

Democratic governance and the necessary evaluation of Public Policies

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Summary: *Today's democracies require strengthening their substantive dimensions, as well as their results. Society will always legitimize a political system that provides results, and welfare and generates security. In this sense, it is considered here that the strict evaluation of public policies, as well as the participation of society in the decision-making of public programs, will allow a broadening of governability and therefore will contribute to a good democracy. quality.*

Keywords: *Governance, Public Policies, Quality Democracy, Evaluation.*

I. Introduction

The constant search for analytical frameworks in the State-society relationship; Above all, within the context of presumed democracies, it is necessary to specify concepts, and one of these is that of governability.

In that sense, a social disposition is assumed to accept the goods generated by the political system, as well as the results of the decisions of the rulers and political representatives as binding on the alter ego; Furthermore, it is understood that there is a willingness to act and develop within an institutional framework appropriate to the demands of the population.

The analysis must reflect the stage of values and rules that society has preferred, which have been collected by the representatives through the political process, and are reflected in the State. Thus, governability is also reflected in laws and regulations, as well as in public policies through certain management styles, categorical routines, administrative devices and procedures. (Brito, 2005:10)

Furthermore, governability presupposes that, rulers are capable of exercising action over citizens; constituting criteria and principles that result from collective experiences and learning, decoding them into norms and policies validated by the majority and guiding their behavior with fundamental mandates and prohibitions in their consent. Likewise, it presupposes the social perception of effective government action in the administration and social distribution of public resources and benefits and in the resolution of problems that affect the community. (Arbós y Giner, 1993, citado por Brito, 2005:10-13).

II. Democratic Governance

It is appropriate to recognize that governance is an articulation of interests. However, its focus is not only on the national/subnational State, and the institutional efficiency they achieve, but also, reference is made to the

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relationship between the proposed Welfare State, and the satisfaction of needs achieved and perceived by the population. the construction of citizens as subjects of law and their relationship with the political system.

For Rojas (2004), governability supports an interesting binomial to study, one because, “by emphasizing the necessary conditions, the universe of possible policies that seek to prevent the crisis of governability is expanded”; and the other because it allows “a broader vision of the concept, it would force us to think about long-term solutions where a comprehensive set of reforms would allow increasing the levels of governability and stability of the political systems in the region.” (Rojas, <http://www.flacso.org>).

Therefore, referring to governability refers to government performance over time; To know if a government maintains governance traits, 3 important criteria are necessary, according to Flisfisch (1989):

- 1) The ability to make timely decisions in the face of events that require a government response.
- 2) The social acceptance of these decisions, not because they have or do not have a high level of support but because they can be recognized as necessary.
- 3) The coherence that these decisions achieve over time so that contradictory effects are not observed between the discourse of those who exercise power and the decisions that are made. In short, the government has a story that tells us, through facts, where it wants to direct the country.

Following the aforementioned criteria, it is evident that governability is congenital to democracy. When it is possible to govern under integrative criteria, there is recognition of the government's decision-making, whose actions are executed in a coherent and coordinated manner, by the proposals and objectives demanded by citizens. To the extent that this process develops and consolidates, it becomes a factor of legitimation of the political system. (Canales *et al*, 2008:3).

Between democracy and governability, there is a composition of elements that amalgamate to such a degree that it allows the result of an electoral democracy to truly translate into concrete public policies; This is achieved only through the existing reciprocity between those who govern and the governed; when this is achieved, then it is democratic governance (Canales, 2008:3).

For Morlino (2005), reciprocity is one of the dimensions of his theorization about the Quality of Democracy. This good or bad form of government depends on the functioning of the processes through which the governed exercise control over their rulers. That is to say, when the State manages to get society to work with it, reciprocity is achieved. This dimension, also called responsiveness, requires the trust, legitimation and response of a participatory society at all times. (Page 63)

In this perspective, the necessary citizen participation is evident, as well as a broad understanding of politics, which allows a close relationship between society and government. Governance requires openness and citizen inclusion in decision-making; for this, the State must be able to generate public spaces for the deliberation of ideas between the different spheres of government, as well as public and private organizations, citizens and officials. of the different governments that makeup society. Thus, institutional functioning and citizen participation are the points where the Quality of Democracy and Democratic Governance converge.

However, guaranteeing the latter requires carrying out a set of political programs aimed at social integration, as well as economic, political and institutional development; otherwise, constant governance crises will occur, due to fragile, poorly institutionalized democracies.

For Brito (2005), Governability is conceived under the following conditions:

- The existence of an international context that privileges the peaceful and negotiated resolution of conflicts.
- Effective control of the territory and rule of law.
- The development of an integrated set of policies at the political, economic and social levels aimed at strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights; promote the subordination of the Armed Forces and law enforcement to the civil power and their non-interference in political-contingent matters; make the State an efficient, transparent and responsible entity; guarantee the satisfaction of the basic needs of the population; promote the integration of excluded sectors of society, gender equality and a culture of tolerance and respect for differences; expand and promote the participation of civil society in various instances of the decision-making process. (p.12-13)

A society is only allowed to be governed by good government, always taking advantage of all its potential; Now, this governability has as its characteristic the positive socioeconomic development of the country. It is necessary to understand that governance must be carried out within the framework of the democratic political system so that it develops sustainably. The interest of sustainable governance must arise as something socially desired, it cannot be something forced, otherwise it would reject itself.

In this sense, it is important to recognize that representative democracy continues to retain attributes of direct democracies, with marked differences in its institutional configuration; in such a way that the extension that has been obtained has been lost in intensity. Hence, the conditions of the representative system have been established by polyarchy, however, for participatory models, democracy does not have to do only with the State, but with any fact where social interactions are generated; and therefore affects deliberation and decision-making, since participation occurs as a promotion of autonomy and personal and social development.

On the other hand, the so-called participatory democracy aims for society to learn to exercise its sovereignty and generate a demand for accountability, which allows it to have control over its representatives. It refers to the need for political representatives to require citizens with high levels of awareness and responsibility for their rights and obligations, as well as the ability to insert themselves into the input and output of political competition. This type of democracy seeks an active commitment of the citizens in terms of social and political participation in their city and nation; In addition to recognizing the value and reflective capacity of citizens, it is also considered that power should not remain in the exclusive hands of an elected group. That is to say, all forms of interaction are valuable to addressing public issues; it is a participation that is based on dialogue. (Peris, et al, 2007 en Calabuig 2008:97 en <http://www.upv.es>).

From the conception of governance, sustainable development maintains a strong defensive posture, so that the management of collective problems is distributed among citizens. It is possible to interpret sustainability, from the theory of democracy, as the association of ideas that promote participatory actions, and that is precisely where the representation of the development of public policy should be inscribed³.

This approach allows the representation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of people so that they can live with dignity, ensuring that people have not only a vote but also a voice in the decisions that affect their lives; It has been shown that, when citizens decide, they are capable of ensuring that those who make public decisions are responsible for their actions. The paradigm also allows fair and inclusive rules, institutions and

³Para leer más al respecto, revisar a Almond, G. y Verba, S. (1963): *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*.

⁴La gobernanza democrática se refiere esencialmente a los patrones y estructuras mediante los cuales los actores políticos y sociales llevan a cabo procesos de intercambio, coordinación, control, interacción y toma de decisiones dentro y entre órdenes sociales y regímenes democráticos (Cruz, 2001).

practices to govern social interactions, firmly seeking equity in every sense, as well as equality, freedoms and respect so that future generations are reflected in current policies. etc. (UNDP, www.undp.org)

This vision of governance granted by UNDP and especially by Amartya Sen (1999), demonstrates democratic governance in three senses: first, because “democratic governance has intrinsic value for human development, since social and political participation are valuable in themselves, in addition to being elements of human development”; second, “democratic governance has an instrumental value, since citizens can express their demands to their rulers, and the latter must therefore be accountable to them”; and third, because “democratic governance has a constructive value since it not only allows us to respond to social demands but is essential to define them, through open debate among citizens.” (González 2007:14, and Calabuig 2008:99 in <http://www.upv.es>)

For the PNUD, democratic governance represents that point where democracy and governance come together, it is that action that occurs in “substance and form, because it does not refer only to effectiveness and results, but has to do with also with fair processes” (www.pnud.org). Therefore, governance must be understood as more than just effective institutions and rules; It also represents the protection of human rights, the promotion of broad participation from institutions, as well as rules that impact and generate results in the daily life of society.

Governance occurs in different spheres of social power; it can be at global, national, state, municipal, institutional and even community levels (Graham in Calabuig, 2008, p.101-105). In this idea, to understand the local level, it is usually studied from local public institutions, as is the case of this study, and if there is one essential feature, among the many that the existence of local democratic governance may have, that it is the real and necessary decentralization of the government.

III. Public Policies

The vicissitudes of public life have made it clear that the Mexican State has limited and scarce political and economic resources, therefore, public care for them is always required. Furthermore, it is common that the public resources available are less than the needs required to effectively cover enormous social problems with urgency. Each of the rulers' decisions costs, regardless of whether they are good, average or bad.

Regardless of the type of decision made, political and fiscal resources are simply needed and consumed; However, beyond the amount of the expense, it is the ways of using the economic resource that, most of the time, are not clearly and prominently presented, which leads to a perception of irregularities in the use of the expense, of scarce, thereby exhausting the inherent fiscal limitations and political fragility.

If we add to this that the society of a nation is quite plural and heterogeneous, then achieving general consensus to decide on public projects becomes an extremely difficult task; Furthermore, one must choose judiciously and carefully between opposing government projects; Therefore, the ruler must be prudent and wise when opting for a public strategy, he must do so under certain reservations, always questioning what are the best plans and programs to execute public purposes through public policies <Public Policy>.

Referring to public policies refer to the decisions that governments make, but it also shows the incorporation of opinion, participation and co-responsibility, as well as the money that private initiative contributes as citizens, voters and taxpayers. So, the projection of the use of fiscal and political resources forces the citizen to choose who he considers, not only the best political strategist but also the best administrator; this is through rational choice in politics and policies, thereby reflecting democracy and the efficiency of public management. Now, for a public problem to be solved, it needs to be recognized as such, and until that happens, then it can be on the government agenda.

Thus, in a romantic sense, it could be said that the premise of democracy is fulfilled, since, in this configuration, the unilateral protagonist proposed by the ruler is reduced, thereby increasing the commitment of the citizens, of civil solidarity organizations, and other actors. That is, a government substantially linked to citizens is proposed,

thus opening the doors for new forms of policy design and management, with unique, co-responsible, supportive, decentralized and supportive characteristics, in such a way that government and society confront varied and joint social problems, collectively³.

Along this path, Subirats (2008) points out that the severity reflected by the symptoms of a social problem is what will constitute the starting point for raising awareness of it and for generating debates about the need for a certain policy. public; These symptoms are observed with social changes. However, usually, at the beginning of the intervention of the public problem, the cause of the problems is often not precisely identified; At other times, a consensus is not achieved between the actors - public and private - that allows them to define the social impact of the problem to be solved; In fact, some episodes of social changes do not necessarily generate public policies, especially because they are not articulated or because none of the alternatives for public intervention are viable, ergo, they do not enjoy sufficient consensus (pp. 35-36).

Both the decisions and the actions that are taken jointly, that is, between society and the State, will seek to guide the social, political, legal, economic and cultural behavior of a population, so that any collective inconvenience that requires social welfare, can be resolved through a joint effort. Therefore, the conceptual construction of public policy adopted in this document adheres not only to the normative and administrative dimensions but also applies, above all, to those so-called substantive policies.

IV. Evaluation of Public Policies

The social exercise of surveillance over public affairs in general, four decades ago was something unknown, an unnamed fact, a kind of conceptual interregnum. However, currently, the broad existence of theoretical developments, as well as practical profusion of social control over public practices, is obligatory and indisputable.

Do not forget that the governance crisis brought with it the consequent valuation of the use of public and political resources. The reading that can be given to these crises results in the need for greater citizen surveillance through vertical, horizontal, as well as societal accountability, and with it a plethora of valorization of democracy, including democracy in the State, so that it effectively serves the construction of citizenship.

Policy evaluation is understood as “the method of systematic research on the configuration of a given program or policy and, on its implementation and effectiveness, thereby expanding its potential “upwards” (Roth, 2002: 137). -139).

Up to this point, it is necessary to recognize that all actions and interventions generated by governments in any of their spheres are susceptible to being evaluated; Therefore, there is an imminent need to evaluate public policies by trying to link criteria of democracy with control, efficiency and quality mechanisms, conceiving that within the public sector, this last idea must balance with other dimensions such as: equity, cohesion. social, solidarity, co-responsibility, institutional cooperation, etc.

In this sense, the evaluation of the public policy programs themselves becomes an instrument capable of legitimizing through trust, thus seeking to guarantee adequate public management. A good, meticulous and honest evaluation becomes a tool that generates good government, thus achieving a state with continuous

³El inglés dispone de dos vocablos que permite distinguir con facilidad la referencia a la actividad política en general (politics) o a una política en concreto (policy). En castellano no se dispone de dos vocablos, por lo que suele acudir al uso del plural para diferenciar la política de las políticas públicas. Tomado de las notas de Robert Goodin y Hans-Dieter Klingemann (eds.), *Nuevo Manual de Ciencia Política*, t 2, Pp. 797.

6Para leer más al respecto, acudir a Morlino, Leonardo. (2005): “La Calidad de la Democracia. Apuntes para su discusión” en *Metapolítica*, No.- 39, enero-febrero, México, Pp. 37-53.

7 Mayor información en Peruzzotti y Smulovitz. (2003): *Controlando la Política: Ciudadanos y Medios en las nuevas democracias*.
https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0718-090X2003000200015

improvements in public management, as well as in services and citizen well-being, which allows the quality of democracy to be invigorated.

In addition to what has been said, the effects generated by a good evaluation allow the weaknesses of the programs to be addressed, finding relevant opportunities that minimize any threat. In this sense, the increase in information, transparency, participation and social control become the essential elements of the modernization of the State and the continuous improvement of democracy.

Now, the government practice of self-evaluation, as well as seeking external evaluations, through outside organizations, as a constant institutional exercise, allows an orientation towards an exhaustive estimation of policies. Furthermore, a culture of evaluation generates improvements in the public, and provides legitimation to its actions, through commitments of greater responsibility and transparency, which, as Cunill (2007) says: "beyond the results obtained at the managerial and operational level. , covers the complete cycle of public policy action, from the design of public policies to their practical implementation in the citizen. Therefore, the value that evaluation provides as an institutional practice is the incorporation of a new approach to the analysis of public action." (p. 44-45)

Different from other instruments of government control, the evaluation not only verifies that the stages of public policy comply with the established legal norms but also formulates a value judgment, supported by evidence and clear reasoning, about the positive or negative results, as well as the desired or unintended impact of public policy programs. This value judgment must be made with the greatest rigor and guarantee.

V. Towards a Proposal.

The analysis of public policies requires understanding two moments: one, producing knowledge extracted from the contextual reality of the analyzed action, and two, situating those involved in the analyzed knowledge.

Public policies constitute a response to a public problem that reflects a (changing) social problem that has been articulated through mediators (for example, media, new social movements, political parties and/or interest groups) to be subsequently debated. in the democratic decision-making process (Subirats, 2008).

The idea is interesting since, by establishing the actors who are within public policies and who in turn can intercede in this process of adaptation and change, either positively or negatively. However, these actors mostly seek to serve the democratic system by participating in what their responsibilities precede them: the passivity of an actor is voluntary, the result of a lack of resources or caused by the fact of not having yet become aware of certain the consequences of the policy constitute an explanatory factor of why a specific public policy is implemented to the detriment of another (Ibid.).

The evaluation phase which we also consider as constitutive of a public policy aims to determine the results and effects of said policy in terms of behavioral changes of the target groups and in terms of the degree of resolution of the problem.

Therefore, and echoing Nuria Cunill's model, an evaluation analysis is proposed at three levels:

- 1) First, an evaluation of the policies (at a macro level), that is, evaluating the government as a whole, as a set of institutions committed to a series of public policies that have been developed democratically;
- 2) The second evaluation is of programs and organizations (a meso level of analysis), which focuses on evaluating specific government programs or specific institutions in the provision of public goods and services;
- 3) Finally, the evaluation of public officials (micro level), which would analyze the specific function of each political actor, or official, and assess whether they are meeting the goals and objectives of their government agency and the public administration as a whole.

An adequate assessment of the public function should include a concatenation of the three levels proposed above, to elucidate the relationships that exist between individual performance, organizational capacity and the aggregate performance of the government.

This interconnection of evaluation practices would offer the possibility of seeking good government, which is part of the challenge of democratic life; and if democratic governance is truly desired, attention needs to be paid to the relationship between government and society.

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