Planning is Crucial

In late January we had the opportunity to learn about the work of Professor William Eimicke, director of the Picker Center, the executive education center at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University.

He has worked as management consultant to several governments and private organizations, in addition to teaching at universities in Beijing and Singapore.

Eimicke lists planning as the third of four fundamental aspects for a more efficient government, a government that is able to deliver quality services to the population.

The first aspect is the presence of strong political leaders with legitimacy to lead this process. The second aspect is the fiscal equilibrium that allows a minimum planning and that shows the government’s financial capacity for future actions.

Then, comes the strategic planning and, finally, the measurement of results, which allows the effectiveness of the decisions to be reviewed.

As it turns out, the fiscal difficulties faced by the Federal, States and Municipal governments would be an obstacle to the formulation of an effective and comprehensive strategic planning. However, this should not prevent the debate from being initiated, at the risk of spending the next few years with the feeling that we are always trying to minimize the impacts of choices that are not always the most appropriate.

Moreover, even in the current difficult economic climate, it is possible to come across public administrations with better financial stability. This is the case of cities that are part of the “Together for Sustainable Development” (Juntos Pelo Desenvolvimento Sustentável), a program focused on improving management and municipal public services, the program is led by the social organization “Comunitas”.

The program believes that the unity among civil society, public and private sectors is key to promote these changes. The program includes business leaders who form the core of governance, where the strategic decisions are made and the development of the projects is monitored.

The program focuses on actions related to fiscal equilibrium, innovation, strengthening of public leadership and engagement with the society and from 2016 on it will also begin to devote itself to the strategic planning for the partner cities. For it to be real and effective, it needs to be created transparently and it must involve the society, civil organizations, productive sector and the representative bodies in general. Thus, it will not be linked to any political ideology, but to the society itself.

Of course, this debate requires political, social and institutional maturity. After all, a strategic planning must rank priorities, and we know that resources are finite, making it impossible to meet all interests.

As society, we must reflect and choose what the most important issue to be improved is. We must also quantify the investment that is required to accomplish our goal, as well as determine the source of the resources.

Past year was certainly difficult for Brazilians, and 2016 will also be a challenging year. It is natural that, in a crisis, emergency actions are taken.

At the same time, we cannot give up on the structured and serious debate about our future as a society. This process must reach all levels of government, and always with the broad participation of the various sectors of society.

After all, as Professor Eimicke points out, the strategic planning shows how actions that are adopted today can make us reach tomorrow’s goals. It is, therefore, urgent to define which direction we want to, finally, go.

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