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Introduction of Civil Service Reforms in Latin America

Through the lenses of Neo Institutionalism

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Abstract

This study analyses the introduction of civil service reforms in three countries in Latin America through the lenses of Neo-Institutionalism. The three countries are Argentina, Brazil and Chile and the two theories are Historical Institutionalism and Institutional Isomorphism. The aim is to show which theory explains better the introduction of reforms in each case. The research design applied to this case study is congruence analysis which is a “three-cornered fight” testing theoretically derived predictions with empirical data, and establishing which theory has a better explanatory power. The study found out that these two theories are complementary rather than contrasting, and therefore both were to some extent useful to explaining the introduction of civil service reforms in the three cases. In Argentina and in Brazil, the introduction of reforms was more led by historical institutionalism while in Chile it was led by Institutional Isomorphism, however, in any case the theories were not excludable and features of both were found in the three cases. The conclusion is that the reestablishment of democracy was crucial for the introduction of reforms since the voice of the citizens played a bigger role and the pursuit of international legitimacy was also decisive for the introduction of reforms. Now that we know why the reforms were introduced, recommendations for further studies would be to analyse to what extent these reforms have been fully implemented and to identify the gaps between *de jure* and *de facto* practices.

Key words: Public Administration reforms, Historical Institutionalism, Institutional Isomorphism, merit-based recruitment systems, Chile, Brazil, Argentina.

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List of acronyms

ADP - Senior Public Management System (Chile)
AECID - Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development
CA – Constitutional Amendment
CADP – Council of Senior Public Management (Chile)
CEP - Commission of Political Studies (Chile)
CIDA - Canadian International Development Agency
CLAD - Latin American Center for Public Administration and Development
COPECA - Standing Committee on Administrative Career (Argentina)
DASP - Administrative Department of the Public Sector (Brazil)
DFID - Department for International Development of the United Kingdom
DNSC – National Direction of Civil Service (Chile)
EA – Administrative Status Law (Chile)
EBAPE - Brazilian School of Public and Business Administration (Brazil)
ECLAC – Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ENAP - National School of Public Administration (Brazil)
IADB - Inter American Development Bank
ILO - International Labor Organization
IMF – International Monetary Fund
MARE – Ministry of Administration and Reform of the State (Brazil)
SAP - Structural Adjustment Programs
SFP - Secretariat of Public Service (Argentina)
SGP – Sub-Secretariat of Public Management (Argentina)
SINAPRA - National System of Administrative Profession (Argentina)
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
UPCN - Union of National Civil Staff (Argentina)
WB – World Bank

Chapter I: Introduction

Merit has its roots in the Latin word *meritus* that means to earn, to deserve, to acquire or to gain. In general terms a merit-based recruitment process can be defined as the appointment of the best person for any given job. However, why does merit matter? Max Weber in his *Essays in Sociology* established that the idea of merit is inherent to civil service in contemporary bureaucracies because it would guarantee that public servants are servants of the state and not of patrons or other individuals (Weber, 1949, pág. 199). Other academics claim that merit-based recruitment processes as opposed to patronage can lead to more productive officials when compared to other methods of selection (Hollyer, 2010, pág. 1), which can consequently lead to better perform of bureaucracies (Rauch & Evans, 1999).

Civil service is formed by institutional arrangements that articulate and manage public employment and the people working in public administration. These arrangements include norms -written and unwritten-, laws, regulations, practices, customs and activities aimed at guaranteeing a professional and efficient management of human resources (IADB, 2006, pág. 5). In the public realm, a system of employment management and human resources must fulfill requirement of equality, merit and neutrality. One of the most common dysfunctions in civil service recruitment systems is the violation of the principle of merit. This occurs when the decision making on the recruitment of a new candidate is not based on competence and skills, but on other reasons generally linked to politicization and patronage.

The first attempts to introduce a merit-based civil service can be found in Great Britain and in the United States during the ninetieth century¹. The justification behind it was very rational. Patronage generally worked well when the size of the government was relatively small, however, the growth of the government in a democratized country led to a system that was corrupt and inefficient. It is claimed that the introduction of merit-based civil services was a reaction on the

¹ In England the civil service reform was known as the Nothcote-Trevelyan Report. It was launched in 1854 and was aimed at creating a modern merit-based civil service. Its primary emphasis was on merit principles that would promote efficiency. The first reforms started in 1855 with the creation of the Civil Service Commission. However, open competitive exams for new entrants were only introduced in 1870 and just in those departments whose ministers agreed on (Shepherd, 2003, pág. 10). In the United States, a reform aimed at implementing a merit-based civil service was launched in 1883 through the Pendleton Act. This act established a Civil Service Commission whose aim was to wrest the public service from the control of party bosses. The reformers that introduced this Act were hoping to leave the patronage methods of administration and the appointment of public officials based on political preferences in the past, opening the doors to a new era of professional government. The change was slow and faced resistance during the first half century. It was only in the mid 1920 that close to 75% of the civil servants were appointed based on merit. However, in the middle of the Great Depression, the "new" recruitment system experienced a drawback as this figured decreased to 60% due to the fact that many directors were trying to appoint their administrators outside the rules of the civil service. The United States was not the only country experiencing resistance in the implementation of these reforms. Similar histories can be found in almost every developed country that today has well institutionalized civil service system (Grindle, 2012, pág. 2) as those individuals benefiting from extensive patronage appointment and corruption would struggle against those praising the benefits of the merit-based recruitment system.

one hand to this situation, and on the other hand to the demands of the growing-private sector requesting a more predictable regulatory environment (Shepherd, 2003, pág. 7).

Nowadays almost every country in Latin America has to some extent implemented civil service reforms and laws that institutionalize merit-based recruitments. Some countries introduced reforms as early as 1930 or 1950 but in most countries its implementation was interrupted by dictatorships. The reintroduction and implementation of reforms occurred after the establishment of democracy. It is this period that this study will focus its analysis on. These reforms combined elements of Weberialism through the institutionalization of merit-based recruitment processes and career-civil service with New Public Management through the implementation of performance indicators, deregulation of line management, conversion of civil service departments into free-standing agencies, performance-based accountability and the reduction of the size of the public sector. However, when referring to reforms in Public Administrations in Latin America this study will focus on Weberialism and more specifically the introduction of merit-based recruitment processes.

Generally these reforms are the result of slow processes that inevitably face many obstades before its full implementation. Certainly, facing obstacles is quite normal when new practices try to substitute the old ones. In Brazil, for example the first attempt to include the introduction of reforms aimed at institutionalizing merit-based recruitment processes dates back to 1930. However, this was a general attempt that lacked political support during the upcoming decades and was interrupted by the establishment of military *juntas*. Other countries implemented bureaucratic reforms to a broader extent only after the establishment of democracy during the 80's and 90's and these reforms were in some cases led by internal crisis that forced the government to act quickly in order to regain public support.

The significance of having an independent and capable civil service has been well documented (Rauch and Evans 1999, Hollyer 2010, Grindle 1012). It is claimed that the Public Administration of a country will determine the formulation and implementation of public policies and the relationship between the State and the citizens (IADB, 2006, pág. 23). Therefore, having Public Administration that is efficient and goal oriented is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of any attempt of modernization of the State, institutional reform, development and reduction of inequalities (Grindle, 2012, pág. 23). When the rules of recruitment in a Public Administration are not clear or are not followed, it might open the gate for political appointments, nepotism, dientelism, inefficiency and lack of implementation of public policies due to the lack of knowledge on the subject or lack of interest in good performance (Grindle, 2012, pág. 26). On the other hand, a proper organization of the civil service within Public Administration can lead to implementation and follow through of policies which would trigger positive effects on the economic, social and political level.

Bureaucratic reforms have been almost broadly understood as part of the modernization of the State in the region. The creation of the Latin American Center for Public Administration and Development (CLAD) during the 70's, the continuous attempts to recommend the introduction of reforms made by the Inter American Development Bank (IADB), the World Bank and the United Nations through the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), seem to endorse the importance of public administration reforms. Despite the fact that civil-service reforms have been

in the Agendas of Latin American countries for decades, the progress in its effective implementation has been very unequal. Some countries have moved to managerial reforms², while others have not even properly implemented administrative reforms. Analyzing the context that led to the process of introduction of reforms may give us a light to understand why some countries have introduced changes to a broader extent. This is how before I started this research on the “state of the art” of the civil-service reforms in Latin America, my mind was filled with the following inquires:

- Why despite the fact that the modernization of the State has been in the agendas of almost every country in Latin America, the actual introduction of reforms varies across countries?
- To what extent have countries implemented civil-service reforms in Latin America?
- Which are the factors that led to the introduction of reforms or merit-based recruitment processes in some Latin America?
- How can Historical Institutionalism explain those changes?
- How can Institutional Isomorphism explain those changes?
- Were they the result of a mimetic process and an attempt to copy the successful experiences of the developed countries?
- Were they the result of an internal or external crisis?

Problem Statement

The link between bureaucratic performance and recruitment processes has been to some extent widely studied. Several academics agree (Rauch and Evans 1999; Iacovello 2006; Hoyller, 2010) that there seems to be a correlation between career-civil services or recruitment processes based on merit and higher economic growth as well as better bureaucratic performance in general. The importance of the introduction of merit-based recruitment processes has been also widely documented by several organizations: OECD, United Nations, World Bank, Inter American Development Bank.

Seeing the long history of patronage and corruption in which the region has found itself drowned in since colonial times; the big inequalities between social classes; the high levels of poverty despite the amount of natural resources and in general the lack of substantial implementation of effective public policies aimed at tackling those and many other problems; I consider the institutionalization of merit-based recruitment processes an important step in the maturation of public administrations that might path the way to having more efficient bureaucracies and therefore better implementation of policies.

The literature analyzing the implementation of public administration reforms and more specifically merit-based civil service reforms, both in developed and in developing countries is to some extent broad. The civil-service reforms in Latin America have been documented by the Inter American Development Bank, the Latin American Center for Public Administration and Development (CLAD), official documents and statements of each government and academics. Some sources have

² Some authors claim that Managerial reforms come as a sequencing event after the effective implementation of bureaucratic reforms (Naím, 1994).

documented in a narrative way the events as they occurred. Other sources have explained why the events occurred in one way or another through the lenses of some theories. However, I was not successful in finding a source comparing the introduction of reforms in a number of countries while arguing which (contrasting or complementary) theories explained better the introduction of such changes.

Certainly there are several elements playing an important role in the introduction of reforms. The influence of international organizations, the imitation of (successful) reforms implemented by other countries, the role played by interest groups, the congress, the unions, the media, and the political support of the reform at a given moment. Without a doubt measuring all this elements is not an easy task seeing the lack of available indicators for it. However, along this paper, an effort will be made to collect evidence on the above mentioned elements and contrast it with the selected theories in order to identify the factors that led to the introduction of reforms in countries selected.

Why Latin America? The region has called my attention because “at the outset of the twenty-first century, nowhere in the world, except perhaps in the United States in mid-nineteenth century, has patronage been more fully embedded in political reality than in Latin America” (Grindle, 2012, pág. 141). The practice of patronage in this region has a long tradition dating back to the conquest. Somehow across colony and republic, autocratic or democratic government, growth or stagnation, centralized or decentralized administrations, patronage have always seemed to prevail (Grindle, 2010, pág. 2). However, some countries have done better than others introducing career civil service systems and fighting the ghost of patronage. When it comes to rating the extent of introduction and enforcement of merit-based recruitment processes in countries in Latin America, many experts seem to agree (Bresser-Pereira, 2001; Iacovello, 2006; Grindle, 2012) that only few countries have managed to succeed –to some extent- in this task against the old system of patronage. What do these countries have in common? Which have been the conditions that lead to the introduction of these reforms? These are inquiries that I will be addressing in this research.

Research aim and relevance

As previously established, researches on the differences and similarities in the introduction of merit-based recruitment processes in Latin America still have some loopholes. The aim of this paper is not to fully fill those loopholes as that would be a very demanding challenge, but to contribute to some extent to the better understanding of how the introduction of civil service reforms to institutionalize recruitment processes based on merit occurred in Latin America.

This will be investigated by testing two theories which have been previously used in academia for the introduction of reforms in organizations and public administrations. These theories are: Historical Institutionalism and Institutional Isomorphism. Expectations and predictions derived from these theories will be tested against empirical data by applying a research design called congruence analysis. The aim is to establish which of these theories has a better explanatory power when it comes to the introduction of career-civil service reforms in Latin America. It is worth highlighting that the two theories do not necessarily need to be confronting theories but can also be complementing theories.

In general terms, a research is theoretically relevant when it contributes to arriving to a better understanding of the studied phenomena and when it can “contribute to the specific scientific discourse and to the advancement of the knowledge produced by it” (Lehnert, Miller, & Wonka, 2007, pág. 25). This study is theoretically relevant because it is aimed at explaining the differences and similarities in the introduction of merit-based recruitment processes in countries in Latin America while paying attention at the events that triggered the reforms. Even though many researchers have explained the introduction of reforms in several countries, I was not able to find one study comparing reforms in three different countries while contrasting theories to explain the introduction of changes.

According to King, Keohane and Verba (1994), a subject is socially relevant if it is consequential for political, social or economic life for understanding something that affects many people’s life, (Lehnert, Miller, & Wonka, 2007). The link between the quality of a merit-based civil service and the performance of bureaucracies as well as the successful implementations of public policies has been well documented (Rauch and Evans 1999; Iacovello 2006; Grindle 2012). Latin America is a region in which close to 600 million inhabitants live in. Despite being a region with plenty of natural resources, a common background marked by colonialism, similar traditions, religion and even a common language –with the exception of Brazil and the Anglo-speaking Caribbean countries- the region still faces many challenges associated with inequality, poverty and corruption. This research has a societal relevance because it will analyze the introduction of merit-based recruitment systems in Latin America which as we have already established are linked to efficient bureaucracies and therefore to effective implementation of public policies.

Research question

This research is driven by the following research question:

How can neo-institutionalism theories explain the introduction of merit-based recruitment processes to hire civil servants in Brazil, Chile and Argentina?

Sub research questions

The following sub-questions need to be answered in order to better understand the above research question:

1. To what extent have Argentina, Brazil and Chile introduced merit-based recruitment processes to hire public employees?
2. To what extent can these reforms be explained by Historical Institutionalism?
3. To what extent can these changes be explained by Institutional Isomorphism?

Research structure

The structure of this research will proceed as following: Chapter II: Theoretical Framework, explains the selection of the two theories and explains them to some detail, highlighting the key elements that will later contribute to the congruence analysis. Chapter III: Methodology, briefly mentions the available research designs and justifies on the selection of congruence analysis for

this paper. Additionally, it explains the unit of analysis, the reasons that led to the selection of the three countries that will be analyzed later on, and finally how the data will be collected. Chapter IV: General considerations on the Civil Service in Latin America, starts with a general overview on the situation of the civil service in Latin America as a region; Chapter V: Brazil; Chapter VI: Chile; and Chapter VII: Argentina, continue with a description of each of the countries on the introduction of the reforms and it finalizes contrasting the expectations contented in the theories with the empirical data collected. Chapter VIII presents a cross national comparison to identify in a clearer way the triggers of the reforms and the theory that better explains the introduction of reforms in each case. Finally, Chapter IX: Conclusions, presents remarks summarizing the main findings of this study, while answering the research questions. It also highlights the weaknesses found in this paper and suggests some recommendations for further research.

Finally the Annex 1 gives a general overview of the literature review. It starts with the definition of the central elements of Bureaucracy according to Max Weber, it continues with the definition of some key concepts that will improve the understanding of the content of the study and based on the experience of developed countries and it briefly mentions why the introduction of merit-based recruitment processes occur.

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

This study applies congruence analysis as its research design. This type of design is a “three cornered fight” (Blatter & Haverland, 2011) involving at least two relevant theories and empirical evidence. The aim is to provide empirical confirmation for the explanatory power of one theoretical approach compared to other theoretical approaches. Due to the choice of this particular design a chapter on the theoretical framework usually begins explaining the reasons to select the chosen theories.

The theories chosen for this research are framed into the New Institutionalism approach. New Institutionalism focuses on institutions and the way they affect society. It seeks to explain why institutions emerge in a certain way in a given context. However, New Institutionalism does not constitute a unified body of thought; instead it has three different analytical approaches each of which calls itself New Institutionalism (Hall & Taylor, 1996, pág. 936). The three approaches are Historical Institutionalism, Rational Choice Institutionalism and Sociological Institutionalism (institutional isomorphism). It is the first and third approach the ones that will be used for the congruence analysis.

The selection of these two theories is based on the fact that both Historical Institutionalism and Institutional Isomorphism begin by insisting that new institutions emerge in a world already replete with institutions (Hall & Taylor, 1996, pág. 953). However, they explain it in very different ways. Historical Institutionalism focuses on the way in which the power relations present in existing institutions give some actors more power than others over the creation of new institutions (Ibidem). It also focuses on how trigger events may be the result of crisis or punctuations, while giving importance to the concept of path dependency and the resistance to change. Institutional Isomorphism on the other hand, focus its attention on the process whereby those developing new institutions “borrow” from the existing world of institutional template. Along this research we will contrast the empirical evidence with the two theories to come up to a conclusion on which theory explains in a more comprehensive way the introduction of reforms in the selected cases.

Historical Institutionalism

The modernization of the State in Latin America has been on the agenda for several decades. Some academics would agree that a number of countries have managed to implement wide reforms aimed at professionalizing their civil services. However, when we look at the region as a whole, it seems to be far from achieving modernization of its bureaucracies. In this sense, Historical Institutionalism is a useful theory to explain similarities and differences among countries when they approach comparable problems. This theory is useful to explain persistence in the way in which current and future choices reflect legacies from the past even when that past is dysfunctional (Grindle, 2012, pág. 24).

The focus of Historical Institutionalism is to explain variations in important or surprising patterns, events or arrangements. It starts with institutions and analyzes how they can affect the behavior of individuals. Historical institutionalism demonstrates the way in which institutions are remade

over time. It relies on the principle that due to strong path dependent effects, institutions are not easily transformed when conditions change (Skocpol & Pearson, 2002, pág. 697). Instead, institutions will often have a large layered quality, what means that when circumstances force their way to introduce changes these generally add to rather than replace already existing institutions. It takes history very seriously by which it does not only look at the past, but at the processes that have occurred (Skocpol & Pearson, 2002). In the words of Orren and Skowronek (1994), Historical Institutionalism brings questions of timing and temporality in politics to the center of the analysis of how institutions matter. According to Steinmo (1993), this does not mean that historical institutionalists are uninterested in regularities and continuities in politics. It just means that the emphasis tends to be on political development as a structured process and on the way institutions emerge from particular historical processes and constellations (Thelen, 1999, pág. 382). According to Guy Peters et al (2005), Historical Institutionalism has generated important insights that have taken our understanding of public policy to a new level. The fact that it makes us regard policy development not as a continuous but as a discrete process can help us understand the political and institutional foundations of dominant and long-lived political projects. These projects being the welfare state, Keynesianism and the mixed economy and *Rechtstaat*³ model of public sector. In international comparative studies of administrative reforms, the historical institutional perspective became an important one. The reason behind it is that the reform of public administration depends on the social and political institutions that have historically grown in the respective country (Kickert & van der Meer, 2011, pág. 476).

Path Dependency

Path dependence is deeply embedded into Historical Institutionalism and it lays on the assumptions that policy making systems tend to be conservative and find ways of defending existing patterns of policy as well as the organization that make and deliver those policies (Peters, Pierre, & King, 2005, pág. 1276). There are two generally and widely known ways of explaining path dependence, one is from an economic-technological point of view and the other is from a sociological one. The first one is related to the typewriting keyboard, David (1985) is responsible of developing this argument, according to him, the standard QWERTY keyboard arrangement as we know it today, was introduced in 1870 and it is dramatically inferior, less friendly and more complex than the keyboard introduced by Dvorak in 1930. However, today we are locked in an inferior arrangement due to a coordination failure: no one uses Dvorak's machines because these are hard to find, and at the same time, these are hard to find because there is no sufficient demand. What political scientists take from this example is that technology, like politics involve some elements of change, but once a path is taken there is a risk to become "locked in" as all the relevant actors adjust their strategies to the prevailing practice (Thelen, 1999, pág. 385).

The other viewpoint to analyze path dependence is through institutionalist sociology, this perspective begins with society as opposed to individuals or firms like the economic perspective. Institutions according to this view are collective outcomes in the sense that are socially constructed (Meyer and Rowen, 1991) because they embody shared cultural understandings of the way the world works. Therefore specific organizations come and go but emergent institutional

³ *Rechtstaat* is understood as public administration systems based in public law or what Max Weber (1946) called legal bureaucratic systems, this model of public bureaucracy involve norms and values of legality, transparency and equal treatment.

forms will be isomorphic with existing ones because political actors extract causal designations from the world around them and these understandings shape the approaches to new forms, which means that even when policy makers set out to redesign institutions, they are limited in what they can conceive of the cultural constraints (Thelen, 1999, pág. 386).

The theory of Path dependency explains process, sequence and temporality. The sequence of events that are related by causal links, leads to a certain outcome; and the origin of an institutional pattern is a “critical juncture” which is defined as an unexpected event of a certain institutional pattern out of more alternatives (Kickert & van der Meer, 2011, pág. 476). Pearson (2000) conceptualized path dependency through an economic model of “increasing returns” in which the exit costs of leaving the path will increase over time, so it is rational to stay in the path.

However, as any other theory, path dependency is only useful to explain persistence once a program has been initiated or implemented, but it has some problems when trying to explain the changes. Hall (1989) argues that the ideas play an important role in the selection of policies, but yet, path dependency is not very effective when trying to explain how those ideas are initially adopted. Collier and Collier (1991) provide some light on how these new paths are initially selected. They argue that at the formative period of a policy, a critical juncture of forces or processes produces a particular outcome. Thelen and Steinmo on the other hand provide three alternative explanations to understand institutional change: first, socio economic or political contexts change; second, existing institutions are used for new tasks –for example the fusion of two ministries-; and third exogenous changes force new roles upon existing actors within institutions (Peters, Pierre, & King, 2005, pág. 1282).

Punctuated Equilibrium

In the Historical Institutionalism approach, change is constructed as punctuated equilibria which mean that policies remain in equilibrium for a long period of time until they are shifted from that path and a new equilibrium is achieved⁴. Punctuated Equilibrium theory seeks to explain a simple observation: political processes are generally characterized by stability but sometimes they produce large-scale departures from the past (True, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2007, pág. 155). While both, stability and change are important in the policy process, most policy models have been designed to explain, or at least been more successful at explaining either stability or change. What is attractive about this theory is that it explains both, and in order to do so, the theory makes

⁴ Peters et al (2005) consider the *Rechtstaat* tradition of administration in continental Europe and the established Whitehall model⁴ in the United Kingdom and Commonwealth countries to be examples of path dependency in policies related to how the State regulate its own behavior, according to the authors, this equilibrium concerning public administration was punctuated sharply during the 80's with the spread of the ideas about New Public Management. The 1980's and 1990's were decades of great reform activities in the public sector and by the year 2000, the public sector in almost every industrialized democracy as well as in many developing countries that followed the reforms has been downsized, has developed more partnerships with the private sector and are more likely to utilize market ideas to achieve policy goals, which shows evidence of an important paradigm shift in the public sector compared to as it was relatively short time ago. Two factors appear to have interacted to make this shift: first, the perceived failure of the previous style of managing, for example some of the discontent with public administration was just a component of general discontent with the State, what explains the victory of Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and other leaders with similar ideologies around the world. The second factor used to explain the paradigm shift was the availability of new ideas to implement in place of those already existing, as already mentioned, it is New Public Management I am referring to in this point.

emphasis in two related elements of the policy process: issue definition and agenda setting. The focus on the first is that issues in public discourse can be defined in different ways, and as issues rise and fall in the public agenda, existing policies can be either reformed or enhanced. Reinforcement brings obstacles to changes, but the questioning of policies brings opportunity for changes in policies outcomes (Ibidem, pp 156). The focus on the second is that agenda setting theory always rested on decision-making foundations, therefore punctuated equilibrium theory simple extends current agenda-setting theories to deal with both policy stasis or incrementalism and policy fluctuations (Ibidem). For True, Jones and Baumgartner (2007), the clearest explanation for both, marginal and large scale policy change comes from the interaction of multilevel political institutions and behavioral decision-making, a combination that creates patterns of stability and mobilization. Even though Punctuated equilibrium theory began with a long term analysis of American policymaking its features are now useful to understand policymaking in general. Within the spotlight of macro politics, when some issues dominate the agenda, it can result in changes in one or more subsystems, therefore, the explanation for the same political institutions producing both stasis and punctuations can be found in the processes of agenda setting (Ibidem, pp 158).

Another important aspect of punctuated equilibrium theory is that it includes positive and negative feedback processes which lead alternately to the creation, the destruction and the evolution of the institutions of public policy (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002, pág. 3). A system is said to undergo a positive feedback process when small changes in the objective circumstances can cause large changes in policy, this phenomenon is also known as “bandwagon effect”. To illustrate this idea, scientists developed a simple experiment constantly dropping grains of sand to a sand pile, the result being a landslide (True, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2007, pág. 160). Even though historical institutionalism teach us that changing is difficult and substantial changes hardly take place (Lindblom, 1959), some studies in administrative reform show that incremental or gradual change can lead to “real changes”, and that many small changes can lead to substantial reform and that abrupt and radical reforms can be the consequence of slow building-up of pressure that passes a certain threshold at a certain moment (Kickert & van der Meer, 2011, pág. 477).

A negative feedback on the other hand, includes a self-correcting mechanism, similar to a thermostat that is regulating the temperature in a room. Whatever the direction of the outside force, the thermostat operates in the opposite way, the result is to maintain steady outputs in the face of changing external pressures. The key element of negative feedback processes is that the system reacts to counter-balance any change coming in from the environment (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002, pág. 11). Negative feedback systems are fundamental to understand a great variety of areas of public policy, and they are central to most theories of politics. They help understand equilibrium behavior of many kinds, and they are central to understanding the roles of voters in elections, interest groups, bureaucrats and member of Congress. Without the understanding of positive and negative feedback, no theory of politics could be completed.

True, Jones and Baumgartner (2007) affirm that decisions react to both endogenous and exogenous forces. The exogenous causes may include changing levels of public attention, striking and compelling new information, or turnover in the composition of decision-making body, for example when the ruling party changes. The endogenous causes can be “bottom-up” processes in which policy change may occur in isolated subsystems and have spillover effects on other subsystems; they can also be “top-down” changes in which the Congress and the President are

capable of transmitting changes to many agencies at once, and they do so when an issue affecting many agencies or programs reaches the national agenda and it is processed serially (True, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2007, pág. 167). Such top-down punctuations will be more easily transmitted to departments, agencies and bureaus than bottom-up punctuations, the reason is that “the insular nature of the parallel processing within subsystems damps out the spillover effects among subsystems” (Ibidem).

Table 1 - Summary of Historical Institutionalism Theory

Use of the theory	Key mechanisms	Elements of the key mechanisms
<p>Explain variations in important events or arrangements. Historical institutionalism demonstrates the way in which institutions are remade over time. It does not only look at the past but at the processes that have occurred.</p>	<p>Path Dependency: policy making systems tend to be conservative and find ways of defending existing patterns of policy as well as the organization that make and deliver those policies. It is useful to explain persistence once a program has been initiated or implemented.</p>	<p>Economic point of view: Today we are “locked in” a less efficient arrangement due to path dependency. Once a path is taken, all the relevant actors adjust their strategies to the prevailing practice.</p> <p>Sociological point of view: institutions are collective outcomes that are socially constructed. Therefore organizations come and go but emergent institutional forms will be isomorphic with existing ones because policy makers set out to redesign institutions are limited in what they can conceive of the cultural constraints</p>
	<p>Punctuated Equilibrium: policies remain in equilibrium for a long period of time until they are shifted from that path and a new equilibrium is achieved.</p>	<p>Issue definition: issues can be defined in different ways and as issues rise and fall in the public agenda, existing policies can be either reformed or enhanced;</p> <p>Agenda setting: explanation for the same political institutions producing both stasis and punctuations can be found in the processes of agenda setting;</p> <p>Positive feedback: small changes in the objective circumstances can cause large changes in policy (pile of sand);</p> <p>Negative feedback: self-correcting mechanism, similar to a thermostat that is regulating the temperature in a room;</p> <p>Decisions react to endogenous (bottom-up or top-down forces) and exogenous forces.</p>

Institutional Isomorphism

For Max Weber, bureaucratization resulted from competition among capitalist firms in the marketplace. He wrote:

“...today it is primarily the capitalist market economy which demands that the official business of administration be discharged precisely, unambiguously continuously, and with as much speed as possible. Normally, the very large,

modern capitalist enterprises are themselves unequalled models of strict bureaucratic organizations” (Weber, 1968, in DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

However, nowadays and according to DiMaggio and Powell structural change in organizations seems less and less driven by competition. Instead bureaucratization and other forms of organizational change occur as the result of processes that make organizations more similar without necessarily making them more efficient (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 112). While several organizational theories seek to explain variation and differences among organizations, Institutional Isomorphism seeks to explain homogeneity among organizations. The authors affirm that once disparate organizations in the same line of business are structured into an actual field, powerful forces emerge that led them to become more similar to one another. Early adopters of innovative features are commonly driven by desire to improve performance. However, as innovation spreads the interest is driven more by achievement of legitimacy and not so much for performance improvement. To illustrate this process, Zucker and Tolbert’s (1981) work on the adoption of civil-service reform in the United States can be useful. According to them, early adoption of civil-service reforms was related to internal governmental needs, and strongly predicted by such city characteristics as the size of immigrant population, political reform movements, socio-economic composition and the city size. Later adoption, however, is not predicted by city characteristic, but is related to institutional definitions on the legitimate structural form for municipal administration.

Institutional Isomorphism is the concept that best captures the process of homogenization. It is a contrasting process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face similar environmental conditions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 114). There are three mechanisms through which institutional isomorphism can occur: first coercive isomorphism that stems from political influence and the problem of legitimacy; second mimetic isomorphism resulting from standard responses to uncertainty; and third normative isomorphism which is associated with professionalization.

Coercive Isomorphism

Coercive isomorphism can result from both formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent, but also by cultural expectations in the society in which these organizations function. These pressures can take the form of force, persuasion or invitations to join a coalition (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 115). The existence of a common legal environment affects the organization’s behavior and structure. Weber pointed out the profound impact of a complex system of law that requires the necessary organizational controls to honor legal commitments, or the legal and technical requirements of the state –the budget cycle, the ubiquity of fiscal years, annual reports and other requirements that ensure the eligibility for the receipt of funds- also shape organizations in similar ways (Ibidem). Meyer and Rowan (1971) affirm that as rational states and organizations expand their dominance over more arenas of social life, organizational structures increasingly come to reflect rules institutionalized and legitimated by and within the state. As a result organizations become homogenous in a certain domain and organized around rituals of conformity to widely institutions. Even though the word coercive might make us think of an institution imposing its will to other institution using force, generally, it can be more subtle and less explicit. Milofsky (1981) for

example, described the way in which neighborhood organizations in urban communities, many of which are committed to participatory democracy are driven to developing organizational hierarchies in order to gain support from more hierarchically organized donor organizations (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 116). International agencies –World Bank, Inter American Development Bank, United Nations- played a leading role in the initiation of reforms to modernize Latin America’s public administrations. Some countries embraced the reforms based on their need to borrow money from the lending institutions, others based on the need of increasing their international credibility through the indexes that these agencies have developed (corruption, performance of bureaucracy, democracy index etc).

Mimetic processes

Not all forms of imitations result from coercion. Mimetic isomorphism is generally driven by uncertainty, which is a powerful force for imitation (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 117). Therefore modeling or imitation is a response to uncertainty. Mimetic processes occur when some organizations model themselves to other organizations because their goals are ambiguous or because the environment creates symbolic uncertainty (Ibidem). Sometimes the modeling organization may be unaware of the modeling or may have no desire to be copied; it only serves as a convenient source of practices that the borrowing organization may use. Models may be diffused unintentionally or explicitly and innovation can always be accounted by the modeling organization, in the words of Alchian (1950):

“While there certainly are those who consciously innovate, there are those who, in their imperfect attempts to imitate others, unconsciously innovate by unwittingly acquiring some unexpected or unsought unique attributes which under the prevailing circumstances prove partly responsible for the success. Others, in turn will attempt to copy uniqueness, and the innovation-imitation process continues” (Alchian, 1950, in Dimaggio and Powell, 1983, pp 117).

One of the best known cases of modeling was the effort of Japan’s modernizers in the late nineteenth century to copy new governmental initiatives on apparently successful western prototypes. The Japanese government sent its officers to study in France, Great Britain and the United States. And as a way of returning the compliment, the United States’ corporations during the 80’s implemented Japanese models to cope with thorny productivity and personnel problems in their own firms (Ibidem). According to Dimaggio and Powell (1983), some organizations initiate the modeling of other organization that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful, and very often the imitation it is more a result of the universality of mimetic processes and less of its proven efficiency. In the words of John Mayer (1981), it is easy to predict the organization of an emerging nation’s public administration without knowing much about the nation itself because peripheral nations are more isomorphic –in administrative and economic matters- than any theory of the world system would led one to expect (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 118). The reason behind it is that most of the countries in the periphery are young or developing countries and young nations tend to copy the “positive” experiences from other nations.

Normative pressures

Finally, normative isomorphism is related to professionalization which is defined as the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work to control the “production of producers” (Larson, 1977) and to establish a cognitive base and legitimation for their occupational autonomy. The biggest recent growth in the professions has been among organizational professionals, particularly managers and specialized staff of large organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 119). Two aspects of professionalization are important sources of isomorphism, the first is formal education and legitimation produced by university specialists; the second is the growth of professional networks that span organizations across which new modes diffuse rapidly (Ibidem). According to DiMaggio and Powell, universities and professional training institutions are important centers for the development of organizational norms among professional managers and staff. Professional associations are another vehicle for the definition and promulgation of normative rules about organizational and professional behavior. These two mechanisms create a pool of individuals who occupy similar positions across a range of organizations and possess a similarity of orientation and disposition that may shape organizational behavior (Perrow, 1974 in DiMaggio and Powell 1983, pp 119).

An important mechanism for encouraging this type of isomorphism is the filtering of personnel. Within many organizations, filtering occurs through the hiring of individuals from firms within the same industry, through the recruitment of fast-track staff from a narrow range of training institutions, through common promotion practices such as hiring top executives, and from skill level requirements for particular jobs. In the words of March and March (1977), many professional career tracks are so closely guarded, both at the entry level and through the career development, that individuals that make it to the top are so similar one to another that are practically indistinguishable. This is explained by the fact that individuals in an organization field undergo anticipatory socialization to common expectations about their personal behavior, style of dress, vocabulary, joking or the way they address others (Ouchi 1980). Professional isomorphism occurs because to the extent that managers and key staff are drawn from the same universities and filtered on common attributes, they will tend to view problems in a similar way, see the same policies and approach decisions in a similar way. Finally, in the words of DiMaggio and Powell:

“The professionalization of management tends to proceed in tandem with the structuration of organizational fields. The exchange of information among professionals helps contribute to a commonly recognized hierarchy of status, of center and periphery that becomes a matrix for information flows and personnel movement across organizations. This status ordering occurs through both formal and informal means...Governments recognition of key firms or organizations through the grant or contract process may give these organizations legitimacy and visibility and lead competing firms to copy aspects of their structure or operating procedures in hope of obtaining similar rewards (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 120).

Each of the three institutional isomorphic processes can proceed even when they do not specifically increase organizational efficiency; the logic behind it is that often, organizations are rewarded for being similar to other organizations in their fields. This similarity can facilitate the

interaction among organizations, can attract career-minded staff, can make the organizations be recognized as legitimate and reputable, and can fit into administrative categories that define eligibility for grants and contracts (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 121).

Predictors of isomorphic change

Using data on the characteristics of organizational fields, Dimaggio and Powell developed a series of hypothesis and propositions to predict which the factors that influence the isomorphic processes are.

Regarding Organizational-Level predictors, they affirm that some organizations respond to external pressures quickly, while others change only after a long period of resistance. Their first hypothesis is *“the greater the dependence of an organization on another organization, the more similar it will become to that organization in structure, climate and behavioral focus”*. This proposition recognizes the greater ability of organizations to resist the demands of organizations on which they are not dependent; a proposition of dependency will generally lead to isomorphic change (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 122). Taking as an example the transaction investment in knowledge and equipment, Williamson (1979) showed that once an organization chooses a specific supplier for particular parts or services, the supplier develops expertise in the performance of the task as well as knowledge about the exchange relationship. As a consequence, the organization comes to rely on the supplier and such transaction-specific investment give the supplier considerable advantages in any subsequent competition with other suppliers. Their second hypothesis is *“the greater the centralization of organization A’s resource supply, the greater the extent to which organization A will change isomorphically to resemble the organizations on which it depends for resources”*. According to Thompson (1967), organizations that depend on the same sources for funding and legitimacy will be more subject to the whims of resource supplier than will organizations that can play one source of support off against another; in cases where there is no alternative sources for funding, the stronger party to the transaction can coerce the weakest party resulting in the latter adapting himself to the former. Another hypothesis is *“the greater the reliance on academic credentials in choosing managerial and staff personnel, the greater the extent to which an organization will become like other organization in its field”* the logic behind it is that applicants with academic credentials have already undergone a socialization process in university programs, and are thus more likely than others to have internalized reigning norms and dominant organizational models.

Table 2 - Summary Institutional Isomorphism

Use of the theory	Key mechanisms	Elements of the key mechanisms
<p>Institutional Isomorphism seeks to explain homogeneity among organizations. Once disparate organizations in the same line of business are structured into an actual field, powerful forces emerge that led them to become more similar to one another.</p>	<p>Coercive isomorphism: can result from both formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent but also by cultural expectations in the society within which organization function</p>	<p>Pressure exerted by some organizations can take the form of force, persuasion or invitations to join a coalition</p>
<p>Generally adopters of innovative features are commonly driven by desire to improve performance and increase legitimacy.</p>	<p>Mimetic Isomorphism: generally it is driven by uncertainty which is a powerful force for imitation. It occurs when some organizations model themselves to other organizations because their goals are ambiguous or because the environment creates symbolic uncertainty</p>	<p>Some organizations initiate the modeling of other organization that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful, and very often the imitation it is more a result of the universality of mimetic processes and less of its proven efficiency.</p>
	<p>Normative isomorphism: it is related to professionalization which is defined as the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work to control the "production of producers" and to establish a legitimate base or their occupational autonomy</p>	<p>Two elements can lead to normative isomorphism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formal education and legitimization produced by university specialists - the growth of professional networks that span organizations across which new modes diffuse rapidly

Predictors of isomorphic change:

- The greater the dependence of an organization on another organization, the more similar it will become to that organization in structure, climate and behavioral focus.
- The fewer the number of visible alternative organizational models in a field, the faster the rate of isomorphism in that field.

Chapter III Methodology

This study is an attempt to bringing the new institutionalism theories into analysis with the public administration reforms in Latin America, more specifically the reforms aimed at establishing career-based civil services. The literature on public administration in Latin America is to some extent broad when it comes to explaining the implementation of reforms and the theories that justify these changes. However, the literature comparing countries and establishing which aspect of neo-institutionalism best explains the introduction of reforms is narrow. Therefore my main research question is how the introduction of reforms in Argentina, Chile and Brazil can be explained from the perspective of neo-institutionalist approach in Latin America.

To answer this question, I will first look at the reforms in public administration in countries in Latin America; I will next take into account the historical institutional theory as a way to understand the long processes that came along with these reforms and I will finally explore if the public institutions were particularly sensitive or not to institutional pressures, for that I will take a close look at the theory of institutional isomorphism and its three varieties: coercive, mimetic and normative or professional. I will present three cases of public administration reform, I will start with a brief description of the reforms, the types of changes that were observed and how those changes were driven by different forces in each case.

Research design

When choosing the right research design in the discipline of social sciences, students face several options and not little uncertainties. One of the most common misconceptions (Yin, 2009, pág. 6) is that the research methods should be arrayed hierarchically, and that case studies are only appropriate for the exploratory phase of an investigation, that the surveys and histories are appropriate for the descriptive phase and that experiments are only a way of doing explanatory causal inquiries. However, these propositions, according to Yin can be questioned since case studies are far from being just an exploratory strategy, in fact one of the best and most famous case studies has been an explanatory case study, it is Allison and Zelikow's *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Ibidem).

The case study method is commonly used as a research method in the social sciences discipline and more specifically in public administration (Agranoff and Radin, pp 1991) and allows researchers to grasp the meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as organizational and managerial processes (Yin, 2009, pág. 4). However, when do we know when to use this method? Yin (2009) suggests that a case study is preferred in examining contemporary events when the relevant behavior cannot be manipulated. Now, which are the strengths and weaknesses of a case study? To start with the strengths, case studies are appropriate for deriving new hypothesis and deriving causal mechanisms; they benefit from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2009, pág. 18); and "Case studies examine the operation of causal mechanisms in individual cases in detail. Within a single case, we can look at a large number of intervening variables and inductively observe any unexpected aspects of the operation of a particular causal mechanism or help identify what conditions present in a case activate the causal mechanisms" (George & Bennet, 2005, pág. 21).

Besides from exploring causal mechanisms, case studies are also useful for theorizing and discovering. As Yin (2009) suggested, their unique strength is their ability to deal with a full variety of evidence: documents, artifacts, interviews or observation that are means but not ends themselves to add findings to theories.

Regarding the weaknesses of a case study design, the greatest concern is related to its lack of rigor; it is claimed that very often, the case study researcher has been sloppy, has not followed systematic procedures or has allowed equivocal evidence to guide his conclusions. This lack of rigor is less likely to be found in other research methods because of the various methodological texts providing researchers with specific procedures to be followed (Yin, 2009, pág. 14). However, and to be fair with this design, the truth is that bias can also be part of experimental designs (Rosenthal, 1966) and in order to overcome this weakness, every case study researcher must work hard to report all evidence fairly. Another critique to case study designs is that they provide little basis for scientific generalization, “how can you generalize from a single case?” (Ibidem) is a very common question. And the answer is that case study like experiments are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes.

Congruence Analysis

A congruence analysis approach is a research design in which the researcher uses case studies to provide empirical evidence for the explanatory relevance or relative strength of one theoretical approach in comparison to other theoretical approaches (Blatter & Haverland, 2011, pág. 144). The researcher achieves this by deducing a set of observable implications from abstract theories and then comparing empirical observations with those implications. The level in which a theory corresponds with the expectations will lead to congruency in the analysis.

According to Blatter and Haverland (2012) there are two prototypical questions that express the goal of this approach:

- Does theory A provides better explanation in comparison to other theories?
- Does theory A provides relevant explanatory insight that no other theory has provided?

These two questions lead to two perspectives: a competitive theories perspective and a complementary one. The latter perspective implies that:

“the theories lead to complementary implications in the real world and that a plurality of theories is not a source of confusion and uncertainty but rather provides the basis not only for more comprehensive explanations but also for conceptual and practical innovations” (Blatter & Haverland, 2011, pág. 145).

Unit of Analysis

The definition of the unit of analysis is the same as the definition of the case, therefore, in this paper, the units of analysis are the civil service reforms aimed at institutionalizing merit-based recruitment processes in countries in Latin America.

Case selection

Several criteria have been used to select the countries where we will analyze the civil service reforms. The first element is based on the survey of the Inter American Development Bank (IADB) measuring Merit-hiring Scores. This survey ranks the countries from 0 to 5 where 5 represents recruitments based on merit with guarantees against arbitrariness and 0 represents a predominance of discretion of authorities (see table 6). Brazil is ranked in the highest level with 4-5 points, Chile in the second position with 3 points and Argentina in the third position with 2 points. Therefore one country of each of the highest three positions was chosen. However, the reader might wonder why if there are five ranks I only took three countries, the reason has not been arbitrary and it follows some criteria that will make the countries really comparable. First of all these three cases have in common the geographic location in South America. Central and North America were therefore excluded from the analysis. Second these countries are similar in terms of Gross Domestic Product per capita. I have decided to take per capita GDP –as opposed to GDP- considering the big differences in terms of population between Brazil and Argentina on one hand and Chile on the other. The GDP per capita of most of the countries ranked in levels 0 or 1 is too low compared to the three chosen cases. In order to avoid biases comparing countries with high level of poverty, high levels of corruption and generally weak institutions with countries that have achieved some progress in the poverty reduction and governance, the countries ranked 0-1 were consciously excluded from this analysis. Another reason to justify the selection is that the three countries faced periods of interruption of their democracies due to military juntas. Several of the countries listed in ranks 0 and 1 not only faced interruption of their democracies but also civil wars, I considered these feature to be a reason to dismiss these countries since the internal situations were dramatically different. Lastly the three selected countries have in common that since the mid-twentieth century they managed to build relatively strong states that had the capacity to generate development strategies of industrialization (Grindle, 2012, pág. 161) that are sometimes linked to the development of well-organized public administrations

Finally, selecting three cases as opposed to one or two has the advantage of diminishing the risk of selecting unrepresentative cases. Also, by selecting three cases the chances of finding severe problems with data collection are reduced. Due to time –and word count- constrains, selecting more than three cases would have resulted in an extremely long research paper and I would have of course, required much more time to deliver.

Operationalization

Congruence analysis is a “three-cornered fight” including empirical information and at least two theories that can be competing or complementary (Blatter & Haverland, 2011, pág. 146). The aim is to provide empirical confirmation for the explanatory power of a theoretical approach compared to other theoretical approaches. In this type of design, causal inference is usually not based on co-variation among variables or on the comparison between cases; in the words of Blatter and Haverland “scholars applying congruence analysis most often do not operationalize the theoretical concepts in the same strict sense as those that apply statistical techniques of analysis in large-N studies do by determining observable indicators for their variable prior to the collection of data” (pp 165). Therefore predictions and observations do not need to be transferred into measurement tools, or the so-called indicators. The relevant criterion for judging the quality of

predictions and empirical evidence is their concept validity. In comparison to large-N studies, small-N studies use a much broader and more diverse set of observations for testing the congruence between the theories and the empirical data. Therefore scholars applying a congruence analysis must invest heavily in explicitly justifying their interpretation that a specific observation is, indeed, confirming or disconfirming a specific theory (Blatter & Haverland, 2011, pág. 166).

Regarding internal validity in this type of research, the causal analysis is based on the congruence between theoretical expectations and empirical data contrasting predictions and observations, therefore for each individual case, congruence must be ensured. Regarding external validity the limitation is that generalization to population is not possible, but generalization to theory or the so-called 'theoretical generalization' by selecting crucial cases for the theoretical discourse is possible.

Variables

The dependent variable in this research is the introduction of career-civil service reforms in public administrations in Latin America. There is no universal or single definition of what a civil service is, however, there is one aspect in which all the literature agree on: it is a subdivision of the public sector but it does not includes all the employees. For example, in 20 out of 34 countries surveyed by OECD, health professionals are not included as part of the civil servants; in 18 out of 34 countries also from OECD, teachers are not included either and finally in 12 out of 34 countries, the police is not granted with a civil servant status (World Bank, 2001). For the purpose of this research paper, we will exclude health professionals, teachers and police and we will focus on publicemployees at the national level.

Career-civil service reforms will be defined as the introduction of changes to improve the performance of public sector employees to have a more efficient state. Career-civil service reforms are aimed at guaranteeing that the best-qualified candidates are accepted into the civil service through concourses and exams to assure the de-politicization of public administration systems and reduce discrimination based on gender, religion or political preferences.

The independent variables can be identified by paying attention to the mechanisms contained in the theories of Historical Institutionalism and Institutional Isomorphism. Thus for the former, punctuated events or internal crisis will be evaluated, and for the latter, attention will be given to the influence of international actors, both international organizations and other countries. Thus to measure these variables and to test the congruence, the following observations/indicators will be evaluated:

Table 3 Observation/indicators for the independent variables

Independent variables	Observation/indicators
Punctuated equilibrium (internal crisis)	- Issue definition: the way public discourse defines issues (since it will determine if they rise or fall from public agenda)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Argentina and economic/fiscal crisis - Chile: corruption scandal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agenda-setting process: what the main actors did to include the topic in the agenda: national debates, encouragement in the mass media, etc.
<p>Institutional Isomorphism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coercive - Mimetic - Professional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programs and initiatives (documents, strategies or plans) promoted by international organizations - Similarity to reforms already introduced in developed countries - Workshops, seminars or courses taken by Latin American civil servants in developed countries; also any other form of professional exchange.

To evaluate the introduction of reforms I will pay attention to formal practices. I refer to *de jure* practices to implement merit-based recruitment systems contemplated in the legal framework of each country. Several factors will be taken into account when analyzing the formal factors of the reforms, among them: formal rules and legislation included in the Constitutions and other regulations, the existence or not of career-civil service institutions for professional development and the existence of evaluation systems to the civil service personnel. In each country I will pay special attention to four factors to evaluate the introduction of reforms:

- **Equality and meritocracy recruitment:** is meritocracy part of the legal framework? Are there equal opportunities for every person that has the required capabilities?
- **Promotion of concourses:** by which means the concourses are publicly announced.
- **Quality of the selection process:** who is part of the examination board for concourses or exams.
- **Career development and promotion:** how is the career development and which are the mechanisms to get promoted.

Data collection

Case study evidence can come from many sources. Yin (2009), highlight six of them: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation and physical artifacts (pp 99). For the purpose of this research, the main source of information will be documents. These sources can take the form of speeches, agendas, government plans, official reports, formal studies made by academics or international organizations and so on.

A source of evidence based in documents has both, strengths and weaknesses. They can be strong because they can be: stable, as they can be reviewed repeatedly; unobtrusive, as they are not the result of a case study; exact, as it contains names, references and details of an event and finally they can be of broad coverage, as they may include a long span of time, many events and many settings. On the other hand, they can be weak because of: retrievability, as they can be difficult to find; biased selectivity, as the collection may be incomplete; and reporting bias, as it could reflect the opinion of an unknown author.

The first weakness is difficult to tackle in a sense that it is impossible to know what we are missing if we do not know it exists. However an important effort will be made to find as many relevant documents as possible “standing on the shoulders of the giants” (Google Scholar) and revising the websites of the relevant organizations as CLAD, WB, IABD, CEPAL and the official sites as Ministries and Agencies of the selected countries. To tackle the second weakness, attention will be given to including only documents that are both critical and/or supportive of the reforms introduced in Latin America. Finally, to tackle the third weakness, special attention will be given to the reputation of the author. For documents written by individual authors, only those individuals with an academic trajectory will be selected. This will be done first by retrieving information mainly from Google scholar and Erasmus University Library, but also by revising the résumés of the authors and seeing if they have relevant published material.

The document selected to analyze the empirical data for this research include: laws and regulations in each of the selected countries; reports from International Organization, for example one elaborated by the Inter American Development Bank in 2006 called Report on the Situation of the Civil Service in Latin America (*Informe de la Situación del Servicio Civil en América Latina*), one of the most comprehensive documents on the subject. I will also include other publications made available by the CLAD and CEPAL. Also relevant documents published by international actors like the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom (DFID). Finally for the data collection in each country, official reports and articles found in the relevant websites will be used. For that purpose, I will be visiting websites of ministries or agencies and think tanks or foundations.

Seeing that this research is a case study and that most of my sources are documents, I must clarify that it is methodologically difficult –besides it is out of the range of this paper- to “test” the validity of the conceptual perspective, instead the cases I will present will be more an “illustration” of the afore mentioned conceptual perspective.

Chapter IV: Considerations on the Civil Service in Latin America

Historically, even in the most advanced economies, changes to introduce reforms in the Public Sector were generally long processes facing many obstacles (Grindle, 2012). The mere introduction of reforms of course did not end contestation about change, as debate, conflict and loyalties to the old system continued even decades after the implementation of the new system. Observing the differences and similarities in the introduction and enforcement of civil service reforms, and more specifically merit-based recruitment processes in countries in Latin America can provide us with a broader understanding of how institutions are transformed over time and how new rules are introduced, adapted and accepted.

Latin America has a long history of patronage, clientelism and corruption. However, the region has made some important efforts in the attempt of institutionalizing career civil service systems. Some countries like Brazil, starting as early as in 1936, Argentina and El Salvador in the 50's, Bolivia, Uruguay and Venezuela in the 60's etc, they all seemed to agree that a key element to improve the public sector that would have an impact in the development of the region was the introduction of institutional arrangements to formalize the public service. As we can see in Table 4, most countries in the region have approved constitutions and passed laws to establish and legitimize civil service systems; of course the extent to which it has been enforced is another issue that we will elaborate on later.

Table 4 - Career civil service legislation and regulations in Latin American Countries

Country	Civil Service in Constitution	Basic Law	Most recent Basic Law
Argentina	1957	1980	1999
Bolivia	1967	1999	1999
Brazil	1988	1936	1998
Chile	1980	1989	2004
Colombia	1992	1992	2004
Costa Rica	1949	1953	1953
Ecuador	1979	1978	2004
El Salvador	1950	1961	2009
Guatemala	1985	1968	2000
Honduras	1957	1967	1993
Mexico	1917	1963	2003
Nicaragua	1987	1990	2003
Panama	1972	1994	1994
Paraguay	1992	1970	2000
Peru	1979	1984	2004
Uruguay	1967	1943	1943
Venezuela	1961	1975	2002

Source: Iacovello 2006 in Merilee 2012.

The first introduction of Civil Service in the National Constitutions did not occur at the same level in all countries, some reforms were more vague or general while others were more specific. For example, in Argentina, the Article 14 of the Constitution only conceived the “stability of the public employee” (Constitución de la República Argentina, 1957); in Chile, the Article 38 of the Constitution established that an organic law will determine the organization of the Public Administration and will guarantee the “career civil service based in principles of professionalization and equality” (Constitución de la República de Chile, 1980); in Brazil, the Artides 37 to 41 of the Constitution establishes the principles of “morality, impersonality and legality”, it also establishes that the vacancies in the Public Administration will be filled by candidates that have approved the concourses, and establishes the development of civil service career though the constant training of public employees (Constitución República Federativa del Brasil, 1988).

Even though all the countries listed in the table above have institutionalized civil service legislations, patronage in most countries in Latin America still seems to be the norm. In Mexico for example in 1989 when the National Action Party (PAN) won the elections against the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) who had ruled the country since 1929, up to 30.000 positions changed hands (Grindle, 2012, pág. 148). In Colombia, a 2004 law sought to put an end to five years of legal ambiguity in which as much as 38% of career personnel were working under provisional appointments. And in Venezuela, about 20.000 people lost their jobs at the national oil company (PDVSA) after signing a referendum to recall the president in 2004 (Ibidem).

Before moving to the analysis on the implementation of merit-based recruitment processes in the countries selected, I consider appropriate to give an overview of the civil service systems in the region. Therefore, some general indicators on rate of political designations, number of public employees, central government wage bill and total public spending per employee will be presented.

Table 5 - Quantitative Indicators of the Civil Service in Latin America

INDICATOR	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Colombia	Chile	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela
Central Government Wage Bill /GDP	1.97%	5.41%	2.12%	10.5%	5.48%	7.32%	4.68%	13.14%
Public employees as a percentage of the total population	0.41%	3.16%	0.31%	1.25%	0.93%	2.3%	5.89%	1.86%
Total public spending per public employee (Dollars)	56,433	7,638	85,616	23,457	71,759	11,862	5,487	38,814
Rate of political designations	0.26%	9%	9.52%	1.08%	1.34%	0.46%	1.19%	1.16%

Source: Mercedes Iacovello (2006) in Inter American Development Bank

Table 5 shows the central government wage bill as part of the GDP, it includes all the salaries paid to both the civil employees of the central government and the armed forces. The average among the 8 countries listed is 6.3%, however, if we exclude Venezuela and Colombia (who spend 13%

and 10% respectively, due to the size and high wages of the militaries), the average goes down to 4.4% of the GDP. According to the IADB, high percentages of wage bills can represent a burden to the country's economy (IADB, 2006, pág. 43). The percentage of public employees varies greatly ranging from 0.31% of the total population in Brazil to 5.89% in Uruguay. However, it is important to highlight that it is very difficult to collect updated data on this aspect since one common practice in the region is the offer of temporary contracts that turn out to be a “dysfunctional mechanism of flexibility of the human resources in public administration” (IADB, 2006, pág. 535). This practice is so widely extended in some countries that it is perceived as a “parallel bureaucracy”. In El Salvador, this practice was first institutionalized for very specific tasks and for a short period of time, but nowadays it represents close to 40% of the public employees (Ibidem), in Peru the numbers are similar and they do not have a specific regulation for this matter, therefore the contracts can turn out to be arbitrary.

The total public spending per public employee is calculated dividing the total public spending of the central government among the number of employees also at the central government these figures exclude pensions and debt services. Finally, the table shows the rate of political designations in 8 countries. The average among those countries is close to 3%, without Brazil and Bolivia, -both with very high rates of political designations- the average is close to 1%. However, one important highlight is that these figures only show those positions that according to the laws and regulations are to be filled by “trusted staff” and the appointment and removal of this personnel is absolutely discretionary (the cabinet of ministers, presidents or directors of state-owned companies etc.) Therefore the actual amount of positions that are filled by political or discretionary designations can vary and is of course almost impossible to measure due to the lack of available information, however, many authors suggest that there are big discrepancies between rules and practices (Iacovello, 2006; Luongo, 2006; Grindle 2012).

Seeing the discrepancies between *de jure* and *de facto* systems in Latin America, the IADB report assessing the state of the civil service in 2006 indicated five levels of merit-based access to government positions in 18 countries. In this assessment countries ranged from complete discretion in hiring public employees (level 0) to extensive career civil service (level 4-5). As the Table 6 will show, only 1 out of 18 countries have been categorized in level 4-5, and 2 in level 3 which mean that even decades after the implementation of institutional arrangement to depoliticize the public administrations in the region, many countries are similar in one aspect: patronage systems seem yet to prevail (Grindle, 2012, pág. 37).

Table 6 - Merit-Hiring Score – Inter American Development Bank (IADB)

Level 0 (low)	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4 – 5 (high)
Panama	Nicaragua	Venezuela	Chile	Brazil
El Salvador	Guatemala	Mexico	Costa Rica	
Honduras	Paraguay	Argentina		
	Peru	Uruguay		

	Ecuador	Colombia		
	Dominican Rep.			
	Bolivia			
Predominance of discretion of authorities to hire, relocate or fire employees	Largely unsuccessful efforts to limit discretion in hiring, promotion, firing	Merit systems live side by side with clientelism in recruitment, selection and hiring	Predominance of technical criteria for recruitment, hiring, promotion and firing of personnel	Open recruitment based on sustainability, with guarantees against arbitrariness. Hiring based on competences using valid instruments. Mechanisms for ingress, promotion, absenteeism, discipline. Non – arbitrary firing on the basis of performance

Source: Iacovello 2006, p. 543 in Inter American Development Bank (2006)

According to Grindle (2012), many of the patronage systems found in Latin America share similar characteristics to the electoral partisanship and rotation in office found in the United States in the 19th century. In this system, with each election, many employees faced the loss, shift or reallocation of jobs that were offered to people that has been helpful during the campaign. Constantly the first year of the new administration was spent recruiting new personnel and designing the initiatives to be carried. Similarly, the final year of the administration, also being the year where new elections would be held, was often a time of poor performance as officials were busy engaged in the campaign either mobilizing the electorate or trying to establish alliances and networks to ensure that they can keep their positions in the next administration.

These practices are not secret for most of the population, in fact most of the time are accepted as “normal” or as part of how public administrations work in these countries. The Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International, which rank countries and territories on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be by the population, can give us an overview of how people in Latin America categorize their public sector.

Table 7 - Corruption Perception Index 2012 – Transparency International

World Rank	Regional Rank ⁵	Country	Corruption Perception Index Score	Number of surveys used	IADB Merit Hiring Score (0-5)
20	4	Chile	72	9	3
20	4	Uruguay	72	6	2
48	11	Costa Rica	54	5	3
69	13	Brazil	43	8	4-5
83	15	El Salvador	38	6	0
83	15	Panama	38	6	0
83	15	Peru	38	7	1
94	20	Colombia	36	7	2

⁵ Including all the countries in the Americas

102	21	Argentina	35	8	2
105	22	Bolivia	34	7	1
105	22	Mexico	34	9	2
113	24	Guatemala	33	6	1
118	25	Ecuador	32	6	1
130	27	Nicaragua	29	7	1
133	28	Honduras	28	6	0
150	30	Paraguay	25	5	1
165	31	Venezuela	19	7	2

Source: <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2012/results> (Transparency International, 2012). Column 6 was taken from Table 6.

After combining the Table on Corruption Perception of Transparency International with the Merit Hiring Score of the Inter American Development Bank, it seems to be a relation between the levels of perceived corruption and the implementation of reforms aimed at institutionalizing merit-based civil service. Seeing that the countries that were ranked as less corrupt –Chile, Brazil- are precisely those with higher scores in the Merit-Hiring Score of the IADB.

Chapter V: Brazil

After this brief overview of some general indicators of civil service and corruption in Latin America, it is time to start the core of this research paper: the reforms in civil service aimed at institutionalizing merit-based recruitment processes in the selected countries. The following three chapters present them case by case, starting with Brazil, followed by Chile and finally Argentina. The chapters are built up in the same fashion. We start with a brief introduction on the background of reforms, we continue with a narrative description as how the reforms were implemented after the establishment of democracy, we highlight the main elements of the reforms and finally we apply the elements of the theories to the empirical evidence.

Brazil is an interesting and useful case for an assessment on the politics of civil service reforms in Latin America because it has the oldest system in the region and therefore provides a lens of history for exploration (Grindle, 2012, pág. 178). Many authors seem to agree that the reforms in Brazil have been remarkable for two main reasons: first the depth and wideness of its approach and second the fact that it is currently considered one of the most successful cases of professionalization of public administration (Gaetani and Heredia 2002; Rauch and Evans 1999; Grindle 2012). The transition from a bureaucracy based in clientelism and patronage towards a bureaucracy based in merit faced many barriers and high political costs. Implementing these changes in a country with an extremely big, rigid and complex bureaucracy, involving many veto players and personal interests of high levels officials could seem like an impossible task (Gaetani & Heredia, 2002, pág. 3). However, Brazil did not only launched one of the most ambitious reforms in the region but managed to succeed (to some extent) and walk in the direction of a more strong and efficient civil service.

Background and description of civil service after the reestablishment of Democracy

The first attempt to institutionalize a career-civil service in Brazil dates back to 1938. In 1930, Getulio Vargas led a revolutionary movement and became president for a four-year provisional term. In 1934 he was constitutionally elected by the Congress and ruled until 1937. That year elections were supposed to be held, however, fearing the institution of a communist government, a *coup d'état* appointed him as a president of the *Estado Novo*. He was committed to the rapid transformation of the Brazilian economy, and for that purpose, having an effective public sector was an instrument to accomplish his goals (Grindle, 2012, pág. 181). In 1938 by presidential decree law he established the Administrative Department of the Public Sector (DASP). Its tasks were to oversee public administration and public buildings, to supervise all government personnel and to implement an examination system for entrance into the public service. A central purpose of DASP was to put end to the practice of patronage by establishing new, modern and technically competent career-public service (Grindle, 2012, pág. 182). In the early years of this first attempt, only 25% of all the administrative positions were actually filled after procedures involving examinations, while most positions at middle and higher levels tended to be reserved for “trusted staff” (Ibidem). Even though the DASP was to create a career public service, this service still had to coexist with a significant range of patronage appointments to high level officials for pursuing the presidential agenda of rapid growth and economic and social development. DASP represented an

attempt to institutionalize the Weberian model of bureaucracy being merit its main flag; however, it was not successful in adopting a recruitment system corresponding with the necessities of the State (Bresser-Pereira, 1995). It is claimed that this first reform was ambitious and authoritarian, and the main reason why it could not be fully implemented in the decades to come was the lack of an authoritarian regime interested in pursuing its implementation (Lustosa Da Costa, 2008, pág. 274).

In Brazil, the formulation and implementation of public policies have been *constitutionalized* which means that in order to pass a civil service reform, a Constitutional Amendment (CA) needs to be approved first. The Constitutions of 1947 and 1967 reinforced the importance of career-civil service in very general terms. As we will see later on, after the re-establishment of democracy, two amendments were particularly important to institutionalize meritocracy: 1988 that promoted the retirement of an important part of the public employees and 1995 that abolished the job-security principle and equated the salaries in the public sector with those in the private sector. It is claimed that the re-establishment of democracy brought with it an extensive attempt to recover the democratic institutions after more than 20 years of military rule and to make the State more efficient through the reforms of Public Administration (Gaetani & Heredia, 2002, pág. 7).

The first wave of reforms occurred in Brazil in 1988. After the new Constitution was enacted, several incentives were launched to promote early retirement of civil servants. This has been claimed to be a mechanism to “clean the bureaucracies” and to path the way for the introduction of reforms aimed at promoting meritocracy (Gaetani & Heredia, 2002, pág. 8). Between 1988 and 1994 the number of federal public employees dropped from 705,548 to 587,802 servants (Bresser-Pereira, 1995, pág. 35). The inclusion into the pension system of all these newly retirees represented a high fiscal weight. It along with the macroeconomic instability and the hyperinflation of the 80’s and early 90’s made the implementation of a reform to make the State more efficient an urgent matter. This first reform was proposed by a group of academics of the Brazilian School of Public and Business Administration (EBAPE) -*Escola Brasileira de Administração Pública e de Empresas*- and the proposed reforms were published in the first edition of the Public Administration Magazine (REP) -*Revista de Administração Pública*- (Lustosa Da Costa, 2008, pág. 278).

The second wave of reforms occurred by the mid-90’s. In 1994 Fernando Henrique Cardoso was elected president. He appointed his close friend Luis Carlos Bresser-Pereira as head of the Ministry of Administration and Reform of the State (MARE) -*Ministerio para la Administración y Reforma del Estado*-. In the words of Gaetani and Heredia (2002), Bresser-Pereira inherited a public administration characterized by clientelism and patronage; lack of information on the public employees and a very weak career-civil service. Bresser-Pereira launched the Plan on the Reform of the State Apparatus⁶ (1995-1999) which had five main dimensions: Institutional; human resources; public labor market; fiscal crisis and cultural and managerial⁷. The reform as a whole

⁶ Bresser-Pereira clearly established the difference between “Reform of the State” and “Reform of the State Apparatus”. The first included aspects from both from the government and from the Brazilian society, while the second was aimed at making the public administration more efficient (Bresser-Pereira, 1995, pp 6)

⁷ This Plan contained more elements of New Public Management than Weberialism. However, in the words of Bresser-Pereira: “New Public Management represents a step forward and even a rupture from traditional bureaucratic administration. However, NPM does not deny all the principles of Weberialism, on the

was not aimed at institutionalizing a bureaucratic administration but more at institutionalizing a managerial administration. However, we will focus in one area of the reform: the dimension on Human resources. The main proposal of this dimension was first the elimination of the job security principle, which up until that moment was remained a *taboo* in a sense that it was never officially discussed in any public agenda (Gaetani, 2000, pág. 1) and second the restoration of the merit system through the reactivation of concursos and exams.

Bresser-Pereira's Plan faced not little opposition from high-level decision makers. Clovis Carvalho, Secretary of the Presidency and Eduardo Serra, Minister of Planning did not consider the reform as a priority; therefore they did not endorse it. The reform was also rejected by the leftist parties in the Congress. However, seeing that they only held 20% of the seats, their position was not decisive. The Unions also refused to accept the reform mainly because their bargaining power would be diminished after the strengthening of the strategic careers. One of the first steps taken by Bresser-Pereira was to equate public salaries with those in the private sector and to establish a calendar for concursos and exams. According to De Matos Ramos (1998), the equation of public salaries with those in the private sector was inspired by the literature on *job weights* found in the British civil service (De Matos Ramos, 1998, pág. 36). These actions called the attention of many young professionals, universities, academics and the public media⁸ who perceived this as a message through which old privileges would be eliminated (Gaetani & Heredia, 2002, pág. 23) and the public jobs would be dignified. The Unions were therefore left with very little power to continue defending a position that was starting to be perceived as illegitimate.

After six months of negotiations, Bresser-Pereira obtained the support of the president⁹ and the reform was approved by the Congress in 1995 though it was only three years later that the Constitution was amended. What results interesting is that initially the attempt to introduce a Public Administration reform was never mentioned in Cardoso's political campaign, neither was it part of the Government Plan¹⁰, therefore, several factors are claimed to be key to explain the approval of this reform. First, the friendship between Cardoso and Bresser-Pereira, which granted the latter with almost complete freedom to appoint all the members of his ministry, most of whom came from an exclusive and elitist group of professionals from the Getulio Vargas Foundation; second Bresser-Pereira explained that the public administration reform would be a mechanism to control the public expenditure and to cover chronic fiscal deficits (Gaetani, 2000, pág. 6), which seeing the federal nature of the State of Brazil, make him win political support from

contrary, it is based on it, conserving the principles of merit and career development while making them more flexible" (1995, pp 8). It is claimed that by combining NPM and Weberialism, Bresser-Pereira was tackling two problems at the same time: the old problem of patronage and clientelism and the new problem of the need of doing more with less (Gaetani & Heredia, *Economía Política de la reforma del servicio civil en Brasil*, 2002)

⁸ It is worth highlighting that Bresser-Pereira and his team embraced in a "crusade" all over the country to explain the reform at all levels and therefore gain public support (Gaetani & Heredia, *Economía Política de la reforma del servicio civil en Brasil*, 2002)

⁹ Cardozo publicly endorsed the reform; however, he set clear that the task of convincing the public opinion, the Congress and other members of the government was Bresser-Pereira's responsibility.

¹⁰ This Constitutional Amendment is considered to be innovative because first it was passed despite not being initially part of the Government Plan and second because in Brazil the *modus operandi* for controversial initiatives (such pension and tax reforms) was to remove it from the constitution (Gaetani, 2000, pp 2)

the governors, something that eventually led to political support from the presidential level; third, the civil servants of MARE were promoting debates all over the country to discuss the reforms, they argued that the reform was “inevitable” and “urgent” which helped to shape both the public opinion and also the political opinion at all levels.

As we have seen so far, the reforms in Brazil occurred in two stages, first with the Constitutional Amendment of 1988 and later with the reforms launched by Bresser-Pereira in 1995. It is claimed that the first wave of reforms in Brazil were not shaped by the influence of international organizations like the World Bank or the Inter American Development Bank (Gaetani & Heredia, 2002, pág. 13). In the words of Moises Naím: “the public employees have been the forgotten price of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP)” (Naím, 1994). The World Bank was promoting reforms aimed at solving the debt crisis in Latin America since the Baker Plan in 1985; however, the first generation of reforms launched by the Bank was focused on privatization, free trade and fiscal adjustment. For the WB, the first priority was to reduce the size of the State and not really to reform the civil service (Bresser-Pereira, 2001, pág. 147). In the words of Bresser-Pereira: “during the four years that I actively participated in the reforms in Brazil, I received visits from representatives of the World Bank, but none of them seemed interested in what was happening” (Bresser-Pereira, 2001, pág. 148).

Nevertheless, during the second wave of reforms in Brazil, the links that the Brazilian government established with both other governments and international organizations have been documented and have been claimed to be an important factor that shaped the public administration reforms (Gaetani, 2000, pág. 10). United Kingdom was one of the main countries that Brazil established dialogue and cooperation with in order to develop the reforms. Kate Jenkins, head of the Efficiency Unit of the British government, a group encouraging better management in the central civil service and author of the report “*Improving management in Governments: the next step*” (1988) led a joint program to promote reforms in Brazil. This initiative was financed by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom (DFID) and it was formed by country leaders of Brazil and the UK. The main objective of this program was to increase the *performance* of Public Administration, keeping some key aspects of the Weberian model but moving towards a managerial model that could do more with less while being result oriented (Da Cunha, 2002, pág. 131). According to the World Bank, developing countries should first complete civil service reforms and only after doing so, they would be able to implement managerial reforms, since it is a “sequencing” process (Bresser-Pereira, 2001, pág. 5). However, Brazil proved that it is possible to combine aspects of Weberialism -concourses and career development- while making it more flexible and result-oriented taking key elements of the New Public Management (Lustosa da Costa, 2008, pág. 281).

Only after the reforms were implemented, both, the World Bank and the Inter American Development Bank became active observers and sponsors of the “Brazilian experiment” (Gaetani, 2000, pág. 8). The Latin American Center for Public Administration and Development (CLAD) in 1998 published a report that became a reference document for the rest of Latin American Countries. It was inspired in the Brazilian reforms and it establishes the basis for Public Management reforms in the region (Marini, 2002, pág. 32)

In 2000, Brazil signed a cooperation agreement with the European Union. The project called *EuroBrazil 2000* was a technical agreement to help Brazil implement its new reforms. It included courses of e-learning as well as workshops and seminars with experts from the European Union addressed to the technical functionaries of ENAP. Since 2002, the Brazilian Government has worked in close collaboration with the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID). The main activities of this project are aimed at training Brazilian civil servants in areas of modernization of the State and E-government (ENAP, 2006, pág. 14). Also in 2002 the ENAP signs a cooperation agreement with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The name of the project is “Partnership for the excellence of the public service” and it is aimed at strengthening the institutional capacities of ENAP and the development of new courses for Brazilian civil servants.

Main aspects of the reforms

Equality and meritocracy recruitment

The Federal public service recruits its personnel through public concursos even if these are only temporary positions (Marconi, 2002 in Iacovello and Rodríguez-Gustá, 2006, pp 126). In some careers like the Specialists in Public Policy, the National School of Public Administration (ENAP) – *Escola Nacional de Administração Pública*- is the one in charge of conducting the concursos, this is claimed to guarantee the quality and technicality of the process. (Iacovello & Rodríguez-Gustá, 2006, pág. 125).

Promotion of concursos

According to the Article 18 of the Decree 6944/09, the call for public concursos must be published at least 60 days in advance of the first test in the Official National Newspaper (da União). The call for public concursos is also published in universities, technical schools, public organisms, printed press, and the websites of the ministries. (Iacovello & Rodríguez-Gustá, 2006, pág. 126).

Quality of the selection process

The candidates are selected based on the results of written and oral exams, degrees and interviews. According to the Article 14 of the Decree 6944/09 of psychological test can apply only when the candidate has a police record (Decreto 6944, 2009).

Career development and promotion

In 2006 the Decree 5707 was enacted. This Decree established the guidelines for the professional development of the federal Public Administration employees and created the National Policy for Civil Servants Development. This Policy will be administered by the ENAP, the Secretariat of Human Resources and the Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management. The objective of the ENAP is to “develop the competences of civil servants to improve the government capacity of implementing public policies” (ENAP, 2006, pág. 3). In order to fulfill this goal, the ENAP offers a broad training program for civil servants through classroom and on-line courses. For career-

development, ENAP offers two main courses: Specialization in Public Policy and Public Management and Planning and Budget.

Brazil has a consolidated bureaucracy, which explains why it is considered to be the most advanced civil service in Latin America in terms of stability and professionalism (Grindle, 2010, pág. 13). In the last years, important efforts were made to professionalize its working force, control public budget, increase transparency and work in a result-oriented scheme. However, some features of discretionary appointments were found especially among many leaders and managers in high level positions who bring into government well-qualified managers and administrators who did not pass through the examination system of entry but nevertheless performed their responsibility with relatively high levels of competence.

Analysis through the lenses of theories

Historical Institutionalism

One key mechanism of Historical Institutionalism is Path Dependency. Features of path dependency can be broadly found along the history of Brazil to implement civil service reforms. Patronage as opposed to meritocracy has been an embedded value in Latin America since colonial times. Three common aspects can be found in historical roots of these countries: 1) they were all extractive colonies; 2) they had a centralized decision-making system led by their respective colonizers; 3) They had a system characterized by personalistic relations (Gomes de Oliveira, 2007, pág. 269). Therefore taking these patterns into consideration is useful to understanding the resistance to change. Attempts to introduce merit-based recruitment processes have been present in Brazil since 1938. However, the new civil service had to coexist with a significant range of high level appointments based on patronage to fulfill the presidential agenda of rapid growth and development. Therefore, that first attempt to introduce a bureaucratic reform added rather than replaced the already existing institutions based on patronage.

To understand change in historical Institutionalism, it is necessary to take a look at punctuations or critical junctures. In Brazil, the introduction of Administrative reforms was triggered by the economic and fiscal crisis. However, the way in which the issue was defined and the way it was negotiated to be included in the agenda were decisive to achieve its implementation.

Bresser-Pereira anticipating the resistance to change of many actors embedded in path dependency. He started establishing a clear definition of the problem and a clear separation between "State Reform" and "Reform of the State Apparatus" focusing of course in the latter. Through public debates across the country and the advertising of the reforms in mass media, local governments and universities, he and his team affirmed that the reform of the State Apparatus was an "urgent" and "necessary" matter. For True, Jones and Baumgartner (2007), the clearest explanation for marginal and large scale changes comes from the interaction of multilevel political institutions and behavioral decision-making. Initially, the Unions were against the reforms because its bargaining power would be diminished (since appointments would be based on merit and not on the Union's membership). Bresser-Pereira's first step was to equate public salaries with those in the private sector. According to the theory of sand-pile that explains how small changes in the objective circumstances can cause large changes in policy, this equation of salaries functioned as a

positive feedback process. This initiative was immediately supported by young professionals and academics and the mass media, making the Unions look as demanding an illegitimate claim and making the reform very attractive for the public in general.

Another interaction at a multilevel political institution was the communication with the regional governments. Brazil is a federal State; therefore the regional governments have an important bargaining power. Bresser-Pereira contacted the regional governments and explained them the importance and urgency of the reform to tackle the chronic fiscal crisis. Once the regional governments endorsed the proposed reform, the President and other Ministers did the same. Thus it can be argued that in this case the decision making process reacted to endogenous forces moving in a bottom-up way.

Finally, the negative feedback, trying to act as a self-correcting mechanism similar to a thermostat was the Ministers of Planning and Secretary of the Presidency that did not consider the reform to be a priority; the left-wing members of the Congress that associated the reforms with neo-liberal initiatives and the Unions that saw the reform as a threat to their bargaining power.

Institutional Isomorphism

Nowadays, bureaucratization and other forms of institutional change can occur as the result of a process that makes organizations more similar to each other. This theory is useful to explaining homogeneity among organizations, the reason for achieving this homogeneity can be driven either for a desire to improve performance or for the desire of increasing its legitimacy. We will now proceed to evaluate to what extent the three forms of institutional isomorphism can be found in the Brazilian reforms.

Coercive isomorphism can result from both formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations upon which they are dependent, but also by cultural expectations in society. The Public Administration reforms in Brazil were an interesting experiment since they combined elements of bureaucratic reforms (meritocracy and career development) with managerial reforms (performance indicators, downsizing, etc), proving that the theory of *sequencing* of the World Bank that establishes that managerial reforms can only be implemented after bureaucratic reforms have been fully achieved, is not a necessarily a precondition. International Organizations like the WB and the IADB were influencing the introduction of reforms aimed at reducing the size of the State through privatization, however, their influence regarding the introduction of Public Administration reforms could not be found. In fact, according to Bresser-Pereira, during the 4 years of the second wave of reforms, neither the WB nor the IADB showed any interest in what was happening in Brazil in terms of bureaucratic reforms (Bresser-Pereira, 2001, pág. 148).

Mimetic isomorphism is generally driven by uncertainty, which is a powerful force of imitation (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 117). In the Brazilian case, close collaboration with the United Kingdom was established. It is claimed that the equation of public salaries with those in the private sector -a small event that brought big changes- was inspired by the literature on *job weights* found in the British civil service (De Matos Ramos, 1998, pág. 36). Since the mid-90's Kate Jenkins, head of the Efficiency Unit of the British government, a group encouraging better management in the central civil service and author of the report "*Improving management in Governments: the next*

step" (1988) led a joint program to promote reforms in Brazil. This initiative was financed by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom (DFID) and it was formed by country leaders of Brazil and the UK. The main objective of this program was to increase the *performance* of Public Administration (Da Cunha, 2002, pág. 131). After the reforms were approved by the Congress, the collaboration with other developed nations continued. For example, in 2000, Brazil signed a cooperation agreement with the European Union. It was a technical agreement to help Brazil implement its new reforms. Since 2002 the ENAP signed a cooperation agreement with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The name of the project is "Partnership for the excellence of the public service".

Finally, normative isomorphism is related to professionalization. Two aspects of professionalization are important sources of isomorphism. The first is formal education and legitimization produced by university specialists and the second is the growth of professional networks that diffuse rapidly (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 119). When Bresser-Pereira was appointed Minister of State Reform, he had almost complete freedom to choose the members of his cabinet. His team was an exclusive and elitist group of professionals from the Getulio Vargas Foundation. This first selection of professionals encompasses with Dimaggio and Powell's assumption that in order to encourage normative isomorphism, organizations "filter" their personnel by hiring individual from a narrow range of training institutions. During and after the second wave of reforms, more evidence of normative isomorphism was found: first by the cooperation agreement between the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom (DFID) and the Brazilian government aimed at training civil servants of Brazil; second the *EuroBrazil 2000* project that included e-learning as well as workshops and seminars with experts from the European Union addressed to the technical functionaries of ENAP; third the cooperation between Brazil and AECID aimed at training Brazilian civil servants in areas of modernization of the State and E-government (ENAP, 2006, pág. 14); and finally the cooperation agreement between Brazil and CIDA aimed at strengthening the institutional capacities of ENAP and the development of new courses for Brazilian civil servants.

It is worth clarifying that the three forms of institutional isomorphism are not excludable and can overlap with each other, that is why some features of isomorphism can be considered to be part of mimetic and of normative isomorphism at the same time.

Chapter VI: Chile

Chile is an interesting case to analyze because even though the traditional system of patronage functioned for many decades, its Public Administration was very technocratic and was not particularly marked by low-quality of civil servants (Grindle, 2012, pág. 196). The common rule in Latin America was that reforms were implemented to deal with fiscal imbalances and macroeconomic crisis. However, Chile is probably the “only exception” to this general rule (Marini, 2002, pág. 36). The establishment of career-civil service was led by a scandal of corruption. In a region where corruption is spread almost all over the countries, this case results remarkable.

Background and description of civil service after the reestablishment of Democracy

The first attempt to institutionalize a career-civil service in Chile can be found in the Constitution of 1980¹¹. Article 38 establishes that an organic law will determine the basic organization of the Public Administration, guarantee the career-civil service and will ensure the equal opportunities to access the civil service as well as the equal opportunities in promotion within the civil service based on professionalism and capabilities. In 1986 the organic law on the General Basis for the State Administration was enacted. It established the general principles on the career-civil service, issues regarding the entry requirements, training etc. The specific rules and procedures of this law were later regulated by the Administrative Statute Law of 1989.

The transition to democracy in Chile started in 1988 with the plebiscite against Augusto Pinochet and the democratic election in 1989 of Patricio Aylwin, member of the Christian Democratic Party but representing the *Concertación* a coalition including also the Socialist Party, the Party for Democracy and the Social Democrat Radical Party. With the new democratic government, the civil service’s legal framework did not face major changes. However, the topic of the modernization of the Public Administration became one of the top priorities of the second term of la *Concertación*, between 1994 and 2000 (Iacovello & Laura, 2006).

In 1994, for example, the Inter-ministerial Committee for the Modernization of the Public Management was created and in 1997 the Strategic Plan for the Modernization of the Public Management (1997-2000) was launched. These initiatives included process simplification, awards for innovation, information offices and a variety of programs for improving management¹² (Ramírez, 2002, pág. 34). Regarding the recruitment processes of the proposed reform, presidents, ministers and other high-level officials had ultimate control over appointments through a process of review of candidates as a way of “rationalizing” patronage appointments. However, and

¹¹ Before this Constitution, some initiatives were launched to provide job security to employees in an atmosphere marked by patronage and repartition of public positions among parties in the aftermath of elections. For example, in 1930 civil service regulations protected employees from the ups and downs of national politics; in 1950, a newer set of regulations provided greater job security; in the 60’s a reform provided public servants with tenure rights once they had been appointed and establish a promotion system based on seniority and merit.

¹² The suggested reforms had more features of a managerial administration than of a bureaucratic one. However, the elements of Weberialism could not be disregarded.

despite the initial impulse that these attempts gained, they were not fully implemented due to several reasons: i) lack of a sense of urgency: in the rest of the countries in Latin America, public administration reforms were driven by fiscal and economic crisis. However, Chile had a great fiscal and economic performance -compared with the rest of the countries in the region- in the ten years prior to the proposal of reforms; ii) lack of conceptual definition on the issue: both academics and politicians did not identify a clear difference between reform of the “State” that includes economic, social, political and administrative changes and reform of the “State apparatus” that was aimed at changing the Public Administration to make it more efficient. It is claimed that since there was not a clear difference between the two reforms, the Public Administration reform seemed very complicated as it was conceived as part of a bigger reform (Orrego, 1999, pág. 101); and finally iii) lack of promotion at a communicational level: the politicians and technical advisors of the reform did not consider as a priority the promotion of the reform in mass media (Orrego, 1999, pág. 102).

Compared to the rest of Latin American countries, the quality of public services in Chile was high and the perception of corruption was low. Therefore the reforms were aimed not so much at dealing with low-quality civil service at the lower level but more at establishing a clear separation between political and administrative positions at the higher levels (Grindle, 2012, pág. 196). Seeing that the democracy was still fragile and that appointments were the result of a balanced ballot among parties in the aftermath of elections, the reformers faced a dilemma: should they establish a broad career system at all levels of the civil service or should they bring greater stability to the higher ranks (Ibidem). They considered that with excellent people at the top, their leadership will filter down through a spillover effect; therefore they choose the second option. The new career system targeted chief of services holding positions below vice-ministers and who were the principal operational officers in the Chilean bureaucracy, as well as their subordinates.

The reformers were a group of multidisciplinary actors looking for consensus. The team was led by a think tank, the Commission of Political Studies (CEP) -*Comisión de Estudios Políticos*- formed by twenty seven publicly respected figures representing all the sides of the political spectrum. This think tank worked in close collaboration with a multidisciplinary network composed by many actors: i) Executive Civil Servants: representing 18 departments of Chile formed the “Interdepartmental Committee to Modernize”; ii) Universities: round tables were established between universities linked to public management and representatives of the government; iii) informal groups working in collaboration with international actors: during the late 90’s several politicians, executive civil servants and academics traveled to New Zealand to study and grasp the key aspects of the implementation of public reforms in this country (Orrego, 1999, pág. 106). According to Grindle (2012) the expertise of New Zealand was used as a model for considering how to fashion a professionalized government elite. According to Ramirez (2002), the reforms were shaped by the influence of the Mission Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)¹³ that identified five main problems in Chilean Public Administration: i) lack of coordination of policies; ii) problems in the internal functioning of the ministries; iii) limitations in the training of human resources; iv) lack of planning mechanism; and v) lack of citizen participation (voice) (Ramírez, 2002, pág. 35).

¹³ The name of the report was: “*Bases para un Diagnóstico de la Administración Pública Chilena en la Transición Democrática y Líneas de Acción para la Modernización de Su Gestión*”, Management Development Program (MDP), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Mission Report July 4, 1990.

The original plan was presented to President Lagos in the year 2000 and it included: the creation of the New Senior Public Management System -*Sistema de Alta Dirección Pública (ADP)*- through which some 2,400 public positions recognized to be political, would be reduced to some 650; the remaining high-level positions would be filled through an open competitive process; the second-level positions would be filled through an internal and competitive process based on merit and capabilities (Grindle, 2012, pág. 197); and the process of recruitment and the development of clear job descriptions and skills required for each position would be determined by an autonomous Commission for High Level Public Management -*Consejo de Alta Dirección Pública*-. The Commission would ensure a competitive process that would lead to the selection of three to five qualified individuals for each vacancy, then, political officials would be able to select one candidate; finally the selected candidate would be offered a three year term contract and if his/her performance was satisfactory, another three year term contract would be offered, here, again, the influence of the New Zealand's model was clear (Grindle, 2012, pág. 198).

Despite the interesting features of these suggested adjustments, there seemed to be little interest in actually implementing the reforms. As it has been established below this lack of interest can be explained through i) lack of sense of urgency; ii) lack of separation of concepts between the "reform of the State" and the "reform of the State apparatus" and iii) lack of promotion in the mass media.

The reforms were only approved after a series of scandals in 2002. The trigger was known as the *sobresueldos*¹⁴ scandal. *Sobre-sueldo*: literally means top-up salary, but "*sobre*" also means envelope, and it was related to the practice of paying public sector employees additional salaries in cash. Seeing the relative good position of Chile -compared to the rest of Latin America- as a transparent country with relatively low levels of corruption (see Table 7), immediately after the scandal, the levels of popularity of the president dropped dramatically to less than 40% (Benitez, 2011) -compared to the historical support of 70%-.

It was after this situation that both the government and the opposition reached an agreement about the management of the public sector. The government was losing popularity and the opposition was trying to take advantage of the situation and preparing the field in the eventuality of their triumph. In the words of Grindle (2012) "the opposition saw the development of the civil service as a saving grace, a lifesaver, so that it would not have to take over a government in crisis" (pp 200). This is how the group that was working in the Agenda for the Modernization of the State since 2000 reintroduced the plan in 2003 and the legislation was passed within just a few weeks. There was no public discussion for the reforms included in the New Deal Law and it was known as the "short agenda" -*agenda corta*- which means that it was attempted to be approved as soon as possible (Iacovello & Laura, 2006, pág. 148). Finally the new *Sistema de Alta Dirección Pública* became law in 2003 and came into effect in January 2004.

¹⁴ The scandal came to light on November 2002 when the Minister of Public Work, Carlos Cruz was publicly asked how he received his payment and he admitted that he received it in an "envelope" (Mercurio.com, 2007). This was supposed to be an incentive system to attract well-qualified officials though the remuneration was not precisely lawful.

Main aspects of the reforms

Equality and meritocracy recruitment

The Administrative Status Law (EA) establishes that every public employee must be selected after passing a public concourse, following the principle of equality and non discrimination. The positions for “trusted staff” that are directly appointed by the President are not part of the Senior Public Management System (ADP).

Promotion of concourses

The concourses are public and can be found in all the websites of the Ministries and Agencies.

Quality of the selection process

Both the Administrative Status Law and the Law of the New Deal establish that concourses can be assessed by private consultancies as a way of guaranteeing transparency. The jury to select the new members of the Council of Senior Public Management (CADP) is formed by the director of the National Direction of Civil Service (DNSC) and four advisors appointed by the President of the Republic and ratified by the Senate.

Career development and promotion

Before the enactment of the New Deal Law (2004) the promotion of civil servants was based in the availability of a superior vacancy and seniority. The new law establishes that promotions will only occur after internal concourses. The Decree Number 69/04 establishes the legal framework for internal concourses.

The Chilean case has been characterized for the development of a result-oriented culture even prior to the introduction of the above mentioned reforms. The political continuity after the reestablishment of democracy has proven to be very pragmatic. Two main weaknesses were found in the Chilean case: i) the prevalence of politicization in the appointment of high level managers and ii) the stagnation of the career development, in which officials are promoted internally without competition from the outside (Iacovello & Laura, 2006, pág. 166). Even though Chile has made a remarkable progress in the introduction of reforms, elements of patronage found in the appointment of high level managers were still found. We can finally affirm that Chile is walking through the path of a full implementation of a merit-based civil service but it will probably take more time to deliver.

Analysis through the lenses of theories

Historical Institutionalism

The first attempt to institutionalize career-civil service in Chile can be found in the Constitution of 1980. However, seeing that the newly established democracy was still struggling to maintain

equilibrium and consensus, the appointment of officials and civil servants was more the result of a bargaining process between the parties in the aftermath of elections than a full implementation of meritocratic principles.

Path dependency lays on the assumption that policy making systems tend to be conservative and find ways of defending existing patterns of policy as well as the organization that make and deliver those policies (Peters, Pierre, & King, 2005, pág. 1276). In the Chilean case, path dependency can be identified first in the fact that regarding the recruitment processes of the reform proposed in 1994, presidents, ministers and other high-level officials had ultimate control over appointments through a process of review of candidates as a way of “rationalizing” patronage appointments. Thus it can be affirmed that at the beginning, the proposed reform did not substituted the former institutions, it only added some elements to it. Before the outbreak of the scandal, path dependency was stronger than any attempt to implement reforms. Three elements that explain temporality can be highlighted: i) lack of sense of urgency of the reform; ii) lack of a clear conceptual definition between “State Reform” and “Reform of the State Apparatus”; and iii) lack of promotion of the reforms in mass media. Path dependency is only useful to explaining persistence once a program has been implemented, to understand change, we will now evaluate the other element of Historical Institutionalism: punctuated equilibrium.

Punctuated equilibrium establishes that processes are generally characterized by stability but sometimes they produce large-scale events from the past (True, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2007, pág. 155). In the Chilean case, the long stability was characterized by the first attempts to introduce reforms in the early 80’s that did not represent a major change from the political appointments that were common in the past. In the late 90’s a set of specific reforms to modernize the State Apparatus were proposed but seeing that there were a sense of “lack of urgency” these reforms were not approved at the time. The “large-scale” departure from the past in this country can be found in a corruption scandal in the early 2000’s. Chile had the reputation of being the less corrupt country in South America. It was after this situation that both the government and the opposition reached an agreement about the management of the public sector. The government was losing popularity and the opposition was trying to take advantage of the situation and preparing the field in the eventuality of their triumph.

Regarding the issue definition, both government and opposition agreed that introducing this reform would provide the country with legitimacy. Both at national level to recover the levels of popularity; and at international level since in the early 2000’s Chile started the negotiation process to join the Organization for Economic and Cooperation and Development (OECD). Therefore recovering legitimacy was a necessity.

Regarding the agenda-setting process, both government and opposition were interested in rushing the reform. The fact that the reforms were approved by the Congress only a few weeks after its introduction and that no public discussion was held was determinant to achieve punctuation.

Regarding the feedbacks, positive feedback can be found in the declaration of the Minister of Public Work affirming that he received his salary in an envelope. This small event had the bandwagon effect of bringing with it a bigger change that was the eruption of the scandal. No self-

correcting mechanism was found after the scandal. Corruption was unacceptable, and the necessity of recovering legitimacy was a must, so no opposition was found.

Finally, the decision-making process reacted to endogenous forces, the corruption scandal. And it occurred in a top-down way. The decision to implement the reforms in a rapid way came directly from the presidential level.

Institutional Isomorphism

Desire to improve performance and to increase legitimacy are thought to be the two main drivers of institutional isomorphism. In the following lines we will see to what extent isomorphism can explain the introduction of reforms in Chile.

Coercive isomorphism can result from both formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations. These pressures can take the form of force, persuasion or the invitation to join a coalition (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, pág. 115). Evidence on a persuasive form of coercive isomorphism was found. According to Ramirez (2002), the reforms were shaped by the influence of the Mission Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) that identified five main problems in Chilean Public Administration: i) lack of coordination of policies; ii) problems in the internal functioning of the ministries; iii) limitations in the training of human resources; iv) lack of planning mechanism; and v) lack of citizen participation (voice) (Ramírez, 2002, pág. 35). I must add that Chile's desire to join OECD could be taken as a coercive form of isomorphism. OECD has established clear requirements for those countries wanting to join the group and Chile was looking for legitimacy and international recognition to do so.

It is claimed that Chile went through a mimetic isomorphism inspired in the model of New Zealand regarding how to professionalize the bureaucratic elite. Finally normative isomorphism can be found in two elements: first during the late 90's several politicians, executive civil servants and academics traveled to New Zealand to study and grasp the key aspects of the implementation of public reforms in this country (Orrego, 1999, pág. 106). Second, the development of the reform plan was made by a think tank, the Commission of Political Studies (CEP) who worked in close collaboration with universities related to public management.

Chapter VII: Argentina

The establishment of a Career Civil Service in Argentina was the result of intensive economic and fiscal crisis that opened the gates for reforms to be implemented. It is an interesting case because despite the efforts to introduce the reforms and the great support that these reforms got from political elites and public media by the moment there were discussed, nowadays, it is claimed that no significant change in the civil service has been generated (Iacovello & Zuvanic, 2006, pág. 76).

Background and description of civil service after the reestablishment of Democracy

Since 1957 labor stability for public employees has been contemplated in the Argentinean National Constitution. In 1973, the Decree 1428 was enacted. Its aim was to regulate the access, career development and promotion of Public Administration employees. The decree established that access to Civil Service would occur only after candidates have gone through public concursos. On the promotion and career development, it established that only those candidates that have previously approved the training courses and have the best qualifications compared to other candidates will be promoted (Decreto 1428, 1973). However, and not long after the Decree was enacted, recruitment by examination was suspended for austerity measures (Grindle, 2012, pág. 184).

After a long history of *coups d'etat* and thirty years of military rule, democracy was reestablished in 1983. The new government of Raul Alfonsín brought several reforms to Public Administration. These reforms were aimed at improving the capabilities and skills of public employees with the idea of professionalizing the administrative apparatus. The Secretariat of Civil Service –*Secretaría de la Función Pública*– was created and its objective was to give priority to the development of administrative careers. In 1987, an initiative modeled on the French experience of an elite service, created the Government Administration Body –*Cuerpo de Administración de Gobierno*– to allow “master managers” to serve across government assigned where they were needed the most (Grindle, 2012, pág. 185). However and even though this service incorporated about two hundred well qualified master managers, its implementation gradually lapsed and its continuance stopped in the same year it was created (Marini, 2002, pág. 40).

In 1991 the government of Carlos Menem found itself set in the most severe economic and fiscal crisis of Latin America. The essential explanation of this crisis was that “the stabilization programs that preceded it drove the government into debt distress” (Beckerman, 1995) leading to hyperinflation that reached the average annual rate of 2,600% in 1989 (Pou, 2000). This situation generated a political moment in which major new initiatives could be undertaken and carried out in short order (Grindle, 2012, pág. 184). Due to the crisis, a law of “economic emergency” gave extensive power to the executive to enact policy changes without the need of legislative approval. The reform of the state apparatus was encapsulated within a set of laws and decrees to deal with an economic emergency and then to reduce the extensive public sector deficit that threatened stability (Grindle, 2010, pág. 13). One of the key actors in the implementation of the reform was the Minister of Economy, Domingo Carvallo. Seeing that the main priorities were to control

inflation and recover stability, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank certainly influenced the policies selected to deal with the macroeconomic crisis¹⁵ (Ibidem).

During the early 1990s, the World Bank increasingly promoted the concept of governance reforms, these reforms were aimed at improving the rule of law, increasing transparency, accountability and quality in public administration. One of the main reforms sponsored by the World Bank was a reform on the judiciary system in 1998 based on the argument that improving the court system would improve the implementation of subsequent reforms of public Administration. The WB's approach to institutionalize these reforms had three characteristics: i) they were donor-driven, which means that the reforms relied on general models or "blueprints"; ii) they relied on technical approaches, which means that they tend to be technocratic (dealing with efficiency and managerial) but not so much with power struggles embedded in institutional arrangements; and iii) they had a selective involvement of stakeholders which means that despite the abundance of reforms project created by local Think Tanks and NGO's, the final project was developed by the World Bank elsewhere and was only "adapted" to Argentina's needs (Tuozzo, 2009, pág. 471). It is argued that these three elements played an important role in the later poor outcome of the reform. Eight years after its initial approval, the project was finally closed in 2006, without any significant improvement in court modernization. In the words of the Bank, the project 'had an unsatisfactory performance and outcome, was unlikely to be sustainable, and had a modest institutional development impact' (World Bank, 2006, in Tuozzo, 2009, pp 477).

Considering that the reforms were implemented with a sense of urgency, there was no direct citizen participation- However, after the recovery of macroeconomic stabilization, both public opinion and governors in the provinces supported Menen's government to continue with the reforms increasing its bargaining process to negotiate with unions and interest groups. The crisis changed the status quo. In this new scenario, the power of the Unions was undermined and they were in a relatively weak position to negotiate with the government. The Union of National Civil Staff (UPCN) -*Unión de Personal Civil de la Nación*- wanted to provide as much protection to its membership as possible, and the regularization of a career-system with tenure seemed like the only possible option to do so (Grindle, 2012, pág. 187). The result of this bargaining process was the creation in 1991 of the National System of Administrative Profession (SINAPA) - *Sistema Nacional de Profesión Administrativa*- through the Decree 993/91. This new system would be managed by the Secretariat of Public Service (SFP) and the Standing Committee on Administrative Career (COPECA). COPECA was to be composed by one representative of the Ministry of Economics, two representatives of the Secretariat of Public Services and three representatives of UPCN.

Therefore the institutionalization of the career-civil service in Argentina was on the one hand shaped by the economic situation and the political leaders that had to take innovative decisions

¹⁵ The IMF had been almost continuously engaged in Argentina since 1991, when the "Convertibility Plan" fixed the Argentine peso at parity with the U.S. dollar in a currency board-like arrangement. The Plan was designed to stabilize the economy through drastic and almost irreversible measures; it also included a broader agenda of market-oriented structural reforms to promote efficiency and productivity. After the adoption of the Convertibility Plan, stabilization was achieved quickly and, with the aid of structural reforms, the economy grew at an average rate of 6 percent per year through 1997 (IMF, 2003)

and on the other hand by the bargaining process between the government and interests groups – Union of public sector employees- that went through long negotiations to establish a career-civil service to provide protection to its membership.

SINAPA was to create a simpler public service career system, guarantee the meritocratic recruitment of officials, and bring stability and better working conditions to the public employees in the country. The system created three subsystems: i) the performance evaluation subsystem in charge of evaluating the agents in an annual basis; ii) the training subsystem aimed at improving the capacities of the civil servants; and iii) the recruitment subsystem that would define the entry requirements for each position. For recruitment, SINAPA would call for public announcement of job opening and the selection would be based on examinations or interviews. In addition, all the promotions would be the result of competitive processes and seniority should no longer be used as the only mechanism for promotion from one job classification to another (Grindle, 2012, pág. 188).

Main aspects of the reforms

Equality and meritocracy recruitment

Recruitment process for both low-echelon and high-echelon positions are responsibility of a Selection Committee. The difference is that for low-echelon positions, the Selection Committee is formed by the authorities that conduct the call. On the other hand, for the high-echelon positions, the members of the Selection Committee are appointed by the authority that made the call, which can result in arbitrariness (Iacovello & Zuvanic, 2006, pág. 77).

Promotion of concourses

The SINAPA establishes that the concourses must be published in newspapers and since 1998. The calls for public concourses are also published in the website of the Sub-Secretariat of Public Management (SGP).

Quality of the selection process

The selection process for SINAPA establishes that the evaluation committee will be formed by experts and technical advisors. Normally, the instruments used to determine the selection of candidates are assessment of their background and work experience and interviews. Technical tests and psychological assessments are not common.

Career development and promotion

The SINAPA includes three career groups: General, Technical and Specialized. Career-development can occur in a vertical and in a horizontal way. In the vertical development, the civil servants are classified depending on their responsibilities in six levels (A,B,C,D,E and F). Each level has been subdivided in “grades”, currently there are 10 grades and they represent the horizontal career-development. For the vertical development, promotion occurs after evaluating age, formal education and capabilities. For the horizontal development, promotion occurs after fulfilling the

requirements of the annual performance evaluation and after taking training courses. (Zeller, 1997, pág. 36)

SINAPA never really substituted the former system based on patronage, four years after its implementation, the Decree 92/95 opened the door to a return to widespread use of patronage appointments, seeing that high level officials were allowed to expand the use of temporary contracts for personnel they wished to hire. Later in 2001, another major economic crisis encouraged those within hiring rights in the public sector to provide additional jobs for families or friends who lost jobs in other sectors (Grindle, 2010, pág. 14)

Since 2002 and despite the change of Administration in 2003, no significant change to the Civil Service has been generated; in fact the topic has not been formally included in the political agenda ever since. The SINAPA has been lately criticized and accused of diminishing its legitimacy, among the most common practices, it can be highlighted the designation of transitory political positions, this positions should have been appointed by concursos (Iacovello & Zuvanic, 2006, pág. 76). Regarding Argentina's civil service reforms, recently the Inter American Development Bank has characterized it as a country with "very developed processes that are only partially used" (Iacovello & Zuvanic, 2006, pág. 82).

Analysis through the lenses of theories

Historical Institutionalism

Historical Institutionalism relies on the principle that due to strong path dependent effects, institutions are not easily transformed when conditions change (Skocpol & Pearson, 2002). Instead, institutions will often have a large layered quality, what means that when circumstances force their way to introduce changes these generally add to rather than replace already existing institutions.

Features of path dependency were found during the decade of the 70's and the 80's. The first evidence was linked to the enactment of the decree 1428/73 that established that only candidates that successfully approve the concursos would be chosen as civil servants, however not long after the decree was enacted, it was suspended due to austerity measures. Therefore it is evident that in this case, that reform did not substitute the former appointment system, it only added some new elements to it but as soon as some misadventures occurred, the attachment to the path prevailed and the new proposal was immediately dismissed. Another evidence of path dependency was found in 1987 with the introduction of an initiative inspired in the French model of an elite service. Even though this reform implemented some innovative features to the Argentinean bureaucracy, it could not replace the former system of organization and therefore it stopped the same year it was created.

The critical juncture that led to the introduction of reforms was shaped by the economic crisis. Hyperinflation reaching the annual rate of 2,600%, devaluation of the currency and a fiscal disaster forced the way of politicians and decision-makers to introduce the reforms. Initially a civil service reform was not contemplated as a main urgency, it was just framed in a bigger set of reforms to recover stability.

After stability was achieved through the implementations of the macroeconomic reforms, some circumstances opened a door to continue with the civil-service reforms. On the one hand, the National Union Structure of Public Employees was afraid of a “savage downsizing” (Grindle, 2010, pág. 14) in which many would lose their jobs. On the other hand, the government had the support of the public opinion due to the results of the macroeconomic plan. The result: the Union saw its bargaining power diminished due to the situation of the moment, and to guarantee the protection of its members it suggested the introduction of a career civil service.

The issue definition was marked by the urgency of doing more with less, controlling the inflation and recovering the macroeconomic stability; the agenda setting of the civil service reforms was marked by the desire of the Unions to guarantee the protection of its members and the negotiation with the government that counted with the support of the public opinion and regional governors. The positive feedback was the good initial results achieved after the introduction of the stabilization plan. Seeing that inflation and the fiscal crisis were controlled, it provided the government with higher levels of support and legitimacy to move forward and implement a broader set of reforms. There were no strong features of negative feedback presumably due to the urgency of the need to implement the reforms. Finally the decisions reacted to endogenous forces (top-down) through the law of “economic emergency” that provided the executive with a broad power to rule without the necessity of approval by the legislative.

Institutional Isomorphism

Seeing that the reforms were shaped by a fiscal and economic crisis and that during the early and mid 90's the World Bank was actively promoting governance reforms, evidence of isomorphism were found in this case. Coercive isomorphism is the result of formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations. For the macroeconomic and stabilization reforms both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were actively involved. The World Bank was behind the development and implementation of a judicial reform aimed at improving the efficiency, transparency and public administration performance of Argentina. It has been claimed that the Bank developed these reforms without the involvement of local stakeholders as Think Tanks or NGO's. It developed a “blueprint” that was later “adapted” to Argentinean needs, and it certainly was a determinant for the failure of the reforms.

On mimetic isomorphism, evidence was found on the reforms of 1987 that were modeled on the French experience of an elite civil service with “master managers” that would serve across the government assigned where they were needed the most. However, and as it has been previously established, even though this reform was introduced, it gradually elapsed and eventually stopped in the same year of its creation.

Normative isomorphism is related to professionalization, which is defined as the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work to control the production of producers. Evidence of normative isomorphism was found in the development of several programs and assistance schemes between Argentinean officials and members of the World Bank (Tuozzo, 2009, pág. 469). As it has already been established, the reforms suggested by the World Bank were relying on technical approaches that dealt mainly with managerial and

efficiency issues and not so much with power struggles and norms embedded in institutional structures.

Chapter VIII: Cross-national comparison on the introduction of reforms

Now that we have individually analyzed the introduction of civil service reforms in Brazil, Chile and Argentina, to increase our understanding on the subject let's move on to the cross-national comparison.

The following table is a summary of the introduction of reforms. The three countries have in common the introduction of reforms in the aftermath of the reestablishment of democracy. Brazil being the first one in 1988, followed by Argentina in 1991 and finally by Chile proposed in 2000 but only approved three years later.

The neo-institutionalism approach focuses on the way in which the power relations present in existing institutions give some actors more power than others over the creation of new institutions. With this argument in mind, we paid special attention to the actors that proposed or endorsed the reforms. We found out that some key actors were determinant to achieve the introduction of reforms, in Brazil the key actor was the Minister of Administration and Reform of the State, in Chile, a Think Tank and in Argentina the Minister of Economy.

Finally the context of the reform was also important to achieve the introduction of changes. The environment prior to the introduction of reforms was different in each country. In Brazil, the involvement of the public opinion and the promotion of public debates were key to gain public support; in Chile, the context was marked by a common interest of two different actors: both opposition and government wanted to get to power in the next elections, therefore they cooperated and worked together to regain legitimacy; finally in Argentina the introduction of reforms was shaped by the demands of the Union to institutionalize a career-civil service that would eventually provide protection to its members.

Table 8 - Summary of introduction of reforms

	Year of reform	Proponents of the reform	Context of the reform
Brazil	First stage: 1988 Second stage: 1995	Luis Carlos Bresser Pereira, Minister of Administration and Reform of the State	For the rest of the cabinet of Ministers the reform of Public Administration was not a priority. Bresser Pereira promoted debates all over the country to encourage the reform, shaping the public opinion and gaining political support from local governments.
Chile	Initially Proposed in 2000, was only approved in 2003	Think tank formed by 27 public figures of all the political spectrum	Opposition (hoping to win next elections) and Government (hoping to recover its popularity) working together to introduce reforms
Argentina	1991	Minister of Economy, Domingo Carvallo and Union of National Civil Staff	Unions with relatively weak position to negotiate with the government. <i>Unión de Personal Civil de la Nación</i> (UPCN) demanded regularization of a career-system as a mean of protecting its membership.

The next table is a summary of the introduction of reforms in Brazil, Chile and Argentina through the lenses of Historical Institutionalism. For the three cases the two main elements of Historical Institutionalism are taken into account: path dependency and punctuated equilibrium.

In the Path Dependency column, I briefly describe the first attempts to introduce a civil service reforms in the selected countries. The three countries have in common that despite the introduction of reforms started some decades ago, it was very hard to substitute the former system based on patronage. However, the level to which the countries have “walked away from the path” varies between them.

Nowadays Brazil and Chile have implemented civil service reforms in a remarkable way, therefore it can be affirmed that even though it took them some time to leave the path, they have progressively walked away from it, the reasons being the pursuit of legitimacy and international recognition. Chile, is currently the country with most free-trade agreement in Latin America, it is also the first country in Latin America in terms of innovation and registrations of patents, and has been negotiating its membership to the OECD since mid-2000, therefore, leaving the path to gain more legitimacy and “fit” better in international organizations was more rational than staying in the path.

Brazil is an emerging economy pursuing to be internationally recognized as a global player. Its ambition to reform the membership of the United Nations Security Council, the organization of important international events as Rio+20 and its active role in other organizations as BRICs or G-20 show their interest to be perceived as a “modern state”. This interest is enough for it to shift from the path in which was locked during the 20th century.

Finally Argentina has made important efforts to introduce civil service reforms, but it seems to be “locked in” in the path as relevant actors adjust their strategies to the prevailing practices. The introduction of three waves of reforms and yet the persistence of clientelism and patronage show the difficulty to leave the path dependency.

Regarding the critical junctures or punctuations, in Brazil and in Argentina, they were marked by economic and fiscal crisis and in Chile by a corruption scandal.

Table 9 - Historical Institutionalism to explain the introduction of reforms

	Path Dependency – Path shift	Punctuated equilibrium
Brazil	Attempts to introduce merit-based recruitment processes have been present in Brazil since 1938. However, the new civil service had to coexist with a significant range of high level appointments based on patronage to fulfill the presidential agenda or rapid growth and development. Therefore, that first attempt to introduce a bureaucratic reform added rather than replaced the already existing institutions based on patronage.	Macroeconomic instability and hyperinflation. Inclusion into the pension system of thousands of new retirees representing a high fiscal weight. Plus. Issue Definition: Public Administration reform would tackle chronic fiscal deficits. Agenda Setting: The reform was a “necessity” Positive feedback: equation of public salaries with the private sector. Media and universities expressed their

		<p>s support to the reform.</p> <p>Negative feedback: Minister of Planning and Secretary of the Presidency did not consider the reform as a priority. The Unions saw the reform as a threat to their bargaining power.</p> <p>Decisions react to: endogenous (top-up) forces. First the support of governors, then the support of the President.</p>
Chile	<p>Despite the introduction of civil service reforms up until the mid-90's presidents, ministers and other high-level officials had ultimate control over appointments through a process of review of candidates as a way of "rationalizing" patronage appointments. Appointments were the result of bargaining process between political parties and not the actual implementation or merit-based recruitment processes. The proposed reform did not substitute the former institutions; it only added some elements to it.</p>	<p>Corruption Scandal. Government loses popularity</p> <p>Issue Definition: public administration reform would give the government legitimacy.</p> <p>Agenda Setting: government losing popularity and opposition paving the way to their eventual triumph.</p> <p>Positive feedback: Public declarations made by the Minister of Public Work</p> <p>Negative feedback: the decision makers rushed to implement the reforms in such a way that no negative feedback was found.</p> <p>Decisions react to: endogenous forces (top-down) president losing popularity</p>
Argentina	<p>1973 Decree establishing that civil servants would be chosen only after they approve a public concourse. After two years was suspended due to austerity measures"</p> <p>1983 creation of the Secretariat of Civil Service however less than a year after its creation it stopped its activities.</p> <p>Since 2002 and despite the change of Administration in 2003, no significant change to the Civil Service has been generated</p>	<p>Economic and fiscal crisis, inflation of more than 2,600% annually. Macroeconomic stabilization that granted the government public support.</p> <p>Issue Definition: urgency for controlling the macroeconomic stability and doing more with less</p> <p>Agenda Setting: desire of the Unions to protect the membership of its members.</p> <p>Positive feedback: control of the economic crisis by the government which gave them more room to implement other reforms as they had the support of the public opinion</p> <p>Negative feedback: no negative feedback was found</p> <p>Decisions react to: endogenous forces (top-down) through the law of "economic emergency" that provided the executive with a broad power to rule without the necessity of a approval by the legislative.</p>

The following table shows the introduction of reforms through the lenses of Institutional Isomorphism.

It is important to highlight that the three forms of isomorphism are not excludable and sometimes overlap each other. Evidence of coercive isomorphism was found in two of the three countries: Chile (through the influence of the United Nations Development Program) and Argentina (through the influence of the World Bank). No evidence was found on the influence of international organizations in the introductions of reforms in Brazil. In fact, both the WB and the IMF were aware of the reforms but never showed interest in what was happening in Brazil, it was only after the reforms were introduced that the two organizations became active sponsors of the “Brazilian experiment”.

Features of mimetic isomorphism were also found in all the three countries, all of them inspired in developed countries that have introduced civil-service reforms to a wider extent. Finally, features of normative isomorphism were also found in the three cases. In Chile and Argentina through the development of assistance schemes either with other country or with an International Organization and in the case of Brazil through the selection of a selective group of professionals.

Table 10 - Institutional Isomorphism to explain the introduction of reforms

	Coercive Isomorphism	Mimetic Isomorphism	Normative Isomorphism
Brazil	No evidence of coercive isomorphism was found as WB and IADB were not interested in civil service reforms.	1998 Joint program with the UK to implement a managerial reform (after the reforms were approved) 2000 Cooperation agreement with the EU to implement the administrative reforms	First reform was proposed by the Brazilian School of Public and Business Administration (EBAPE). Second reform came from an elitist group of professionals from the Getulio Vargas Foundation
Chile	Mission Report of the UNDP 1990	New Senior Public Management was inspired in New Zealand’s experience.	Politicians and civil servants travelling to New Zealand to understand the managerial reforms in this country. Second, the reform in Chile was defined by a Think Tank, the Commission of Political Studies (CEP) and the participation of Universities
Argentina	WB developed a “blueprint” to reform the judiciary system that would increase efficiency, transparency and public administration performance.	Government Administration Body inspired in the French Model of bureaucratic administration.	Development of several programs and assistance schemes between Argentinean officials and members of the World Bank

Chapter IX: Conclusions

Public Administration reforms can be bureaucratic or managerial. According to the World Bank public administration reforms are a sequencing process. Meaning they need to be implemented before managerial reforms. However, the countries analyzed in this study show that the introduction of public administration reforms after the reestablishment of democracy were a combination of both bureaucratic (career-civil service) and managerial (performance indicators, awards, etc) reforms, without one necessarily happening after the full completion of the other. Along this research I was focusing on the introduction of one specific aspect bureaucratic public administration reforms: career-civil service.

Reformers of all political inclinations have suggested the introduction of career civil service as an antidote to corruption, nepotism and inefficiency. Based on the argument that a career-civil service would increase efficiency and professionalism since only those that are more capable of performing a task would be chosen, reforms have been introduced as a part of a rhetoric to increase legitimacy. However and even though every single country in Latin America have included career civil service principles into their legal frameworks, the extent to which each country have implemented those principle varies tremendously.

Main research question

After analyzing the context that led to the introduction of reforms in Argentina, Chile and Brazil, we will now answer our main research question: *How can neo-institutionalism theories explain the introduction of merit-based recruitment processes to hire civil servants in Brazil, Chile and Argentina?*

The reform of Public Administration has been on the Agenda of Latin American countries for decades. Some countries first implemented career-civil service reforms as early as the decade of the 30's or 50's but a common factor was that many of these reforms were interrupted during the military rule. Therefore, the re-establishment of democracy seemed to be an important element to consider for several reasons: first the inclusion of other actors in the decision-making process that would normally be excluded in a rigid military regime, for example: the Unions in Argentina and Brazil and the universities in Chile and Brazil; second for pressures exerted by the citizenship demanding better, more efficient and less corrupt governments as in Chile; and third for the constant seek of legitimacy that characterize the young democracies.

Some authors suggest that most public administration reforms have been an attempt to make the State more efficient after economic or fiscal crisis, -an event that can be a "critical juncture"-. This assumption was proven right in Argentina and in Brazil. In the late 80's and early 90's both countries faced fiscal and macroeconomic crisis with hyperinflation reaching 2600% on an annual basis. This context was favorable for the introduction of Public Administration reforms that included career-civil service changes under the argument that having a more efficient bureaucracy would lead to a more cost-effective use of resources. However Chile had a great economic performance -compared to the rest of the countries in the region- during the 80's and 90's, therefore fiscal or economic crisis cannot be used to explain its introduction of career-civil service reforms. The Chilean case is very interesting because like in no other country in the region, citizens

have been vocal in demanding better governments. Therefore the “critical juncture” in Chile was not the economic or fiscal crisis like was the case in the other two countries, but a crisis of legitimacy after a corruption scandal. This punctuation forced the approval of reforms that were proposed earlier but due to a lack of “sense of urgency” were not approved by the Congress.

Sub research questions

To what extent have Argentina, Brazil and Chile introduced merit-based recruitment processes to hire public employees?

Brazil was the first country in implementing in its Constitution career-civil service during the late 30's. Argentina followed during the 50's and Chile during the 80's. However, the early introduction of reforms is not an indicator of better career-civil service as all these reforms were interrupted during the military regimes.

Even though the three countries have included into their legal framework the principle of career-civil service; the recruitment based on concursos and exams and the promotion based on merit and not only seniority, the extent to which each country has succeeded to fully implement these reforms varies across them. Generally there is a gap between *de jure* and *de facto* practices related to the implementation of reforms. For example, in Argentina, even though the legislation established the principle of meritocracy, merit system lives side by side with clientelism in recruitment and selection in hiring and a proof of it is the designation of transitory political positions where those positions should have been appointed by concursos.

The merit-hiring score of the Inter American Development Bank ranks the countries from 0 to 5 being 5 the most meritocratic and 0 the less. According to this index, only Brazil is ranked at the higher level with 4-5 points, affirming that it has an open recruitment system based on sustainability, with guarantees against arbitrariness, where hiring is based on competences using valid instruments and where there were no proofs of arbitrary firings. Chile is ranked in the second position with 3 points, affirming that there is a predominance of technical criteria for recruitment, hiring, promotion and firing of personnel, however, due to the bi-party system, many appointments—even though are very qualified- continue to be the result of political appointments or patronage. Finally Argentina is ranked in the third position with 2 points affirming that the merit system live side by side with clientelism in recruitment, selection and hiring.

Even though Brazil and Chile have been recognized as the two countries with the most modern public administrations in the region, still much work needs to be done as some features of patronage and political appointments of positions that should be filled by concourse were found. However, the important progress that these two countries have achieved should not be disregarded.

To what extent can these reforms be explained by Historical Institutionalism?

The two key mechanisms of Historical Institutionalism are path dependency and punctuated equilibrium. Path dependency is useful to explain persistence once a policy has been implemented. During colonial times, the three countries have in common three things: they were

extractive colonies (from two different empires, but extractive colonies at the end) with a centralized decision-making system and political appointment based on patronage. Even though along this research we did not include into our time frame the colonial period, these elements have been claimed to be embedded across time and to be determinant for path dependency. Features of path dependency were found in the three countries. In all three cases, the introduction of civil service reforms in the 20th century added rather than replaced previous establishments, and yet in the 21st century it is difficult to affirm that merit systems have fully replaced patronage, on the contrary, they seem to live in symbiosis.

Punctuated equilibrium on the other hand explains shifts from path due to a specific event or a critical juncture. In Argentina and in Brazil, the punctuation that led to a path shift was found in the economic and fiscal crisis and the urgency of having a more efficient way that followed the principle of “doing more with less”. In Chile on the other hand, the trigger event was a corruption scandal that decreased the levels of popularity of the government in power. It is argued that the voice of the citizens in Chile have had the capacity to put pressure on the government and influence the decision-making process, in an environment marked by the desire of Chile of joining the OECD, having a clean record on corruption and increasing its levels of popularity and legitimacy was a must.

To what extent can these changes be explained by Institutional Isomorphism?

Institutional Isomorphism explains homogeneity among institutions rather than differences. Even though some of the reforms introduced in the three cases have been inspired by the public administration reforms in the Anglo-Saxon countries, there were not identical to those in the developed world as they were led by different conditions in different times. In addition the reforms in Latin America did not follow the common belief that “managerial reforms can only be implemented after bureaucratic reforms because they are part of a sequencing process”.

No evidence of coercive or mimetic isomorphism prior to the implementation of reforms was found in Brazil. It has been claimed that in Brazil reforms of the State Apparatus were not influenced by international organizations like the World Bank or the IADB. It was only after the reforms were implemented that these two organizations and CLAD started to promote the “Brazilian experiment” and their documents became a reference for upcoming reforms in the region. Features of mimetic isomorphism were found after the implementation of reforms, in 1998 with a cooperation agreement between the Brazilian government and United Kingdom. Therefore for this case Institutional Isomorphism is not the best theory to explain introduction of changes in Brazil.

In Chile evidence of coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism was found prior to the inclusion of the reforms by the Congress in 2003. A form of coercive isomorphism was found in the report of the UNDP released in the early 90's suggesting a set of reforms to be implemented. Mimetic isomorphism has been claimed to be found in the homogenization of reforms inspired in the experience of New Zealand. During the mid nineties Chilean bureaucrats participated in exchanges (seminars and workshops) in New Zealand to study and understand the implementation of reforms in that countries, this was the first evidence of normative isomorphism. The team in charge of defining the reforms –a think tank working in collaboration with universities related to

the public management- can be considered to be another form of normative isomorphism. Therefore the Chilean introduction of public administration reforms can better be explained by the theory of institutional isomorphism.

Finally in Argentina, evidence of coercive and normative isomorphism shaped by the World Bank were found in 1998 with the introduction of a judiciary reform aimed at making the State more efficient, more transparent and to improve its public administration. Different to the type of coercive isomorphism found in Chile (which were more a set of recommendations) in Argentina, the Bank developed the reforms without the participation of local stakeholders, it developed a "blueprint" that was later "adapted" to Argentina's reality and this could be a reason to explain the failure of the positive outcome of the reforms.

Limitations of this study

It is important to highlight that as any other research, this study found some limitations on its way. First, regarding external validity the limitation is that generalization to population is not possible, but generalization to theory or the so-called 'theoretical generalization' by selecting crucial cases for the theoretical discourse is possible. Second, regarding the theories chosen to explain the introduction of merit based-recruitment process, I am aware that several different theories could have also been useful in explaining the introduction of changes, for example rational choice theory or interest group theories among others. However the selection of only two theories of the neo-institutionalism approach was a conscious decision. The wave of reforms in Public Administrations in developing countries have been long processes that occurred in several stages and only after these reforms were fully implemented in most developed countries; therefore analyzing the reforms through the lenses of historical institutionalism and institutional isomorphism was a logical option.

Another important limitation is related to the data collection process. This was a desk research, and as such finding relevant and reliable information was not always easy. Evaluating the meritocracy in a country is not an easy task. One thing is to have a legal framework that includes the principle of meritocracy and another totally different thing is to have a fair system that actually implements and follow through that legislation. Normally there is a gap between *de jure* and *de facto* practices and information available about that gap is many times not well documented and therefore it was not found on the three cases.

Recommendations for further studies

This research was aimed at contributing to theoretical discourse on the factors that best explain the introduction of merit-based recruitment processes in Latin America. However, further and deeper research is needed. Therefore, my recommendations would be: first to expand the time frame going back to the institutional arrangements during colonial times. Several features of that period are claimed to be shapers of public administration in these countries: i) they were all extractive colonies; ii) with a centralized decision-making system led by their respective colonizers; iii) a system characterized by personalistic relations. Therefore, and seeing that Historical Institutionalism takes history very seriously, analyzing more years would provide us with more elements to understand the reforms.

Second, I have analyzed the introduction of reforms only after the reestablishment of democracy after several decades of military rule. It would be interesting to analyze other countries that have implemented reforms but whose democracies have not been interrupted, for example Costa Rica, the only country in Latin America that did not face a military dictatorship during the 20th century.

Third, to close the gap on available information between *de jure* and *de facto practices*, I would suggest collecting primary information through extensive interviews of actors involved: civil servants, members of the evaluation committees of the concursos, candidates applying to the concursos, members of the judicial courts etc. This was not done in this study because it was not my aim. My focus was to explain the introduction of reforms, but now that we are aware why these reforms have been introduced, it would be interesting to continue explaining how these reforms have been implemented and to what extent.

Annex 1. Literature Review

Max Weber's Bureaucracies

Government's Policy formulation and its implementation is shaped by the state apparatus and the delegation of responsibilities to bureaucratic officials who will be in charge of turning policies into outcomes. Therefore, the means by which these bureaucrats are selected will have an impact on policy processes and state performance. In his work *Essays in Sociology* (1949) Max Weber highlighted the principle of fixed jurisdictional areas which are generally ordered by laws or administrative regulations aimed at guaranteeing that only those persons that have qualifications to serve will be employed (Weber, 1949, pág. 196). He also highlighted the principle of office hierarchy in which the higher officials supervise the lower ones; and the principle of office management that presupposes that all specialized office managers receive training (Ibidem, pp 198). Regarding the characteristics of the official, Weber established that he/she must have a 'vocation' to hold his/her office and to intrinsically accept a set of obligations, such as establishing loyalty to impersonal and functional purposes and not to a *person*, therefore avoiding patronage.

For Weber, bureaucratic organization based on laws, hierarchy and impersonality must triumph over more personal and traditional forms of organization. As he would have argued, patrimonial States in which rulers personally control the administrative apparatus and allocate positions based on their own preferences cannot provide sufficient order and continuity for modern societies. The 'leased prerogatives' of prebends, a characteristic of patrimonial societies is simply not conducive to such development (Weber, 1949, pág. 207). For Weber and for more recent generations of public reformers (Rauch and Evans, Iacovello, Grindle), career civil service systems will depoliticize public sector, they would turn the attention of bureaucrats from the private orientation of loyalty to a person or party to a public orientation of loyalty to an institution or to the State (Grindle, 2012, pág. 31). Civil service reforms would ideally represent a halt to corruption, nepotism, favoritism, incompetency, lack of professionalism, inequity and injustice.

It is argued that merit-based recruitment systems might lead to more productive officials, and therefore more efficient bureaucracies when compared to other methods of recruitment, such as clientelism or patronage. Many studies emphasize the importance of meritocratic selection of state officials and its impact on state performance (Hollyer, 2010, pág. 2). For example, in 1993 the World Bank attributed the great economic growth of the Asian Tigers to their high quality of governance, where bureaucracies in these states resulted from extremely competitive meritocratic process of the recruitment of officials (Ibidem).

Central Concepts

In this paragraph some central concept essential for this research study will be explained. The following concepts will be elaborated on: bureaucracies, clientelism, patronage and career civil service.

Bureaucracies

The types of bureaucracy will determine the type of recruitment process that Public Administrations use to hire their employee. Understanding the differences between these types is necessary in order to grasp the internal dynamic of state apparatus. In an attempt to classify the different types of bureaucracies, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) has developed four categories:

Administrative or Classic Bureaucracies: this type of bureaucracies is generally characterized by low capacity and relatively high independence. They are formed by the apparatus that exercises administrative functions in all the ministries and sectors of the state, and are normally covered by formal rules of merit, which are not applied in practice and which represent frustrated or halfway attempts to develop a classic Weberian bureaucracy. Officials have gained their posts on political criteria rather than merit, but they can have stability. This type of bureaucracy has little capacity to exercise an active role in the decision-making and implementation cycles of public policy. Its limited capacity prevents effective influence in the decision-making phase, which takes place mostly in the political superstructure of the ministries from which it is disconnected. (Echeverría & Carlos, 2007, pág. 148).

Clientelistic Bureaucracies: these types of bureaucracies are characterized by low levels of independence and capacity. Officials enter the government temporary under criteria of confidence of party affiliation. The role of this configuration is linked to its character as a political resource of the governing party, which exchanges jobs for votes or political support. This bureaucracy is another extension of the political party actor, with some capacity of veto over the professional or merit-based segments of the bureaucracy, with which it can enter into conflict. Its role in policy making or implementation is almost irrelevant, except on the most operative level of simple and routine tasks. (Ibidem, pp 149)

Parallel Bureaucracies: it has a low level of independence and high levels of capacity. It is technical. Its name is due to the fact that it is not part of the permanent structure, although in some countries the cadres are successively renewed. The groups of officials offer their expertise in very specific areas and generally do not answer to a specific political party. Their participation in the public policy cycle differs according to the position they occupy. One version consists of teams of technical advisers who play a key role in the design of policy alternatives in proximity to the head of the executive branch. Another version is more focused on guaranteeing execution of policies, projects, or the effective delivery of certain public services. (Ibidem)

Merit-based Bureaucracies: these types of bureaucracies are characterized by high levels of independence and high levels of capacity. They are formed by officials recruited on merit and assimilated into professional careers with a series of incentives for the professional performance of their work. These are bureaucracies that give opinions and act. Most of them have specific responsibilities, such as areas of public policy that require a degree of training or differential knowledge, that gives them influence over the area in which they act and converts them into important factors for maintaining the stability and public-interest orientation of policies (Echeverría & Carlos, 2007, pág. 151).

Bureaucracies in Latin America are not homogenous organizations. In fact they are very different institutions that react to different configurations of independence or autonomy and capacity (Echeverría & Carlos, 2007, pág. 146). It is worth highlighting that this classification of bureaucracies is not excludable, therefore, one country might have some features of one type of bureaucracy and it can combine it with features or another type of bureaucracy. With the above mentioned information, this paper is not attempting to classify the bureaucracies in each country but more to use it as general information to better understand the differences between the types of bureaucracies, their capacities and levels of independence as a way of increasing the insights on bureaucrats' willingness and capability to implement government's policies.

Clientelism

The term of clientelism refers to a complex chain of personal bonds between political patrons or bosses and their clients. These bonds are founded on mutual material advantages, as the patron offers resources such as jobs or money to his/her clients and in exchange, they a client returns his/her support and cooperation that normally takes the form of party support, votes, attendance to rallies, etc. In its origins, clientelism was used to describe village and neighborhood politics. However, nowadays its use has extended to characterize entire political systems (Brinkerhoof & Goldsmith, 2002, pág. 4) to the extent that some academics have used it to describe political systems in developing countries. For example, Martz (1997) referring to Latin America affirms that clientelism is an "enduring mechanism of control in society...identifiable in all times and settings". Clientelism can take many forms in different environments, but some basic characteristics highlighted by Kaufman (1974) can be identified: first clientelism is the relationship that occurs between actors of unequal power and status; second, it is based on the principle of reciprocity, that is, it is a self-regulating form of interpersonal exchange, that ceases once the expected rewards fail to materialize; and third in clientelistic practices, the relationship is particularistic and private, anchored only loosely in public law or community norms (Brinkerhoof & Goldsmith, 2002, pág. 4)

Patronage

Sorauf (1960) defined patronage as an "incentive system, - a political currency - with which to purchase political activities and political responses" (Bearfield, 2009, pág. 2). In the words of Grindle (2012), patronage systems in public services are similar to extended pyramids of contracts between superiors and multiple subordinates, in which a job in the public sector is exchanged for loyalty in some form. According to her, power in patronage appointments moves downwards while loyalty flows upwards (Grindle, 2012, pág. 20), while this contract is informal and unwritten it is still clearly understood by both parts.

It is important to clarify that all political systems—even the most advanced democracies- accept to some extent some form of patronage, therefore when referring to patronage in this research, I will be referring to patronage *systems* where discretionary appointment of public officials is the only known route to a nonelected position, this is of course opposed to career or merit-based systems.

Career civil service

In career civil service or merit-based systems, the preponderance of non-elected public sector jobs are filled through a process of credentialing based on education, examination, or some other tests of merit. It has a career ladder that is accessed through regularized demonstrations of credentials of education, tenure in office and other forms of assessing merit. In this system the official performs duties for the state and not for the patron, and the rules of the game are formally objectified through regulations and procedures.

According to Marcelo Ramos (1998), a career system must have the following elements: i) it should guarantee that public employees respond to the public interests, or the interests of the State; ii) it should ensure the constant motivation of public employees; and iii) it should emphasize the necessary professionalization as a mean of ensuring that public employees have the necessary qualifications to perform their duties (De Matos Ramos, 1998, pág. 34) .

Patronage systems as opposed to merit based or career civil service systems impair fair competition for jobs on the basis of neutral examinations and protection of public employees from political influence (Grindle, 2012, pág. 21). According to Grindle, one of the key distinctions between patronage and career civil service systems is the nature of the contract between the employee and the employer. In the former, the contract is based in a principle of political or personal reciprocity between employee and employer, in the latter the contract is between the employee and the institution or the State, it is based in rules and it is impersonal. Max Weber distinguished between prebendal and bureaucratic organizations. In the former, offices are generally purchased while in the latter officials are generally recruited through meritocratic processes (Hollyery, 2009, pág. 2). Weber suggested that the idea of merit is inherent to civil service systems in contemporary bureaucracies. The reason behind it being that it would guarantee that public servants are servants of the state and not of patrons or other individuals (Parrado & Salvador, 2011). In his words, modern public service is a *vocation* that encompasses duties to the office and more specifically to the State (Weber, 1949, pág. 199).

The World Bank has also highlighted the importance of meritocracy in State performance. In 1993 it released the report *East Asian Miracle* which emphasized the positive role played by East Asian bureaucracies in the region's rapid industrialization (Rauch & Evans, 1999, pág. 750), during the 70's and 80's Korea and Taiwan were recognized as the most economically successful nations in the world which created a strong prima facie case in favor (Ibidem) of the hypothesis that Weberian states were key to achieve economic growth and development.

What explains the introduction of merit-based civil services?

Early studies have focused on many different reasons to explain the performance of bureaucracies and the introduction of merit-based recruitment processes. Some of these studies have focused on democracy and income as elements that determine bureaucratic selection. One common line of argument in favor of democracy and its link with Weberian States suggests that democratic governments have incentives to select the most capable and qualified individuals to perform jobs in Public Administrations, while autocrats might not face similar incentives (Hollyer, 2009). The reason that explains this argument is, according to Egorov and Sonin (2004) that highly competent

bureaucrats are better able to remove the government than incompetent ones, therefore autocrats face an incentive to choose incompetent officials.

The findings on country income and Weberian states are mixed; one line of arguments establishes a correlation between higher income and better bureaucratic performance based on the idea that generally highly developed bureaucracies are more likely to be found in developed economies where GDP and GDP per capita as measures of income are certainly higher than in developing countries (World Bank, 1993). However, for Rauch and Evans (1999) this suggestion might be simplistic, in their work *Bureaucracies and growth: a cross national analysis on the effect of Weberian State structures in economic growth*, they developed an original dataset where they examined the characteristics of state economic agencies and growth records of a sample of 35 developing countries for the period 1970-1990 and they concluded that:

“Virtually no association emerged between the degree of approximation to Weberian characteristics and initial levels of per capita income in this sample of developing countries. In this sample of developing countries at least, it is hard to argue that past growth or higher levels of income are important causes, in themselves, of more Weberian states. Put more optimistically, it seems that low levels of per capita income are not necessarily a barrier to achieving more competent and coherent state bureaucracies” (Rauch & Evans, 1999, pág. 756).

Other authors consider the influence of international organizations to be an important element in the promotion and introduction of reforms aimed at modernizing the State, they refer specifically to the programs launched by the United Nations and its agencies during the late 80's and early 90's such as “modernization of the State”, “Public sector modernization” and “Strengthening and reform of the State” (Ramió & Salvador, 2008, pág. 556), but also to public administration reforms initiatives launched by the Inter American Development Bank, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund according to the authors, the recognition and legitimacy of these programs motivated many Latin American countries to introduce Public Administration reforms.

Grindle (2012) explains the transition from patronage to civil service systems through a rational argument: politicians approve reforms when electoral outcomes indicate that parties used to regular opportunities to win elections are no longer assured of repeated victories. Under these conditions, politicians who promise jobs to their followers in the event of an electoral victory might agree to a system in which some of their supporters can gain tenure in public office and will then not suffer the loss of those jobs when power is delivered to other parties by the voters. Therefore politicians who have depended on the promise of patronage to win elections face partisan incentives to regularize jobs in a merit-based civil service system (Grindle, 2012, pág. 26). According to the author, this argument rests on a view of patronage systems tied to party identity and the electoral rationality of those who approve the introduction of a merit-based system even if they may not have advocated for.

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