

Public policies for sustainable development. A critical review of background, concepts and perspectives**Las políticas públicas para el desarrollo sostenible. Una revisión crítica de antecedentes, conceptos y perspectivas**

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Abstract

This paper's main objective is to realize an analytical review of the concept of public policy and its relationship with sustainability. Thus, its background is revised and it is argued that there have been, in recent decades, three dominating paradigms which conditioned its design and application: a neoclassical one, another one associated with ECLA (UN Economic Commission for Latin America) and a monetarist. The definitions of public policy proposed by different authors during the period 1972-2008 are analyzed, and a critique of their scopes is advanced, with the result of the identification of aspects such as the lack of a consensus among them about the design of an ideal model of public policy, as well as a lack of continuity and lags in the application of international recommendations, un-coordination among public entities and a lack of rigorous follow-up and evaluation. It is emphasized that up to nowadays, the agenda for such public policies do not take into account basic elements such as the betterment of the quality of life, gender equality, an inclusive society, resilience, and sustainable safe cities. It is concluded that there still exists the need to establish a structural relationship between public policy with sustainability, and that it is important to impact strategies and actions of different realms of government in order to improve the levels of social wellbeing.

Public policies, Sustainability, Quality of life, Development, Models**Resumen**

El objetivo del presente trabajo es realizar una revisión y análisis del concepto de políticas públicas y su relación con la sostenibilidad; se exponen sus antecedentes y se afirma que ha habido, en decenios recientes, tres paradigmas dominantes que condicionaron su diseño y aplicación: el neoclásico, el cepalino y el monetarista. Se analizan las definiciones de política pública propuestas por diversos autores en los años recientes y se formula una crítica a sus alcances, llegando a identificar aspectos tales como la falta de consenso entre los estudiosos del tema para la formulación de un modelo ideal de políticas públicas, la falta de continuidad, el desfase en la aplicación de recomendaciones internacionales, la descoordinación entre entidades del sector público y la falta de rigor en su seguimiento y evaluación. Se hace énfasis en que las agendas públicas, producto de esas políticas, no toman en cuenta, hasta ahora, elementos básicos como el mejoramiento de la calidad de vida, la equidad de género, las sociedades incluyentes, la resiliencia, las ciudades sostenibles y las ciudades seguras. Se concluye que aún falta mayor elaboración conceptual y operativa para establecer una relación estructural entre ambos ejes, políticas públicas con sostenibilidad, y que es importante que ello impacte estrategias y acciones en los distintos ámbitos de gobierno, mejorando, en esencia, los niveles de bienestar social.

Políticas públicas, Sostenibilidad, Calidad de vida, Desarrollo, Modelos

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Introduction

At the end of the second decade of the 21st century, we observe a series of phenomena that require the attention of all sectors, and especially those who design, apply, modify and evaluate public policies in the world.

A total population that is above the 7,300 million inhabitants, with contrasting economic growth rates in the various regions of the world; a revision of the neoliberal model due to the high costs it generates in terms of social backwardness, marginalization and poverty, and; revision of protectionism schemes for economies and high economic-population concentration in cities and their regions.

This contrasts with the threat to human health from global warming, water scarcity, the threat also of a food crisis and the sharpening of environmental phenomena. (PNUD, 2015).

The objective of this work is to perform a critical analysis of the evolution of concepts related to public policies and sustainable development, in the perspective of locating areas of opportunity where planning processes can be improved in decision making.

The document consists of this section and four more. In the second section, we review the impact of the dominant paradigms between the Second World War and the beginning of the seventies: neoclassical, ECLAC and monetarist. In this section, public policy is defined as the intervention of the state to modify a given situation in matters of economic and social development.

A review is made of contributions generated by authors such as Thomas R. Dye, Houlet and Ramesh (Parsons, 2007) and the proposal related to various elements of public policy (Olavarría, 2007). This section also deals with how, since 1987, the concept of sustainable development and recent international meetings have been proposed, which seek to incorporate into the public agendas the recommendations issued by the UN regarding the Sustainable Development Goals, the meeting of COP21 and the most recent Habitat III, carried out in Quito, Ecuador.

In the third section, the contributions of various authors in recent decades are exposed; their proposals on the concept of public policies and the main elements that they must contain are exposed and discussed; the ideal model of public policy proposed by Laswell is analyzed and the different recommendations exposed by authors such as Hugh Hecló, Hogwood B.W. and Gunn, L.A., William Jenkins, Omar Guerrero, Dunbning, Thomas R. Dye, and David Easton (Parsons, 2007).

At the end of this section, reference is made to the legitimacy, implementation and results and social impact of public policies.

In the fourth section, the recent international environment is presented with economic, demographic and social indicators that deal with the current world problems.

Some phenomena related to environmental and territorial issues are analyzed and the criticism of the scope of public policy is grouped into five main sections, among which stand out: lack of continuity in public policy, lag in the application of international recommendations on matters of sustainability and public policies, lack of coordination between public sector entities and the application of these policies, lack of rigor in the follow-up and evaluation of these recommendations and absence of interdisciplinary teams that address these problems.

At the end of that section, emphasis is placed on the effects of cyclical and recurrent economic crises, as well as the decision of public agents to address the urgent and immediate and to set aside the important and transcendent aspects of public life.

Regarding the final section, of conclusions and recommendations, reference is made to the fact that the lag in the application of the policies emanating, among others, from the international forums of the UN, COP 21 and Habitat III, is generating a vacuum in the public agendas on issues related to sustainability, education for sustainability, science, technology and innovation as factors that can support the takeoff to development. In this section it is also pointed out that there is an indisputable richness in the contributions of the concepts of public policies and sustainability.

However, it is concluded that there are no structural links between both axes of action in modern national states. It is also concluded that there is no ideal model of public policies proposed by Laswell and retaken by Parsons and Velásquez; there is a wealth that can be valued and rescued, but only in terms of public policies, leaving behind the axis related to sustainability. In relation to the recommendations, it is suggested to translate, in strategies and actions, the guidelines issued at the international level of the UN fora, to incorporate them into government agendas, prospective planning and programs that impact directly, in the elevation of social welfare levels. In that sense, it is suggested to address, in a better way and with greater coverage, the challenges that emanate from local development and strengthen the idea of serving, not only the urban regions, but also the rural ones that have historically been lagging behind.

Epistemic framework: relationship between Development, Public Policies and Sustainability

In recent decades, especially at the end of the Second World War, there was an international environment characterized by two major phenomena: 1) The interest of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to carry out programs and actions to promote development and, 2) Organizations linked to the Organization of the United Nations, concerned about the integration of economic policies in a direct manner, to promote industrialization in Latin America and the Caribbean. As previously mentioned, there are, at least, three major paradigms that influence, in a decisive way, the new environment for the Latin American region: the neoclassical approach, the ECLAC paradigm and the monetary policy approach. These three paradigms extend, practically, until the decade of the eighties. (Gutiérrez, 2007). The neoclassical approach refers to the interpretation of economic growth based on the proposal of Robert Solow, in the fifties of the twentieth century, which part of transforming society, from a traditional state, characterized by stagnation and subsistence, to a society capitalist dynamics based on the entrepreneurial sector. This paradigm includes several authors such as W. Arthur Lewis, who points out the existence of two sectors: the modern capitalist sector linked to industry and the traditional pre-capitalist sector associated with agriculture.¹

Here also the contributions of Walt Whitman Rostow, who deals with the stages of economic growth and adds that the countries, with less development, are in a situation of transitory delay that is part of a historical process within each society. Rostow points out five common stages of this block of countries: i) traditional society (subsistence agriculture), ii) creation of pre-start conditions; iii) takeoff (depending on whether the investment rate exceeds the population rate); iv) path to maturity (approximately six decades), and: v) stage of mass consumption. This proposal was widely disseminated and accepted in the neoclassical paradigm because it is based on the postulates of international trade theory. (Rostow, 1960).

With regard to the ECLAC school, Raúl Prebisch, president of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Organization during the 1950s, formulated the center-periphery theory that laid the foundations of the so-called economic theory structuralist according to which, the world is characterized by "centers" with high industrial development, generators of technology and producers of goods, which export to developing countries and; the "periphery", which is constituted by countries with a preponderance of the agricultural sector and lags in technological innovation, receptors (importers) of industrial goods generated in developed countries (CEPAL, 1998).

After the military coup of 1973, in Chile, a current was created for the design and application of economic policies, which privileged the development, from the industry into the country and generated a control of inflation, promoting monetarist-type policies. A group of advisers from this government, from the so-called school of Chicago, laid the foundations to maintain high economic growth rates and control of inflation, with very high political and social costs.

In this international environment, for Latin America and the Caribbean, these three paradigms, although they were not the only ones, had a strong presence in the design, application and evaluation of public policy.

Public policy is the intervention of the State in a certain matter about which there is an idea that things do not go as desired.

This part of the precept that the State must intervene to change this situation, although it is recognized that not all social or economic issues should be subject to state intervention (Olavarría, 2007).

An idea of the environment through which there is an interrelation between problems, solutions and the intervention of public policies is shown in Figure 1.

There is a social base on which they rest, normally, a set of problems that become demands of all sectors of society. On the opposite side, are the solutions that are inscribed precisely in the so-called public policies, and at the top of the triangle are the decisions of the authorities. The geometric figure selected for this effect is a triangle that, traditionally, has been identified as a figure that maintains equilibrium, not only in the process of classical physics but, as it is the case, in matters of social and economic development.

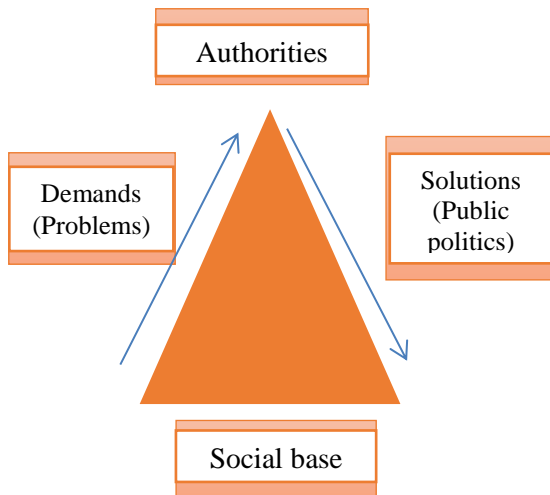


Figure1 Problem flow and solutions
Source: Olavarría Gambi, Mauricio (2007)

According to Olavarría (2007), there is a large number of authors who think about public policy. Kraft and Furlong (2004), establish that a public policy is an intervention of the State in response to social problems in which are reflected, in addition to the values of society, the conflict between these values and the priorities of a decision. Thomas Dye, points out that public policy is any decision that the State chooses to make or not. The State regulates conflicts in society and promotes an organization to face conflicts with other societies, and the taxes it receives are a form of reward to provide services to members of society.

Howlett and Ramesh point out that public policies are the result of government decisions, which may be aimed at maintaining or altering the *status quo*. Jenkins, states that a public policy refers to a set of interrelated decisions, taken by an actor or group of actors regarding the selection of goals and means to achieve them in a specific situation, for which, these decisions are within the scope of authority of those actors (Olavarría, 2007).

In general, public policies are directly linked to two research axes: i) The decisions of the government and its feasibility and ii) the design of a public agenda. Among the relevant characteristics of public policies are planning, budget programming and short, medium and long term goals. The role of social development planning is based on establishing achievable goals within defined periods, because that means the sum of efforts of human organizations and institutions to avoid contingencies and that unforeseen problems do not arise (Pamplona, 2000). The basic aspects of public policy are identified in four major elements: the first refers to the existence of a decision or set of decisions on a matter of a competent authority; the second, that this decision or set of decisions follows a formal process, that is, that there is an institutional procedure that leads to certain initiatives becoming public policy or not; The third element refers to the characterization of the problem and to the discussion on substantive aspects of public policy, and; the fourth element that, once the public policy has been defined, there is a political process in which various actors explain their interests (See Figure 2).

1st	2nd
That for there to be a public policy there must be a decision or set of decisions on the same subject, of a competent authority.	That decision or set of decisions follow a certain formal process. That is to say, there is a certain institutional procedure that leads certain initiatives to become public policy or not..
3rd	4th
The characterization of the problem and the discussion on the substantive aspects of public policy make necessary the contribution of the technical - rational approach.	That after the definition of a public policy there is a political process in which diverse actors explain their interests and fight because the concrete contents of the public policy incorporate and satisfy those interests.

Figure. 2 Elements of the notion or idea of public policy
Source: Own elaboration based on Olavarría Gambi, 2007

The concept of sustainable development emerged in 1987 when the report of the World Commission for Environment and Development of the UN. It is a genuine contribution to the theme of guaranteeing a balanced relationship between economic growth, natural resources, the environment, poverty, demographic growth and, implicitly, public policies. In fact, at the end of the second half of the decade of the eighties, the planet was facing strong threats that were combined to generate a global diagnosis, by that instance of the UN, but also to delineate guidelines and prevent trends natural phenomena will generate dramatic effects on the survival of the human species on the planet. Throughout the three recent decades, countless international forums have been developed to give continuity and concrete commitments of the international community to reduce and diminish the causes of this problem. Other events include the Habitat II meeting of the UN, in Istanbul, Turkey (1996), which analyzed aspects related to human settlements, economic growth and the environment; the signature of the Kyoto Protocol (1994), to curb and reduce the impacts of greenhouse gases in the world, and; the world meeting, convened by the UN in Johannesburg, Africa (2002), to analyze economic and social problems and their relationship with the environment.

In recent years, this effort by the international community has continued to address the structural relationship between economic growth, poverty, marginalization, natural resources and the environment. The General Assembly of the UN, in September 2015, approved the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in which it delineates substantive concepts for the planet as prosperity, alliances, human development and a world of peace. The new agenda arises from this declaration and seventeen Sustainable Development Goals are embodied (SDG) (UN, 2015). Of these seventeen SDGs, at least four are directly impacting on the design, restructuring, instrumentation and evaluation of public policies; they are:

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Goal 13. Adopt urgent measures to combat climate change and its effects.

It is considered that, at least, these four objectives are having a direct impact on public decision-making at the level of the international community, so that, in effect, the term has been very short (barely two years) between the adoption of these recommendations and their translation into public policies.

Evolution of concepts

In terms of the evolution of these two main areas of research that are: public policies and sustainable development it can be pointed out that, up to now and given the recent appearance of the international agreements indicated above, there are few elements to affirm that the international community is in a phase of direct application of sustainability as a way of life.

Several authors have addressed the issue of "the public and its problems", which means the way in which they conceive, construct and explain the political agenda and the public policy agenda. From the time of Max Weber until the 1970s, we have been analyzing the way in which governments adopt certain measures and why governments implement these actions. The relationship between the nature, causes and effects of public policies leads to a broader vision about the variety of approaches and disciplines to explain the problematization of society and public policies.

Figure 3 shows the way in which there is an ideal model generated by specialists in the subject of public policies. At the center of this figure is the orientation of public policies, which depends on factors such as the concern to draw a contextual map of processes, options and results of public policies and guidance to solve problems. On the other hand, highlights the integration of knowledge and the multidisciplinary approach that should be in this ideal model. The model is not complete, if different methods for the application and monitoring of public policies are not considered.

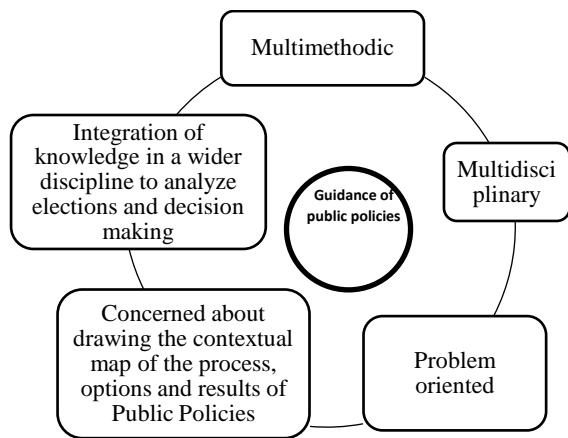


Figure 3 Ideal model of public policies according to Laswell

Source: Own elaboration based on: Parsons, W. (2007).

It can be said that, at the international level, the decade of the seventies marks the turning point through which public policies begin to formulate, apply, analyze, study and report in the field of social sciences.

A summarized form to identify the evolution of the concepts, the authors and the main elements that make up public policies, is found in Table 1.

Year	Definition	Author (s)	Main elements
1972	"Advanced course of action under the authority of governments".	Hugh Hecló.	-It allows the possible participation of individuals.
1984	"Any public policy is defined as such, and subjectively, by an observer and is usually perceived as the understanding of a series of decision guidelines to which many circumstances and personal, group and organizational influences have contributed."	Hogwood B.W.y Gunn, L.A.	-Goals of social situations.
1992	Public policy is the action program of a public authority. A public policy is the result of the activity of an authority vested with public power and governmental legitimacy. A policy is presented in the form of a set of practices and rules that emanate from one or more public actors. A public policy is presented in the form of a program of governmental action in a sector of society or in a geographical space: security, health, independent workers, the city of Paris, the European community, the Pacific Ocean, etc. .,	Ives Mény y J.C. Thoénig.	- Emphasis on authority -Government action linked to society.

Year	Definition	Author(s)	Main elements
1995	Set of interrelated decisions made by a political actor, or a group of actors, related to the selection of objectives and means to achieve those objectives within a specific situation where those decisions must, in principle, be within the power of the actors to be materialized.	William Jenkins.	-Political actor with power to make decisions.
1999	A type of government activity, one that aims to stimulate social collaboration or inhibit conflict.	Omar Guerrero	-Government activity -Collaboration social or inhibition of conflict
1999	... politics, then consists of making common decisions for a group, through the use of power (...) any act of politics can be seen from either of two perspectives, either as a cooperative search for an answer to common problems or as an act by which some members of a group impose their will on other members of the group.	W. Phillips Shively.	- Decision-making on focused objectives.
1999	Public policy is presented in the form of a program of action, typical of one or more public or governmental authorities.	Jean Claude Thoénig	-Decision making under an action program
2002	Process by which public action programs are elaborated and implemented, that is to say, political - administrative devices coordinated, in principle, around explicit objectives.	Pierre Muller y Ives Surel.	-Public action programs -Goals
2002	Set of decisions that are translated into actions, strategically selected (within a set of alternatives, according to a hierarchy of values and preference of the interested parties). Its size is public because of the size of the social aggregate, on which they have an impact, but above all because of its imperative nature, since it is covered with the legitimate and sovereign authority of the public power.	Maria das Gracas Rua.	- Public dimension - Legitimate legitimacy
2002	Public policy is constituted by government actions. What governments say and what they do in relation to a problem or a controversy.	Dunbning.	-Government actions
2002	A public policy is a government action aimed at achieving objectives outside of itself.	Hugo Hecló y Aaron Wildavsky	-Government action
2007	Course of governmental action or inaction in response to public problems.	Michael E. Kraft and Scott R. Furlong	-Actions of government
2008	What governments choose to do or not do.	Thomas R. Dye.	-Center in government
2008	Authoritative assignments of values for the whole society.	David Easton	-Authoritarianism
2008	Set of successive responses of the State to situations considered socially as problematic.	Carlos Salazar Vargas	-Response to problems

2010	"They are the decisions that are made. In politics they pursue social objectives, they bring together a set of government activities that are carried out in the different areas of Public Administration and make up a set of successive responses to different social situations. They are materialized through legal regulations and in a programmed manner through plans and programs established in government planning."	Georgina González	-Orientate the behavior of the actors. -The origin of a public policy or program, begins with a complaint or problem of such magnitude that it can change the agenda. - Policies can arise from the realm of power.
2011	"The public space condenses the intervention of governmental and non-governmental actors in the definition of public problems and solutions, which requires modifying the pattern of social conduct with the help of public policies."	Ricardo Uvalle	-By means of public policies, the government makes decisions and takes actions to solve the demands and public pressures.
2018	Public policies are government actions with public interest objectives that arise from decisions based on a process of diagnosis and feasibility analysis, for effective attention to specific public problems, where citizens participate in the definition of problems and solutions.	Julio Franco Corzo	- Search for objectives of public interest or benefit; - Being the result of a research process that involves the use of a method to ensure that the decision made is the best possible alternative to solve a specific public problem.

Table 1 Brief chronology of the evolution of the concept of Public Policies according to different actors (1972 - 2018)

Source: Adapted based on Velásquez, Raúl (2009) et al. and González, Georgina (2010), Uvalle, Ricardo (2011), Franco, Julio (2018)

As can be seen in this table, there are common order concepts that can be grouped into three main blocks: 1) legitimacy; 2) instrumentation, and; 3) results and social impact.

- 1) *Legitimacy*. Most of the authors referred to place in the legitimacy group concepts such as government, power, public actors and authority. It is, without a doubt, to maintain and improve the status quo, of any socioeconomic system.
- 2) *Naturally, institutional legal instruments are decisive*.
- 3) *Instrumentation*. In this second group, called instrumentation, most of the authors cited in the previous table refer to concepts such as planning, organization and budgeting.

Undoubtedly, these concepts emanate from the first group that deals with legitimacy, without which it is not possible to think about instruments. In this section it is convenient to make the difference between legitimacy and legality. The first refers to a system based on a state of law that has the support and support of large social groups. Legality refers strictly to the prevalence of a legal-institutional regime without necessarily being legitimate, that is, having the support and support of society.

- 4) *Results and social impact*. This group deals with concepts presented by such authors such as: circumstances, norms and actions. To this last respect it is convenient to point out that most of the authors referred to (if not the whole) ignore concepts such as the improvement of the quality of life, natural resources and the environment, sustainability, human development or values with a strong component in world peace and well-being.

Undoubtedly, this review still has a long way to go in terms of placing sustainability not only as a lifestyle or as a development model, but, more importantly, as a socioeconomic system based on the generation of wealth, the redistribution of income, care and preservation of the environment, social welfare and factors that impact in the short term with a less unbalanced development from the sectoral, territorial and generational point of view (Carrillo, 1996).

A critique of the scope of concepts

As it was possible to confirm, the evolution of public policies has been recent, as has the adoption of recommendations by the governments of the international community, related to the international forums of the UN, in the area of sustainable development.

With the implementation of the neoliberal model, in the eighties, parallel paths were drawn: it highlights the establishment of the neoclassical paradigm of the economy, allowing a free market and the existence of conditions to promote economic growth, based on the theories of trade international.

More than three decades after implementing this model, the balances reported by organizations such as UNDP-UN are contrasting because, on the one hand, wealth continues to accumulate in the industrialized economies and, on the other, higher levels of poverty have been generated and marginalization in large regions of the world at the present time, including regions of sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Central America (UNDP, 2015).

It is also observed that there is no homogenous application of these international recommendations on sustainable policies: while some regions of the world such as the United States of America, Canada, East Asia and Europe continue to generate the largest volumes of carbon dioxide emissions up to the years recent, and some of them have already incorporated clean technologies, eco-technologies, reforestation programs as well as environmentally friendly mobility systems, others, especially in developing countries, although emit less carbon dioxide volumes, continue to use of traditional energy resources and marked lag in the application of clean technologies. This contrasting panorama generates concern, since the natural tendencies of these phenomena suggest that, by the year 2050, there will be a predominantly urban world with strong threats to the quality of life of the population settled in those regions (Inclán and Perlo, 2017).

Beginning in 2015 with the SDGs, with the agreements of the COP-21 Summit Meeting held in the city of Paris in December 2015, and the Habitat III-UN meeting held in the city of Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016, a continuity line of these recommendations is established, which are part of the New Urban Agenda. Among those recommendations are the purpose of building sustainable, safe, resilient cities, a strong component of gender equity in territorial policies, as well as the incorporation of innovative industry and technology. It is undoubtedly an "ideal" way to promote development, accompanied by well-being and care for the environment and natural resources.

This new international framework allows us to point out that the two axes treated throughout this document integrate structural factors that contribute to the understanding of the state of affairs up to now. Among other elements, the following stand out: 1) lack of continuity in public policies; 2) lag in the application of international recommendations on sustainability and public policies; 3) lack of coordination between entities of the public sector and the application of said policies; 4) lack of rigor in the follow-up and evaluation of these recommendations, and; 5) absence of interdisciplinary teams that address this problem.

1) *Lack of continuity in public policies*

Probably due to the changing economic and financial situation in the world, preeminence has been given to the factors that promote economic growth, industrialization, international trade, banking and financial development, privileging the accumulation of capital and generating, in a indirectly, the increase in social, territorial and economic inequalities. This has resulted in the lack of continuity in public policies that, on the one hand, have privileged the dominant global economic and financial system, and on the other, strategies and instruments that allow modern national states to place themselves at the center of the economy have been left aside vanguard in terms of promoting social development. The foregoing has generated an absence in the continuity of public policies as an instrument for such purposes.

2) *Delay in the application of international recommendations on sustainability and public policy*

Given that the central pivot that has guided the actions of governments, in recent decades, has been economic and financial development, there is a strong lag in terms of planning, legislation and regulation regarding sustainability as well as in relation to social policies that lessen the strong pressure generated by poverty and marginalization in the less developed regions. In this sense, there is also a considerable lag in terms of Education for Sustainability.¹

¹The United Nations Organization uses sustainability as a general paradigm to address various interrelated challenges (eg, poverty reduction, environmental protection, social justice and education for all.) See the report: What is it? sustainable development?). As part of this approach, Agenda 21 is the ISSN 2524-2016
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official document of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also called the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Agenda 21 is a comprehensive blueprint for the actions that UN organizations, governments and the most important groups at the global, national and local levels VÁZQUEZ-GUZMÁN, Olga, CARRILLO-HUERTA, Mario and FLORES-GONZÁLEZ, Sergio. Public policies for sustainable development. A critical review of background, concepts and perspectives. Journal-Public Economy. 2018

This is relevant because there is no doubt that the education sector, science, technology and innovation can and should be sectors to which they are given greater attention and allocated greater economic and financial resources, which would result in a improvement in human capital and social capital.

3) *Discoordination between entities of the public sector and the application of said policies*

It is very likely that, due to the inertia to which the public sector is subject, the urgent is usually addressed and the important is left out. This is due to the fact that modern national states are subject to strong economic and financial pressures and also to the influence of harmful agents that have permeated their structures and have generated acute phenomena of dysfunction and corruption. It is notorious that different state secretariats, within the same territory, approach the same phenomenon from different perspectives, but without adequate coordination.

To this is added, usually, the ignorance or the scarce application of plans and development programs aimed at fulfilling the substantive tasks of the public sector.

4) *Lack of rigor in monitoring and evaluating these recommendations*

As mentioned before, it has been the three recent years in which the recommendations on sustainable development have been delineated by the international community. The three events that have had the greatest impact on international public policies have been: the SDG-UN, of the month of September 2015; the COP 21 meeting in Paris in December 2015, and; the international meeting of Habitat III-UN in October 2016 in Quito, Ecuador. It should not be forgotten that, even though these agreements and recommendations are very recent, the daily problems of low economic growth in developing countries, as well as environmental deterioration, global warming and social inequalities demand immediate attention.

To the foregoing, it must be added that, even before these international meetings, there was a lack of rigor in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies aimed at economic, social and environmental development.

5) *Absence of interdisciplinary teams that address this problem*

Of conventional form, the different regions and countries of the world, are conformed by three great sectors: public, social and deprived. Naturally, the greater responsibility, both from the legal and institutional point of view, corresponds to the national states. In this sense, the public sector is the repository of the trust that society gives it and that, due to its legal nature, can and should influence, in a central way, the criteria of an efficient, responsible and participative government and public administration.

However, it has been observed that, especially in developing countries, there is no adequate linkage between governments, research centers, universities and companies, which means that there are no interdisciplinary teams that address this problem. In terms of the review of the scope of these concepts, it has been detected that, at least, in the developing countries more attention and institutional weight has been given to public policies of a sectoral nature.

The economic processes in the world have been influenced by cyclical and recurrent crises that have conditioned the performance of the public sector, so that greater attention has been paid to macroeconomic policy phenomena, such as control of inflation, a better redistribution of income, fight against poverty and formulation and application of international trade instruments. This is the case of actions that, pressured by international circumstances, governments have promoted sectoral policies, leaving aside strategic sectors for development such as science and technology, education for sustainability, planning and territorial planning.

should take, declared the period from 2005 to 2014 as the Decade of Education for Development. Sustainable (DEDS). Education for sustainable development (ESD), in some parts of the world also called education for sustainability, is a key concept for education in the new millennium. ESD is a broad notion that provides a distinctive orientation to many important aspects of education as a whole, including access, relevance, equity and

inclusion. ESD touches on all aspects of education, including planning, policy development, program implementation, funding, curricular programs, teaching, learning, assessments, and administration. The goal of ESD is to provide a coherent interaction between education, public awareness and training with a view to creating a more sustainable future (UNESCO, 2012).

Together with this problem, the solution of problems will be addressed depending on circumstances and circumstances that address the urgent and immediate, but not important and transcendent, as should be public policies for sustainable development.

Even more, these are public policies of a centralist nature, in which the regions or cities with the highest demographic concentration (megalopolises, metropolises and large cities) are privileged, in addition to the economic and financial sectors, not only due to the strong pressure social, towards the public sector, but to the recurrent electoral processes that, within the framework of political marketing, political parties consider with high electoral profitability.

These last characteristics lead us to the inference that there has not been a public policy that addresses the development of the local, keeping in the backward and the forgotten, the small communities, villages, agricultural areas and, in general, small and medium-sized cities in this countries.

In another sense, attention to problems in these small localities can only be observed in the discourse, but in practice, public policies are not applied properly and there is no real attention, neither institutional, nor economic, nor financial.

Conclusions

Throughout this work, the background that accompanied the emergence and the elements that make up public policy were followed up.

Likewise, the neuralgic aspects that have been discussed in international, governmental and academic forums were reviewed to the evolution of sustainability. Of the seventeen SDG of the UN, four were taken up that are directly related to the two research axes addressed here: public policies and sustainable development.

In a later section, the evolution of the concept of public policies from the decade of the seventies of the 20th century to the end of the second of the 21st century was analyzed, which results in a characterization of the elements that identify this common problem.

With regard to the critique of the scope of the concepts addressed, a set of considerations that address the lack of continuity in public policies, the gap in the implementation of international recommendations in terms of sustainability and policies are highlighted public, the lack of coordination between public sector entities and the application of these policies, the lack of rigor in the follow-up and evaluation of these recommendations; the absence of interdisciplinary teams that address this problem.

It is very likely that, in regions with a lower level of development in the world, these instruments will be applied in an outdated manner and, without a doubt, it will be observed that there is no integration with a broader concept such as the one referred to promotion of human development. In particular, for the Latin American and Caribbean region there is a considerable gap since, in comparative terms with other regions, it presents the most contrasting levels in terms of social and economic development. Several countries in this region share common origins and history; however, their levels of development are highly contrasting, and the lag in Central American and Caribbean countries is notorious.

On the other hand, there is no universal consensus on the scope of public policies to impact, directly, neither on levels of development nor on sustainability. The contribution of specialists in this field is relevant, but it can be concluded that there is not yet the "ideal model" that is being addressed by authors such as Laswell, Parsons and Velásquez.

This is possibly due to the different degrees of development of countries and regions. In the same way, the public agendas exhibited in development plans and programs observe a relative lag, because they hardly begin to mention, in such legal systems, relatively recent concepts such as resilient societies, sustainable, equitable and secure cities, just as they have just begun to incorporate new forms of relationship between political actors and society.

Also, little attention has been given to local development as a strategy to encourage "from below", policies and strategies of economic growth that impact on the improvement of the quality of life.

Probably due to the size of the population and the electoral political profitability, public agents are more interested and focus their attention and resources on the large human conglomerates, located in the new forms of territorial configuration expressed in metropolises and megalopolises. One situation is undeniable: there is consensus in the scientific community that the effects of global warming are severely affecting the levels of social welfare and human health and that, if we do not reduce the emission of greenhouse gases as well as incorporate, in a short time, sustainable mobility systems, as well as alternative energy systems that mitigate those threats, in a few decades the situation will become even more distressing.

Added to this scenario is the recurrent threat generated by the shortage of water resources (water stress), the generation of a global food crisis and the strong pressure that will continue to be exerted in urban areas on natural resources and the environment.

Recommendations

It is suggested to insist on modifying the public agendas and to convince the political actors to assume a greater responsibility, adopting a holistic and multidisciplinary vision on these phenomena, creating and operating teams of specialists in the areas of public policies, science and technology and sustainability.

Finally, it is necessary to incorporate, in these public agendas, the culture of prevention against the risks and social vulnerability generated by the great imbalances that the human species has created in natural resources and the environment.

This culture must invariably include a new code that privileges a high scale of human values and ethics that involves companies, corporations, banks, non-governmental organizations, universities and research centers, to act in a coordinated manner with the public sector. Only in this way will it be possible to translate, in actions, the true model of sustainability to plan, with a vision of the future, and act for the benefit of future generations.

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