

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the diffusion of ISO-9000 certifications in Brazil, through the lens of neo-institutional theory and references on managerial fads in organizations. The assumption is that many of such certification decisions – which became quite popular in Brazilian organizations since 1990 – can only be fully understood if their faddish and institutionalized nature is adequately perceived, and that many of these processes may reflect ceremonial adoption (i.e., “lip-service”). Through an exploratory field survey of 70 cases of ISO 9000 certifications in Brazil, the study attempts to better understand issues related to such programs’ adoption decision process, implementation strategy, perceived results and justification mechanisms. The study found the ceremonial adoption of ISO 9000 to be (a) positively correlated with isomorphic behavior, influence of consultants/gurus, as well as authoritative management styles; and (b) negatively correlated to performance.

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ISOMORPHISM AND CERIMONIALISM IN ORGANIZATIONS: AN EMPIRICAL SURVEY ON THE DIFFUSION OF ISO 9000 CERTIFICATIONS IN BRAZIL*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The quality movement, and particularly its most popular techniques, such as Total Quality Management (TQM) and ISO 9000 certifications, have been quite in vogue approaches in the organizational realm for many years. Albeit the gigantic amount of resources that has been invested in companies worldwide using such labels, scientific efforts to understand such processes have started much too recently. In TQM's case, for example, despite being popular in the West for more than 15 years, it has started to receive concentrated attention from scientific publications only in the past decade (e.g., Academy of Management Review, 1994; California Management Review, 1993; Organizational Dynamics, 1992).

During the 1990s, one of the most notorious diffusion mechanisms of the quality movement was the spread of ISO 9000 certifications. Right after the official launch of the Economic Community (EC) in 1992, when the International Standards Organization (ISO) started measuring ISO 9000 registrations, there were about 25,000 companies certified in 48 countries of the world, 83% of those in Europe (see Exhibit 1). By the end of 2000, there were more than 400,000 ISO 9000 certificates issued, Europe representing a mere 16%, with diffusion spreading across

* The NPP would like to thank the student that participated in the research that produced this report as assistant, Rafael Alcadipani da Silveira.

158 countries. Other accounts suggest that if 1990 is taken as the base year, the number of registered companies globally have normally increased by 100% per annum (Ho, 1999).

ISO 9000 is an international quality standard comprising three series of prescriptive technical norms (9001, 9002 and 9003) and a number of accompanying descriptive norms (Casper & Hancké, 1999). The ISO 9000 series resulted from a number of national standards that were established during the 1970s to provide industry with a series of guidelines on how to establish a system for managing product quality in a manufacturing industry (Mulder, 1991; Khan & Hafiz, 1999). Several shortcomings of the previous standard, the BS 5750 (1979), and pressures from certain sectors of the American automotive industry, led to the formation of an International Standards Organization (ISO), which motivated the introduction of the ISO 9000 series in 1987 (Casper & Hancké, 1999; Khan & Hafiz, 1999).

Exhibit 1**ISO 9000 Certifications around the World – 1993-2000**

		Cycle 1 31/1/93	Cycle 2 30/9/93	Cycle 3 30/6/94	Cycle 4 31/3/95	Cycle 5 31/12/95	Cycle 6 31/12/96	Cycle 7 31/12/97	Cycle 8 31/12/98	Cycle 9 31/12/99	Cycle 10 31/12/00	Overall Growth 93-00
Africa/ West Asia	# Certifications	951	1.272	1.855	2.619	3.378	6.162	8.668	12.150	17.307	20.185	2023%
	Share in percent	3,42%	2,73%	2,64%	2,75%	2,65%	3,79%	3,88%	4,47%	5,04%	4,94%	
	Cycle Growth		33,75%	45,83%	41,19%	28,98%	82,42%	40,67%	40,17%	42,44%	16,63%	
	# Countries	7	8	16	24	27	37	40	48	49	52	
Europe	# Certifications	23.092	37.779	55.400	71.918	92.611	109.961	143.674	166.255	190.248	220.127	853%
	Share in percent	83,02%	81,12%	78,73%	75,61%	72,72%	67,58%	64,34%	61,16%	55,36%	53,87%	
	Cycle Growth		63,60%	46,64%	29,82%	28,77%	18,73%	30,66%	15,72%	14,43%	15,71%	
	# Countries	24	30	34	34	36	38	42	42	47	50	
Central/ South Americas	# Certifications	27	140	475	733	1.220	1.713	2.989	5.221	8.972	10.805	39919%
	Share in percent	0,10%	0,30%	0,68%	0,77%	0,96%	1,05%	1,34%	1,92%	2,61%	2,64%	
	Cycle Growth		418,52%	239,29%	54,32%	66,44%	40,41%	74,49%	74,67%	71,84%	20,43%	
	# Countries	3	6	9	12	15	19	23	28	29	30	
North America	# Certifications	1.201	2.613	4.915	7.389	10.374	16.980	25.144	33.550	45.166	48.296	3921%
	Share in percent	4,32%	5,61%	6,99%	7,77%	8,15%	10,44%	11,26%	12,34%	13,14%	11,82%	
	Cycle Growth		117,57%	88,10%	50,34%	40,40%	63,68%	48,08%	33,43%	34,62%	6,93%	
	# Countries	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
Far East Countries	# Certifications	683	1.583	3.091	5.979	9.240	18.407	29.878	37.920	56.648	81.919	11894%
	Share in percent	2,46%	3,40%	4,39%	6,29%	7,26%	11,31%	13,38%	13,95%	16,48%	20,05%	
	Cycle Growth		131,77%	95,26%	93,43%	54,54%	99,21%	62,32%	26,92%	49,39%	44,61%	
	# Countries	9	11	11	12	13	14	16	18	20	21	
Australia/ N.Zealand	# Certifications	1.862	3.184	4.628	6.479	10.526	9.478	12.946	16.751	25.302	27.299	1366%
	Share in percent	6,69%	6,84%	6,58%	6,81%	8,27%	5,83%	5,80%	6,16%	7,36%	6,68%	
	Cycle Growth		71,00%	45,35%	40,00%	62,46%	-9,96%	36,59%	29,39%	51,05%	7,89%	
	# Countries	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
TOTAL	# Certifications	27.816	46.571	70.364	95.117	127.349	162.701	223.299	271.847	343.643	408.631	1369%
	Cycle Growth		67,43%	51,09%	35,18%	33,89%	27,76%	37,25%	21,74%	26,41%	18,91%	
	# Countries	48	60	75	87	96	113	126	141	150	158	

Source: ISO - The ISO Survey – 10th Cycle (2000)

ISO 9000 certification is awarded not only to "world class quality", as other certificates or awards, but potentially to any firm, providing that it demonstrates, in essence, product consistency and documented process controls. In other words, compliance with ISO 9000 does not attest quality: it indicates consistent use of documented, standardized procedures (Anderson et al, 1999; Casper & Hancké, 1999), and mostly that the products or services consistently meet the – self-defined – specifications (Beattie & Sohal, 1999).

The astonishing diffusion of ISO 9000 certifications during the last decade was partly caused by the purpose of removing trade barriers in Europe and creating a unified EC by 1992. ISO 9000 became a critical component in the effort to harmonize diverse regulatory environments. With EC's acceptance of the ISO certification, other governments began adopting it, firstly U.S. and Canada, and thereafter, all over the world (Anderson et al., 1999).

But why has ISO 9000 certifications spread so rapidly, even beyond EC and government normative pressures? Why is it that companies around the world have decided to seek the certification? Taylor (1995) reports on the findings of a survey of nearly 700 organizations, of which 17% had obtained the certification. The four main reasons for seeking certification were customer pressure, improved efficiency, higher grade product and image/marketing advantages, against only 7% that saw it as a part of an overall TQM strategy. Rayner & Porter (1991) found, in the UK, that there were primarily marketing reasons for the implementation of ISO 9000 system: 80% of the organizations they surveyed gave that as their prime reason, followed by actual (35%) and anticipated (15%) customer pressure, against a mere 10% that cited quality improvement as the prime reason. Brown & Van der Wiele (1995), in a survey of 160 Australian companies, found similar reasons. Meegan & Taylor identified three main reasons for pursuing ISO certification: customer pressure, perceived benefits to the business and a mistaken understanding of what ISO 9000 is.

Following the global increase of organizations seeking ISO 9000 certifications, doubts have been raised about its effectiveness for infusing quality within organizations (Rao et al, 1997). Such doubts have been repeated by several authors in the field, both by practitioners (e.g., Stratton, 1994; Zuckerman, 1994) and academics (Academy of Management Review, 1994). Studying the impact of ISO 9000 in the car industry of France and Germany, Casper & Hancké (1999) found that the certification tended to reproduce, while modernizing, the previously existing traditional organization practices. Zhang (2000) found that TQM has better effects on overall business performance than ISO 9000. Analyzing three cases of ISO 9000 certification in educational organizations, Moreland & Clark (1998) argued that the certificate has the property of imposing patterns of sense-making in organizations.

Descriptions and analytical studies of the quality movement have followed two basic paths: on one hand, some accounts regard it as a competitive requirement, fundamental to achieve global competitiveness (e.g., Gehani, 1993; Garvin, 1986). On the other hand, some perspectives see them as passing fads (Hackman & Wageman, 1995; The Economist, 1992; Jacob, 1993). The debate is far from over.

II. THEORY REVISION

1. NEO-INSTITUTIONAL THEORY AND MANAGEMENT FADS

In organization theory, this type of rapid diffusion of management practices tends to be explained through Neo-Institutional arguments (e.g., Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Abrahamson, 1991; 1996). According to this theory, diffusions such as the ISO 9000's during the 1990s can be explained as attempts of organizations within an "institutionalized field" to conform to socially normalized behaviors (typically

coming or adapted from outside the particular context), aiming to obtain or to maintain their legitimacy in such field.

According to Neo-Institutional theory (e.g., Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1987), institutionalization is a series of social processes by which legitimized social constructions (Berger & Luckman, 1967), regarding practices or behaviors of individual entities (for example, organizations), acquire a normative status in social action. For institutional authors, institutions tend to adopt techniques and innovations that are socially seen as legitimate in their institutional fields, often regardless of efficiency concerns. That, for those theorists, would be the reason why many organizations end up being isomorphic to their institutional environments, and particularly, to other organizations admired in their fields. Hence, according to this line of thought, one could affirm that countries, communities, or organizations, within the influence hemisphere of a certain “institutionalized field”, would be susceptible to import socially normalized behaviors (coming or imitated from outside), seeking to maintain their legitimacy in such field. More recently, Gill & Whittle (1992) proposed a model that uses the life cycle metaphor to suggest that managerial techniques are created and sold as management panaceas, usually via consulting packages. In their model, such panaceas have a cyclical nature, from enthusiasm, adoption, and disappointment, until a substitute panacea reinitiates the cycle. According to this line of thought, the management fad typical of our days can be seen as a tendency to simplify reality. That is, managerial ideology would not be able to perceive, or would refuse to accept, the complexity of daily life, and thus would wade into the first passing wave, which generally would take the form of an oversimplified organizational change approach.

At least since the early 1990s, Eric Abrahamson (1991, 1996) has also been extensively studying managerial fads and fashions. Abrahamson’s typology of four theoretical perspectives to explain the diffusion of managerial innovations (Abrahamson, 1991: 590-600) is quite well known in the field. According to

Abrahamson, the efficient-choice perspective is the dominant approach in the literature, and holds that organizational choices of administrative technologies are rational, and independently based on the evaluation of which innovation will maximize the firm's efficiency. This rationalist approach is typical of economic theorists of organizations. On the other hand, the forced-selection perspective affirms that organizations are not completely independent to choose which administrative innovations to adopt or reject: a few external agents and/or organizations may be sufficiently powerful to impose the adoption or rejection of managerial innovations among less powerful organizations. The third (fashion) and fourth (fad) of Abrahamson's perspectives share a similar assumption: under conditions of uncertainty, organizations tend to imitate the adoption decisions of other organizations. What differentiates these two standpoints is that in the fashion perspective, organizations are influenced by actors outside their group. Yet, the fad perspective supposes that administrative technologies are scattered when organizations imitate other within the same group (Abrahamson, 1991: 597).

By using a theoretical foundation informed of the Neo-Institutional perspective on the diffusion of management fads, this study clearly assumes that the attitude of organizations within emerging markets tends to be one of assimilation of concepts and models produced outside their own contexts. Such organizations would therefore drink – directly or indirectly – in foreign fountains, which would make their management environment an essentially imported field of work and research. And obviously, this study assumes that the adoption of foreign management technology in these countries would attest a low degree of critical judgment in their organizations, and a low self-esteem of their managers and academics.

2. CEREMONIAL BEHAVIOR AND DECOUPLING

In the real world, the adoption of institutionalized techniques or discourse, does not imply necessarily in change of behavior. Some theoretical accounts have suggested

that quite often such form of diffusion may be more rooted on image than on substance (Alvesson, 1990). In other words, organizations may conform only ceremonially to the institutionalized technique, without actually going beyond make believe and lip service (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Within traditional boundaries of Neo-Institutional theory, it has long been accepted that organizations may adopt managerial techniques and practices more for marketing purposes than for efficiency concerns:

“Organizations [in institutionalized environments] need not only to conform to myths, but also have to maintain the appearance that such myths actually work” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977)

In other words, the submission to institutionalized practices (or “myths”) may bring legitimacy, but can also be actually inefficient or impractical for the organization. In such cases, the organization may submit ceremonially to rituals and symbolic elements of the managerial technique or innovation, without really taking it seriously (Scott, 1991). In truth, ceremonial behavior seems to be closely linked to the concept of loose coupling that occurs when "an organization's structure is not coterminous with its activity" (Weick, 1976: 5). It is also related with Oliver (1991), who argues that organizations may engage in several tactics in response to institutional pressures, from avoidance to manipulation. And naturally, this type of behavior is also quite consistent with the concept of “formalism” (Riggs, 1964; Ramos, 1983). The term *formalism* was created by Riggs (1964) to refer to the social phenomenon of discrepancy between established norms and the reality they are supposed to regulate, coupled by an expected lack of punishment to those disobeying the law. Because we believe this concept to be particularly relevant to ceremonial behavior as described in the context portrayed in this study, we will return to it in the concluding section.

A trigger for this kind of behavior may be, for example, the “do something” type of pressure by investors or controllers upon the organization’s directives. When profits decline (or, in the case of economic aperture in the early 90s throughout Latin America, when profits are threatened by lack of competitiveness), the pressure to ease down investors’ discontentment may be very strong. In such contexts, investors demand from top management dramatic or spectacular actions to prevent their losses. According to this point of view, organizational change and intervention may become a firework spectacle, a bureaucratic game devised to generate organizational action and to legitimate management positions: in fact, some authors have pointed out that by adopting the latest management panacea, the organization and its management can be symbolically viewed as “updated” and “enlightened” (Starbuck, 1983; Gill & Whittle, 1992).

3. THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS AND EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ON CEREMONIAL BEHAVIOR

There is much argument and quite enough evidence of “ceremonial” behavior in organizations in the literature. Pym (1973) provided a classical analysis of ritualism and ceremonialism in the adoption of performance appraisal. Maher (1981) found that firms were more likely to invest in resources to prove compliance with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977 than to actually make expenditures to improve existing controls. Baysinger & Butler (1985) study on the diffusion of boards of directors found that early adoption of independent board members was evidently based on the need or desire for oversight, whereas late adoption was not made for substantive reasons, but for ceremonial conformity. Edelman (1992) proposes that in the context of equal opportunity legislation, organizational structures are used as symbols of compliance, while the organization preserves managerial discretion at the behavioral level. Lees (1992) recognizes ceremony is one of what he calls “faces” of management development programs: i.e., organizations may engage in management development ceremonially, without belief

of conviction about their content or purpose, solely to confirm the ritualized progress of managers through the organization. Brown (1994) analyzed façade and myth making of four individuals managing a project's information to gain legitimacy. Fogarty (1995) suggested that the accounting profession has created structures of symbolic conformity over time, and that society has, in its turn, bestowed ceremonial confidence on the profession. Westphal & Zajac (1995) provide evidence of ceremonial decoupling in the context of executive compensation plans: they argue that organizations explicitly decouple structure from behavior by adopting policies as a symbolic response to one set of beliefs, with little intention to implement the policies, if they are at odds with another set of beliefs, succeeding at appearing to satisfy the demands of multiple institutional pressures. Montgomery & Oliver (1996) found evidence of decoupling in the context of AIDS-related policies and practices in American hospitals. Kalbers & Fogarty (1998) found that the pattern and rate of adoption of audit committees in U.S. firms since 1940 to be similar to other diffusions observed in institutional theory studies, such as Tolbert and Zucker's. Gianakis and Davis (1998) showed community policing in Florida to be a ritual in the police management ceremony, suggesting it to be designed to shield the organization from the formal evaluation of its technology in order to protect its flow of resources. Howard et al. (2000) propose that many organizations adopting voluntary environmental codes do so not to generate substantive change, but to create a form of "greenwashing" or smokescreen, pleasing their institutional constituents.

Evidence of ceremonialism has appeared also beyond the boundaries of management theory. For example, Christensen (1995) discussed how marketing-managed organizations use marketing to display compliance to the environment while confirming itself. Studies in the field of Marketing have recently discovered (e.g., Handelman & Arnold, 1999) how a minimum level of "marketing actions with a social dimension" (i.e., aimed at pleasing institutional expectations) were critical in a retail context, enabling the effectiveness of economic-oriented decisions. Handler & Hasenfeld (1997) use the idea of "ceremonial" adoption to explain - by

denouncing the repeated enactment of ineffective policies - the persisting existence, for hundreds of years, of failed welfare policies in the West.

But has evidence of ceremonial behavior been found in the cross-national diffusion of management techniques, such as the ISO spread discussed in this paper? There is indeed such type of evidence and discussion. For instance, Markóczy (1994) showed how organizational change in Hungarian firms after the decline of USSR occurred partially on the surface (organizational structure, specific person substitutions etc.), as the price traditional firms had to pay to preserve deeper practices, enrooted in their paradigms and power structures. She suggests this ceremonial type of change, made to match on the surface activities and structures to the new "Western-company" paradigm, followed the same Hungarian organizations' tradition of ceremonially matching their activities and structures to the party's campaigns standards during the "iron curtain" days. In other words, ceremony marked a new game managers played according to old rules: be it Western or Soviet in origin, the deeper routines and beliefs guiding daily practices remained unchanged. Another example is Grancelli's (1995) work: he used Meyer & Rowan's ceremonial framework to discuss the problem of "fake modernity" of institutional systems in Central-Eastern Europe after the decline of socialism. Caldas & Wood (1997) also argued that, in the context of emerging markets, "imported" managerial technologies advertised by management gurus and implemented by specialized management consultants are often believed to be superior (more effective and more prestigious) than locally developed techniques. Assessing the uniformity of goal-setting practices among several subsidiaries of an American Bank around the world, Mezas et al (1999) found a misleading uniformity in such practices across nationalities. After further study, they found out that all countries presented a ritual agreement on ceremony, but most diverged on substance and real practice. They hence prescribe cross-national researchers to focus on real behavior, rather than on professed behavior. Studying transnational transfer of strategic practices within MNCs, Kostova (1999) suggested that the degree of transfer success depends on the level of institutionalization of the practice; in other words, the transfer process is

understood to be fully successful not only when the practice's formal rules are adopted by the recipient unit, but when it is thoroughly institutionalized, i.e., when it becomes internalized by its employees as it has been before by the employees from the home of the practice. In her model, such internalization would occur when the recipient unit's employees (a) are committed to the practice; (b) are satisfied with the practice; and (c) have psychological ownership of the practice. Chaudhuri & Acharya (2000), reporting mostly on the diffusion of ISO 9000 across India over the 1990s, reported that "in some extreme cases, a parallel system has even materialized!", due to a general disillusionment on its actual results.

Theoretical arguments and empirical evidence of ceremonial behavior has also been found specifically on the Quality movement and ISO 9000. Hackman & Wageman (1995), for example, defend that TQM has evolved into a simple fad, and to most organizations it can become an ambiguous and sometimes dubious intervention, mostly because of its rhetorical excesses. In a study based on survey and archival data of 2,700 U.S. hospitals, Westphal et al. (1997) found that early adopters customize TQM practices for efficiency gains, while later adopters gain legitimacy from adopting a normative form of TQM programs. Their results suggest, hence, that later adopters who choose TQM for institutional reasons, rather than technical reasons, choose to introduce a more narrowly conceived TQM. Using a qualitative study, Zbaracki (1998) proposed that institutional forces can severely distort the technical reality of TQM, forcing decoupling and ceremonialism. In his model, he shows that "managers consume a rhetoric of success about TQM, use that rhetoric to develop their TQM program, and then filter their experiences to present their own rhetoric of success", producing an overly optimistic view of TQM. And finally, in a study of two case studies in the French Computer industry, Vasconcelos and Vasconcelos (2000) argued that there were two manners to implement ISO 9000 standards: an "in-depth" procedure, concerned with organizational effectiveness and with external legitimacy, and an "instrumental" one, only concerned with external legitimacy.

4. GAPS IN CURRENT THEORY, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND STUDY JUSTIFICATION

Albeit much has been studied and written about ceremonialism, on one hand, and on ISO 9000, on the other, there are still a few gaps in the theory that may deserve inquiry.

Firstly, (as seen on Exhibit 1) *why and how ISO 9000 certifications were – and have been still – been diffused throughout emerging markets in rates even higher than among the countries they were originated from?* Can this be explained by the classical institutional arguments, such as Tolbert & Zucker's (1983), that early adopters should be responding more tightly to technical dictates and constraints, as institutional pressures are higher, whereas late adopters (as emerging markets) should be more influenced by isomorphic forces in the adoption decision? There seems to be a need of a thorough investigation that unveils ISO 9000 adoption and implementation in such markets, and that can account for what is really happening – from an organizational point of view – using a perspective that is not only critical, but well informed of the literature on the diffusion and institutionalization of management fads. To study and to understand this type of faddish diffusion – and, if it exists, its ceremonial adoption – seems quite important for the comprehension of organizational intervention in emerging countries. It is important, firstly, because it is a central topic on the agenda not only of executives concerned with the issue of local competitiveness in emerging countries, but also of scholars focusing on organizational change and intervention in such contexts. Secondly, the diffusion of quality systems in emerging markets, particularly ISO 9000 certifications, has drained scarce efforts and significant resources for local organizations in these markets, ever since they opened up to global competition, again catching the attention of most of those analysts – practitioners and academics – concerned with what happens in and around organizations. And thirdly, this kind of research is justifiable also for the simple fact that there are not enough academic studies in emerging markets – in truth, there is only a handful of studies that circle the issue

even in other markets (e.g., Hackman & Wageman, 1995; Westphal et al., 1997; Zbaracki, 1998) – attempting to understand the action of diffusion agents and mechanisms, the extent and dynamics of adoption, and the actual outcomes, of the quality systems diffusion.

Secondly, *is the ISO 9000 certification fertile ground for ceremonial behavior?* As discussed above, evidence has been found around TQM, but our intuition is that ISO 9000 may be even more fertile ground for decoupling and organizational lip service than the quality movement as a whole. Some credible institutional authors (e.g., Tolbert & Zucker, 1996; Barley & Tolbert, 1997) have proposed that the decoupling of formal structures and actions is probably “apt to be rare and relatively short lived” (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). On the other hand, we believe that ceremonial behavior may be more frequent and enduring than these theorists have suggested it to be. And in this sense, it is our intuition that this type of “ceremonial” behavior could account, on one hand, for the tendency observed by some analysts (e.g., Brooke, 1994; Jacob, 1993) of ISO 9000 certifications to be restricted in certain contexts to very narrow scopes, many times insignificant to an organization’s core operations, obviously renouncing to the potential benefits of the thorough implementation of a quality system. It could also explain, on the other hand, why the same type of observers have suggested that, in other occasions, the organizations ends up with two realities after the certification is attained: one true (normally, pre-existing or oblivious to the certification), and the other, the official one, for the ISO auditor to check upon.

Thirdly, and maybe most important: *if ceremonial behavior can be found on ISO 9000 implementations, does it pay off?* The classical Neo-Institutional arguments for the existence of ceremonial behavior suggest that it occurs to attain legitimacy to external institutional constituents. For example, within the quality realm, Westphal et al. (1997) argument that quality programs may provide an organization with little technical benefit, but the claim to use it confers legitimacy on the organization. The question still not answered in the literature is: does it work, is market image and

external legitimacy attained? And furthermore: if it is, is it sustainable? We believe that further investigation is needed to attest if in fact the assumption that ceremonial behavior tends to be “short lived” (Barley & Tolbert, 1997) is or not correct.

And fourth, *what is the consultant’s role on the type of intervention ISO 9000 comprises and consequently, what is the consultant’s role on the level of through or ceremonial adoption?* It is our understanding that the consultant’s position and influence on organizational change has been understudied in the literature: in the case of ceremonial change and ISO 9000 implementation, it has been almost null. This gap should be covered soon enough.

III. AN EMPIRICAL SURVEY ON ISO 9000 IMPLEMENTATIONS

Motivated by the theoretical gaps described in the previous section, we designed an exploratory survey on ISO 9000 implementations in Brazil, one of the most ISO-compliant countries within the emergent market realm. The survey was aimed at (1) understanding the motives, objectives and results of ISO 9000 implementation in such context; (2) investigating if ceremonialism in fact existed among companies that received ISO 9000 certification; (3) exploring what would be the major causes of such ceremonialism, if existent; and (4) verifying if such ceremonial attitude pays-off in terms of performance and/or market legitimization.

1. SURVEY DESIGN AND METHOD

The field survey was exploratory in nature, and involved the investigation of ISO-9000 certification implementation processes in 70 organizations with operations in Brazil.

The (non-randomic) sample of companies was obtained through a large-scale invitation to all companies in the database of the largest business school in Brazil. Companies that accepted to participate and passed the validation protocol were included in the sample. The validation protocol demanded that participants had to (a) have obtained an ISO 9000 certification in the recent past (firms that were still going through the implementation were excluded); (b) agree to provide at least three respondents from several areas and with different levels of involvement in the certification process; and (c) provide complete and informed interviews.

Exhibit 2

Survey's Sample Composition – by Industry

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Number of Organizations</i>	<i>%</i>
Automation	3	4%
Automotive	14	20%
Beverage, food and consumer goods	4	6%
Capital Assets	2	3%
Construction	4	6%
Engineering	2	3%
Financial	6	9%
Information Technology	8	11%
Steel	4	6%
Chemical	5	7%
Services - several areas	11	16%
Others	7	10%
Total	70	100%

The final sample included organizations from a large array of industries: pharmaceutical, chemical, textile, telecommunications, automotive, consumer goods, electronics, financial, and so on (see Exhibit 2). Most organizations were large or mid-sized (Exhibit 3), and all but three were privately owned (Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 3**Survey's Sample Composition – by Size**

<i>Number of Employees</i>	<i>Number of Organizations</i>	<i>%</i>
200-250	15	21%
251 – 500	12	17%
501 – 750	5	7%
751 - 1.000	8	11%
1.001 – 1250	2	3%
1.251 - 1.500	2	3%
1.500 - 3.000	11	16%
3.000 - 6.000	5	7%
6.001 or more	9	13%
Total	69	99%
	No such information on one participant	

Half of the sample was comprised of subsidiaries of multinational corporations, which could benefit from the previous experience of the implementations conducted by their home operations.

Exhibit 4**Survey's Sample Composition – Origin of Capital**

	<i>Privately Owned</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>
Brazilian Organizations	31	3	34	49%
Mixed Capital (Private/Government)	1		1	1%
Foreign- North American Origin	18		18	26%
Foreign – European Origin	16		16	23%
Foreign – Asian Origin	1		1	1%
Total	67	3	70	100%
Total (%)	96%	4%	100%	

The data was obtained through a set of structured interviews with key executives and line managers that were conducted for each of the cases. At least three interviews were conducted per case, adding to a total of 215 interviews, conducted between December of 2000 and August of 2001. Due to the validation protocol, respondents came from several different areas of the organization (see Exhibit 5), and from different hierarchical positions (see Exhibit 6), as intended. Most respondents were middle-level managers or supervisors.

Exhibit 5

Survey's Respondants – by Area of Origin

<i>Respondant's Area</i>	<i>Number of Respondants</i>	<i>%</i>
Quality	64	30%
Engineering	22	10%
Administration	18	8%
Others	17	8%
Sales	16	7%
Manufacturing / Operations	16	7%
Information Technology	8	4%
Marketing	8	4%
Laboratory	6	3%
Technical Support	6	3%
Human Resources	6	3%
Customer Care	5	2%
Business Units/Divisions	4	2%
Product Development	4	2%
Production Planning and Control	3	1%
Projects	3	1%
Telecommunications	3	1%
Credit	2	1%
Purchasing	2	1%
Logistics	2	1%
Total	215	100%

Exhibit 6**Survey's Respondants – by Hierarchical Position**

<i>Hierarchical Position</i>	<i>Number of Respondants</i>	<i>%</i>
President	2	1%
Vice President	4	2%
Director	18	8%
Manager	62	29%
Engineer	22	10%
Coordinator	18	8%
Leader / Supervisor	27	13%
Analyst / Assistant	28	13%
Specialist	4	2%
Others	26	12%
Not available	4	2%
Total	215	100%

The study controlled the level of involvement with the certification of each respondent (see Exhibit 7), as well as his/her professional gain or loss obtained from the certification (i.e., we controlled if the respondents perceived they had gained or lost professionally with the certification [see Exhibit 8]). The objective was to determine if most responses and dependant variables would be affected by the respondent's personal situation.

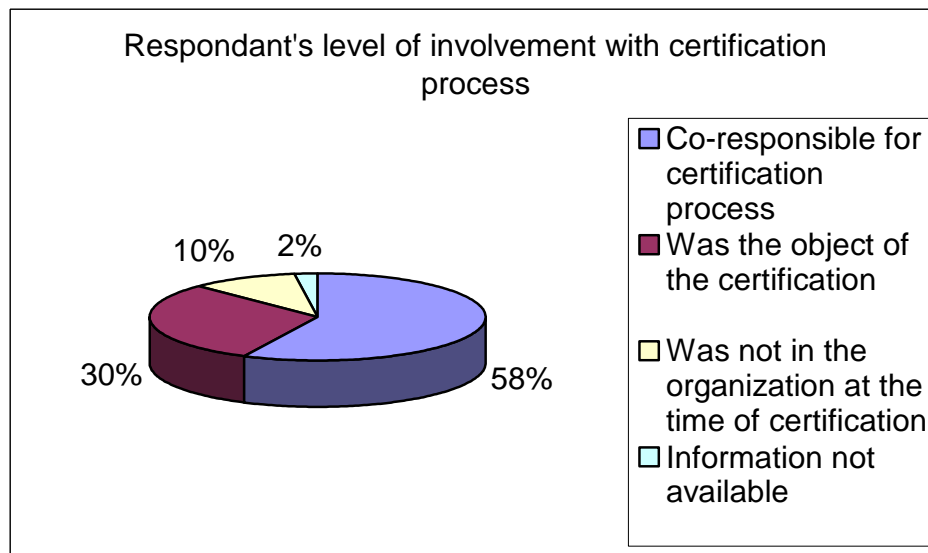
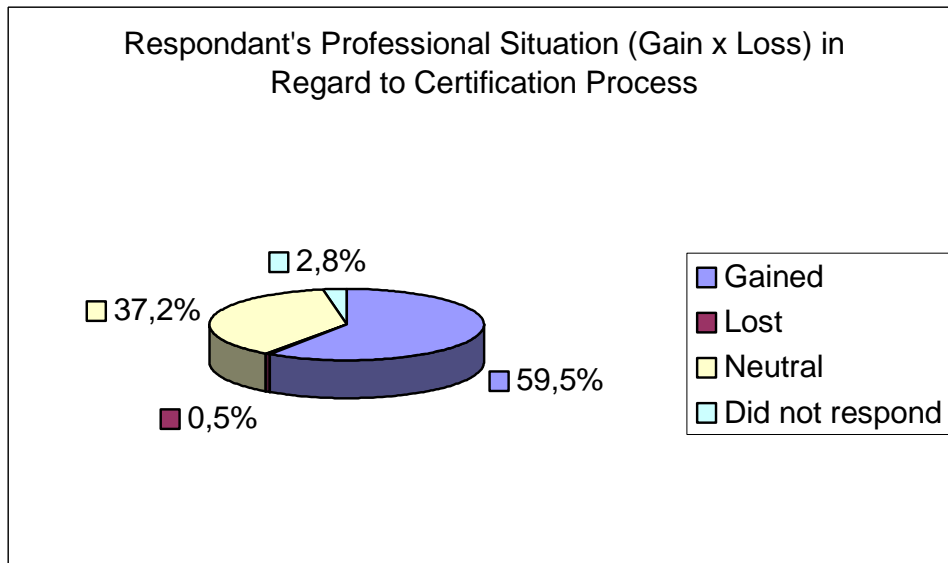
Exhibit 7**Respondant's Level of Involvement with Certification Process**

Exhibit 8**Respondant's Professional Situation (Gain X Loss) in regard to Certification Process**

All interviews followed a structured questionnaire (see Appendix 2) with 46 questions, most of them in the form of 5-point Likert scales. The questionnaire addressed the following topics: (1) the antecedents, motives and objectives of the ISO 9000 implementation process, (2) the way the process was conducted (3) the results obtained. All responses were classified and analyzed using such sources of information. The following subsection presents a summary of the survey's major findings.

2. SURVEY RESULTS – MOTIVES TO SEEK CERTIFICATION AND THE OBJECTIVES OF ISO 9000

Our study sought firstly to identify the motives that most commonly were cited to justify the adoption of the ISO 9000 certification. Exhibit 9 shows the percentage of respondents that considered each of the motives to be important.

Exhibit 9

Reasons for Adopting ISO 9000

Reason	Percentage of respondents ranking 1 or 2 in a 5-point Likert scale)
Increasing Competition/ Entry of new Competitors	60%
Influence of clients or suppliers	53%
Example of other companies taken as models	43%
Influence of headquarters or shareholders	40%
Internal politics, negotiation among interest groups inside the organization	35%
Influence of government or community	20%
Influence of external consultants	16%

In the surveyed sample, the most cited motive for a company to adopt ISO 9000 standards was the increase of competition in the field this company is operating. The second most cited reason was the influence of clients and suppliers with whom the company has direct contact. The third most cited reason indicated a purely isomorphic behavior with companies following the example of other companies highly regarded in their field.

It is worth noticing that the reasons that were cited as less influential were those linked to government, community and especially to consultants and external experts.

This seems to indicate that companies surveyed could be focusing more on short-term objectives (due to stiffer competition) than on long term relationships with their governments and communities when implementing ISO 9000.

It may be surprising to many that the most cited objective of the ISO 9000 implementation processes surveyed was not to improve quality or to increase profits, but to *improve organizational skills*. Moreover, the second most cited objective of seeking an ISO 9000 certification was the enhancement of the company's institutional image, even more so than of its quality *per se*. Indeed, improvement of organizational skills, of institutional image and of quality appear to be closely linked in the companies surveyed. One possible interpretation – and a quite important one for the purpose of this paper - is that the ISO 9000 certification may be sought by many organizations not as a mean to achieve or to improve quality, but for the secondary outcomes it may produce.

Skill improvement during ISO 9000 usually derives from the several efforts involved in (a) preparing the processes and procedure for certification, in (b) formalizing structure, roles and strategic objectives, as well as in (c) training and preparing employees. Organizational and individual skills may thus be improved more rapidly and structurally than they would if the organization had not engaged in a consistent certification process. But theoretically, the skill improvement would occur as a means toward the certification, not as a goal of its own. Also at a theoretical level, once an organization's quality system has been certified, its products or services should be perceived by its market as more quality-compliant, or even as of better quality, than the products and services of those competitors who are not certified. In other words, a better image should derive from better products or services the company provides once its quality system is improved. Therefore, such image enhancement would be a natural secondary outcome, consequent of the improvement in the certified organization's products or services, and not a primary goal itself.

Exhibit 10

Objectives of the ISO 9000 Certification

Specific Objective	Percentage of respondents ranking 1 or 2 in a 5-point Likert scale)
Improving Organizational Skills	93%
Better Institutional Image	92%
Improving Quality	91%
Improving Relationship with Clients	88%
Improving Productivity	79%
Increasing Market Share	71%
Obtaining Cost Reduction	70%
Gaining Flexibility	68%
Increasing Profitability	63%
Increasing Sales/Earnings	61%

It is quite interesting, as suggested by the results of this survey, that secondary outcomes may be prompting new adopters to seek ISO 9000 certification, once such certification has been institutionalized in a particular environment.

Exhibit 10 shows the most important objectives of the ISO 9000 cited in the certifications that we surveyed.

Other important issue in our survey is related to the role of consultants during the ISO 9000 implementation process. Our study showed that 50.7% of the ISO 9000 certifications surveyed were mainly conducted by external consultants. In the remaining 48.3% of the certifications surveyed, the role of the external consultants was secondary. In the certifications in which the consultants had a leading role, only 51% of the interviewees agreed that consultants had a positive impact on the process. Again the consultant's role in the ISO 9000 certification is challenged as our data show that in 49% of the cases in which consultants were involved

(corresponding to 25% of the total number of cases) consultants were considered to add no value or to destroy value in the context of ISO 9000 implementations. This is a quite important issue that will be discussed in further detail in our conclusion.

3. SURVEY RESULTS – OUTCOMES OF THE ISO 9000 IMPLEMENTATIONS

Another section of our survey focused on the results of the ISO 9000 certifications. The processes surveyed showed the following outcomes: Improved organizational skills was the most cited concrete result, followed by better institutional image, improved quality, better relationship with clients, productivity and market share. Exhibit 11 below shows the percentage of respondents agreeing that each of the outcomes was a concrete result of the certification.

Again, not only the skill improvement issue is to be underlined in the results: it should be noted the significant percentage of organizations that admit that the improvement of their *institutional image* was one of the major outcomes of the certification process: more than improving quality (86%) or relationship with customers (80%), no less than 89% of the companies surveyed agreed that the ISO 9000 certification brought a positive enhancement in their institutional image, as well as an upgrade in their people's skills (90%).

Exhibit 11

Results of ISO 9000 Certification

Specific Objective	Percentage of respondents ranking 1 or 2 in a 5-point Likert scale)
Improving Organizational Skills	90%
Better Institutional Image	89%
Improving Quality	86%
Improving Relationship with Clients	80%
Improving Productivity	71%
Increasing Market Share	59%
Gaining Flexibility	58%
Obtaining Cost Reduction	55%
Increasing Sales/Earnings	49%
Increasing Profitability	45%

Our survey's last section focused on the unwanted consequences of implementing an ISO 9000 certification. Among these unsolicited results, the most commonly cited are creating rigidity (54%), banalizing the quality concept (75%), losing time (71%) and increasing costs (64%).

Since these "collateral effects" have also been quite associated in the literature with ISO 9000 certifications throughout the world – i.e., it is doubtful that most organizations were totally unaware of such risks -, it may be possible to infer that most organizations in the survey were either obliged to adopt ISO 9000 in spite of its possible unwanted outcomes, or believed that the certification's benefits, be it primary (as quality improvement) or secondary (skill improvement, institutional image enhancement), could exceed such unsolicited effects.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In our theoretical analysis, we reviewed support for the idea that some ISO 9000 implementation processes would be aimed more at gaining legitimacy than at improving performance.

Exhibit 12

ANOVA

	Cluster		Error		F	Sig.
	Mean Square	df	Mean Square	df		
Motive - Competition	132521,892	1	8039,270	67	16,484	,000
Motive - Consultants	11705,324	1	8813,865	67	1,328	,253
Motive - Isomorphism	20786,106	1	11416,194	67	1,821	,182
Motive - Internal Politics	9896,196	1	10384,186	67	,953	,332
Motive - HQ Shareholders	15658,171	1	15334,067	67	1,021	,316
Motive - Clients	228912,470	1	15794,516	67	14,493	,000
Motive - Government/Community	1914,688	1	13982,883	67	,137	,713
Objective Profitability	173324,025	1	4866,302	67	35,617	,000
Objective Flexibility	113351,794	1	6264,021	67	18,096	,000
Objective Productivity	23969,332	1	3615,678	67	6,629	,012
Objective Sales/Earnings	201736,379	1	4722,029	67	42,722	,000
Objective Mkt Instit	54529,091	1	3131,475	67	17,413	,000
Objective Mkt Share	298482,306	1	4304,263	67	69,346	,000
Objective Client Relations	86678,920	1	3228,033	67	26,852	,000
Objective Quality	12143,045	1	2888,385	67	4,204	,044
Objective Internal Organization	1237,947	1	1764,851	67	,701	,405
Objective Cost Reduction	32177,196	1	4711,523	67	6,829	,011
Result Profitability	153773,584	1	5125,388	67	30,002	,000
Result Flexibility	111829,109	1	5285,578	67	21,157	,000
Result Productivity	55849,948	1	4411,866	67	12,659	,001
Result Sales/Earnings	158390,932	1	4753,526	67	33,321	,000
Result Mkt Instit	43100,124	1	2902,602	67	14,849	,000
Result Mkt Share	279881,334	1	4981,190	67	56,188	,000
Result Client Relations	122315,396	1	3458,675	67	35,365	,000
Result Quality	41474,710	1	3279,372	67	12,647	,001
Result Internal Organization	12406,442	1	2495,500	67	4,972	,029
Result Cost Reduction	81246,403	1	5263,811	67	15,435	,000
Unexpected Result Rigidity	1327,115	1	9709,136	67	,137	,713
Unexpected Result Banalization	40083,529	1	6692,750	67	5,989	,017
Unexpected Result Loss of Time	10484,743	1	5822,350	67	1,801	,184
Unexpected Result High Costs	90,353	1	5425,014	67	,017	,898
Substantive vs Ceremonial Engagement	32426,709	1	3529,046	67	9,189	,003

The F tests should be used only for descriptive purposes because the clusters have been chosen to maximize the differences among cases in different clusters. The observed significance levels are not corrected for this and thus cannot be interpreted as tests of the hypothesis that the cluster means are equal.

In this section we will perform some exploratory statistical analysis to look for evidence of this kind of isomorphic (imitation-oriented and performance-indifferent) behavior among the companies implementing ISO 9000 in the sample.

We analyzed the data in our survey by means of a cluster analysis, aiming to find different kinds of ISO 9000 implementation; we looked especially at the motives, objectives and results obtained by the companies. Because we were interested in differentiating the processes that had a better overall performance from those that had a weaker impact, but since we were also interested in the variables that may influence such performance outcome, we decided to use all motive (reason) and result variables as grouping variables in the clustering process. Using the K-means clustering algorithm in SPSS we obtained 2 clusters with respectively 54 and 15 cases. One case was not considered due to missing values. The difference between the two clusters analysis can be better understood using the ANOVA shown in Exhibit 12.

Cluster 1 shows a better overall performance than cluster 2. The items that statistically differentiate one cluster from the other are the following:

- Companies in cluster 1 tend to adopt ISO 9000 more strongly **due to the pressure of increased competition, and to the pressure of clients** than companies in cluster 2.
- Companies in cluster 1 tend to adopt ISO 9000 aiming more clearly and explicitly at performance-oriented objectives like, **flexibility, sales growth, market share, client relationship** and **cost reduction** than companies in cluster 2.
- Companies in cluster 1 also tend to adopt ISO 9000 aiming more clearly and explicitly at improving its **institutional image** than companies in cluster 2 and they indeed had better results in that item.

- Companies in cluster 1 tend to have better results from their ISO9000 programs in terms of, **flexibility, productivity, sales growth, market share, client relationship, quality** and **cost reduction** than companies in cluster 2.
- However, on the negative side, Companies in cluster 1 tend to be more affected by the **banalization** of the concept of quality , perhaps because of a higher amount of attention given to ISO 9000 procedures and protocols.

Overall, the results suggest that the two clusters are very noticeably different. Companies in cluster 1 perform better than companies in cluster 2 in almost all relevant variables. These companies in cluster 1 were more committed to the common purposes of an ISO 9000 certification, defined their objectives in a clearer manner, and finally obtained better results by giving the process more attention and consideration. In other words, companies in cluster 1 had better results because they were substantively engaged in implementing the ISO 9000 certification and use to promote organizational change.

On the other hand the attitude of the companies in cluster 2 is clearly less engaged with the original motivations of implementing ISO 9000, less clear in terms of objectives to be attained, and the results effectively obtained were in fact inferior when compared to cluster 1. The companies in this cluster seem to be more engaged in change that is only ceremonial, doing the bare minimum they have to do to obtain the certification, and thus not really pushing the system to its limits. Their situation cannot be equaled to those of companies in the sample which tried to implement ISO 9000 and failed: the reason is that the data shows that those companies have motives and objectives aligned with ISO 9000 normal purposes, but results below expectations. That was not the case with the companies in cluster 2: according to the data, they seem to never have had the intent to implement ISO 9000 in a substantive manner, aiming only at artificially improving their market image.

It was clear from our first analysis that there were two distinct types of ISO 9000 implementations, a substantive, performance-oriented one and a ceremonial one, less directly concerned with performance, and aimed at obtaining an improvement in its market image by being ISO-certified. It was also evident that the two types were quite different in terms of intended and actual performance.

Exhibit 13

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,943 ^a	,889	,711	35,4958

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Unexpected Result High Costs, Objective Client Relations, Motive - Competition, Motive - Government/Community, Motive - Consultants, Objective Flexibility, Result Mkt Instit, Motive - Internal Politics, Iso9000 Implementation Scope, Unexpected Result Rigidity, Degree of Democratization, Result Internal Organization, Objective Sales/Earnings, Motive - HQ Shareholders, Motive - Clients, Objective Quality, Iso9000 Centrality, Motive - Isomorphism, Unexpected Result Banalization, Objective Productivity, Objective Mkt Instit, Result Quality, Objective Mkt Share, Objective Cost Reduction, Result Productivity, Unexpected Result Loss of Time, Result Flexibility, Objective Internal Organization, Result Mkt Share, Result Cost Reduction, Result Sales/Earnings, Result Client Relations

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	201792,7	32	6306,022	5,005	,000 ^a
	Residual	25199,101	20	1259,955		
	Total	226991,8	52			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Unexpected Result High Costs, Objective Client Relations, Motive - Competition, Motive - Government/Community, Motive - Consultants, Objective Flexibility, Result Mkt Instit, Motive - Internal Politics, Iso9000 Implementation Scope, Unexpected Result Rigidity, Degree of Democratization, Result Internal Organization, Objective Sales/Earnings, Motive - HQ Shareholders, Motive - Clients, Objective Quality, Iso9000 Centrality, Motive - Isomorphism, Unexpected Result Banalization, Objective Productivity, Objective Mkt Instit, Result Quality, Objective Mkt Share, Objective Cost Reduction, Result Productivity, Unexpected Result Loss of Time, Result Flexibility, Objective Internal Organization, Result Mkt Share, Result Cost Reduction, Result Sales/Earnings, Result Client Relations

b. Dependent Variable: Substantive vs. Ceremonial Engagement

But which could be the variables that contributed to building such differences? Which differences in terms of motives, objectives and achieved results did contribute the most to explain the existence of the two types of implementation we observed? To answer this question we performed a multiple regression analysis taking the substantive engagement vs. ceremonial engagement as dependent variable, and all other variables (motives, objectives, and achieved results) as independent variables in the multiple regression equation.

The model overall fit measured by coefficient of determination R^2 was 0.889 as shown in Exhibit 13 and 14.

The multiple regression analysis can give information on the relative weight of each independent variable on the behavior of the dependent variable. That may be inferred from the beta-standardized coefficient, which allows for a direct comparison between coefficients as to their relative explanatory power of the dependent variable. The Beta standardized coefficients used in our analysis are

shown in the Exhibit 14. The analysis of these coefficients leads to some interesting conclusions.

The elements that more importantly contribute to an effective use of ISO9000 as an instrument of organizational change, i.e., the elements that contribute to a substantive engagement in the sample were: (1) Using ISO 9000 to redesign the internal organization (beta=0.610), (2) Defining objectives in terms of sales and earnings increase (beta=0.376), and (3), Accepting Loss of Time linked to the Process (beta=0.297).

On the other hand, the elements that most clearly contributed to ceremonial engagement during the ISO 9000 certifications were linked to (1) The influence of consultants and/or management gurus (beta = -0.201); (2) Authoritarianism: the implementation process being conducted in an authoritarian manner (beta =-0.200); and (3) Isomorphism: The tendency to imitate other (previously ISO-certified) companies perceived as role-models (-0.197).

Exhibit 14**Coefficients^a**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	,815	69,442		,012	,991
Iso9000 Implementation Scope	4,220E-02	,087	,062	,483	,634
Iso9000 Centrality	-,128	,131	-,162	-,978	,340
Degree of Democratization	-,144	,110	-,200	-1,307	,206
Motive - Competition	9,765E-02	,096	,144	1,021	,320
Motive - Consultants	-,141	,095	-,201	-1,481	,154
Motive - Isomorphism	-,120	,101	-,193	-1,191	,248
Motive - Internal Politics	4,683E-02	,073	,072	,639	,530
Motive - HQ Shareholders	,142	,069	,271	2,061	,053
Motive - Clients	4,131E-02	,084	,084	,493	,628
Motive - Government/Community	-3,76E-02	,071	-,067	-,526	,605
Objective Flexibility	-3,09E-02	,117	-,044	-,264	,794
Objective Productivity	7,206E-02	,177	,066	,408	,688
Objective Sales/Earnings	,290	,127	,376	2,287	,033
Objective Mkt Instit	-8,82E-02	,170	-,082	-,520	,609
Objective Mkt Share	-,115	,154	-,157	-,743	,466
Objective Client Relations	-,122	,194	-,132	-,627	,538
Objective Quality	4,337E-03	,213	,004	,020	,984
Objective Internal Organization	-,112	,284	-,074	-,396	,697
Objective Cost Reduction	-3,65E-02	,184	-,038	-,199	,844
Result Flexibility	4,188E-02	,162	,053	,259	,799
Result Productivity	-6,08E-02	,224	-,066	-,271	,789
Result Sales/Earnings	-,142	,213	-,177	-,669	,511
Result Mkt Instit	,200	,190	,179	1,053	,305
Result Mkt Share	9,423E-02	,164	,131	,573	,573
Result Client Relations	,136	,245	,155	,556	,585
Result Quality	4,634E-02	,163	,045	,285	,779
Result Internal Organization	,729	,211	,610	3,449	,003
Result Cost Reduction	,112	,180	,135	,620	,542
Unexpected Result Rigidity	,133	,103	,197	1,296	,210
Unexpected Result Banalization	-1,14E-03	,142	-,001	-,008	,994
Unexpected Result Loss of Time	,250	,158	,297	1,584	,129
Unexpected Result High Costs	-,122	,150	-,140	-,814	,425

a. Dependent Variable: Substantive vs. Ceremonial Engagement

V. CONCLUSION – ON CEREMONIALISM, ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES



In this study we showed that the ISO 9000 implementation processes we surveyed could be split in two groups with contrasting characteristics. In the first cluster the companies were substantively engaged in the implementation of the ISO 9000 process. These organizations decided to profit from the opportunity offered by the ISO 9000 process to get the best results it could offer. This happened either because these organizations saw the benefits of implementing ISO 9000 as a necessary step to implement organizational change they already needed, or because the ISO 9000 process unveiled some flaws that needed to be addressed, or even because these organizations were forced into the ISO 9000 certification by some external influence. However, once the process started, they seem to have decided that it would be worth to profit from its opportunities; hence, somehow the certification momentum was used to fostering organizational change, improving organizational processes, formalizing and codifying tacit knowledge and perfecting organizational skills. In the second cluster organizations were merely ceremonially engaged in the ISO 9000 certification process. These organizations were typically in an opportunistic behavior, only looking for the image benefit that the ISO 9000 certification may bring them.

At this point we could ask an important question. **Did ceremonialism pay off?**

According to our results, yes in one dimension (as expected), but no (surprisingly) on another. The ceremonial practices were successful because getting the ISO 9000 certificate was still possible despite their ceremonial engagement to its cause and inner value. In fact all surveyed ISO 9000 processes were successful ones from a formal standpoint. Because these companies convey to external constituents an image of conformity to socially accepted norms, without really adopting practices they believed to be incompatible with them, they do indeed succeed in their ceremonial endeavor (or *decoupling*, according to Meyer & Rowan).

On the other hand, our results suggest that ceremonialism did not really pay off in yet other dimension: it failed when it comes to performance. The companies in cluster 2 showed distinctively inferior results in many major variables such as flexibility, productivity, sales growth, market share, client relationship, quality and cost reduction than companies in cluster 1. Interestingly, our results show that companies that substantively implement ISO 9000 perceived better results than companies engaged in ceremonial implementation, even in terms of institutional image, which is by definition the key objective of a ceremonial implementation. Therefore, in this dimension, our results suggest that ceremonialism did not pay off in their façade implementation of ISO 9000.

Additionally, we focused on the **elements contributing to induce ceremonialism in ISO 9000 implementations**. We highlighted three factors that favor ceremonial engagement the most among the companies that implemented ISO 9000 in the sample. The first one was the influence of consultants and management gurus, the second being authoritarianism, and the third one isomorphism and mimetic behavior. We will briefly discuss each of these elements.

Firstly, the role of consultants and gurus in the implementation process was found to be particularly ceremony-inducing in the sample. This may be connected to the type

of consulting firm that specializes in ISO 9000 implementation processes. ISO 9000 implementations are often conducted by smaller - and less expensive - consulting firms explicitly oriented towards the final certification itself and not specialized in seeking process/efficiency gains. Differently from larger management consulting firms, these smaller, specialized, firms may thus not focus on organizational transformation, focusing on leveraging their know-how on what is the bare minimum a firm has to do to obtain the ISO 9000 certification. After all, these firms are not – and they do not intend to be – prepared to deal with the multiple intricacies of organizational transformation and strategic change including culture, attitude, motivation, structure, management processes, information technologies, etc. Therefore, the overt focus on “getting the diploma”, doing the bare minimum, oversimplifies processes spawning ceremonialism, which finally affects performance in negative manner.

In this sense, the consultant’s role may be very important in presenting the process-related potential and possibilities, thus influencing if organizations perceive ISO 9000 as an occasion for ceremonialism or as an opportunity for investing in thorough organizational change. As we have made clear in this study, our research shows that better results are in the second alternative.

The second ceremony-inducing element we highlighted was authoritarianism. In our study, ceremonialism is clearly associated to authoritarianism during the implementation process. This may be linked to the fact that many of the firms seeking ISO 9000 in a ceremonial way are led to do so by marketing or institutional reasons, without taking into account that ISO 9000 principles may be in fact incompatible with the managerial style and practices they possess. In order to implement ISO 9000 in such a context, decisions are often made in an authoritarian way, to covert (a) the fact that the ISO 9000 certification does not entirely fit the organization’s needs at first, and (b) that deciding to get an ISO 9000 certification may have been a mistake. Under such circumstances, ceremonialism may be generated by a (healthy) resistance attitude that opposes a decision that may not

make sense and may be harmful to the organization; or yet ceremonialism can be (tacitly) accorded between management and the organization's employees – that is – the ISO manuals and written procedures must be implemented, but they are not to be followed seriously after the certificate is obtained.

And thirdly, isomorphic behavior was shown in our study to be a major contributor to ceremonialism in ISO 9000. Recent research suggested that many management technologies have been diffused as merchandise to the “fake modernization” of emerging countries, as local companies seek to close the competitive gap that exists between them and competitors from developed economies (Grancelli, 1995; Markóczy, 1994). Take Latin America as an example. During most of the 1980s and 1990s, the competitive disadvantage of most industrial sectors of their economies was enormous (Coutinho & Ferraz, 1994; Porter, 1990). With the aggravating circumstance of the scarcity of local solutions, countless organizations ended up voraciously seeking – as classical late adopters – for “quick fix” foreign solutions (Caldas & Wood, 1997). The ISO 9000 certification is one of such favored foreign-made techniques, which could project an image of modernization of the local economy and the advocated enhancement of its organizations' competitiveness.

Brazil may be classifiable as an extreme case. For varying reasons, even when in such richer economies quality standards such as ISO 9000 certifications were becoming indistinctive, unexceptional, and taken for granted, local organizations were searching for ISO frantically: nowhere in the world has the number of certification applications grown so rapidly as in Latin America, and particularly in Brazil, during the 1990s (see Exhibit 15).

Brazilian certifications have been concentrated in the more industrial Southeastern and Southern states, but anyone is bound to find ISO implementations throughout the entire country (see Exhibit 16).

Exhibit 15

ISO 9000 Certifications in Brazil – 1990-2000

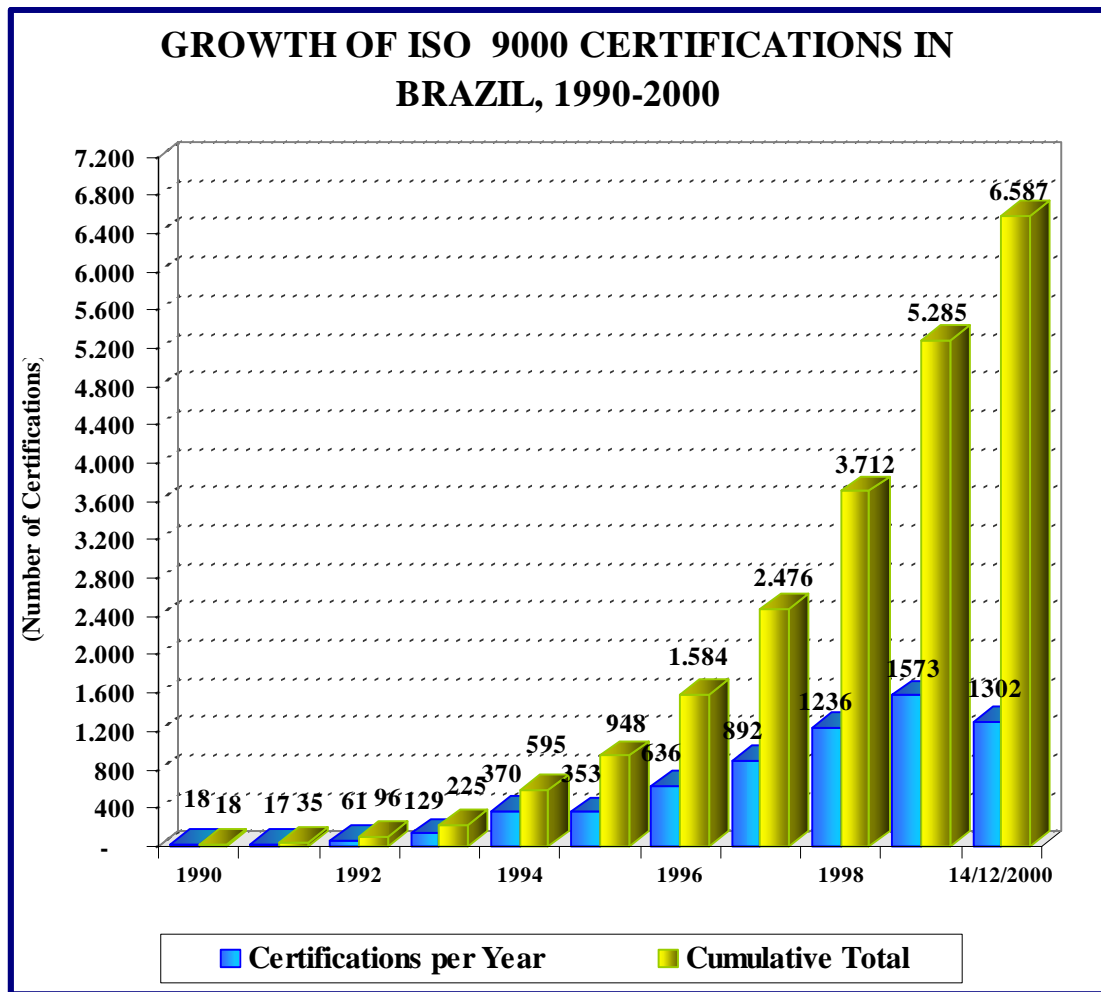


Exhibit 16**ISO 9000 Certifications in Brazil – by Region**

Brazilian States	Total
São Paulo	3.411
Minas Gerais	538
Rio Grande do Sul	490
Rio de Janeiro	480
Paraná	464
Santa Catarina	307
Amazonas	236
Bahia	164
Pernambuco	91
Espírito Santo	89
Ceará	70
Distrito Federal	58
Goiás	52
Pará	28
Alagoas	20
Paraíba	19
Mato Grosso	18
Rio Grande do Norte	18
Maranhão	16
Sergipe	16
Mato Grosso do Sul	11
Piauí	7
Rondônia	3
Roraima	1
Total	6.607

Source: Inmetro [www.mdic.gov.br] (2000: YTD, 14-Dec-00) / Obs.: One certification may comprise more than one industry and/or region. Hence, the depicted total may not be equal to the total number of implementations in the country.

One cannot help but wonder why that is the case, even if so many of the certified Brazilian organizations do not export at all**, let alone to Europe, one of the last corners of the world with some markets that still truly value ISO 9000 certifications as a proxy of quality.

Exhibit 17

ISO 9000 Certifications in Brazil – by Industry

Área de Atuação	9001	9002	9003	Total
Steel and Metal Manufacturing	164	1.053	-	1.217
Electronics and Optical	412	616	2	1.030
Real Estate	286	638	4	928
Commerce; Auto repair	28	897	2	927
Chemical	190	491	1	682
Transportation, Storage, and Telecommunications	68	607	-	675
Transportation Equipment	198	245	1	444
Machinery and equipments	206	228	2	436
Rubber and Plastic Goods	84	337	-	421
Construction	53	245	-	298
Mining Products (Non-Metalic)	46	174	1	221
Food, Beverages and Tobacco	32	169	-	201
Paper; Print; Publishing	26	174	-	200
Financial Services	17	148	-	165
Health	8	151	-	159
Textile	30	119	-	149
Education	51	80	-	131
Social Services (Community and Personal)	4	60	-	64
Extraction Industries (except Energy)	1	52	-	53
Oil, Gas, and Nuclear	11	40	-	51
Hotels and restaurants	2	46	-	48
Wood and Similar	1	21	1	23
Agriculture and Similar	1	19	-	20
Others	22	120	-	142
Total	1.941	6.730	14	8.685

Source: Inmetro [www.mdic.gov.br] (2000: YTD, 14-Dec-00) / Obs.: One certification may comprise more than one industry and/or region. Hence, the depicted total may not be equal to the total number of implementations in the country.

** [In the survey described in this paper, 76% of certified organizations did not export – nor expected to anytime soon – at all. This proportion is similar to that reported of most organizations ISO-certified in the last decade, for example, in Brazil and Argentina.](#)

Indeed, we do not need to go far to perceive that in many of these emerging markets the ISO 9000 craze has gone a little bizarre. For example: a thorough review of the certification directories in Brazil will lead us not only to large manufacturing plants and multinational organizations (see Exhibit 17), but also to a vast array of aberrant adopters: from motels, neighborhood labs, milk farms, a state (SC) military police force, ONGs, and third-tier colleges, to all-you-can-eat grills, one can almost find it all (see Exhibit 18 for a sample of such cases).

Exhibit 18

Bizarre Cases of ISO 9000 Certifications in Brazil



UNIBERO - A primeira Instituição Universitária a obter o Certificado de Qualidade ISO 9002

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Polícia Militar de Santa Catarina - criminosos passaram a ser chamados de "clientes preferenciais"

WWF é a primeira ONG ambientalista brasileira a receber o certificado ISO 9002
(<http://www.wwf.org.br>)

This type of behavior in less developed countries is not unpredicted in Organization Studies. For example: it has been noted in the literature that emerging countries tend to be more prone to isomorphic behavior than other societies. According to Powell and DiMaggio:

“(...) it is easy to predict the organization of a newly emerging nation’s administration without knowing anything about the nation itself, since “peripheral nations are far more isomorphic—in administrative form and economic pattern — than any theory of the world system of economic division of labor would lead one to expect” (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991: 70)

The results of this study, suggesting the strong presence of isomorphic behavior of organizations ceremonially engaged in ISO 9000 certifications within an emerging market, is also consistent with other classical institutional propositions (e.g., Tolbert & Zucker, 1983), according to which early adopters should be responding more tightly to technical dictates and constraints, as institutional pressures are higher, whereas late adopters should be more influenced by isomorphic forces in the decision to adopt.

But apart from traditional, mostly functionalist, institutional theory, other theories may be used to explain and to further explore this kind of behavior in Latin American – and most specially, in Brazilian – organizations: the ideas of formalism and national (neocolonialist) dependency seem particularly promising for future studies on the subject of ceremonial behavior in changing organizations.

According to Riggs (1964), formalism exists in all nations, but it is more common in the so-called “prismatic” societies; i.e., in developing societies, in which despite the existence of differentiated power structures and theoretical social roles, roles’ expectations may become unclear or people’s rights may not be respected. Alberto Guerreiro Ramos (1983), who also studied formalism in the Brazilian context using

Riggs' theoretical framework, underlined that formalism is dominant in prismatic societies, such as the Brazilian, because of their historical dependence of the industrial, developed, Western nations: thus, less developed societies would present formalism not as aberration, but as a strategy of social change, derived from their historical obligation of adopting social structures foreign to their realities. Decoupling would hence be a type of coping and defense mechanism against such alien social obligations that we all carry as a historical legacy.

To use Riggs' idea of formalism, coupled with Ramos' reminder that it may be linked to the obligated adoption of foreign social structures throughout our historical formation, may be a fruitful research vein. Neocolonialist theories – in their turn, very consistent with this idea of adoption of social practices from more developed societies being forced upon less developed countries – are only recently being called to explain organizational action and change. The re-visitation of Riggs' formalism and its link with neocolonialist critical theory may enable us to better comprehend the broader social elements and organizational mechanisms that provide the general context under which ceremonialism and isomorphism occur in organizations. And this may guide us into more non-dependant, autonomous, ground for organizational action. The fad euphoria we have lived in the last two decades, of which the ISO 9000 masquerade is merely another example, have insistently shown us that we desperately need it.

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VII. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – ORIGINAL RESEARCH PROJECT

NPP – PROJETO DE PESQUISA ISOMORFISMO E CERIMONIALISMO EM GESTÃO EMPRESARIAL: UMA PESQUISA EMPÍRICA SOBRE A DIFUSÃO DE CERTIFICAÇÕES ISO-9000 NO BRASIL

Área: Administração de Empresas (AE)

Linha de pesquisa: Normal

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa analisa a difusão das certificações ISO-9000 no Brasil sob o prisma da teoria neo-institucional e de referências sobre modismos gerenciais nas organizações. A premissa é de que muitas dessas decisões de certificação – que se tornou muito popular nas empresas brasileiras desde 1990 – só podem ser entendidas plenamente à luz de sua natureza modal e institucionalizada, e que muitas desses processos podem refletir adoções cerimoniais (isto é “para inglês ver”). Através de questionários aplicados em empresas que buscaram a certificação ISO no Brasil, o estudo procura entender melhor fatores ligados à tomada de decisão sobre a adoção, à estratégia de implantação, aos resultados percebidos e aos mecanismos de justificação dos programas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Modismos gerenciais, ISO-9000, isomorfismo, cerimonialismo.

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the diffusion of ISO-9000 certifications in Brazil, through the lens of neo institutional theory and references on managerial fads in organizations. The assumption is that many of such certification decisions – which became quite popular in Brazilian organizations since 1990 – can only be fully understood if their faddish and institutionalized nature is adequately perceived, and that many of these processes may reflect ceremonial adoption (i.e., “lip-service”). Using questionnaires applied in firms that sought ISO certification in Brazil, the study attempts to better understand issues related to such programs’ adoption decision process, implementation strategy, perceived results and justification mechanisms.

KEY WORDS

Management fads, ISO-9000, isomorphism, ceremonialism, neo-institutional theory.

**NPP – PROJETO DE PESQUISA
ISOMORFISMO E CERIMONIALISMO EM GESTÃO
EMPRESARIAL:
UMA PESQUISA EMPÍRICA SOBRE A DIFUSÃO DE
CERTIFICAÇÕES ISO-9000 NO BRASIL**

1. FORMULAÇÃO DO PROBLEMA DE PESQUISA

No início dos anos 90, após décadas de economia protegida, o país estava finalmente encontrando o caminho da integração com os mercados internacionais, buscando abrir e modernizar sua economia num curto período de tempo. Impulsionadas pela abertura econômica, as empresas privadas eram forçadas a investir pesadamente em modernização gerencial e administrativa. De fato, no universo das organizações, o *queimar etapas* e o ritmo quase frenético das mudanças tinham criado um ambiente único, fascinante de se observar. Acima de tudo, o ambiente empresarial parecia estar cada vez mais receptivo a novas idéias administrativas.

Entretanto, nesse período, a pesquisa de tecnologias administrativas e inovações gerenciais foi pouco significativa, e a década foi marcada pela importação maciça de teorias e sistemas criados nos países industrializados (Bertero, Caldas e Wood, 1998). Por outro lado, e com o agravante de poucas soluções locais, a *desvantagem competitiva* da maior parte dos setores industriais brasileiros era enorme (Coutinho & Ferraz, 1994), quando comparados a competidores de classe mundial. Por esses motivos, as empresas nacionais acabaram buscando “soluções rápidas” na década de 90 para encurtar a diferença que os separava de seus concorrentes estrangeiros. Uma dessas soluções, sem dúvida, passou pela busca de certificações ISO-9000, que

poderiam projetar a imagem da modernização da economia brasileira e a advogada competitividade de suas organizações.

Na teoria organizacional, tende-se a explicar a rápida difusão modal desse tipo de prática gerencial através da chamada *Teoria Neo-Institucional* (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Segundo essa teoria, difusões como a observada da ISO no Brasil dos anos 90 podem ser explicadas como tentativas de organizações dentro de um “campo institucionalizado” a *conformar-se* a comportamentos socialmente normatizados (vindos ou imitados *de fora*), *visando manter a sua legitimidade* nesse campo.

Por outro lado, essa teoria também sugere que, muitas vezes, esse tipo de difusão pode estar apoiada mais em aparência do que em substância (Alvesson, 1990). Isto é, empresas podem conformar-se apenas cerimonialmente à técnica institucionalizada, sem de fato ir além do faz-de-conta (Meyer e Rowan, 1977). Este tipo de comportamento poderia explicar, por um lado, o comportamento observado por alguns observadores (Brooke, 1994; Jacob, 1993) no que tange à adoção de ISO-9000 no Brasil ter sido restrita em muitos casos a escopos reduzidos e insignificantes das operações das empresas, deixando de aproveitar os benefícios de uma efetiva implantação de sistema da qualidade. Isto também poderia explicar, por outro lado, porque alguns analistas sugerem que, noutras ocasiões, a organização acaba tendo duas realidades: uma verdadeira, e outra “para o auditor (da ISO) ver”...

2. JUSTIFICATIVA DA PESQUISA

Antes de mais nada, esta pesquisa pode ser justificada dentro de um esforço concentrado, nos últimos anos, de entender a questão da difusão de modismos administrativos no Brasil. Afinal, tal tópico é hoje em dia um assunto central nas agendas tanto de executivos preocupados com a questão da competitividade, quanto de pesquisadores preocupados com a questão da mudança e ação organizacionais.

Por outro lado, a difusão de sistemas da qualidade no Brasil, e em especial da certificação ISO-9000, tem drenado esforços e recursos extremamente significativos de organizações brasileiras desde a abertura da economia, novamente chamando a atenção da maioria daqueles que se preocupam com o que acontece dentro e em volta de organizações. Por exemplo, sabe-se que o crescimento de tentativas de certificação no Brasil cresceu mais no Brasil nesta década do que qualquer outro país no mundo. Por maior que seja nossa defasagem competitiva, sabe-se que o volume de recursos gastos com esse fim é assombrosa para um país com tão pouca exportação para a Europa (mercado que força esse tipo de requisito).

O que não se sabe, entretanto, é por que e como esses programas foram – e têm – sido difundidos pelas empresas no Brasil. Falta uma análise desse tipo de programas que entenda a sua adoção e implantação e que procurem compreender o que está acontecendo – do ponto de vista *organizacional* – de uma perspectiva crítica e informada da teoria sobre difusão e institucionalização de modismos gerenciais.

Por fim, esta pesquisa se justificaria também apenas pelo simples fato de que não existem estudos empíricos suficientes no Brasil – na verdade, há poucos que sequer rodeiem o assunto em outros países – que procurem entender a ação dos agentes e mecanismos de difusão no caso de sistemas da qualidade, a extensão e a dinâmica de adoção, ou ainda os seus resultados efetivos.

3. OBJETIVOS DA INVESTIGAÇÃO

Como um todo, o objetivo da pesquisa é contribuir para o entendimento sobre a difusão de modismos gerenciais, através de uma investigação sobre a adoção, implementação, resultados percebidos e mecanismos de processos de certificação ISO-9000 no Brasil dos anos 90.

O estudo proposto é uma pesquisa de campo exploratória, empírica, que busca explorar algumas hipóteses preliminares retiradas da revisão teórica do assunto no Brasil.

Pode-se resumir da seguinte forma os seus objetivos específicos:

1. Entender **por que** as empresas procuraram certificação ISO-9000 no Brasil da última década.
2. Aprofundar quantitativa e qualitativamente o entendimento de **como e até que ponto** foram efetivamente feitos tais processos.
3. Aprofundar quantitativa e qualitativamente a **percepção dos resultados** alcançados com tais processos.
4. Sugerir as **implicações** do estudo para a **pesquisa futura** e para a **prática** organizacional.

4. CONCEITOS-CHAVE

4.1. TEORIA NEO-INSTITUCIONAL: MODISMOS E ISOMORFISMOS

A teoria neo-institucional das organizações foi popularizada inicialmente pelo artigo clássico de Meyer e Rowan (1977), mas de fato pode-se afirmar que é uma extensão e atualização das idéias de Selznick (1949) nos dias de hoje, temperadas em especial pelos trabalhos de Peter Berger na sociologia do conhecimento (ver Berger e Luckman, 1967). Como um todo, ela pode ser vista como uma componente da tradição teórica que imagina existir um forte controle social sobre a ação de instituições individuais. No Brasil, uma revisão sobre os clássicos dessa vertente – de controle social nas organizações – pode ser encontrada em Prestes Motta, 1993[1979].

Em poucas palavras, *institucionalização* diz respeito à série de processos sociais pela qual construções socialmente legitimadas, a respeito de práticas ou comportamentos de entidades individuais (por exemplo, organizações), adquirem

um *status* normativo na ação social. Para os chamados “neo-institucionalistas”, instituições tendem a adotar técnicas e inovações que são *socialmente vistas como legítimas* em seus *campos*, geralmente de forma *independente* de preocupações sobre eficiência (Scott, 1987; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Seria esse o motivo, para esses teóricos, pelo qual muitas organizações acabam mostrando-se *isomórficas* em relação a seus ambientes institucionais e, particularmente, em relação a outras organizações em seu meio. Para teóricos nessa linha, portanto, poderia-se dizer que países, comunidades ou organizações dentro do hemisfério de influência de um “campo institucionalizado” seriam sempre susceptíveis a *importar* comportamentos socialmente normatizados (vindos ou imitados *de fora*), *visando manter a sua legitimidade* nesse campo.

Mais recentemente, Gill e Whittle (1992) propuseram um modelo que usa a metáfora do ciclo de vida para sugerir que técnicas administrativas são criadas e vendidas como *panacéias gerenciais*, geralmente através de pacotes de consultoria. Em seu modelo, tais panacéias têm natureza cíclica, passando pelo entusiasmo, adoção e desapontamento, até que uma panacéia substituta reinicie o ciclo. Nessa linha de pensamento, o modismo administrativo, típico de nossos dias, pode ser visto como uma tendência para simplificar a realidade. Ou seja, a ideologia gerencial não consegue perceber, ou se recusa a aceitar, a complexidade do dia-a-dia, e assim agarra-se à primeira onda que passa, em geral na forma de abordagens simplistas de mudança nas organizações (Gill e Whittle, 1992).

Ao usar uma base teórica neo-institucional, este trabalho parte do princípio de que nossa postura (no Brasil e em outros países periféricos) é de assimiladores de conceitos e modelos produzidos em outros países. Ou seja, nossas organizações beberiam – direta ou indiretamente – em fontes estrangeira, tornando a gestão empresarial um campo de trabalho e estudo essencialmente importado.

A adoção de pacotes de tecnologia de gestão estrangeiros no Brasil seria, então, pouco crítica e atestaria a formação deficiente dos administradores formados no país.

4.2. ISOMORFISMO, CERIMONIALISMO E FAZ-DE-CONTA

Na linha teórica do neo-institucionalismo, entende-se que organizações podem adotar técnicas e inovações administrativas por motivos mais mercadológicos do que técnicos:

“Organizações [em ambientes institucionalizados] precisam não somente conformar-se a mitos, mas têm também de manter as aparências que esses mitos realmente funcionam” (Meyer e Rowan, 1977: 356).

Em outras palavras, a submissão a práticas institucionalizadas (ou “mitos”) oferece legitimidade, mas pode não ser realmente eficiente ou prática para a organização. Nesses casos, a empresa poderia *submeter-se cerimoniosamente* a rituais e elementos simbólicos da técnica ou inovação administrativa, sem de fato levar a promessa de seus resultados a sério (Scott, 1991).

Um estopim para a adoção dessa natureza pode ser, por exemplo, a pressão do tipo “faça alguma coisa” de investidores ou controladores sobre os dirigentes da empresa. Na verdade, alguns autores mostram como essa noção de “fazer alguma coisa” parece ser importante. Quando os lucros diminuem (ou no caso da abertura econômica dos anos 90 no Brasil, *quando os lucros ameaçam despencar*), a pressão para amainar o descontentamento de investidores e controladores pode ser muito forte. Nesses contextos, demanda-se da direção da empresa que ela faça algo dramático ou espetacular.

A partir desse ponto de vista, a mudança nas organizações pode virar um espetáculo de fogos de artifícios, um jogo burocrático para gerar ação organizacional e legitimar posições na empresa: realmente, autores já apontaram como, ao adotar a última panacéia administrativa, a empresa e seus dirigentes podem ser simbolicamente vistos como “atualizados” ou “esclarecidos” (Starbuck, 1983; Gill e Whittle, 1992).

4.3. O MOVIMENTO DA QUALIDADE, OS SISTEMAS DA QUALIDADE E A ISO-9000

Em meados dos anos oitenta o movimento da qualidade já era bastante popular nos países industrializados. No Brasil, embora o movimento também já tivesse seus defensores, implantações representavam apenas casos isolados. Os fatores contextuais ajudam a explicar o ritmo inicial lento de adoção. Em alguns setores mais competitivos realmente haviam empresas atualizadas com as mais modernas técnicas gerenciais, que começaram cedo suas implantações. Por outro lado, a maioria das empresas ainda trabalhava numa realidade marcada por um mercado fechado e pouco competitivo, onde a indefinição de regras e a incerteza quanto a uma possível internacionalização só alimentavam a enorme inércia existente.

Mas as mudanças foram rápidas e irreversíveis. No início dos anos noventa, a questão da qualidade tornou-se central. Com o tempo, um crescente número de organizações foi se convertendo à onda de modernização. Em 1992, 68% das grandes empresas já investiam em programas de qualidade e produtividade (Reis, 1992). Um estudo posterior, realizado pela Price Waterhouse, mostrava que, no início de 1993, 61% das grandes empresas brasileiras já haviam implementado programas de qualidade total (Zahar, 1993). Sistemas da qualidade, e entre eles a certificação ISO-9000, não foram a única inovação administrativa implementada no país, mas foram sem dúvida uma das mais importantes.

Diversos indícios sugerem que o processo de adoção de sistemas da qualidade no Brasil mudou, com o passar do tempo, de uma fase caracterizada por escolhas racionais para uma escalada marcada por mimetismo e contágio. Sinais desta escalada podem ser detectados pela evolução do número de empresas certificadas pelas normas de qualidade da série ISO 9000. Em meados de 1991, elas eram apenas 18; em meados de 1994, o número chegava a 400. Em 1997, cerca de 5500 empresas já estavam certificadas. Esse crescimento é uma *aberração* em termos comparativos com qualquer outro país no mesmo período (Brooke, 1994). O que se depreende é a idéia de que, provavelmente, o que ocorreu foi uma difusão frenética da novidade, a princípio por motivos racionais e, progressivamente, por padrões miméticos e isomórficos. Da mesma forma, essa idéia sugeriria que, enquanto mais tardia e menos racional forem a adoção e sua motivação, maior a tendência cerimonialista do processo de certificação. De fato, muitos estudos têm sugerido que a adoção de soluções administrativas é um processo de duas fases: (1) pioneiros e iniciadores abraçam as inovações por considerações de eficiência; e (2) adotantes tardios e a maior parte dos imitadores simplesmente seguem os líderes. Pesquisa neste sentido incluem as investigações sobre estruturas multi-divisionais (Fligstein, 1985), difusão de estratégias de diversificação (Fligstein, 1991) e de reformas no governo (Tolbert e Zucker, 1983).

5. HIPÓTESES PRELIMINARES

Guias metodológicos para pesquisa organizacional exploratória (ex.: Eisenhardt, 1997) tendem a sugerir que não devem existir hipóteses prévias nesse tipo de investigação, de forma a preservar a abertura para novos *insights* e visões da realidade. Assim, de acordo com tais orientações, ao engajar-se em pesquisa exploratória, o investigador deve ver as hipóteses como *produto* do processo. Apesar disso, o presente estudo de fato partiu de algumas poucas *conjecturas*, retiradas da literatura neo-institucional acima discutida.

Mesmo que o propósito da pesquisa não era o de formalmente *testá-las*, tais CONJECTURAS serão sumarizadas a seguir. Ou seja, **espera-se que o estudo explore as seguintes conjecturas de partida**:

- C1: O contexto e os mecanismos que permeiam as decisões sobre a adoção e a estratégia de implementação de processos de certificação ISO-9000 no Brasil correspondem àqueles relacionados à adoção de modas e modismos gerenciais.
- C2 Enquanto mais tardia a adoção da certificação (em relação aos pioneiros brasileiros de finais da década de 80), mais os critérios para adoção de processos de certificação ISO-9000 podem ser entendidos mais por padrões miméticos, normativos ou coercitivos (todos previstos na literatura sobre modismos gerenciais) do que por análises racionais do tipo “custo-benefício”.
- C3: Enquanto mais tardia a adoção da certificação (em relação aos pioneiros de finais da década de 80), mais institucional a adoção, e portanto maior deve ser a incidência de adoções “cerimoniais”, medidas por escopos muito restritos e/ou secundários, bem como por descolamentos entre os procedimentos validados e a realidade do dia-a-dia.
- C4: Os resultados obtidos com processos de certificação ISO-9000 no Brasil da última década tenderam a ser decepcionantes e a ficar abaixo das expectativas das empresas, embora tendam a ser racionalizados e as implantações tendam a ser justificadas, como mecanismo de proteção da decisão e da legitimidade organizacional em conformar-se a padrões institucionalmente aceitos.

6. METODOLOGIA DE INVESTIGAÇÃO E FONTES

A pesquisa aqui proposta na verdade já foi iniciada, e a apresentação do projeto não se deu simultaneamente em função de que seu autor possuía pesquisa em andamento no NPP.

PLANO DE PESQUISA E VARIÁVEIS

O estudo foi concebido em três partes, das quais as duas primeiras já foram realizadas: (1) pesquisa bibliográfica e obtenção dos dados da pesquisa qualitativa, (2) pesquisa de campo e (3) análise e conclusão.

A pesquisa bibliográfica e a obtenção dos dados da pesquisa qualitativa compreende levantamento de referências teórica sobre o fenômeno estudado em publicações acadêmicas e profissionais.

A pesquisa de campo compreende os seguintes passos:

- preparação, teste e validação do instrumento de pesquisa (questionário) a ser usado;
- aplicação das entrevistas; e
- tabulação dos dados.

O questionário foi desenhado para ser preenchido através de entrevistas (ver cópia do questionário em anexo).

Pretende-se obter dados de ao menos 40 processos de certificação ISO-9000. Como se pode ver (anexo), as **variáveis independentes** incluem:

1. Fatores de identificação: ligados ao *tipo de organização*, ao *tipo de indústria* e ao *respondente*;
2. Fatores de *decisão* e de *contexto de adoção*; e
3. Diversos fatores ligados a *método e abordagem de implantação*.

Já as **variáveis dependentes** incluem:

4. *Resultados esperados e percebidos*; e

5. *Mecanismos e padrões de justificação* da adoção, do processo e de seus resultados.

A análise e conclusão compreende a revisão e interpretação de todos os dados, a proposta de hipóteses para investigação (não-exploratória) futura e a elaboração do relatório final.

7. CRONOGRAMA MENSAL DE TRABALHO

- *Até Julho/1999*
 - Planejamento geral
 - Elaboração do questionário
 - Levantamento bibliográfico
 - input da pesquisa qualitativa
 - elaboração e pré-teste do questionário
 - Levantamento bibliográfico
 - início da pesquisa de campo
- *Agosto/1999*
 - pesquisa de campo
 - início da tabulação
- *Setembro/1999*
 - análise do material coletado
- *Outubro/1999*
 - redação e entrega do relatório de pesquisa

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9. ORÇAMENTO (R\$ / US\$)

• <i>1 auxiliar de pesquisa (3 meses)</i>	1134
• <i>material de consumo</i>	150
• <i>transporte</i>	450
• <i>congresso internacional (se artigo derivado for aprovado)</i>	(US\$)2750
• total	R\$ 1734 + US\$ 2750

Observação: a aprovação e utilização da verba para participação em congresso internacional fica condicionada à aceitação de trabalho baseado na pesquisa em pelo menos um dos seguintes eventos: encontro anual da Academy of Management, encontro anual da SCOS, encontro anual do BALAS ou encontro anual da Iberoamerican Academy of Management.

9.A. PLANO DE TRABALHO / CRONOGRAMA DO AUXILIAR DE PESQUISA

- *Julho/99* • Apoio na tabulação
- *Agosto/99* • Apoio na tabulação
- *Setembro/99* • Apoio na análise do material coletado

APPENDIX 2 – SURVEY FORM

ROTEIRO DE PESQUISA DE CAMPO – ISO 9000

DADOS DE IDENTIFICAÇÃO

**(Todos os nomes serão mantidos confidenciais, coletados apenas para controle – Dados serão usados só de forma agregada)*

Entrevista do	Nome do Entrevistado*: _____	Telefone de Contato*: _____
	Área em que trabalha: _____	Cargo: _____
(a) Situação pessoal do entrevistado em relação ao processo de certificação:		
1- <input type="checkbox"/> Entrevistado teve (co-)responsabilidade direta pela certificação		
2- <input type="checkbox"/> Entrevistado não teve responsabilidade direta - foi objeto da certificação		
3- <input type="checkbox"/> Não estava na empresa durante a certificação		
(b) Situação profissional do entrevistado em relação ao processo de certificação:		
1- <input type="checkbox"/> Entrevistado <u>TEVE VANTAGEM</u> profissionalmente em função certificação		
2- <input type="checkbox"/> Entrevistado <u>PERDEU</u> profissionalmente em função da certificação		
3- <input type="checkbox"/> Entrevistado <u>NEM PERDEU NEM GANHOU</u> profissionalmente em função da certificação		
Dados da Empresa:		
(c) Nome da Empresa *	_____	(d) No. de Funcionários: _____
(e) Setor de Ativ.:	_____	(f) Públ./Priv.: _____
(g) Origem Capital: 1- <input type="checkbox"/> Nacional 2- <input type="checkbox"/> Estrangeiro (país: _____)		
Período:	(h) Mês e ano da <u>primeira</u> certificação:	___/19__

Quanto ao nível de profissionalização da empresa:

1. A empresa é inteiramente profissionalizada ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ A empresa é totalmente familiar

Quanto ao nível de **dependência da organização em relação a exportações:**

- | | | | | |
|--|------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| 2. Em relação ao total de faturamento, as exportações da empresa representam uma proporção próxima a | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| | ⑤ | | | |
| | 0-19%
80-100% | 20-39% | 40-59% | 60-79% |

CARACTERIZAÇÃO DA ADOÇÃO

3. Descreva sinteticamente o processo vivido pela empresa (o que aconteceu, com quem/que, quando e porque):

4. Qual o **escopo da certificação** (constante no certificado da ISO) ?

Ainda **quanto ao escopo da certificação**, com base no tipo de empresa, bem como no seu porte e características, você diria que:

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 5. A certificação teve escopo muito abrangente , incluindo a maior parte da empresa e suas atividades | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | O escopo da certificação tinha abrangência restrita a apenas uma parte da organização |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|

(Se marcou 4 ou 5 na questão 5, deixe em branco a questão 6; se marcou 1, 2 ou 3 na questão 5, responda:)

Você diria que a parte da organização ou do processo ao qual se restringiu o escopo da certificação:

6. É a **parte ou processo mais central (core)** da organização e de sua atividade ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ É uma **parte / atividade secundária ou marginal** da organização e de sua atividade

7. O processo de preparação da organização para a certificação foi liderado por uma **consultoria externa** (consultoria empresarial, diferente da consultoria certificadora) ?

- ① SIM
② NÃO

(Se “não” na questão 7, deixe em branco; se “sim” na questão 7, responda:) Você diria que a atuação da consultoria:

8. Foi amplamente atuante e influente ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Foi secundária e meramente acessória no processo principal

Quanto à forma de condução do processo, você diria que:

9. O processo foi conduzido de forma **coercitiva**, “de cima para baixo” ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ O processo foi participativo, baseada no envolvimento amplo e efetivo dos funcionários

ANTECEDENTES DA ADOÇÃO

Quanto às **razões do processo de certificação**, você diria que a adoção foi provocada por:

10. Abertura de mercado / Entrada de novos concorrentes ou substitutos	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
11. Influência de consultores externos / gurus de administração	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
12. Exemplo de concorrentes e/ou empresas admiradas pela organização (mimetismo)	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
13. Motivos políticos internos da organização / Influência de grupos que se beneficiariam com a certificação ou com o esforço para certificação	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
14. Pressão da matriz / acionistas	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
15. Pressões efetivas (coercitivas) de clientes / fornecedores	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
16. Pressões efetivas (formais/normativas) de governo / comunidade	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
17. Outro (especificar:) _____	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente

Quanto aos **objetivos específicos da certificação**, você diria que a organização visava:

18. Alavancar rentabilidade	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
19. Aumentar a flexibilidade e a inovação organizacionais	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
20. Aumentar a produtividade	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
21. Aumentar a receita da empresa	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
22. Marketing institucional - Desejo de passar imagem de que produtos / serviços da empresa têm qualidade de nível internacional	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
23. Melhorar market-share	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
24. Melhorar relacionamento com clientes (queda do nível e da gravidade de reclamações)	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
25. Melhorar efetivamente qualidade de produtos e/ou serviços	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
26. Melhorar organização interna, através da racionalização de processos e procedimentos	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
27. Reduzir custos operacionais	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
28. Outro (especificar:) _____	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente

RESULTADOS DA CERTIFICAÇÃO

Quanto ao **alcance dos seus objetivos**, você diria que a empresa analisada conseguiu efetivamente:

29. Alavancar rentabilidade	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
30. Aumentar a flexibilidade e a inovação organizacionais	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
31. Aumentar a produtividade	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
32. Aumentar a receita da empresa	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
33. Marketing institucional - Passar imagem que produtos / serviços têm qualidade de nível internacional	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
34. Melhorar market-share	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
35. Melhorar relacionamento com clientes (queda do nível e da gravidade de reclamações)	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
36. Melhorar efetivamente qualidade de produtos e/ou serviços	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
37. Melhorar organização interna, através da racionalização de processos e procedimentos	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
38. Reduzir custos operacionais	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente
39. Outro (especificar:) _____	① Concordo inteiramente	②	③ Neutro	④	⑤ Discordo inteiramente

Quanto a **resultados inesperados**, você diria que a empresa analisada também sofreu:

- | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|-------------|---|----------------------------|
| 40. Engessamento - A organização e seus processos acabaram ficando inflexíveis e menos fluidos do que antes da ISO | ①
Concordo inteiramente | ② | ③
Neutro | ④ | ⑤
Discordo inteiramente |
| 41. Banalização dos conceitos da qualidade - Conceitos centrais da qualidade acabaram sendo banalizados | ①
Concordo inteiramente | ② | ③
Neutro | ④ | ⑤
Discordo inteiramente |
| 42. Perda de tempo sem a contrapartida prometida de ganhos | ①
Concordo inteiramente | ② | ③
Neutro | ④ | ⑤
Discordo inteiramente |
| 43. Alto custo de implantação com relação custo x benefício duvidosa | ①
Concordo inteiramente | ② | ③
Neutro | ④ | ⑤
Discordo inteiramente |
| 44. Outro (especificar:)
_____ | ①
Concordo inteiramente | ② | ③
Neutro | ④ | ⑤
Discordo inteiramente |

Por fim, no tocante aos **resultados efetivos da certificação no dia-a-dia da organização**, você diria que:

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 45. As mudanças nos procedimentos ocorreram efetivamente - Procedimentos da ISO realmente mudaram o dia-a-dia | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | As mudanças nos procedimentos só ocorreram no papel ou " para inglês ver " - Na prática, valem outros procedimentos |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|

46. Outras observações, sugestões e comentários a respeito da pesquisa:
