PARTICIPATORY EVALUATIONS IN PUBLIC POLICIES FOR LEARNING IN SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: CASES OF JALISCO AND ZACATECAS (2019-2021)

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ABSTRACT

This research addresses two case studies of the participatory evaluations carried out in Jalisco and Zacatecas, specifically the programs "My passage" and "Model for Equality between Women and Men" respectively. The importance of these cases lies in being the first evaluation exercises that break with the traditional methodologies of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval) and the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP), pointing to qualitative methodologies. What is participatory evaluation? It should be noted that they are practices promoted by the subnational governments themselves, and in the case of Jalisco they are the product of coordination with international agents. The methodological process of the evaluation is conceived under a hypothetico-deductive vision, the approach is mixed with greater orientation towards a qualitative analysis, using techniques such as: documentary and bibliographic work through content analysis, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The significance of these evaluations is expressed in offering a new vision which promotes the participation of the actors, it also promotes a better use of the evaluation, therefore, the most relevant findings are that participatory evaluations generate significant learning from the process for the cycle. of public policy that serve as precedents for public improvement in subnational governments, taking into consideration that institutional capacities, public officials and the evaluation team need to be strengthened so that learning is transferred from one organization to another to design, implement and participatory evaluation.

Keywords: participatory evaluation, process learning, public policy cycle.

INTRODUCTION

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization Network of Latin America and the Caribbean (ReLAC, 2021) points out that the new century demands a

substantial change in the management, formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies. In this context, it points out that a transition is required from "a society that receives benefits to another more active one" that assumes a predominant role in each of the phases of public policy (ReLAC, 2021). In this framework, the evaluation requires a renewed conceptual and methodological development that allows its appropriation by both the implementing agencies and the participants and beneficiaries, that is, by society, for them to be perceived as agents of change. with the capacity to influence and transform policies (ReLAC, 2021).

Likewise, ReLAC (2021) emphasizes the need for evaluations to identify, recognize and promote the participation of all actors involved in explicitly established spaces and times. In this sense, Portilla (2021) points out that the evaluation has experienced an important qualitative change; However, at the subnational level, this problem is more complex, since the evaluation has had different developments and advances due to specific factors and contexts of the subnational public administrations.

On the other hand, Ballescá (2018) establishes that evaluation in subnational governments has been characterized by two aspects: first, as a mechanism for transparency and accountability of public spending; and second, due to the centralization and standardization of traditional methodologies provided by the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Policy in Mexico (Coneval), which has hindered the transition of the evaluation towards a qualitative approach.

However, at the subnational level, the culture of evaluation has been strengthened to face the challenges of the new century. In this sense, the cases of evaluations implemented by federal entities such as Jalisco and Zacatecas stand out, which have chosen to promote methodologies for participatory evaluation. However, other entities in the country are still in a development process to consolidate this type of practices in evaluation.

The objective of this article is to compare and systematize two case studies in which participatory evaluations were carried out in specific programs: "My passage" in Jalisco and "Model for Equality between Women and Men" in Zacatecas. From these cases, the aim is to point out learning in the public policy cycle that can be replicated in other entities in the country.

The text is structured in three sections: first, a theoretical framework is offered for understanding the central category and its peripheral implications; Secondly, the methodology used in the research is explained; and thirdly, the results and their discussion are presented, through a summary of the variables or aspects highlighted in the evaluations of each entity, with the purpose of showing how these contribute to improving public policy. Finally, the most relevant conclusions of the research are presented.

Theoretical framework

In the development of this section, the discussions between authors of the categories and central concepts of the object of study are presented. For the purposes of this research, the central category is participatory evaluation, and its peripheral implications or central concepts are public policy cycle and learning.

What is a participatory evaluation?

Evaluation is a phase of the public policy cycle; As a result, different types of evaluations have been established, such as participatory evaluation, which has been defined by various authors.

According to Tapella *et al.* (2021), participatory evaluations are those in which "the parties involved in the project define what will be evaluated, with what objectives, when it will be done, what collection methods will be used and how the results will be communicated." This type of evaluation implies a participatory approach that "should serve to learn, readjust and act by taking corrective measures to obtain better results […], that is, the evaluation should serve to provide new and different knowledge for the development of policies and programs" (Tapella *et al.*, 2021).

Tapella *et al.* (2021) also points out that participatory evaluations have a double function: on the one hand, "they contribute to strengthening organizations so that they have greater control over their own development"; and, on the other hand, they function as "a tool to improve the capacity of various actors to reflect, analyze and propose solutions from their multiple perspectives."

What is learning in participatory evaluations?

The concept of learning in participatory evaluations is of utmost importance, for its understanding in this research two aspects are pointed out, on the one hand, it refers to the fact that participatory evaluations imply a teaching-learning process, and on the other hand, it refers to to the use and learning of participatory evaluations.

Regarding the first, Rotondo (2021) points out that participatory evaluations are "a teaching-learning process in which different positions and values are exposed." On the other hand, Tapella *et al.* (2021) points out that in a participatory evaluation, facilitation is of utmost importance, which refers to a teaching-learning process. In this regard, Rodríguez and Tapella (2018) point out that it is "a participatory learning process" which draws the most important lessons for all the actors involved.

Returning to the argument that participatory evaluations are a participatory learning process Tapella *et al.* (2021) point out that thanks to this, the evaluation is made "more interesting, more efficient and effective, which will allow us to achieve better

results." This process tries to seek the development of the participants' capabilities, in the words of the authors it speaks of "that the participants develop new skills or abilities, and that this allows them to participate more and plan and implement a better evaluation process in the future." The authors discard the idea of training; rather, it is a learning network in which each participant has a specific role and functions. In this sense, reference is made to the role of the facilitator who oversees:

"generate the conditions to learn by doing, so that while participating, the members of a team develop those skills that will allow them to participate in a better way, and that will allow the evaluations to give better results. And his responsibility is for everyone to learn (including himself)."

Rotondo (2021) points out that participatory evaluations are based on "the valuation of local knowledge and knowledge, with the purpose of generating learning about the changes, in order to strengthen their capacity, empower people and social groups to make decisions." The author's idea points out the importance of building meaningful learning in the evaluation participants. In addition, Rotondo (2021) explains that participatory evaluation, by focusing on the actor, "recognizes the role of consciousness and human action in social changes, therefore, it is part of transformation paradigms. That is, when the individual acquires new learning, he becomes aware of his environment, which allows him to influence living conditions, solve problems and make decisions. In the author's words, it adopts a "transformative approach to reality that involves the construction and feedback of knowledge and learning".

Finally, what would be expected from a participatory evaluation is that it produces learning in the participants of the evaluation and of the evaluation in general, so that these learnings are useful for change, social transformation and the transformation of policies, in such a way that these learnings can be useful in other contexts and the relevance of adapting and institutionalizing them is considered.

Learning in the process and use of evaluation

From another point of analysis, Browne & Wildvasky (1998) (in Pressman and Wildvasky [1998]) refer to learning, in the sense that "learning is change." The authors return to Bateson (1972), who devised a theoretical learning scale. For the author, the lowest rung of this scale is "zero learning," which is merely reduced to "receiving a signal." The second step is "learning one" which according to the author "incorporates a signal that extends from the original event to the organism's memory." The third step corresponds to the conception of "learning to learn", this is described as "learning to receive signals". For the author, it involves a "double turn" process that "annuls the point-by-point correlation established in behavior between a stimulus and a change" (Browne & Wildavsky, 1998).

For Browne & Wildavsky (1998) in double-round learning the processes are deeper. In the context of evaluation, this type of learning leads to significant changes, for Browne & Wildavsky (1998) "evaluative learning generates a context for organizational change: an expected and continuous change thanks to learning. A climate of evolution emerges through continuous self-analysis." This double-round learning allows an organization to refine its evaluative behavior." Likewise, the authors point out that learning and evaluative processes "are deposited in an accessible memory of the organization, and are reactivated on each appropriate occasion, thus facilitating learning and organizational change."

In this sense, learning in evaluation should be considered "learning to re-project." From this perspective, evaluation should not be considered the end point of policies, rather as the beginning of being able to transform policies. In this regard, De Leon (1982) (in Browne & Wildavsky 1998) suggests the following:

"The policy evaluation community, by conducting careful analysis of the program, could compensate for the policy inadequacies of the system. It could systematize this particular redesign process and facilitate the transfer of learning from one redesign organization to another. However, without institutional support that comes from external groups of residents or participants in internal organizations, institutional reinforcement of learning is problematic."

In this line of analysis, De Leon reiterates the importance of evaluations being participatory and placing special emphasis on the production of learning, so that this is used to influence the different phases of the public policy cycle. In addition to the previous argument, when evaluation and each of the phases of the policy cycle are taken as isolated parts and not as interconnected learning processes, the opportunities to learn during each of them are overlooked. For this reason, it must be considered that "each stage depends on others that have occurred before and that continue later, this is not because someone is opposed to learning but because, on the contrary, there are profound philosophical differences in the type of learning." to be instituted" (Browne & Wildavsky, 1998).

The institutionalization of learning continues to face challenges, however, as Etheredge (1979) proposes (in Browne & Wildavsky 1998), emphasis should be placed on the need for "the production of organizational memories so that they can encode experience and learning." The ability to implement the learning acquired during the evaluation is limited by "the initiative and personal experience of the participants in each project. This network of personal experiences dedicated to finding and using lessons learned is weakened by personnel changes." Following this line of analysis, when learning from evaluations is not institutionalized and is not codified in organizational memories, it is very likely that they will leave while the people who acquired the learning leave, therefore, the possibility of transforming policies.

Finally, it should be noted that in a scenario in which there is resistance to change, it is not possible to cement learning, therefore, the management and action of organizations is not planned based on it. This situation intensifies when officials decrease their interest in learning, since their attention can be diverted to external matters away from any form of organizational learning. Therefore, the most important work focuses on how to make decisions based on and produce learning, as well as the demand for how to generate and use learning from evaluations in a way that leads to policy transformation and a learning process. interconnected throughout the policy cycle.

Methodological section

The methodological process used in this research is hypothetical-deductive. The type of study corresponds to the descriptive one through two case studies of the intrinsic type, due to the nature of the federal entities addressed, likewise, it is expected that the relationships and associations that exist between the two entities can be known, in such a way that it is possible to identify those elements that can serve as a learning experience. The research approach is mixed with greater orientation towards a qualitative analysis of case studies (Zacatecas and Jalisco), for this it will be based on the selection of an evaluation carried out on a program or policy in each of the entities.

For this research, three research techniques were used, privileging documentary and bibliographic work through content analysis; In addition to this, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were designed and applied to key informants remotely through the Zoom and Google Meet platform. For the selection of interviewees and respondents, sampling was used for special or unique cases, as well as sequential and snowball sampling in the case of interviews. The interviews were applied to two members of the government from both case studies, and two actors from the evaluation stays. This selection was made considering the number of people who participated in the evaluation team of each case. Finally, the questionnaires were applied to the beneficiary users of the program and actors who participated in the evaluation group.

The object of study of this research is the methodological proposals for participatory evaluation at the subnational level in the field of study that refers to the Evaluation Unit of Jalisco and the State Evaluation Council of the State of Zacatecas. The characteristics of the study space are: on the one hand, Zacatecas is one of the 32 entities of the Mexican Republic, it is located in the central north of the Mexican nation; With an area of 75,284 square kilometers, it represents 3.84% of the national territory. The total population of Zacatecas, based on data from the National Institute of Statistics Information (INEGI) in 2022, was 1,622,138 inhabitants, of which 51.2% are women and 48.8% men. The economically active population (EAP) or labor participation rate in the first quarter of 2022 was 56.6%, while the unemployment rate

was 2.79% (INEGI, 2022). In relation to poverty and social deprivation indicators, according to the INEGI in 2020, 40% of the population was in a situation of moderate poverty and 3.79% in a situation of extreme poverty.

On the other hand, Jalisco is located in the midwestern part of the Mexican Republic, it has an area of 78,588 square kilometers, which represents 4.0% of the national territory. The total population of Zacatecas based on data from INEGI (2020) was 8,348,151 inhabitants, with 50.9% women and 49.1% men. Regarding socioeconomic characteristics, in the first period of 2022, according to INEGI data, the economically active population was 61.6%, while the unemployment rate was 2.36%. Of the total employed population, 53.7% were employed in the formal sector and 46.3% in the informal sector. Regarding poverty and social deprivation indicators, based on data from INEGI (2020), 29.1% of the population was in moderate poverty and 3.48% of the population in extreme poverty. In this same year, the vulnerable population due to social deprivation reached 31.2% and the vulnerable population due to income was 9.29%.

Failures as a learning subject in participatory evaluations

In participatory evaluations we talk about learning, in the sense of learning in the process and from the process. Learning in the process refers to that knowledge that is learned at the time the evaluation is being carried out, however, process learning is that which arises after the evaluation, that is, the use and appropriation generated by the participatory evaluations. This subchapter emphasizes the learning of the process that starts from those mistakes that result from these two experiences of participatory evaluations carried out in Zacatecas and Jalisco.

The participatory evaluations carried out on the Mi Pasaje Program and the Model for Equality between Women and Men, show from a general vision that the learning of the process generated by the participatory evaluations are methodological rigor, greater usefulness of the results, transparency and accountability. accounts, and strengthening the culture of evaluation. Although learning is generated because of the evaluation process, there are also some mistakes that could be taken into consideration to undertake actions that counteract the deficiencies of these evaluation exercises. Based on Caballero (2022), the mistakes that result from these evaluations are: institutional capacities, technical capacities of officials, and capacities of the evaluation teams.

Results and Discussion

Institutional capacities

The experiences of participatory evaluations of the federal entities of Jalisco and Zacatecas denote many weaknesses and mistakes in institutional capacities. The most relevant challenges that stand out in this topic are evaluation systems in the process of consolidation (uneven growth of evaluation systems), deficiencies in the legal framework (absence of institutionalization of participatory evaluation), and political-electoral agreements.

Evaluation systems in the process of consolidation

The evaluations of the entities denote an uneven growth of the State Evaluation Systems. On the one hand, Jalisco is a clear example of how evaluation has been consolidated by subnational governments, not only in the regulatory field, but also in the practical component, that is, in the management of the evaluatioOver the years, the government of Jalisco has worked to strengthen the culture of evaluation in search of innovative practices that contribute to the improvement of public policy. In this sense, Jalisco, through its State Evaluation System, has promoted the management of participatory evaluations starting in 2019 and in the last year the first actions have been undertaken to institutionalize it.

On the other hand, Zacatecas is an entity that has a State Evaluation System in the process of consolidation, with the last five years being the most important to strengthen the culture of evaluation. However, although a robust Evaluation System has not been consolidated, there has been a commitment to managing participatory evaluations for public improvement; However, its permanence over time has not been possible due to the political-electoral changes that occurred in the entity, since in 2021 the transition of government took place where the governorship of the 2016-2021 period ended, in which carried out these evaluations.

This disparate growth of each of the entities in terms of evaluation positions us in a scenario where it is increasingly complex to consolidate new evaluation practices, specifically participatory evaluations. By having different contexts influenced by various causes of the subnational public administrations themselves, such as: political will, corruption, clientelism, lack of acceptance and interest in evaluation, power relations, political-electoral changes, among others; it is difficult to enable an epistemological change in evaluation.

To transcend towards this change in participatory evaluations, it is necessary that the State Evaluation Systems point towards innovative practices, therefore, it is essential to recognize the importance of evaluation and, above all, the learning that

they generate not only in the improvement of public policies but in organizational learning itself.

In this sense, evaluation must be promoted as a priority issue for the government, in such a way that it is possible to direct actions to carry out complementary evaluations that go beyond the traditional schemes and methodologies of the National Council for the Evaluation of Policy. Social Development (Coneval). This paradigm shift in evaluation transcends the two great characteristic aspects of evaluation in Mexico, on the one hand, being a mechanism of transparency and accountability, and, on the other hand, the centralization and standardization in the Coneval methodologies.

The adoption of these evaluation methodologies requires strengthening the legal-institutional framework regarding evaluation that leads to maintaining the practice of participatory evaluations over time and ensuring that they are not ephemeral. That is, organizations aim towards a vision of evaluation as a subsystem within the public policy system, that is, anchoring evaluation to the different phases of public policy and not segregating each of them so that it works independently. One from the other, either a priori or a posteriori.

Institutionalization of evaluation practice

Talking about the institutionalization of evaluation refers to the fact that State Evaluation Systems must have a regulatory framework of a mandatory or indicative nature regarding evaluation. The subnational governments of Jalisco and Zacatecas prevail the need to establish within this regulatory framework the application of participatory evaluation, so that the construction of the terms of reference (ToR) is based on a broad typology of evaluation, where the evaluation participatory is an additional type to the current typology in subnational governments and in this way does not limit its application to the political will of subnational governments.

In the case of Jalisco, various reforms are being carried out to state laws with the purpose of incorporating citizen participation into the entity's monitoring and evaluation regulations, that is, to institutionalize participatory evaluation. Some of these reforms refer to the addition of citizen participation in the evaluation processes to articles 80, 81 and 83 of the Participatory Planning Law for the State of Jalisco and its Municipalities. Likewise, in the General Guidelines for the Monitoring and Evaluation of the Government of Jalisco Programs, participatory evaluation was added as an additional type to those already established.

The participatory evaluation in the entity has been implemented as a result of the articulation of local (subnational) and international agents, that is, an agreement between the government of Jalisco with the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy (Mideplan) of Costa Rica and the German Institute for Evaluation of Development Cooperation (DEval) that, although there are no formal agreements, there are factors to contain the agreement through the project Promotion of Evaluation

Capacities in Latin America (Focelac). At the subnational level, participatory evaluations are formal acts that materialize alternative and emerging forms of management and organization, which are being carried out in the current administration period that covers the years 2018-2024.

The government of Jalisco has implemented different participatory evaluations after the pilot evaluation of the Mi Pasaje Program, which reflect how the organization has managed to refine its evaluative behavior. This refers to the fact that the evaluative learning process in the entity generates a context to continue facilitating organizational change[2], in other words, the improvement, learning and evaluative processes acquired from this first experience have been impregnated in the organizational structure. in such a way that it has been possible to reactivate them in each evaluation experience, facilitating the learning process to project again.

In the case of Zacatecas, the panorama is very different, since during the administration that included the period 2016-2021 there were no actions in the regulatory framework that required the management of participatory evaluations as a type of evaluation. It was only established in the current Annual Evaluation Plan (PAE) that three evaluations would be carried out on the three most important interventions of the entity's social policy. This situation led to the fact that at the end of the administration there was no legal matter that would ensure the implementation of more evaluations of this type, therefore, the participatory evaluations ended with the administration period, being a short-term action that did not achieve permanence in time.

The participatory evaluation in Zacatecas, the scenario is different because its implementation was not an act with greater institutional scope, therefore, the subsequent implementation of this type of evaluations was limited because there were no containment factors for the agreement, as well as formal acts. that would ensure its permanence. Consequently, the application of participatory evaluations is limited to the initiative and personal experience of officials, which is weakened or worse still extinguished due to personnel changes or the organization's own resistance to change.

Returning to the idea of the previous paragraph, participatory evaluation is subject to political will; in this scenario, if the operational leaders of the new administration are not interested in resuming these experiences and, far from seeing them as an effort to improve policies, they see it as a experience that destabilizes their governments diminishes interest in resuming these practices, therefore, the possibility of their survival over time is once again extinguished; because new officials divert their attention towards preferences or ideologies of a specific government that increasingly distances the evaluation processes from beneficiaries, program operators, academics, private actors, and public sector actors. civil society, succumbing any form

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[2] Learning is change (Bateson, (1972) in Pressman y Wildavsky).

of organizational learning that would have resulted from the participatory evaluations carried out prior to his government.

Participatory evaluations in Jalisco exemplify the normative or indicative component of an organization which tends to readjust and reform so that the participatory evaluation is a general agreement that transcends the variable political-electoral changes and government transitions. In this sense, Zacatecas from its institutional character requires generating actions to form a technical-political construct in which the agreements are solid and can sustain the contributions of the new participatory methodology. That is, generating a Political Administrative Action Program (PPA), which according to Knoepfel *et al.* (2008) constitute a specific moment of decision in which the legal bases that support public action are established in norms, regulatory acts, laws, decrees or administrative agreements. In this sense, the Administrative Political Agreements (APA) are of special interest, which are an institutional element in which the decision made in the PPA is operationalized.

The Administrative Political Agreement (APA) will then be the means by which the subnational government of Zacatecas generates agreements in general terms that contain the pertinent administrative, technical and financial elements to consolidate the organizational and procedural basis for the incorporation of participatory evaluations as a additional typology to the current one. The idea presented here is exemplified more clearly in Table 1, which shows the regulatory component regarding evaluation in the entity of Jalisco and Zacatecas.

Another factor that decisively influences the institutionalization of the evaluation is the allocation of the budget, that is, more financial, human and material resources must be allocated to the execution of participatory evaluations, since these require more time and involve greater costs. The case studies analyzed show us two different scenarios, on the one hand, the case of Zacatecas denotes that limiting participatory evaluations to the annual budgetary logic limits the evaluation process, and, therefore, it is more difficult to institutionally consolidate the practical component of participatory evaluation.

On the other hand, the case of Jalisco shows that organizations can promote financial mechanisms for the management of participatory evaluations, since by having trusts for external evaluation, financial resources can be exercised on a multi-year basis, so that the Participatory evaluations, being more expensive and requiring more time, have a greater chance of lasting over time. The previous finding is exemplified more clearly in Table 2 about the practical component of the evaluation in both entities.

Technical capabilities of officials

The participatory evaluations analyzed allow us to understand, from the technical capabilities of officials, those exchange goods to facilitate the evaluation process within organizations, which can be a reference for subnational understanding.
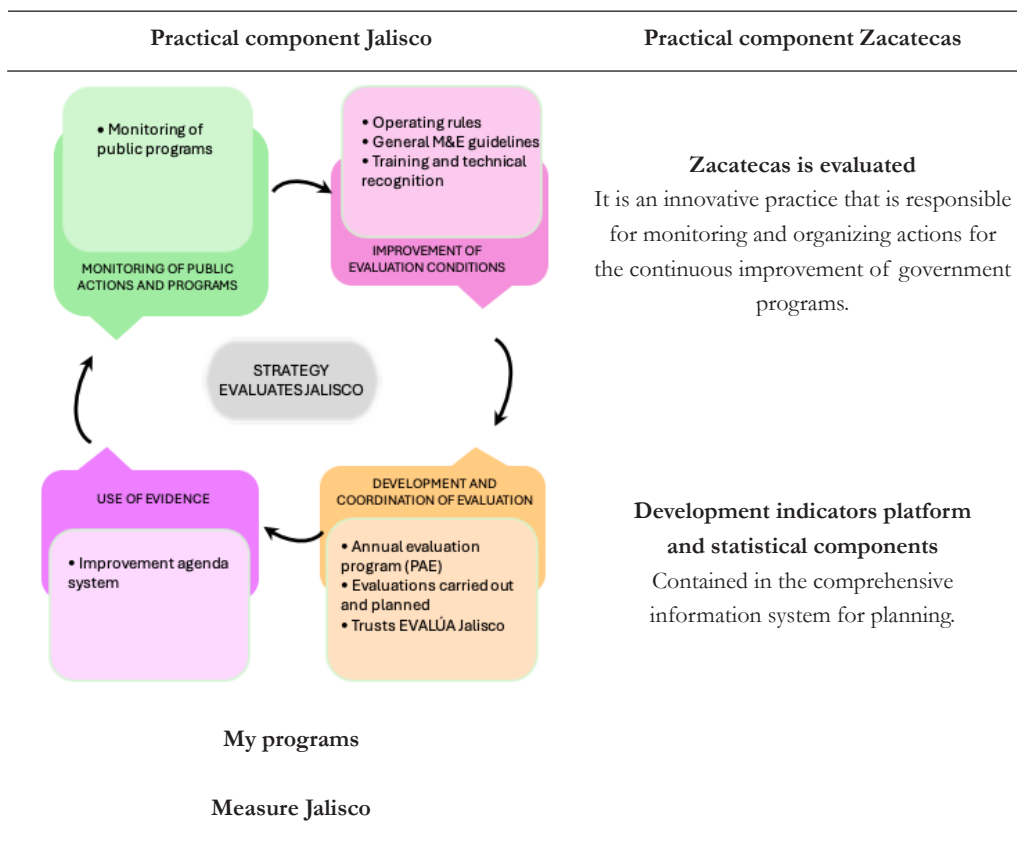
Table 1. Regulatory component regarding evaluation.

Jalisco regulatory component		Zacatecas regulatory component
Political constitution of the state of Jalisco	1	Political constitution of the free and sovereign state of Zacatecas
Organic law of the executive branch of the state of Jalisco	2	Planning law of the state of Zacatecas and its municipalities
Participatory planning law for the state of Jalisco and its municipalities	3	Social development law
Law of social development of the State of Jalisco	4	Fiscal Coordination Law
Budget, accounting and public spending law of the state of Jalisco	5	Federal Budget and Fiscal Responsibility Law
Transparency and access to public information law of the state of Jalisco and its municipalities	6	Financial Discipline and Tax Responsibility Law
General guidelines for the monitoring and evaluation of Jalisco government programs	7	General operating guidelines for results-based budgeting
Internal regulations of the secretary of planning and citizen participation of the state of Jalisco	8	Guidelines for monitoring aspects susceptible to improvement
Guide for the preparation of operating rules for the government of the state of Jalisco	9	Regulations of the state evaluation system

Source: own elaboration based on data from Coneval (2021).

In subnational governments there is resistance towards evaluation for two reasons, first, because no one wants to be evaluated, especially when from the planning of the program and from its implementation processes, the organization has identified the failures and inconsistencies that have been committed. Second, because the program executors themselves have the erroneous view of evaluation as an audit (Caballero, 2022). Given this panorama, the conviction of the operational leaders who are entrusted with the task of facilitating change processes from the organization is of utmost importance. In this sense, officials are an indispensable element of institutional

Table 2. Practical component regarding evaluation.

Practical component Jalisco	Practical component Zacatecas
  My programs **Measure Jalisco**	**Zacatecas is evaluated** It is an innovative practice that is responsible for monitoring and organizing actions for the continuous improvement of government programs. **Development indicators platform and statistical components** Contained in the comprehensive information system for planning.

Source: own elaboration based on data from Coneval (2021) and the Government of Jalisco (2021).

leadership to promote different evaluation alternatives. . That is, causing the leaders of the evaluation units to be decided on this paradigm shift, that is, leaving the traditional and betting on these innovation alternatives such as participatory evaluations, among others.

In this situation, the case studies show that officials have technical-political skills that allow them to link the phases of public policies with the levels of participation, as well as specialized technical training in evaluation and specifically in participatory evaluations; which together constitute a fundamental requirement for the consolidation of the State Evaluation Systems. On the other hand, participatory evaluations require the actors involved in the evaluation process to undertake certain actions, such as: the willingness to give up power in decision-making, constant training of evaluation, organization and communication personnel; and greater time, commitment; and material and human resources to participate in the evaluations.

Regarding the willingness to give up power in decision-making, an element that could be identified from both evaluations carried out is that not all the actors who were part of the evaluation group (for the case of Zacatecas) and the expanded work group (for the case of Jalisco) had the same level of participation in each of the stages, that is, the actors did not manage to obtain control of the evaluation process. In the case of Zacatecas, a level of decision-making participation is reflected and at some points in the process a level of association; However, in the case of Jalisco, the level of participation is concentrated at lower levels of participation, such as the decision and consultation levels. The above depends largely on the hierarchies and levels within the institutions, since there are actions that normatively only comment to government actors in which the rest of the actors are not involved since they are actions that are outside. of their jurisdiction and cannot directly influence said processes, mainly in the planning and use stage of the evaluation.

Although the selection of the intervention to be evaluated and the construction and monitoring of the improvement agenda are two actions that are normatively the responsibility of the program executing agencies and the evaluation management agencies, it is necessary to open transversal spaces where the different actors involved in the evaluation groups work collaboratively, facilitating shared decision-making. To exemplify these spaces, actions would have to be generated from two different visions: the first, to promote from the executing agencies of the program dialogic spaces in which the different actors who were part of the evaluation team participate to discuss and deliberate about those actions that should be carried out. be undertaken to readjust the program based on the results and learning obtained from the evaluation, once the institutional positioning has been carried out and the aspects susceptible to improvement have been established. In this way, the participation of the actors would be expanding towards another stage of public policy in which the re-design no longer corresponds solely to the executing agency of the program but is a product of shared decision-making thanks to the learning of the process generated in participatory evaluations.

From the second vision, it is up to the evaluation management units to generate dialogic spaces where the actors involved in the participatory evaluation participate to monitor the progress and compliance of the aspects susceptible to improvement, that is, to generate collaboration agreements to delegate obligations and responsibilities. to the actors involved, so that they generate pressure and counterbalance against the program management agencies. These actions fall mainly on organizations and public officials since their function is to configure themselves as facilitating subjects of the process to achieve a level of control participation on the part of all the actors involved and especially the users who participate in the evaluation.

Within this order of ideas, constant staff training is important for many reasons because evaluations are a paradigm shift that transcends the vision of evaluation seen as a check list or as a numerical rating towards the executing agency of the program.

. Given this panorama, the need to train all levels of command, from headlines, operatives and auxiliaries, in participatory evaluation to commit them to the demand for an evaluation with creative and technical development is clear. Likewise, encourage the abandonment of the vertical relationship that predominates in traditional evaluations and provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate transversal relationships that allow the diversity of actors to empower themselves and conceive themselves as agents of change in the evaluation.

Another determining factor in participatory evaluations is the organization and communication between the diversity of actors involved in the management of the evaluation. Therefore, it is essential to build a learning and feedback network in the organization to make the evaluation process more feasible and fruitful. In relation to the above, commitment and time are constitutive elements; since they demand the obligation to include participatory evaluations in the work agenda, since they require full dedication of officials.

In this sense, the two experiences analyzed in this work show that the officials of the different agencies involved in the evaluations had difficulty dedicating themselves fully to the evaluation, because these require additional workloads to the daily dynamics of the instances, which made progress in the evaluation difficult. This is where the importance of allocating more human resources is recognized or taking actions from the same authorities to ensure that the participation of officials in the evaluation does not interfere or have negative repercussions on their daily work activity.

Finally, the time factor is an essential element for the management of participatory evaluations. In general, these types of evaluations take longer in the selection of the various actors, their training, the implementation of the evaluation, the analysis of results, the preparation of findings and recommendations, the communication of results, and the follow-up. and monitoring of aspects susceptible to improvement. Therefore, extended time periods are required that are not annual but multi-year.

In addition to the above, it would be necessary to consider the external factors of the context itself, since the evaluations carried out in Jalisco and Zacatecas show the complexity of carrying out participatory evaluations in short periods characterized by a context of confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which On many occasions it exceeded the technical capabilities of the participants, as they were factors that cannot be predicted or controlled; However, currently there are other factors that entities must consider when executing participatory evaluations in a post-pandemic context.

Technical capabilities of the evaluation team

Participatory evaluations reveal deficiencies in the technical capabilities of the evaluation team. The main challenge that evaluators present is to conceive themselves

as facilitators of the change process using the rigorous techniques and methods they possess. In the case of Zacatecas, it is evident that the main function of the evaluation group was that of facilitator of the process, accompanying the evaluation group during the different stages: preparation, design and implementation of the evaluation, providing workshops for constant training in the use and implementation of different techniques and methodological tools, such as brainstorming, simulation games, focus groups, audiovisual techniques, among others.

In the case of Jalisco, the evaluation team maintained its role as external evaluator as in any other type of evaluation. This action reflects that from the perspective of external evaluators the paradigm change is not completely accepted. This is based on two different visions of the evaluator, on the one hand, he does not conceive participatory evaluations as an epistemological or paradigm change, rather he considers it an innovative technique different from doing evaluation. On the other hand, there is a vision that believes that participatory evaluations are a paradigm shift that involves a way for the evaluator to rethink how to do evaluations. Following this line of analysis, according to Caballero (2022), the most important challenge for the evaluator is to differentiate between a traditional evaluation with field work and a participatory evaluation.

From the first vision that was presented in the previous paragraph, participatory evaluation is a type of traditional evaluation with field work, which involves the expanded work group in the last phase of the implementation of the evaluation where different techniques are used. participatory to present the results and findings of the evaluation, with the aim of their validation and acceptance. The result is that the findings generated from the participatory evaluation were like those of another traditional evaluation of results that was carried out by the same evaluation team years before where the program had another name.

Another of the most significant challenges of the external evaluation team is knowing how to communicate their technical-methodological knowledge with the various actors that participate, since it is based on the premise that they do not have specialized knowledge in matters of evaluation. Therefore, it is essential that the evaluation group, from its role as facilitator, carries out the necessary training and pedagogy so that the participants do not feel excluded from the process and have the necessary elements to give their opinion and defend their ideas regarding what they want to know, how they want to do it and how they are going to communicate the results, in front of the rest of the evaluation team. Therefore, the evaluation team: must use language that is close to the citizen without technicalities; have the willingness to listen and generate spaces of trust with the different actors to break the tensions, conflicts or pressures that generate the same power relations, in such a way that the actors are maintained throughout the process; and, finally, it must make the evaluation a transversal process where power in decision-making is transferred and shared agreements are generated.

The experiences of Jalisco and Zacatecas show that training for external evaluators is necessary, as well as the communication and organization of participatory evaluation from the State Evaluation Systems themselves. The case of Jalisco reflects that the evaluation management itself is designed with different levels of participation in each of the stages, which excludes the evaluation team from the planning process and only reduces its function to the execution stage in which limits the participation of the expanded working group, this explains why the external evaluators have not fully accepted that this is an important methodological change and different from traditional evaluations with field work. Given this panorama, the challenge is to rethink the management of participatory evaluation so that the evaluator is conceived as a facilitator of the change process who provides support to the evaluation group throughout the evaluation process.

Contributions of participatory evaluations to the improvement of public policy

The learning obtained in participatory evaluations can generate improvements in the evaluated policy cycle, this does not mean that the evaluations generate results of the failures that exist in each of the phases of public policy, rather, it is about understanding that the learning that these evaluations generate serve as a reference to improve the following phases of public policy, since its very nature means that this is not a process that occurs linearly, but rather cyclically, in which the phases they tend to blur, overlap and intermingle[3].

Learning the process for the transformation of the public policy cycle

The public policy cycle, according to Aguilar & Lima (2009), consists of four phases in which participation is placed at the center from its founding moment. In this situation, participation becomes a constitutive element for the cycle of public policies that must be considered from the gestation, formulation, implementation and evaluation as a daily exercise that implies "the fulfillment of an entire cycle aimed at guaranteeing the effectiveness of citizen action and its impact strategies on public policies" (Cespedes, 2017).

Participation in the evaluation phase is the telos of participatory evaluations, for this reason guaranteeing the participation of the various actors that are part of an intervention enriches the evaluation exercise, likewise, creates an environment of validation and continuity of the policy. Based on Canto (2005), participation is conceived from different levels that range from the lowest level, which is information to control, in this case the evaluative process (see Table 3); However, what participatory

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[3] Aguilar y Lima, 2009, pág. 18.

Table 3. Levels of participation in the phases of public policy.

Participation level	Description
Information	Knowledge of budgets, regulations, programs, plans, projects of the government sector and which are the basic condition to make any type of participation possible.
Consultation	Consultation with citizens is carried out, with the purpose of the government finding out about the proposals and opinions of citizens on specific aspects of public action.
Decision	You participate in the decision, that is, not only is an opinion issued, but it is obligatory for the person making the consultation.
Delegation	It is established when the government grants (delegates) to some citizen organizations the implementation of a project or program related to addressing public problems.
Association	It implies that the initiative can also be on the side of citizen organizations and that they agree with the government to carry out common policies or programs.
Control	It is the control of the actions of the government by the various forms of citizen organization.

Source: own elaboration based on Canto (2009).

evaluation seeks is precisely to transcend a process of citizen participation in which there is not only information or consultation, but delegation and deliberation.

It is then proposed that the participation of the various actors in participatory evaluations generates learning from the process that facilitates organizational change; it also enables the transfer of learning from an evaluation organization to a design organization and to an implementation one, since the stages of the cycle of public policy function dependently on each other either a *priori* or a *posteriori* and not in a fragmented manner.

The learning of the process is reflected in the phase of use of the evaluation, in this last phase the evaluation group follows up on the improvement agenda launched by the executing agency of the program, that is, it is in charge of verifying compliance with the recommendations that were generated from the evaluation. In the case studies analyzed there is no redesign of the program, rather, it is a readjustment in the areas that suggest aspects susceptible to improvement; However, much of the learning generated by these evaluations is relevant to talking about a redesign of the program. Following this line of analysis, it is important to reconnect the evaluation with the planning so that the areas susceptible to improvement as a result of the evaluations are institutionally taken up in the planning, and in this way generate mechanisms through which the beneficiaries are included in coordination with the executing agency to work in these areas so that they influence the redesign of the evaluated intervention.

The transfer of learning from an evaluation organization to a design organization will only be possible if resistance to change is not generated in the organizations. For this, it is essential that the decision makers of the design organization, through their

technical-political capabilities, generate agreements to include the participation of program beneficiaries, civil society actors and/or private actors who are involved with the intervention. This does not mean that the entire potential or target population served by the program, much less that all actors involved with the intervention should be part of the redesign process, rather, it means that decision makers can generate negotiations between the different actors with the aim of creating a joint agenda, in which the functions of each one are well established and the learning resulting from the evaluation is taken up to apply them in the redesign or in the areas that need to be improved in the program.

The evaluations of Jalisco and Zacatecas suggest two characteristics of the programs that can be evaluated participatively, these are: that the program has a high participatory component and that it is a solid program that has matured over time; However, this last characteristic makes it difficult or more complex to talk about a redesign. Returning to the previous idea, it is proposed that the programs evaluated participatively be those of recent creation, this means that, if a type of participatory evaluation is established that the objective is to evaluate the design, processes, implementation or whatever it may be , it is more likely to take advantage of these learnings to be able to create the necessary institutional adjustments to make available to the various actors integrated in the intervention mechanisms that guarantee their participation (not reduced to consultation or decision but to deliberation and association) in the planning phase. redesign of the policy, considering that it is more feasible to address the inadequacies in a young policy than one that has been implemented for a long time, which would make it difficult to talk about a redesign or even change the program's intervention logic.

Based on the previous analysis, once formal collaboration agreements have been established for the redesign, it is possible that in the implementation phase there will be co-responsibility between the various actors involved in the intervention. In this sense, decision-making capacities are required to talk about co-governance, that is, a level of participation where the various actors have specific functions during the implementation of the program and are not only beneficiaries, but subjects of rights.

Finally, it follows that the most successful contribution of participatory evaluations is the involvement of different actors for the transformation of public policy, in the sense of providing citizens with political responsibilities to facilitate the process of change. Therefore, it is required that the levels of participation of these actors transcend a level of participation of association and deliberation in the evaluation process and not be reduced to consultation or decision, so that it is possible to establish consensual and shared decision-making. Likewise, serve as a mechanism for the democratization process.

Conclusions

Participatory evaluations show an important part of the articulation of the phases of the policy and the levels of participation, which generate learning from both the successes and failures of its execution which, when shared with the design and implementation organizations, facilitate the process of change and the continuity of the transformation and improvement of the policy. Therefore, as shown in this paper, opting for complementary approaches contributes to transforming not only the traditional vision of evaluation in Mexico but also to promoting the culture of evaluation and strengthening subnational systems.

In addition to the above, participatory evaluations transcend the use of evaluations thanks to the learning generated from the involvement of the various actors involved in the management and implementation of the evaluated program, as well as the scaffolding of knowledge of the program itself as a result of the change of the traditional terms of reference with which they are evaluated, adapting them to the specificities of each one and the aspects that one wants to know about them.

Finally, if the learning from participatory evaluations leads to organizational change and by rethinking and proposing the programs that are being evaluated, this analysis leaves other lines of research open by questioning how participation can be configured and permeated in the subsequent phases of the cycle. of politics.

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