MEASURING STATE CAPACITY IN BRAZIL: IS WEBERIAN BUREAUCRACY A USEFUL PARADIGM?

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AGENDA

1. Statement of the problem
2. Research questions
3. Methodology
4. Findings
Competing views on how to operationalize the concept of State Capacity, its constitutive dimensions and indicators

Wu, Ramesh, Howlett (2015): skills and resources to policymaking

Fukuyama (2013): meritocratic bureaucracy and individual autonomy

Evans (2010): state-society relations

→ State capacity is a theoretical construct formed by latent dimensions that can be measured only indirectly, through a set of observable indicators
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Which of these views have more adherence to the empirical reality?

Are the constitutive dimensions of state capacity empirically confirmed?

Are there relationships among them?

Do such dimensions actually cause State performance?
Contemporary Brazil as an empirical locus

Data collected by a Survey answered by more than 3,000 federal civil servants in 2018

Multivariate statistical methods: Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

- SEM as a technique to measure state capacity avoiding problems of circular reasoning
FINDINGS

The model fits the data well

- The selected questions of the Survey are sound indicators of each latent dimension, as theoretically predicted

On ‘meritocracy’ latent dimension

- There is no ‘meritocratic promotion’ in the Brazilian federal bureaucracy: promotions are based on seniority and commissioned positions are freely and politically appointed
- “Meritocratic recognition” is a kind of reward for good performance at work (QB4: satisfaction with the recognition received for doing a good job)
The correlation between 'meritocracy' and 'individual autonomy' is strong (.901), indicating that they may have a certain dependence on each other.

The latent dimension 'skills' was also strongly correlated with 'meritocracy' and 'autonomy'.

However, correlations among the other latent dimensions were weak and not statistically significant.
A strong positive and significant correlation (p<10%) between ‘meritocracy’ and ‘State performance’

The correlation between 'skills' and ‘State performance' was positive and significant (p<10%), but the coefficient relatively weaker

Table 2: SEM Regressions

|                | Estimate | Std.Err | z-value | P(>|z|) |
|----------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|
| Performance    |          |         |         |         |
| Autonomy       | -0.114   | 0.217   | -0.526  | 0.599   |
| Meritocracy    | 0.768    | 0.278   | 2.766   | 0.006   |
| Relations      | -0.025   | 0.043   | -0.575  | 0.565   |
| Resources      | 0.074    | 0.049   | 1.502   | 0.133   |
| Skills         | 0.292    | 0.090   | 3.250   | 0.001   |
### EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

The constitutive dimensions of the State Capacity in Brazil and their most important indicators

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Factors/Latent dimensions</th>
<th>Questions/Indicators</th>
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| **Autonomy-meritocracy**  | QC5 - Involvement in decision-making  
QC2 - Encouragement for new and better ways of doing my work  
Q84 - Recognition received for doing a good job  
QC1 - Government takes advantage of my talents  
QC4 - Approval of a project depends on my technical considerations  
QC3 - Making decisions in the performance of my job |
| **Technical competencies (skills)** | QG4 - Leadership  
QG5 - Conflict management  
QG7 - Communicative skills  
QG3 - Policy analysis  
QG1 - Substantive policy knowledge |
| **Relations with external actors** | QF7 - State government  
QF6 - Local government  
QF3 - National Congress  
QF10 - Civil Society |
| **Resources** | QE2 – Financial (Budget)  
QE3 - Technological  
QH1 – Personnel (staff) |
CONCLUSION

Weberian bureaucracy is still a useful paradigm for studies on state policy capacity — at least for contemporary Brazil

- A strong positive and significant correlation between ‘meritocracy’ and ‘State performance’

- A strong correlation between 'meritocracy' and ‘autonomy’

- Technical competencies (professional skills) are a characteristic of Weberian bureaucracy
LIMITATIONS

The cross-sectional nature of the data implies difficulties in providing robust conclusions about the causal relationships between the concept’s dimensions and observed performance.

State capacity varies in time, geographical regions, and policy sectors → more studies comparing policy sectors, agencies and regions are needed.