

# MANAGEMENT CAPACITY: INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION FOR FEDERAL PUBLIC PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION IN BRAZIL<sup>1,2</sup>

Sheila Cristina Tolentino Barbosa<sup>3</sup>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

As a phase of the public policy cycle, implementation transforms general intentions into actions and results. This challenge is enhanced by the increasing complexity of implementing public policies, mainly due to the points of contact between different themes under the scope of these policies. In this regard, we can observe that a particular public policy objective interferes in several jurisdictions or is interfered with by them (O'Toole Junior, 1996). Implementing public policies can involve actors from different levels of Government and organizations with other interests, *expertise*, and institutional forms, constituting interorganizational arrangements for achieving specific government actions, and their structure and way of interacting influence their performance.

Besides several organizations that make up the federal government's structure, the arrangements above for implementing public policies may include state agencies and private and third-sector organizations. Including such organizations in these arrangements is a trend to obtain the best of each sector's competencies and promote complementary actions to solve public issues, maximizing society's well-being.

This logic is anchored in the premise that the state has a higher capacity to collect resources necessary to solve public issues, and the private and third sectors have a better ability to produce and deliver goods and services (Salomon, 2002).

Those interorganizational relations are defined by the participation of state and non-state actors that define the lines of the complex implementation process and demand considerable effort of interorganizational coordination to effectively transform public policies into results.

Once recognized the need for joint actions between the public and the private sectors, as well as the public and third sectors, for the better solving of public issues – concept brought by texts dealing with state reform in Brazil, such as Pereira and Spink (1998) –, the discussion turns to include, therefore, the most appropriate means to promote this joint action and optimize the synergy intended by it. That is, the focus of the discussion becomes what type of management suits this collective action, whether it would be a traditional management model based on authority and control or management based on cooperation (Palumbo, 1998; Hill, 2009; Salomon, 2002).

---

1. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.38116/bapi33art6>

2. Originally published in Portuguese in *Boletim de Análise Político-Institucional*, No. 9, June 2016. Available at: <[http://repositorio.ipea.gov.br/bitstream/11058/7107/1/BAPI\\_n9\\_capacidade.pdf](http://repositorio.ipea.gov.br/bitstream/11058/7107/1/BAPI_n9_capacidade.pdf)>.

3. Public policies and government management specialist, currently working at the Department of Studies and Policies of the State, Institutions and Democracy of the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Diest/Ipea).

In recent years, the topic of public policy networks has been widely addressed based on the concept of governance, grounded in the same contexts adopted in the analysis of interorganizational coordination, although they represent – governance and coordination – different ideas.

Governance refers to regulating relationships through mechanisms that include governmental authority and sanction. Still, it goes beyond them since interorganizational coordination relates to promoting cooperation (Daft, 1999). For Kooiman (2003), the need for coordination comes from the division of labor, functional differentiation, and specialization processes that occur in the separation of decision-making from implementation.

Coordination can, therefore, be seen as a dimension of governance, but it only represents part of the concept of governance. It is helpful in a complex social context as a process of integrating separate but interdependent actors who, in some way, need to adapt to each other despite their possible antagonism (Kooiman, 2003).

Therefore, the central question Klijn (2005) raises is: how to organize the implementation of public policies and provision of public services within the fragmented setup of the organizations involved? Moreover, taking into account a state tending not to carry out public policy by itself but only acting as an integration system in which public policies and the provision of public services are produced and delivered by other contracted organizations – for profit or not. The coordination of the action of those different parties is at the center of this integration process.

The study on interorganizational coordination in implementing federal public programs developed herein was organized into five sections – including this introduction. Section 2 presents the analytical framework design. In section 3, we address the methodological aspects of the analysis and discuss the data from recent experience in Brazil regarding the public policy implementation process in the social field. Section 4 presents an in-depth analysis with a specific discussion on interorganizational coordination mechanisms in this implementation process. Section 5 includes the final considerations as an outcome of this analysis.

## 2 PROSPECTS FOR INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION ANALYSIS IN PUBLIC PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Discussing the possibilities and limits of interorganizational coordination requires first establishing its purpose. For Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), it is caused by the interdependence control requirements: the need to have access to resources, control results, and avoid dependence on the environment, mainly external.

We observe that there are several ways to approach the interorganizational coordination analysis, classified as follows:

- structural perspective: focus on formalization, complexity (geographical dispersion, number of actors involved), direction, and timeframe of relationships;
- process perspective: focus on defining stages of the interorganizational coordination process and managing sequential, parallel, and reciprocal interdependencies;
- performance perspective: focus on evaluating results measured through performance indicators to produce a certain standard of results;

- consistency perspective: focus on the distribution of competencies and the resulting overlaps, gaps, and divergences in government action; and
- political perspective: focuses on the distribution of power and types and participation volumes.

From the structural perspective, the variables of interest analyzed are related to the formalization, centrality, and timeframe of the relationships between implementers (stable or dynamic) and those indicating the vertical or horizontal dimensions of those relationships. On the other hand, the process perspective focuses on managing interdependencies between implementers forming interorganizational arrangements. Such interdependencies can be sequential, parallel, and reciprocal. The performance perspective focuses on the mechanisms used to monitor and optimize implementation performance in search of homogeneous results. From the perspective of the consistency of state action, the attention goes to the coordination for minimizing failures, such as gaps, inconsistencies, or overlaps in public policy actions. For last, from a political perspective, the focus is on relationships between implementers in terms of opportunities for participation and distribution of power in the interorganizational arrangement of public policy implementation.

Based on the perspectives mentioned above, the analysis of organizational coordination aims to enable a broader view of the process and point out unique aspects of interorganizational coordination related to implementation outcomes.

### 3 INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION IN BRAZIL'S FEDERAL PUBLIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN THE SOCIAL FIELD IN RECENT YEARS

We conducted qualitative research to highlight the main aspects of coordinating interorganizational relationships in federal public programs implementation. It applied a comparative method based on Boolean algebra and logical equations that allow us to identify the conditions or setup of conditions leading to a specific result, in this case, the success or failure of public programs implementation. The reason for adopting this method was its ability of the so-called qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), to deal with the causal complexity of the social sciences (Ragin, 1987; Rihoux and De Meur, 2008).

In this regard, the quality of success or failure attributed to the implementation outcome was mediated based on the physical percentage of implementation achieved by the program at the end of the period of the Multi-Year Plan (Plano Plurianual – PPA). Mainly, reaching a value equal to or greater than 80% of the physical implementation goal was considered successful.

To enable the comparison process of the coordination experiences studied, we developed an analytical framework based on the five analysis perspectives, including mechanisms and contexts of interorganizational coordination, which refer to coordination in hierarchical, market, solidarity association, or political contexts.

It is worth explaining that coordination is based on authority for the first context – the hierarchical one. For the market context, coordination takes place based on exchange. On the other hand, for solidarity associations, coordination occurs through a common interest. Last but not least, in the political context, coordination occurs through the accommodation of interests, not always in common and sometimes even conflicting.

It is essential to highlight how crucial the political context is to discuss the interactions between the actors involved in the public program's implementation, as observed by Câmara (2002) and as outlined by the research data.

We focused on identifying interorganizational coordination in sixteen cases of federal public programs' implementation in the social field, selected among priority programs of the 2004-2007 PPA, reportedly to be in better conditions for implementation in terms of resource availability and decision-making. Conditions, which, in theory, highlight the effects of coordination and management capacity on the implementation outcome.

Data characterizing the coordination and implementation of each of the selected programs were collected through questionnaires and interviews with program managers, action coordinators, and implementers at the regional and local levels. The different implementation cases were then described based on the five previously mentioned analysis perspectives and compared among them to identify the conditions or setup of common conditions in success and failure cases of the federal public program's implementation.

Looking at the Brazilian experience (as of the organization of the 2004-2007 PPA), the analysis of variables related to interorganizational coordination showed that those which emerge as differentiators for the implementation success are the indicators related to the relationships in the decision-making process, that is, those of the political perspective. This observation points to the relevance of this perspective and the need to give it more attention, as we will further discuss and explain.

This relevance is possibly an outcome of something that has not yet ripened in implementing public policies. This situation is different from what has already occurred from the structural perspective because – as will be seen next – the structural aspects related to complexity, for instance, are not significant in explaining success since they occur in a typical pattern in all cases analyzed. However, this does not mean saying those are factors that can be neglected, even if they are not part of aspects of differentiation for the success or failure of implementation.

In explaining the success of the implementation resulting from the analysis including all variables, the results equation points out as the conditions for success the relationships with program managers of the “exchange of information and joint decisions” type or relationships with program coordinators of “subordination relationship and information exchange relationships” type, or, even, the presence of some discretion in the decision-making process.

The result of the comparative analysis makes it clear that the type of participation suggested by the variables indicating the relationships and the distribution or sharing of power implied by the variables related to the decision-making process are critical factors in public programs' implementation.

Consistently, the lack of participation and power sharing appears in the explanation of failure. The failure cases explain that the absence of relationships with other implementers is the differentiating factor, as seen in its different cause combinations. Were observed the following conditions in those combinations: relationships of subordination and lack of connection with program managers, lack of discretion in resource distribution, lack of coordination mechanisms of decision-making and negotiation and coordination units and functions, as well as the lack of influence of interest groups.

We observed that the impact of interest groups is not a factor in success. Still, this absence associated with the lack of relationships with other implementers is in the failure explanation.

In cases where the influence of interest groups has been reported, its presence is related to the indication of beneficiaries or the allocation of financial resources. This apparent contradiction – the lack of influence from interest groups in explaining failure, but, on the other hand, its presence not included in the basis of success – can be explained by the causal complexity observed. That is, the outcome is explained by a full set of conditions, not the presence or absence of an isolated condition. According to data provided by the research, the absence of interest groups only is factor of failure when it appears combined with lack of relationship with other implementers.

The low participation is pointed out in explaining the implementation failure, primarily due to a lack of relationships and coordination mechanisms that enable such participation. Additionally, a lack of discretion in the decision-making process due to the low involvement of other implementers in the interorganizational coordination process of implementation is present in the explanation of failure.

One interesting thing is that, despite the mentioned indication of low interaction between the federal level and the other implementers, especially at the municipal level, the research indicates as relevant the aspects of participation in explaining the success of the implementation.

The research data does not support a consistent explanation for this apparent contradiction between the evidence of low interaction and the fact that participation is a factor that contributes to a successful implementation. Finding a reason for that would be a task for future studies. Still, it may be related to what Frey (2000) pointed out as a movement of democratic expansion towards building a more consistent social participation, i.e., the participation already mentioned is not yet consolidated but is moving in that direction. We can already notice its relevance in research data.

Interorganizational coordination in public social programs' implementation in Brazil has a pattern with hierarchical contours as a consequence of institutions setting the government's mode of operation. That is, under the constitutional, directive, or operational decisions ranging from determining public interest's supremacy and defining the formal structure of state action plans coordination to the modes of operation of those actions. In other words, it is a management model based on authority.

From a structural point of view, interorganizational coordination is characterized by the complexity of typical formalized relations. However, it was observed that this complexity is not a determinant of successful implementation. Coordination, in this regard, is stable and has a vertical structure. However, some evidence of horizontality and dynamism can be verified, and instability in arrangements for policy implementation provides autonomy to state or local governments for resource allocation in projects.

Regarding the process perspective, the interorganizational coordination for federal public programs' implementation is characterized – to a high degree – by the management of interdependencies, parallel and sequential, coordinated by plans and standardization, coherently set in a strongly hierarchical and formalized context. Moreover, reciprocal interdependency – commonly found in contexts of solidarity associations – remains more visibly explored, which, at the same time, according to the international literature, can offer synergy gains and would probably require much more in terms of interorganizational coordination.

Probably, the situation is connected to implementation patterns that have been reproduced over time when establishing public policies as systems (policies related to the same issues and shared structures, such as work, health, and education). These patterns are subject to gradual changes over time due to external pressure concerning the implementation content and performance.

On the other hand, from the performance perspective, what stands out in the analysis is that some guidelines affirm their focus on performance, establishing indicators and goals to be achieved. However, interorganizational coordination towards performance remains incipient due to still fragile monitoring, which assumes more ex-ante and ex-post control features than coordination that provides concurrent performance adjustments through effective monitoring. The reason for it possibly lies in the fact that, in Brazil, the adoption of results-oriented state action planning is a relatively recent experience, and much of its practical application needs to be consolidated in the state action *praxis*.

Interorganizational coordination is visible in the consistency perspective of this kind of state action. It seems to operate much more at the institutional level since the research suggests that the evidence of gaps, inconsistencies, and overlaps related to federal public programs are flaws whose origins are in institutional arrangements. Here, the participation of the actors involved in the implementation, or even civil society organizations' involvement in pointing out those coordination flaws, guides this coordination effort. At this point, the political context in implementing interorganizational coordination stands out since, through participation and the need to arrange interests, such flaws become more evident so they can be effectively corrected through negotiations and later institutional adjustments.

After discussing the findings from those interorganizational coordination perspectives of analysis, we present analyses related to the interorganizational coordination mechanisms observed in the studied program data and their connections with the results of the already addressed views.

#### 4 INTERORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS FOR FEDERAL PUBLIC PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Regarding the coordination mechanisms that explain the successful implementation, the comparative analysis indicated that decision and negotiation mechanisms, regular advice or planning, and information systems are vital elements to success – although none are crucial or sufficient separately. That is, none is the only one responsible for success nor part of all successful combinations.

At the same time, the comparative analysis to explain failure – considering the same variables – does not present any possible logical minimization. It means that based on the research data, it is impossible to determine what conditions are related to the coordination mechanisms that are differentiators for implementation failure. We cannot state, even by analogy, that the situation opposite from the one found in the explanation for success considering such variables is a valid explanation for failure. That is why depending on the conditions related to the needs and sufficiency found during the analysis, one can say which are relevant rather than determinants of a successful implementation.

Another interesting fact is that we observed incentive mechanisms in the implementation process in only one of the studied cases. This situation may be connected to the verification that implementers' performance control is not consolidated and that using incentive systems is an alternative to increase performance.

The application of coordination mechanisms has diverse settings having communication mechanisms and information systems as a common core.

Among the potential coordination possibilities mentioned, the research outcomes suggest that the political perspective has greater power to explain the success and failure of the implementation processes studied since its associated variables are presented as differentiators in both cases. Thus, the discussion about types of participation is relevant – clearly outlining that this concept is not only restricted to social engagement outside the government since implementers participate in decision-making and actions for programs' implementation.

Furthermore, the research data suggest the relevance of developing relationships' quality for public policies' implementation. In this regard, we proposed further studies to analyze the promotion of shared common values and references – as pointed out by Jobert (2004) – beyond establishing formal participation institutions, determining actions, or simply acquiring products and services.

The results of the study allow us to deduce that more relevant than the discussion on the need or not for hierarchy in interorganizational arrangements for public policies' implementation is the debate on how to balance the requirements related to the distribution of discretion, participation, and arrangement of interests of the actors involved in the implementation process – also in contexts of hierarchy. Thereby, we recommend including this debate in the agenda for future studies.

For last, regarding interorganizational coordination mechanisms, the instrumentality of management is limited to a few since many of the possible mechanisms in interorganizational coordination for public programs' implementation are underused or not even used. Out of the eight mechanisms studies, in most cases, only communication and information systems are combined. On the other hand, the incentive system mechanism is the least used, with only one occurrence among the cases studied.

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analyses reported herein reveal a pattern of hierarchical coordination and point out weaknesses that indicate the importance of looking beyond formulation and planning, bringing to the country's research agenda the debate on implementation management.

There is significant autonomy in policies shaped as financing structures and focused targeting in those as consolidated systems – e.g., policies related to education, health, social work, employment, and income. It would be a valid exercise for research efforts to exam management alternatives and interorganizational coordination in public programs' implementation, considering an implementation process characterized by these extremes in the distribution of competencies. Primarily by thinking of intermediate settings, including, for instance, the use of coordination mechanisms that promote not only communication and interactions from top to bottom but also the other way around and horizontally.

The inevitable questioning regarding autonomy in the distribution of competencies is related to the dichotomy between targeting and autonomy in the specific Brazilian context. Settling control over the involved actors' performance implies partially absorbing their autonomy once their performance is defined and controlled in a shared way. On the other hand, the feasibility of greater autonomy has other consequences. The most relevant is the fragility of performance-oriented coordination.

The point of interest in this dichotomy is the search for a balance between the public policies' federal targeting and the maintenance of the states' autonomy. On the one hand, a more focused targeting, typical of public policies organized in the systems – such as those in health, education, and work – is related to greater control of the implementation process. On the other hand, autonomy grants greater “responsiveness” on the actors' side and greater process legitimacy.

Also related to implementation performance, given the limitation of interorganizational coordination under this perspective, we consider relevant the debate on the relationship between interorganizational coordination and the effectiveness of planned implementation performances. This debate is recommended aiming at shedding light on possible targeting and contributions of interorganizational coordination in transforming plans into results; that is, it means looking beyond planning and formulation to understand the role management plays in government actions' performance.

## REFERENCES

- CÂMARA, L. M. Breves notas sobre o modus operandi do modelo de relacionamento entre instâncias de governo institucionalizado pelo Decreto-Lei nº 200/67 em face dos novos desafios do federalismo cooperativo. **Revista de Administração Pública**, v. 36, n. 5, p. 797-809, set./out. 2002.
- DAFT, R. L. **Administração**. Rio de Janeiro: LTC, 1999.
- FREY, K. Políticas públicas: um debate conceitual e reflexões referentes à prática da análise de políticas públicas no Brasil. **Planejamento e políticas públicas**, n. 21, p. 211-259, jun. 2000.
- HILL, M. **The public policy process**. 5th ed. London: Pearson Longman, 2009.
- JOBERT, B. **Estado, sociedade, políticas públicas**. Santiago: LOM, 2004. (Série Universitária).
- KLIJN, E.-H. Networks and interorganizational management: challenging, steering, evaluation and the role of public actors in public management. In: FERLIE, E.; LYNN JUNIOR, L. E.; POLLITT, C. (Ed.). **The Oxford handbook of public management**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. p. 257-281.
- KOOIMAN, J. **Governing as governance**. London: Sage Publications, 2003.
- O'TOOLE JUNIOR, L. J. Rational choice and the public management of interorganizational networks. In: KETTL, D. F.; MILWARD, H. B. (Ed.). **Public management**. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. p. 241-263.
- PALUMBO, D. J. **Public police in America: government in action**. 2nd ed. Orlando: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998.
- PEREIRA, L. C. B.; SPINK, P. K. (Org.). **Reforma do Estado e administração pública gerencial**. 2. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 1998.
- PFEFFER, J.; SALANCIK, G. R. **The external control of organizations: a resource dependence perspective**. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.



RAGIN, C. C. **The comparative method**. Berkley: University of California Press, 1987.

RIHOUX, B.; DE MEUR, G. Crisp-set qualitative comparative analysis (CsQCA). In: RIHOUX, B.; RAGIN, C. C. (Ed.). **Configurational comparative methods: qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) and related techniques**. Thousand Oaks; London: Sage, 2008. p. 33-68.

SALOMON, L. M. **The tools of government: a guide to the new governance**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

