

Teaching Comparative Public Administration: A Latin American perspective

Oscar Oszlak

In this chapter I present a possible approach to teaching comparative public administration (hereafter, CPA), based on my own experience as a teacher of this subject in Latin American universities. Training on CPA is quite familiar in master programs of the region, in which one course of the curricula is usually devoted to the comparative study of public management and public policies.

Teaching these courses admits multiple approaches, both in terms of goals, contents and methodologies. Personally, I start CPA courses asking students about their expectations regarding what they hope to learn at the conclusion of the instruction. The answer is consistently the same: they would like to know how bureaucracies function in other countries, what are their differences with those at their home country, and other similar concerns.

Whether or not this should be CPA's object of knowledge is of course debatable. I anticipate my negative point of view, acknowledging, however, that students' expectations are justifiable. In effect, these courses are generally taught at an advanced stage in the career, but the usual contents of the core courses of the curricula seldom adopt a comparative focus: the empirical material employed tends to deal with domestic experiences based on issues or phenomena of the country where the programs are offered, with a frequent use of case studies. Students feel quite eager to gain knowledge on how does the state apparatus operate elsewhere, especially because their training seeks to find out the most efficient and effective ways of managing public affairs. Hence, knowledge of other successful cases or experiences appears as a natural correlate of this curricular orientation.

Similarly, the literature in this field reflects, in a way, this same type of concerns. There are dozens of books and countless articles which, under the title of CPA tend to offer collections of cases -often recommended as best practices- which analyze supposedly successful experiences about how organizational problems have been tackled or solved in public management, demonstrating an insufficient effort to transcend casuistry and search for more general trends and patterns through truly comparative analysis.

Other books, like Ferrel Heady's (1998) classic one, focus their analyses on the discussion of the different schools of thought in the field of public administration. Hence, its comparative intention is limited to a narration of the historical evolution of currents and ideas that consider public administration as an object of study, rather than to making a truly comparative analysis of those approaches.

They are even less dedicated to compare cases or experiences than to identify regularities or recognizable patterns that have a higher value of theoretical interpretation. This circumstance has created great dissatisfaction among specialists and a healthy reaction expressed in the search for explanations about the scarce progress produced in this field.

I will contend that the literature on CPA shows three different trends: (1) an inclination to repeat, time and again, the story of the development of this field of study; (2) a coincidental opinion in stressing that CPA has not met the great promises that used to exhibit in its time of greatest splendor; and (3) a high consensus that partly attributes this failure to the fact that American comparativists have failed to overcome the ethnocentric focus of their research.

If these premises are true, it seems necessary to reflect about which approaches and contents are more relevant to make comparative analysis in public administration and to transmit its contributions to students in post-graduate education. Especially in Latin American academic institutions, where programs of study in this area are based on literature and case studies largely originated in American and, to a lesser extent, European academic centers.

In the organization of this article, I will successively discuss the three premises just described in order to sustain my argument with evidence collected in the abundant, available literature. Then, I will propose that CPA courses should devote a module to the treatment of comparison in public administration as a method of learning and possibly of generalization of knowledge, given the scant attention given to the use of these tools in typical research methodology courses. Finally, I will present a series of work experiences in which I was involved during my professional career, to illustrate various forms to address research projects where comparisons were required. The implicit assumption is that teaching CPA is also, and above all, teaching to comparatively investigate public administration.

A repetitive story

The story is well known, so that I will not repeat it at length. But a few paragraphs are deemed necessary because I believe that the evolution of this field of study explains, to some extent, its relative failure. Right from the beginning, CPA became intrinsically tied to the issue of development and bureaucratic modernization in the Third World. As Gant (2006) has noticed, “the term ‘development administration’ came into use in the 1950s to represent those aspects of public administration and those changes in public administration, which are needed to carry out policies, projects, and programs to improve social and economic conditions.” The process of decolonization in Asia and Africa, following the end of World War II, created high expectations about a rapid improvement in social and economic conditions in the newly independent countries. Governments were put under great pressure to accelerate development, giving rise to the need of building administrative capacities for public policy design and implementation.

The end of World War II was a turning point. The map of, the world had changed drastically. Rostow forecasted that the road towards economic development had to proceed through stages, following the well known pattern that the most advanced countries had experienced before. The route towards progress required modernizing structures and institutions. On the other hand, the war had generated a greater exposition of American scholars to the administrative systems of Europe and Asia. There was an increasing interest to learn how governments function in other places. There was a world to discover, much larger in area and population than the better-known North-Occidental world.

Mimetism, that is, the disposition to learn and copy things that work, has always been a concern of both developing and developed countries. Latin America partly adopted the American constitution, the French civil code, and the British commercial practices. The new Japanese samurais, turned into ministers of modernization, learned public management from the United States. Americans became interested in European institutions like the Ombudsman or the public enterprises. The need for this mutual process of learning had already been proposed in 1887 by Woodrow Wilson, in his famous essay on the “Study of Administration”, observing that comparative studies

were necessary to see (1) whether administrative processes in the United States were relevant or applicable to other countries; or (2) to see whether any administrative institution or practices can be transplanted from other countries to the U.S administration (Wilson, 1887).

On the other hand, the initiatives of the American government for post-war reconstruction in Europe, as well as the policies to curb communist expansion, adopted during the Cold War, led to a significant increase in training and research technical assistance activities in developing countries (Nef and Dwivedi, 1981: 42; Schaffer, 1978: 181–185). The A.I.D. technical missions, staffed by experts trained in the tradition of Western central countries, became one the key instruments of this policy.¹

Meanwhile, political science experienced dramatic developments in view of the enormous interest in studying politics from a comparative standpoint. The important books published in the late 1950s and early 1960s reflected the influence of Talcott Parsons and his general systems theory. Macro approaches to the study of politics, like structural functionalism, became pre-eminent paradigms in political science, and authors like Almond, Coleman, Verba and others paved the way of comparative political analysis. Their contributions had an enormous influence upon the studies of bureaucracies around the world by members of the Comparative Administration Group.

To compare meant going to another country to verify how the institutions function and, based on such analysis, build models or theories that demonstrate that the world does not work according to the North-Western model, as there are other realities where governance is set to different modes. Some authors, such as Robert Dahl, Dwight Waldo and Herbert Simon questioned the alleged universality of American public administration. In turn, the contextual relevancy in the comparison of public administrations was observed by Wallace Sayre and Herbert Kaufman. It is this academic climate, and the practical need of finding solutions to the problems of institutional strengthening of governments in the third world, that created favourable conditions for Fred Riggs and his colleagues at the C.A.G. to develop their frameworks based on a contextual or ecological perspective and a structural-functionalist approach.

In this way, the issue of development and the development of methods and techniques of comparison were constituted as twin fields of the study of public administration, both theoretical and practically (Farazmand, 1996). The rise in 1962 of the C.A.G. and its rapid diffusion, gave decisive impetus to the comparative analysis of public bureaucracies. Under the leadership of Fred Riggs, this movement had its period of greatest splendour over the following decade and began to decline in the 1970's until it practically disappeared.

One of the reasons that supposedly explains the decline of the C.A.G. is that the Ford Foundation, the main source of funding for scholars enrolled in this movement, came to the conclusion that their research was inspired by a more theoretical than applied motivation, as their work sought to create new analytical categories and broad interpretations about public management in the Third World, rather than searching for solutions to the vexing problems of underdevelopment in those countries—the main target of the Foundation grants. Hence, the C.A.G. declined during the 1970's. The oil crisis at the beginning of this decade and the Watergate scandal contributed to reduce funding for this kind of studies, while agencies and foundations were shifting their priorities.

CPA under critique

¹ As another manifestation of this trend, I may recall that CLAD (the Latin American Center for Development Administration) was created in the early 1970s, to improve the institutional capacity of member governments to bring about economic development.

The substance and orientations of comparative research in public administration have been subject to criticism by different authors. Jreisat (2005) contends that CPA, in method and in content, has not successfully integrated with the main field of public administration, to the detriment of both. With globalization and changes in information technology, the current separation impairs public administration education. This assessment is based on a literature review and an appraisal of the contributions of comparative scholarship. For others, it has been confused with the field of development administration. In addition, CPA has not been able to rid itself of its original biases, as a field actually born with the intention to transcend the parochial frames and American ethnocentrism. But in this attempt, development theory scholars assumed incorrectly that progress would be linear with societies aiming toward a “take-off” stage, after which development would be self-sustaining.

According to Peters (1994), the decline experienced by the CPA since the 1980’s had its sequel in the successive decades, as a result of the rise of neoliberalism and its impact upon the processes of state reform, leading to the marginalization, if not total replacement, of the tradition of comparative research. In his view, this field is still disjointed, incoherent and, therefore, uncertain.²

This trend had an expected impact upon the teaching of CPA. Looking at the earlier attempts to broaden the scope of this specialized teaching, van Wart and Cayer (1990, 238) observed that “the major criticisms were that the field was too involved in the quest for a comprehensive paradigm or metatheory, that it was not empirical enough, and that it was too self-absorbed in academic concerns and insufficiently relevant.” The same authors, reviewing the evidence presented in the leading journals for a change of attitude and approach toward the comparative context, observed the following features: “[They] include a significant practitioner component, a substantial orientation toward policy recommendations, a relative paucity of theory-testing studies, wide and mature coverage of a range of studies, and methodological studies that seem slightly better than in the past, but still far from ideal. The field as a whole, however, lacks features that give it clear identity (e.g., state-of-the-art critiques, methodological pieces, and broader, middle-range theorizing), and thus the overall status of comparative public administration remains ambiguous.” (Ibid., 238)

Another issue closely related to the startling pedagogical indifference to comparative and international material in the approved core of degree programs, is the issue of tenure and promotion. A study conducted in the 1980s indicated that since this material received no official recognition in accreditation or core course construction, it turned out to be peripheral.

Cultural ethnocentricity of CPA

Robert A. Dahl (1947) was probably the first scholar to denounce the futility of trying to create a science of public administration through the formulation of universal laws. Laws or putative laws which would allegedly be “stripped of normative value, of the distortions caused by the incorrigible individual psyche, and of the presumably irrelevant effects of the cultural environment.” Although Dahl was reacting against the supposedly universal validity of the “principles” sustained by the Scientific Administration school, his critique could also be applied to the similar attempt by the comparative administration movement at finding such universal laws devoid of moral and political ends and independent of the cultural and social setting.

² As Randall Baker (1994) commented, during the 1990’s a small group of scholars attempted to bring the winds of international change into the curricula of the 230-plus member institutions of NASPAA. Their efforts met with the indifference of most teaching institutions to the geographical realities of the late-twentieth century context of public life. The international group quietly died from lack of generalized support.

However, scholars came to agree on the need to avoid imposing concepts “made in America” to other realities. They noticed that in any comparative study, there was a tendency to conceptualize in terms of their national or personal experiences. Not surprisingly, they found that most CPA analysis were ethnocentric in the sense that their hypotheses were not representative of other contexts. Heady stated the matter this way: “...parochialism is a persistent dominant feature of American public administration, evidenced in the curricula of institutions of higher education and in the conduct of public administration by practicing professionals” (Heady 1987, 480). In turn, Baker rightly observed that public administration and, as a matter of fact, all systems of government are comparative in nature. The mistake lies in equating the term “comparative” to “foreign” or “elsewhere”.

The need to decolonize CPA thinking, empirically and conceptually, began to be felt as a way to understand the American public administration itself. To learn what happens in other polities appeared as a *sine qua non* condition to understand what happens at home, for it provides a mirror against which comparison makes sense. Aberbach and Rockman (1988) put it this way, “the U.S. administrative system is best understood in a comparative context. . . . We not only understand our own systems better when we compare, we gain a better understanding of the methods, concepts, and theories we employ.” As the founding father of CAG confessed, “we were never able to focus directly on American public administration in a comparative perspective.”³

Similarly, Baker (1991) warns that as a subject, public administration has long had a parochial cast, but even the most avowed parochialist must be aware of some fairly radical forces at work in the local parish. The political history of the United States is one of exceptionalism, a deep suspicion of international entanglements and organizations (unless there was a veto possibility involved), periodic retreats into isolation, and an increasingly pervasive ignorance of geography.

How are these trends observed from a Latin American perspective? First, it should be recognized that, as it has occurred in other fields of scientific and technological knowledge, systematic research on public administration has not been a priority in this region, at least insofar as its academic production is compared with that in other latitudes. After all, most university programs in this field are nurtured to a large extent by bibliography originated in “north-occidental” academic centers, and much of these materials have been found useful to compensate for the shortage of Latin American production. On the other hand, however, this body of literature has traditionally been considered by many scholars as a vehicle of cultural colonialism and a manifestation of dependency. Their models and interpretations have been criticized as inappropriate for interpreting the contextual and historical specificity of public bureaucracies of the region.

But I suspect that there still exists a subtle and not sufficiently clarified relationship between scientific or technological progress in a given field of knowledge and its cultural impact upon the social reality in which that knowledge has originated. Probably this is due to the fact that the cultural assumptions of a given technology must be congruent with the technological premises of a culture. This dialogue between science, technology and culture cannot be improvised. It is usually the gradual and systematic result of an interactive and articulated process between reflection and action. Research and technological development create the raw material and the instruments for action. Action, in turn, retrofits the creative process by promoting successive spirals of a virtuous circle that, ultimately, expresses the mutual necessity of an action based on reflection and a

³ “I continue to think that the underlying reason for this decline of comparative public administration since the 1950s and 1960s’ has been our own ethnocentrism in continuing to view American public administration, and the truly exceptional solutions we have found for coping with our peculiarly presidentialist problems, as a general paradigm for the field as a whole”. (Riggs 1991, 475)

reflection inspired in reality. Specialized teaching constitutes one of the fundamental vehicles for transmitting its contribution to the understanding of reality.

Teaching how to compare

Perhaps one of the problems of CPA is the adjective used to name the field, which contributed to "limit" it to comparisons between countries. What is needed is probably to use comparative approaches to strip the study of public administration of its parochial bias. Training in this field with a comparative orientation should not be limited to the contents of a "course" in CPA. Comparison must be a constitutive part of the entire curriculum. Graduates of a training program in public administration must acquire a comparative vision about the processes of institution-building, formulation and implementation of public policies, organizational models, or strategies for state reform in their own countries. The pedagogical aim is not to turn them into experts in the public administration of Portugal, Chile, or Mongolia. Perhaps it is more convenient to learn about a particular policy, process or experience that has taken place in a given country, with the exclusive purpose to understand the conditions of its success or failure, without trying to uncritically transplant or adapt it. Hardly can a student, or a teacher for that matter, "understand" cause-effect relationships explaining a certain process or outcome, without a personal involvement in the particular social and cultural milieu; at least without having reached a higher level of training (and, probably a deeper exposure), than those a typical master program in this field may offer. This does not mean that other concepts, analytical frameworks or methodologies are needed to interpret a phenomenon of public administration in a different national context; probably, other data, variables and hypothesis may be required.

After all, the secret that explains something to work (or not) may rest upon the very idiosyncrasies or culture of a people. And that hardly can be copied. Exotic plants are not easily transplantable: certain conditions of temperature, humidity and soil may be required for them to grow in a different terrain. In other words, as several authors have pointed out, the main value of comparative study is to understand ourselves.

Ultimately, to compare in public administration does not imply the pursuit of universal explanations or the construction of value-free models of interpretation. It is neither a search for recipes that work. Nor is comparative the task of piling up cases without an effort to establish what makes them similar or different. It is an analytical, not merely a descriptive exercise which tries to explain rather than mumbling about a phenomenon. The common question of all work with a comparative intention should be what is what you want to compare, which amounts to say, what is what you want to know. To this end, it is necessary to teach to think, to tackle research with this intention, but above all, teach to reasoning about the meaning of the comparison itself.

In general, research methodology courses -at least in Latin America- do not offer adequate training on the various forms of comparing. Even less so on specialized topics as CPA. In part, the problem is due to the fact that those who dictate methodology courses do not work in the field of public administration. The same happens with the CPA courses themselves and with the comparative contents of other courses in the program curriculum. It is rather unusual that professors in this field have a vast experience in consulting for the public sector and, therefore, their knowledge of the actual functioning of public administration tends to be meager. Finally, the very fact that in Latin America, the CPA curricula are designed mainly on the basis of the literature that suffers from the above outlined biases makes education in this field even less relevant.

My purpose in this chapter is to engage in a dialogue with colleagues from America and Europe about alternative ways of teaching CPA. I do not intend to discredit the classical methods of teaching these courses nor hope to radically alter its contents. My only aspiration is that teaching CPA ceases to be, exclusively, (1) a story about the evolution of the schools and approaches that have marked the history of this field; (2)

an analysis of "foreign" cases without a real comparative intent; or (3) the exercise of explaining analytical frameworks and models of alleged universal application.

Many years ago, I had the opportunity to participate in a research project in which the comparative method was used, precisely, for the purposes of finding generalizable answers to various research questions on public administration capable of transcending geographical boundaries and historical time.⁴ According to Ilchman (1984), five questions have been the central concern of scholars involved in the study of comparative administration and although other questions may come to mind, they could -according to the author- also be incorporated into some of the proposed ones:

1. What accounts for the variable political power of public organizations between and within political units?
2. What explains the variable productivity of public organizations between and within political units?
3. How can be explained the variable systems of authority and organizational forms existing between and within public organizations and among political units?
4. What explains the variable role congruence between public officials?
5. What explains the maintenance and adaptation of public organizations to its environment, and its contribution to the maintenance and adaptation of the broader system?

These questions formed a matrix in which, the dependent variable of a given question could be used (except in the fifth question) as a source of variance of another question. According to the author, this set of questions would tackle and encompass the vast majority of subjects susceptible of comparative analysis in public administration. In his scheme, the variables implicit in the five questions may become independent or dependent, according to the case considered, thus closing an analytical scheme presumably capable of formulating a series of consequential propositions practically universal in scope, of the type "If A \rightarrow B", i.e. the variance of any of the variables can be explained by any of the others. For instance the greater the power of a bureaucracy, the smaller its productivity.

The original intention of this conceptual framework was to carry out a research project aimed at finding some general laws or typical patterns of relationship among the five variables, irrespective of historical or contextual considerations which, at best, could function as intervening variables. With these assurances, Ilchman, associated with Todd La Porte, started a study with a team of research assistants who conducted a thorough reading of all kinds of books and articles which, without foreknowledge, and judging by their titles and their contents, could contain, implicitly, theoretical propositions that linked any pairs of the five variables. Such propositions had to be inferred through the reading and analysis of these various texts. Analysis of the information obtained in this way would consist in making systematic comparisons among cases, situations or processes in which consequential propositions of the same nature (for example, the more decentralization as a form of organization, the less accountability as a pattern of behavior) had been developed, in order to identify possible similar patterns of relationship and thus reach generalizations with a greater scope and level of abstraction.⁵

The book never saw the light. This was probably due to the fact that the methodological approach, however imaginative may have been, was unable to link the inferences made from such heterogeneous material or, even less so to identify generalized

⁴ The project was directed by Warren F. Ilchman and Todd La Porte at the University of California, Berkeley, between 1967 and 1969. I participated as a research assistant, while completing my doctorate in political science.

⁵ The results of the project were expected to be published under the title "Comparative Organization" in the McGraw-Hill Comparative Politics collection, expanding in this way the series that the publisher had been disseminating with recognized success.

patterns. From a broader perspective, I, would argue that comparative analysis cannot progress (if theoretical generalization means progress) using this type of approaches.

Towards broader approaches to CPA

To compare in public administration is not limited to learn about the organization and functioning of other bureaucracies. It encompasses many other aspects of the internal dynamics of the state organizations, as well as its links with civil society, the market and the international domain. In my personal experience, I have found that comparison, in public administration, can be fruitfully addressed from at least four different perspectives, analyzing (1) what factors or circumstances converged to explain processes of state formation and institution building which followed different historical patterns; (2) what variables explained the process of formulation and implementation of public policies, the adoption of alternative courses of action in the face of similar social problems; the achievement of different outputs, impacts and outcomes; or the degree of success or failure reached by a project or an organization, among other relevant questions; (3) what organizational arrangements, systems of authority, institutional formats, frameworks, resource management models or administrative behavior patterns may explain, comparatively, higher levels of efficiency, effectiveness or performance; and (4) what strategies of state reform are tried by various governments to produce substantial changes in the role of their institutions, in the scope of their intervention, in their organizational structures or in their systems and management processes.

We can easily see that this multiple perspective goes way beyond the usual approaches of comparative statics. The first set of questions refers to the processes of formation of state bureaucracies and institutional construction in general. The second observes governmental organizations in action, through the processes of solving social issues included in the state's agenda (Oszlak and O'Donnell, 1976). The third one examines the organization of bureaucracy through the study of its structures and processes. And the fourth one focuses on the analysis of strategies and mechanisms for transforming the institutional apparatus of the state. Thus, these approaches recreate a dynamics which, in a way, reproduces the "life cycle" of public administration: birth, structuring, operating and reform.

Based on my experience with these various kinds of studies, the remaining of this chapter will be devoted to an examination of several research projects in which I was personally involved. The purpose is to highlight the usually difficult decisions that researchers and consultants must confront when dealing with cases in which a comparative approach is required. I strongly believe that an account of the intricacies and dilemmas that so often must be faced in this type of projects constitutes a useful source of knowledge for teaching courses on CPA.

State formation and institution-building

As a first illustration, let us consider a possible strategy to address the comparative, historical study of processes of state formation. Several compilations collect studies on this subject conducted in different national contexts, like the well known book by Charles Tilly (1975) on the process of state formation in Europe. Usually, editors introduce a chapter trying to compare the different cases, but in general the result is not truly comparative.⁶

⁶ At the beginning of the 1980s, with the support of the Ford Foundation, I designed the conceptual framework and promoted the organization of a research project on state formation in the five countries of Central America. The project was coordinated by Edelberto Torres Rivas at ICAP, the Central American Institute of Public Administration. As a result, five books were published, reflecting the historical experience of state formation in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. But it cannot be affirmed that the project was really comparative, since there was no further systematic comparison among the five cases.

Many research techniques may be used to study processes of state formation. For example, as I did in my research on the formation of the Argentine state (Oszlak, 1982), through the reconstruction of personnel censuses and statistical series of budget executions, during a critical historical period. Estimates were based on the figures contained in the annual memoirs of the Argentine Finance Ministry. It was interesting to compare annual budgetary expenses with the figures voted by Congress for any given period, to establish the degree in which executions departed from the anticipated budget calculations. Analyzing the differences between the approved budget for particular items of expenses and those actually spent, an "index of unpredictability" was built, showing very significant variations according to the years considered. But an analysis of these differences, in terms of the dichotomy "expenses for law and order" and "expenses for social and economic progress", showed that between 1862 and 1880 -a period of wars and uprisings of local *caudillos* against the national government-, spending for "order" largely exceeded budget forecasts, while the trend was totally reversed in the following decade, when spending on "progress" was virtually unforeseeable, exceeding several times the approved budget.⁷ Statistics helped to confirm the assumptions made regarding the historical evolution of the profile and the role of the Argentine national state. The use of this type of research techniques as part of CPA course materials may prove a valuable instrument to stimulate the interest of students in comparative analysis and in the use of techniques that help reveal historical trends at a higher level of abstraction.

But other questions could also be formulated. For example, what factors explain the fact that, even though most Latin American nations were born within a very short period of the 19th century, after waging a common struggle for independence, their historical trajectories followed quite different courses. Probably the answers to the following set of questions may explain, to a greater or lesser extent, these different patterns of historical development.

What is the relationship, for example, between the historical moment at which national independence is achieved and the relative development reached by the capitalist system? It was not the same for a new nation to gain political sovereignty at the beginning of the 19th century, as it was the case with almost all Latin American countries, than to achieve it after the Second World War, as it occurred with the majority of African countries. The same applies to the experiences of European countries born as nations during the second half of the 19th century (Germany, Italy) as compared to those other older ones (England, Belgium, Netherlands) in which capitalism was developed earlier.

The density and distribution of the population at the time of independence may be another important variable to explain differences in terms of availability of labour force for the development of capitalist relations or the emergence of production and consumption markets within the national territory. In much of Latin America independence took place in almost unpopulated countries and a geographical area comparatively much larger than the average European countries.

The colonial legacy could be explored as another relevant variable to explain their differential impact on the culture and institutions of the new nations after independence. For example, the inertial effects of the British tradition on the bureaucratic organization of India were probably much stronger than those of Spanish dominance over, for example, the Philippines. It is likely that the remains of the colonial organization were much higher the longer the period of imperial dominance. Thus, for example, it could be hypothesized that the impact of colonial organization in Latin America was more important in those countries where the viceroalties were created earlier, as is the case

⁷ "Order and progress" were the main driving forces of capitalist development along the second half of the 19th century. Most government expenditures were allocated to either stabilize the social and infrastructural conditions for facilitating the advancement of capitalism ("order") or to promote policies that would articulate the economic production function ("progress").

with Mexico, New Granada (e.g. Colombia) and Peru, than in the Río de la Plata (Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay), where the viceroyalty was short lived.

On the other hand, there were nations whose economic activity benefited from the differential impact of immigration, which supplied the labour force required by emerging capitalist systems rapidly integrated to European markets. In addition, European immigrants brought with them their cultural and ideological background and their associational tradition, which had a very significant weight in the development of political parties and trade unions. In turn, this type of immigration could certainly have had decisive consequences on the working-class struggles and on the process of formulation and implementation of labour and social policies.

Cardoso and Faletto (1968) have identified as another relevant variable for responding to our initial question, the extent to which new nations' main exported commodities were produced by enclaves dominated by foreign capital, or, on the contrary, ownership of the land and the factors of production were in the hands of, or were controlled by, a local bourgeoisie. Therefore, the conditions that configured production and distribution markets, and the possibilities of appropriation and socialization of the economic surplus, had - according to these authors- a very different weight in the process of economic development and in the formation and consolidation of a local bourgeoisie.

Finally, to understand the varied paths followed by the countries of the region after independence, it may also be considered the relative weight of ethnic, linguistic and religious factors that, in each national experience, favoured or hampered the social integration process; triggered struggles in defence of ancestral rights (such as those of indigenous peoples) or explain variable degrees of secularization due, for example, to the different impact of the Catholic Church and its traditions on local institutions and culture. To illustrate this point, the influence of the Church upon education differed strongly in Mexico, Costa Rica or Uruguay.

The preceding hypotheses and propositions do not arise from a serious research on the processes of state formation in Latin America. Simply, they were suggested as an illustration of the type of questions that a course on CPA may raise on this issue, as a way of awakening in students, concern with questions relevant to the design of a comparative research project.

Comparing public policies

The comparative analysis of public policies, on the other hand, should not be reduced to comparisons of similar policies, as for example, social security systems applied in different countries. Hirschman (1968) has made an excellent comparative analysis of state policies in Latin America with regard to three totally different issues: the Chilean inflation, the Colombian agrarian reform and the fight against the drought in North Eastern Brazil. A common element to all three cases is the fact that the analyses encompasses very lengthy periods, along which these issues gave rise to different technical solutions and the creation of highly heterogeneous institutions to solve them. What Hirschman actually tries in that study, and does so brilliantly in a comparative chapter, is to identify which state management styles can be identified along those processes and to what extent it is possible to generalize a pattern of decision-making, characteristic of Latin American governments. Hence, it was not a matter of analyzing how a similar problem is solved in different contexts, but to detect modes of reasoning for addressing and trying to solve public policy problems.

Let me now provide a few illustrations on possible approaches to compare organizational performance. In a study conducted in 1967, I compared the historical behaviour of the cost of tax collection over a century, by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. A rustic indicator, resulting from dividing the annual budget of this agency by the total revenue obtained during the same period, provided a time series showing that

between 1865 and 1965, the cost to raise \$100 had been reduced from 3,92 dollars to 0.45 cents.

However, the series showed strong variations throughout the period, a true tendentially downward zigzag. The question, which had in fact inspired the research, was what factors explain variations in the efficiency of the IRS over time? Of course, the reconstruction of the historical series only provided empirical evidence of changes, but not the explanation of their causes. A parallel investigation was required to find out the multiple transformations occurred during this extensive period, such as legislative changes (e.g. creation of the income tax); innovations in collection techniques (e.g., introduction of tax withholding at the source of income); significant contextual events (e.g. the two world wars, the great depression of 1929); the developments in computerized data processing; the assumption of new roles by the IRS (e.g., production of statistics, international technical assistance) and a content analysis of Congressional hearings in which the Commissioner of Internal Revenue tried to justify his budgetary estimates before the legislators.

A systematic comparison of the variations in the annual cost-revenue index, in the light of those events and institutional transformations, provided a quite satisfactory explanation of the historical dynamics that so dramatically reduced the costs of collection. At the same time, the analysis helped explaining why, given the fundamental impact of the use of computers in the processes of collection, the cost-revenue index remained relatively stable in the last years of the series and even may explain why the "floor" already reached in 1945, has been maintained practically unchanged until the present.

From a didactic point of view, the exposition of this case study begins with a display of the historical series, showing the substantial reduction in the costs of revenue collection over the 100-year period. Then, students are asked to analyze the shape of the curve, its peaks and valleys and its final tendency to stabilize. At this point, they receive a written summary of the events and institutional changes during the period, for them to formulate hypotheses about the relationship between the mass of information received and the shape of the cost-revenue curve. Small working groups may be formed in order to arrive at separate reports. The activity culminates with a collective discussion, in which the teacher provides his detailed knowledge of the case, filling the gaps that the students' reports may have failed to consider.

Comparing organizational structures

The comparative analysis of bureaucratic organizations admits numerous objects of study, as well as a multiplicity of approaches. A common research topic is the comparative examination of civil service systems--a subject that also lends itself to different forms of approach. A couple of cases may illustrate two different research strategies to study this subject.

In the first case, I was part of a research team -the Comparative Civil Service Systems Research Consortium," based at Indiana University-, which carried out studies on civil service systems in various countries and several continents, within a common framework developed by the program. To make it truly comparative, the research directors requested the contributing authors to employ a detailed protocol,⁸ in which the subject index was minutely specified, indicating the topics that each case should contain and, even the maximum extension to be devoted to each theme, so as to standardize the extension of every chapter. In this way the project directors expected that the comparative analysis of the different cases would be facilitated, given that all of them had to organize their analysis using the same script. As a matter of fact, they did not even have to undertake this job since, together with the protocol, the authors were

⁸ I am referring to the *Protocol for Comparative Studies of National Civil Service Systems* (hereafter, *the Protocol*), suggested by the Consortium to the authors. See Oszlak (1999).

instructed to establish to what extent did their studies fit any of the civil service types described in any of two typologies, respectively developed by Ferrel Heady and Henry Morgan. In other words, once the authors finished the analysis of their individual case studies, they had to place them in the cells of Heady's matrix or in Morgan's conceptual map, implicitly considering both models as genuine theoretical paradigms.

To tell the truth, the exercise constituted a conceptual and methodological nonsense, and a good example of the fallacies in which it may be incurred when attempting to exert such a strict control of a process of comparative research.⁹ In particular, the condition imposed on authors not only to observe a strict protocol, but also to find out in which cells of predefined models they had to locate their respective cases.

The following tables synthesize the models proposed by Heady and Morgan:

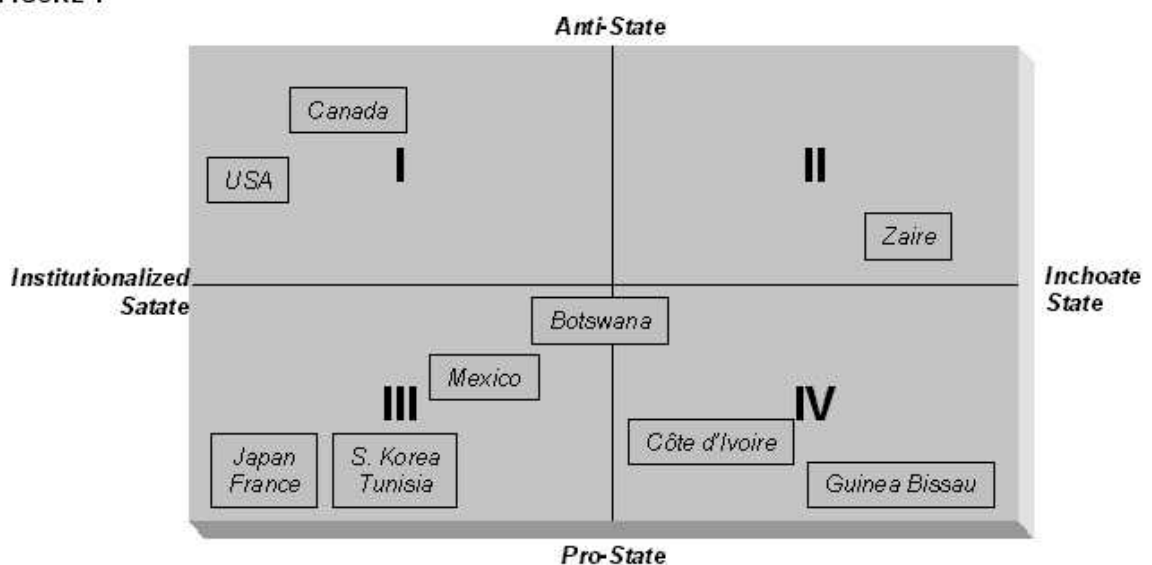
CONFIGURATION OF FERREL HEADY

CONFIGURATIONS OF CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEMS

Variables	Ruler Trustworthy	Party Controlled	Policy Receptive	Collaborative
Relation to political regime	Ruler responsive	Single party or majority party responsive	Majority party responsive	Military responsive
Socio-economic context	Traditional	Corporatist or planned centrally	Pluralist competitive or mixed	Corporatist or planned centrally
Focus for personnel management	Chief executive or ministry-by-ministry	Chief executive or ministry-by-ministry	Independent agency or divided	Chief executive or ministry-by-ministry
Qualification requirements	Patrimony	Party loyalty or party patronage	Professional performance	Bureaucratic determination
Sense of mission	Compliance or guidance	Compliance or cooperation	Policy or constitutional responsiveness	Cooperation or guidance
Examples	Saudi Arabia Iran Brunei	China Cuba Egypt	France Great Britain United States	South Korea Indonesia Ghana

CONFIGURATIONS OF PHILIP MORGAN

FIGURE 1



⁹ The following critique was included in my paper on the Argentine case and raised in an oral presentation at the Conference on Civil Service Systems held at the University of Indiana.

FIGURE 2

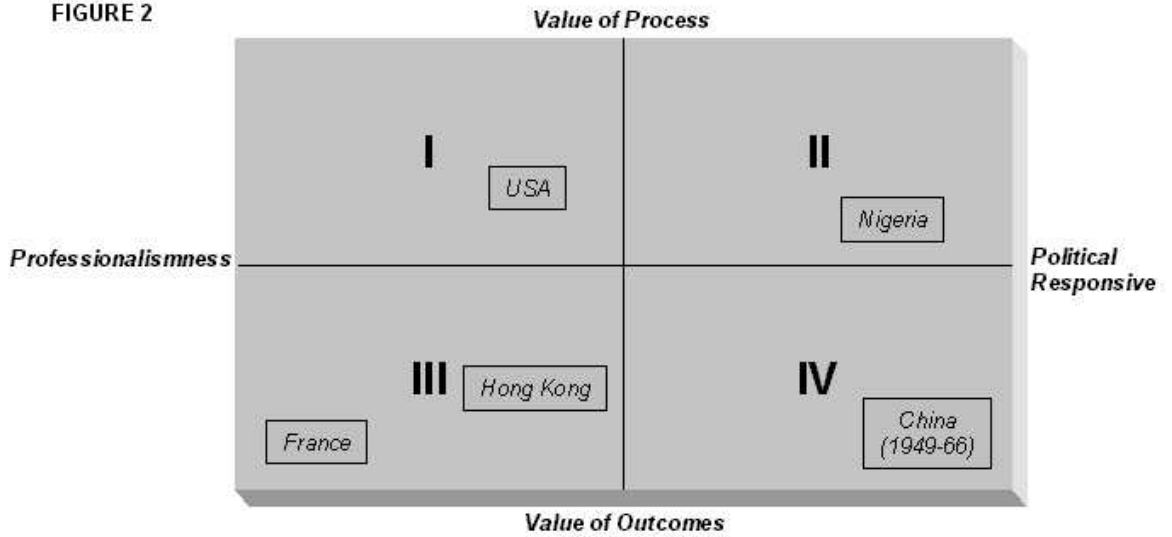
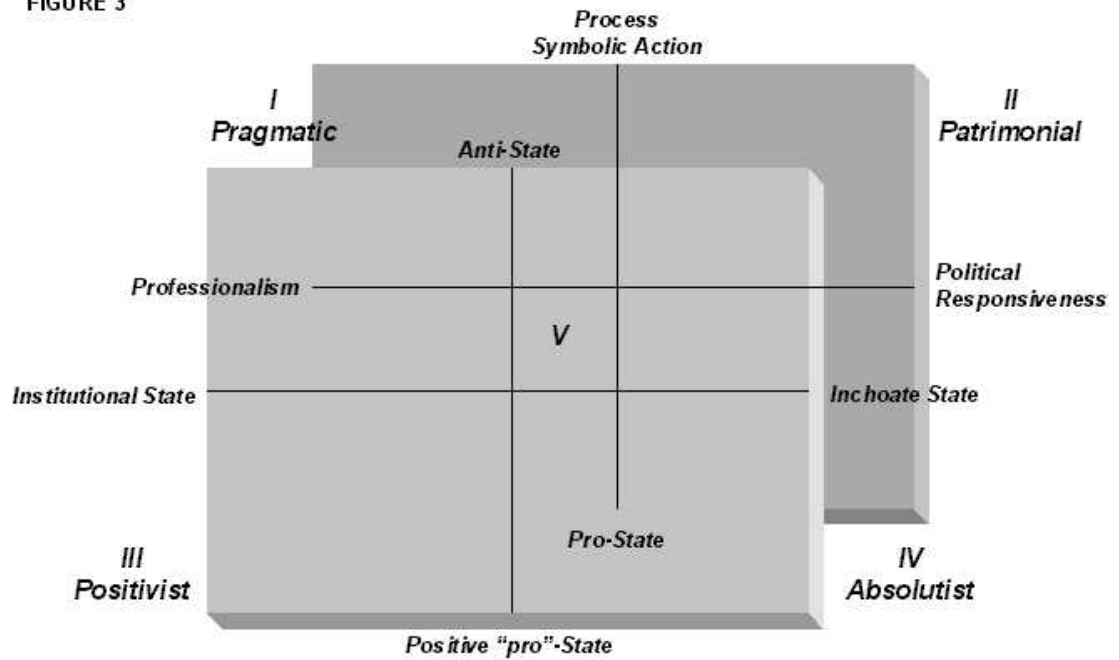


FIGURE 3



Heady's configuration is an interesting attempt at theory building, but the resulting analytic framework raises a number of doubts. One relates to a problem of covariance: several variables have a high probability of appearing in the same configuration because they may be mutually determining or strongly correlated. For example, in a democratic system (or in a poliarchy) there will probably be a majority party; the sociopolitical context will obviously be competitive; and civil servants will be responsive and will observe the constitution or the policies enforced. These features simply characterize a democratic system, just as the other configurations feature other political regimes.

To substantiate this point it may be observed that the only descriptive elements which are strictly applicable to the civil service (as opposed to its overall context) -such as "focus for personnel management" or "sense of mission"- are never tied to a unique pattern; the different values that these variables may present suggest that other dimensions, such as existing technological or cultural patterns, may be playing a more determining role upon the observed phenomenon than those related to the nature of the political regime--the obvious dominant referent in all configurations.

Another weakness of this approach is that most of the topics addressed by the protocol -internal labor market, representativeness, politicization, public opinion, reform and diffusion- were not recalled as variables in the proposed configuration analysis. One would expect that after examining the various features of a CSS in a given case, these same elements would fall into a particular pattern that could then be compared with other patterns or fit into more encompassing models. Instead, Heady and Morgan choose other dimensions or parameters which may, of course, be valid as academic exercises, but not for the holistic characterization suggested by the protocol.

I would also observe that Heady's configurations do not belong to the same level of analysis. To call a configuration "party controlled" implies that an external agent (let us say, a single or widely dominant political party) has absolute control upon the organization and functioning of the civil service, whereas to say "collaborative" alludes to a kind of attitude or behavior of civil servants with regard to their masters. In the first case, the defining element of the configuration is external to the civil service; in the second one, it is an attribute of the civil service itself. But even more questionable is the attempt to embrace, as a configuration, the constitutive features of a complex social system (i.e., its political system, its socioeconomic characteristics or a large portion of its institutional apparatus and internal dynamics) with reference to a single attribute ("collaborative", "policy receptive"), no matter how diffused it may be.

Something similar occurs with Morgan's configurations -which the author prefers to call "fields"- resulting from the overlapping of different analytic dimensions and forming a sort of map.¹⁰ The fields do not seem to be mutually exclusive or adequately descriptive of the reality they intend to characterize, either in their denomination, level of analysis chosen or historical connotation. As in the case of Heady's configurations, they incur into the same type of simplification as they attempt to capture in an exhaustive way, and presumably through universal categories, the diversity of configurations that may be found in reality. For instance, patrimonialism could well be associated with absolutism; positivism and pragmatism may not fall within opposing fields.

Another subject deserving a more careful examination is the fact that in both, the configurations and the fields, a series of attributes of the civil service are inferred (i.e. recruitment and compensation systems) without having been considered either in Heady's variables or in Morgan's parameters. This conceptual "elasticity" does not appear to be justified.

When one finally arrives at his four quadrants, Morgan leaves us with an unfinished business: the fifth residual category, "to be explored further," which ultimately indicates that the variety may be much greater (the central point in the map would synthesize all possible options) and, above all, that the quadrants tend to describe the extreme or "pure" cases, rather than those currently found in reality.

In my opinion, however, some of the parameters and polar situations chosen may be scarcely relevant or highly questionable, as in the case of pro- vs. anti-state feelings, since state, as a category, was almost absent in the Anglo-Saxon literature and still has

¹⁰ As a matter of fact, Morgan's approach is not very different from Heady's: their main differences are (1) the type of analytic dimensions that attract their respective interest; and (2) the way they represent the selected variables or continua: in one case, an expanded matrix; in the other, a multidimensional map.

little meaning at the social level, at least in the United States. Another example is the level of institutionalization of the nation state. The United States, highly ranked under this parameter, is not a good example of a fully integrated nation-state and there are authors who consider the U.S.A. as an extreme case of a country that has never become a true nation-state.

The level of independence of the civil service is a parameter that has an obvious relationship with the characteristics of the political regime (as it is also the case in Heady's configuration). And with respect to the degree of tension between process and outcome, it is debatable to place the United States as a clear example of a system emphasizing process over outcomes. If not for anything else, the USA has been quite active in overcoming this tension by promoting a new paradigm of state reform (and hence, of civil service reform) that emphasizes the need to move from process to output in public management.

I use this case in my CPA courses as an educational material to highlight errors and fallacies that may be incurred when one intends to design a comparative research project. The lesson to be extracted is that to pigeonhole cases within the framework of a conceptual model may turn out to force reality so as to conveniently fit into a supposed theory.

In another case on the same subject, I was responsible for a comparative research on the existing civil service systems in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (Oszlak, 2002). The study, commissioned by the IDB, was based on a very comprehensive questionnaire aimed at gathering data about the different aspects covered by a civil service system. Questionnaires were sent to a total of 26 countries, whereas 19 answers were obtained..

As in the previous case, the problem of comparison laid in the possibility of obtaining uniform data, the only way to gain control over the analyzed variables that could become the subject to comparison. Therefore, I decided to design a closed questionnaire, with multiple options for the various components of a SSC, including the possibility of adding, if necessary, open answers with comments or additional clarifications.

Since the study was carried out just at the beginning of this century, it was considered convenient to retrieve information on the processes of state reform that had taken place in almost all countries of the region during the 1990s. The questionnaire included, among others, questions regarding the magnitude and composition of the civil service, their degree of unity or fragmentation, the nature of the existing legal systems, the modalities of management of organizational structures and posts, the management of human resources, including recruitment, hiring and stability of employment, the number of political appointees, the degree of unamovability of the public servants, their promotion systems, horizontal mobility schemes, systems of personnel evaluation and training, labor conditions, and the structure and composition of salaries.

With regard to the components of the civil service systems, heads of the agencies in charge of the subject in each country were asked about the existing policies and mechanisms on each of the above mentioned themes. But instead of posing open-ended questions requiring long answers that, almost certainly, would discourage respondents, they were faced with multiple choice answers such as the following:

Human resource administration

Human resource management covers the set of activities that govern the relations between the public administration and its staff during the careers of public employees. Therefore, it includes selection and entry, development, promotion, training, remuneration, retirement, rights and duties. It is generally formalized in statutes or

personnel systems, complemented by a series of rules and regulations that rank lower in legal category.

This part of the questionnaire also highlights the regimes applicable to political appointees or confidential employees, owing to their importance in some countries and to the 'politicization' this can entail, and to the impact on team continuity and public policies.

General profile of public servants

- 1 What is the average age and distribution by age group of public servants on each level of government?

Group	National govt.	Prov./state govt.	Municipal govt.	TOTAL
Under 20				
From 21 to 35				
From 36 to 50				
From 50 to 65				
Over 65				
TOTAL				

Comments:

(...)

Statistical and quantitative aspects

The magnitude and distribution of public personnel allows, among other things, to compare the relative size of the public sector in the various jurisdictions in which the public administration is divided within the country, as well as its relationship with the economically active population. Besides obtaining these data, this first section of the questionnaire attempts to know the distribution of personnel by sectors or areas of state activity, as an estimated indicator of the role of the state vis a vis society.

(....)

- Q. 11 ¿What is the average permanence of political appointees in their positions (including cabinet officials, advisors, general directors, department chiefs, etc.). In case there are Studies on the subject, please indicate in Observations the source on which the data are based. Otherwise, provide your opinion based on other judgments (i.e., experience, third party judgments, public opinión) adding any clarification in Observations.

- Less than 1 year
 Between 1 to 2 years
 More than 2 years

Observations:

- Q. 12 Indicate the systems used in your country for contracting personnel not included in the administrative career, that is, those agents that lack the possibility to

acquire stability in employment. Also indicate how the total of public employees is distributed among the various systems of contracting personnel.

	% daily laborers
	% contracted according to the legislation of the private sector
	% contracted for a fix term with a non permanent status.
	% contracted through contracts with International organizations.
	%
	%

In other words, designing the questionnaires required a previous knowledge of how the different career systems function in the real world. On the basis of typologies and classifications thereof, the questionnaires asked respondents to indicate the applicable choice, given the particular characteristics of their own systems. This previous knowledge of policies, models or systems which are possibly applied to every component of a SSC, allowed respondents to locate their particular case within the potential universe, leaving open the possibility to describe a different one, not considered in this universe or to specify the response through clarifications or ad-hoc explanations. This procedure greatly reduced the effort to fill out a questionnaire of over 100 questions and facilitated the subsequent comparative analysis of responses, since the options alluded to very precise descriptions of variants of each policy, system or procedure.

The result of this comparative research was a fairly comprehensive diagnosis of the organization and functioning of SSCs of the region, as well as of their institutional capacity deficit. Comparisons among systems provided, for the first time, a clear picture of the variety of existing situations with regard to relevant variables, such as the proportion of public personnel vis-à-vis the economically active population, the rate of personnel turnover, their distribution in terms of sex, age, educational level and years of service. Also, it was possible to find out which were the most common systems used for the incorporation and selection of personnel, the evaluation of their performance, the composition of their salaries, the methods of education and training, among others. Particular attention was given to the existence and size of personnel working under special systems, like "critical posts", political appointments and the like. Similarly, it was possible to assess the gap between formal legislation and effective implementation of the SSC in the different countries.

This type of studies is quite representative of the kind of knowledge a researcher or a high level civil servant should receive during his/her university training, in order to produce diagnoses or make decisions related to the management support systems of a bureaucratic organization, as it is the case of a considerable proportion of students in a CPA course.

Comparing organizational performance

Sometimes, the comparison may include internal processes of a given public agency as well as its relations with the relevant environment. Its level of performance may be explained both by causes related to the internal organizational dynamics and to contextual variables. An interesting case arose when the President of a National Institute of Industrial Technology (INTI) wanted to determine what were the explanatory factors of the success or failure of the research centers for technological development which depended of the Institute (Oszlak, 1984). Given the time and resources available, two cases of successful performance and two failed experiences were selected for investigation.

We decided to examine the technological problems of two sectors of the Argentine industry through the analysis of the network of interactions between enterprises

demanding new technological developments and the institutes that supplied technological inputs, in the light of the structural characteristics of each sector and the framework of public policies relevant for these sectors. The implicit objective was to find out what happens when the public sector -whether associated or not with the private sector- decides to provide research, development and technological services in a particular field of industry; under what conditions it succeeds in articulating its efforts with a productive sector; and what lessons can be derived in terms of alternative strategies for action in view of the level of performance achieved.

This entailed a double and parallel task: on the one hand, to explore the evolution of each of the industrial sectors studied, focusing the analysis on those factors and circumstances which imposed a particular profile to the technological problems of the respective sector; and on the other hand, studying the centres' strategy of organizational development, taking into account the structural conditions of the productive sectors within which they operated. Even though the study focused especially on the problems involved in the articulation of the centres with their operational environment, considerable attention was also paid to the characteristics of the organization and functioning of INTI's system of research and development centres to which they belonged.

The selection of the sectors and centres was not fortuitous. Among the criteria that decided the choice I should mention: (a) the relative degree of success or failure of the centres, provisionally assessed according to the views of key informants; (b) the particular characteristics of the products and technologies employed; (c) the degree of concentration of the industries and the presence of foreign capital in the different sectors; (d) the existence of technological dependence; (e) the variable combination of promoters that jointly created the centres with INTI; ((f) the location and span of influence of the centres in regional terms, and g) the possibilities of access to information.

It was not too difficult to determine which of the two dozen centres belonging to the institution were successful and which ones had frustrated the expectations of their creation. Neither a survey nor a thorough investigation was needed; It took only a few interviews with key informants to select the cases. As a result of the application of the criteria just mentioned, CICELPA and CITEF were selected as successful case studies. These sectors were quite different both, in terms of their organizational-functional aspects and in their clientele. In a way, the comparative analysis of these cases offered the possibility to characterize the field of action of research and development institutes which venture into productive sectors that offer favourable prospects for a relatively autonomous technological development.

The research focused more on the institutional aspects of the problems of incorporating technology in the productive process than on the economic ones. The main interest was to understand the reasons, identify the mechanisms and highlight some of the restrictions that operate in the process of articulation between the state, the demanders and the suppliers of technology in certain industries. It was not our purpose to quantify or assess the costs and benefits derived from the promotion, production or incorporation of technological innovations, despite occasional references to this subject.

The project studied carefully and separately the pulp & paper and the canning industries, in those aspects which, presumably, determined or influenced the incorporation and/or domestic development of technologies in these industries. Thus, attention was given to such aspects as degree of economic concentration and integration of the production process, geographical distribution, local supply of equipment and inputs, characteristics of the market, degree of diversification of output, costs of production, competitive advantages at the international level and participation in investment of state and foreign capital. We also analyzed, in each industrial sector, the framework of public policies within which the productive activity took place and their

possible repercussions both on the technological profile of the industry and on the technological decisions of enterprises and research and development institutes.

After characterizing the operational environment of each centre, we examined its articulation with the respective productive sectors and its linkages with the rest of the state apparatus, especially the central unit of INTI. This entailed establishing the participation of the different promoters in the management of its centre, the internal or external origin of the goals, targets and priorities, the source, magnitude and modalities for allocating financial and material resources, the promotional activities carried out in each case, the features of the respective clientele and the relationship between the formal regulatory framework and work plans actually implemented. Through this approach it was possible to reconstruct the process of generation, transfer and incorporation of technologies, with particular reference to the specific structural context of the organizational units and actors involved, and to the possibilities of overcoming its constraints.

Finally, we made a comparative analysis of the experience of the two industrial sectors, trying to identify similarities, differences and combinations of circumstances that could explain the relatively successful articulation between the government, the demanders and the suppliers of technology in the two sectors. At this point, we examined the strategies of technological decision making at the enterprises and R&D institutes, in the light of the structural and regulatory constraints that operated in each sector. The premise was that the propensity of demanders and suppliers of technology to articulate their activities depended, primarily, on the technological profile of the respective industrial sector, resulting in turn from the structural characteristics of the branch and the positive or negative sign of the balance of public policies impinging upon their economic activity. We also tried to interpret other cases in which the supply and demand of technologies was weak or non-existent.

From the point of view of teaching CPA, the reading and analysis of the report that documented the results of this research was found useful for students to learn how the examination and systematic comparison of concrete cases may lead to rethinking the premises, assumptions and propositions underlying research in the scientific-technological field. Macro-systemic interpretations may not provide sufficient clues to understand the complexity of the process whereby technological developments are successfully incorporated into industrial productive activities. Very often, these policies have been implicitly based on a simple linear vision of the processes of innovation and, therefore, have found answers to all the problems of technological development in the establishment of R&D institutions which, given their weak linkages with their clienteles, ended up as simple additions to the huge volume of scientific and technical resources alienated from productive activities. Hence, the importance of establishing under what circumstances these R&D institutions can be successfully inserted into their operational contexts.

The specification of the operational context of an R&D Institute means to establish what factors determine the disposition of other actors to interact with it, as well as the intensity and nature of the interactions maintained. It also requires turning those actors into the central object of analysis. In this way the context loses the diffuse and undifferentiated character with which it is usually reflected in studies investigating the bureaucracy-environment interface.

Comparisons against a standard value

The performance of a public organization may be evaluated not only in terms of the magnitude and impacts of its output but also observing its relative efficiency in the allocation of its inputs. Sometimes, it is possible to employ standards that serve to fix a reference against which organizational performance in the process of converting inputs into outputs can be compared. In general, it is not easy to estimate desirable standard-values, especially when public management is involved and "output" may not me

amenable to be measured in physical terms. One may agree that 32-24-32 could be a standard of feminine beauty or that a 65 m.p.h. speed is acceptable in certain highways. But it is not easy to find equivalent values in the fields of procurement, personnel administration or maintenance.

Since this is a typical problem that probably any professional specialized in public administration must deal with, I usually employ a case study in which a group of consultants developed a sophisticated methodology to determine whether a public organization suffers from what I have once called an "excess-lack syndrome," a usual problem that requires right-sizing of its labor force (Oszlak, 1972).

The study was commissioned by the World Bank, which was interested in finding out whether the staff of administrative personnel employed in the ministries of education of four different Argentine provinces was oversized or just adequate. Without any further methodological or technical specification, the terms of reference required the consultants to develop a "contrast model" against which to compare the situation found in each case in terms of size and composition of personnel. As a matter of fact, there was a double possibility of comparison. On the one hand, to contrast a theoretical model of the optimal size and distribution of personnel against the values found empirically. On the other hand, to contrast the results of the four provinces in terms of their relative distance with respect to the desirable values stipulated in the model.

To build the "model": (1) all management support processes, from daily control of absenteeism to procurement, from assessment of personnel performance to promotion and dissemination of information, were classified, making sure that every single support function was duly considered; (2) in each of the identified management processes (46 in total) we identified the sequence of tasks required to complete each single process (i.e., making a purchase, maintaining an equipment); (3) we determined and classified the personnel profiles needed to perform each task for each management process; (4) we estimated the "normal" time required to perform each task as well as its frequency, according to the profile of the staff involved; (5) we multiplied the time required by each task by its annual frequency, for different profiles of staff. Each of the processes was validated by the personnel who acted as technical counterparts, in each of the analyzed provinces

Aggregate results allowed an estimation of the total time required to carry out, in an annual period, all of the administrative support functions of educational management, classified in terms of months-persons for each type of profile. Separately, the ministerial personnel were classified with the same functional categories of level and specialty used for the "contrast model", so as to determine the number of months-persons annually devoted to deliver each kind of specialized tasks. Then, by comparing these figures with those estimated according to the "model", the differences obtained indicated the probable "excesses" or "defects" for each type of staff profile. As it was expected, excesses of human resources were found in most managerial processes, especially in lower level, non specialized tasks, while some shortages were observed in planning, information and control functions.

A second comparison, among the values found in the four analyzed provinces, helped to establish a sort of "ranking" of inefficiency among them. The result of comparing personnel excesses and shortages ranged from 11% to 35% net excess according to the process and province considered.

In general, students of my CPA courses appreciate the knowledge gained in the application of this type of techniques, since unlike North American or European graduate students, most of them already work in the public sector during their training and thus they are advised about the potential instrumental use of these tools.

Final remarks

In his Preface to *Crownwell*, Victor Hugo wrote: “when the body changes, how could the coat not change?”. Hence, in a world that changes at an increasing speed, comparative public administration cannot remain aloof of new issues, new phenomena, new challenges to decision makers. Problems of governance are getting more complex, rendering the role of administrative knowledge and skills much more demanding. “The global context, the information revolution, and democratization trends in many parts of the world are reshaping public organizations as tools of governance in modern society” (Jreisat, 2005). Therefore, there is a growing need to learn about how public management can be improved, how can we make a better use of our information, how can we innovate in the design of organizational structures.

There is a growing need to broaden the CPA field beyond particularistic cases, to learn from the application of successful administrative technologies and to find out under what conditions may those experiences be adapted or transplanted into different contexts. Unfortunately, CPA in the north-western part of the world is still too parochial, while in the “remaining” three-quarters of the world, it has not yet attained a relevant place in the academic disciplines dealing with public administration.

Teaching CPA in Latin America suffers from both, the ethnocentric biases of the large body of literature originating in the developed world and the scarce number of studies that are truly relevant for a comparative understanding the contextual and historical specificity of public administration issues in our region. This paper has tried to highlight both types of weaknesses and to illustrate about the utilization of certain methodological approaches and case studies that may prove useful for initiating a North-South dialogue about ways to break the still narrow confines of comparative research in this field.

Bibliography

Aberbach, J. D., and B. A. Rockman. (1988). "Problems of Cross-National Comparison." In **Public Administration in Developed Democracies: A Comparative Study**, ed. D. C. Rowat. New York: Marcel Dekker, 419,440.

Baker, Randall (1994), **Comparative Public Management: Putting U.S. Public Policy and Implementation in Context**. Greenwood Publishing Group

Cardoso, Fernando H. and Faletto, Enzo (1969). **Dependência y Desarrollo em América Latina**. Buenos Auireas, Siglo XXI Editores.

Dahl, Robert A. 1947. "The Science of Public Administration: three problems." Public Administration Review 7:1,11.

Farazmand, Alí F. (1996). “Development and Comparative Public Administration: past, present and future”. **Public Administration Quarterly**, Vol. 20, No. 3 (FALL, 1996), pp. 343-364

Gant , George F. (2006), *The Concept of Development Administration*, in Eric E. Otenyo, Nancy S. Lind (ed.) **Comparative Public Administration: Research in Public Policy Analysis and Management**, Volume 15), Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp.257-285

Heady, Ferrel (1998). **Public Administration: a comparative perspective**. New York: Marcel Dekker.

Hirschman, Albert O. (1968). **Journeys towards Progress**. New York, Twentieth Century Fund.

Ilichman, Warren F. (1984). "Administración Pública Comparativa y el 'Sentido Común Académico'", in Oscar Oszlak. **Teoría de la Burocracia Estatal: Enfoques Críticos**. Buenos Aires, Paidós, pp 54-120.

Jreisat, Jamil (2005) "Comparative Public Administration is Back, Prudently", **Public Administration Review**. Number 2, March 2005, pp. 231-242(12)

Nef, Jorge and Dwivedi, O.P. (1981) "Development Theory and Administration: a fence around an empty lot". **Indian Journal of Public Administration** 27(1), 42-66.

Oszlak, Oscar and O'Donnell, Guillermo (1976). **Estado y Políticas Estatales en América Latina**. CEDES G.E. CLACSO, Buenos Aires.

Oszlak, Oscar (1972). **Diagnóstico de la Administración Pública Uruguaya**. United Nations. New York.

Oszlak, Oscar (1982), **La Formación del Estado Argentino**. Buenos Aires, Editorial de Belgrano.

Oszlak, Oscar (1984). **El INTI y el Desarrollo Tecnológico en la Industria Argentina**. Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Industrial. 1984: Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Oszlak, Oscar (1999). "The Argentine Civil Service: An Unfinished Search for Identity." James L. Perry (ed.), **Research in Public Administration** (Stamford, CT: JAI Press, 1999), pp. 267-326.

Oszlak, Oscar (2002) "Sistemas de Servicio Civil en América Latina y el Caribe: situación actual y desafíos pendientes". **Revista de Servicio Civil**. No. 13, San José, Costa Rica.

Otenyo, Eric E. and Lind, Nancy S. (ed.) **Comparative Public Administration (Research in Public Policy Analysis and Management, Volume 15)**, Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Peters, Guy, (1999); **La política de la Burocracia**, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Riggs, F. W. 1991. "Public Administration: A Comparativist Framework." **Public Administration Review** 51(6)

Schaffer Bernard (1978) "Administrative Legacies and Links in the Post-Colonial State: Preparation, Training and Administrative Reform." **Development and Change** 9(2): 175-200.

Tilly, Charles (1975). **The Formation of National States in Western Europe**. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

van Wart, M., and N. J. Cayer. (1990). "Comparative Public Administration: Defunct, Dispersed, or Redefined?" **Public Administration Review** 50:238,248.

Wilson, Woodrow (1887). "The Study of Administration, **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Jun., 1887), pp. 197-222.