POLICY ANALYSIS – ITS SIGNIFICANCE WITHIN REFORMING PUBLIC POLICIES MANAGEMENT

ANALIZA DE POLITICI – SEMNIFICAȚIA ÎN CONTEXTUL REFORMEI MANAGEMENTULUI POLITICILOR PUBLICE

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Abstract: *Social-politic contexts constitute particular frameworks in which specific public issues emerge. Their institutional answer allows the elaboration and implementation of adequate public policies. Implicit/intrinsic strategies require organized, oriented approach intervention from different institutions. Public policies management has developed specific aspects in Romania as compared to other countries*.

Key words: *reform, management, policy analysis, public policies, institutions*

INTRODUCTION

The state is the main institution that generates "public policies". Through these, the state has concrete interventions in the economic and social areas, determining changes deriving from the necessity to solve certain public issues/matters.

There can be identified a series of elements which bear resemblance between "managerial sciences" and public policies analysis. The latter allows valuating the political context elements; however, its aspect of orientation, justification and validation of different managerial strategies is also important.

The present contribution will consider the public policies management as "the complex of processes, procedures and interventions through which public and private organizations interact in order to achieve politically and electorally validated objectives". (Craciun, C., Collins, P., 2008, Managementul politicilor publice. Transformari si perspective, p.18)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to define public policies, it is necessary to discuss the doctrinaire, global, methodological and, last but not least, democratic aspects (Giosan, V., 2008, p. 77).

Thus, the doctrinaire refers to the set of values and beliefs on which the policies are built, in order to solve the aimed public matter. It is obvious that different values may lead to the identification of different solutions or to certain methodological constructions.

The global aspect sets the public policies in a generalizing vision. Public policies cannot be outlined beyond the interaction of deciding factors, beneficiaries and groups of interests.

The methodological aspect discusses the technical perspective, the tools and techniques used within the public policies specific for each stage.

The democratic aspect shows the complex role the citizen has in the process of public policies; it is an actor who plays specific parts in the identification of the pubic matter, as a direct or indirect beneficiary of the public policy.

In the Dictionary of public policies (2009, p. 179), Jean Claude Thoening commences from the premise that "pubic policies are a specific social and political phenomenon, empirically founded and analytically built" which "designates the interventions of an authority invested with public power and governmental legitimacy upon a specific area of society or territorial".

A definition pragmatically elaborated is the one which presents public policy "as the action direction or lack of action chosen by the authorities as an answer to a certain issue or a set of actions interconnected" (Leslie, Pal, 2002, in Politici publice. Teorie si practica, p.21). The quoted author indentifies some public policy existential elements: public policy guides different actions interconnected from definite domains; public policy does not imply only action but inaction/lack of action as well, each alternative representing the public authority choice; public policy generally answers to interconnected matters rather than isolated ones.

Thomas Dye refers to the above element, "action-inaction/lack of action", defining public policies as "everything that the governmental actors decide to perform or not.

The public response to political issues on the agenda and benefits of recognition is done through public policies.

In essence, a public policy comprises well-defined elements, such as: measures of concrete intervention to prevent, ameliorate/improve or solve the public matter, decisions made by the deciding actors, the lines and

directions of concrete action oriented to clearly defined/set objectives and aims, and last but not least, the target-public of policy.

Public policy implies making a set of decisions, not a singular one, as Andrei Miroiu defines the public policy "a network of connected decisions regarding the choice of objectives, means and resources earmarked for their achievement in specific situations" (2001, p. 9)

The changes in the economic, social, cultural milieu produced as following the implementation of some public policies elaborated by central and local authorities, are registered as consequences/ effects of the respective policies.

Boussaguet (2001) appreciates that the political matter needs to fulfill certain conditions. Thus, it is necessary that the public matter interest several categories of actors who are aware of it and that it is to be found again in the form of the action on the public stage. At the same time, the preoccupation for the matter brings it within the public space and opportunities are built in order to place it in the public debate. Its solving is on the public or political authorities agenda, and thus it becomes object to politicizing.

Any public matter is a social construction. The way in which the public policy is drawn up will ultimately determine its debate and the manner in which decisions will be made to solve it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The management and control of public policies constitute a challenge as they valuate - to a great extent - the elements of the global frame of planning and management in the Romanian system, with a view to other states experience.

The reform within the public policies management is drawn into three major directions of thinking and action: decentralization, the reform of public position and the improvement of policy formulation approach at central levels. In this way new objectives appear, such as the activation of policies coordination mechanism vertically, so as to substantiate governmental initiatives; the assurance of public policies coordination horizontally, by means of strategic plans introduction; the creation of mechanisms to correlate public policies priorities with the budget (Bondar, F. Politici publice si administratie publica, 2007, p.110-111)

Modern governing implies "responsible and efficient management based on outcomes/results, including monitoring, reporting and evaluation functions; the evaluation of existing/ on-going policies and programmes in terms of functionality, design and efficiency as related to the circumstances, the needs and the priorities new or modified" (Russel, T. Robinson, Managementul politicilor publice, 2008, p. 162-163).

Concrete ways of analysis of public policies are important as long as they are validated by practice.

PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS

In William Dunn's discourse, public policy analysis is a multidisciplinary research, meant to provide an adequate approach of the process of public policy elaboration. According to his opinion, the consistency of the public policy analysis is given by the "interweaving of common, popular knowledge with specialized investigation formulas used in social sciences and professions, including public administration and planning" (Dunn, W., 2010, Analiza politicilor publice, p. 16).

In Pierre Muller's opinion, the major merit of the policy analysis is to offer a global perspective in order to understand public policies against the background of specific perspectives which do not allow outlining reality exactly: "the approach proposed by public policy analysis earned the outstanding merit of opening the black box of the state, turning it into a subject of research of the content of public action programmes, asking mainly questions regarding the origin of solved and building/creating solutions" (P. Muller, 2009, Dictionar de politici publice, p. 15).

Public policy analysis is connected at its beginnings with the 1930s, when it coagulates against the background of the state rationing preoccupations and politics in general.

Lasswell (1930) uses the term of policy, making reference to practices and values applied in the process of elaboration of public policies. In the theory developed by Lasswell, it is stated "the social and intellectual utility of social sciences by acknowledging public policy sciences. From this perspective, public policies have the force of empirical knowledge, they develop multidiscipline character and are solving problem-centered which collectivity acknowledges and claims.

ADVOCACY COALITION FRAMEWORK

This model describes the evolution of public policies along the time, proposes explanations of the changes taking place in the public action in longer periods of time (over 10 years).

The actors involved in the elaboration of the public policy do have both the expertise and the motivation to influence, periodically, the decision making in the respective area, depending on their interests and beliefs. It is the actors' influence in the decision taking process within a subsystem of a public policy.

For a better understanding of this model, we will consider the two constituting elements:

1. The subsystems of public policy
2. The individual actor of public policy

Consequently, the public policy subsystem is formed from the human resource involved (actors from legislative institutions, researchers, agencies, leaders of the groups of interests or other people who hold significant power to influence the decisions in a subsystem of a policy).

The causes, the shared interests and the beliefs connected to a certain policy constitute the foundation/ground of coalition framework, which, in order to gain political control, rallies/mobilizes/musters their resources and implements specific strategies.

The second element of the ACF model is the individual actor. The ACF model starts from the premise that each actor holds certain beliefs, difficult to change; beside their own perceptions, the perceptions of the coalition in which they take part are outlined. The coalitions are built and promote varied interests and beliefs which lead to tensed situations.

In presenting this model, Paul A. Sabatier refers to the prospect theory, which shows that the actors are inclined to evaluate the failure situations rather than the successful ones; those belonging to other coalitions are perceived as rivals and their own coalitions are seen much more powerful than in reality. The elements which differentiate coalitions are exaggerated and are assigned the power to strengthen relationships from the interior and to fuel the conflict between different coalitions which sustain the public policy.

The ACT model is addressed to the elite of public policy and is focused on the forming of their system of beliefs.

These beliefs, as norm and ontological hypotheses, can be identified at central level, with an obvious general character; they are difficult to change and are applied to all public policies.

The next level refers to the beliefs which are specific to the very core/nucleus of a policy; they are adequate to be applied to a subsystem of public policies and concentrate fundamental perceptions relates to that subsystem.

A last level of the belief system of the public elites is formed from secondary beliefs; they act in restricted areas concerning programmes and make easy the knowledge process on the one hand and the punctual change on the other.

Two categories of variables which influence the public policies can be introduced in analysis.

We will refer to "steady parameters", i.e., the cultural pattern, the norms and fundamental regulations which act in the society, the profile of the public problem and last, but not least, the natural resources distribution manner. Another category of variables is represented by external variables with significant influence on public policies, on medium and long term such as: elements of change within the ACF and the belief "remodelling" on the public policy, or the intervention of other subsystems of the public policies; the dynamic character of the socio-economic framework determines changes in public opinion as related to various public policies.

Thus, the dynamic character of ACF can be outlined. It shows how a public policy responds to the changes imposed by different external variables on the coalition beliefs.

The ACF was initially focused on the idea that public policies suffer fundamental changes only in the context in which, under the influence of socio-economic factors, the main coalition actors' beliefs are modified; naturally, a framework in which, the coalitions which proved strong and of a majority, leave way to others, which will determine the evolution of public policies in other direction.

Later, according to other researchers, the ACF model was connected to other potential action ways, tailoring new visions: the cooperation between coalitions and the promotion of positive relationships, the activation of coalition levers to solve conflicts, the assurance of implied actors' representation, consensus based decisions.

STAGES APPROACH

Using the stage principle, this method has as objective "the elaboration of an ideal model of public policy and its way to apply it, the construction of a fix framework and general enough to be applied to any policy, the structuring and rationalizing of the analysis itself of the public policy" (Christine Musselin, 2009, Dictionar de politici publice, p. 23). Consequently, within a temporal structuring, different aspects of the public action are uncovered/disclosed through specific instruments.

In 1956 Harold D. Lasswell analyzed public policy as policy process and identified the stages of application: data collecting, promoting, recommending, calling upon, applying, completing.

It is obvious that later contributions allowed different approaches of the public policy analysis. A theoretic reference model is the one proposed by Charles O. Jones (An introduction to the study of public policy, 1970). Thus, the five stages proposed are:

1. Indentifying of the issue – implies an understanding of the events, their defining as public issue and consequently its including on the public agenda.
2. Developing the programme – the public issue is outlined and the programme meant to solve it; once on the public authorities' agenda, solution identification is followed by decision taking
3. Implementing the programme – the programme is acknowledged to the actors who will implement it, the necessary resources are summoned up and the programme is applied.
4. Evaluating the programme – data about the programme are collected and a set of criteria measure and appreciate them.
5. Ending the programme – the programme is completed and ways of future developments are set, if it is considered.

Specific actions are associated to each stage, comprised in functional systems which allow the implication of several actors, thus responding to the complexity of public action.

The stage approach model allowed the development of several research programmes, focused on different stages of the public policies; its ideal-type character goes beyond the risk of reconstructing reality according to its guidelines. It is important its attempt to order political mechanisms.

CONCLUSIONS

Policy analysis is pre-eminently a cognitive approach, however, without neglecting interaction as well. In order to be efficient, public policy needs to be a cognitive approach (Leslie Pall, 2002, p.30), implying interaction as well. The systematic character of policy approach implies following well-defined stages, preparing the ground for results which determine the actors involved to go beyond their subjective reporting. The effects of public policy oblige producing an analysis of the public policy and the valuating of certain expertise to legitimate the outcomes.

Policy analysis is considered an intellectual subject and systematic research which provides data that orient involved institutions in the public policy reform.

This reform is closely connected to the way in which the public administration reform is articulated including the applied managerial model, which should make the organizational activity and the institution procedures efficient.

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