

EVALUATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES IN MEXICO: AN ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

This review article analyzes the role of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) in the institutionalization of public policy evaluation in Mexico. Twenty years after its creation, CONEVAL has established itself as a technical benchmark in the generation of information and methodologies for measuring poverty and evaluating social programs. However, its history was also marked by political tensions, institutional limitations, and debates about its autonomy and usefulness. Through a systematic documentary review of 35 key sources, including official reports, academic articles, external evaluations, and national and international technical literature, we examined CONEVAL's achievements, challenges, and dilemmas from 2004 to 2024. However, its history was also marked by political tensions, institutional limitations, and debates about its autonomy and usefulness. Through a systematic documentary review of 35 key sources, including official reports, academic articles, external evaluations, and national and international technical literature, we examined CONEVAL's achievements, challenges, and dilemmas from 2004 to 2024. An analytical matrix was used to classify and compare documents according to criteria of relevance, institutional impact, and timeliness. The main findings reveal a central paradox: CONEVAL developed robust technical capabilities but faced structural obstacles to effectively influencing public policy decisions. Furthermore, its limited involvement in participatory mechanisms and its exposure to political changes weakened its legitimacy. Furthermore, its limited connection to participatory mechanisms and its exposure to political changes weakened its legitimacy. It is concluded that strengthening evaluation activities, which will be carried out by INEGI starting in 2025, requires incorporating participatory and deliberative approaches, as well as ensuring the use of methodologies developed by CONEVAL to enable comparability of evaluations. To be effective and democratic, public evaluation must be technical, inclusive, and participatory to serve social rights and distributive justice.

Keywords: accountability, CONEVAL, social development, policy evaluation, institutionalization

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INTRODUCTION

In the Latin American context, the institutionalization of public policy evaluation has faced a trajectory marked by tension between technical autonomy and centralized political decisions. In Mexico, the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) was key in advancing a culture of evaluation to improve government decisions, strengthen accountability, and, above all, positively impact the lives of people living in poverty and vulnerability.

However, in recent decades, and particularly after the change of government in 2018, there has been growing pressure to weaken autonomous bodies. This raises critical questions about the viability of maintaining independent evaluation mechanisms in contexts of high concentration of power. Therefore, it is urgent to reflect on the role played by CONEVAL, its achievements, limitations, and potential for strengthening.

The evaluation of public policies has gained increasing importance in recent decades, especially in countries with consolidating democratic systems like Mexico. In this context, the need for institutions capable of generating objective, transparent, and timely information for decision-making has become an imperative of modern governance (OCDE, 2020). This demand intensifies when it comes to policies targeting vulnerable populations, such as social programs that aim to reduce poverty and inequality.

The creation of CONEVAL in 2004 marked a turning point in the institutionalization of evaluation in Mexico. For the first time, the Mexican State was provided with a technical and formally autonomous agency responsible for coordinating poverty measurement and evaluating the federal government's social programs (CONEVAL, 2006). This institution emerged in a context of democratic transition and international pressure to improve accountability mechanisms, within the framework of reforms inspired by new public management models (Santiso, 2007).

However, the history of CONEVAL also reflects the structural and political limitations that evaluation institutions face in contexts of high centralization of power. Despite its national and international recognition, the organization was subject to recurring tensions, particularly when its findings did not coincide with the political priorities of the governments in power (Moreno-Brid & Pérez-Benavides, 2021). An example of this was the controversy generated by the change in general management in 2019 and the proposal to merge CONEVAL with the Ministry of Welfare, which raised concerns about the possible loss of its technical autonomy.

From a critical perspective, this article proposes a review of the role played by CONEVAL in strengthening the national evaluation system. To do so, it starts from the premise that evaluation cannot be understood exclusively as a technical or methodological practice, but rather must be analyzed based on its capacity to influence

power structures, budgetary decisions, and the democratic quality of the State (Bovens, 2007; Chelimsky, 2006).

It is also argued that the future of evaluation in Mexico will depend not only on robust regulatory frameworks, but also on an active citizenry and a political class committed to transparency and the continuous improvement of public interventions. In times of political polarization and the weakening of autonomous organizations, it is essential to defend evaluation as a collective right to knowledge and to participate in the construction of more just policies.

Theoretical framework

To understand CONEVAL's role in policy evaluation, we started from a theoretical articulation that incorporated three key dimensions: 1) governance and democratic accountability, understood as the State's capacity to respond to citizen demands in a transparent, efficient and participatory manner (Bovens, 2007; Behn, 2001); 2) organizational learning and the use of evaluation as a tool to continuously improve public interventions (Chelimsky, 2006; Weiss, 1999); and 3) the theory of change, which allows us to understand how public policies can transform realities when they are built from an evidence-based approach and with social participation (Funnell & Rogers, 2011). From this perspective, evaluation is considered a dynamic process that contributes to the development of public institutions serving the people, rather than an isolated act of oversight.

In the first dimension, governance and democratic accountability have entailed an institutional redesign geared toward transparency, citizen participation, and effectiveness. Thus, accountability is not limited to a hierarchical relationship between superiors and subordinates but is configured as a network of public responsibilities involving citizens, social actors, and technical institutions (Bovens, 2007).

Democratic accountability proposes that oversight and control mechanisms should be geared toward ensuring that government decisions respond to the public interest, rather than to partisan or clientelist logic (Behn, 2001). In this context, public policy evaluation is a key tool for supporting institutional performance and the effects of public interventions with evidence.

In the second dimension, evaluation, organizational learning, and decision-making, it is considered that evaluation is more than a measurement technique; it represents an institutional practice that enables organizational learning and continuous policy feedback (Weiss, 1999). In this sense, evaluation generates critical knowledge about what works, why, and under what conditions, allowing for error correction, resource optimization, and strategy redesign.

Chelimsky (2006) distinguishes three fundamental purposes of evaluation in modern democracies: knowledge (understanding whether policies are working),

improvement (suggesting adjustments or transformations), and oversight (preventing abuses or deviations). From this perspective, CONEVAL played an intermediate role by acting as a bridge between technical knowledge and political decisions, which placed it in a strategic, but also vulnerable, position.

Finally, the theory of change, the use of evidence, and evaluation models allow us to understand how public interventions aim to generate social transformations and the necessary conditions for this (Funnell & Rogers, 2011). Evaluation, within this framework, is not only about verifying outcome indicators, but also about reconstructing the intervention's logic, its assumptions, and its intended or unintended effects.

In Mexico, CONEVAL developed a robust methodology for evaluating consistency and results, which articulated program theory with quantitative and qualitative indicators. This model has been recognized by multilateral organizations as a leading evidence-based evaluation practice (OCDE, 2020).

Based on these dimensions, the analytical framework of this review positioned CONEVAL as an intermediary actor between evaluative technocracy and democratic accountability mechanisms. On the one hand, it possessed specialized technical expertise and developed highly complex measurement and evaluation instruments; on the other, its legitimacy depended on its ability to translate these results into understandable and useful decisions for citizens and decision-makers.

This intermediary role is inherently tense: when evaluation confirms official discourse, it is institutionally strengthened; but when it questions or contradicts government priorities, it becomes a target for pressure, cutbacks, or delegitimization. This ambivalence requires a sufficiently autonomous evaluation body with regulatory and institutional protection that allows it to act independently and responsibly in the public interest.

Thus, the theoretical framework allows us to understand that evaluation should not be disconnected from power structures or disputes over the direction of policies. Consequently, having a strengthened autonomous body implies strengthening the democratic capacities of the State to be accountable, learn from its mistakes, and act fairly.

METHODOLOGY

This study followed a qualitative documentary methodology and a systematic review of primary and secondary sources. An interpretive approach was adopted to reconstruct CONEVAL's institutional history from its creation in 2004 to 2024 and identify its methodological contributions, its institutional role, and the political tensions it faced. This methodology allowed for the systematization of disparate information, generating a critical analysis from a contextual perspective.

Thirty-five key documents were analyzed, selected for their thematic relevance, timeliness, and impact on public policy. These documents were grouped into five broad categories:

CONEVAL annual and special reports (2006-2023).

External evaluations of social programs coordinated by CONEVAL.

Academic articles indexed in Redalyc, Scielo and Scopus.

Reports from multilateral organizations (OECD, World Bank, ECLAC).

Grey literature: technical notes, expert editorials, official communications, and popular essays.

Key documents include: the Social Development Policy Evaluation Report (CONEVAL, 2008, 2012, 2018, 2022), Multidimensional Poverty Measurement Methodology (CONEVAL, 2019), the evaluation of the consistency and results of the Prospera Program (2014), and the document The Future of Evaluation in Mexico (CONEVAL, 2020).

For document analysis, an analytical matrix was constructed based on categories derived from the theoretical framework and refined through an exploratory reading of the selected documents. This systematization allowed us to identify patterns and trends relevant to the discussion, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of the analysis categories.

Category	Description	Subcategories
Institutional autonomy	Degree of technical and financial independence of CONEVAL	Financing, Management Appointment, Relationship with the Executive
Methodological capacity	Technical rigor and development of evaluation instruments	Methodologies, Indicators, Data Transparency
Political advocacy	Ability to influence public policy decisions	Derivative reforms, Impact on program design, Legislative use
Social participation	Inclusion of social actors in the evaluation process	Consultative mechanisms, Hearings, Accessible disclosure
Tensions and conflicts	Critical institutional or political moments	Regulatory changes, Media controversies, Political pressures

Source: Self-elaborated.

Each document was examined through critical reading to identify relevant information according to these categories, recording findings, key quotes, and assessments in analytical sheets. Qualitative content analysis techniques were used (Bardin, 2002). The period selected (2004–2024) for the study spans from the legal creation of CONEVAL until before its dissolution. This was done with the aim

of observing three key moments: 1) the stage of institutional consolidation (2004-2012), characterized by the development of methodologies and growing technical legitimacy; 2) the stage of stabilization and recognition (2012-2018), with CONEVAL's positioning as a national and international reference; and 3) the stage of institutional tension and vulnerability (2019-2024), marked by attempts at political weakening and redefinition of its role. These periods were triangulated with institutional events, regulatory reforms, and changes in government, in order to contextualize the findings and provide elements for their historical interpretation.

Given the documentary analysis nature of the study, it is recognized that the findings are determined by the availability of public sources of information and the document selection process. However, these biases were mitigated through source triangulation, transparency of criteria, and comparative analysis. In short, the methodology used allowed for a systematic, rigorous, and critical approach to CONEVAL's institutional performance, from a comprehensive perspective that recognizes its technical, political, and social dimensions.

RESULTS

A diverse documentary database was compiled, comprising 35 sources selected based on three criteria: (a) thematic relevance to the object of study, (b) level of institutional impact (such as influence on the design, reform, or elimination of policies), and (c) the document's relevance to the period of analysis (2004–2024). This selection made it possible to identify not only the technical evolution of CONEVAL but also the social and political contexts in which it developed. Each document contributed key pieces to reconstruct the tensions, strengths, and challenges that have accompanied this organization from its creation in 2004 to 2024.

These documents were grouped into five categories: 1) CONEVAL reports, which provided an overview of methodological developments and institutional positions in response to political situations; 2) external evaluations, which provided insights into the uses and effects of CONEVAL's diagnostics; 3) indexed academic articles, which provided a critical and theoretical perspective on CONEVAL's role; 4) international technical literature (OECD, World Bank, ECLAC), which provided comparative insights into evaluation institutions; and 5) gray literature and opinion papers, which contributed to understanding the social and political perceptions of CONEVAL at different historical moments.

This analysis identified patterns, ruptures, and continuities in the process of institutionalizing evaluation in Mexico. The matrix presented below systematizes this interpretation, articulating the selection criteria with the information extracted and their contribution to the findings of this analysis (Table 2).

Table 2. Concentrated analytical matrix of the documents analyzed.

Nº	Title	Selection criteria*	Information that provides	Main finding
1	Social Development Policy Evaluation Report 2008 (CONEVAL, 2008)	Thematic relevance, impact	Consolidation of indicators and multidimensional measurement	First important technical institutional positioning
2	Report 2012 (CONEVAL, 2012)	Relevance, impact	Methodological monitoring and expansion of evaluations	Greater interinstitutional integration
3	Report 2018 (CONEVAL, 2018)	Current events, impact	Pre-evaluation for change of government	Evidence of structural lags in priority programs
4	Report 2022 (CONEVAL)	Current events, impact	Evaluation of new federal programs	Difficulties in evaluating without clear operating rules
5	The future of evaluation in Mexico (CONEVAL, 2020)	Relevance, current events	Positioning in the face of institutional tensions	Call to defend technical autonomy
6	Consistency and Results Evaluation: Prospera 2014 (CONEVAL, 2014)	Relevance, impact	Application of the CONEVAL evaluation model	Linking theory of change and measurement
7	Multidimensional Measurement Methodology (CONEVAL, 2019)	Relevance	Technical bases of the measurement system	International recognition of the Mexican model
8	Building Capacity for evidence (OCDE 2020).	Comparative, current	Regional diagnosis of evaluation capacities	Lack of link between evaluation and decisions
9	Evaluation and Management for Results, Banco Mundial (2021)	Comparative, current	Latin American experiences	Evaluation without institutionalization, ineffective
10	Social Panorama (CEPAL, 2022)	Comparative	Structural inequalities	Lack of distributive impact in evaluations
11	Moreno-Brid y Pérez-Benavides (2021)	Relevance, current events	Criticism of institutional dismantling	The assessment has not prevented setbacks
12–25	Indexed articles (cited in the Text)	Relevance, impact	Case analysis, conceptual debates	Reinforce critical and contextual reading
26–30	External program evaluations (SEDESOL, 2009–2017)	Relevance, impact	Application data of the CONEVAL model	Variability in quality and incidence
31–35	Grey literature (opinion articles, interviews, press releases)	Present	Public narratives about CONEVAL	Social perception depends on the political climate

*Selection criteria: a) thematic relevance, b) level of institutional impact, and c) relevance of the document.

Source: Self-elaborated.

This collection of documents provides empirical support for the interpretations presented in the following sections. The evidence collected allows us to identify a series of milestones, tensions, and institutional lessons learned that illustrate the dynamic role played by CONEVAL in shaping the national evaluation system. The results presented below are the product of the intersection of this evidence and the developed theoretical framework, allowing for a structured and critical reading of the role of evaluation in contemporary Mexican public policy.

The findings derived from the analysis reveal that public policy evaluation in Mexico, carried out by CONEVAL, is a deeply political field, in which values, priorities, and visions of social development are negotiated. Identifying how and when technical evidence influences real-world decisions, and when it is neutralized or ignored, allows us to understand the necessary conditions for a democratically informed public evaluation. In this context, the findings of this research not only document what CONEVAL has been, but also raise fundamental questions about what it can and should become.

The systematic documentary analysis reveals a complex and nuanced picture of the role played by CONEVAL in the institutionalization of public policy evaluation in Mexico. Based on the analytical matrix constructed, the findings are presented grouped into five key areas: 1) institutional autonomy, 2) methodological capacity, 3) political influence, 4) social participation, and 5) institutional tensions.

Institutional autonomy

CONEVAL was designed as a technically autonomous, though not constitutionally autonomous, body budgeted by the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP) and with a collegial board composed of academics and government representatives. This configuration allowed it to operate with a degree of independence during its initial years (CONEVAL, 2008) but proved insufficient in the face of subsequent political challenges, especially after the removal of its executive director in 2019 due to criticism of the elimination of social programs without prior evaluation (Moreno-Brid & Pérez-Benavides, 2021).

This finding aligns with Bovens's (2007) theory, which argues that accountability is effective only when responsible actors have the real capacity to act independently and enforce their recommendations. The lack of full legal guarantees calls into question the effectiveness of their evaluative role.

Methodological capacity

CONEVAL has been recognized by international organizations for its methodological rigor. Its multidimensional measurement of poverty, the types of evaluations (design, processes, outcomes, and, to a lesser extent, impact), and the methodological guides published annually demonstrate a technically sound institution (CONEVAL, 2018; OECD, 2020).

The analysis of the reports reveals a sustained effort to translate the theory of change into operational logic applicable to social programs, with an emphasis on the coordination of objectives, activities, and expected results. This is in line with the perspective of Funnell & Rogers (2011), who highlight the usefulness of logic models as comprehensive planning and evaluation tools.

Political influence

One of the most significant results of the analysis is the observation of a gap between the generation of evaluative knowledge and its effective use in public policy decisions. Despite robust findings, CONEVAL lacked the authority to modify or condition budgets, nor to force agencies to redesign failed programs (CONEVAL, 2020). However, through the Areas Susceptible to Improvement (ASM by its acronym in Spanish), which generated commitments assumed by the agencies or entities of the Federal Public Administration (APF), recommendations or findings from external evaluations were issued with the aim of implementing improvement processes in the programs, which were regularly addressed when the APF was the one who sent the recommendations.

This finding is consistent with Weiss's (1999) thesis, who warns that the use of evaluation is often symbolic or politically selective, especially when the findings contradict institutional interests. In this regard, CONEVAL was empowered to issue more prescriptive recommendations related to the lack of institutional independence.

Social participation

Despite its technical advances, CONEVAL demonstrated a systematic weakness in incorporating participatory mechanisms into its evaluation processes. Most evaluations were conducted from an expert perspective, without involving beneficiaries or user communities, which limits the social appropriation of the results and perpetuates a technocratic logic (Santiso, 2007).

This limitation has been pointed out by ECLAC (2022), which warned that the legitimacy of evaluation also depends on its capacity to generate processes of dialogue and social deliberation. Although CONEVAL has published citizen versions of its reports, such as memoirs, infographics, and documentation on mobile applications, these efforts were insufficient in the face of the need to democratize the evaluation process.

Institutional tensions

The 2019-2024 period is marked by an increase in tensions between CONEVAL and the federal government. These tensions are expressed at three levels: (a) discursive, with the public discrediting of its reports; (b) budgetary, through the reduction of resources; and (c) institutional, with proposals to eliminate it or merge it with other agencies (CONEVAL, 2020).

According to Chelimsky's (2006) theory, these conflicts are indicative of a clash between the logic of political control and technical autonomy. Evaluation then becomes a field of symbolic dispute where the question of who has the right to say what works and what doesn't is decided.

DISCUSSION

The results show that, while CONEVAL has been a benchmark in the institutionalization of evaluation, its existence and effectiveness are closely tied to the political context. Unlike agencies such as the National Planning Department in Colombia or the National Evaluation Council in Chile, CONEVAL, from its inception, lacked sufficient legal guarantees to ensure its independence from the executive branch.

In a country with deep structural inequalities, it is essential that evaluation instruments not only generate information but also effectively influence the allocation of resources and the redesign of interventions. CONEVAL's experience demonstrates that technology alone is not enough: political will and an active citizenry are required to sustain a culture of critical and transformative evaluation.

These results allow us to delve deeper into the role that CONEVAL played as an institution that operated on an intermediate level between technical and political rationality. As argued in the theoretical framework, its status as an intermediary actor placed it in a strategic but also vulnerable position, especially in contexts of concentrated power and limited participatory institutionalization.

CONEVAL confirms that the institutionalization of evaluation in Mexico was not accompanied by legal and budgetary mechanisms that ensured its functional independence. This represents a central contradiction for democratic accountability, since citizen oversight requires agencies capable of issuing technical judgments, without the results being taken as political positions and impacting the functioning of evaluation activities (Behn, 2001; Bovens, 2007).

The tension between the evaluative mandate and political subordination thus becomes a constant that not only affects CONEVAL but is common to other evaluation agencies in Latin America, as documented by CEPAL (2022) in its comparative analysis. In this sense, the institutionalization of evaluation should be understood not as a *fait accompli*, but as a contested political process.

Second, the methodological capacity developed by CONEVAL enabled the consolidation of a robust evaluation infrastructure, which contributed to strengthening transparency and access to disaggregated information. However, as Chelimsky (2006) points out, the knowledge generated by evaluation only has a democratic meaning if it becomes an input for improving public policies and is not locked into technocratic circles.

From this perspective, although CONEVAL offered the opportunity for those responsible for the evaluated programs or public policies to express their opinions regarding the evaluations, decision-makers observed limited effective use of its recommendations. This demonstrates a weak connection between evaluation and political planning. This not only limits the evaluation's effectiveness but also reduces its transformative function. As Weiss (1999) warns, when evaluation is not used, the system loses its capacity for institutional learning.

Third, the limited social participation in CONEVAL's evaluation processes demonstrates that the evaluation culture in Mexico continues to be dominated by top-down logic. Despite efforts to socialize results, mechanisms for deliberation and peer evaluation remain marginal. This situation reinforces Santiso's (2007) argument about the predominance of an evaluation technocracy in the region, which risks depoliticizing the debate on public affairs.

Finally, the recent political tensions faced by CONEVAL should be interpreted as symptoms of a broader conflict over the role of knowledge in public management. When evidence contradicts official discourse, a reaction is triggered that seeks to undermine the legitimacy of evaluation bodies. This dynamic confirms the hypothesis that evaluation, far from being a neutral field, is embedded in power relations and symbolic disputes (Bovens, 2007; Chelimsky, 2006).

In summary, the findings highlight the need to strengthen CONEVAL, on the one hand, to protect its institutional autonomy through legal and budgetary reforms, and on the other, to move toward a more participatory, deliberative, and social justice-oriented evaluation, in terms of the effective exercise of social rights. To achieve this, it is necessary to generate interest and willingness among political actors to address the construction of a comprehensive vision of evaluation policy in Mexico on government agendas (López, 2020).

Prospective analysis

The focus of this research is on the institutional history of CONEVAL, from its creation in 2004 to 2024, as an experience in the construction of an autonomous body specialized in social evaluation. This process, under a collegial logic and with academic and technical participation, allowed it to position itself as a national and international benchmark in the multidimensional measurement of poverty, the monitoring of social programs, and the generation of useful evidence for public decision-making (Scartascini & Chuaire, 2014; OCDE, 2020). However, in the evening edition of July 16, 2025, the Official Gazette of the Federation published the reform decree to extinguish CONEVAL and transfer its functions to INEGI, which entered into force on July 17, 2025.

This research adds a perspective that assumes the institutional closure of the agency as a turning point. From this perspective, the transfer of evaluation functions to INEGI, an institution with high technical recognition but no track record in deliberative or normatively oriented evaluation, could mark a technocratic reconfiguration of the evaluation system.

In this regard, Scartascini & Chuaire (2014) pointed out that an effective evaluation policy cannot be reduced to the production of indicators but must be integrated into the entire public policy cycle, promoting institutional learning, plural

deliberation, and the redesign of social intervention strategies. In this sense, the new functions granted to INEGI open two possible scenarios.

First, the dismantling of CONEVAL constitutes a risk to the technical accountability model, with implications that extend to the evaluative autonomy of the Mexican State (Moreno-Brid & Pérez-Benavides, 2021). Furthermore, it poses a risk of vertical rather than horizontal execution, an aspect that jeopardizes the production of knowledge derived from the evaluated actions, government transparency, and citizens' capacity to participate in the debate on the effectiveness of public policies (Behn, 2001; Santiso, 2007).

Second, this transfer of functions opens an unprecedented institutional scenario in Mexico. While this transfer has raised concerns about the potential loss of evaluative autonomy and the depoliticization of accountability, it also represents an opportunity to reflect on the progress made by CONEVAL and its potential compatibility with the functions historically performed by INEGI.

From an institutional perspective, CONEVAL provided a normative approach to evaluation, linked to social rights, multidimensional poverty, and distributive justice. Its evaluations not only produced data but also contextualized interpretations based on criteria of equity, effectiveness, and sustainability. Furthermore, it developed innovative methodologies for measuring poverty and monitoring social programs based on the theory of change and consistency and results models (CONEVAL, 2020).

For its part, INEGI is an autonomous constitutional institution specialized in statistical, geographic, and census production. It has consolidated experience generating reliable and systematic information useful for multiple sectors, including public administration. Its technical strength decentralized national structure, and institutional legitimacy could facilitate efficient technical implementation of the measurements inherited from CONEVAL (INEGI, 2024).

However, the real challenge of this institutional merger lies not in the technical compatibility between the two institutions, but in their epistemological and political compatibility. INEGI has not historically been a social policy evaluation body, nor does it have a collegial tradition of normative interpretation of information. While CONEVAL valued academic deliberation, critical evaluation, and the use of evidence to influence public decisions, INEGI has favored a logic of producing neutral data, without engaging in the debate over the direction or impact of public policies.

Considering these institutional characteristics, this merger can build functional convergence, ensuring that the transferred functions retain a normative and participatory approach and creating a specialized evaluation unit with technical staff from the defunct CONEVAL. This unit could operate as a collegial core within INEGI, coordinating its statistical capabilities with qualitative and social impact assessment frameworks. Likewise, it will be necessary to strengthen the link between statistical products and the cycles of public policy formulation, monitoring, and

redesign through new legal or regulatory provisions that guarantee the independent, transversal, and deliberative nature of evaluation.

In short, while the dissolution of CONEVAL represents a potential decline in terms of autonomous evaluation institutions, integrating its functions into INEGI may be functionally viable, recognizing the need to maintain its critical focus and its connection to social rights. The future of evaluation in Mexico will depend not only on the technical capacity of institutions, but also on their political will to be accountable, learn institutionally, and build more transparent and inclusive governance.

CONCLUSIONS

CONEVAL represented a significant effort to institutionalize public policy evaluation in Mexico. Its methodological contributions and rights-based approach have been fundamental in highlighting social gaps and demanding better results from government policies. This review revealed significant progress in building a culture of public policy evaluation. Its creation formalized an institutional framework for measuring poverty and evaluating social programs, providing the State with technical tools to monitor, adjust, and report on its interventions.

Among its most significant contributions are: the multidimensional poverty measurement methodology, adopted as a national standard; the design of technical guides and guidelines for the evaluation of federal programs; the generation and dissemination of disaggregated and publicly accessible information; and the promotion of good evaluation practices at the national and international levels.

These actions strengthened transparency and placed evaluation on the public agenda, a fundamental contribution to strengthening the democratic state. However, despite the institution's efforts to develop tools to facilitate decision-making for improving public policy and authorizing budgets for its operation, there has been a gap between the production of evaluative knowledge and its effective use for decision-making. CONEVAL's recommendations lacked binding force. Furthermore, a limited inclusion of social stakeholders in the evaluation processes was identified, which limited citizen appropriation of the evaluation and diminished its transformative potential. This lack of participatory action reinforces the perception that evaluation responds to a technocratic rather than democratic logic. In other words, evaluations became bureaucratic exercises rather than instruments for continuous improvement.

While the study also revealed the institutional fragility of CONEVAL in the face of political ups and downs, as well as the lack of sufficient legal safeguards, which made it particularly vulnerable to pressure from the executive branch and budget cuts, the fact is that, with its dissolution authorized by the legislature and published in the Official Gazette of the Federation, its functions have been fully absorbed by INEGI.

The above reveals an urgent need to move toward evaluation models that combine technical rigor with citizen inclusion, effective advocacy, and non-political use. This will require citizen observation to understand how the transition is carried out and how the knowledge and information generated by CONEVAL is adopted.

Finally, it is important to clarify that this research does not aim to highlight or criticize a political position, but rather to highlight the progress made in the institutionalization of evaluation in the analysis for the development of a strong, participatory, and impactful public evaluation, undoubtedly a commitment to democracy.

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The logo for REMEVAL, featuring the word "REMEVAL" in a blue, sans-serif font. The letter "e" is stylized with a yellow and orange circular graphic element integrated into it.