

Policy Instruments, Public Deliberation and Evaluation Process

Joan Subirats

Evaluation can not only serve as a means of measuring or appraising the performance of policy instruments but can also foster consensus building among the different actors involved. This is done through a social learning process that involves discussing the criteria used to evaluate how effective the measures adopted are in terms of the problem or problems a specific policy instrument, particularly in the case of policies that require a change in human behaviour or where there is little consensus about which variables should be used to measure the effectiveness of the policy adopted.

In this paper the author does not attempt to discuss the characteristic features of evaluation studies so much as the evaluation process itself, the way the various actors contribute to the evaluation, how this process relates to social learning systems and how the outcome of the evaluation can subsequently be used to reformulate policies and the way they are implemented. This paper will mainly discuss environmental policies as this is a field in which these ideas are particularly applicable.

A New Strategy for Public Policy

Henry Mintzberg and Jan Jørgensen

For a long time, the concept of “policy” has for the public sector meant the same as “strategy” for the private sector. In both sectors, the prevailing model has been highly rational, that is, policy or strategy are formulated consciously and above all analytically, before becoming explicit and being applied formally. A great deal of research and tests have set forth a whole range of questions as to the validity of this traditional model. In the public sector in particular, however, the alternative has been to return to descriptions that emphasize incremental and political processes, as if policy or strategy did not exist.

Defining strategy as an “action plan” opens a completely new perspective on public sector policy formulation. Some conclusions are drawn in this article from a research project designed to study the

strategies of several organizations —mainly Canadian, from both the public and private sectors— to understand how strategies are arrived at and how they change with time.

The Evaluation of Public Policies: Theoretical Approaches and Realities in Nine Developed Countries

Juan Pablo Guerrero Amparán

The article deals with the problem of evaluating public policies from two perspectives. The first part looks at the theoretical perspective and engages in a long discussion of the different methodological strategies to evaluate government action. The second part analyzes the experiences gained from the evaluations in nine developed countries, paying special attention to the institutional frameworks and the political determinants that have encouraged the development of organisms that effectively and regularly fulfill an evaluation role. Certain types of evaluation and some specific political institutions have set evaluation up as a factor in the control of the responsibility of public servants and as a relative counterweight to the actions of the organs that carry out public policy. The author tries to explain which evaluations, which public institutions and why.

Public Management in the United States: Crisis and State of the Art

David Arellano Gault

This document includes a review of the main currents that attempt to stimulate new dynamics in thought and action in U.S. public administration. Known in America as “public management”, various theoretical and practical methodological approaches have been used to defend different strategies for reform implementation in U.S. government. The arguments and criticism developed recently in the literature for each current are analyzed and observation is proposed of the apparent sterility of such arguments (either methodologically, or practically, or both) as a diagnosis of the state of the art of public management in the United States.

Decentralization as a Means to an End: The Case of New Federalism in the United States

Olivia M. Hidalgo-Hardeman

The conventional view of decentralization is that it fosters a greater degree of democracy by increasing the numbers actually involved in the decision-making process. It is also believed that decentralization promotes efficiency, effectiveness, and ultimately political stability because of the proximity of political leadership to localized public demand.

This paper challenges the conventional view of decentralization as facilitator of democratically guaranteed public policy success. This author maintains that there is a need to focus not upon governmental decentralization as the equivalent to democratization, but rather upon the consequence of public policy action regardless of point of initiation within government institutions. The debate about decentralization that leaves out public policy expectations and measures of progress misplaces focus and will result in public policy failure. Proponents of reform philosophy attempt to change our approach to government because neither centralized nor decentralized efforts alone necessarily mean achievement of desired public policy results. Rather, a conscious effort must be made to link institutional arrangement to policy objectives with an emphasis on desired impact. This is the major lesson to be learned from the U.S. case.

Administrative Audits in the Public Sector: Experiences in the Catalan Regional Government

Carles Ramió

Today, all organizations, private or public, are affected by the challenge of competitiveness. Internal audits, understood as a senior management tool to discover the state of an organization and to improve it are, undoubtedly, a key factor in improving competitiveness.

This article describes how the Catalan regional government administration (Generalitat) in Spain has assumed this challenge and how it is responding to it through various mechanisms, including administrative or managerial audits, a particular version of internal auditing adapted to the specific public sector environment.

How these administrative audits are carried out (preparation of a complex and participative diagnosis, flexibility in proposals and the possibility of negotiation with the actors involved and control over the implementation of organizational improvements) is one of the most original contributions of this experience that is in tune with recent contributions by students of public and private organizations.

Forms of Private Sector Participation in Financing Government Projects: Recent Experience in Mexico

Alejandro Villagómez

The central goal of this document is to present institutional arrangements in the framework of recent experience in Mexico, and provide a reference document for public and private agents involved in the process. A large part of the material presented is based on the literature recently produced by international organizations and other bodies involved in the process. The remainder of the document includes the following sections. The second section summarizes the contractual bases for private sector participation in government projects. The third one presents a comparative discussion of these contracts, selection criteria and how risk is treated, while the fourth section offers a selection of concrete cases in the use of the facilities that constitute Mexico's recent experience.