

LABOR RELATIONS BEFORE THE LIFE VERSUS ECONOMY DILEMMA DURING THE NEW CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC

Samuel Soares de Souza Santos

Master, Professor EBTT/Física, Instituto Federal do Amazonas, Campus Tabatinga, IFAM CTB

Geovana Viana de Oliveira

Administration Technician, Instituto Federal do Amazonas, Campus Tabatinga, IFAM CTB

Joaquim dos Santos Ferreira

Specialist in Business Environmental Management, Instituto Federal do Amazonas, Campus Tabatinga, IFAM CTB

Lidiane Garcia Bressan

Master, Professor EBTT/Matemática, Instituto Federal do Amazonas, Campus Tabatinga, IFAM CTB

Vanessa Alvarado de Lima

Bachelor of Business Administration, Universidade Federal do Amazonas, Instituto Natureza e Cultura, INC UFAM

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Abstract: In this work we present the results of the Course Conclusion Work entitled: *Transformations in labor relations resulting from public management actions in the face of the life versus economy dilemma during the new coronavirus pandemic*, which was defended within the scope of the integrated technical course in Administration in December 2020 and whose main purpose was to contribute to the public debate about the actions that were being carried out by public management to combat the effects of the covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Pandemia, covid-19, dilemas éticos, Vida versus Economia.

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic of the new coronavirus brought to view the ethical dilemmas that incorporate decision-making in the public interest and other segments of society. In his investigation into the moral dilemmas of public management in the face of the pandemic, Santos (2020) argues that “because it is a situation of public interest and generalized responsibility, the structures that are at the forefront of its management linked to the Public Administration”. Notwithstanding this, the author also highlights the participation of other segments, such as market, religious, scientific and civil society institutions (SANTOS, 2020).

THEORETICAL REFERENCE

Regarding the apparent dilemma Life versus Economy that was constituted in the pandemic, several researchers affirm that it is an impossible choice to be made, because the quality of life implies its sustainability through the production of goods and services and the precise production of consumers of such goods (SCHRAMM, BORGES & FORTES, 2020). In this sense, the solution currently in force is to save lives and emphasize health services thanks to the general confinement

of the population or, at least, the populations considered more vulnerable (SCHRAMM, BORGES & FORTES, 2020).

According to Schramm, Borges & Fortes (2020), the economic effects of social isolation adopted by most states were already expected, such as a drop in the production of goods, a decrease in tax collection, an increase in unemployment and a decrease in wages. Considering this, “the State must get into debt and provide resources to those who need it most”, knowing that allowing mass infection “can completely disorganize the economy and the public health system” (SCHRAMM, BORGES & FORTES, 2020).

However, as a result of the economic effects experienced with the suspension of non-essential commercial activities, “the pressure from entrepreneurs for the liberalization and flexibility of the operation of commerce and industry is very strong and mayors and governors give in to pressure (VASCONCELOS & VASCONCELOS, 2020). Shops close their doors and then return with their routine activities in the middle of the pandemic.

BUT WHAT EXACTLY ARE MORAL DILEMMAS?

Moral and ethical dilemmas can be defined as any situation in which there is a conflict between the various moral values of a certain group of people and the available options for action (COHEN, 2012). According to the author, these are also situations in which the conflict generated between different values and beliefs does not present a totally good solution and another totally bad option, implying, however, in positive and negative repercussions at the same time. The dilemma situation requires a deep reflection about the possible alternatives available to the subjects that face it, as well as a deep analysis about the degree of importance of the moral values

that govern their social and political conduct. Taking as conceptual frameworks the procedural properties of ethical dilemmas, that is, aspects related to decision making, Santos (2019) defines moral and ethical dilemmas as:

“[...] experiencing a tension between the possible paths of moral action in the search for the best decision in a given circumstance seen from the perspective of those who interact with the moral dilemma” (SANTOS, 2019).

Santos (2020) makes us observe six subdilemmas arising from the great dilemma life versus economy, namely: social isolation: necessity, restriction of rights and/or civic/moral responsibility; big data in pandemic management: “big brother” or management tool; health professionals: honor the profession, protect the family and self; emergency aid: need, bureaucratization and possibility of deviations; suspension of classes and educational activities; release of prisoners as a measure to contain the pandemic.

According to Batista (2020), Covid-19 has spread with destructive force across the planet, putting to the test the management capacity of managers in the various affected nations. And this ended up showing the skills of various public actors, leaders and managers, to achieve success against the crisis or reveal the fragility of their management structure when the population needs it most (BATISTA, 2020). As well emphasized by the author, “so much has been expected of the public manager, in all spheres of power – from the chief executive to the congress, from ministers of state to mayors” (BATISTA, 2020).

In this pandemic context, labor relations feel intense effects. Many lost their jobs, and those who remained learned to deal with the changes generated, as well as the new routine, a new pattern of relationships, and a new work journey. The pandemic has highlighted

the unsustainability of Brazilian companies, pointing out deficiencies at all levels of business and the indispensability of personal/family and business financial education.

LIFE VERSUS ECONOMY: A DILEMMA OF BRAZILIAN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

In the Brazilian case, one of the great critics of the policy of adopting social isolation as a preventive measure was the current president of the Republic Jair Bolsonaro, whose statements were on the covers of journalistic articles (ALVES, 2020). In one of his statements to the press, the president stated that:

Soon the people will know that they were deceived by these governors and by much of the media on this issue of the coronavirus. I hope they won't blame me up front for the number of millions and millions of unemployed in my person [...]. We cannot politicize this here, I only said this because they constantly attack me [...]. The mainstream media, governors, watching my chair, if they can anticipate my departure, they will do it there, but for my part, they will not have the opportunity to do so, we will continue our role [...]. More important than the economy is life. But we cannot extrapolate the dose, with unemployment there, the catastrophe will be greater [...]. I don't work with projections of numbers, I don't interfere in the work of Luiz Mandetta, our minister of health, I see the numbers that come from there, from these projections, and I think there is an exaggeration there [...]. At the moment, my great concern is with people's lives, as well as with the unemployment that is provided by these irresponsible governors [...]. The recommendation is to be calm, calm, not to panic the population, not to exterminate jobs, governors, be responsible [...]. At the moment we already have a problem, governors are the real job killers. Part of the governors, I make it clear, are exterminating jobs in Brazil. This is a much worse crisis than the coronavirus itself has been causing

in Brazil and can still cause. There is hysteria (SALDAÑA, Folha de São Paulo, 2020)

When commenting on the actions of Brazilian public management to combat the proliferation of the new coronavirus, Alves (2020) claims that:

In Brazil, the federal executive government, as long as it could, was reluctant to adopt these measures, initially defining the situation in the country as an imminent danger, which was accompanied by polemical statements by the president of the republic, a subject from whom it was expected, in according to the contemporary philosopher Foucault, postures based on temperance and ethics, since these are characteristics inherent to the condition of being political. For the philosopher, politician is that subject who has mastery of the ability to take care of himself as a condition that enables him to take care of the other, with temperance and ethics being mandatory requirements for the achievement of this condition. However, the history of humanity has revealed that societies, when choosing their representatives, are no longer guided by these principles (ALVES, 2020).

It was in this context that the dilemma or false dilemma of life versus economy emerged, which exerted a strong influence on the decision-making of government agents, as it relates to important decisions that could change the course of history. For philosophy, a moral dilemma is a situation in which the individual is obliged to decide between two disjunctive duties or obligations, always favoring one party and disfavoring the other, which always leads to two disjoint duties or obligations.

In this sense, considering as a starting point the basic principle of the Marxist theory that work is the founding element of human sociability, it is necessary to direct our gaze to the transformations that occurred in labor relations during the pandemic period. Among the main measures adopted by the government

to face the pandemic, the following stand out: teleworking and remote work, Provisional Measure 936/2020, published on April 1, 2020, established the National Program for the Maintenance of Jobs and Income, transfer of resources from PIS-PASEP to FGTS; suspension of payments; credit for the payroll of micro, small and medium-sized companies; credit for the airline sector; credit for the health sector; loans for micro, small and medium-sized companies and for individual entrepreneurs; the exemption from the payroll.

Maranhão and Senhoras assert that the percentage of state resources allocated to face the new coronavirus pandemic was very low in relation to the current size of the Brazilian GDP. According to the authors, more resources are needed to contain the vicious cycles of the pandemic crisis and there is a gap, both in fiscal policy (actions by different ministries, especially Economy and Health), and in monetary policy. (Central Bank) and credit (BNDES). In addition, Maranhão and Senhoras (2020) also point out that:

The BNDES belatedly launched the first measures to reinforce the cash of companies and support workers facing the effects of the coronavirus. The measures will help companies face cash difficulties and keep a few more jobs, but they will not be enough on account of the social isolation policies implemented on the recommendation of the Ministry of Health (MS) and the World Health Organization by states and municipalities against the will of the speeches by the president or even the Minister of the Economy (MARANHÃO e Senhoras, 2020).

In view of the measures and mechanisms adopted by the government, we can find public figures denial of the effects and difficulties faced by the pandemic related to the liquid fear exposed by Bauman (2001; 2007; 2008).

The denialism on the part of the federal public power was evident in its decisions

and statements in view of the catastrophic pandemic situation that Brazil faces. However, it is necessary to understand that this denialism adopted by the current government emerged before the pandemic and has been present since the election campaign period.

In such a critical moment for the history of humanity, a pandemic of such proportions, the denialism of public managers has been opposing all the scientific criteria of contingency of the virus and treatment of the infected, when due support is not given in relation to isolation. social and other health measures, as if each orientation had no scientific basis, as if the scientific community and its ramifications had no value given the problem faced.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The pandemic of the new coronavirus brought with it not only economic losses for the country and incalculable losses for Brazilian families, but also changes in paradigms and a new labor vision, in the face of decision-making resulting from public managers. These changes have generated a series of insecurities and uncertainties regarding the future, but through them it was possible to establish an adaptation process, which often presents itself in an innovative way in the face of our ability to reinvent ourselves in moments of crisis.

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