

INNOVATIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: A VIEW BASED ON THE FGV-EAESP COURSE

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INTRODUCTION

The teaching of Public Administration (PA) in Brazil has been going through a very instigating moment. Since the process of its creation, with all the challenges inherent to the development of the public sector until today, there has been a continuous expansion of the undergraduate and postgraduate courses number in the Public Field throughout the country. Such courses are presented with varied denominations as: Public Administration, Public Policies, Management of Public Policies and Social Management, among many others.

As pointed out (Coelho, 2008, Martes et al., 2010, Farah, 2016, Gomes, Almeida and Lucio, 2016). Oldfield (2017), the public sector also underwent changing processes and became more questioning and uncertain and therefore, the education programs in the courses related to public administration also had to be adapted. Analyzing executive education programs in Brazil, Pacheco and Franzese (2017) point out that those courses focused on mid-career managers should maintain equidistance between training and academic programs, focusing on problem solving and interdisciplinarity. The need for innovation and integration between research-teaching in executive programs also appears in recent articles (Knassmüller, 2016, Quinn, 2016, Notten, 2013).

Seeking to understand the importance of pedagogical innovations aiming at a more profound interaction between research and teaching for undergraduate students in Public Administration, we will, in this article,

reflect on the changes made in the Graduate Course in Public Administration (PA) at São Paulo School of Business Administration Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV-EAESP) that were made with this objective.

In 2012, there was a major reformulation on the curricular grade and on the pedagogical project of the PA course at FGV-EAESP. We know that in terms of available resources the reality of the experience analyzed here is different from the reality of most Brazilian universities, mainly in the recent scenario of economic and political crisis in the country. But we understand that some of the challenges that will be highlighted by us can be shared by the coordinators of the other courses on the public field, deserving conjoint reflections.

The present article is divided as follows. In addition to this introduction, we here present a brief history of the AP course trajectory at FGV-EAESP, emphasizing the course redesign. In the sequence we discuss the experiential teachings and its link with the research, besides the internationalization of the course. Lastly, the final reflections will be presented.

## TRAJECTORY OF THE GRADUATION COURSE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AT FGV-EAESP

Training professionals for the public sector since the 1960s, the undergraduate course in Public Administration at FGV-EAESP underwent several transformations until reaching its current format. Between the 1960s and 1990s, the graduation in PA, as a result of an agreement with the government of the State of São Paulo, was free of charge for its students. This fact appeared to attract a large number of candidates who, despite receiving excellent training to work in the public sector, mostly ended up seeking professional placement in the private sector. In other words, public administrators were formed with support of governmental resources, but these mostly opted for a professional insertion in the labor market (ABRUCIO, TEIXEIRA, 2017).

The fact that this agreement did not foresee and also did not impose any condition that the egress was supposed to search for a career in the government, as it happens in the João Pinheiro Foundation (FJP), left open the possibility of opting for insertion in the business sector, despite the governmental resources applied so that the professional would work in the public sector. It is important to remind that the space for hiring professionals in governments, when we exclude political indications and access by public tender, is very restricted. In this sense, FJP's experience of already preparing the PA graduate to a public career is very important to ensure that public investment is translated into quality professionalization aimed at qualified professionals who will be destined to government activity.

Between the middle of the 1990s decade and 2011, the graduation in Public Administration at FGV-EAESP, after the end of the gratuity agreement with the state government, started charging monthly fees and organizing a Training Line in the Administration course in one single selection process with 200 places each semester: 150 for the Business Training Line and 50 for Public Administration. Since the entrance exam was classificatory, and most of the candidates applied to Private Companies, most of the Public Administration places, around 40 in 50, were occupied by candidates

from Private Companies that were not classified in the first call for that training line. The problem thus persisted: FGV-EAESP continued graduating public administrators whose majority was professionally absorbed by the business sector.

In this context, after some pressure from important Stakeholders such as: governments, the third sector, international organizations, business foundations, consultancies and political leaders that sought FGV-EAESP graduates to work in their organizations, the Getúlio Vargas Foundation's management decided to extinguish the existing Public Administration Training Course in the Administration Course and support the creation of an independent baccalaureate with its own curricular structure and its specific selection process. It means, from then on, whoever applied for candidacy at PA course, would be the ones that had real interest in acting in the public area.

The institutional acknowledgment of the importance of PA courses by FGV-EAESP management was a decisive step towards the course reformulation and the viability of a new curriculum, more connected to the transformations the expanded field of Public Administration had been through. The new curriculum contemplates, in addition to the discussion of important contents for the training of professionals that intent to work in governments, equally important content for professional action in the set of state and non-state organizations that are directly related to activities in the public interest, as well as in the other powers of the State, international organizations and consultancies.

## THE REDESIGN OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION COURSE

In 2012, the Graduate Program in Public Administration at FGV-EAESP gained a new format and the mission of forming leaders and public managers with the objective of helping in the country development. In order to do so, it took on an innovative character, both in content and in form, addressing fundamental questions of the contemporary world, aiming at training leaders with a broad vision of the social sciences, management knowledge and public policies, with negotiation and decision-making capacity, in national and international issues. The quest is to prepare a student who has both humanistic training and management skills, through multidisciplinary teachings, open to debate, and immersion experiences in local, national and international contexts.

The structure of the course grants curricular flexibility, as it considers the student the subject of the learning process. Several pedagogical methodologies are used, such as case studies, debates and workshops on contemporary issues, extra class activities and fieldwork, with a view to forming an autonomous student capable of pursuing the social and professional changes in the contemporary world.

The course contains ten thematic blocks, considered of great importance for the public administrator training, and has a mixed structure (bimonthly and semester). Each bimester is composed of five or six subjects, compulsory or elective, and there is a transversal theme to each semester, which connects all the bimonthly contents. These themes are also addressed in thematic and instrumental workshops.

From the first to the fourth semester, the students attend to Public Policy Practice Workshops where they are challenged to understand the processes of formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies in different contexts and sectors. In these workshops it is possible to mobilize contents studied in different disciplines into a multidisciplinary knowledge production during the thematic dossiers elaboration.

From the second year forward, the students take part in activities that put them in front of the challenge of facing the concrete realities of a pub-

lic administrator such as: Federal Immersion, allocated in the third semester, it is the moment when the students spend a period of time in Brasília studying public policies of national scope; Subnational Immersion, allocated in the fifth semester, it happens through an experience of immersion in states or municipalities to the production of public policies diagnoses and the elaboration of proposals to solve local problems; South-South Connection, in which the students travel to different countries of the South axis in order to get in contact with different social technologies of public policies solutions and to share knowledge acquired in Brazil if they are important for the visited reality.

The main objective of this article is to present in a more detail these different methodologies of teaching applied in the most diverse disciplines throughout the course of FGV-EAESP graduation in PA, with emphasis on the experiential approach. In addition, we will also discuss the effects of direct articulation between content and practice in student learning process, the main methodological guideline for the work of AP teachers in the FGV. As mentioned previously, the option was not made for a specific methodology, but rather an orientation for the use of different methodological strategies, always taking in consideration which would be the most adequate to develop a student who is able to intervene positively with actions aimed at improving the Brazilians conditions of life.

## EXPERIENTIAL TEACHING

One of the main objectives in the courses of the public field is to modify the Brazilian social reality. Thereunto, a fundamental first step is to know profoundly how the organizations and administrative structures that formulate and/or elaborate the policies and actions work, to understand how the implementation process works and to understand the institutions and organizations that monitor, evaluate and supervise the policies results and in this sense, providing students experiences in this area is fundamental.

At FGV-EAESP, these activities were transformed into the structuring axis of the undergraduate course, called Immersions and Connections, composed of three compulsory subjects. The first one, called Federal Immersion, aims to bring the students of the 3rd semester closer to the daily life of the teams that coordinate some of the main public policies in the country. The Federal Immersion lasts one week, from Sunday to Saturday, and the class is divided in groups of approximately eight students.

During four periods in a week (mornings or afternoons), these groups are allocated in different ministries to get in contact with the programs pre-selected by the Coordination and their work teams. Always supervised by a masters or doctoral students, the group learns to produce a rich description of how the formulation, monitoring and evaluation stages work, based on interviews, lectures and conversations with public servers. Beyond that, in the other periods, the students have from three to four institutional visits to the National Congress, the Itamaraty Palace, the National School of Public Administration (ENAP), the Federal Comptroller's Office (CGU) or the Court of Auditors of the Union (TCU) and, eventually, an UN agency.

On the last day of the Federal Immersion, the students present the research result on the program or policy to the examination board formed by the teacher responsible for the discipline, the Coordinator of the Public Administration Course, the supervisor accompanying the group, and one representative of the receiving Ministry, to assist in the evaluation process of the research carried out by the students. This presentation has as its primary focus the description of the program and, secondly, that the group

presents the major challenges identified during the week work in the governmental agencies.

In our opinion, this first immersion has a fundamental role in the course. After the two initial semesters, in which the students study the structure of the Brazilian State and seek to understand from the administrative, sociological and legal points of view the challenges in public administration, this is the moment when the students effectively understand how the federal government work in reality. In addition, the experience the students have by being in contact with the federal employees, the vast majority of which are professionals fully dedicated to their tasks, with a long experience and good academic background, our students will get in contact with people who might serve as a professional reference for the end of the student's course.

The second discipline is Local Immersion. Initially, the objective of the course was to take the fifth semester students to get to know about good practices, approaching them to the challenges faced by the different states and municipalities on implementing education policies, health, culture, local development, environment, management defense of minority rights and public safety. During the ten days of the experiment, the group of approximately ten students was also accompanied by a student of the Masters and/or Doctorate courses. The goal is to provide the students real experiences with the administrative team and especially with the technicians of the programs and the beneficiary population, to understand the specificities of each area, as well as the results and impacts on citizens' lives, in a reality very different from São Paulo.

In 2016, an alteration was made in the subject Local Immersion<sup>1</sup>. Instead of just presenting good experiences, we chose to establish partnerships with municipalities - which were initially selected in partnership with *Comunitas* and then based on the personal networks of the course teachers - the ones who were willing to receive the students. Again, the class is divided and each group is accompanied by a supervisor. But the difference is that, from then on, each student was responsible for a secre-

<sup>1</sup> For further information about this change, see Burgos e Sandim (2017).

tary, and based on a diagnosis previously elaborated and the interviews or conversations (Spink, 2008) with the local teams, the student elaborates three proposals to deal with some of the problems defined by each Municipal Secretary.

The choice for this change of focus in Local Immersion had two reasons. The first was to help forge students' perspective on problem solving. We understand that this is a distinguishing feature of the public field courses in relation to the courses of Sociology, Economy, International Relations or other at the social sciences field. Therefore, our students, who are already in the second half of the course, focus their attention on searching for solutions and not only on presenting good diagnoses. The second reason is to show the difficult reality that the Brazilian municipalities are currently experiencing, with a great lack of financial, human, informational, patrimonial, and many other resources. For us, it is fundamental that the logic of "experiential teaching" occurs in common situations and not only in those cases considered as good practices of public management.

The third discipline is the South-South Connection, its objective is to take students to learn about the socioeconomic realities of Latin American countries and learn from the public policies that governments are formulating and implementing to face the main national challenges. During the 22-day (three-week) period, the group of sixth and seventh semester students remain in contact with national and local government teams (when appropriate) to understand the actions, projects and programs of a particular area, but also interact with the civil society organizations, international organizations, universities and research centers that carry out activities related to the students' chosen theme.

The initial choice for Latin America was made for two reasons. First, our students, when they have the opportunity, they usually choose to visit the Northern Hemisphere, especially the United States and Europe. Secondly, because we understand that our context is similar to our neighboring countries, both in terms of problems and also in terms of resources to solve these problems. Thus, the idea of international cooperation and the exchange of knowledge between close realities helps in the final process of

academic learning and also contributes to increase the feeling of belonging to the Latin American reality.

It is worth mentioning that the great majority of the expenses of lodging and displacement on the three immersion programs are responsibility of FGV-EAESP - approximately 20% of the cost is paid directly by the students - and the experience of this discipline does not represent any cost to governments and/or organizations receiving our students.

## PROXIMITY TO RESEARCH

The integration between teaching and research also constitutes one of the fundamental axes of our course. FGV Pesquisa (Research) is the designated structure to get research funding, both for teachers and students of all courses. In the case of graduation course, we have three projects offered to the students, within the Program of Initiation to Research (PIP). The first is the Local Connection, this program takes pairs of students to learn about innovative experiences in public, business and civil society management during the month of July. The second is the Research Residence, where the selected students spend four months - extendable for four extra months - in the various Centers of Studies of EAESP, interacting with researchers from different areas and receiving a monthly grant to assist them in the research. The third is the Institutional Program for Scientific Initiation Scholarship (PIBIC- Programa Institucional de Bolsas de Iniciação Científica), which follows the same guidelines established by CNPq.

In addition to these institutional programs - which are offered to both Public Administration and Business Administration students - we created the Research Workshops in the 2012 curricular reform. This means that in the first four semesters of the course, students choose a theme throughout the semester, use different methodologies to understand the theme, collect data (quantitative and qualitative), interpret and analyze them. Because it is a set of compulsory subjects, we reassure that our entire student body knows the basic elements of scientific research, even if the student chooses not to take part on any of the opportunities offered by FGV Pesquisa.

Using the resources of the Research Residency Project, but mainly resources from other origination, our challenge is also to include the students in the projects carried out by the EAESP study centers. The CEAPG (Center for Public Administration and Government Studies), for example, it established the guideline that recommends that any approved project should be attended by undergraduate students in the research team. Although it is not yet followed by the other Centers, especially in CEPESP (Public Policy and Economics Center) and FGV-Health (Center for Studies

in Health Planning and Management) it is very common to have graduate students involved.

In the last few semesters, in the workshops as well as in CEAPG projects, student demands have been focused on six main themes: combating corruption, urban mobility, public safety, education, gender and poverty and inequalities. It is interesting to notice that these interests have also been reflected in the Course Completion Works and in the desire to continue the research at graduate level.

## THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF GRADUATION

FGV-EAESP, through the International Relations Coordination, created in 1991, has an extensive network of more than 100 partner universities abroad. Since the course reformulation, the interest of the Public Administration students in accomplishing regular exchange programs remains high. Although there is a clear preference for European universities, especially in countries such as France, Germany, Spain and Italy, and to a lesser extent the United States or Canada, we have noticed an interesting change in recent years regarding some students who opted for exchange programs in Latin America and Asia.

In addition to these regular exchanges, we have sought to offer other international experience opportunities to the student body. One of them is the “Experiência Buenos Aires Internacional” program created by the Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, to receive students from partner universities for a few weeks. The selected students are assigned to a secretary or governmental body to assist in strategic projects. The program also includes tutoring, meetings with senior local government officials and a number of cultural activities in the city. Although the students had to pay their air transportation and lodging expenses in Buenos Aires, those who participated in the EBAI 2014 and 2018 editions were very pleased and, in some cases, started to consider following their career as a public administrator in a totally different context.

Another interesting internship experience for our students is The Washington Center program. In addition to promoting internships in organizations based in the US capital, this organization promotes an important network of contacts and knowledge exchange. In its last editions, some students were granted scholarships in the program, enabling their participation even for those who did not have the financial resources to afford living there during a semester in Washington DC.

More recently, the Public Administration course has established, on a reciprocal basis, a Double Diploma agreement with Luigi Bocconi University in Milan, Italy. In this modality, the PA student attends the first three

years in Brazil and one year in Italy, obtaining with this a second diploma in the International Politics and Government course of the mentioned university. Bocconi students will be able to come to Brazil to take credit for two years and thus also obtain a second degree: a baccalaureate degree in Public Administration from FGV-EAESP. In Italy, unlike Brazil, an undergraduate degree can be paid in three years.

## LABOR MARKET INTEGRATION

There is no doubt that the 5,570 municipalities, 27 states and the Union need professionals each time more capable to manage their policies. In this sense, and only considering the governmental field, apparently, there would be no employability problem for the graduates in public field courses.

However, employability does not depend only on the offering of vacancies. It is essential that the professionals are in line with the profile desired by the employers' organizations. If in the state sphere, these students need to know about policy formulation and implementation, as well as how to carry out the actions monitoring and evaluation. They also need to apply planning tools, to know the rules of Administrative Law and, of course, to know how to listen and interpret the yearnings of popular participation, among other skills.

In the non-state sphere, the fact that we are in São Paulo, the largest business center in South America, is a decisively advantage. This is because many of the headquarters of nongovernmental organizations, businesses and consulting firms are located in the city. It generates a considerable job and internships offer to the students. On the other hand, a great challenge is to prepare them to work in these organizations, which have logics and organizational cultures very different from the state public administration. In this sense, the possibility of taking disciplines in the other FGV courses in São Paulo as Business Administration, Law or Economics, as elective subjects have been fundamental to complement the education of our student body.

Another professional option that matters a lot to our students is the international organizations. Besides the obligation to carry out the South-South Connection already mentioned, the sixth semester of the course is totally focused on the international relations theme. Thus, the compulsory curricular subjects include six specific subjects: International Relations Theory, International Organizations and Regimes, Contemporary Geopolitics and the Latin America Role, International Law, Brazilian Foreign

Policy and Comparative Public Administration. We understand that with this knowledge, our students will be better prepared to understand the international context and, if it is their option, to seek professional placement in the international area.

## FINAL REFLECTIONS

In this article we want to highlight what the Public Administration course at FGV-EAESP has been doing in four major axes: experiential teaching, proximity to research, internationalization and integration with the labor market. We understand that almost all courses in the public field seek to deal with these aspects on a daily basis. But we know that we speak from an absolutely privileged spot, due to the different resources that we have within our institution.

We are always eager to innovate, but there are many challenges ahead. The first of these challenges refers to financing, since innovations are often highly costly. Although FGV-EAESP is financed by its monthly fees, our situation is not always comfortable since some of these innovations are subject to price variations (such as domestic airfares) or even to exchange rates (as in the case of South Connection tickets and accommodations of the South-South Connection). But we are far from the financial situation faced by many of our colleagues in public universities in recent years. And we are completely supportive of their demands to increase the financial resources destined to these universities, in terms of cost and in terms of infrastructure. We know that it is extremely difficult to innovate without resources.

The second challenge concerns the inequalities within the student body. Although we have greatly increased the number of reimbursable scholarships and, mainly, non-refundable scholarships since 2012, we are aware that for a student in financial difficulties, staying within the FGV-EAESP environment is a daily challenge. From the time spent on the student's displacement from the most peripheral areas, getting access to expensive books, and the high cost of food and extra activities that are a fundamental part of university life, we continue having to deal with numerous inequalities among the students. Providing housing structure, nutritious and inexpensive food, and support services to students, as well as the great universities of the world have, remains a great challenge.

The third challenge is to expand partnerships with governments, companies, international organizations, the third sector and social movements to always be attentive to the needs of the labor market. We know the economic crisis is very deep and that unemployment - or low-quality jobs - remains a major concern among students, graduates and their providers. Keeping our pedagogical project in line with what the different organizations need is fundamental. We have already mentioned that the fact that we are in São Paulo generates a series of advantages in terms of labor market for our course, but we understand that in each locality where other universities that offers public field courses are located there are different economic dynamics. Being aware of that and always trying to increase and improve the professional opportunities for the graduates is fundamental.

Finally, we have the fourth challenge. In our view, democracy is a fundamental value for any society and it needs to be reassured every day by our republican institutions. The search for Brazilian public management improvement is a project of the whole field of public administration. To achieve this goal, we need freedom to make positive and negative evaluations, criticisms and compliments, whether inside or outside the academic field. We will always be attentive to this, supporting our colleagues internally at FGV-EAESP and, of course, the colleagues in the whole field. Only with democracy and freedom of expression we will be able to improve public management so that we can reduce the enormous inequalities in our country.

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