities (SAPSFORD & JUPP, 1996).

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) argued that qualitative researches employ a set of methods such as semiotics, narrative, content, and discourse in order to provide explanations for the social phenomena. In so doing, the investigator inserts him/her in the field seeking to understand, by using his/her aptitudes, how people perceive the phenomena and to the differences among actor's perception. For this reason, qualitative analysis demands the investigator's involvement in the fieldwork to be successful. Because they are based on people's life experiences, qualitative methods rely upon repetitions and coherence within narratives, as a method for explaining the social phenomena. To apply qualitative methods, the researcher needs to be close to the subject in order to apprehend the whole picture in which the research is inserted as well as to catch the feelings of the people involved (BRYMAN, 1988).

According to Gilbert (2001) theories are built following three different processes, sometimes, complimentary:

- Deduction
- Induction

· Falsification

Inductive approaches are those made upon reality, that is, an inductive investigation starts from observing a particular phenomenon inside reality seeking to systematize it into new theories. Gilbert (1995) suggested that, theory, in fact, start with induction because theories are made from observing and interpreting realities.

In deductive approaches, the investigator employs known theories as a means to explain a phenomenon (ibid). The investigator is concerned with testing an established body of knowledge trying to expand it to other realities. In differentiating qualitative from quantitative methods, Bryman (1988) stated that quantitative methods should be applied to confirm the relationship between theory and research, whilst qualitative methods applied to explore emergent relationships. In this way, he suggested that qualitative methods are rather inductive than deductive. While the former is based on observation, the latter is based on intervention.

Gilbert (2001) also discussed a process of falsification, which is based on Popper's Critical Rationalism. The process of falsification assumes that there is an alternative solution for the induction versus deduction dilemma. The main tenet of Critical Rationalism is the idea that there is a "logical asymmetric between verification and falsification" or that "scientific laws can be tested by systematic attempts to refute them" (CONWAY, 1999, p. 34-35). The argument behind the idea is: if we are not able to prove that something does not exist, this fact does not forbid us to assume that it does exist.

In sum, theory building can be undertaken by applying known theories, by observing reality and trying to develop theories upon this observation, or by falsifying observable phenomenon in order to assume that the contrary is likely to be true.

### 3 PROPOSED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Table 2 : Stages for the research framework

Stage 1	Identifying a research question
Stage 2	Choosing the suitable research method
Stage 3	Choosing the suitable data collection tool
Stage 4	Choosing the suitable data analysis tool
Stage 5	Identifying variables
Stage 6	Sticking with validity and reliability
Stage 7	Carrying out research

Source: Miles and Huberman (1994)

So far, the focus of this paper has been placed upon the paradigmatic aspects of carrying out researches in Social Science. From this point, the focus turns to the proposition of a feasible research framework for investigating stakeholder's influences in a given organization's decision-making process.

A comprehensive literature review about the stakeholder theory is presented in Oliver (1991) in which the research framework presented in here is based on. In overall, she discusses that an organization, as an open system entity, is reasonably influenced by the people, groups and other organizations whose influence is critical to the organization's decision-making process. In overall terms, an organization's survival is related to its capacity of managing stakeholder's influences in order to either avoid environmental threats or to exploit opportunities. The main issues in the stakeholder management process are:

- To identify the foremost stakeholders;
- To identify what sort of influence/interest links these stakeholders to the organization; and
- To identify what sort of strategies the organization has to employ in order to manage its relationships with them.

From this assumption, this paper deals with a methodology of stakeholder identification and salience and also a methodology for identifying how stakeholder's influences come about.

### 3.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

In order to make the investigation feasible for local government organizations, the following research question is proposed: Is local government decision-making a stakeholder-based process? The research question can be broken into four intermediate questions:

1. Who is likely to be regarded as a stakeholder in local government decision-making?
2. How much powerful have these stakeholders for impacting the process?
3. How stakeholders do participate in the process?
4. Are these influences related to the environment in which local governments inhabit?

By answering the first question, the investigation provides a descriptive contribution to theory embodied in a comprehensive stakeholder's list for the type of organization on focus. By answering the second question, the investigation provides another descriptive contribution embodied into a model for explaining the stakeholder's influences process. By answering the third question, the investigation provides a normative contribution to theory through a set of insights in stakeholder's behavior that would help the focal organization to better manage their relationships with stakeholders. Finally,

by answering the fourth question, the investigation contributes to theory proposing taxonomy for stakeholder's classification that would shed light on the stakeholder management process as well.

### **3.2 RESEARCH METHODS DETAILED**

Due to the nature of the questions and attempting to simplify the research design, the four questions above are assembled into two questions which lead to two distinct and complementary studies. The first and the second question were combined in one study which aimed to identify the stakeholders and how much power (salience) they have to influence decision-making. It is assumed that nobody enters into an arena before fully knowing their competitors. The third and fourth questions were combined into a second study aiming to identify the patterns of behavior that each stakeholder have towards local government decision-making. Again, it is assumed that nobody starts a dispute before knowing what 'weapons' and strategies the enemy has in their hands. Hereby, the research design is drawn upon these two questions.

#### **3.2.1 FIRST STUDY: DISCOVERING THE STAKEHOLDER ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ORGANIZATION'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

According to Yin (1994), researches are designed to answer who, what, where, how, and why questions. The questions embedded in the first question are the "what and how much" types of question, which according to Yin (1994), are likely to be answered by surveys.

Saslow (1982, p. 13) suggested that surveys are "large scale observation studies done on groups of humans" and a feasible strategy when the researcher wants to cover a large amount of opinions from different people about the same issue. Yin (1994) also suggested that survey is a suitable approach to collect data that uses measurements, such as magnitude, quantity and value.

##### *3.2.1.1 DATA COLLECTION TOOLS*

Saslow (1982) argued that surveys are carried out through questionnaires as data collection tools and these questionnaires can be structured employing open as well as close-ended questions. In this investigation, a two-part questionnaire is suggested to gather evidence about stakeholder identification and stakeholder salience (these concepts are fully dealt with in Mitchell et al., 1997).

The questionnaire's first part is suggested to identify who is likely to be a stakeholder for the organization. In this way, it was devised upon an open-ended question in which respondents can indicate as many stakeholders as they wished.

The aim of this question is that an organization needs to know, as many as possible, the stakeholders able to place claims upon its decision-making.

In order to reduce the impact of value judgment in the stakeholder identification process, which is explained by the fact that each respondent could come up with a different list of stakeholder, a stakeholder nomination index (abbreviated herein as SNI) is proposed. Gomes (2003) demonstrates that stakeholder identification is a fuzzy issue to which little investigation has been dedicated to. The SNI is calculated by aggregating all nominations one stakeholder has received and compared with the total of valid responses. SNI is represented by the following formula, where 'i' represents the number of identifications a stakeholder received 'n' is the number of valid identifications. SNI is a continuous variable between zero (0) and one (1).

$$SNI = \frac{i}{n}$$

Expression 1: The stakeholder identification variable

The second part of the questionnaire was devised upon a close-ended question, in which the respondent is asked to rank stakeholders' power to influence decision-making according to a model adapted from Winstanley et al. (1995) and based upon Likert Scale. The Winstanley et al's model assesses stakeholder's influences according to two dimensions of power, namely power over policy-making and power over operations which are distributed into seven criteria. Whilst power over policy-making involves the stakeholders' ability to influence the definition of the organization's objectives and outcomes, power over operations is related to the stakeholders' abilities to shape the organization's operational processes.

As an overall measurement of power, it is suggested the stakeholder salience index (abbreviated herein as SSI). The SSI assesses stakeholder's power in each of the seven criteria proposed as well as it serves as an overall measurement of power. SSI is calculated averaging the values granted to each stakeholder by the respondent "1 to n". The following mathematical formula represents the calculation. Where 's' is the score credited to a stakeholder due to its perceived influence in a specific criterion. In this way, SSI is a continuous variable between 0 and 5.

$$SSI = \mu(s_1; s_n)$$

Expression 2: The stakeholder salience variable

In order to contribute to stakeholder theory by supplying issues in the stakeholder identification process, the methodology has to explore to what extent these two variables, namely SNI and SSI, can be seen as dependent variables of differences in the geographical and political context, which is presented in table 4. This approach is justified by the argument that organizations are able to change themselves for complying with environmental demands as well as they are able to enable their environment making it more responsive to its needs (PFEFFER & SALANCIK, 1978). Furthermore, stakeholder identification is a subjective process upon which political, economic and social issues may have some sort of impact. Gomes (2003) proposed population density and political context to identify the extent that geographical and political issues are likely to influence the organization's discretion for identifying their stakeholders.

**Table 3: Research variables proposed**

Research variables		Type of variable	
		Type	Identification
Independent Variables	Geographical differences	Nominal	Non-rural (1) Rural (2)
	Political Leadership	Nominal	Labour (1); Conservative (2); Liberal Democrats (3), and so on
Dependent Variables	Stakeholder nomination index (SNI)	Interval Scale	(0 - 1)
	Stakeholder nomination index (SSI)	Interval Scale	(0 - 5)

Source: Bryman (2001); Kazmier (1982)

### 3.2.1.2. DATA ANALYSIS, RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY IN SURVEYS

After being calculated, the dependent variable SNI and SSI are compared with these two independent variables in order to test causal relationships. According to Bryman (2001), the method for analyzing nominal and an interval scale type variables is a combination of contingency tables, chi-square and "eta". Contingency table, normally called cross-tabulation, is used to confront assess relationships between dependent and independent variables. Looking at the contingency tables, it ought to be clearer where the preferences are placed and whether there is convergence on preferences. Chi-square assesses goodness of fit and it helps on clarifying whether the results are reliable. Eta assesses statistical association between variables. Data reliability is ensured by the Cronbach's alpha test that, according to Bryman (2001), is a method for assessing internal reliability. The nearer to 1, the highest the internal reliability the data set has. Bryman (ibid) contended that this result indicates high consistency among the indexes involved and the internal reliability of the SNI is therefore ensured.

Bryman (2001, p. 71) also suggests "the split-half method" for ensuring reliability of quantitative data. In this method, SNI is split into two groups in which the indexes are randomly allocated. According to the split-half calculation, there is very strong association when the results are nearer to 1.

Yet in terms of other reliability assessment tools, Bryman (2001) discourages the use of the test-retest method because it can induce to bias. Sometimes, the retest is undertaken too long after the test and circumstantial changes have occurred. According to him, another problem is to perform the test-retest with the same respondents, which may cause false consistency. Due to these arguments, it is not proposed the test-retest in the indexes involved here.

According to Bryman (2001, p. 72-73) validity has to do with "whether a measure of concept really measures that concept". In the same vein, Saslow (1982, p. 200) argued that: "Validity estimates how well a dependent variable is measuring what it claims to measure". Bryman (op. cit.) contended that validity could be face validity, concurrent validity, predictive validity, constructive validity and convergent validity. She also suggested that: "At the very minimum, a researcher who develops a new measure should establish that it has face validity – that is, that the measure apparently reflects the content of the concept in question" (ibid., p. 72). Osborne (1996, p. 12) argued that: "validity is concerned with the rightness of research tools or studies". He also argued that key to construct validity in any form of research is methodological triangulation.

In order to ensure the validity of the method proposed in paper, an investigator triangulation is proposed in order to ensure that the indexes are devised by valid means.

### **3.2.2 SECOND STUDY: UNFOLDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING**

As an attempt to answer the second set of questions (third and fourth on page 5), a qualitative study is proposed. In this approach, the constructivist paradigm is used as an approach of collecting and analyzing qualitative data. In so doing, it is proposed cross-sectional case studies and interviews of validation. While the former aims to open up the decision making process, the latter aims to validate the case studies findings. These two qualitative research approaches are dealt with as follows.

#### *3.2.2.1 CASE STUDIES: METHODS AND TECHNIQUES FOR ASSESSMENT*

Case studies are feasible approaches for the aims of this investigation because it describes processes. Case studies are also regarded as an appropriate approach to investigate stakeholder influences because it is a relatively new phenomenon, which has been set upon public organizations. According to Yin (1994), case studies are helpful when the focus is placed upon contemporary events. Finally, the case

study approach is proposed because the researcher has no control on the way this phenomenon (stakeholder influences) comes about. By employing case studies, the researcher is able to gather evidence about a specific phenomenon from different perspectives. In the case of this investigation, case studies permitted the analysis of different perspectives at the same time, namely geographical and political leadership types. One can argue that other sorts of approaches are also able to do this and I agree. However, case studies allow the investigator to look at the same phenomenon in different perspectives and with more detail due to the depth that it provides for carrying on research.

Yin (1994) argued that case studies could look at both single and multiple cases or take an embedded or holistic approach depending on how the researcher examines the case. A case study is said holistic when the research focuses on an organization as a whole and the sub-units are only a means to understand the whole. A case study is said embedded when not only the whole organization is being looked at and also its sub-units. In this kind of analysis, the observer aims to understand the phenomenon of stakeholder's influences through multiple levels that compose the organization. This investigation employed a cross-sectional research design through a multiple and embedded case study because it examined stakeholder influences in the several levels of the organizations decision-making.

Bryman (2001) argued that cross-sectional research designs are suitable strategies to identify variations in a single point of time. This investigation used a cross-sectional approach because it recognized the importance of gathering data from the four cases at the same time due to economic, cultural and political changes which could bias the respondent's perceptions about stakeholder influence. Another issue is the span of time available to carry out the whole investigation.

Bryman (2001) argued that case studies are normally related to longitudinal investigations, that is, the researcher spends some time following the process through which the phenomenon comes about. Through narratives the investigator is also able to depict a process, through which a phenomenon came about by incorporating respondent's experiences as being true reports of the process. In doing so, the investigator is able to trace the process historically. Analysis of documents could also supply to the investigation the historical issues that s/he was not able to witness. Therefore, cross-sectional case studies can be seen as different accounts about the same history.

Eisenhardt (1989, p. 535) argued that "case studies can be used to accomplish various aims: to provide description, to test theory, or generate theory". She also contended that using multiple case studies in a replication logic, the researcher is able to confirm and 'disconfirm' inferences because the evidence gathered in one case is likely to be confirmed or not in other cases. In this investigation, cross-sectional case studies help to pinpoint stakeholder influences within the continuum of the decision-making process.

As the results of the multiple cases will be used as part of the triangulation process, the investigation goes through the first five steps with the process of modifying theory being left to the triangulation process.

### 3.2.2.1.1 DATA COLLECTION IN CASE STUDIES

The data collection process can use data triangulation, which according to Denzin (1970) is good tool for looking at the same subject through different dimensions, namely time, space and person. The process itself can be done by interviews, observation, documents and so on. The main aim is to collect the higher amount of data as possible in order to feed the data analysis process. Interviews are to be carried out with the help of a tape recorder.

### 3.2.2.1.2 DATA ANALYSIS

The data collection process started with the transcription of the recorded interviews. The whole set of interviews were typed to the computer through word processor software. After that, the transcribed interviews should be returned the interviewee in order to ensure that the transcription is a very representation of the interview's viewpoint.

The next step in the data analysis process is to transfer the set of computerized data to the qualitative analysis software. It is suggested the N6 software produced by Qualitative Solutions and Research Ltd (Australia), which according to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 312) is the tool that enables the analysis to fragment texts into "segments or chunks" and works very well as a theory builder. The data collection main product is a narrative of how decisions are made and the sort of stakeholders involved in the process. The analysis employed, as suggested by Miles & Huberman (1994), the 'Partially Ordered Meta Matrix' process for analyzing texts and documents. This tool consists of fragmenting the data into units as small as possible in order to find out "common codes, common displays of commonly coded data segments, and common reporting formats for each case" (op. cit., p. 178).

The N6 is suggested to scan the whole set of data looking for and pinpointing stakeholder's influences. When identified, the software make possible to identify clusters of influences. The N6 is also was helpful because it facilitated the coding process of a huge amount of text.

### 3.2.2.1.3 RELIABILITY IN CASE STUDIES

Yin (1994) suggested that case study protocol improve the possibility of the investigation being able to be replicated elsewhere. By applying protocols, the investigator ensures that the very same pattern of question

will be asked to the correspondent interviewed. It also ensures that the conditions in which different sources of data are to be approached are similar.

Bryman (2001) argued against applying quality criteria on case studies. According to him, case studies represent particular situations from which generalizations are difficult. Even though, the investigation employed reliability measures described by Yin (1994) in order to improve the effectiveness of the investigation.

#### 3.2.2.1.4 *VALIDITY IN CASE STUDIES*

Yin (1994) suggested three types of tactics to ensure case study validity. They are construct validity, internal validity and external validity. For ensuring construct validity, he (*ibid.*, pp. 34-35) suggested "multiples sources of evidence" and "to have the draft case study reviewed by key informants". For ensuring internal validity, Yin (1994, p. 35) argues that internal validity is "a concern only for causal case studies", which is not the case of this investigation. For ensuring external validity, Yin (*ibid.*, pp. 35-36) argues that as this judgment is a matter of generalization using "replication logic in multiple-case studies can ensure it".

### 3.2.3 INTERVIEWS OF VALIDATION

Interviews are proposed for gathering evidence from key informants to validate the overall data collection process employed in this second study. Interviews are regarded as the main type of qualitative investigation even though they can also be used in quantitative investigation if they employ structured questions. Yin (1994) presented two types of qualitative-aimed interviews, namely open-ended and focused. While the first type is freely carried out, the second is "more likely to be following a certain set of questions derived from the case study protocol" (*ibid.*, p. 85). Bryman (2001) suggested a similar classification with interviews regarded as unstructured and semi-structured.

#### 3.2.3.1 *DATA ANALYSIS*

The data analysis process suggested is content analysis, which according to Bryman (2001, p. 177), "seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner". For faster analyzing data, it is proposed the Partially Ordered Meta Matrix which has been dealt with before.

### 3.4 THE METHODOLOGICAL TRIANGULATION IN THE THEORY-BUILDING PROCESS

This subsection deals with the method for combining the findings from the two studies upon which this investigation is supported. It starts discussing

the different tactics for doing triangulation and it ends demonstrating the expected results as well as they help on answering the research question.

According to Denzin (1970, p. 301): "triangulation is the use of multiple methods in the study of the same object". Doing qualitative analysis, which is mainly based upon narratives and histories, the use of diverse sources of information is regarded as a good approach for improving the research's reliability (AMARATUNGA & BALDRY, 2001). Indeed, this investigation sought various viewpoints in order to locate the focused phenomenon within multidimensional perspective. Yin (1994) argues that triangulation is likely to help construct validity within the research. McDonald (2001, p. 208) also declares "the achievement of validity requires a triangulation of research strategies".

Denzin (1970) classifies triangulation as:

- Data – trying to look at the same object in different dimensions such as time, space, and person;
- Investigator – asking different researchers to look at the same object;
- Theory – trying to look at the same object from different theoretical perspectives; and
- Methodological – trying to explore the same object applying different research methods.

## 4 OUTLINING THE WHOLE INVESTIGATION

Table 3 presents the quality criteria that have been used in this investigation. They are related to the extent that research findings are likely to be replicated, generalized and accepted as good theory. Table 4 summarizes the research framework indicating some expected intermediate and final outputs.

**Table 4: Criteria of judgements in research methods**

Research Methods Rational			
Research Approach	Reserch tool	Reliability	Validity
Postal survey	Open-ended questionnaire	Confront the stakeholder list with other sources	Cronbach´s alpha
	Closed-ended questionnaire	Apply chi-square test	Discussion with peers
Cross-sectional case studies	Interviews	Apply case study protocol	Multiple sources of evidence
	Analysis of documents		
Cross-sectional case studies	Interviews	Apply protocol of interviews	Multiple sources of evidence

Source: Adapted from Bryman (2001), Miles & Huberman (1994) and Yin (1994)

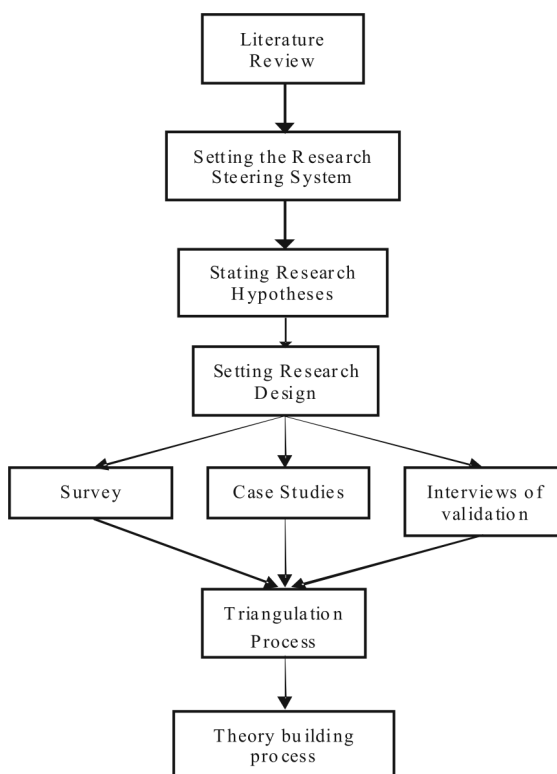
**Table 5: Research framework**

Phases	Research focus	Strategy	Intermediate output	Refinement	Final output
Phases 1: Quantitative Analysis	Who is likely to be a stakeholder of Brazilian Public Organizations?	Cross-sectional mail survey	A stakeholder identification list	Discussion with peers and with respondents	A generic stakeholder's map
	How influential each stakeholder is likely to be?		A stakeholder salience index		
Phases 2: Qualitative Analysis	The identification of how decisions are made within local government organizations	Cross-sectional case studies	The process of stakeholder influences in the decision-making process	Discussion with peers and with interviews	A model for identifying stakeholder influences in the decision-making process of local government organizations
Phases 3: Qualitative Analysis	The validation of the decision-making process identified before	Qualitative interviews	Stakeholder influence patterns of behaviour	Feedback from interviews	

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 1 presents the research process. It demonstrates that the investigation started with issues raised within literature review process. From this point, some landmarks were set down under which the whole research has been undertaken, namely research questions and hypotheses. Then, a feasible research design was set and the data collection process started. After collected, the data was analyzed and the hypotheses tested and finally the contributions to theory were proposed.

**Figure 1: Research process framework**



## 5 CONCLUSION

This paper presented a methodology for investigating stakeholder influences in the local government context. For doing so, it went through a philosophical discussion about the dichotomy of positivism and hermeneutics under which Social Science researches are likely to be carried out. It also presented issues within qualitative and quantitative approaches. Exemplifying the methods proposed, it suggests a methodology employed in a doctoral investigation which was carried out looking at English local authorities in the period of 2000 to 2003.

The framework proposed here results from the combination of investigations on stakeholder identification and salience in public organizations of difference nature, such as health services, education services and public organizations in general, which demonstrated that stakeholder influences represent critical issues for public organizations strategic management process. It follows the assumptions that organization must know their stakeholder in order to devise feasible strategies to deal with them and, in this way, to avoid either environmental threats or to exploit environmental opportunities. From these assumptions, the investigation can be split into two studies: an exploratory and quantitative investigation to identify the stakeholders likely to be seen as an issue for the local government organization's strategic management, and an explanatory and qualitative investigation to uncover the process through which the stakeholder's influence process comes about.

About the application of the framework proposed here, it seems to be much more feasible for local authorities. But it also can be employed, with few changes, in different environments. The stakeholder theory is an important issue for devising strategic planning in public and private as well as for profit and no-profit organizations. However, the main aim of this paper is to contribute to local government managerial process.

As said before, this methodology has been tested with English local authorities with success, which supports that this methodology should be replicated in Brazil. Logically, some adjustments are to be done, because there are significant differences in the political, economical and cultural scenarios. Furthermore, stakeholder is a time and context-based variable and revisions are to be done in order to get the work updated. In this way, the overall aim of this paper is to start the discussion about the feasibility, practicality and future of employing the stakeholder theory to investigate Brazilian public and private organizations relationships with the people, groups and other organizations able to influence their decision-making process.

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