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BOOK REVIEW: INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Emmendoerfer, M. L. (2019). Inovação e empreendedorismo no setor público. Brasília: ENAP. <http://repositorio.enap.gov.br/handle/1/4282>

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The book “Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the Public Sector” generates important contributions, specifically regarding the Brazilian context. The author, Magnus Emmendoerfer, began his research trajectory in 2000, on the subject of entrepreneurship. After joining the Federal University of Viçosa (Universidade Federal de Viçosa - UFV), his attention focused on public administration, an area in which he presides the Brazilian Society of Public Administration (Sociedade Brasileira de Administração Pública - SBAP) (2018-2020). Currently, Magnus Emmendoerfer is the leading professor in Brazil with publications and a perennial research agenda on Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the Public Sector. His studies have been developed at the Research Group on Management and Development of Creative Territories (Grupo de Pesquisa em Gestão e Desenvolvimento de Territórios Criativos - GDTeC) of the Administration and Public Policies Center, registered at National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico – CNPq), with headquarters at UFV.

Although mainstream research on the subject has its centrality based on the trajectory of Anglo-Saxon and European countries, the book demonstrates work that can provoke the debate about innovation and entrepreneurship in the public sector in the context of developing countries.

The book presents innovation as a method to stimulate changes in the approach to public service and entrepreneurship. It represents it as a process of introducing innovation in organizations and public policies and the work stands out when

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addressing the two themes in an articulated way. Therefore, it works as two inseparable concepts when applied to the logic of public service.

The main objective of this book is “to contribute to the understanding that innovation and entrepreneurship can both enable the improvement of public administration (...) as well as being part of the policies and plans for the improvement of public services and the quality of life” (Emmendoerfer, 2019, p. 9). The method used for the elucidation of ideas is suitable for the construction of understandings, particularly when the author proposes to present the topics in the form of questions, building an instigating dialogue with the reader.

Instigating is a properly placed adjective, especially when we recognize the author’s care in dissociating the idea of the relevance of innovative and entrepreneurial behaviors in public organizations (and in the public policies implemented by them) from political discourses brought by representatives of public administration’s managerial strands. Thus, it appears that the proposal is to demonstrate that institutional architecture can be innovative and entrepreneurial to provide citizens with faster and better-quality services. A New Public Administration is not proposed, perhaps due to the perception of the fragility of this concept. Instead, there is the perception that the improvement of works must accompany the development of technologies and society, with entrepreneurship as a means and / or purpose to the search for innovations in the public sector.

The work meets the proposed objectives and extrapolates them. The reading provides several insights and analyzes historical and conceptual issues that are sometimes treated as a background to the construction of reasoning. Sometimes they place, without express intention, proposals for models of analysis of projects and policies implemented by the State.

In addition, two points can be further developed. The first lies in the theoretical contribution provided by the book. The work presents a veiled effort to present categories of analysis for the various points offered. There is a perception that seeks, not only to present the various concepts worked on, but also to suggest analytical categories that can support a new methodology for evaluating public action, which demonstrates the research bias of the author of the work. Readers with a background in academic research are faced with several indications that may suggest future research agendas that may contribute to a new theoretical framework that focuses on innovation and entrepreneurship in the public sector.



This is one of the points where it can be said that the book's contribution is not only theoretical, but also practical. Reading this book is beneficial both for academic analysis and for public managers to have a tool for analyzing their own capacity to undertake and innovate in the public sector. The proposed analysis categories range from the design of the innovation proposal to the construction of a supportive environment, passing through subjective issues to individuals with the potential to become public sector entrepreneurs. At the end of the reading, as the reader is a public manager, the categories presented prompt the subject to question himself about the organizational environment in which he is inserted, the design of the proposed projects, the form of internal communication to the organization and their own action.

There are countless provocations provided by the book that, worked with adequate research methodology, can contribute to new agendas that will collaborate to unravel the internal logic of public organizations and their barriers to innovative and entrepreneurial behaviors. From these provocations, one can replicate the author's methodology by presenting new questions. As proposed by the author, to cultivate reasoning, the provocations will be briefly contextualized, and the questions asked at the end of the examination. No answers are intended, only the permanence in the discussion necessary for the formation of new theories.

When it comes to innovation, the first provocation to be addressed is the differentiation between public project and public policy. Public projects are those that can be implemented to address a problem that acts as a barrier in the provision of the service. By their nature, they must be transitory and depend on a less stakeholder involvement. From a managerial assessment, they are simpler since they propose to act in a focused manner. Innovations in public projects can be authored and proposed exclusively by the executive branch, depending on less articulation between the actors involved.

Public policies aim at the country's economic development or the establishment of citizens' rights. They are, therefore, permanent and depend on the articulation of the legislative, judicial and auxiliary bodies, such as the Public Ministry and civil society, through indirect representation. Public policies are justified in the federal constitution and, although more stable, they also need innovation efforts. Innovations within traditional public policies, such as Public Health and Social Assistance, must still be presented, discussed and standardized in several management councils. The debate on innovation in public policies inundates the space of the executive branch, reaching



areas which the chief executive does not have direct management capacity. Considering this differentiation, what is the way out to achieve the involvement of the three branches of government and civil society in innovation in public policies? How to divide the risks inherent to innovation processes in the public sector among the different actors? Given these issues, the entrepreneur in the public sector can be a path.

The second provocation discussed here refers to the involvement of street level civil servants in the debate on innovations. Contemporary literature has turned to the descriptive analysis of street level bureaucracy and its discretionary capabilities. Those civil servants who work at the street level and deal directly with social dynamics, have knowledge that is inaccessible at the strategic and tactical levels of organizations. However, the listening channels of these servers are usually scarce, which guarantees the maintenance of informational asymmetry between the spheres of management and work. The participation of these servants in the design of new efforts is traditionally low or nonexistent. So, how to implement a direct communication channel that guarantees the design of more effective innovations? How to involve them in the debate and mitigate the natural conflicts of this relationship? This book can act as guidance for entrepreneurship in the public sector and can be a starting point for managing these issues.

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