



State and public policies: Analysis approaches within the framework of emergent strategy

Estado y políticas públicas: Enfoques de análisis en el marco de la estrategia emergente

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Abstract

Understanding the evolution of the concept of public policy allows you to expand your field of study and contributes to improving the decision-making process. This article describes the models: sequential, incremental and mixed exploration, as well as the type approaches: functional, historical, production, limited rationality and strategic. Likewise, it establishes some criteria for the formulation and implementation of public policies. To do this, a systematic review of the knowledge of public policies is carried out from the organizational, productive and critical dimensions. The approaches of the various authors consulted are contrasted with the concept of strategy, coming from the field of administration. It is concluded that the concept of public policy is analogous to the strategy of private organizations; however, in the public sector a dichotomy between formulation and implementation is evident, caused by the separation between policy and public administration. It is proposed to develop monitoring mechanisms for emerging strategies to promote adaptation and organizational learning.

Keywords: State; Public policies; Approaches; Emerging strategy

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Resumen

Comprender la evolución del concepto de política pública permite ampliar su campo de estudio y aporta a mejorar el proceso de toma de decisiones. Este artículo describe los modelos: secuencial, incremental y de exploración mixta, así como los enfoques de tipo: funcional, histórico, de producción, de racionalidad limitada y estratégico. Así mismo, establece algunos criterios para la formulación e implementación de las políticas públicas. Para ello, se realiza una revisión sistemática del conocimiento de las políticas públicas desde las dimensiones organizativa, productiva y crítica. Los enfoques de los diversos autores consultados se contrastan con el concepto de la estrategia, proveniente del campo de la administración. Se concluye que el concepto de política pública es análogo al de estrategia de las organizaciones privadas, sin embargo, en el sector público se evidencia una dicotomía entre la formulación y la implementación, causada por la separación entre la política y la administración pública. Se propone desarrollar mecanismos de monitoreo de las estrategias emergentes para promover la adaptación y el aprendizaje organizacional.

Palabras clave: Estado; Políticas públicas; Enfoques; Estrategia emergente.

Introduction

The action or inaction of the State determines the course of a country in achieving its economic development and social welfare goals. Public policies are the roadmap guiding us to the destination; these maps must accurately describe the environment, identifying the different factors that either support or jeopardize reaching the goal. These factors are varied, complex, and interrelated, necessitating the use of different analytical approaches to broaden the understanding of government activity and improve decision-making processes. The study is based on theoretical backgrounds including sequential, incremental, mixed scanning, functional, and historical approaches, complemented by strategic approaches from the value chain and bounded rationality, with the aim of contrasting them within the framework of emergent strategy.

The importance of deepening the analysis of public policies is justified by their crucial role in the success of the State. In the formulation stage, it allows for identifying areas that require greater attention, optimizing resource use, and maximizing impact.

It also helps to detect emerging or persistent problems in society, enabling the design of appropriate and timely solutions. Additionally, it provides data and information to develop effective and well-founded strategies, reducing the risk of errors during execution. Through evaluation, strategies that work are identified, improvement opportunities are discovered, and learning is promoted. All this legitimizes State action and increases stakeholder confidence, fostering investment and economic development within a framework of equity and social justice.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis of public policies has evolved over time, facing various theoretical approaches enriched by perspectives from different fields of knowledge. These theories attempt to simplify reality to make it understandable; however, this reduction cannot fully account for the complexity faced by decision-makers when formulating, executing, and evaluating public policies (Roth, 2008). Below, three decision-making approaches are analyzed: rational, incremental, and mixed scanning, as proposed by Etzioni (1967).

Sequential Approach

To analyze public policies, Lasswell proposes a sequential model or "Policy Cycle" that covers the entire lifecycle of a policy, including the stages of design, implementation, and evaluation (Pastor Albaladejo, 2014). This model is analogous to problem-solving and consists of the following stages: recognizing the problem, proposing possible solutions, choosing a solution, applying it, and evaluating the results. This approach places great importance on the policy designer who interprets the observed reality and determines the best solution to the public problem posed (Zuluaga & Morales, 2017). Despite its emphasis on the design process, this approach can also be used in the stages of implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and analysis (Celis, 2013).

Problem-solving is characterized by its rational nature and incorporates the scientific method along with other elements of operations research left behind by the military after World War II. In this sense, public policy

analysis sought to improve political decisions by breaking down a problem into its basic components, then logically and sequentially structuring the objectives and actions. Next, the design team formulated various alternative solutions, which were compared in terms of technical and economic efficiency. Finally, the best alternative was selected, and its distributive effects and equity implications were assessed without much attention to implementation (Quade, 1989).

According to Hernández (2015), the advantage of the sequential model is the ease of understanding the process and using it as a reference framework for other models. This allows for the construction of case studies or comparative studies, enabling the examination of different stages of the public policy lifecycle, isolating certain stages for in-depth study, and analyzing the role of actors; however, it risks oversimplifying the analysis into a linear model that does not consider environmental circumstances, including the interests and beliefs of actors.

An important contribution to the sequential approach came from the general systems theory, which was adapted to public policy analysis by Easton (1969). This author proposes the political system as the object of analysis, considering it an open system that maintains exchanges with the environment, in this case, society. This shift changes the focus of interest, placing great importance on the role of social interactions among individuals and groups, including the study of the state, power, public policy, decision-making, and the legitimate use of force, among others. This transition moves from a political system composed of formal or legal structures to one that includes interest groups and motivational or personality dimensions, improving the understanding of individuals' actions in various political situations.

Recognizing the role of social actors in solving their problems gives meaning to public policies, allowing social actors to redefine their problems and experiment with solutions through their participation in strategy formulation and implementation, conflict management, and the learning process. In this way, public policy broadens its perspective, shifting from focusing on problem-solving to

building a new representation of the problem to create social and political conditions that enable its solution (Roth, 2012). This new concern for the influence of the environment in public policy formulation coincides with the external analysis typical of strategic thinking.

Incremental Approach

The incremental approach proposed by Lindblom (1959) emerged in opposition to the sequential model. It takes as a reference open, experimental, and self-correcting democratic societies, where strategies are supported by conjectures and errors that guide the learning process. This author argues that the ends and means of a public policy are not based on knowledge of absolute validity but on relative knowledge that allows for bounded rationality. Thus, incrementalism acknowledges that the future is uncertain and that the exhaustive study of a problem is slow and costly. This subjective view is closer to empirical knowledge based on observation and experience, opposing the objective, verifiable, and measurable knowledge of the scientific method (Mukdad, 2014).

Lindblom (1979) deepens this approach and argues that there is a difference between incremental policy and incremental analysis. The former corresponds to a pattern of political behavior that occurs in small steps, varying only in degree: small or large. This is the most common way political decisions are made. The latter, as a method of analysis, recognizes three types: simple incremental, disjointed incremental, and strategic analysis. Simple incremental analysis examines consecutive policies that differ only incrementally. Disjointed analysis includes simple incremental analysis along with other study perspectives such as alternative solutions, political goals, problems to be remedied, trials, errors, consequences, and participants. Finally, strategic analysis incorporates the previous two but focuses on simplifying the problem in an informed and conscious manner to choose specific and possible actions. For Lindblom, strategic analysis goes against the ideal of synopsis of a phenomenon or the search for a general theory, which he considers vain and sterile due to bounded rationality.

Another important contribution is the recognition of the influence of actors through social arrangements and transactions, surpassing complex analysis procedures and the recommendations of advisory groups (Lindblom, 1959). In this sense, he expresses that citizens often solve their problems through collaboration and free competition rather than resorting to systematic State intervention in fiscal and regulatory matters. This social approach received numerous criticisms because it renounces rationality in public decision-making. This does not mean that the author considered analysis unnecessary; rather, unlike the rational and programmatic approach, he proposes a partisan analysis as an indispensable tool for political negotiations, persuasion, and control (Aguilar, 1992).

According to Quade (1989), public policy analysis contributes to the decision-making process by revealing inconsistencies between ends and procedures; likewise, understanding the problem allows for the generation of new alternative solutions so that ideas can be transformed into viable and feasible policies. Furthermore, he criticizes the partisan position of public policy analysis, arguing that it distorts and accommodates the reproductive dynamics of a political system, thus it should be impartial, without predispositions, and designed to consider the entirety of the problem. This viewpoint complements the power conflict observed in the political contest, which includes promises and commitments to win over the electorate. Thus, when moving from the campaign phase to governing, the strategy must be adjusted through different alliances and actions to fulfill what was promised.

Lindblom provides a descriptive view of the formation of public policies, which emerge as a successive approximation to the desired objectives (Aguilar, 1992). A characteristic of the incremental approach is its ability to simplify decision problems through proposals that only slightly deviate from previous policies. This avoids making drastic changes that would imply changing the structure or disrupting established processes, facilitating consensus among decision-makers.

Mixed Scanning Approach

The mixed scanning approach was introduced by Etzioni (1967) under the name "Mixed Scanning." This decision-making approach seeks to reconcile the rational and incremental approaches. Thus, his proposal combines elements of both perspectives: a rational scan that covers the entire field without much detail, combined with an incremental analysis focused on deeply observing familiar areas. Therefore, mixed scanning recognizes the context and allows for the identification of problems that would not be evident using a single approach (Aguilar, 1992).

The mixed scanning approach criticizes the extreme positions of rationalist and incrementalist models. First, it criticizes the excessive control of the sequential approach, which favors centralized planning that does not express the collective good and does not recognize the complexity of social systems, accusing them of being unrealistic and undesirable. On the other hand, it criticizes the incremental approach for the limited control of the decision-maker's environment, ignoring the influence of social actors. This leads to decision-making processes that only reflect the interests of the most powerful, without considering the most vulnerable population, which has no representation or position of power. Similarly, the incremental approach denies social innovations as it is not pertinent to fundamental decisions involving significant changes (Etzioni, 1967).

The mixed scanning approach seeks to balance the influence of social actors by proposing to dynamize decision-making through two mechanisms. First, a rational and centralized decision-making process for fundamental policies that define the long-term direction and basic strategy. Second, a short-term incremental process that implements fundamental decisions once adopted. The combination of both approaches gives mixed scanning a more realistic perspective by considering available resources and the position of social actors. In turn, the contextualization of rationalism is less conservative and allows for the exploration of far-reaching alternatives in dynamic environments. This makes the mixed scanning approach more flexible and better able to adapt to various situations (Etzioni, 1967).

Other public policy analysis approaches similar to Etzioni's proposal correspond to those proposed by Celis (2013) and Knill and Tosum (2012). Celis (2013) proposes three approaches according to the role played by the State and civil society. Theories centered on the State relate to the sequential approach, where decisions are made by politicians and government officials. In contrast, theories centered on society relate to the incremental approach, where individuals and groups influence the choice of policies to be developed. Finally, mixed theories attempt to reconcile both positions.

On the other hand, Knill and Tosum (2012) consider two perspectives: problem-solving and power. The problem-solving perspective emphasizes technical and administrative aspects, being similar to the sequential approach. On the other hand, the power perspective analyzes the correlation of forces among social groups and their influence in setting the public agenda, which relates to the incremental approach. This includes topics of interest such as advocacy coalitions, clientelism, or social exclusion. Although a mixed perspective is not proposed, it is emphasized that both are complementary.

Functional Approach

Unlike the thematic and descriptive classification of public policies, which divides them into categories such as health, education, housing, and labor, Lowi (1964) proposes a functional approach based on the costs or benefits perceived by the actors. The different interactions of actors seeking to achieve their interests result in a struggle for power configured in the so-called political arena under established rules of the game (Aguilar, 1992). The combinations of concentrated or diffuse costs and benefits generate four types of policies:

1. Regulatory or legislative policy: consists of enacting norms that regulate the behavior of citizens in general. Conflicts arise among different actors defending their interests.
2. Distributive policy: grants a benefit to a special sector in clearly individualized and specially designated cases.

It presents less conflict because the actors are not antagonistic.

3. Redistributive policy: benefits less favored classes. It addresses sensitive issues such as power relations, property, and social prestige, making the political arena more tense.
4. Constitutive or constituent policy: it is general in nature and guides State intervention on a substantial matter, for example, institutional reform or the country's constitution.

The importance of the functional approach lies in understanding the dynamic nature of the political field, where different actors co-erce, intercede, and negotiate their interests. This generates multiple forces shaping the political arena, making it difficult for a single actor to determine the course of action. These disputes involve material elements such as resources and infrastructure along with immaterial aspects such as symbols, arguments, and legitimacy. It is, therefore, an unequal struggle with winners and losers; where the State is in a position of power, its decisions are expected to be explained, transmitted, and argued transparently (Fernández, 2021).

Historical Approach

Another way to analyze public policies is to understand the historical evolution of their formation and execution processes. According to Roth (2012), public policy approaches represent different interpretative frameworks around a cyclical process where public policies are designed, implemented, and evaluated. In this case, the actions taken during execution drive changes in context, regulatory frameworks, discourses, and interactions among actors. In turn, evaluation measures the efficiency and effectiveness of implemented policies, promoting their improvement or change. The author considers four approaches:

1. Classical approach: a unitary system prevails with authority relations in the administration, characterized by great importance placed on coordination, information management, and resource limitations among units.
2. Good governance approach: seeks to increase the success probability of

policies through the creation of scenarios, strategies, and participation mechanisms for actors and non-governmental organizations.

3. Public management approach: emphasizes the effectiveness of public policies over ideology and obtaining power conditions. It considers the context and available resources.
4. Contingency approach: integrates the interests and particularities of policy recipients, implementing entities, and external conditions. It also includes prospective monitoring and control processes to rationalize processes and maintain strategic direction.

Hernández (2015) considers that the analysis of the historical evolution of the public policy cycle provides a retrospective understanding of reality, contrasting with the prospective approach that seeks to transform the existing reality. The author identifies the following approaches:

1. Public choice: assumes the production of policies as a process where citizens (voters) seek the most public goods at the lowest possible cost (taxes); and political actors who attempt to provide those goods to acquire more power and prestige. As a result, State intervention in the economy increases, to the detriment of the public interest.
2. Welfare Economics: postulates that individuals should make most social decisions through market mechanisms, which should be regulated by State intervention to correct their defects. This approach views policy production as a technical procedure without recognizing political, institutional factors, or actor pressure.
3. Class theories: framed in capitalist societies where the interests of capital are favored with low State autonomy. It is characterized by focusing its analysis on the outcomes of public action rather than the process itself.
4. Pluralism and corporatism: in the pluralist model, policies are perceived as the result of competition and collaboration among interest groups motivated by increasing their benefits. In this case, the government acts as an arbitrator.

In contrast, in the corporatist model, actors are limited and do not compete with each other, while the government is responsible for organizing actors hierarchically.

5. Statism: views the State as an independent actor capable of conceiving and implementing its objectives in a durable and consistent manner. This model explains the policy differences among states; however, it fails to explain the existence of policies incorporating liberties and rights, as well as situations where it cannot impose its will.
6. Neoinstitutionalism: institutions are responsible for producing public policies, shaping the interpretation of problems and alternative solutions, and thereby limiting the decision-making and application process.

Methodology

To analyze the State's action and public policies, it is necessary to consider the influence of different authors, disciplines, and scopes, which is why a qualitative documentary investigation employing systematic review is conducted. According to Arias (2023), this type of research possesses an explicit and replicable method; leading to the generation of new knowledge through the retrieval, analysis, and interpretation of primary and secondary information from printed, audiovisual, or electronic documentary sources.

Specifically, a systematic review starts with a research question. In this case, the study of government action through the lens of public policies arises from the need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the State's work. This way, the study aims to answer the questions: How can efficiency in solving public problems be contributed to? and How can understanding of government activity be improved? (Hernández, 2015).

To answer these questions, a four-stage method is applied: 1) review, identification, and selection of relevant articles; 2) specification of inclusion and exclusion criteria; 3) analysis of information; and 4) interpretation and synthesis of results. The review of articles begins with Lasswell's postulates from the 1950s and explores the contributions

of the most relevant authors up to the year 2020. Regarding the method employed, only studies published in peer-reviewed journals and books by international reference authors in this field are included. In terms of analysis, the method of triangulation of different bibliographic sources is applied. Finally, the synthesis seeks to link new conceptual elements or find general principles that describe the formulation and implementation of public policies (Fernández, 2021).

This contributes to knowledge construction from three dimensions: organizational, productive, and critical (Barahona, 2013). The organizational dimension contributes coherence and systematization of theoretical proposals with a transdisciplinary approach. The critical dimension helps evaluate the internal coherence of models, their inconsistencies, and pertinence of use. As for production, it is expected that the organization and critique of different public policy approaches will produce new conceptual tools that expand the understanding of State action and help find better solutions to public problems.

Results

Strategic Approach

This approach defines the government as a set of interrelated organizations responsible for the State's administration as well as for formulating and implementing development strategies for the country. In this sense, the concept of public policy is analogous to that of strategy, understood as a set of guidelines aimed at building a desired future. Its origins date back to the 1990s under the name "New Public Management" with the purpose of responding to the lack of efficiency and result-oriented focus of bureaucratic logic (Chica, 2011).

The concept of New Public Management arises from the proposal to treat citizens as clients and improve service quality by applying standards and performance measures along with the disaggregation of administrative functions into autonomous units (Hood, 1991). Other important contributions include the introduction of market mechanisms in public administration with a business-oriented approach (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992), the creation of public value (Moore, 1995),

and process management (Aguilar 2006). These contributions highlight the concern for achieving results, reflecting the neo-classical school (Drucker, 1954). In this context, the concern arises for reforming the bureaucratic structure and applying the market logic of private companies.

The strategic perspective enriches the understanding of public administration since explaining political phenomena from a single approach generates a fragmented view of reality that ignores its complexity. Therefore, an analytical framework is needed to observe all the elements affecting policies. The purpose of this framework will not be to produce new and sophisticated theories but to use existing theories according to the object of study (Hernández, 2015). This will improve decision-making in the stages of public policy formulation and implementation, considering both technical aspects and context. Next, other approaches to public policy analysis are addressed to find common ground and new analytical factors.

Emergent Strategy Approach

The analysis begins with the influence of administrative theories since the appearance of the first models of public policy analysis and their convergence with the concept of emergent strategy (Mintzberg & Jogersen, 1995). As a starting point, the sequential model (Lowi, 1964) is addressed, which understands decision-making as a rational process where reality can be completely understood and explained. Therefore, it is a prescriptive model based on the scientific method, sharing similarities with strategic planning (Ansoff, 1976). In this case, emphasis is placed on analyzing social problems from within State institutions, interpreting public policy as a linear process.

On the other hand, the incremental approach recognizes a pattern of political behavior where public policies are directed through small steps (Lindblom, 1959). This relates to understanding strategy as a pattern where successful actions become patterns of behavior incorporated later into strategy. This does not imply abandoning the planning approach; it simply represents an expansion of the strategy perspective (Mintzberg, 1993).

Understanding the complex nature of strategic thinking applied to public policy analysis gives rise to the mixed scanning approach, which seeks to reconcile the sequential and incremental approaches. The similarity of these approaches with the perspectives of strategy as a plan and as a pattern (Mintzberg, 1993) implies the need to integrate both positions to achieve greater flexibility and adaptation of public policies. This is consistent with the purpose of emergent strategy to correct distortions in the environment not foreseen during the planning process.

A central point of public policy analysis is the division between strategy formulation and implementation, which generates greater inefficiency (Mintzberg & Jogersen, 1995). In this case, politicians in the executive and legislative branches carry out the formulation, while public administration handles the implementation. The political arena is characterized by incremental processes and power plays, while public administration manages a bureaucratic structure with low decision-making power for lower-ranking officials. In both situations, the rivalry between actors' interests that only inadvertently serve the public good is emphasized.

In practice, the traditional approach operates under the assumption of a rational model where policies or strategies are analytically and consciously formulated, made explicit, and then applied formally. This is an intentional strategy that, when executed, becomes a deliberate strategy. This assumption is far from reality, where in most situations, the strategy is not deliberate; modifications must be made to achieve the objectives and adapt to the environment. These modifications are called emergent strategies and enable organizational learning.

Recognizing the dynamics of the implementation process allows us to understand strategy as a pattern of action where emergent strategy corrects the course to achieve the intentional strategy's objectives. Emergent strategies often originate from gradual, collective, and spontaneous processes, many of which do not intend to be managed. Sometimes, policies arise from the depths of the system, developed by inflexible or aware bureaucrats who try to address impractical

directives. This necessitates tracking emergent strategies, as in a greenhouse, where plants that bear fruit are encouraged to grow, and weeds are removed. Unfortunately, public institutions have focused on eradicating emergent processes, limiting their ability to adapt and learn (Mintzberg & Jogersen, 1995).

A new perspective on public policy is needed, where strategy is defined as a norm of action. In this case, general guidelines are established, but public administrators are given greater freedom of action in specific details. This process is called umbrella strategy. The result is a strategy that is partly deliberate, partly emergent. But what happens if an action falls outside the umbrella? A traditional administration would stop it immediately, but a more sensitive administration would decide not to and realize the consequences of the developed pattern. Later, when the consequences are clear, action could be taken to suspend what is dysfunctional or move the umbrella to cover what is worthwhile. This way, emergent strategies become deliberate, achieving organizational learning in a strategic sense (Mintzberg & Jogersen, 1995).

This new perspective, combining deliberate and emergent strategy, allows organizations to adapt to periods of stability and change, enabling active learning and conscious control. Constant and predictable situations allow for deliberate strategies; on the other hand, less understandable and variable situations demand greater specialized knowledge and creativity. In these cases, critical thinking for formulating strategies is deep within the system, requiring broad guidelines with room to maneuver within them, so emergent strategies can arise.

In unexpected situations requiring quick decisions and adaptation, emergent strategy prevails. To develop a strategy that integrates deliberate and emergent aspects, public administration must foster a flexible structure that allows the emergence of strategies and supportive ideologies. For this, it is crucial to monitor convergence and divergence patterns to know when to resist for internal efficiency or when to promote change to adapt to environmental changes (Mintzberg & Jogersen, 1995).

A limitation for implementing this model is the size and complexity of the State, which requires specialized knowledge and large operations in different geographical contexts. This raises doubts about how deliberate a strategy can be since no government can gather all the necessary ideas and information to formulate an intentional and detailed strategy in one place and time. Added to this is the time needed to understand the complex context in which public policies are developed, where there is a risk that summarized information may lead to the trivialization of the problem.

Another aspect to consider is the difficulty of institutional learning through emergent strategies. This is due to factors such as the legal prerogative of deliberate strategy, fixed norms and regulations, lack of participation of public servants in policy formulation, bureaucratic structure with low decision-making capacity, inadequate knowledge management due to hierarchical and geographical limitations, high centralization, and obsession with formal planning processes and the inability to measure the benefits of a policy in the short term. Therefore, it is proposed to decentralize the State by relaxing norms, delegating responsibilities, and creating an agile consultation system that allows public servants to participate in policy formulation and decision-making processes (Mintzberg & Jørgensen, 1995).

Value Chain Approach

The value chain approach incorporates customer satisfaction with primary and support activities to achieve a competitive advantage (Porter, 1985). This way, public organizations can structure and manage their activities to maximize the value created for society by improving efficiency and effectiveness in the production of public goods or services (Moore, 1995). This framework is based on the legitimacy of State action towards citizens as a result of better operational capacity. In this case, logistics activities are replaced by policy formulation, program implementation, and the provision of goods or services.

It is important to highlight that a country's competitiveness is measured not only by its economic capacity but also by its ability

to improve citizens' welfare (Porter, 1991). This fact makes the State's true competition the fight against inequality and poverty. The solution to this problem must be approached from a multidimensional perspective, which, along with the economic dimension, incorporates the social, environmental, and cultural dimensions; thinking in terms of creating public value with long-term sustainability (World Bank, 2020).

To create public value, the value chain model considers the combination of three factors: products, regulations, and direction, which configure the profile of public intervention (Hernández, 2015). The regulatory dimension explains the State's role as a regulator of societal behavior, establishing what can and cannot be done, along with measures to encourage or discourage certain behaviors and their consequences. Public policies aim for the population to do something they would not do without intervention or not to the extent and direction intended. Rules and the consequences of non-compliance are the central instruments of this objective.

The second dimension is associated with the production of goods and services that generate public value, often minimized by liberal approaches. The value chain model maintains that the State's participation in the productive structure is often crucial since it produces essential goods and services such as education, health, infrastructure, and energy for society's functioning. Production takes place within the State's institutional network through different operations, processes, or technologies. To understand a policy, it is necessary to analyze its products, recipients, their use, and the effects produced; as well as the production network, resources transformed, and technologies used.

The third dimension articulates the previous two because the State not only regulates and produces but also directs these actions according to its conception of public value. The direction action is reflected in national, regional, and sectoral strategic plans. The orientation of regulations and the characteristics of the public production profile only make sense in the context of deliberate or emergent projects prioritized to address social problems and generate public value.

The value chain model is descriptive because it allows for understanding and analyzing public policies. It is not a prescriptive method since it does not define steps to formulate or implement a policy. It is rather a map detailing the territories to explore and the milestones needed not to get lost in the attempt. An analogy frequently used is to consider public policies as the action of channeling a river, i.e., understanding the flow of ongoing events and taking actions if redirection is necessary (Hernández, 2015). This situation is analogous to what happens with emergent strategy.

In the context of public value creation, public policies should be oriented towards strengthening the productive sector, providing quality public services, implementing effective social protection systems, investing in human capital development, and adopting best practices, among others. It is also necessary to develop mechanisms to ensure government transparency, to generate citizen trust, and reduce corruption. All this requires continuous innovation and adaptation to learn from successes and failures, adapting strategies to the lessons learned (Sachs, 2005).

The importance of innovation as a strategy to adapt to changing and uncertain environments challenges the traditional notion of long-term sustainability of competitive advantages. McGrath (2013) argues that competitive advantages are transient and that organizations must develop capabilities to detect new opportunities. This approach implies greater strategic flexibility to abandon obsolete practices and mobilize resources to respond quickly to market demands.

Another important contribution of administrative theory comes from the concept of disruptive innovation (Christensen, 1997). This approach considers innovation as a process of change where new, simpler, and cheaper products or services replace existing ones through the use of new technologies. This dynamic creates new markets by allowing access to people with fewer resources and makes traditional business models obsolete.

The formulation and implementation of policies favoring disruptive innovation in public administration open the opportunity

to produce goods and services more efficiently and sustainably for the benefit of a larger percentage of the population. This is the case with the use of artificial intelligence, which has the potential to reduce the number of administrative procedures, optimize information management, and improve decision-making in public institutions. This will reduce the time officials spend on repetitive and monotonous tasks, increasing spaces for community interaction, favoring the identification and application of emergent strategy.

Limited Rationality in the Garbage Can Model

The confusion that arises from challenging prescriptive models under the logic of limited rationality has led other theorists to propose explanations such as the Garbage Can (Cohen, et al., 1972), here problems, solutions, and policy participants are randomly mixed. In this sense, ignorance of the context leads to anarchic organizations where solutions search for problems. Thus, strategy becomes what the organization does, not what it should do (Mintzberg & Jogersen, 1995). In this model, strategies are often planned and executed that do not address citizens' actual needs. This situation is highly inefficient due to the waste of resources, which, being limited, prevent the development of emergent strategies that correct the course of poor strategic planning.

The Garbage Can model is considered descriptive and responds to ambiguous and highly uncertain environments. In this model, activities, procedures, formal and informal rules, strategies, and solutions are mixed disorderly in a trash can. This situation is observed in organizations where there is a lack of clarity about their functioning, procedures, and objectives, as often occurs in public institutions. These organizations are called organized anarchies and operate based on inconsistent and poorly defined preferences. This leads to a trial-and-error process with wide variations in the time and effort spent on decision-making.

An important element of this theory is its critique of the role of organizations as vehicles for problem-solving or as places where conflicts are resolved through negotiation.

Thus, it is considered false that organizations have a set of procedures that allow their members to interpret what they do. From this perspective, an organization is defined as a collection of strategies seeking problems to which they can be a response and decision-makers creating needs that justify their work (Cohen et al., 1972).

Despite its descriptive nature, this model reveals some of the limitations faced by public administration. However, understanding the different elements mixed in the can and their possible interactions allows for addressing innovation processes. In this case, organizations must be attentive to unexpected solutions where participants coincide with relevant problems and solutions. This is consistent with the iterative and experimental nature of the innovation process, requiring flexibility and adaptability in public organizations. This is nothing more than being alert to the emergence of emergent strategy to incorporate it into planning processes through learning.

Conclusions

To improve the understanding of public policies, it is necessary to understand their evolution and the different analysis approaches. In this sense, a shift from a rational and scientific approach oriented towards problem-solving from an institutional perspective to one that recognizes the influence of the environment and the role of actors for public policy success is observed. The analogy between public policies and the strategy of private organizations allows for the adoption of some principles of administrative theory by the public sector. These include the value chain and strategy approaches, which resemble the sequential, incremental, and mixed scanning approaches.

To broaden the perspective of public policies, functional, historical, and limited rationality approaches are addressed. The functional approach recognizes the importance of the environment and the interrelation of actors in the so-called political arena. It also proposes a typology of public policies: regulatory, distributive, or constituent, influencing actor opposition or support. The limited rationality theory opposes linear and prescriptive

thinking, allowing for the approach of public policies as a complex phenomenon subjected to chance and uncertainty. Finally, the historical approach suggests that public policies can only be understood retrospectively, where policy execution drives changes in context, regulatory frameworks, discourses, and actor positions.

Generally speaking, public policies can be approached from both descriptive and prescriptive perspectives. Prescriptive approaches establish norms, criteria, and procedures that public policy-makers must follow to achieve desired objectives efficiently and effectively. This group includes incremental, sequential, and mixed scanning approaches. Another way to approach public policy analysis is through descriptive approaches, which rely on observing and analyzing the phenomenon to explain how public policies are made. This group includes functional, historical, value chain, garbage can, and emergent strategy approaches.

From the perspective of emergent strategy, one of the greatest difficulties in public policies is the separation of strategy formulation and implementation processes. This reduces the ability to communicate emergent strategies identified by public officials during implementation, which in turn reduces the ability of politicians to adapt and learn from the strategies they formulate. A system is proposed to manage emergent strategies to improve the State's effectiveness in solving social problems.

Based on the analysis conducted, it can be seen that all approaches converge on the importance of promoting organizational flexibility and adaptability in dynamic and uncertain environments. One way to do this is by fostering the identification and adoption of emergent strategies, which allow for returning to the established course and promoting learning. The best way to do this is through innovation.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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