The executive analysis of results in the direction and accountability of the government strategies

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ABSTRACT

Given the reality of the country regarding the scarcity of resources, especially financial ones, advances in public management have presented several options for governmental action, whether federal, state or municipal, with proposals for focusing public policies, but little put into practice.

By observing this scenario, with the adjustment of investments and efforts, to calibrate the delivery capacity of governments, more and more tools are needed to support the direction taken, which evidences the correctness of decision-making based on data and information closer to the effectiveness of actions.

Recently, there have been variations of public policy evaluations, but they do not permeate a timelines that is appropriate to the government cycle. The state of Goiás developed the Executive Analysis of Results, which, based on the program *Goiás Mais Competitivo e Inovador*, seeks to present the results achieved in a more objective and timely manner

The Executive Analysis of Results guides or promotes the correction of governmental actions based on the evolution of strategic indicators and their associates. The prerogative of the Executive Analysis of Results is to provide a scenario that is evaluated much less frequently than that of the publication of indicators by the official institutions. Thus, public managers can monitor the effectiveness of their actions and, if necessary, redesign and repackage projects to achieve their goals.

Keywords: Government. Results. Strategies. Accountability.

INTRODUCTION

After decades of implementation and evaluation of public policies, naturally we should already have a consistent and more employable model that could suppress all the difficulties faced in Public Management, mainly in what concerns the expectation of reaching results based on prior modeling and planning. However, when a new planning cycle begins, we seek increasingly better tools that will deliver a result beyond what has been achieved previously.

When we expect that each year we will have better results than the previous year, we are limited by factors that have an impact on different scopes of power and decision. We need to adapt ourselves to the crisis scenario, whether political or economic. There is an increasing need to curb waste based on a culture of quality spending as complex as meeting the needs and demands of the population. The shortage of resources does not allow us to know if we will have financial contributions at a given moment nor that we will be able to have and manage structural and human resources without this affecting the services of the Public Power.

Society is more demanding and finds within the limitations of the Public Power reasons to question even the existence of the State. There is the need to reevaluate the whole public policy cycle to have sustainable public policies and not just actions that may or may not be carried out, without expected results that are actually feasible.

In order to position the subject matter of this paper in a coherent and concise manner to our interlocutors, there is the need to align some definitions and/or concepts inherent to the context, and the main one is the Cycle of Public Policies.

THE CYCLE OF PUBLIC POLICIES

Public policy literature is quite comprehensive. Some phases and nomenclatures differ according to each author and/or ideologies structured according to the panorama implemented. To develop this paper, we will conceptualize the cycle of public policies in 7 phases:

Phase 1 – Diagnosis of the public problem: an allusion to the needs and demands of the population, political demands that must serve this population and opportunities for advancement or contingency for future problems.

Phase 2 – Update of the strategic agenda: the consolidation of the public problems prioritized for government performance, usually in the form of plans, laws, decrees, amendments, processes, and actions. It allows public managers to have a portfolio for allocating funds and directing efforts. Government plans prepared during a given election period are also included in this phase.

Phase 3 – Portfolio of initiatives: represents proposals or suggestions for solutions to public problems. Their implementation depends on the context where the public problem was diagnosed, i.e., the emphasis or criticality of the problem is representative in terms of the application or not of a given initiative.

Phase 4 – Definition of the initiative: among the portfolio of initiatives, the chosen one is the initiative that is more aligned to the context that will receive investments of funds and direction of efforts. The strategic alignment of the organization is the prioritization of a consonant public policy.

Phase 5 – Planning: based on the previous phases, the planning systematizes the performance of the Public Power for the implementation of public policy, allowing us to foresee the conclusion of the policy at the end of the process according to the expectation depleted during its preparation. The conclusion here does not concern the quality and effectiveness of the public policy, at this phase we only perceive tangible criteria in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

Phase 6 – Implementation and monitoring: once planning is concluded, after all the planning is prepared, in this phase it is implemented and there is current monitoring to update the status of each point of interest or control listed by the public manager.

Phase 7 – Evaluation: after phase 6, measures are condensed to verify if the implementation of that public policy produced the expected effects, or if at least the scenario was affected so that/ so/in order that based on new propositions we achieve continuous effectiveness of the actions.

Following these phases, there is no strangeness to what we normally propose during a cycle of public policies, but as we anticipated at the beginning of this paper, each day we are faced with a new scenario that requires a certain degree of adaptability and faster responses to the problems faced.

However, what we want to pinpoint in this paper is the time in which the actions of this cycle are carried out - we do not propose to change the order of these phases, but rather propose to bring them closer or overlap them. The monitoring carried out in phase 6 and the evaluation carried out in phase 7, in conjunction and distributed over the previous phases, anticipate situations that may not be foreseen in subsequent phases. However, as an objective of this study, we will focus only on evaluation.

WHY DO WE NEED TO EVALUATE PUBLIC POLICIES?

Usually, the evaluation of public policies has been defined as a tool that supports the feasibility of programs and actions. It provides to the public manager certainty that a given action may bring satisfying results or something close to it.

In the context of planning, the Multi-Year Plan (PPA) has several initiatives that reflect the aspirations of the population and will be carried out with deadlines, which are not so short and require future funds. But what if that given action does not achieve the expected effectiveness? What if such action is no longer consistent with what we identify as a need? We will need to find arguments to justify the result, and consequently we will be able to conduct or plan again for a new cycle the implementation of an adjusted public policy.

Without a public policy evaluation, we do not allow ourselves to make decisions without knowing for sure whether a change is needed. . Adjustments can only be made where problems of public policy application have been detected, unless we abandon the evolutionary characteristics of public management that lead to actions justified by evidence. However, going in the opposite direction would cause irreparable damage, problems with certain cases of accountability, conflicts of interest, and even misconduct in public office.

According to Cohen and Franco (2004), public policy evaluation is justified because it plays a central role in rationalization and is a basic planning element. When the application of a public policy does not have its results evaluated, there is a great risk it won't be effective. Without evaluation, we do not know if we are on the right track or if we are just performing something due to legal obligation.

The evaluation of public policies cannot be seen only as a mechanism to support the performance of the Public Power, but also as accountability to the population that expects that their needs and demands be met promptly and with at least minimum quality - that is, promotion of accountability and social control.

Day after day, society becomes more demanding. It is not satisfied and is moved by crises and austerity policies, demanding quality public service because it understands that it already pays a high price for it. And even if a certain public service is high quality, there will always be the need to seek better ways to perform so that part of the investments are redirected to low quality public services.

ACCOUNTABILITY: A MATTER OF GOVERNANCE, RESPONSIBILITY, AND SOCIAL CONTROL

When in the previous paragraph we ask ourselves why we evaluate public policies, we address the matter of fostering liability and social control. Recently, the term accountability has begun to be used in the sense of responsibility, without the need for outside interference to that authority scenario. Normally, it connotes the appropriation of a problem and its respective solution, in connection with the criteria that seek to guarantee better public performance (VAITSMAN, 2011).

Accountability is control and independence over a particular responsibility or action. It can be understood as the commitment of the public manager when assuming the delivery commitments to the population. Even campaign promises, when considered as public problem inputs prioritized by a governing authority, may imply accountability.

This search for responsibility is still imminent, since public managers may view the evaluation of public policies as a tool for political criticism when a particular result is not satisfying - even if the opposite is also possible, i.e., the recognition of results consistent with the political-social expectation. When the purposes of a public policy evaluation are unknown and distrusted, the tendency is to =not use it, since it gives the sense that evidence can be created against a questionable administrative act.

When a public policy is designed and implemented, not interfering in the process in order to ensure its results is no longer reasonable. Efficiency, effectiveness, and efficacy criteria may change from one moment to another and this requires us to have adaptability criteria or, in other words, good management and governance to change and decide what needs to be addressed immediately.

Another element to remember is that even if there is not much discussion regarding differences between control mechanisms and evaluation mechanisms, when focusing on the scope of an implemented public policy we note that the evaluation aims to develop full knowledge about programs, actions, and projects, as well as their impacts. General, control mechanisms seek to check conformities and establish limits for monitoring the program.

VOLATILITY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES

It is common knowledge that once a public policy has been defined and its programs and actions have been designed, changes will occur during its implementation – and they may be small or big, to the point of making a program or action unfeasible. These changes are necessary to ensure that the objectives established are achieved or that we can positively interfere in the initially diagnosed scenario. They are also necessary when we overvalue or undervalue a goal, moving away from criteria of reasonableness due to funds, invested efforts, and the addressed scenario.

Changes are needed to improve the implementation of public policies, and not just to make corrections. Only a short-term program could take the risk of remaining solid and efficient. However, most programs last more than one year, which is inevitably a length of time prone to complications.

The preparation of a diagnosis, the level of available information, the definition of priorities, the financial and human resources, the interferences of the actors involved, among other factors, are subject to constant changes. All these factors have an impact on the results of a program.

Any change is accompanied by an impact that must be measured. In this context, and also in the universe of evaluation of public policies, we need measures that allow us to know if we are on the right path or if we have deviated from the objectives we proposed to pursue. The perceptions we bring to the technical solution method based on the use of indicators make it possible to visualize where we are and where we want to go.

And, in this case, we should bear in mind that there is a policy evolution that requires the evolution of all the processes and concepts applied in its implementation. In relation to the use of the indicators, we can say that they are no longer identified by the quantitative methodology and begin to observe more qualitative issues. It is no longer enough to implement a public policy; it must be effective. (CARNEIRO, 2013)

Later, we will address the indicators briefly, but it is clear that defining them is crucial for monitoring and evaluation of public policies. Socioeconomic indicators are no longer enough and we need to find more tangible alternatives to establish a basis for comparison.

TYPES OF EVALUATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES

Before we proceed to the objectives of this specific paper, we need to position further concepts for alignment with our readers. The vast literature on public policies leads to classifications to group them according to their proposed application. According to Cohen and Franco (2004) and Cotta (1998), we can classify public policies in relation to the agent that performs the evaluation, the nature of the evaluation and the time in which it is performed.

A – TYPE OF EVALUATION: BY AGENT

External evaluation: carried out by actors external to the institution in charge of implementation of the public policy. It has the advantage of not incurring everyday vices, and there is a possibility of innovations, but it also leads to longer terms since it does not have all the information. It is commonly understood as an audit or assistance operation. Even if the evaluator is in the same institution, but in a different area, the evaluation is considered external.

Internal evaluation: carried out by actors of the institution in charge of implementation of public policies. This is the opposite of external evaluation in terms of advantages and disadvantages.

Mixed evaluation: combines external and internal evaluations, seeking to include the advantages of each one and reduce their disadvantages.

Participative evaluation: motivated by the participation of the target public in the process of implementing public policies, including planning, execution, and evaluation. It is a more critical assessment and may occur over a longer period of time, as the target public's expectations may not be fully met by the proposed solution.

B – TYPE OF EVALUATION: BY NATURE

Formative evaluation: carried out during the formulation of the programs and actions, to support the managers in completing corrections or improvements in the structuring of the strategy. Prior monitoring may be performed to map the status of the scenario to be addressed.

Summative evaluation: carried out after the formulation, when the programs and actions have been implemented for some time or even when they end, to evaluate their effectiveness and have the perception of the gains/losses of the impact caused.

C – TYPE OF EVALUATION: BY TIME PERIOD

Ex-ante evaluation: connotes the diagnosis that is made at the beginning of the formulation of a program, to inform decision-making about whether or not to continue its implementation. It evaluates the coherence of the program. It is usually called pre-evaluation.

Ex-post evaluation: connotes monitoring or points of control during the execution of a program or at its end, in order to inform decision-making regarding the continuity of the program, whether we should keep the formulation initially designed or if we need to make adjustments. When the evaluation is performed at the end of the execution of the program, the goal is to target a new use of that experience or not, whether adjusted or not. It is usually called an impact assessment.

We note that an ex-post evaluation is sometimes discriminated as a method of abstraction or a non-concrete method because it evaluates a result by a baseline. However, in any case, it anticipates certain decisions that need to be made.

D – TYPE OF EVALUATION: BY PROBLEM

Evaluation of processes: an evaluation that seeks to identify the bottlenecks during the process of adjustments in the implementation of the program or action. It is directed towards improving the efficiency of public management, supporting the continuity of the vicious circle.

Evaluation of impacts or results: a more robust evaluation that gathers several elements and verifies if a given public policy was effective or not. As a program achieves its objectives, it evaluates if the scenario initially diagnosed has undergone changes that justify the actions taken. It informs decision-making on whether to give continuity to a program and formulate others.

Cotta (1998) suggests differentiating between the evaluation of impacts and the evaluation of results. The author understands that an evaluation of results is intended to measure interference in the target audience scenario, while an impact evaluation is aimed at capturing the effects of this interference.

OBJECTIVES

After a brief introduction of the public policy evaluation scenario, we are able to proceed with the fundamental presentation of this paper, which is The Executive Analysis of Results, which is an evaluation prepared with the participation of government actors (C*entral de Resultados*

da Secretaria de Estado de Gestão e Planejamento do estado de Goiás - Segplan[1]) - and specialized support from a consulting company (*Macroplan – Prospectiva, Estratégia & Gestão*).

The purpose of the Executive Analysis of Results is to give support to public managers based on a greater prediction of the results to be achieved. It provides a timely and shorter duration evaluation so that the formulation of strategies, the design of programs and actions, as well as their execution be observed through the effective achievement of the aligned objectives.

It is a tool which guides government performance and actions. In addition to identifying points of control to achieve goals, it represents a form of accountability, since it exposes all the commitments assumed and confronts them with perceived reality. It is not explicitly a mechanism of public spending quality, but rather it supports the need to direct the necessary interventions for the qualifications of the actions performed.

The Executive Analysis of Results merges the idea of Project Evaluation and Indicator Evaluation, which support the actors involved in the execution of the programs, but with guiding approaches. In other words, it abandons the separate view, understanding that when a particular program is outlined, its efficiency, efficacy, and above all effectiveness cannot be evaluated by only looking at the physical and financial performance of such program, let alone the value measured of an indicator that may not have been influenced yet by the public policy in question.

It is not a new concept or product, we cannot consider it a great innovation in public management, but we can understand it as a great point of transposition of periods of evaluation within the cycle of implementation of a public policy. It is not to be confused with an impact assessment as suggested by Cotta (1998), but instead it brings greater qualification to the public manager for decision-making, because at every favorable time it provides analyzes and positions of the possible results.

Its purpose is to support the evaluation of a certain program during its execution, avoiding that we exceed the limits of the term necessary to cause some change. Anticipation positively reduces the risk of losing all effort made.

In terms of temporal positioning, we estimate that every six months we have a broader evaluation; and, on a quarterly basis, a specific evaluation to support program managers.

METHODOLOGY

In the state of Goiás, after outlining the diagnosis of the situation of public problems, public policies were prioritized in challenges, which could be potentially faced and met criteria such as criticality, relevance, opportunity, timeliness, and governability. The *Goiás Mais Competitivo e Inovador* **(GMCI)**[2] program was structured based on this work, translating the strategies of government action measured according to an analysis of the competitive evolution of socioeconomic indicators (SANTOS, 2016).

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1   Results Center of the Secretariat of Management and Planning of the State of Goiás - Segplan

2   Goiás More Competitive and Innovative Program (GMCI)

The GMCI is a program aimed at developing competitiveness and improving public management in the state of Goiás, aiming to place Goiás among the most competitive states of the country, considering the rankings of competitiveness and based on studies, scenarios, and surveys of the challenges emerging in that state for the coming years.

Figure 1 – Portfolio of Challenges/Programs of the GMCI

[Translation:
QUALITY OF LIFE:
HOUSING – DEATHS IN TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS – CHILD MORTALITY – HOMICIDES – BASIC HEALTH CARE SERVICE – CONNECTIVITY – BASIC SANITATION

ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS:
QUALITY OF LEARNING – CHILDHOOD EDUCATION – INNOVATE GOIÁS – QUALITY OF ROADWAYS

EFFICIENT PUBLIC MANAGEMENT:
 FISCAL SOUNDNESS]

The GMCI has three axes: quality of life, economic competitiveness, and efficient public management. The challenges or "subprograms" are positioned within each axis.

As with any program, it has undergone some developments: actions, projects, milestones, and activities were identified to improve the diagnosed scenario.

Bold goals were negotiated for socioeconomic indicators to reflect improvement of the public services provided and attention to the needs of the population. Evidently, in a scenario of crisis and lack of resources, these goals can be timely overvalued or undervalued - always seeking a bold goal that is reasonable and possible to achieve.

Figure 2 – Scope of the Executive Analysis of Results

[Translation:
GOALS
CHALLENGE/PROGRAM – STRATEGIC INDICATOR
PROJECT/ACTION – ASSOCIATED INDICATOR
MILESTONE/ACTIVITIES
PRODUCTS /DELIVERIES
PROJECT EVALUATION
INDICATOR EVALUATION
EXECUTIVE ANALYSIS OF RESULTS]

The Executive Analysis of Results, based on the definition of any structure of the GMCI portfolio, makes it possible to evaluate whether the formulation initially defined will provide the results contained in the goals of the indicators and the expected deliveries for each challenge.

The formulation of the program defined strategic indicators with the possibility of comparison with the other federative units, following the aforementioned concept of competitiveness. These indicators, for the most part, do not allow for follow-up with reduced frequency, some have a delay of one year or more. Therefore, to promote quality information for the evaluation of the program, the Executive Analysis of Results jointly provides information on the strategic indicator and information on the associated indicators and/or specific information that measures the progress of the actions, both quantitatively and qualitatively. (SANTOS, 2016)

Products related to strategic performance were defined as a point of control of results, and sometimes they are the only alternative, since not all strategic indicators allow for guided reading based on an associated indicator. For example, the relative and absolute housing deficit calculated by the Fundação João Pinheiro (MG) does not provide associated indicators similar to the child mortality rates (prenatal visits, vaccination coverage etc.), it is usually accompanied by the deliveries of housing units.

By following the evolution of the associated indicators, the strategic indicators trend, and the performance of challenge deliveries, we began to have better control of the condition of the implementation of public policies and, finally, provide greater security to continue or promote change in the executed design. We do not have to wait for the execution of a plan or project to be completed. The greater the anticipation of results, the better the condition of adjusting a certain critical situation and reducing the risks and costs of subsequent changes.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting great care is needed when defining the period to be evaluated. Short deadlines may not reflect the program implementation - especially when the impact is sensitive regarding social problems.

Two cycles of elaboration of the Executive Analysis of Results were already carried out, which contemplated more and more information, analyzes, and notes, avoiding that any indication of change in the program be subjective. That is, evidence and trends are presented to support decision-making. This does not imply that it will become a restriction to the program – the continuity, change or termination of the program remains under the responsibility of its manager.

The Executive Analysis of Results is structured in three major stages or sections: updated retrospective analysis, performance analysis of the GMCI program and analysis of indicator trajectories.

The Updated Retrospective Analysis is a stage or section that provides the diagnosis prior to the formulation of the GMCI program, but where all the updates of indicators and information were made to position the scenario closer to the reality of the performance of the public manager. A "basis of comparison" is defined for the program evaluation disregarding the possible lag.

The Program Performance Analysis is a stage or section that presents the traditional evaluation of projects, that is, the physical execution of the programs, actions, frameworks, activities, and deliveries - with the exception of the financial part that, for the moment, we have opted to delay to better qualify the program's cost management.

During this stage, we may assume very conflicting conditions. We may observe a program with high execution percentage and no results achieved, just as we may observe a program with many deliveries and no improvement in the indicator. The analysis cannot be performed in isolation and does not follow a standard to be applied to all challenges.

The Analysis of Indicator Trajectories is a stage or section that provides analysis and evaluation of the measured path of the indicators from the base defined during the retrospective analysis. We observe increases and decreases in the indices and perceptions of whether there were advancements or not in view of the established goals. This is where most of the trends that demonstrate the effectiveness or inaccuracy of a particular action are present. Here we can perceive that we are carrying out a diagnosis after the formulation of a strategy, but our intention is to clarify the notes that tend to reach the results or not.

CONCLUSIONS

The estimated deadline for conclusion of GMCI planning the end of 2018. Until then, the public managers, the persons responsible for actions, ge and the actors who gain or lose depending on the results achieved by the indicators periodically have information in their hands to subsidize any decision-making.

The Executive Analysis of Results allows for the maintenance of a specific program, pointing out that every line of implementation is following the most appropriate path to reach the results and improvement of the initially diagnosed scenario.

It allows you to review a particular program, making the points of correction or improvements explicit according to the delivered results, suggesting that we should not persist with the implementation of something that, up to that moment, did not produce anything satisfying.

The creation of new programs and actions may be indicated when the expectations and limits of the current program are exceeded or when branches of activities that are quite different from the defined scope are identified.

Furthermore, in a drastic manner, the Executive Analysis of Results may recommend the cancellation or termination of a certain program. Either because the program is no longer coherent or because the treated scenario has been modified in such a way that a new formulation is needed.

It is a type of work more directed toward achieving what needs to be done rather than necessarily representing the insertion of public management innovation. It is a public policy evaluation condensed into a format that gathers results of projects/actions and results of indicators, aligning the expectations of the public agents with the possibility of performance.

We still need to evolve in the design of a methodology to prepare the Executive Analysis of Results. The information produced must be better communicated and, we need to strategically convince the public agents to make the necessary decisions - because, culturally, these agents ignore notes and disregard decision-making based on data.

The present trend analysis allows the program results to have a uniform direction but may lead to misinterpretation, since within a given historical series, specific or seasonal factors may have interfered in the timeline. We are diligent in presenting all these gradations to make good use of the information that we have at hand.

In addition, in the next cycles of preparation of the Executive Analysis of Results, in addition to the necessary adjustments, we intend to expand and further enter the scope of public spending quality.

In any case, we believe that preparation and use of the information produced bring great benefits to public managers, even to those who fear the political use of results. We provide another tool available to public agents and the population in relation to guide government strategies towards accountability.

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