
**NATIONAL SURVEYS WITH CIVIL SERVANTS: MODELS ADOPTED
IN SEVEN COUNTRIES AND POSSIBILITIES OF APPLICATION IN
BRAZIL**

***PESQUISAS NACIONAIS COM SERVIDORES PÚBLICOS: MODELOS
ADOTADOS EM SETE PAÍSES E POSSIBILIDADES DE APLICAÇÃO
NO BRASIL***

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to explore how national governments use surveys to measure aspects of government bureaucracies. Based on a document analysis it is investigated how seven States (Australia, Canada, Chile, India, Ireland, United Kingdom and United States) conducted surveys with civil servants based on organization, purpose, and scope of these surveys.

Methodology: the inductive method is used, through the review of research conducted in the seven States mentioned above, in a qualitative and quantitative approach.



Results: when comparing the seven surveys, one can observe that all of them have the goal to understand the perceptions and demographic characteristics of civil servants in order to improve state performance. The acknowledgement of the importance of these actors for the achievement of more effective public policies dialogues with the literature on conditions for State action, particularly regarding administrative and political-relational capacities.

Contributions: to discuss the possibility of applying similar methods in Brazil.

Keywords: Bureaucracy; Profile of public servants; State capabilities; Governance; Quality of government.

RESUMO

Objetivo: explorar como os governos nacionais usam pesquisas para medir aspectos das burocracias governamentais. Com base em uma análise de documentos, investiga-se como sete Estados (Austrália, Canadá, Chile, Índia, Irlanda, Reino Unido e Estados Unidos) realizaram pesquisas com servidores públicos nos quesitos de organização, finalidade e escopo.

Metodologia: utiliza-se o método indutivo, mediante a revisão de pesquisas realizadas nos sete Estados acima mencionados, em abordagem qualitativa e quantitativa.

Resultados: ao comparar as sete pesquisas, pode-se observar que toda têm o objetivo de compreender as percepções e características demográficas dos funcionários públicos, a fim de melhorar o desempenho do Estado. O reconhecimento da importância desses intervenientes para a realização de políticas públicas dialoga com a literatura sobre as condições da ação do Estado, nomeadamente no que respeita às capacidades administrativas e políticas-relacionais.

Contribuições: discutir a possibilidade de aplicar métodos semelhantes no Brasil.

Palavras-chave: Burocracia; Perfil dos servidores públicos; Capacidades estatais; Governança; Qualidade do governo.

1 INTRODUCTION



For the past 10 years, Brazil has been largely investing in understanding its federal bureaucracy. The “*Portal da Transparência*”, literally Transparency Portal, released a series of data bases related to federal government spending and budget transferring to subnational levels, complemented recently by the efforts to publish data related to civil servants. Then, data on carriers, salaries and allocation of the federal work force also became public, allowing a renewal in the studies about the Brazilian State apparatus.

In 2014, National School of Public Administration, a Brazilian agency for developing and training civil servants and managers, started an effort to survey federal bureaucracy. Since then, two major initiatives were done: the first one was dedicated to understanding middle managers’ role in federal organizations (Cavalcante and Lotta, 2015); the second one aimed to make a profile about civil servants working on infrastructure projects and regulation (Freire et al., 2016).

Although innovating, these studies focus on part of the Brazilian federal bureaucracy. They do not consider, for the conception of the research instrument or for the discussion of the results, the surveys carried out by other countries. Thus, this work fills the gap of previous research, by conducting a comparative study that promotes a better understanding on civil servants’ surveys and subsidize the development of future surveys.

The present paper aims to discuss the main characteristics of the surveys carried out by seven countries and to identify which dimensions could be used in a survey with the Brazilian bureaucracy. After a search in five languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian) we could find surveys conducted by Australia, Canada, Chile, India, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

We aim to answer three main questions: (1) Why do some countries decide to analyze in deep the workers dedicated to formulating and carrying out public policies? (2) What are the dimensions and the most common questions asked to bureaucrats in national surveys? (3) What were the most common strategies to develop those surveys?



After a brief discussion about the possibilities to utilize these data for decision-making and theory testing, the main characteristics of the research carried out by each of the countries will be presented below. At the end, we show a synthesis of the results and propose elements that could be used on a national survey with the Brazilian bureaucracy.

2 NATIONAL SURVEYS WITH CIVIL SERVANTS: CONTRIBUTIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING AND THEORY TESTING

National surveys are powerful tools to get in touch with public servants. They permit to introduce dimensions about satisfaction in work, affinity to public policies issues, relationship with superiors and with clients, family-work interaction, gender equity and diversity, among other important concerns. Public sector human resources management can benefit to data directly provided by public servants, which can enrich and be combined to known administrative data.

Such information can also provide a better comprehension of public organizations and form a basis for the comparison of public administrations. Data can be collected on individuals and analyzed in organizational or national level, depending on sample technics. A new path for studies on bureaucracy and public administration emerges. Different organizations can be compared according to their bureaucracy characteristics inside a country; much like countries themselves can be compared. It enhances government transparency and knowledge exchange.

These are important sources of accountability for society and for Parliament and can subsidize changes in public administration. On top of this contribution for decision-making, data on civil servants can help with testing theories about state capacity and public policy implementation.

There is no consensus on the definition and form of state capacity measurement, since this concept is multidimensional (Hendrix, 2010; Cingolani, 2013). A non-exhaustive list of capabilities that has been identified in the literature comprises: (i) bureaucratic or administrative capacity; (ii) political-relational capacity; (iii) fiscal



capacity; (iv) military or coercive capacity; (v) legal capacity; (vi) capacity of territorial scope; (vii) industrialization capacity.

Among these, the concept of bureaucratic/administrative capacity has gained prominence. In her review of the literature on state capacity, Cingolani (2013) has identified that most works conceptualize capacity as the power of state implementation stemming from a professionalized bureaucracy. Although important, it should not be forgotten that administrative capacity is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one, for state capacity, since the State is not limited to the bureaucratic entity (Repetto, 2004). In addition, the functions of the State go beyond the mere implementation of public policies. Despite these considerations, the study of state capacities has gained prominence (Bersch, Praça & Taylor, 2013).

The study of state capabilities can be done using objective or subjective measures, based on the perception of specialists or public servants. For Savoia and Sen (2015) the use of subjective measures, such as national surveys, has the advantage of capturing formal and informal aspects from the point of view of the agents directly involved in the country's institutions.

Concerning the policymaking, implementation studies have a lot to benefit from national surveys. Since the classical works of Lipsky (1980) and Ham and Hill (1993), bureaucracy is considered a fundamental piece for public policy. Street-level bureaucrats' thoughts, values and decisions are the public policy (Lipsky, 1980). They interpret and apply norms according to their views, establish priorities and decide discretionarily about whom and how to attend. Routines are created to deal with uncertainty and work pressures, resulting in public policies that diverge from the main plan or formulation (Lima and D'Ascenzi, 2013).

In this sense, national surveys can improve knowledge about the implementation context to test hypotheses about the role carried out by public servants. Comprehending values and perceptions of public employees enables a better understanding on challenges related to the development of public policies. How the initial plan for a public intervention is adapted to local context and which results are achieved depends strongly not only on how many but also on who does this job. This



kind of information is more frequently perceived by surveys with the bureaucracy and other technics than with administrative data.

Given these potential contributions for decision making and theory testing, we describe in the next sections national surveys with civil servants conducted on seven different countries.

2.1 CANADA

Since 1999, Canada has conducted the Public Service Employee Survey, a work led by the Secretariat of the Chief of Human Resources, an entity linked to the Secretariat of the Canadian Treasury Board, in partnership with the Canadian statistical agency. The instrument used in this survey was developed by several agencies of the Canadian federal service, in partnership with the Joint National Council. Its purpose is to measure the opinions of the servants regarding aspects related to their profile and their performance in the Canadian government.

The survey is composed of 4 main dimensions¹. The first deals with employee engagement, and addresses issues such as job satisfaction and the profession. The second refers to leadership. Based on the premise that strong leadership is a key driver of employee engagement and organizational performance, the survey includes items such as satisfaction with the immediate supervisor and the senior management in the organization. The third dimension refers to workforce related issues, which were divided into subtopics such as performance management, empowerment, work-life balance, workload, and retention. Finally, the fourth dimension was work environment, based on the idea that a perceived respect in the workplace also promotes the engagement of the employees. In addition, some other topics were addressed such as organizational objectives, organizational performance, ethical workplace, physical environment, harassment and discrimination.

For the design of the questionnaire, different focus groups were organized in three different cities, with the purpose of covering different territorial contexts that affect the performance of the Canadian federal servers. The survey is conducted



predominantly over the internet, although it is also available on demand, on request and in other inclusive formats (such as printing on larger fonts, audio and Braille).

Its periodicity is triennial, being sent unrestrictedly to all federal servers. The last survey, conducted in 2014, comprised 106 questions and covered 93 Canadian departments and agencies, representing 255,263 people. Of these, 182,165 answered the questions, a response rate of 71.4%.

2.2 AUSTRALIA

Australia annually conducts the State of the Service Report, notwithstanding there are initiatives of data survey on public service workforce since 2003. The referred State of the Service Report was conceived by the Civil Service Commission, which is legally obliged to present its results to the Parliament. The ORC International, a public opinion research specialized company, is responsible for the operationalization of the research. The survey's main objective is to explore how the capability and capacity of the Australian Public Service contributes to meeting strategic goals and addressing the Government's priorities. According to the last report, the survey's results help to build strategies to build capacities to the present and the future.

The survey is composed by three central issuesⁱⁱ. The first issue regards the leadership and culture and deals with aspects such as leadership, culture, conduct, transparency, honesty and engagement. The second issue is human capital management. This part contains discussions such as aging and work capacity, diversity, workforce planning and management performance. At last, the survey focus on organizational effectiveness – which is unfolded on topics such as negotiation with the workforce and organizational capacity.

The survey is an online self-report questionnaire. There is the possibility to contact the survey conductors by mail and request the questionnaire to be sent also by mail in the case of civil servants who are/were not working during the application period and wants to participate.



The survey is annually sent to all Australian federal servers. The 2015 survey covered 103 departments and agencies, which corresponds to 66% of the universe. It was composed by 91 items and had a mean response time of 30 minutes.

2.3 CHILE

Chile, differently from the other countries of this research, only conducted a survey with its civil servants once. In 2013 Chile conducted the Barometry de la Gestion de Personas (loosely translated as: People Management Barometer). It was elaborated due to the normative established by the People Management Model, published in 2012 by the National Department of Civil Service. The surveys objective was to measure the quality and the results of the people management of the state central administration with the aim of enhance the design and implementation of decentralized management policies and toolsⁱⁱⁱ. The instrument was structured in four general people management processes, which are following detailed.

The first process refers to Planning and Support, which sought to analyze the people management capacities and role performed on the planning and control of related activities. It includes people management policies and planning, budgetary planning, information system to people management, the people management area position and also innovation and development.

The second process refers to Performance Management, which sought to understand the alignment between organizational objectives and goals with teams and persons as well as the quality and availability of these persons to the task's performance. It is composed by recruitment and selection, induction and individual performance.

The third process refers to Development Management, which aimed to investigate how the organization prepares to offer the individual and team capacities required to future needs. Among its components, there are training, people mobility and organizational knowledge management.

The fourth and last process refers to the process of Organizational Change Management, which aimed to analyze the actions and systems established to



anticipate and manage the organizational changes necessary to its adaptation of influence on bigger change contexts.

The data collection was based on a self-reported online questionnaire having as focal points to answer the questions the services and people management managers. The levels of development of each previously mentioned processes were divided into three different levels: low, medium, and high.

There were not found any record of other Barometries conducted or on course. There was no sampling process, being part of this survey 171 public services of the central administration, which corresponded to 77% of the public service units in 2012.

2.4 INDIA

India conducted its first survey with public servants in 2010. To justify the survey, the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances declared that a perception research enable the catch of important data to be used on statistical analysis, which will subsidize initiatives to improve the administrative machine. Besides making data available and analysis on structural and personal aspects possible, the survey has as objective to capture patterns and tendencies to identify systemic and process deficiencies analyzing the constraints and challenges of each frame. In the report entitled “Civil Services Survey – A report”, it is affirmed also that the study seeks to develop a “user’s guide” that could be a model to similar future studies. However, this was the only study of this kind conducted by India.

The Indian public service is composed by approximately 6,4mi employees that can be nested into three categories: “All India Services”, “Central Services” and “State Services”. Considering that it was the first survey of its kind, the idea was to initially include on the research only part of the public servants (all of the “All India Services” and part of the “Central Services” employees) and, once the methodology was mastered, include people from other areas. In addition, the survey was conducted with a census approach, that is, all public servants of the selected agencies were invited to participate. The research covered 18.432 public servants of 10 different agencies. The response rate was 26% (4.808 participants). The questionnaire had 43 questions and



could be filled online or by mail. It is worth to notice that the survey was build and conducted in collaboration with a private research company^{iv}.

The research aimed to measure the perception of the public agents on 13 main dimensions, that are: (1) demographic profile; (2) ability to attract, recruit and retain suitable candidates; (3) job satisfaction and motivation; (4) adequate working environment; (5) mobility and career development policies; (6) work-life balance; (7) opportunities and usefulness of learning and development programs; (8) performance management; (9) leadership and management (perception about hierarchical superiors); (10) commitment and integrity in the workplace; (11) relationship with external stakeholders and concern for improvement in service delivery; (12) harassment and discrimination; and (13) general perception about the public service and individual agencies.

The survey also comprised a section to additional comments where two issues showed up with significant frequency, notwithstanding have not been explicitly covered by the objective items. First, the political interference on the public service was very cited as a reason that explains the weak performance of the agencies. Lastly, the internal policy between employees based on personal loyalty, chaste, frame, region and religion were also cited as equally or even more harmful.

2.5 UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom conducts annually the Civil Service – People Survey, which is on its 7th edition. The objective of the survey is to investigate how the employee's engagement levels can be improved. The research is based on the premise that engagement is positively related to client satisfaction (in this case, citizen satisfaction), productivity, absenteeism decrease, and product and service quality. This increase of engagement would not only improve performance but also contribute to a higher level of well-being.

The 2015 survey had 62 questions and was applied on 96 public service organizations, which corresponded to 99% of the public service units. It was sent to 430.777 people and the response rate was 65% (279.653 participants). The research



also was based on a census approach, with all employees of the participant organizations been invited to participate. The reason presented to use this approach was that, although small random samples could offer precise results, the questionnaire is sent to all to demonstrate that the opinion of all public service workers have the same value. The research was conducted by the company ORC International.

The study covered 12 main topics: (1) day-to-day work experiences; (2) knowledge of organizational objectives and purpose; (3) employee relationship with the immediate supervisor; (4) employee relationship with co-workers; (5) quality and access to learning and development programs; (6) inclusion and fair treatment; (7) resources and workload; (8) perception about salary and benefits; (9) relationship with senior managers and the organization's ability to effectively manage change; (10) employee engagement; (11) perception about whether the results of the survey will be taken into account by the organization's managers on effective actions; (12) organizational culture. Items about discrimination, harassment, well-being and future intentions were also part of the questionnaire.

2.7 UNITED STATES

The United States conducts annually a survey with its civil servants called Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). The research is carried out by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and aims to measure whether and to what extent, in the perception of the employees, the conditions that characterize a successful organization are present in the organizations they work. The results of the survey inform human resources policies and initiatives in specific organizations.

The research addresses issues related to the perception civil servants have of their work experiences, superiors and organizations. Data collection takes place remotely via an online form and it usually has a response rate of approximately 50%. In 2015 421,748 civil servants participated. Permanent workers, both part and full-time, were invited to take part. The 2015 questionnaire (the latest version available for analysis) was composed of 98 items – 84 about perceptions of the civil servants and 14 items about demographic aspects. The items regarding perception cover 7 topics:



personal experiences at the workplace; unit of work; agency; supervisor; leadership; satisfaction; work-family and work-not work programs. Work-family programs address issues such as telework, alternative working hours, and programs that support civil servants who spend part of their time caring for their children or parents.

These items are grouped into three indexes. The first one is the Engagement Index, a measure of the conditions conducive to engagement. Another index addressed is the Global Satisfaction Index, a measure of civil servant satisfaction with their position, salary, organization, as well as whether they would recommend their organization as a good place to work. In addition, there is the New IQ Index, a measure that identifies behaviors that can help creating an inclusive environment. The other items are part of four HCAAF Indexes (Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework), which address leadership and knowledge management, results-oriented performance, talent management, and an additional index on job satisfaction.

2.8 IRELAND

In 2015 Ireland held its first Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey. Based on the idea that engagement has a significant positive effect on performance, productivity, retention rates, motivation and well-being, the survey was carried out with the objective of capturing the perceptions of civil servants about the performance and functioning of the Civil Service in Ireland. The research also aimed at allowing comparison between different organizations.

The questionnaire was prepared by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) on request of the Civil Service Management Board (CSMB). Based on previous research and best practices related to engagement, the questionnaire was developed with the collaboration of internal and external stakeholders. Composed of 112 items, the questionnaire was answered by 15,519 civil servants (41.94% of a total of approximately 37,000 workers). Data collection was done through an anonymous online link or through the completion of a printed questionnaire subsequently sent to the CSO.



The items are grouped into 22 dimensions: (1) engagement, which measures the sense of energy, connection, and fulfilment that civil servants have with their work; (2) commitment to the organization, which measures the degree of connection of civil servants with the organization for which they work; (3) well-being, which measures how much civil servants feel they can achieve their potential and cope with the normal stress of life; (4) dealing with change, which measures how much civil servants feel they can handle change, including the management of negative emotions; (5) autonomy, which measures how much civil servants feel they have freedom to influence and conduct their daily work; (6) meaningfulness, which measures how much civil servants feel their work has value, meaning and purpose; (7) competence, which measures the belief of civil servants in their ability to perform the required work; (8) skills matching to work, which measures how well employees feel that their skills and abilities are appropriate for the job; (9) career development and mobility, which measures how much civil servants feel there are sufficient opportunities for career development, learning, mobility and promotion in the civil service; (10) remuneration, which measures the employees' perception of their remuneration, considering their efforts and contributions as well as their peers; (11) performance standards, which measures how much civil servants consider performance standards to be high and how much a low performance is effectively managed; (12) career support from the supervisor, which measures the level of support and development that civil servants perceive to receive from their immediate superiors; (13) social support, which measures how much civil servants consider to have opportunities to develop close relationships at the workplace; (14) leadership, which measures how civil servants perceive the quality and effectiveness of leadership in the civil service – it also measures their perceptions of decision-making, vision, values, and communication; (15) organizational support, which measures how much civil servants feel their organizations value their contribution and care about their well-being; (16) learning and development, which measures how much civil servants realize they have sufficient and effective opportunities for learning and development; (16) innovative environment, which measures how much civil servants feel their organizations support and encourage them to be innovative; (17) welcoming environment, which measures how



much civil servants perceive themselves to be involved in the decision-making process of their organizations; (18) impact on citizens, which measures how much civil servants perceive that their work has impact on the population; (19) perception by the population, which measures how the civil servants feel they are valued and perceived by the population in general; (20) identification with the civil service, which measures how much civil servants feel a sense of belonging to the civil service compared to the agency that employs them; (21) commitment to the renewal of the civil service, which measures how much civil servants support the Civil Service Renewal^v; (22) knowledge of the Civil Service Renewal, which measures how aware civil servants are of the Civil Service Renewal.

3 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

When comparing the seven surveys, we can observe that all of them have the goal to understand the perceptions and demographic characteristics of civil servants to improve state performance. The acknowledgement of the importance of these actors for the achievement of more effective public policies dialogues with the literature on conditions for state action, particularly regarding administrative and political-relational capacities.

The unit of analysis for the application of the surveys, therefore, are the entire group of civil servants, which allows everyone to have the opportunity to take part in the research^{vi}. The exception is the Chilean experience, which focused on managers of services and people to fill in the questionnaires. Due to the priority given to planning and management of the workforce in these countries, whose agencies are dedicated to this issue and often occupy strategic positions in the governmental hierarchy, the surveys received large political support. Most of the time they were conducted in a partnership between government agencies, particularly official statistics agencies, or by hiring public opinion polling firms.

Regarding products or results, reports are prepared with the generated data, with the segmentation of statistics by governmental organizations. For countries that



have produced longer historical series, such as Canada, there is the possibility of measuring workforce trends and discrepancies between agencies. For the Australian case, the surveys inform the official reports submitted to Parliament. In the Chilean case, the research subsidized the issue of a presidential decree with measures to improve people management.

Brazil does not have a federal or even subnational experience to comprehensively investigate the opinions and demographic characteristics of civil servants. There are, however, conditions for that. Some federal agencies have expertise in conducting surveys with public bureaucracy (such as the National School of Public Administration – Enap and the Institute for Applied Economic Research – Ipea) and in the production of reliable public statistics (such as the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – IBGE). These agencies are linked to the Ministry of Planning, Development and Management (MPDG), which is responsible for the formulation of guidelines for people management at the federal level and for the maintenance and management of the Integrated System of Human Resources Administration (SIAPE).

Therefore, the expertise and resources needed to conduct this type of research exist at the federal level, although it is not trivial to politically articulate to carry out this work. An initial possibility could be by expanding the surveys recently conducted for the entire federal civil service in Brazil (Cavalcante and Lotta, 2015; Freire et al., 2016).

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ⁱ In a recent version, two more dimensions were covered: and discrimination.

ⁱⁱ The survey is composed by the following dimensions: a) Personal data; b) General impressions (similar to climate studies); c) Health and well-being; d) Recruitment; e) Retention; f) Values and APS (*Australian Public Service*) conduct code; g) Performance Management; h) Learning and Development; i) Leadership; j) Innovation; k) E-communication and collaboration; l) organizational culture.

ⁱⁱⁱ According to what was reported at the *Barómetro de la gestión de personas 2013 – Resultados Generales de la primera Aplicación a Servicios Públicos y Modelo de Gestión de Personas 2013*: http://www.serviciocivil.gob.cl/sites/default/files/Barometro_0.pdf

^{iv} The public agency Center for Good Governance, at Hyderabad, and the company AC Nielsen ORG-MARG participated of the research.

^v Civil Service Renewal is a renewal program of the Irish public service that begun in 2014 by means of 25 specific actions that seek to make the civil service unified, professional, responsive, open and accountable.

^{vi} As explicitly pointed out for the British experience, although smaller and random samples could produce more accurate statistical results, sending the questionnaire to all servers has the symbolic character of giving all servers the opportunity to express their opinion and assigns equal value to everyone's opinion.

