LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN MEXICO: A VIEW FROM THE THEORY OF PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS.

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INTRODUCTION

Mexico is one of 25 federal countries around the world, our political system dates from October 4, 1824 date of the enactment of the first constitution of independent Mexico. In its text, the Constitution of 1824, provided that the new republic took the name of the United States of Mexico and its article 4th defined our country as a Representative Republic, Popular and Federal\(^1\).

Like other federal countries, our nation, has three levels of government: national government named federal, sub national or regional governments, which in our country are state governments and local governments or municipalities. Each has its own frame of reference and powers, and as such they are organized differently depending on the laws that affect them.

In this way, our country like a representative democratic republic\(^2\), it also involves the idea about separation of powers, which gives a first condition to the organizational form of our governments. For this republican principle, which involves the separation of powers, federal and state governments are formed and organized on the basis of three areas of government or powers that the Executive, Legislative and Judicial.

For municipalities, the supreme law, (Constitution), itself also determines that these kind of government are governed by a collegial group with popular representation, which is called “ayuntamiento”\(^3\). The municipal government, like an authority collegiate body, necessarily implies a form of public organization different from the other levels of government. The local government has executive powers, regulations (not laws) and judicial powers, which if they have any, are unclear and limited.

The relevant aspect is that the municipalities are the basic unit of territorial division of the states (which are the basic units that make up the Federation), are also the base of political and administrative organization which integrate our government system. The municipalities are in relation with our country, what families represent the society, is the basic unit.

However, if it is true that the municipality is legally speaking a community organization and a political entity with legal personality and its own\(^4\), if it is true that the municipality is the basis of territorial division and political and

\(^2\) Article 40 of the Constitution of the United States of Mexico provides that “the Mexican people’s will become a Republic representative, democratic, federal, composed of free and sovereign States in all that concerns their internal government, but united in a Federation established according to the principles of this fundamental law.”
\(^3\) Section I of Article 115 of the Constitution of the United States of Mexico states that "Each municipality shall be governed by a directly elected City Council consisting of a mayor and aldermen and the number of trustees established by law ..."
administrative organization states in their internal affairs, if it is true that, legally speaking, is an area of government and a parcel of our federal system constitutionally recognized as prior has argued, so too is the fact that the municipality is primarily and especially privileged life space of the individual and the community.

Under the sociological approach, the municipality is the public space where everything happens: in the municipality's population born, grow, play, study, develop social and economic relations of various kinds, is where de population based, developed and finally dies, and all of the above occurs within the local area because the municipality is where the home, office, hospital, school, political party, church, factory, office, the pantheon stay; in short, everything is located in the territory of the municipalities. No more land in our country, are that the territory of the municipalities. For this reason the municipality is the living space and its government plays a key role in achieving the stages of wellness and quality of life of the population.

Undoubtedly this is the point of greatest importance to the local level, because the municipality is the public space where happen several sociological relationships that determine the degree of harmony and conditions for strengthening the development of the population. Within the local area occur three broad types of social relationships:

a) Public relations between citizens and citizens.
b) Public relations between citizens and territory.
c) Public relations between citizens and government.

In local space, there are citizens´ relations with citizens, in other words social relationships or communal living among the inhabitants of the municipality; these relationships can be economic, social, cultural or political. The relevant is that such relationships to occur in harmony or in the least amount of conflict as possible, to facilitate the interaction of citizens by enhancing their level of development.

Also occur, in local space, citizens' relations with their territory, the most basic relationship of humans with their natural environment occurs at the local territory, from human settlement and the formation of cities, to the use of natural resources for production of commodities and massive wealth, everything happens at the local level. The importance of deliver the best possible this kind of relationships, necessarily impacts on the sustainability of local development.

However, the most important type of relationship for our object of study; is the relationship that occurs in local space between citizens and local public organization that holds the representation of the population and wield power: Government. Municipality, through its City Council, is the organization of the state closer to the community - geographically speaking - so it tends to perceive more strongly the problems of local society.

As previously noted, municipalities are governed by a collegial group of authorities. The importance of this level of government is that the Municipality
appreciates, receives and checks daily, and directly, challenges and social demands of their population. Unlike the other two spheres of government, citizens have easy access to government offices, meet the Mayor, his staff, they cross daily, and they move their concerns and requirements to officials government.

This condition of the municipality to be the community more alive and dynamic, and its City Council, as the government closer to population from which it arises and therefore shared with the community their problems, solutions, aspirations and desires; make it a highly relevant subject of study in light of the Theory of Public Organizations. Municipalities like public organizations are the key point for the design, planning, development, implementation, operation and evaluation of public policies focused on local development and, consequently, increasing the quality of life of the general population.

It will be important to determine how the public organization integrate itself in the local space, its dynamics, its internal strengths and weaknesses and its external relationships and links with population and other public organizations such as governments of the other areas; and analysis, in the light of the main provisions of the Theory of Public Organizations, the characteristics, purposes, symbols and values framework and institutions that local government creates.

As a public organization and public space, City Council designs, plans, operates and evaluates public policies that relate to its population. It will be important to point out what conditions are necessary for making public policies more efficient and increase their impact in achieving higher levels of wellness in the local space. Factors such as the quality of information, analysis and synthesis capacity of decision makers, power groups and pressure that influence decision making are some of the relevant elements in this analysis. Additionally, once the decision is made and the feasibility of its operation, strength and design deviations from the bureaucracy in its implementation, the social communication of public policy and its impact on the population, are just some of the important to discern the edges and the environment within the public organization called City Council.

**OBJECTIVE**

Given these premises that emphasize the crucial role of local governments to build better public policies and government programs that promote and encourage local development and increased welfare stages of the general population is important to analyze, light of the Theory of Public Organizations, features, endogenous conditions and exogenous factors that determine the dynamics of the municipalities in their capacity as local governments.

**DEVELOPMENT**

Before going into the study of public organizations and the most important cognitive premises developed in this theme; is essential to mention the difficulty of the object of study in management science. As simple as it sounds, the
definition of the object of study in Management Science from the public organizations has not been an easy topic to be addressed by different authors that have intervened in the debate. The origin of public administration studies was in the United States with the publication of Woodrow Wilson's article "The Study of Administration" inscribed in Political Science Quarterly in 1887\(^5\).

From this publication, a lot of words and ideas have been said about what should be the object of study of the science of administration. The debate has been so extensive that has led some authors to speak of "identity crisis"\(^6\), or as some others have called "intellectual crisis"\(^7\) or "defining crisis"\(^8\) of public administration as a science. Probably the difficulty of determining precisely what the object of study of our subject is, lies in the fact that administrative science has grown steadily and have gone to study public organizations and government management to clarify issues related to public goods and public policy design, without abandoning the first objects of study.

This idea has transcended not only in objects of study, but also in the methods and theoretical approaches used to analyze and study the events of the civil service and public administration. As you may imagine, in this extensive background, there are many possible choices of study and implementation methodologies, some of which come together to oppose what further complicates the difficulty of consensus and agreement among theorists of public organizations.

If we reflect on the difficulty of specifying the subject matter of administrative sciences in relation to municipalities, it is evident that the conclusion is not easy, because in relation with local governments is equally interesting and important study how local governments are organized and how does the dynamics of development of the public organization within to fulfill its institutional goals, to analyze how public organization exploits the process of manufacture and design of public policies the municipal level as a result of exogenous activity and the impact on the generation of goods and services and their impact on quality of life for its people. To paraphrase Harold Lasswell, is equally relevant study of local public organizations, such as analyzing the processes of local public organizations.

In the study of public organizations theory are two main approaches or paradigms of knowledge that deals with the analysis of public administration:

a) Classical approach.
b) Current and modern approaches.

Both paid significantly to the study of public management science and theory of public organizations, establishing conceptual frameworks necessary to

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5 Carrillo Ernesto “Evolution of public administration studies: the question of the object” in From Public Administration to Governance, María del Carmen Pardo (compilation), El Colegio de México, México 2004.
understand development of public organizations dynamics such as the subject of fundamental study of public administration.

**Classical approach**

In classical approach, also known as traditional paradigm or orthodox thinking in public administration, first writings on public organizations were grouped. The most significant authors in classical school are Woodrow Wilson and Max Weber⁹, who along with other authors such as Goodnow, White, Gulick or Willoughby gave basis for the development of several theoretical proposals that deal with the concept of public organizations, its component elements and their importance in the exercise of government.

Similarly, authors such as Taylor, Fayol, Mooney and Reiley offered from the perspective of business organizations, conceptual approaches that have marked the development of public organizations theory.

**Woodrow Wilson**

Wilson is considered studies on public administration founder. As we previously mentioned, with the publication of his "Management Study" in 1887, he opened a new scientific field related to the study of public organizations. In his own words: we went to the emergence of "the last fruit of political science"¹⁰ as he defined it.

Wilson`s essay defines the background, the object of study and research methods to have been observed by the new discipline. What is relevant for development of this paper is the proposal, made by the author, on the subject of study. Wilson proposed that the science of administration should focus on "discovering, first, what are the things that government can properly and successfully do, and secondly, how can to do these things with greater efficiency and lowest possible cost, both in terms of money and energy."¹¹

This definition puts relevance in two issues that are important for the study of public administration and have been addressed by all this science theorists since then:

1. The difference between politics and administration.
2. Searching of administrative management principles that help improve organizational efficiency.

According to Wilson "the sphere of government is its own sphere. Away from the political (...) Administration is outside the proper sphere of politics"¹². Consequently, administrative issues are not political issues. From this condition emerge the dichotomy politics – administration, that will characterize the classical approach to the Theory of Public Organizations and mark the premise to need address the problems of public administration insulated from the

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¹¹ Ibíd. Pág. 3.
dynamics and political environment they occur. The epistemological principle that management science is a discipline distinct and isolated from the field of political science is one of the most important principles of classical thought of the Theory of Public Organizations.

Related with the principle about improved organizational efficiency, Wilson makes relevance of this premise from the main concept of the subject matter of the science of administration. However, there is a recurrent insistence author noted that the benefit or added value of the new discipline is made more effective and efficient public organizations. The value of private management for public administration is to assimilate the principles of the first to intervene in the dynamics of the second. "... The administration area is an area of business (…) the object of administrative studies is to rescue methods of execution from the confusion and high cost of empirical experience and restored under the foundations of the solid foundation of stable principles"\textsuperscript{13}.

When we make a practical analysis of concepts and precepts of the Wilsonian school in local public organizations, the author can help us to determine that the objective of the municipalities would establish precisely from what they can make "correct and successful". Starting, those premises puts us on the verge of complicate debate, because if we avail ourselves of the legal vision of municipal governments, the purpose of the city councils would be executing correctly and satisfactory delivery of public services that are listed in the Fraction III of Article 115 of the Constitution\textsuperscript{14}. However, the legal framework itself imposes on municipalities, through general and secondary laws and operating regulations a number of additional required tasks, so that the subject matter of municipal public organizations expand as much as determine the proper legal framework. However, as we mentioned previously and abound it later in the document, the purpose of municipal governments has expanded beyond the powers mark the law itself, the result of the current dynamics faced by local areas; consequently, the object of study of local public organizations is so broad and ambiguous as the definition of Woodrow Wilson.

In relation with the separation politic – administration proposed by Wilson initially would be assured by the distinction between local government and public local administration. It identifies that local government is vested in the city council, which is defined as a political entity composed with authorities elected by popular direct vote (Mayor, Aldermen and Trustees) who make decisions relate to lead the municipality. It is recognized in the local space, as the political and collegiate governing entity, which is responsible for making policy decisions that lead the destinies of the municipality. Its members have a limited term on their activities (three years and their fees are none waived). They exercise political authority.

On the other side is public local administration, which is responsible for the technical operation of political decisions. It is composed by appointed persons,

\textsuperscript{13} Id. Pág. 10.
\textsuperscript{14} Article 115 of the United States of Mexico Constitution fraction III: Municipalities will be responsible for the functions and delivery public services: a) Clean water, drainage, sewerage, treatment and disposal of waste water, b) street lighting. c) Clean, collection, transfer, treatment and disposal of waste; d) Markets and supply centers. e) Mausoleums. f) Trace. g) Streets, parks and gardens and their equipment; h) Public safety.
who known as civil officials. They keep in office indefinitely and their jobs are waived. The city administration is made up by different areas or departments of the municipal government, for example, Treasury, Public Works and Services, Administrative Office, City Secretary, among others. Like any public organization, one of its objectives is to maintain an environment in which individuals, working together in groups, efficiently achieve the chosen goals. Implements and operates decisions. Their sphere of functions is operation of decisions that impact in population. Finally, it is recognized in the local space, as the administrative system.

If we refer to the third level of Woodrow Wilson analysis, related to the pursuit of administrative management principles that help improve organizational efficiency, we must indicate that in interior of public organization there is a main unit, the nature of public organization responds to this precept. Administrative Office has a special charge of municipal administration: the management of resources to all substantive units of local government operation and, consequently, its organizational behavior is characterized by efficiency, rationality and optimization of those resources.

To conclude the review about main ideas of this author, is important to mention that Wilson opines that government while most divided is, more irresponsible will be, that is, when power is unified and it is directed from a single center is likely to be more responsible. From this assumption is justified the existence of strong centralized national government, who would not be subject to strict limits or controls. This notion is diametrically opposed to the urgent need to privilege the local space, which is an important condition in the organizational development of the municipalities. Just municipalities or local governments and institutional stronger, require less absorbent central governments.

Max Weber

The second most important author of the classic approach is Max Weber, who focuses his intellectual efforts in building the subject matter of public organizations from elucidating the formation and behavior of government, particularly under bureaucratic approach. For this author, public organizations are entities through which performs the exercise of domination.

In his "Sociology of Power"\textsuperscript{15} published in 1922, Weber said that domination is "the probability that in a group of people, certain orders or all orders, find obedience"\textsuperscript{16} and that dominance can have as source, various reasons for obedience. Weber categorically says that "not all kind of domination uses economic ways, let alone still, has economic purposes"\textsuperscript{17}. Domination by authority is a legal – rational type of domination, and this category of rational domination prevails in the relationship between politicians and officials, this link between who exercise power or authority and who operate in obedience political decisions, are the basis of formation public organizations, these being

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. Pág. 59.
\textsuperscript{17} Idem.
also the mechanism by which domination is exercised by the government to the population.

Officials are typical administrative body of rational organizations; they can be political, economic, philanthropic or other reasons organizations. Integration process of these rational organizations requires staff with specialized training that allows the application of the rules in fully rational way. Therefore, to participate in the administrative body of an organization, only qualified person with demonstrable specialized training can take part, "and only such persons may be elected officials". Qualification of this staff is through demonstration different knowledge; this evidence warrants rational application of the rules that allow the exercise of domination by public organizations. Exercise of this different knowledge generates bureaucracy legitimacy, it is important to greater demonstrable evidence of the application of knowledge, in consequence less questions to public organization legitimacy and this increases the probability level of obedience. For Ricardo Uvalle this knowledge is: 1. Professional knowledge 2. Knowing applied 3. Utilitarian knowledge and 4. Productive knowledge.

Group of officials who integrate public organizations are called Bureaucracy. In this order of ideas, bureaucracy is the way by politicians, who hold power, exercise legal - rational domination or authority towards society. Domination from government (power) to society requires bureaucracy; it needs to public organizations and entities to give legal and legitimate demand obedience of citizens to government decisions. The system of government, as pure type of legitimate domination, and its administrative entities exercise legal and rational authority to society.

Weber not only defines and characterizes bureaucracy; he also analyzes factors that have contributed to its expansion and explores its consequences, including bureaucratization of an extensive list of societal action from the monetary economy to democracy.

Weber's theory of bureaucracy is highly relevant in to the analysis of public organizations, it defined with masterly precision the subject matter of governmental entities to establish them as the operating mechanism of political decisions and, thus, exert domination under the model of authority (legal and legitimate). For Ernesto Carrillo salient features of this theory are:

1. Bureaucracy as main concept to organize his theory.
2. He answered the key question on what does legitimacy of domination grounds. To this document, answer to this question is rational – legal type of domination, searching relationships between politicians, bureaucrats and citizens.
3. Define organizational principles of bureaucratic structure management.

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18 Id. Pág. 70.
19 Uvalle, Ricardo "Formation and behavior of bureaucratic public administration." Lecture given in the Ph.D. program in Public Policy. EGAP - ITESM. Mexico 2011.
20 Carrillo Ernesto op. cit., 2004, p. 28
4. Identifies possible dysfunctions of bureaucratic process to raise the issue of tension between bureaucracy and democracy.

Referring to local governments, we can mention that the municipal administration is the bureaucratic body of local government. The exercise of control or domination of mayors, aldermen and trustees occurs when public municipal officials become the bridge of action of the city council’s decisions.

As domination of city council is rational - legal, its manifestation happens through various measures, both legal and administrative, which approves government at Council’s meetings. The set of regulations, edicts, governmental agreements, development plans, urban development plans, operational working programs, etc. are tangible evidence of the process of domination from government to its population in local space.

However, for domination and exercise of power of a municipality to effectively occur, it is necessary that all these legal and administrative provisions are implemented and run. Here is where municipal government as a public organization becomes relevant, because their performance is essential for real exercise of authority find effective obedience in to its population. Municipal public administration, as bureaucracy of the city council, is the entity that operates the arrangements made by the council; its work is operate city council colleagues’ decisions and executes the rule action to local population.

As Weber said, bureaucracy must be qualified for the exercise of their work and to extent effectiveness in the process of domination exercised by the council on the municipal population. Bureaucracy is integrated by public officials, they must demonstrate their knowledge to be able to qualify and integrate the municipal governing organization. In the reason that they increase their knowledge in that proportion will be more effective in implementation and operation of the decisions of the government, and the achievement of necessary obedience for exercise of domination.

Today, the quality of the action of municipal bureaucracy is called municipality’s institutional capacity and these are manifested due to different complex interactions that occur within and outside of the public organization at the municipal level. We can affirm institutional capacities have a range of action to the administrative capacity of the public organization, which refers to technical – bureaucratic skills that are necessary to implement its objectives.

In the administrative capabilities highlight two fundamental dimensions, the first focused on human resources and the second to the organization. Regarding the first, refers to the number, variety and positions type; to the organizational and procedural factors of human resources that address issues such as recruitment, promotion, wages, and the ladder, to the education / training human resources and organizational development of the public group; to grouping of experts from recruitment based on merit and offered opportunities for promotion and advancement of a governmental career long term; system of promotions and punishments; individual capacity the actors responsible for tasks in terms of
information, motivation, knowledge / understanding and skills required, among other things.

Regard to organization capacities, attention is focused to availability of financial resources needed to perform tasks planned before, to the responsibilities, goals and functions of the organization; administrative structure and roles and responsibilities distribution; to legal capacity of organization to make other institutions abide its programs; to management systems to improve performance of specific tasks and functions; to the intergovernmental relationship, coordination and cooperation; type and characteristics of public policies and programs designed and applied; to laws, regulations and, in general, governing "rules".

In conclusion, strengthening of bureaucracy as a necessary condition of domination in Weber thinking is a highly complex dimension in the municipalities.

CONCLUSIONS

Any national or local government exercises power to its population and influence their lifestyles through many decisions that it take during its period of time. Authorities political decisions are operated by the public administration, we can understand it as several public organizations that make up the different areas of government whose main task is operation of public programs. Public administration in exercise of its functions, or the operation of public organizations, is called public management.

Public management is integrated by public policies and in public policy´s process the crucial moment is decision-making. To increase level of effectiveness in the decision – making process, it requires more and better information, identify social needs and demands with precision and opportunity and long experience of who makes the decision. Additionally, public policies have two more important points: a) design and b) operation or implementation, in both scenarios require a number of resources available to ensure their level of effectiveness, those resources do not only refer to financial or material resources, additional it is necessary, as I mentioned before, trained staff, dynamic and flexible working processes, legal attributions and faculties, communication and cooperation networks. Those all things are institutional capacities, or to put it another way improving public organizations in their action and performance.

If we have as an important objective to increase the level of effectiveness and impact of public administration and its public policies, and in this way contribute to raising the status of population welfare, we must invest in improving public organizations so that they work more effective.

In Mexico public organizations weakest, institutionally speaking, are those that conform municipalities´ governments, but these governments are highly strategic for new development alternatives. There is a direct relationship between institutional conditions of the local governments and public
administrations improvement, both in relation to their capacity and how they do municipal public management. To lower institutional capacity, lower management capacity and more discretion in public resources administration, less effective and efficiency in public services also, that includes lower quality, impact and coverage of public policies, it has a consequence to increase dependence of local governments in relation with other government levels and therefore lower quality of living in inhabitants.

It is important to mention that officials in these public organizations frequently do not have the authority, resources or information enough for the proper performance of their functions. We must add that the model of current municipal public organizations and the municipal administration operation are highly centralized. Consequently, there is no transparency and effectiveness, on public policies’ impact and public resources management.

The main goal is change from these conditions to other which promotes local development. It requires necessarily better public organizations at the municipal level whose can operate better public policies, where emphasize on local approach is the most important premise in their behavior. This is main way if we improve public organizations of the city management.

Decentralization efforts and consequent effects of strengthening municipalities are motivated by a conscious and deliberate process by those who have understood the convenience local – global adjustments in distribution of political, institutional and territorial power, where municipalities are the winners.

Today the idea that the Municipality, as the institutional public organization closest to the citizen, who lives with true intensity economic and social problems of their population has been strengthened; demonstrable and empirical experiences have given evidence that local government has advantage to identify and manage constraints and opportunities in resources application and in consequence have better conditions to solve community problems and effectively increase the welfare of its inhabitants.

We will have to go in this direction. Let's do it for the look and smile of our children.

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