

IMPACT OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION SHORTCOMINGS AND CONTEXT CONSTRAINTS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CIVIL SERVANT PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL: THE CASE OF BRAZILIAN FEDERAL SERVICE

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Literature points out constraints existing in public service to performance appraisal (PA) related to, among others, justice perception and cultural aspects. In order to analyze the effectiveness of civil servant PA policy in the Brazilian federal administration, an ex-post policy evaluation was conducted, considering its impact and implementation process. It implemented a qualitative methodology, with a case study strategy, a policy cycle analysis with the participation of relevant actors and key institutions. The results showed reduced effectiveness of the policy derived, on one hand, from implementation failures found in each stage of the policy. On the other, the results identified structural barriers - (i) stability at work; (ii) recruitment by competition; (iii) frequent supervisor turnover; (iv) autonomy and discretion of civil servants; (v) high number of decision and veto players – that lead to PA cultural constraints - (i) companionship among workers; (ii) non-acceptance of performance critiques; (iii) absence of managerial culture; (iv) traditional practice of filing the evaluation process; (v) ineffective performance bonus. One of the main practical implications discussed, besides the need to improve the policy design and implementation, is that traditional PA policies in Brazil confront federal service characteristics, leading to an outright rejection of the process, which became an administrative protocol. The research specifies and amplifies the organizational obstacles to PA in Brazilian federal service, which could be tested in other contexts.

Keywords: Brazil federal administration; civil servants; performance appraisal; public sector barriers; public policy cycle.



IMPACTO DAS DEFICIÊNCIAS NA IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DA POLÍTICA E RESTRIÇÕES DO CONTEXTO NA EFETIVIDADE DA AVALIAÇÃO DE DESEMPENHO DE SERVIDORES PÚBLICOS: O CASO DA ADMINISTRAÇÃO FEDERAL BRASILEIRA

A literatura aponta para as restrições que existem à avaliação de desempenho (AD) no serviço público relacionadas à percepção de justiça e aspectos culturais, entre outros. Para analisar a efetividade da política de AD dos servidores públicos da administração federal brasileira, foi realizada uma avaliação ex-post da política, considerando seu impacto e seu processo de implementação. Foi aplicada uma metodologia qualitativa, com uma estratégia de estudo de caso, uma análise do ciclo da política, envolvendo atores relevantes e instituições-chave no processo. Os resultados mostraram uma eficácia reduzida da política decorrente, por um lado, das falhas na implementação, identificadas em cada etapa da política. Por outro lado, foram identificadas barreiras estruturais - (i) *estabilidade no trabalho*; (ii) *acesso por concurso*; (iii) *rotatividade frequente das chefias*; (iv) *autonomia e discricionariedade dos servidores*; (v) *elevado número de atores com poder de decisão e veto* - que geram limitações culturais em relação à AD - (i) *camaradagem entre os trabalhadores*; (ii) *não aceitação de críticas sobre o desempenho*; (iii) *ausência de cultura gerencial*; (iv) *prática tradicional de burocratizar o processo de avaliação*; (v) *gratificação por desempenho ineficaz*-. Uma das principais implicações práticas discutidas - além da necessidade de aprimorar o desenho e a implementação da política - é que as políticas tradicionais de AD no Brasil confrontam as características da administração federal, o que gera uma rejeição do processo, que se tornou um processo proforma. A pesquisa detalha os obstáculos organizacionais à AD no serviço federal brasileiro, que poderiam ser testados em outros contextos.

Palavras-chave: administração federal brasileira; servidores públicos; avaliação de desempenho; barreiras do setor público; ciclo da política pública.

IMPACTO DE LAS DEFICIENCIAS EN LA IMPLEMENTACIÓN DE LA POLÍTICA Y RESTRICCIONES DEL CONTEXTO EN LA EFECTIVIDAD DE LA EVALUACIÓN DEL DESEMPEÑO DE LOS FUNCIONARIOS PÚBLICOS: EL CASO DE LA ADMINISTRACIÓN FEDERAL BRASILEÑA

La literatura señala las restricciones que existen a la evaluación del desempeño (ED) en el servicio público relacionadas con la percepción de la justicia y los aspectos culturales, entre otros. Con el objetivo de analizar la efectividad de la política de ED de los funcionarios públicos en la administración federal brasileña, se realizó una evaluación *ex post* de la política, considerando su impacto y su proceso de implementación. Fue aplicada una metodología cualitativa, con una estrategia de estudio de caso, un análisis del ciclo de la política, involucrando a actores relevantes e instituciones clave en el proceso. Los resultados mostraron una efectividad reducida de la política derivada, por un lado, de fallas en la implementación identificadas en cada etapa de la política. Por otro lado, se identificaron barreras estructurales - (i) *estabilidad en el trabajo*; (ii) *contratación por oposición*; (iii) *frecuente rotación de gestores*; (iv) *autonomía y discrecionalidad de los funcionarios*; (v) *alto número de actores con poder de decisión y veto* - que producen limitaciones culturales en la ED - (i) *compañerismo entre los trabajadores*; (ii) *no aceptación de la crítica al desempeño*; (iii) *ausencia de cultura gerencial*; (iv) *práctica tradicional de protocolizar el proceso de evaluación*; (v) *bonificación por desempeño ineficaz*-. Una de las principales implicaciones prácticas discutidas - más allá de la necesidad de mejorar el diseño e implementación de la política- es que las políticas tradicionales de ED en Brasil confrontan las características de la administración federal, lo que genera a un rechazo del proceso, que se convirtió en un proceso protocolario. La investigación específica y amplía los obstáculos organizativos a la ED en el servicio federal brasileño, que podrían testarse en otros contextos.

Palabras clave: administración federal brasileña; funcionarios públicos; evaluación de desempeño; barreras del sector público; ciclo de la política pública.

I INTRODUCTION

Performance appraisal (PA) is a tool that can bring benefits to organizations and workers themselves (KIM & HOLZER, 2014). In the public sphere, it is one of the main dimensions of any government modernization initiative. Thus, the classic perception that civil servants do not work with the same intensity as private employees exists (MARVEL, 2015). This general view, along with the reform agenda driven by the New Public Management, generates a constant demand for further effectiveness and efficiency of governments, which is why performance management has become a fundamental issue in public organizations (HONDEGHEM; VAN DORPE, 2012).

However, public servant performance appraisal policies continue to be a challenge for governments that intend to use it as a management tool and to improve the effectiveness of their institutions. Literature identifies multiple cases, in different countries and contexts, of performance management systems in public bodies that have resulted in restricted effects.

This research develops an ex-post evaluation of the main performance appraisal policy in the Brazilian federal administration. After several years of implementation, it was necessary to carry out a comprehensive analysis. As it is emphasized in literature (RAMOS; SCHABBACH, 2012), policy evaluation has several purposes: improve the decision-making process; enable the appropriate allocation of resources; promote accountability of government officials to parliament, regulatory agencies and citizens; and also allow policymakers and managers to design more effective, efficient and higher quality policies.

The evaluation identifies implementation policy issues, as well as the existing barriers in Brazilian public service to effective civil servant performance appraisals, and the misconception of traditional administrative and political PA reforms — which are designed from the standpoint of private management.

This article is justified by scarcity, in the literature on the matter, of a study of civil servant PA from the analytical perspective of the policy cycle stages (DENISE; MURPHY, 2017). Likewise, this policy evaluation brings relevant results for the identification of Brazilian public administration barriers in relation to the implementation of PA policies that could share common elements with other cases.

2 CONTEXT AS A POLICY IMPLEMENTATION CONSTRAINT IN CIVIL SERVANT PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

AD processes encounter several elements, especially context-derived, that restrict their effectiveness. In the public sector, taking into account its particularities, which differentiate it from the dynamics of private sphere, PA policies for public employees still face additional obstacles that constrain their implementation.

Literature points out distal factors as dimensions of the social context that influence the performance appraisal process. According to the model proposed by Levy and Williams (2004), four groups of variables would condition the results of the performance evaluation: (i) *distal variables*, (ii) *process proximal variables*, (iii) *structural proximal variables* and (iv) *rater and ratee behavior*. Unlike proximal factors, distal factors come from other aspects outside the performance appraisal and go beyond the process and design of systematics. Some of these elements would be the organizational climate, organizational culture, people management strategies, external economic conditions, technological advances and the configuration of workforce, among others. The last group of variables alludes to the psychological elements of the actors involved, both in the way of rating and in the reactions of ratees to the judgment about their performance and in relation to the entire process (LEVY; WILLIAMS, 2004).

Studies such as the Chiang and Birch (2010) stress the relevance of organizational and cultural elements, both national and organizational, for the effectiveness of PA processes. As well as the transnational research by Peretz and Fried (2012), which concludes that national culture affects the design and practice of PA in organizations. Thus, it influences the use or not of multiple sources, the purpose of PA, the percentage of workers rated or the individual or collective focus of the appraisal. In the same vein, the paper by Chen and Eldrige (2010) on the adaptation of a Western performance management model to a Chinese subsidiary highlights the need to adapt performance management systems to the reality of each organizational and national context.

In the public sector, O'toole Jr. and Meier (2014) identify three groups of main context variables in performance management: (1) *political context-concentration of power*, which studies the trade-offs between unitary versus shared powers, single or multiple-level, corporatist versus adversarial, with or without a formal performance appraisal system;

(2) *environmental context*, considering the extent of complexity, turbulence, munificence, and presence versus absence of social capital; and (iii) *internal context*, that must pay attention on the extent of goal clarity and consistency, organizational centralization versus decentralization, and degree of professionalism.

Dixit (2012) also explores the incentives of bureaucracies from the perspective of *principal-agent* theory and emphasize some differences regarding the public sector. In this sense, public administration has a greater degree of complexity as it responds to a multiplicity of principals. It must manage a large number of tasks, some of which are not clearly observable, and has different levels of hierarchies with many actors, which presents confusion to diverse principals. Assis & Reis Neto (2013) also allude to the multiplicity of principals and multitasks, which can lead from the perspective of rational choice theory to servers performing the easiest tasks.

Klein and Mascharenas (2016) studied the motivation and satisfaction of Brazilian federal civil servants. They concluded that, in line with literature, employees in public organizations are strongly motivated by intrinsic aspects of work, and the influence of extrinsic elements is smaller than that of collaborators in private organizations. Thus, their job satisfaction is greater when intrinsic factors predominate, which is why the authors recommend that public management policies must be aligned with the culture and internal dynamics of organizations.

Weibel, Rost and Osterloch (2010) point out, through a meta-analysis and an experiment, that economic bonuses have modest effects on performance in public administration. It can have positive effects on motivation and in the effort to perform tasks that are unattractive to officers, but it has a negative effect on intrinsic motivation and self-determination to develop the most interesting tasks. Furthermore, they consider that budgetary limitations in the public service generally result in insignificant bonuses, generating limited positive effects and important costs in terms of motivation.

Ohemeng, Zakari and Adusha-Karikari (2009) also observe, under the expectancy theory, that the effects of PA on the motivation and effort of public servants in Ghana are scarce. Workers do not expect significant effects from the process, and since promotions derived from performance are automatically produced in practice, economic rewards do not improve motivation. Likewise, local culture prevents honest and rigorous appraisals from being made, resulting in maximum marks in most cases, which distorts the potential use of appraisal results.

Another contextual factor studied by Zheng et al. (2012) is the *organizational*

citizen behavior, which relates to performance within the social and psychological climate of the environment where the tasks are performed. In this sense, the PA process has a positive relationship with the organizational citizen behavior when there is an organizational commitment from workers.

Park (2014) studies the motivations of public managers to carry out rigorous or lenient appraisals. The study highlights that their motivation for an accurate appraisal is conditioned by the organization's incentive system and by the perception of having more audience accountability. They consider that formal bonuses can improve the accuracy of their appraisals, but forced distributions on scores are a negative practice to assess correctly. They conclude that the norms and internal dynamics in organizations condition rater accuracy.

Maia and Bastos (2019) studied, in a Brazilian federal agency, variables that are positively related to an improvement in performance and that could be inductors for the effectiveness of the evaluation processes. Thus, when employees realize their expectations regarding their obligations and those of the organization with them, stipulated at the time they were hired (fulfillment of the psychological contract), their performance increases.

Finally, recent Brazilian research by Bezerra et al. (2019), which was implemented in a federal entity, also stress the lack of adaptation of the performance appraisal systematic to the organizational culture and political nature interactions that occurs among the actors involved.

3 METHODOLOGY

The evaluation aimed to analyze the effectiveness of the Brazilian federal administration's public servant PA policy, outlined mostly in the Law 11.780/2008 and the regulation Decree 7.133/2010, which affect most federal careers. We set effectiveness as the end-objective of the policies: the expected and unexpected impacts on the target population and the changes occurred beyond the established objectives (SILVA, 2013). Hence, we studied the existence of the expected effects of the individual PA, compiled from scientific literature. Therefore, the research had an evaluative characteristic, be it of the impacts and of the policy process. In this sense, in order to examine the process, we analyzed the PA cycle and the public policy cycle. We observed the stages of work planning, management and monitoring, performance rating, and use of results in the PA cycle (DECREE, 2010). Regarding the analysis of the public policy cycle, we took into

account seven phases inspired in the model proposed by Saravia (2006): inclusion of the issue in the political agenda, elaboration, formulation, planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation. Likewise, we considered both top-down and bottom-up approaches (Sabatier, 1986) while studying the policy. Considering the indications of the IPEA guide (2018), this ex-post evaluation carried out an analysis of the diagnosis of the problem, an evaluation of the design, an evaluation of the implementation and an impact evaluation.

We adopted the qualitative research method with the case study strategy and a constructivist perspective. The data collection techniques began with semi-structured interviews, followed by documental analysis, some of which had been initially chosen while the later ones were recommended by the interviewees, to understand the policy and entities studied. This analysis included the study of the federal government PA norms from the 20th century until 2017. We then carried out participant observation, made through the involvement as external evaluators, in a PA committee of a federal autarchic entity. This participant observation took place for two years, over four periods in each one, lasting between 5 and 10 days.

We preserved the identity of all studied entities and actors. They were six significant federal institutions participating in the evaluation, three of which are among the organizations with larger budget and workforce, including the bodies that participated in the design, formulation, and planning of the policy.

There were 22 individuals interviewed. The number was determined by the collected information saturation criterion (GASKELL, 2002). Likewise, we made the actor selection primarily through successive suggestions that were given by the interviewees themselves. Nevertheless, our directive was to seek those who had held different roles in the policy, such as: policymakers; current policy planners and the ones holding the charge when the law was approved; academic specialists; PA coordinators in different entities; PA officials in government schools; unionists; organization planners; people management director; work team leaders; members of PA committees; and public servants placed in work teams.

Therefore, the selection of the sample was not random and risks generating a selection bias problem (IPEA, 2018). However, there were some key actors at the time of policy formulation, planning, and execution that necessarily had to be heard in order to obtain an adequate evaluation of the policy. It was also ensured that a reasonable variety of profiles in relation to their positions and designed institutions were included. Likewise, the saturation criterion recommended by Gaskell (2002) also helped to neutralize this bias,

as the interviews continued until the interviewees stopped offering new contributions or insights.

We interpreted the information obtained from the interviews, documents, and participant observations through the content analysis technique (BARDIN, 2004) and using data triangulation (GONDIM et al., 2005).

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research context

In Brazil, each administrative level currently has the competence to regulate its own PA system. Hence, the Union and each municipality and state have specific normative. The 2008 Federal Law N° 11.784 (LAW, 2008), which is regulated by the 2010 Decree 7.133 (DECREE, 2010), rules 49 federal careers performance bonus system, out of 87, which applies for 80 federal institutions, including direct administration of executive, judicial and military nature, along with independent bodies (COELHO JR., 2013). It should be emphasized that this regulation was an inspiring norm for the subnational administrative levels, which incorporate the main principles of the system established by the Decree 7.133/2010 to their own laws (SILVEIRA; PINHEIRA; ANTUNES, 2012). In Table 1, the main outlines of this regulation are summarized.

TABLE 1- Main characteristics of the PA system established in the Decree 7.133/2010

Characteristic	Content
Evaluation criteria	Targets and minimal competences (art. 4).
Rating method	Must be determined by each entity. (art. 7).
Planning tool	Work plan of the unit evaluated. (art. 6).
Who evaluates	Multiple sources – 360° (art. 4).
Evaluation objective	Individual evaluation (art. 1).
Connection to organizational objectives	Individual targets linked to intermediary unit targets, which are then linked to the annual global targets of the Organization (art. 5).
Participation	Knowledge of used criteria and tools, process monitoring and nomination to disclose and guide (art. 21).
Right to appeal	A request to the immediate supervisor and a final appeal to the CAD (art. 22).
Bonus	Tied to the bonus, 20 points for individual performance, 80 points for institutional performance (art. 8); the value of each point shall be determined by specific career plan normative (art. 9).
Use of information	Training, career or job development, remuneration and personnel transferences, but without detailing the procedure (art. 12 Decree 7.133 e art. 140 Lei 11/784).
Organs created	Commission for the Monitoring of the PA (In Portuguese, Comissão de Acompanhamento da Avaliação de Desempenho, CAD) (art. 23).

Source: elaborated by the authors, based on the Decree 7.133 (Decree 2010).

The Decree 7.133/2010 designs an individual appraisal by competences and targets with a set of them being mandatory, establishes the 360-degree-feedback, mandates the drafting of work teams and institutional plans, and it results in a remuneration incentive process due to the performance bonus. This bonus is obtained according to the final evaluation grade attained, individual, and at the entity-level. Similarly, it establishes, among other things, general lines of the servant participation in the planning of the connection of results to training and the relation between internal monitoring organisms, which must be established within the entities.

4.2 Policy Process Analysis

Entry of the Issue in the Political Agenda

The first stage of the policy cycle studied was the entry of the issue into the political

agenda, also known in literature as *agenda building*. The way in which the agenda building of the issue is set is crucial to the later elaboration and formulation of the policy and also to its effectiveness (KINGDOM, 2006). In this sense, the entry of PA policy revision in government political agenda during the second term of President Lula was subsidiary to other political objectives. Therefore, it pragmatically fits into the National Policy for Personal Development (DECREE, 2006), which promotes the democratization of labor relations in public service and strengthens officer remuneration (GARCIA et al., 2006). It should be noted that the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration, in the context of political measures which were framed in the Director Plan of the State Apparatus Reform (PDRAE, in Portuguese), reduced the number of federal public servants and froze the salary adjustments (ANDREWS, 2010). Thus, the Lula administration had as one of its main federal administration projects the goal of correcting this situation and upgrade salaries, and this correction was made mostly through performance bonuses. The I-3 (third interviewee) reported:

“In 2006 (...) one of the government directives was the strengthening of the public service salary, because it some renewal was really needed (...) It was a moment (...) of restaffing government organs, strengthening careers, mostly on this remuneration aspect, and the government dedicated itself strongly to that matter” (Testimony of I-3, involved in the PA federal policy monitoring).

This fact caused the Policy to lose some of its autonomy and focus on problem resolution and, as indicated by Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979; 1981), when the Policy elaboration is detached from the causal explanations of the problem, its implementation success is in risk.

Elaboration

At the elaboration stage, the moment in which different alternatives are proposed and studied before taking a decision on the final direction of the policy (SARAVIA, 2006), the choice of alternatives was not based on studies. Rather, it was mostly made through suppositions of actors participating in the meetings, a typical procedure of policies made by bureaucracy (HOWLETT; RAMESH; PERL, 2013). In this sense, the internal character of the discussions by public servants of the Planning Ministry hindered the participation and consensus of other key actors in the process. Therefore, the union confederations

expressed their opposition towards the policy design at the discussion board *Mesas de Negociação*. In their view, it had a productivity character and was focused on remuneration through bonuses.

“Since its inception, we have been critical of this systematic, and now we can see that from the moment we presented these criticisms we were correct. (...) The way it is applied today, with a remuneration character, a financial character, it has not had the effect for which it was created”
(Testimony of I-20, head of a federal public servant union confederation).

The absence of this support, which would afterward be reproduced in the different federal organs, compromised the legitimacy of the policy. It also provoked, in the execution stage, more resistance towards correctly implementing the normative among public employees. This is known as *bureaucratic competition* and is motivated by those excluded from the policymaking and contrary to the original policy guiding lines (NICHOLSON-CROTTY, 2005).

Formulation

The new federal PA policy formulation phase was quickly developed in the National Congress, without any resistance. The Provisional Measure 431 (PROVISIONAL, 2008) was presented by the Federal Government to National Congress on May 14th, 2008. It was approved four months later by both houses without substantial modifications, even regarding provisions related to the PA chapter. It was sanctioned by Vice-president José Alencar and published on September 22nd, 2008, designated as Law 11.784 (LAW, 2008). The regulation, which was similar to the text dedicated to PA in the Law, was approved by the government much faster, surprising even the planners with the celerity of its procedure. Thus, one and a half years later on March 19th, 2010, the Decree 7.133 (DECREE, 2010) was published and signed by President Lula and the Planning Minister Paulo Bernardo Silva.

Planning

The planning stage in the public policy cycle implies the preparation of the implementation of the laws or normative defined in previous stages (SARAVIA, 2006). Hence, significant efforts were made during this phase, such as training and disclosure

actions, which included: regional congresses, a thematic course in the government school (ENAP – National School of Public Administration, in Portuguese), the publishing of a guiding manual, and one explanatory regulation of the Decree 7.133. Likewise, there were preparation actions such as the creation of a specific monitoring unit in the Ministry of Planning and a knowledge exchange experience with the Portuguese administration as part of a European Union cooperation program.

Considering the preparatory actions carried out at this planning stage and the time invested in them, it is possible to affirm that the necessary efforts were made to prepare the implementation of the new PA in federal entities, which is one of the requirements identified by Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979, 1981) for the success of public policy implementation.

Execution

As Saravia (2006) points out, this stage is decisive to the success of policies, and the bureaucracy has a fundamental role in transforming the policy formulations into reality. In effect, the federal administration, represented by servants who are participating in the new PA in the affected entities, was responsible of the implementation of the policy and, simultaneously, was the target of it. We identified some failures in the process of this key phase, mainly caused by barriers derived from formal structures and from the organizational culture of the Union administration.

The federal entity adaptations to the Decree 7.133 (DECREE, 2010) were made with the support and backing of the Ministry of Planning. The room for maneuvering in internal formulation ended on, mostly, the rating criteria and the definition and operationalization of personal factors of competence. According to the statements of multiple interviewees, this formulation process was made with little participation and many felt excluded, not having even the option of express any comment on its design. So expressed I-7, chief unit in a federal entity:

“It was conceived in a quite autocratic way, (...) this performance appraisal system was developed without the participation of the institution. There was a presentation on how it would be, but there was no taking part in the constructive process, and in making people understand it” (I-7).

Additionally, there was a rejection of worker union representatives in the organizations, which followed the union confederacy protests. Therefore, although the

new PA was initially well-received because it generated a significant wage increase, the lack of participation and of union acquiescence contributed to discrediting the system and led to its reduced acceptance (KIM; HOLZER, 2014).

In addition to these issues in the early stages of implementation, the main identified problems were the lack of dialogue and prominence from the leaders on PA management, and the leniency of evaluators, expressed by unambitious planning and by the assignment of higher grades at the assessment results. The role of leaders is recognized, according to the literature, as essential in the PA success (DESTLER, 2016), as they should supervise and enhance the evaluation cycle process during all its stages. However, scarce proactivity was perceived by those who held managerial positions. First, in the dialogue-establishing moment with their staff in the construction of unit planning. Second, in the absence of either plan monitoring, interaction with the team members, and also in the restrict use of targets middle term review. Third, we also verified failures regarding managers practices in the general absence of dialogue results feedback with the public servants evaluated. This absence of dialogue eliminates an essential element on PA process (MIEROOP; VROLIX, 2014). I-2, a specialist on performance management and civil service consultant, related this situation:

“Some bosses don’t want any commitment, they don’t want to monitor or supervise. Some bosses do not want problems, and they say, (...) we shall stablish any pro forma goal and stay in a comfort zone. Then, the system flows slowly when it could run faster and more effectively” (I-2).

Lastly, the managers did not take advantage of the evaluation results in order to provide information to the next term planning process, which establishes the circularity nature of the PA cycle (COELHO JR., 2013).

The other issue that jeopardizes the policy process effectiveness in the execution phase is the benevolence of evaluators. The agreed upon goals and objectives are unambitious, easy to be fulfilled, and, at the same time, the raters (managers, employees, peers and the evaluated) grant the maximum grades on the judgment of civil servant performance. This generalized leniency was caused, according to most interviewees, by the fact that the performance bonus was considerably high, and also perceived as part of the salary. Thus, raters do not want to harm employees, as they perceive any bonus reduction as a punishment and a restriction on their rights.

“I will not grade badly (the employee) because I know the financial impact into the civil servant’s life, and I can juggle the civil servant performance because I do not want to reduce wages. We have these contradictions currently running” (Testimony of I-19, involved in a PA coordination at a federal ministry).

However, these were not the only constraints detected. There are other elements related to structures and the organizational culture of federal administration which also led to this benevolence. These elements will be thoroughly analyzed in the next item, where are outlined the constraints of traditional PA in the federal service.

Regarding the PA justice perception analysis (CROPANZANO; BOWEN; GILLILAND, 2007), the conclusion is that the process is not perceived as fair, generally, among employees and, therefore, is not accepted. In the procedural justice dimension, most interviewees claimed the evaluation was not real – it was done in a protocolary manner. As for distributional justice, PA is conceived as punishing because the bonus is understood as a right and any reduction of this value is seen as an injustice. For the same reason, it also does not reward those with the best performance because most obtain the maximum grade. I-15, involved in personnel management in a government school, explained:

“It has a direct repercussion over the salary, it has a negative repercussion, that is, it can only decrease salaries, it does not raise wages. There is a saying in public management: if you do everything correctly, you will not lose anything, but you also will not earn. One can only lose, one does not earn anything with it, so, there is no bonus, (...) but if there is a quite good worker, I cannot raise the salary, I can only harm it, therefore this is a premise which makes this model inapplicable, it does not work” (I-15).

Finally, in the dimension of interactional justice, although most relationships are based on respect and companionship, several interviewees denounced the existence of multiple cases of persecution and harassment by leaders through the evaluation process.

Monitoring and evaluation

In relation to the actions of monitoring and evaluation of the PA policy, there is, firstly, an internal control of federal agencies in charge of PA and also external by bodies such as the Ministry of Planning or the Federal Court of Auditors (TCU, in Portuguese).

However, in both cases, it is an annual monitoring of the assessment results, and these entities are not able to motivate or change to the development of real PA actions.

“We do not have any mechanism to force people to rate or that motivates people to rate properly, even using the best instrument, the best appraisal form... Most of the time, the question is: Is it [the PA] well elaborated? The forms may be good enough, but people most of the times – not every time – do not take them seriously, and it turns out that the results are only fictitious” (Testimony of I-21, involved in the PA federal policy monitoring).

Secondly, no mid-term policy evaluation has been made until the elaboration of this research, which could help improve its implementation. Internal adjustments were made within some entities, but they did not solve the existing obstacles and the results of the processes remained the same. That is, maximum scores in all cases, with some marginal exceptions.

4.3 Policy Impact Evaluation

The research revealed the failures experienced by the policy, ranging from the entry of the issue on the agenda to its current execution, as well as the existence of barriers throughout the process. Derived from these elements was the absence, or limited presence, of the expected impacts of PA was evidenced and, therefore, reduced effectiveness. In order to present the conclusions about the existence of the effects of PA in the policy object of study, which are recognized in the literature (CLEVELAND et al., 1989; COELHO JR., 2013; SCHIKMANN, 2010), Table 2 displays the degree of presence of these potential effects is indicated in a simplified form. We classified the effects according to the actor typology -based on the focus of their impact and the degree of presence in three levels: *habitual presence*, in which the effect takes place in a regular way; *limited presence*, in cases where the effects are exceptionally present; and *null presence*, where the effects do not happen.

TABLE 2 - Analysis of the degree of presence of PA effects in Brazilian federal policy

	Habitual presence	Limited presence	Null presence
Employee	<p>Employees are aware of the work demands of the Organization.</p> <p>Develops commitment to achieve team goals.</p>	<p>Makes employees' efforts more efficient.</p> <p>Improves worker performance and productivity.</p> <p>Improves employee confidence in managers.</p> <p>Improves motivation for employees' work.</p> <p>Favors the reevaluation of daily routines.</p> <p>Provides feedback to employees about their work.</p> <p>Improves or corrects aspects of their work.</p> <p>Sanctions employees.</p> <p>Develops the skills of the employees according to their needs.</p> <p>Encourages self-knowledge and reflection on the professional development of workers.</p> <p>Rewards employees.</p>	<p>Encourages worker participation and democratizes decision-making processes.</p> <p>Involves employees in the strategic decisions of the Organization.</p> <p>Promotes the identification of workers with the mission of the Organization.</p> <p>Maximizes employees' work skills through individual work plans.</p> <p>Develops commitment to achieve the goals of the Organization.</p> <p>Promotes employees on basis of fair criteria.</p> <p>Recognizes the efforts and role of each employee within the Organization and can contribute to their motivation.</p>
Work teams	<p>Forces work units to the realization of a results-based planning.</p>	<p>Defines the competencies and goals of each work team.</p> <p>Aligns the goals and competencies of the employees to the strategic objectives of the units.</p> <p>Encourages collaboration among work team colleagues.</p> <p>Improves work unit performance and productivity.</p> <p>Promotes the managers' work in relation to the direction and motivation of the workers.</p> <p>Improves dialogue and communication among managers and subordinates.</p>	<p>Creates pressure among colleagues to improve performance.</p> <p>Creates more information for decision making.</p>

	Habitual presence	Limited presence	None presence
Organization	<p>Contributes to results management.</p> <p>Contributes to compliance with regulations and norms.</p> <p>Requires conducting a results-based planning for the Organization.</p>	<p>Defines the competencies and goals of each job post.</p> <p>Aligns employees' goals and competencies with the Organization strategic objectives.</p> <p>Improves organizational performance and productivity.</p> <p>It adds the perception of interdependence between units and people.</p> <p>Identifies training and people development needs.</p>	<p>Identifies readjustment needs in the functions and transfer of workers.</p> <p>Identifies conditions of hygiene, safety and life quality at work which influence performance.</p> <p>Allows evaluating the success of training initiatives in performance.</p>

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Considering this classification resulting from the research findings, it is possible to observe that the impacts of PA policy are limited and, therefore, to verify that its effectiveness is low. Most effects at all three levels (employees, work teams, and organization) do not occur, or happen exceptionally. We observed *limited presence* when the effect was not generally recognized but occurred in certain divisions or entities, being a minority. The effects that happen *habitually* have to do, mainly, with the obligation to carry out the planning in each cycle, which derives from the regulation of the PA since it is one of the requirements to gain the performance bonus. Likewise, it is pertinent to point out that the specific objectives pursued by the policy are also achieved in a limited way. In this sense, Law 11.784 (LAW, 2008) aimed to improve the qualification of public servants and subsidize the personnel management policy, classified with the degrees of limited presence and null presence, respectively. I-21, linked to the planning and monitoring of federal PA policy, pointed out, with determination, these limitations:

“We cannot take today the results of performance appraisals as results which are real and which we can use to determine development actions, training actions, improvement actions of an Organization, an institution, a team...Nowadays, it is unrealistic for one to say that we can do this, we cannot do it” (I-21).

Although the policy design has brought innovative elements, such as the 360-degree appraisal, these would not solve the existing problem, nor modify the behavior of civil servants facing PA. However, it should be noted that the majority of interviewees, while acknowledging the limited impact of the policy, perceived an improvement in the current PA process in relation to past policies, a matter that is still relevant. Many

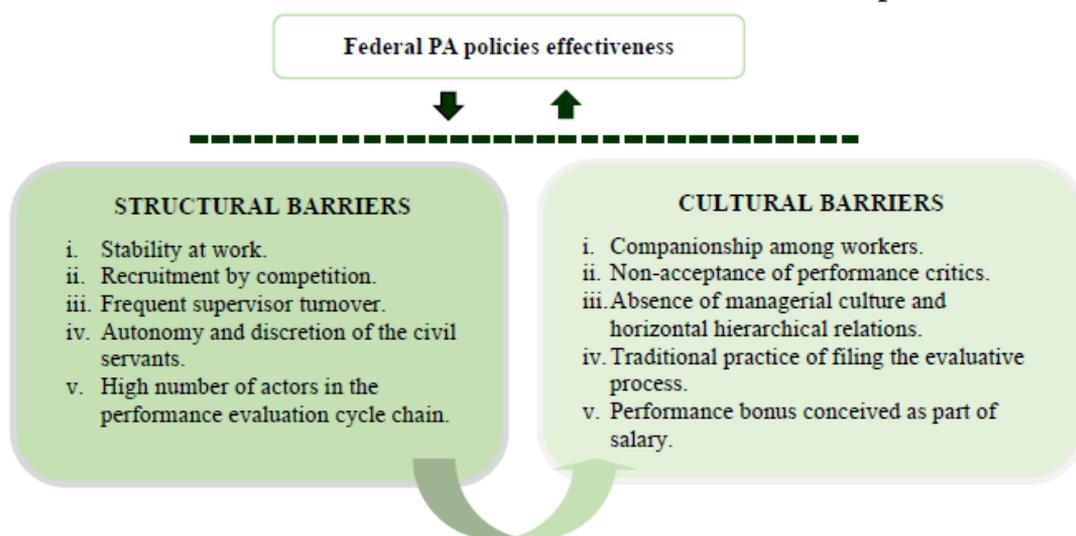
have alluded, as a positive aspect, the consolidation of planning practice because of the requirements of the standard of evaluation. Likewise, some of them pointed out that, with the passing of time and the maturing of the evaluation culture in organizations, the process would progress. A teamwork leader in a federal entity, I-6, believed that the PA process, still with its limitations, contributed at least to improve the personnel management:

“I think the positive point (...) is that, at least once or twice a year, it is necessary to have that conversation, it is necessary to have that monitoring. So, I think it also forces you to take a look at personnel management. I think it lacks a bit of preparation for the head himself too, (...) how to do that, but I think this is an initial kick-start. (...) Here, [at the entity], even I, as a boss, cannot see another instrument, another project or any other initiative that really forces me to talk to the civil servant, to give feedback. So, in that sense, nowadays it is the only tool we have” (I-6).

4.4 Brazilian Federal Service Constraints to the Implementation of traditional PA Policies

Based on the analysis of the process and the impacts of this federal policy case, it is possible to identify consolidated barriers existing in Brazilian central administration that interfere with the effectiveness of civil servants’ traditional PA policies.

These barriers are of two natures: those derived from *formal structures*, which refer to the norms that determine the action and organization of government and its workers; and those which originate from the *organizational culture*, understood as the “rituals, myths, habits and beliefs common to the members of an organization, thus producing rules of behavior generally accepted by everybody” (PIRES; MACÊDO, 2006, p. 83). It should be noted that formal structures influence and shape the organizational culture, as it will be detailed, so both types of barriers are closely linked. In the same way, these formal and cultural elements differ significantly with the dynamics that take place in private organizations. The barriers identified to the traditional PA in the federal government are represented in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1 - Barriers identified in Brazilian federal service to PA policies.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Regarding formal structures, the following barriers were observed:

i. **Stability at work:** civil servants can hardly be dismissed and are usually placed in the same entity throughout their careers. This favors their autonomy and companionship among co-workers. At the same time, personal conflicts could be magnified, and PA is a significant source of them. This was explained by I-10, a union representative in an autarchic entity:

“In the federal system there is a lot of companionship, it is the sprit de corps of the house... (...) You are in an institution where you interact with the person for twenty or fifteen years, and it seems that this person is a part of your family ... If you are in daily life, and you have a guarantee of your job, and if you are going to lose salary money, (...) that brings you a hassle, you will create enemies in here... In private initiative, the boss fires you, here you cannot do it, then you get people with identity conflicts with each other” (I-10).

ii. **Recruitment by competition:** the access to a public stable job in federal administration involves a difficult and long period of preparation, even years, in order to surpass hundreds of candidates for a few positions’ competition. Moreover, those who overcome that phase must pass a three-year performance evaluation to consolidate the position and become permanent. In contrast to the private sector, federal employees primary merit efforts burden in the first career stages.

These criteria and dynamics of access to the federal service have several effects on workers’ behavior and organizational culture, which gain the right to occupy their

position after considerable effort and to overcome multiple competitors. This leads to a very common situation observed as federal public employees are reluctant to receive criticism about the way they work.

iii. **Frequent supervisor turnover:** civil servants in managerial positions, who are appointed by trust and on a temporary basis, are afraid of negatively evaluating co-workers, who could in the future occupy their position and, therefore, they prefer not to raise potential personal problems through PA.

“Today you are boss, maybe tomorrow you are not, the role can be reversed. So if you suddenly demand, regardless of how you demand and who the people are, the staff can see things to the personal side and afterwards... now it's my turn ... you did it so now I'm also going to do it. This is inadequate, but it happens, so there is this changing issue, sometimes in a fairly pre-programmed way, (...) from election to election there will be a team change. (...) It ends up influencing how people interact with each other” (Testimony of I-18, an academic specialist in performance management).

This structural element is also a differentiating element in relation to most common dynamics in the private sphere, where turnover is lower and it is rare that an employee occupying a managerial position returns, after a time, to a position with a lower hierarchy level.

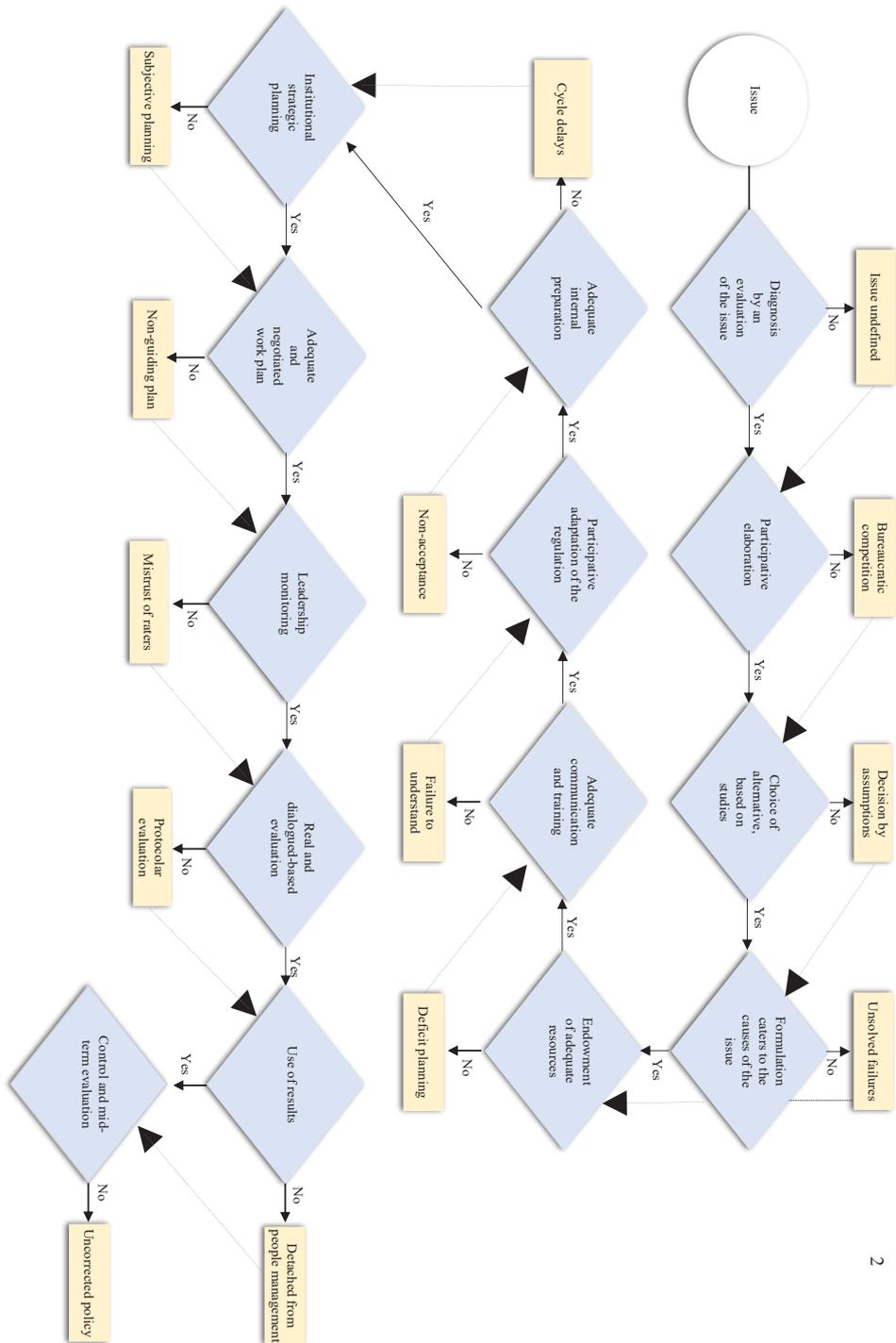
iv. **Autonomy and discretion of the civil servants:** in the view of the Lipsky (2010) *street-level bureaucrats*, the success of policies depends largely on the officials on the last stage of implementation. Therefore, the autonomy of civil servants allows them to resist the initiative of greater control over their work by means of PA, altering, in their discretion, the meaning and reach of the normative. Under this point of view, employees do not violate the requirements of the law, but, as Oliveira (2012) points out, in these cases they may restrict themselves to complying with the letter of the normative in a purely protocolary manner, which is known as *work-to-rule*.

v. **High number of actors in the performance evaluation cycle chain:** the PA policy entails a high number of decision points and agents with different interests throughout its development, motivated by the need to properly execute the evaluation cycle – composed, in the analyzed case, by the institutional planning, planning of work teams, monitoring of the execution, performance rating and use of the results. According to Pressman and Wildavsky (1998), a long chain of decisions implies a greater risk of failure in the implementation chain, so that the probability of a deterioration of the

quality process is higher. In addition to this multiplicity of decision points, PA policy depends on a wide margin of action on the part of the agents involved, civil servants of public administration. The range of their decisions are quite expansive, the options are numerous, and they require significant pro-activity. Therefore, this policy contains a higher degree of causal links requirement than others.

In Figure 2, the primary decision points of the PA federal policies and the repercussions of the direction of each of them are represented. We simplified the options into the possibilities *yes* and *no* in order to make the scheme feasible, although, partial or intermediate solutions were identified in actuality. The lozenges represent the decision points and the action that the policy design intends. When the agents involved in each decision point do not conform to the expected ideal, they generate negative repercussions for the effectiveness of the policy, represented by rectangles, and the cycle continues to drag failures, represented by the discontinuous arrows.

FIGURE 2 – Representation of decision points in PA Brazilian federal policies inspired by Pressman and Wildavsky (1998) model.



2

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Regarding the obstacles of organizational culture, the following elements were identified:

i. **Companionship among workers:** fraternal values predominate over professional values. There is a preference to earn the sympathy of others and maintain a good relationship with colleagues, and therefore they avoid conflicts that may arise from the PA. Unlike the private sector, the stability and continuity of servants for many years in the same organization implies that they have special care for the coexistence. In this sense, the I-7 head unit in a federal entity alluded to this collegiality as part of the organizational culture:

“By the public service culture, having a good peer relationship is sometimes more important for your work to be successful than you being a good worker solely at your operating unit. (...) Today it is increasingly important that this thing of having a good interpersonal relationship, (...) generates a procedural smoothness. (...) And if you also have a good relationship you can get into meetings, getting meetings to improve the interface ... so I understand that it helps a lot in the team environment, even the team spirit itself” (I-7).

ii. **Absence of managerial culture and more horizontal hierarchical relations:** leadership practices are devoid of personnel management and hierarchical control relations, but are based on companionship and the protection of workers' autonomy. This also means that, with few exceptions, there is no monitoring of compliance of work planning, turning the PA into a static process or an isolated task which occurs twice a year. Structural elements such as stability and recruitment by competition, as noted, could influence this limited culture of personnel management.

iii. **Traditional practice of filing the evaluative process:** the policy intended a drastic change in the habits of servants, who have long developed lenient PAs, with no real commitment to PA objectives. According to Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979, 1981), the greater the degree of behavior change required in the target public, the more difficult the achievement of the objectives pursued by a policy will be.

iv. **Non-acceptance of performance critics: interviewees** indicated that there was no culture of feedback in the federal administration and that workers felt evaluation was a personal offense and could not accept them professionally. Thus, civil servants usually appeal when they obtain negative PA results. It has also been observed that, in some cases, they appeal even when results do not negatively affect the complete gain of the performance bonus. This situation generates a cost for rigorous raters.

“It has already happened here... some bosses made an evaluation the way it should be done, and what happens is that the servant immediately goes through the reconsideration process. And it has often happened that the boss does not reconsider (...) the way the servant wanted. He submits the appeal, which goes to a commission, and then there is a whole process, thus, the servant does not admit he has a salary reduction” (Testimony of I-14, involved in coordinating the IPA policy in a federal entity).

v. Performance bonus is conceived as part of salary: federal civil servants conceive that pay for performance gratification is part of the salary, a right rather than a bonus, so any restriction of it is understood as a punishment for them. This view is motivated, on the one hand, by the past government’s use of bonuses as a less onerous way of increasing public servant salary, as it was pointed out in the policy cycle analysis. On the other hand, it has been assimilated to salary after years of automatic wining of the complete bonus by almost all employees.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This article presented elements which explain why the individual PA policies in Brazilian federal administration do not work as intended, and how this process works. The main obstacles, in addition to the failures verified in the phases of the policy cycle analyzed, are related to the characteristics of federal service. We identified elements of its formal structure and organizational culture which conflict directly with the pretensions of PAs.

Traditional federal civil servant PA designs and its improvements over time have outlines that are inspired by private sphere practices. Thus, they are focused on developing a real, rigorous evaluation of civil servant performance. Techniques such as forced distribution ratings were proposed, as well as external evaluation committees, introduction of high remunerative bonuses, devices for dismissing low-performing employees, etc. Results found a bias of control and punishment for the civil servants, who are broadly perceived as performing less than the private organization’s workers. The general purpose of such legislation confronted the reality of the existing structures and culture. This provoked a rejection from the initial implementation phases of civil servants, who have the autonomy to decide the real reach of the evaluation systems and to empty of the substantial meaning of the process.

Policymakers must change the traditional approach to evaluating individual performance. Attention should be paid to the adequate fulfillment of the evaluation cycle stages, seeking formulas that guarantee that all stages are carried out. In this sense, care must be taken to ensure the quality and existence of a participatory and collaborative planning, managerial monitoring, intermediate reviews, performance evaluation through face-to-face interviews, and authentic use of the results, linked to training and personal development. The main goal should be a greater commitment of managers to accomplish these stages, with the existence of a reflection on the performance of employees during the evaluation time, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses, as well as recommendations for improvement, indicating the means to their professional development.

Ratings may continue to be benevolent, but ensuring compliance with all stages of the evaluation cycle will lead to greater achievement of the effects pursued in the PA and may lead to workers' acceptance. Supervisors can consider the maximum score in PA results of collaborators, but the process must provide a space for reflection and communication of the strengths or weaknesses about their performance. Placing the focus on the process and not on the results of the evaluation can contribute to a significant improvement in the effectiveness of PA policies in Brazil public service. In the long term, if the policies are accepted and the stages are fulfilled with normality, the evaluation culture will be consolidated.

It is recommended, in future research, to study models and policies aimed at consolidating the stages of the performance evaluation cycle and that overcome civil servant rejection. Likewise, it is suggested to test and quantify the grade of influence of formal structures and organizational culture barriers highlighted in this article in other public contexts.

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