“Directive function in Latin America: Components to establish a professional system”

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Introduction

Speaking about professionalization tendencies of worldwide public function, one of the most relevant or important issues is the design of a professionalization system or career for senior public managers or public managers\(^1\); also called professional management function, through professionalization systems known as senior civil services\(^2\) (SCS). In the context of public administration backed up by solid civil services or public functions\(^3\) which have considered that their employees –managers– require specific abilities or competences and special treatment so that said object of study becomes an important element to strengthen organizations and base their success on the quality of their direction (Brosnahan, 2000). Moreover, we dare say, nowadays this issue should be part of every public administration’s agenda that aspires to be modern.

Manuel Villoria and Eloisa del Pino in their book “Human Resources’ Direction and Management in Public Administrations” (2009) share with us a relevant piece of information concerning the countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) based on a report from this organization entitled “The state of public service” (2008). They

\(^1\) Throughout the text we will be using the following terms without distinction: directive function, high bureaucracy, high directive function or senior civil services. The terms that refer to indistinct persons will be: public managers, high public managers, public managers, senior managers, senior civil servants or senior public servants, senior officers, senior executive officers, high government employees; in three chapters bureaucrats appears as an equivalent word.

\(^2\) Senior refers to a higher rank by virtue of duty. The term does not apply in countries like Spain or France which prefer using the equivalent to senior government employees, high public function or haut function publique; countries like Germany or Austria use “peak/summit of civil servants” (Spitzanbeamte).

\(^3\) Civil service or public function is an employment system in which people enter public administration on their own merits and on equal opportunities (OCDE, 2008: 16).
state that “Almost every country of the OECD has a professionalized management system, those below average are Turkey, Japan, Slovak Republic, Iceland and Italy—despite all attempts—, Germany, Ireland and in last place: Spain”. We would add to this that Mexico is below this last place because it does not even have laws or regulations regarding this matter; few attempts have been made by publishing the Professional Career Service Law for Public Federal Administration in 2003.

As Ferrel Heady (1996) asserts, in recent decades directive function has been provided with political and administrative tools and implements—in countries with political stability and developed bureaucracy—; this has lead them to be known as “The Western Mandarians”, they do not substitute administrative staff belonging to the civil service or politics, they are employees located between them. They are essentially policy makers that at the same time try to conciliate the two aforementioned areas of staff. To define these services or SCS more precisely: “vertically it is a mediating institution between appointed politicians and members of the civil service, and horizontally it is a mediator among different ministries, departments or agencies (OECD, 2008)”. Additionally, some international organizations have commented on directive function, OECD (1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2008), World Bank (2003), Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) (2003), Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD) (2003) which have pointed out the need to strengthen the directive ability of organizations through special systems or similar plans. Speaking of theoretical basis, the idea of improving organizations’ directive ability and train public managers is theoretically backed by New Public Management which try to redefine traditional administrative work and propose, among other ideas, public managers as factors of change. From this point, we have to understand that there is no managerial ability where activity is, fundamentally, the mere impersonal implementation of rules and faithful observance of established procedures (Longo, 2006:70). Thus, hierarchical attribution does not mean real empowerment to exercise.

4 There is vast literature on this subject. Some of them point to New Public Management, an emerging proposal in the 1970’s and 1980’s with solid roots in organizational and political economics theory, resulting from the problems Traditional Public Administration poses. New Public Management according to the Public Management Committee of the OECD represents a “new public management paradigm...aimed at promoting a culture that focuses on a less centralized public sector” (Mathiasen, 1998). New Public Management is meant to improve the actions of its government and its managers. New Public Management entails emphasizing management over policies; organizing the government in groups of agencies and departments and not in traditional and hierarchized pyramids; adopting decision making strategies to achieve results and improve quality; cutting costs rather than creating new ones, having greater flexibility; improving efficiency in the provision of public services; promoting competence in these areas and among public sector organizations (Keraudren and Mierlo, 1998: 41-42).
managerial functions (Brosnahan, 2000). In this sense, we can talk about public employees’ "management rights" as precedent of the establishment of public direction.

It is worth mentioning that the professional management function issue is not only interested in designing laws, which could be an immediate solution or proposal for Latin American countries, which have a predominantly legalistic culture. This issue also has to do with identifying and strengthening management abilities and competences and creating adequate environments to make people be able to direct their organizations in a better way, improve their performance and decrease their levels of improvisation and corruption. The results have been obvious in the countries that have been mentioned earlier, which already have professionalization systems for public managers.

The following question arises: where is Latin America in this process? Chile is the most outstanding example, as well as other legislations (Colombia, Dominican Republic, Brazil) that mention this subject; however, professional management function is rarely mentioned. Professionalization of Latin American public administrations does not show signs of consolidation in most countries, so professional management function issues are even more distant.

In fact, a new debate arises –which would be part of identifying the problem–, why should we create a public management professionalization service if the civil service has not been consolidated? It would be important to mention that this formula does not have to be followed, we could even consider two assumptions: do it simultaneously or have the first promote the second one.

Nevertheless, we have to work on this issue for the next couple of years, set up possible components to establish a professional management function system; which is this paper’s main purpose. This paper is divided into three sections: 1) Conceptual and theoretical approaches to management function; 2) Ideal models of management function; 3) Components to establish a professional management function system; 4) Conclusions.

1) Management function: conceptual and theoretical approaches.

The issue of management function or public management forces us to mention some studies, the most important ones were carried out in the 20th century: classic schools of management function with the following authors, Henri Fayol, 1916 (1961), Harry Hopt, 1933 (1961), Paul Holden 1941 (1968), Luther Gulick, 1936 (1987), as well as Harwood Merrill and Elizabeth Marting, 1952 (1959) which associate management function with management cycle. All of them share common elements such as
Prediction, Planning, Organization, Direction, Coordination, Motivation, Information, Control, etc. It is obvious that the subject does not end here. On the contrary, it presents a series of findings that go beyond management functions and that are related to abilities, capacities, affective components, informal aspects, interpersonal relationships, time devoted to working in the office and time spent away from it, etc. What we want to know is: Public managers, who are they? What do they really do? Where can we find them?

In relation to the aforementioned elements, there are few studies that have gone beyond what is strictly linked to management. Thus, like the first paragraph, we have to mention classic studies: Stewart (1988), Likert (1961), Sayles (1964), Kotter (1983) and specially Mintzberg (1983, 1996, 2002, 2005) which developed his study in both the private and the public areas, like Laufer and Burlud (1989). Or studies that focus on some specific public functions like the ones developed by Price Waterhouse Coopers (1998) or OECD (1999). In Latin America, Kliksberg’s (1983) works stand out. Specifically, in Mexico Monsato (1986), Cabrero (1995) and Hartasánchez’ (2002) works are important.

Thus, the combination of both visions—management and additional elements—gives birth to the following definitions: “Directing is not a mere element of management; it has to do with multiple talents such as integrity, intuition, ability to inspire others, deep sense of self, courage to innovate and quick and infallible discernment. Direction means unbreakable spirit, visionary spirit and a real affection for the people being directed” (Brosnahan, 2000). “Direction is mobilizing people to deal with problematic realities, face and solve them” (Heifetz, 1994) or “the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers” (Gardner, 1990). As we can see, this subject opens up a series of possibilities to understand and face an issue of this nature.

1.2 Where do we place public managers from an organizational point of view?

Firstly, we would have to make some preliminary considerations concerning organizational aspects. In every bureaucratic organization issues related to work division, functional hierarchy divided into positions that develop various roles, work procedures, written communication, level of expertise of members with adequate salary; all of these elements operate as a whole, “apparently” rationally harmonized through routines, processes and rule compliance to achieve the organization’s different goals (Weber, 1979). All of this in a framework template or descriptive model which responds to “the logic of the adequate” (Peters, 2003).
This is more or less the formal philosophy that has inspired most western bureaucracies or public administrations. To that end, one of the main issues is the way jobs are distributed based on functional hierarchy and the level or percentage that corresponds to different staff areas. On this particular point, we agree with Guy Peters (1995:90) who asserts: “The controversy of political designation or designation based on merits –to mention some main examples– is a matter of degree”. Virtually, every political system knows that certain designations are clearly political –frequently, “policy elaboration” positions– and they also have job positions that are routinely filled through merits system. So, the problem is to know how high up the administrative hierarchy designations may be made on merit or at least not openly political, or where the limits of political designations lie. This is the heart of the matter.”

However, if we had to have a simple diagram to show the way a bureaucratic structure is organized, it would be the following:

**Diagram 1. Traditional Bureaucratic Structure**

![Diagram 1. Traditional Bureaucratic Structure](image)

Developed by the author.

Nonetheless, it is well-known that this traditional outline has a lot of subdivisions, a sophisticated classification of job positions; they can be very diverse and even be unique based on specific characteristics of bureaucratic structures. Besides the staff categories mentioned earlier.

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5 It is worth noting that modern emergence of bureaucratic organizations is not random; it is the result of specific economic and social budgets which have emerged in a determined historical moment: development of monetary economics, quantitative development of specific social base, especially State and mass parties, quantitative development of administrative activities, technical superiority over any other form of organization (because it is cheaper, faster, more objective and has predictable results), concentration of material instruments in the hands of the *dominus* and leveling of economic and social differences of the subjects (Weber, 1979: 709).
in the pyramid, we have to mention other types of personnel, staff that performs consultancy functions, people hired for professional services, etc. (Dussauge, 2008).

The risk of using this simple diagram –based on what happens in most bureaucracies that use it– is that political positions are usually filled through political designation; administrative positions (if a civil service exists) are frequently filled through contests/competitions or merits system. In the lower part of the pyramid –operatives– several mechanisms exist, sometime these positions are owned by unions and other times they are filled through designation or merits.

It is worth mentioning that this diagram has been undergone several analysis and questions concerning existing coordination among these areas of personnel, their level of communication and roles that each of the persons that occupy these positions develop, level of contribution to achieve different organization goals and objectives.

For example, speaking of roles, according to Longo (2002), we first have politicians, people who assume and exercise government responsibilities in public administrative institutions. In second place, managers form the middle part, which informs politicians about the operation of specific pieces of management performance. This part is a heterogeneous range of categories of public employees or public servants. Lastly, operative personnel which some authors like Lipsky (1980) call Street-Level-Bureaucracy, mostly personnel who works at government-attending windows and are represented by unions which develop representation and personnel advocacy tasks in the work sphere. Each one of these actors –regardless of their archetypical description– responds to different logics of interest and their performance varies according to different existing

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6 i.e. for political appointments or designations it is worth looking at the United States where a series of rules that perfectly design the limits between personnel types and avoid interference. Firstly, the proportion of political appointments of civil servants is much reduced; they are not usually part of the civil career service when their term ends. Secondly, it is transparent and clear for both political parties that after every change, political appointments can be removed. Thirdly, Congress is in charge of gathering a list of possible appointments for the entire presidential term (called the Plum Book). Fourthly, many political appointments have been ratified by the Senate. In this process, Presidents try to appoint people with relevant credentials. As the White House explained in an official interview, political appointments are filtered and classified before they are sent to the President for appointment. Consequently, the merits of the candidates end up being extremely serious, even though there is not a formal competition. Finally, political appointments do not interfere with the appointment of senior civil servants, who are named through merits systems or competitive process (OECD, 2008).
contexts. Thus, in some cases there is greater proclivity to cooperate among actors.

Nonetheless, the most frequent debate has to do with the classic politics-management dichotomy (Weber, 1979; Wilson, 1887; Goodnow, 1900; Suleiman, 1984). What happens when both parts cannot establish an adequate dialog? How does this affect the bureaucratic system’s performance? How do we find an adequate balance between both parts? Politicians versus professional managers? Politics versus public administration? What happens when the politicians sphere dominates the professional sphere or vice versa?  

It is worth mentioning that these so-called dysfunctions were uncovered by multiple diagnoses to Weber’s traditional management model, signs of exhaustion which lead to suggestions to move towards a range of possible options of change. Among the alternatives to solve this politics-management dichotomy is the one to create a communications vessel or “hinge” between politics and management which falls on management function or the role of public managers to give them polyvalent function exercise throughout the administration; in the interest of their qualities as negotiators and coordinators of other actors besides the ones in the bureaucratic structure and at an inter-ministry level to keep the administration’s operation dynamic. Of course, they would be in charge of handling a lot of the political-administrative problems, acting as liasons, which a single power or ministry could not solve. Thus, public managers would need to have huge strategic leadership qualities (to make things work) to solve different problems and citizen demands; thus, their role would be fundamental in public administrations’ transformation process.

As a result, if we go back to the bureaucratic philosophy we have been working with in this paper, we would have to highlight the public manager’s category the following way:

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7 For the last couple of years, there has been an ongoing debate with multiple visions that seek to find an adequate balance or warn about the risks of bureaucracies that run amok or are hostages to the party systems or classifying bureaucracies based on their ties with the characteristics of political systems. See works by Jacoby, Henry (1973) *The bureaucratization of the world*. Ed. University of California Press, Berkeley, California; Rowat, Donald (1988) *Public Administrations in Developed Democracies*. Ed. Marcel Dekker, New York, USA; Peters Guy (1995) *The Politics of the Bureaucracy*. Ed. Logmann, USA; LaPalombara, Joseph (1963) *Bureaucracy and Political Development*. Ed. Princeton University, USA; Riggs, Fred W. (1970) *Frontiers of Development Administrations*. Ed. Duke, University Press, USA, and Morstein, Fritz (1957) *The Administrative State*. Ed. Chicago University USA
Along these lines, speaking of management function regulation, the 2005 Commission Report of the Basic Statute of Public Employees in Spain (2005: 64) considers that the aforementioned regulation has different connotations in diverse countries based on their traditions or their evolution. Most of them have stumbled upon problems, mostly because it not only means implementing a public management model that contrasts with deeply-rooted bureaucratic customs, but also creating a new professional group that is inserted into the political direction and top civil service career; precisely in that vague and never well-defined space in which politics and management separate and converge.

This argument which focuses on the attention given to management function as a specific object of study, which has been materialized in different ways: creating specific regulations, selection or training processes. It is maintained that these current arises from need, traditional civil service systems have expressed their inability to produce the required managerial profiles and promote proper managerial practice. Thus, public management professionalization has become priority to reformers and has forced the concentration of specific functions of human resource management in the upper area of civil service systems (Longo, 2004:203).

Said selection of posts has demanded the implementation of specific basic rules that have led to a full blown differentiation of civil service career. Surely, this tendency has involved the differentiation of public managers and civil service careers; as seen below:
Table 1. Managerial function. Is it differentiated?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>YES/NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland/Netherlands</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This leads to a certain definition or term of its own of this segment of staff, as seen below:

**Tabla 2. Some countries’ definition of senior civil servants (countries belonging to OECD).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Main definition</th>
<th>Is SCS defined?</th>
<th>Creation date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Senior Civil Servant (Spitzenbeamte-peak/summit of civil servants)</td>
<td>Organizational levels/ Salary groups</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Senior Executive Service</td>
<td>Salary group/ Organizational levels</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>High public employees (Haut fonctionnaires)</td>
<td>Organizational levels</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Executive group</td>
<td>Scales</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Public Function</td>
<td>Organizational Levels</td>
<td>Selection of Cooperative Members</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>High public function</td>
<td>Organizational levels</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Senior Executive Service</td>
<td>Salary group</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1) Executive frame (Cadres dirigeants)/ High frames (Cadres superieurs) 2) Altos Funcionarios (Haut fonctionnaires)</td>
<td>Organizational levels and selection of cooperative members</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Dirigenza (1st and 2nd executive levels)</td>
<td>Organizational levels</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Senior Civil Service (Algemene Bestuursdienst)</td>
<td>Civil Service Scale/ Organizational levels</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Senior Service Executive</td>
<td>Organizational levels</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Senior Civil Service</td>
<td>Salary group</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In reference to the size of this structure, the number can vary according to the magnitude of existing civil services; however, according to studies made by OECD (1999:19) the percentage does not go beyond 2% in relation to civil service staff. The number of civil senior services may vary from country to country based on their diversity and size. Smaller countries have less than one thousand senior civil servants (Belgium, New Zealand and the Netherlands); bigger countries have over 2,000 (Australia, Canada, France, Italy and the United Kingdom). However, there are great exceptions like the United States, which has approximately 7,000 of these servants (OCDE, 2008: 7). The same thing happens with levels or limits of public managers’ careers which set boundaries between the latter and politicians. Of course this varies from country to country.8

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8 On this subject, we recommend the reading of the study by Matheson, Alex, Boris Weber, Nick Manning and Emmanuelle Arnould (2007) *Study on the political involvement in senior staffing and on the delineation of responsibilities between ministers and senior civil servants*. Ed. OCDE, Paris. Page 16. This study deals with the situation of 12 countries: Belgium, Denmark, Korea, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, United Kingdom, Sweden, France, United States and South Africa; explaining the levels of public managers careers or senior systems.
Thus, if a career for public managers had to be defined, OECD (1999:9) would say that it is a structure and a recognized management system for high non-political positions (for public management functions) in government. It is a civil service system which trains managers to perform functions ad hoc. It is a service that is mainly carried out through appropriate institutions and processes to promote stability and professionalism for this senior management group, with the necessary flexibility in government composition.

We must highlight the following elements of the definition given above (OECD, 2008):

- **Highest government positions:** The positions filled by the senior civil service are hierarchically the highest (in central departments or agencies), usually located just below political appointments done through non-competitive procedures. The number of levels senior civil service includes depends on the definition used by the country. The highest government positions can be defined through a specific range of positions (general secretaries or general managers), establishing a personnel degree or scale attributable to the person and the position or salary group.

- **Competitive appointments:** An open appointment means that there is an adequate notification for internal and external candidates, based on merits, abilities, experience, and candidate performance.

- **Institutions and adequate processes for human resources management:** Appointments, removals, promotions, performance evaluation, wages, etc. are determined by processes which include “power balance” mechanisms. This balance is necessary to ensure open competition and avoid political interference. In some cases, there is a commission which makes the appointments within the department, evaluating and classifying candidates. This work can be verified by an independent body or the independent body can organize the appointment process itself or a part of it. In these examples, institutions and procedures provide real competition for recruitment. In other countries, the candidate is selected merely because of a vacant higher position. In these cases, competence criteria is usually canceled in practice; i.e. they pretend to describe the profile of the position to publish it in the official journal for a potential pre-selection of the candidate, they even publish the job position before. There is not a universal definition of adequate human resources’ management institutions and processes; institutions have specific contexts.

- **Functions:** Senior civil servants can carry out one or more essential functions: i) political consultancy: analyzing and informing ministers about political contents, usually without including the opinion of political parties, which is the job of consultants or political appointees;
ii) operational efficiency: managing resources to achieve expected results in programs and services; iii) efficiency in corporate services: management of financial, staff, technology and infrastructure resources.

- **Formal separation of a specific group:** Separation means that the staff belonging to the senior civil service has different rules and plans from the rest of the civil service. Those different plans could be: salary structure, hiring, appointment, performance and evaluation agreements, power balance system, etc.

- **Flexibility and respect for processes:** Flexibility may need to homogenize competitive processes in appointment so as to have an appropriate relationship between senior civil servants and the minister (or political appointees). They could be joined by adequate processes, i.e., when ministers have the chance to accept or reject an appointee from an autonomous commission or when they accept an independent evaluation in case of inadequate or unreliable performance, they can remove a senior civil servant. In these cases, process to avoid political arbitrariness should be respected.

- **Centralized Direction:** senior civil servants must be centralized or monitored to prevent political interference which presents itself at individual ministry level; especially in promotion, decrease and salaries based on performance.

In this sense, the Ibero-American Charter for the Public Service (2004) asserts: “public managers are those jobs or directions immediately subordinated to the political level of the governments, in charge of directing, under a strategic orientation, structure and processes through which public policies are implemented and public services are produced and provided. It is a differentiated function of politics and public policy professionals that make up ordinary public function. The adequate definition and consolidation of a professional public direction is basic to an adequate institutional design of contemporary public systems”.

Even though there have been breakthroughs, there are still institutional deficits and future study to carry out; this is an issue that is subject to deep revisions that will spur new discoveries. The Latin American case (Figueroa, 2002) is a very fértil field to explore these new lines of study.

2) Ideal models of management function.

A special element to differentiate professionalization systems of management function is the identification or certain types or models developed based on certain characteristics, despite the existence of a multiplicity of them that could be unique for every country. It is possible to talk about “Ideal models of management function”. A brief distinction of them is found below (Jiménez Ascencio, 2006):
a. Corporative Model or Closed management function

Also known as career or bureaucratic model. Characterized by being a closed management function model; that is, it lacks windows to the outside world. Its distinctive feature is that the management function is extracted from the organization itself; it is the public employees themselves who after a long period of performing public-employee-related functions and occupy management positions in the public sector as a kind of coronation of management function.

Thus, it is mainly characterized by a public servant who is recruited and selected in “foot branch” (lowest job position of each of the branches of service) to perform a specific career in public service, promotions and income are regulated by statute. There are several entry requirements predominantly related to academic merits. These systems are highly hierarchical concerning career development and their levels. The public servant that is part of the career system will have a permanent position, once he has proved or passed the trial period. Work conditions, payments, pensions and regulations related to all of these are decided by authorities and negotiated by unions. It is worth mentioning that management competitions are not formally defined, the selection follows career criteria and internal co-optation. Countries that are close to this model are France and England (before the Next Steps reform).

According to Jiménez Ascencio (2006: 39-40), the greatest inconvenient that this public management system has is that the appointment of a public employee as public manager is a type of continuity of the management career (thus can mean an occupation of managerial levels by management and directive logics) and that, usually, their performance is given for life, a circumstance that given the guarantee of permanence, makes it unable to assess the extent to which public managers perform well their duties. Its greatest advantage is that public managers are picked up within the organization; as a result they know pretty well the context, the environment and their own limits.

b. Politization model or politics-occupation of managerial positions.

This is an open system, based on the principle that public employees are not hired for a specific career, but for a specific position. Managerial positions in the public sector can be filled by anyone, despite their abilities and origin. It is a model starts with the typical parameters of the spoil system; its primary meaning is that all jobs in the administration have to be provided by political confidence criteria concerning their performance, this meant no particular difficulties. Thus, appointments are carried out with absolute discretion. This politization model of managerial functions is characterized by the decisive element in the provision of positions that is political confidence up
to the point when the rest of criterion (professionalism, ability or merit) are purely adjectival.

This is a system currently in force in many countries, at least in issues such as occupation of high levels of public administration or very close to politics; although some Anglo-Saxon countries have banished it completely. The countries that still enforce it include almost all Latin American, Asian, and African countries, as well as Spain, as long as the published regulations of 2007 are not implemented.

In terms of advantages and disadvantages, Jiménez Ascencio (2006:44) himself states that there has always been a great advantage: flexibility in recruitment and dismissal as a result of huge discretion (absolute liberty) by the organ that designs and dismisses. The disadvantages are part of the process itself, that is, public managers that are recruited based exclusively on political confidence and without any kind of requirements (in some cases not even academic ones) of merit, ability and therefore people imbued in a strong “amateurism”, with a deep ignorance of the public sector they are part of. Likewise, a dependence on the public management mandate of the political cycle makes the managerial capital be constantly renewed and a source of experience and knowledge will be lost; an organization cannot function without this.

c. Managerial model or public management professional

This model arose as a result of the two previous models; the basic elements of this public management model are rooted in the Anglo-Saxon world. This model’s main characteristic is the identification of a managerial function in the public sector equipped with a series of professional features that make it unique before a strictly political activity and the traditional task of the professional bureaucracy (civil service). The fundamental feature of this managerial model is the discovery of a specific managerial function and that the adequate performance of said managerial functions requires strong doses of professionalism. Managerial experiences of certain Anglo-Saxon countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand promoted this managerial model that was later reconstituted based on New Public Management (Jiménez Ascencio, 2006: 46).

This model is the result of the development of efficiency and effectiveness ideas and values in the public sector. It has certain influence on the private sector and demands the characterization of managerial positions.

We have already mentioned that we start by recognizing that managerial function is an activity of professional nature which requires knowledge and a series of abilities concerning managerial tasks (different quantitatively and qualitatively from knowledge and abilities needed for functional performance). Thus, this area needs competences above all. There is a
public procedure of selection or designation based on the demonstration of possession of skills. On the other hand, once public managers have been selected, they have the power or their own delegates to direct the organization (staff, organization, budgets). The point is to let managers manage, programmed plans or contracts defined by the government (Villoria y Del Pino, 2009: 502). All of it in a framework of specific responsibility and accountability, with a system of rewards and punishments of its own, a certain temporality or defined term, but without dismisses made discretionally or with political interests.

According to Manuel Villoria y Eloisa del Pino (2009: 502-503) after analyzing the three models, it seems that the only one that responds to criteria of professional managerial function is the managerial model. The first one is professional but not managerial. The second one can be managerial but not professional; however, only the third one allows the articulation of professional management.

3). Components to implement a professionalization system for managerial function

The establishment of a professionalization system for managerial function considers the need to construct a series of components to design and implement it. From our perspective, said components have to focus on the following points:

a. Have the support of the highest level of executive and legislative authorities
b. Build the necessary institutional arrangements between politicians and managers.
c. Design a specific legislation to regulate it (professional guarantees, rights and duties) and a structure that takes charge.
d. Establish the implementation sphere to develop managerial function
e. Limit the number of job positions regarding managerial function.
f. Propose a professionalization model.
g. Create necessary institutional environments.
h. Promote a socialization process of the managerial function.

In the following section we will analyze each one of them.

a. Have the support of the highest level of executive and legislative authorities

This component mainly has to do with an essential element to achieve success in this kind of initiatives, the necessary “political will”. Comparative experience shows that initiatives to professionalize management function need the help of the highest levels and not just casually; the direction of this process is close to the presidency, said systems are managed mostly
by personnel offices or agencies which are directly related to the President or the Prime Minister. On the other hand, legislative powers (represented by political parties) participate in the drafting of laws and rules related to its operation, and without a doubt their intervention endorses its procedures and functions. From now on, we could assert that without this support a professional management function would not survive. Thus, this instances’ support is essential, because of the legitimacy they provide, as well as the promotion and importance they give this figure to strengthen public management and the political system as a whole.

The scenario described above brings about two relevant issues: firstly, that the management function issue is in the political-administrative agenda and hopefully also in the agenda of the parties; and at the same time legislative and administrative efforts work together to implement a better public policy in this matter, which is recognized and connected to previous collective efforts to improve the conditions of public servants in general.

b. Build the necessary institutional arrangements between politicians and managers.

In the words of Carles Ramió (2006): “the most problematic element of management space regulation in public administration is politics and its relationship with professional management. This is a classic subject of study in Political Sciences, Administrative Sciences and Administration Theory. Without a doubt, management is the most strategic part of public organizations because it has an indisputable and necessary political nature; in this circumstance it pivots democratic legitimacy and the connection of the administrative system and the political system. It is also true that in a more or less strategic point professional management appears and its connection to political management has its own language problems or priorities. On the other hand, the naiveté is evident in the wilsonian division which could clearly differentiate in public administrations the political dimension and the professional one. On the contrary, in our opinion, both dimensions are interrelated and mixed in real public management. But one thing is to recognize this interrelationship and another is to consider this political-professional space as a confusing magma where everything is mixed up and there are no rules and regulations. This interpretation tends to have ulterior motives and promotes the generation of an excessive politicization of administrative bodies. On the contrary, our position considers that despite the interrelationship between the political and the administrative dimension, it is necessary to regulate the space of each component not to separate –meaningless purpose– but to clarify game positions and rules to promote institutional performance of public administrations”.

Actually, a key issue to implement a professional public function is the clear establishment of game rules for politicians and managers. Precisely, as
Ramió (2006) asserts, the point is not to separate, but to clarify spaces and positions to combine efforts and develop public policies, among the most important thing. This component is essential, and it is mainly connected with role identification and levels of responsibility of both politicians and managers.

The definition of said positions and responsibilities or the necessary space each one of these actors should have requires a set of written rules and regulations, as well as unwritten ones which could be more related to the construction of agreements, codes and a system of values for both authors. Together, they not only explain limits of performance, but also denote a clear and precise communication of each of their responsibilities.

It is worth mentioning that in position identification and space construction, it seems that, at least in Latin American countries, there is greater clarity of what it is and what the role of the politician represents; although this does not happen with managers and public servants in general. Managers have a vague image, little recognized. This is mostly because of the lack of a professional system that backs it up; managers are mostly appointed by politicians –their bosses– which make them be identified as politicians themselves. On the contrary, professionalization measures should be implemented to contribute to an institutionalized professional managerial function, this should result in a more *primus inter pares* situation between politicians and managers instead of a subordination relationship of the latter in relation to the former.

It is important to note that this is without a doubt one of the most complex components of the implementation of this figure is the one Francisco Longo (2006: 65-66) mentions; despite having a great first approximation to public managers what and what for, it is important to mention that their outlines have not been achieved, neither practically nor theoretically, a degree of precision that facilitates a conceptual delimitation of the figure. Thus, the effort to measure the degree of real development and institutionalization becomes a purpose full of difficulties. This difficulties increase if we think of the complexity of institutional environments in which public managers are forced to take risks and be analyzed, or similarly, the diversity of factors that contribute to its development and consolidation. This makes its analysis and study more attractive.

A relevant issue in the study of institutional arrangements between politicians and managers is on the one hand, the analysis of manager evolution and their increasingly prominent place in public administrations; on the other hand, the relationships established between both actors. Thus, we can observe a management function as a collective of people which has greater autonomy in relation to the political class, based on the approach promoted by Goodsell (1994), Rohr (1986) and Friedrich...
Likewise, this is related to the relationships established between managers-politicians/politicians-managers through the analysis of different theoretical relationship models between both actors. To achieve this, the main theoretical basis can be found in the works of Joel Aberbach, Robert Putman and Bert Rockman (1981) *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies*; Guy Peters (1987) “Politicians and bureaucrats in the politics of policy making” in *Bureaucracy and Public Choice* by Jan-Erik Lane (coordinator), Poul Erik Mouritzen and James Svara (2002) *Leadership at the Apex Politicians and administrators in western local governments*. In fact, there is little literature concerning development and implementation in Latin American countries.

c. Design a specific legislation to regulate it (professional guarantees, rights and duties)

Specific legislations try to endorse the special treatment a figure such as professional management function requires. A legislation that stipulates a series of rights and duties for managers, which different types of personnel that make up bureaucracy will enjoy. Legislations that— as we pointed out in the first chapter— could be different to the ones that regulate civil service personnel or other kinds of personnel such as the operative one.

In Latin America two alternatives could be established, the first one includes having legislation and rules of their own for management function, or in their legislation’s framework make a distinction of management function. For example, as established in the Basic Statute of Public Employees in Spain in 2007.

In this sense, the fact is that having a specific legislation is associated to anticipating the existence of a body or organization responsible for its administration; with specific function characteristics to perform tasks. Call it a particular office that is responsible for the management of professional management function.

So, this would be the formal or normative part; however, we should mention that to promote a professional managerial function there is no need to have a specific legislation, like the cases mentioned earlier: Germany, Denmark and France, which do not have specific regulations; however, they have a strong focus and also recognize the importance of managers and their role in public policy elaboration and as agents of change.

The reality is that with or without legislations, the importance of professional managerial function currently forces us to focus on it, review and study it to further develop it.
d. Establish the implementation sphere to develop managerial function

This point refers to the implementation sphere for management function. This means considering different government orders, identifying within them if the professional managerial function institutionalization will only be for centralized public administration or also for public-sector administration. Or maybe like it has worked in other countries where it has not only been confined to ministries and departments, but has been implemented in agencies too.

The definition of the implementation sphere depends on current interests and the level of professionalization achieved by public administrations themselves. From our point of view, implementation of a professional managerial function in Latin America would have to be transversal in centralized and public-sector administration. Or we could think about a gradual construction, where centralized administration would be the first development scenario.

Likewise, the delimitation of the implementation sphere also gives us a hint of the level of centralization or decentralization that could be applied to this figure. Comparative experience tells us that the wider the range on organization selection, the greater decentralization is. At this point, we have to consider scenarios where an administration body will establish their own human resources management system under general guidelines. This pens up a world of possibilities.

e. Limit the number of job positions regarding managerial function.

Other countries have built their management function by limiting its job positions or they have designed it by taking into account different levels of managerial and political positions for its formation; in fact, the interest is to identify a structure’s series of levels or positions close to managerial profiles subject to professionalization.

In Mexico, the professional managerial function proposal included selecting two professional career service positions, in this case, General Manager and Deputy General Manager, and a political position called Unit Secretary. With these three positions, it is considered that a professionalization system for public managers could be initiated, taking into account that the vertical scale is not very wide. In contrast, for each selected position for professional managerial function, a commitment to horizontality, with differentiated salary increases based on a broad strip of levels.
f. Propose a professionalization model

The managerial function professionalization model is an employment system or career system or mixed system. This definition is essential, from thereon relevant processes have to be designed and spread; these processes include competition type (i.e. opened, closed or both), professional career (belonging to a closed service), performance evaluation model (competences is closer to positions or employment systems), performance contracts, performance connected to economic payments based on results, training types, use of information and communication technologies, among others.

g. Creating necessary institutional environments

Building a professional managerial function and expectations regarding having managers with different levels of performance, some of them could be identified with traditional managerial styles, not an easy task. Especially because this work is not only limited to the strengthening of managerial function through rules, human resources management tools, and the building of a managerial culture. The challenge goes further, it has to do with the alignment and development of external conditions to make managerial function more fertile and productive.

For example, we cannot ask managers to work on a results-based philosophy of their budget environment does not have that orientation. Likewise, we cannot ask managers to base their work on innovation if they are subject to traditional administrative controls which inhibit and do not encourage. In this sense, if managers do not build an incentive system, it would be absurd to demand greater results. All of this combined with a vindication of its position before politicians and society.

This component is probably the most complicated one up until now; the level of participation of other issues and actors is more elevated, complex and diverse. However, having a common idea as a base and a collective construction can be the means to achieve solid bases to ensure the existence of a professional managerial function.

h. Promote a socialization process of the managerial function

Socialization is also an essential element because there is a perceived lack of comprehension and knowledge concerning what professionalization of public servants is and what it represents, especially in managerial public function. If we assume that certain sectors of the political class in Latin America there is a clear ignorance and disinterest concerning the issue of professionalization what it is and what it represents in this sphere; clearly, we cannot expect more from citizens. In fact, if we do not know
what professional career service and professional managerial functions represent—and add citizen’s disdain and existing negative predisposition—it will be difficult to recognize their usefulness.

In this sense, it is necessary to know their usefulness in a democratic system and spread them through a “Network of allies” made up not only by governments and public administrations, but also by universities, professional schools, political parties, unions, civil society organizations, the media, among others.

As you can see, once these components have been mentioned, there are a lot of challenges that bring about multiple questions and lines of investigation which could be currently addressed; some of them have different levels of difficulty, it would take longer to address them, but they would yield material to develop individualized studies. However, we consider that the situation is appropriate to move forward; creating solid basis for a professional managerial function in Latin American countries.

Professional managerial function is one of the main topics of public administrations’ reform and modernization. The mere mention of the sentence is extremely attractive; obviously the most challenging part will be how to promote a philosophy of this nature among the institutional machinery of the country. This research intends to provide guidance so as to build necessary elements to move forward on this subject.

4) Conclusions

As we have seen, building components to establish a professional service for managerial function is not an easy and simple task. This venture has to combine normative and technical aspects as well as political and cultural elements.

In addition to this, it is worth mentioning a series of questions relating to institutional design that have to be answered to build a professionalization system for public managers in Latin America:

- What kind of public administration do we want? Based on this, what kind of public managers do we need to define?
- What do we need from public managers? What goals should be achieved?
- How inclined are the Latin American countries to produce public managers with the necessary skills? But above all, is the system prepared to retain necessary talent and develop it?
- Nowadays, are the people in charge of politics and administration sharing the same vision and values to promote a proposal to professionalize public managers?
- What is the perception politicians have on public managers?
Do our elected politicians really care about this professionalization topic? Are they really our allies?

Have enough arguments and evidences been built to convince and persuade others about the importance of public servants’ professionalization?

Are the role and importance of public managers present in the country’s political administrative culture?

Which are the obstacles and challenges that have to be brought down to establish a public manager career in Latin America?

How will the relationships between politicians and public servants be affected by the implementation of a career for senior public managers?

On the other hand, the human resources’ management perspective for public managers forces us to explore the following research lines:

- Selection process design for public managers.
- Formation processes elaboration for public managers.
- Review of performance evaluation systems for managerial function.
- Construction of a family of generic skills by area.
- Identification and/or creation of tools to measure managerial abilities.
- Development of personal and emotional skills for public managers.
- Definition of areas in charge of selecting public managers, as well as training centers and staff profile analysis responsible for management function.
- Checking of tabulators aligned with performance evaluation.
- Budget process analysis to make them result oriented.
- Review of competence systems for public managers.
- Registering and analyzing what other countries are doing in this area.
- Review of information technologies for managerial function management.

Professionalization system for senior public managers requires as well as civil service issues, important times and elements to shape it, so that it can be of interest in the area to be implemented. Additional elements such as normative and operation conditions analysis, in situ work, the adequate training of these managers and also politicians are the most relevant ones. Additionally, great support from the head of public administration includes negotiation development with different actors, as well as construction of networks that support the project; its horizons should not only include Public Administration, but other public powers and other levels of government.

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