

# Rethinking the concept and measurement of bureaucratic capacity

Celina Souza

UFBA

Flavio Fontanelli

FGV-EBAPE

International Conference on National Perspectives in a Global Economy:  
Rethinking State Capacities, Public Policies and the Brazilian Crisis

Rio de Janeiro, 7-9 November, 2016

# Objectives of the previous project (Bureaucratic Capacity in Brazil and Argentina: When Politics Matter)

- Analyze the process of bureaucratization and the construction of bureaucratic capacity in the federal governments of Brazil and Argentina.
- Measure the quality of the Brazilian bureaucracy in agencies in charge of four development policies (environment, infrastructure, industrial and innovation).
- Creation of an index of bureaucratic capacity in Brazil (Bureaucratic Quality Index- BQI).
- Capture and analyze the perceptions of bureaucratic and social actors in Argentina about the quality of their bureaucracy.

# Why study bureaucratic capacity and why compare Brazil and Argentina?

- The capacity of the bureaucracy is a predictor of what is likely to happen to public policies.
- Brazil and Argentina began their bureaucratization process at the same time (1930s) and their systems have been quite similar. After redemocratization they followed different paths regarding the selection of their civil servants.
  - **Why?**
- Literature: Weber; Bringing the state back in; Evans and Rausch (1999; 2000); Sockpol; Mann, Peters.
- Sources: Brazil: 19 agencies; 29,000 records. Argentina: 18 interviews.
- Data collected in 2013 and 2014, reflecting a political period in both countries when the same party ruled for over 12 years.

## BQI – Dimensions and Indicators

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
Recruitment	Proportion of civil servants with temporary contract
Recruitment	Proportion of civil servants requisitioned from other agencies
Qualification	Proportion of civil servants with a generalist qualification (EPPGGs)
Qualification	Proportion of expert civil servants
Internal promotion	Occupation of political appointments by career civil servants
Accountability	Proportion of civil servants dismissed after administrative processes

# Main findings

- **Brazil**

- Weberian and professional bureaucracy constituted in less than 20 years.
- Selection based on merit through competitive entrance exams.
- High BQI in all dimensions but when the index is broken down into policy areas and intra-agencies, one the characteristics of a professional bureaucracy, namely the existence of a stable career, is not as high as expected.
- Decision to professionalize the bureaucracy was taken by political actors as a result of redemocratization.

- **Argentina**

- Recruitment mostly based on personal and/or party connections but they do not lack the capability to design and implement policies in policies considered a priority by the administration.
- Lacks rules and procedures capable of reducing uncertainty and remains subject to electoral cycles.

# Main findings in comparative perspective

- **Brazil and Argentina**

- Late bureaucratization.
- Similar bureaucratic systems since the 1930s but interrupted later.
- Bureaucratic capacity is not distributed evenly.
- ***Why they followed different paths after redemocratization?***
  - Different redemocratization agendas.
  - The Brazilian elite sought to ensure the building of stronger democratic institutions via the constitution, within which a Weberian bureaucracy was inserted.
  - In Argentina redemocratization focused on an agenda of strengthening human rights and punishing their violations during the military regime.

# Concept and measurement of bureaucratic quality: a framework for discussion

- **State capacity:** broad and ambiguous concept, which involves several dimensions – political, institutional, legal, territorial, administrative and technical.
- **New avenues of research:** Sartori (1984; 1970), Collier (1995) and mainly Goertz (2006), i.e. to start an investigation by constructing a concept.
- **Goertz:** concepts are theories about the fundamental constitutive elements of a phenomenon, meaning the core characteristics of a phenomenon and their interrelationships.

# The framework

- *Multilevel* and *multidimensional* concepts with three levels, i.e. how components of one level are combined or structured to produce dimensions at the next higher level:

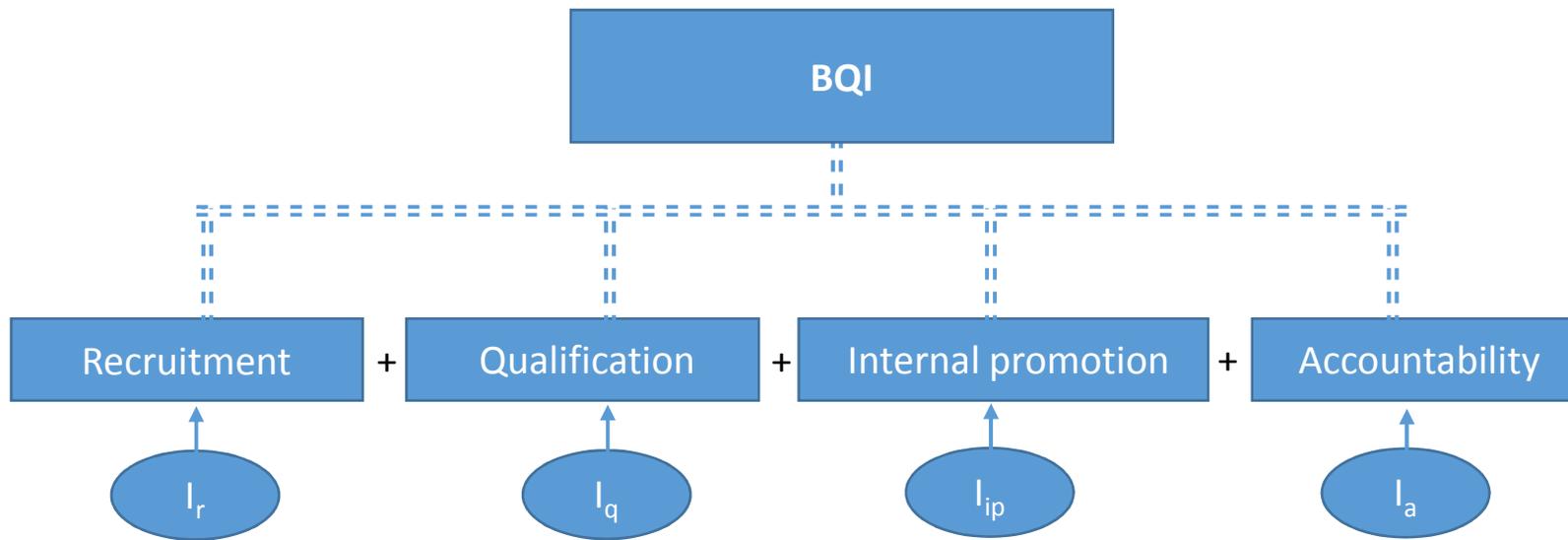
- 1. Basic level**
- 2. Secondary level**
- 3. Indicator/data levels**

- The basic and the secondary levels are the theory of the concept while the indicator/data level is the connection to measures and data collection.

# Basic level

- Bureaucratic quality can be conceptualized when different combinations of the following conditions are present:
  - ✓ Meritocratic recruitment;
  - ✓ Predictable, rewarding long-term careers;
  - ✓ Rules for hiring and firing that replace arbitrary dismissals;
  - ✓ The filling of senior positions through internal promotion;
  - ✓ Skilled professionals able at acting either as an expert or as a generalist;
  - ✓ Professionals free of external influences;
  - ✓ Control through administrative and legal rules (accountability).

# The Concept of Bureaucratic quality according to the structure suggested by Goertz (2006)



# Secondary and Data level

Dimension	Indicator	Calculation
Recruitment	IR1 Proportion of civil servants with temporary contract	Number of civil servants with temporary contracts / total number of civil employees admitted via examination
Recruitment	IR2 Proportion of civil servants requisitioned from other agencies	Number of civil servants requisitioned from other agencies / total number of civil servants hired through exams in the agency
Qualification	IF1 Proportion of civil servants with a generalist qualification (EPPGGs)	Number of generalists / total civil servants with college degrees
Qualification	IF2 Proportion of expert civil servants	Number of experts / total of civil servants with college degrees
Internal promotion	IP1 Occupation of political appointments by career civil servants	Number of career civil servants appointed to political appointed positions/ total number of positions available for nomination
Accountability	IA1 Proportion of civil servants dismissed after administrative processes	Number of civil servants dismissed / total number of staff

# Bureaucratic Quality Index: Results

<b>POLICY AREA</b>	<b>BQI</b>
Industrial	0.68
Innovation	0.66
Environmental	0.62
Infrastructure	0.59

# BQI by dimension

Dimension	Indicator	Weight	Environmental	Industrial	Infrastructure	Innovation
Recruitment	IR1	0.2	0.504	0.007	0.226	0.039
Recruitment	IR2	0.2	0.010	0.012	0.039	0.014
Qualification	IF1	0.2	0.011	0.018	0.007	0.005
Qualification	IF2	0.2	0.826	0.591	0.279	0.647
Internal Promotion	IP1	0.1	1.220	1.196	1.588	0.973
Accountability	IA1	0.1	0.018	0.010	0.004	0.000
		<b>IQB</b>	<b>0.624</b>	<b>0.677</b>	<b>0.590</b>	<b>0.66</b>

# Contributions

- **Theoretical:**

- Bureaucratic capacity is not evenly distributed among government agencies.
- Application of Goetz's (2006) three-level framework for analyzing a social phenomenon and a political institution, i.e. the bureaucracy and its quality.
- A substantive concept of bureaucratic quality was proposed (basic level of the three-level framework), which has been disaggregated to produce dimensions of the second level framework (secondary level) and the operationalization of the third level through data collection.
  - The three levels were combined giving support to one another.

- **Empirical:**

- The construction of the BQI constitutes a method that can be replicated in the analysis of other policies and/or policy sets.
- The application of Goetz's framework may overcome some of the shortcomings of the concept of state capacity.