



ENSINO E PESQUISA EM
ADMINISTRAÇÃO

GROUNDING THEORY: MELHORANDO A PRÁTICA E A PESQUISA EM ADMINISTRAÇÃO NO BRASIL

GROUNDING THEORY: IMPROVING BRAZILIAN
ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Eduardo Angonesi Predebon
Universidade Federal do Paraná - UFPR

Doutor em Administração

Edson Cezar Aguiar
FEA/USP

Doutorado

Claudia Monica Ritossa
UFPR

Doutorado em administração
Mestre em administração pela UFPR

Fabiane Cortez Verdu
UFPR

Doutora em Administração

Paulo Daniel Batista de Sousa
Universidade Federal do Paraná - UFPR

Doutor em Administração

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. Universidade FUMEC / FACE . Prof. Dr. Cid Gonçalves Filho

. Prof. Dr. Luiz Cláudio Vieira de Oliveira . Prof. Dr. José Marcos
Carvalho de Mesquita.

ABSTRACT

The world of academic research is changing rapidly, with new ideas and new approaches being continually added. Consequently, how to undertake socially relevant, theoretically important, and methodologically sound Administration research must increasingly be seen as a critical theme to inform Brazilian scholars across disciplines, and a significant mechanism for transferring expertise out of universities into society. This paper addresses important issues concerning the application of grounded theory in Administration research. It focuses mainly on the feasibility of grounded theory methodology on Administration research with emphasis on the objective of providing an understanding of this established approach in social sciences for qualitative data analysis. Our purpose has been to identify the foundations of this methodology and its implications for Administration research. We therefore

explore the structure and implications of the methodology, advance several propositions concerning its application, and identify directions for further exploration and additional research of this analytic strategy on Administration research. In the conclusion, we summarize suggestions from our analysis for improving the building of grounded Administration theory.

KEYWORDS

Grounded Theory. Administration research. Administration practice.

RESUMO

O mundo da pesquisa acadêmica está mudando rapidamente, com novas ideias e novas abordagens que estão sendo continuamente adicionadas. Por conseguinte, realizar pesquisas socialmente relevantes, teoricamente importantes e metodologicamente sólidas em Administração deve ser, cada vez mais, visto como um tema crítico para informar estudiosos brasileiros em todas as disciplinas, e um mecanismo relevante para a transferência de conhecimentos, das universidades para a sociedade. Este artigo aborda questões importantes, relativas à aplicação da Teoria Fundamentada nas pesquisas em Administração. Ele se concentra, principalmente, sobre a viabilidade da metodologia da Teoria Fundamentada em pesquisas de Administração, com ênfase no objetivo de proporcionar uma compreensão da abordagem estabelecida nas ciências sociais para análise de dados qualitativos. Nosso objetivo foi identificar os fundamentos desta metodologia e suas implicações para a pesquisa em administração. Portanto, nós exploramos a estrutura e as implicações da metodologia, o avanço de várias proposições relativas à sua aplicação, e identificamos as direções para uma maior exploração e pesquisa adicional desta estratégia analítica na pesquisa em administração. Na conclusão, resumimos nossas sugestões de análise para melhorar a construção da teoria fundamentada em Administração.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Teoria Fundamentada (Grounded Theory). Pesquisa em Administração. A prática da Administração.

INTRODUCTION

The major challenge to any researcher or scholar is to contribute to the development of knowledge and to transfer this expertise within the society. Thus, research fills a vital and important role in society, it is the means by which discoveries are made, and ideas are confirmed or refuted, events controlled or predicted and theory developed or refined. All of these functions contribute to the development of knowledge. However, no single research approach fulfills all of these functions, and the contribution of qualitative research is both vital and unique to the goals of research in general. Qualitative research enables us to make sense of reality, to describe and explain the social world and to develop explanatory models and theories (MILES; HUMERMAN, 2003). It is the primary means by which the theoretical foundations of social sciences may be constructed or re-examined.

Social research today is highly diverse in nearly every respect, including methodology. The previous decades have seen an increase in the range of research approaches that are considered acceptable for Administration research. There is now widespread acknowledgement of qualitative research as a valuable and valid research approach. However, qualitative research covers a plurality of research paradigms, within which there are many research methods, research processes and techniques. The existing methods, processes, and techniques used on a regular basis and replicated by disciplines do not allow for properly conceiving the redefining of problems. Thus, there is a need for addressing persistently methodological issues to innovate and

create an interdisciplinary foundation for knowledge in Administration.

In Administration studies, the relations between theories and encapsulated knowledge appear multifaceted: theories provide for concepts upon which instruments are contrived; at the same time, instruments create knowledge for those who take action in organizations, and also for researchers; but also to a certain extent, instruments have their own autonomy in regard of Administration theories – the cognitive autonomy (BAIRD, 2004). All these aspects are at work in the structuring of any particular field of investigation where methodological issues stemming from practice have a major role. Thus, practical methodological issues will certainly lie at the core of Administration studies in the coming years. It is in regard to this consideration that this paper hopes to contribute through relevant aspects.

There are many different research strategies (collecting data through document study, interviews, observation or participation, and analyzing data using hermeneutics, phenomenology or grounded theory) for building interpretive understanding. Our particular interest involves grounded theory, a popular methodology in qualitative research, which is founded on an iterative cycle which is both inductive and deductive where theory is allowed to emerge directly from data and is ultimately tested or grounded against the “real world”. Such methodology enables the development of deep understanding of the complex interaction of people, processes and technology within organizations. The benefits of the methodological richness of qualitative research are balanced by the difficulties of holding the interest

with the diversity of approaches and their associated requirements for quality, validity and rigor. Consequently, this paper presents a methodological framework based on grounded theory methodology, in which research processes, tools and techniques can be selected and implemented in order to build theory in Administration.

GROUNDED THEORY METHODOLOGY

Grounded theory methodology is most accurately described as a research method in which the theory is developed from the data, rather than the other way around. What makes this is an inductive approach, meaning that it moves from the specific to the more general. The method of study is essentially based on three elements: concepts, categories and propositions, or what was originally called "hypotheses". However, concepts are the key elements of analysis since the theory is developed from the conceptualization of data, rather than the actual data. Corbin and Strauss (1990, p. 23) define it as follows: "the grounded theory approach is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon".

The major difference between grounded theory and other methods commonly used in Administration research as, for instance, action research, case study research and ethnography, is its specific approach to theory development, suggesting that there should be a continuous interplay between data collection and analysis. Thus, the primary objective of grounded theory is to expand upon an explanation of a phenomenon by identifying the key elements of that phenomenon, and then

categorizing the relationships of those elements to the context and process of the experiment. In other words, the goal is to go from the general to the specific without losing sight of what makes the subject of a study unique.

Grounded theory contains many unique characteristics that are designed to maintain the "groundedness" of the approach. Data collection and analysis are consciously combined, and initial data analysis is used to shape continuing data collection. This is supposed to provide the researcher with opportunities to increase the density and saturation of recurring categories, as well as to assist in providing follow-up procedures in regard to unanticipated results. Interlacing data collection and analysis in this manner are also designed to increase insights and clarify the parameters of the emerging theory. At the same time, the method supports the actions of initial data collection and preliminary analyses before attempting to incorporate previous research literature. This is supposed to guarantee that the analysis is based on the data and that pre-existing constructs do not influence the analysis and the subsequent formation of the theory. If existing theoretical constructs are used, they must be justified in the data.

Grounded theory provides detailed and systematic procedures for data collection, analysis and theorizing, but it is also concerned with the quality of emergent theory. Strauss and Corbin (1994) state that there are four primary requirements for judging a good grounded theory: a) it should fit the phenomenon, provided it has been carefully derived from diverse data and is adherent to the common reality of the area; b) it should provide

understanding, and be understandable; c) because the data is comprehensive, it should provide generality, i.e., the theory includes extensive variation and is abstract enough to be applied to a wide variety of contexts; and, d) it should provide control, in the sense of stating the conditions under which the theory applies and describing a reasonable basis for action.

IMPLICATIONS OF GROUNDED THEORY METHODOLOGY ON ADMINISTRATION THEORY

The research methodology suggested in this paper is that of grounded theory, with an aim of generating a substantive-level Administration theory. This approach has been effectively used in organizational research and may possibly be adopted for three primary reasons. First, grounded theory is an inductive theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data (LOCKE, 2001). This generative approach seems particularly useful in Administration given that no models of building theory have been established so far. While models of building theory do exist in the Administration context, they are less applicable to the entire stages of research in general focusing or dealing largely with their development stages. Second, a major premise of grounded theory is that to produce accurate and useful results the complexities of the organizational and institutional context have to be incorporated into the understanding of the phenomenon, rather than be simplified or ignored (SELDEN,

2005). Therefore, the use of grounded methodology allows the inclusion and investigation of these key organizational elements. Third, grounded theory facilitates “the generation of theories of process, sequence, and change pertaining to organizations, positions, and social interaction” (GLASER; STRAUSS, 1967, p. 114). Thus, a research approach that specifically includes elements of process and change is particularly appropriate to analyze the Administration milieu.

These three characteristics of grounded theory – inductive, contextual, and processual – fit into an interpretive rather than positivist orientation of research. The focus should be on developing a context-based, process-oriented description and explanation of the phenomenon, rather than an objective, static description expressed strictly in terms of causality (O’CONNOR *et al.*, 2003). As a consequence, the grounded theory methodology gives predominance to realism of context and theoretical and conceptual development as research goals (CLARKE, 2005). Therefore, it could describe and explain the interaction of contextual conditions, actions and consequences of the phenomena in Administration. Finally, the methodology of grounded theory is interactive, requiring a steady movement between concept and data, as well as comparative, requiring a constant comparison across types of evidence to control the conceptual level and scope of the emerging theory. Consequently, this provides an opportunity to examine continuous processes in context in order to draw out the significance of various levels of analysis and thereby reveal the multiple sources of loops of causation and

connectivity so crucial to identifying and explaining patterns in Administration.

While recognizing the importance of all three characteristics and the need to consider them in conjunction with one another, the ever-increasing impact of human activities on the organizations makes the consideration of grounded theory methodology an urgent and critical task. Moreover, the bulk of Administration research from our perspective has studied social phenomena as if they were continuous and organized with cross-sectional research designs. This approach reflects in part the idealized goal of prediction and control, our natural tendency to use research methods we already know, and the typically prohibitive costs of collecting longitudinal data (BREWER; HUNTER, 2006).

MAIN AREAS OF USE OF GROUNDED THEORY METHODOLOGY ON ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH

The following section describes the main areas in which it is proposed that the use of grounded theory methodology on Administration should focus. They aim at reflecting some of the key Administration science questions in which there are increasingly data and where strategies of analysis are not widely used in substantive areas. Grounded theory approaches are becoming increasingly common in the Administration research literature because the method is extremely useful in developing context-based, process-oriented descriptions and explanations of the phenomenon. A few examples of grounded theory methodology approach used for Administration analysis could be found in Browning *et al.* (1995), Sutton (1987), and Isabella (1990). In these

classical studies, the authors applied grounded theory methodology to study Administration themes in organizations to understand the linkage between organizations' contexts, programs and practice, providing conceptual frameworks in an integrative model for comparative analysis and theory building across organizations.

It is intended that this list should be refined and much conceptual and empirical work must be done to test, explore and further develop the structure and implications of the grounded theory methodology. It should also be stressed that the following is not expected to be an exhaustive list but rather a set of exemplars on which the grounded theory methodology could be used. First, there have been large longitudinal surveys for many years; increasingly data are available from a host of large and small scale longitudinal surveys which allow researchers to properly address many substantive areas including, for example, stakeholders' interests, management policy choices, or social-cultural factors. Indeed research into all aspects of the life course can often be placed into context of a qualitative research. In addition to single outcomes such as those highlighted above there is a major imperative to consider multiple risks for example for Administration outcomes such as commitment, reliability, congruence, cost or effectiveness, which may be inter-related. However, strategies to analyze such data are not so well developed. Classical methodologies of analysis were suitable only for continuous dependent variables and even for such variables the approach has been criticized in recent years. Conversely, grounded theory

methodology provides researchers with a clearer method for assessing the data.

Second, many social scientific outcomes are influenced by networks, for example strategic decisions by organizations, political units or agencies may depend on decisions by similar institutions; young people are often placed under peer pressure to undertake certain activities; or in educational institutions, resources or other issues may lead to different networks of learners having very different educational experiences and hence outcomes. In short, there is a wide number of applications of network data in disciplines as diverse as Administration, Economy, Education and Sociology. There have been advances both in data availability and in methodology in recent years but not a commensurate advance in the use of such techniques. Given the potential of such data to address important social scientific questions there still needs to be a push to make the science of collecting network data more widely understood; and to mainstream the analysis of network data into Administration, especially through grounded theory methodology. And, third, an important development in Administration analysis in recent years has been the combination of data from more than one study in a secondary analysis, which improves the knowledge based on the area under study and each new set of data increases our confidence that the research results reflect reality (BREWER; HUNTER, 2006). This can both provide new insights and the evidence for policy decisions and provisions in many areas of organizations, for instance: equal employment opportunity policy; workplace environment policy; information

security and control policy; performance management policy; race, gender and sex policies; and, confidentiality and disclosure of information policy.

However, while there may be a greater potential for grounded theory methodology in the Administration science than it has been the case in the past few decades, many situations where it is either ethically or practically not possible to undertake a grounded research will remain. Thus, there is a multilevel situation to be addressed. Not only are there statistical issues associated with analyzing the data but there are also methodological issues surrounding the creation of such data for example how one should merge data from a number of sources in a coherent and scientific manner. A multilevel perspective may thus add depth and richness to theoretical models and grounded theory studies of topics traditionally examined at just one level of analysis (KLEIN; KOZLOWSKI, 2000).

There are many topics of interest which would benefit from being addressed using the grounded theory methodological approach. For example, the employ of information technology to satisfy the needs of users and organizations; the impact of changing different types of salary payments; the impact of government initiatives on small business success or failure; or the development of new venture formation, growth, and corporate entrepreneurship. In fact, with the increase in Administration areas there is even more need to be able to properly evaluate the effect of policies and hence to elaborate new policy. The longitudinal data sets can be used to address and to inform these policies but it should also be stressed that by its very nature, this is an

issue where one will require the ability to merge data from a number of sources in order to make progress. Examples of situations which have important policy relevance would be: intergovernmental and international relations; human resource management and social equity; environment, science, and technology; organizational effectiveness; labor market; strategic planning; and so forth.

Finally, as our understanding of the complex nature of societies increases, it becomes increasingly important to evaluate these circumstances effectively in order to inform sensible policies. The key areas in which we believe Administration is lacking expertise are research design, data collection, data quality assessment and, indeed, theorizing. None of the extremely exciting or important propositions described in the above areas can be undertaken with any degree of confidence unless the data have been collected sensibly. Making progress in these tasks will require research, experimentation, thought, discussion and commitment from the researchers to the field level. Nevertheless, a measure of encouragement can be derived from the way in which problems, both inside and outside Administration areas, are being addressed and by the innovative approaches that have emerged over the past few years. Consequently, there is a need for research and discussion to consider the many possibilities presented by grounded theory methodologies to develop theories, which properly integrate the multitude of qualitative data sources with those of a more quantitative nature. At last, the aim here is to provide alternatives at the cutting edge issues facing Administration with a view to

developing intellectually-stimulating debate between scholars from a variety of disciplines able to take forward an important research agenda as well as improving its current practice.

IMPLICATIONS OF GROUNDED THEORY METHODOLOGY ON BRAZILIAN ADMINISTRATION THEORY

The grounded theory methodology presented in this section is meant to provide Brazilian Administration researchers with a creative alternative to more traditional research methodologies. The grounded theory approach offers potentially richer and better explanations of Brazilian Administration unfolding and development. One important way it does this is by showing that the nature and extent of individuals, organizations and institutions shape Brazilian Administration performance. This, in turn, has important implications for Brazilian Administration policy, which has long focused exclusively on an economic dimension. Similarly, understanding how stakeholders interact in diverse and poorly understood organizations and communities remains one of the great challenges of Brazilian Administration development.

Three broad recommendations and implications can be offered for incorporating grounded theory methodologies into Brazilian Administration research. First, for development interventions in all sectors and at all levels, especially the country level, grounded theory methodology should be used to identify correctly the range of stakeholders and their interrelations. Understanding how proposed Administration policy interventions will affect the power and political interests of stakeholders is a vital

consideration, since all policy interventions occur in a social context characterized by a delicate mix of informal organizations, networks, and institutions. Second, it is critical to invest in the organizational and the human capabilities of the poor and to help build bridges between communities and social groups in Brazil. The latter is particularly important because many decisions affecting the poor are not made at the local level. To this end, the use of participatory processes can facilitate consensus-building and social interaction among stakeholders with diverse interests and resources. Finding ways and means by which to transcend social divides and build social cohesion and trust is crucial for Brazilian economic development. One of the great virtues of grounded theory methodology is that it provides a common language for these different stakeholders, enabling them to communicate more easily with one another. Third, a grounded theory methodology perspective could add voice to those calling for information disclosure policies at all levels to encourage citizenship and accountability of both private and public actors through fostering information exchange across social groups, complementing social and organizational interaction based on information and knowledge interactions. Although it is too soon to announce the arrival of a new research paradigm, it is not unreasonable to claim that a consensus is emerging about the importance of research methodologies, and especially grounded theory methodology in Brazilian Administration research development. This implies more rigorous evaluations of project and policy impact on Brazilian Administration research, more work on understanding the determinants of Administration itself. It also implies

that practical lessons emerging from Administration projects conducted with grounded theory methodology can themselves be used to inform Brazilian Administration theory.

MAIN AREAS OF USE OF GROUNDED THEORY METHODOLOGY ON BRAZILIAN ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH

In Brazil, Administration has assumed new prominence because of continuing concerns about local and global competition, the internationalization of technology and the productivity of labor. The following section highlights some of the main areas in which it is proposed that the use of grounded theory methodology on Brazilian Administration should focus to gain a better understanding of the context of Brazilian organizations and their environments. They aim at considering some of the key Brazilian Administration science questions in which there are increasingly data and where strategies of analysis are not widely used in substantive areas.

Grounded theory methodology enables researchers to examine current themes on the strategic role of Brazilian Administration and develop analytical and research skills needed to provide theoretical and professional support to organizations in mobilizing their assets and resources to meet business needs and aspirations through a wide-ranging set of areas of research. Several inferences could be drawn concerning key elements of grounded theory methodology for the study of Brazilian Administration, a few themes that emerged are the significance of the economic and social context in shaping and reshaping the Administration arena; the new organizational forms

and relationships; the importance of knowledge management and learning in the workplace; technology adoption, diffusion, and transfer within and across organizations; foreign strategic investments and international cooperative relationships; the links between human resources management and organizational performance; and, public management and government performance at the public-sector.

First, grounded theory methodology could provide an insight into what is considered necessary for gaining sustainable competitive advantage and to overcome normal competitive pressures on Brazilian Administration; particularly, in organizational design; technology; culture; and management policies and practices. Grounded theory methodology will provide a foundation for understanding the character of management and change management through the construction of an understanding of reality, a model or theory which will guide Administration practitioner's action and behavior. Second, the debate on how to manage effectively in contemporaneous organizations has been intensifying. Grounded theory methodology could promote and improve organizational performance through the analysis of the fundamental elements of the organizations' context, for example, institutions and regulatory framework, industry or product markets, and the size and nature of ownership of the organization. These elements will give Administration researchers a strategic view of resourcing, managing performance and increasing organizational capability, broadening the awareness of the choices facing Brazilian organizations, and contributing to build the necessary people

capability to achieve the organization's business goals.

Third, the need for a restructuring towards flat hierarchical structures; the enlargement of job tasks with greater employee autonomy; and, the managerial leadership necessary to shape the more intangible aspects of the workplace, for example, beliefs, norms and values are all topics of interest to Brazilian managers, which would benefit from being addressed using the grounded theory methodological approach. By doing this, Administration researchers would be capable of leading and contributing to successful change in organizations and would also be skilled in identifying required competences to achieve the organization's objectives. Fourth, grounded theory methodology could benefit Administration researchers to analyze the shifting dynamics in Brazilian work patterns, contractual arrangements and organizational design, considering the implications of trends as downsizing, outsourcing, team working and delayering. Therefore, Administration researchers would be able to make better decisions about the design of work structures and relations appropriate to contemporary conditions.

Fifth, Administration researchers could use grounded theory methodology to investigate organizational structuring and restructuring, and the employment relations assessing the potential of training and development initiatives designed to enhance organizations' strategic capability and performance. Consequently, questioning whether the notion of the learning organization is realistic or not; and, if it is, characterizing what are effective at breaking unproductive patterns of behavior and operating

innovatively in a changing Brazilian marketplace. Sixth, Brazilian public-sector managers faces the challenge of making the most of a series of very large cross-national data collection exercises over recent years and grounded theory methodology helps in the analysis of these cross-national data. As the above has indicated these data have a very wide series of applications across the full breadth of the Brazilian Administration science and massive potential applications in government's management policy.

Finally, much further investigation is needed, however, to determine the effects of grounded theory methodology for the study of Brazilian Administration on relevant outcomes in a broad range of critically subjects as social complexity, social competition and legitimizing discourses; as well as the impact of institutionalization, professionalization and bureaucratization. As a result, it is fundamental that we assess carefully the nature of our research problems and ascertain whether they potentially fit a grounded theory profile. In addition, we hope that researchers will take grounded theory frameworks and apply them to a wider range of research problems at either a theoretical or philosophical level in order to assess the potentially grounded nature of Brazilian social phenomena and develop better methods for theorizing such phenomena. By so doing, we are convinced that Brazilian Administration science will understand in much more depth and breadth the contexts which indeed exist in the social systems that surround us.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This paper has set out grounded theory methodology in order to provide guidance and to demonstrate for Administration researchers who wish to draw upon primary information, such as fieldwork and case studies, in order to develop novel knowledge claims that they could work closely with those involved in phenomena being researched, and by bringing together different sources of primary information. However, working closely with data is not synonymous with grounded theory procedures. Instead, grounded theory procedures provide researchers with guidance in articulating novel knowledge pretensions in a mainly inductive manner, beginning with acquaintances with practical knowledge among instances of phenomena.

Grounded theory procedures are formally iterative and this suggests a redefinition of relations between contexts of discovery and verification. Iteration establishes expectations that categorizing information will be provisional, and will be undertaken for different purposes during different phases of a research project. The development of grounded theory procedures provides a basis to reflect upon the practice of inference that is central to articulating general knowledge claims. In addition, grounded theory procedures also draw attention to the role of category formation as part of the research process, whether subsequent techniques of analysis are qualitative or quantitative.

In general, the assumptions of this paper support the argument that Brazilian

Administration research is engaged in modest theory testing. The published papers tend to mainly represent research that is in its early conceptual phase, identifying concepts and issues for future research. However, substantive-level theory is not developed and the persistent lack of empirical research explains the gap that exists between theory and practice in Brazilian Administration. Grounded theory helps to close this gap by providing a methodological framework to assist Brazilian Administration researchers working in an interpretative paradigm to build theory from qualitative data. Under these circumstances, the attempt to close the gap between the ivory tower and the real world may well appear, to some at least, as more convincing. It is, of course, not the argument of this paper that such a move renders grounded theory and practice unproblematic.

The analysis in this paper has tried to weave together issues and theories from different perspectives that, by a large, have been debated by different groups of theoretician in mutual isolation. The main discussion is simply that the theoretician interested in the flourishing of grounded theory methodology would do well to explore the challenges raised in the field. Of course, given the vast scope of the field, it has not been possible to present any knock-down arguments about the limits of a grounded theory methodology. Thus, this paper has not explored all the permutations of Administration, all the possible reforms of organizations that would favor individuals, nor all the case studies of Administration to find structures that facilitate the efficient pursuit of multiple objectives. Our hope is simply to have presented a case why

the Administration theory, and, specially, Brazilian Administration theory, should benefit from a much more thorough exploration of these issues. The more specific discussion is that there is a need for fundamental reconsideration at least when it comes to thinking about Administration research. This should not in any way be taken as a repudiation of other research methodologies. This preliminary discussion was meant to be a modest contribution to the Administration research, a small part of the broader case for the claim that Administration theoreticians, and specially, Brazilian Administration theoreticians, should take a second look at the advantages of a grounded theory methodology or at least at the pitfalls of certain naïve departures from this methodology.

CONCLUSION

Grounded theory methodology is an exciting and promising research area. There is strong indication that it will receive even greater levels of research interest than currently is the case, in the forthcoming years. If researchers draw and apply the lessons and experiences from methodologies such as grounded theory, then Administration has better chance to converge quickly and emerge as an area with substantial intellectual bases and become a strong contributor to knowledge and practice. On the contrary, failure to regard the lessons can lead to a lot of resources being wasted, research capital being spent on unproductive debate, and result in futile exercise in reinventing the wheel. In a country like Brazil with limited financial resources, infrastructure, trained personnel and expertise may benefit from grounded

theory methodology to obtain needed information, analysis and theories. As well as being an effective methodology for researching solutions to common Brazilian Administration problems, this approach can be easily used at the national level, enhancing interinstitutional and interdisciplinary work and the integration of knowledge. Hence, it is necessary to shorten the learning curve and quickly demonstrating the efficacy and veracity of grounded theory methodology as a body of knowledge worthy of scholarship and practice.

The basic purpose of this paper was to provide Administration scientists with an overview of an original body of literature, the grounded theory, and to offer a few suggestions on how it might usefully be applied to the study of Administration. Our hope is that this introductory treatment will help to impose simplicity and coherence on a growing, complex body of research, and that it may serve as a useful starting point for those who wish to pursue these ideas further.

One simple theme deserves emphasis in this conclusion. The works of Glaser, Strauss, and others in grounded theory has to this point been the most promising source of creativity, theoretical and methodological progress; but they have yet to generate the amounts and kinds of theoretical work their proponents had hoped for and probably would have predicted many years earlier. The grounded theory methodology sheds new light on methodology by focusing on theory construction – an elegant suitable focus that captures the essence of organizational relationships

and offers a coherent framework for integrating a myriad of dimensions of Administration performance. For these reasons, among others, many researchers of Administration are likely to find the grounded theory an especially attractive strategy of inquiry and research.

Based on our discussion of the feasibility of grounded theory, we urge Administration scholars to explore the potential of their research questions to accommodate rigorous grounded theory research and to dare to go on using this methodology with all research problems that could benefit from building theory and that allow for empirical inquiry. All areas of the Administration field need theory development. We can not unfortunately point out areas of Administration research that would be in a position to benefit from grounded theory more than other areas. However, we hope that grounded theory research will gain more footholds in all areas of Administration research in the future. In the teaching curricula, and research agendas of universities and colleges, Administration is a promising field, and as such it will benefit from rigorous tries at theory development. Knowledge creation is facilitated by building grounded theory that constantly complements theory-testing (EISENHARDT, 1989), and, specially, Brazilian Administration will need their base of a proper theory. In summary, we believe that grounded theory in general has a lot to offer to the field of Administration. We wish to support the further use of the methodology and hope to have contributed to the spreading of knowledge on its employment. 

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