GOVERNANCE IN CHILDCARE

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ABSTRACT: Given the wide action margin of public administration, governance practices can happen at different hierarchical levels, topics and varying groups of interest. The present case study lays out a governance practice in the topic of childcare in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, where, due to pressures from different interest groups, dialogue spaces were established with the intention of influencing the state's related public policies. Our objective is to analyze the determining factors that facilitate the implementation of the basic principles of a governance model for the interaction between different interest groups. The article concludes with some useful recommendations to be considered in local governance models. To achieve this, the Analytic Governance Framework was used as a reference to diagnose this collective process. The methods used were observation, participatory action research, expert panels, interviews, and documental analysis.

KEYWORDS: governance, citizen participation, social policies, childcare, participation

INTRODUCTION

The different levels of government have the duty of implementing public policies focused on providing the ideal conditions for boys, girls and teenagers to enjoy the human rights that the Political Constitution of the Mexican United States guarantees them and ratifies in several international agreements.

In the state of Chihuahua, the concern that these human rights are indeed guaranteed is still valid. Even though the latest study carried out by Unicef Mexico (2015) showed that Chihuahua had progressed as the result of imple-

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menting programs aimed at lowering children's mortality rate, widening the range of basic education and offering better levels of social protection, it is also true that the current government still faces the challenge to keep reducing the levels of extreme poverty that still affect 40.8% of the state's boys, girls and teenagers, aside from reinforcing programs to reduce the mortality rate among mothers, prevent pregnancies at young age, child migration and the eradication of violence against children and teenagers.

If aside from this, we add the fact that an urban and border context increases the risk factors for children (UNICEF, 2015), it is justified that one of the strategies that became important in protecting and improving the quality of living for boys, girls and adolescents was the creation of safe environments for childcare within the reach of the most vulnerable sectors (United Nations' Children's Fund, 2015).

As an urban and border town, socioeconomic conditions in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua increase the risk factors for boys, girls and adolescents. This city concentrates 40% of the state's population (INEGI: 2010), but it is also the home of 490,000 residents that live in conditions of multidimensional poverty (SIPINNA, 2017).

These conditions of poverty, in large measure, are due to a mix of low incomes –the city's main source of employment is the manufacturing sector– and the high costs of living. Added to the population's economical situation, one must consider different factors like: a) 20% of this city's homes are single-speakers, b) a high percentage of women are part of the working sector, c) a lack of public spaces close to the neighborhoods where they live (INEGI, 2010), d) desynchronized school and working hours –which explains why almost 100,000 boys and girls from 0 to 6 years old are left alone or in the care of one of their brothers (Coria, 2013); e) there aren't enough childcare facilities within the economic reach of these kinds of families, and f) the existing facilities are not distributed so that these kinds of families can access them when they need to do so (González-Martínez, 2016).

The combination of all of the aforementioned situations worsens the vulnerable condition of boys, girls and adolescents by exposing them to environments of growing family violence, as evidenced by the clear increase of lawsuit cases of neglected childcare (See Image 1) (González-Martínez, 2016) (Ochoa, 2017).

One way to offer security to boys, girls and adolescents is to guarantee the childcare facilities that they need. These facilities include nurseries ("*guarderías*") and daycare centers ("*estancias infantiles*"). The difference between these two is that the first one is characterized by focusing its attention on providing the essential aspects of food, hygiene, sleep and health, while the

second one is considered to include educational activities for boys, girls and adolescents, aside from the care of all said essential aspects as well.

Civil society and the government have carried out important efforts to increase childcare facilities but, still, these don't seem to be enough. Up until March 2017, one nursery for every 1,926 boys, girls and adolescents in childcare ages was estimated within the city (See Image 1). Also noteworthy is the fact that, in seven years, the number of boys, girls and adolescents in childcare age has increased slightly (INEGI, 2015), but the number of nurseries accounted for in the Statistical Directory of Economic Units remains unchanged (INEGI, 2017).

IMAGE 1. CONCENTRATION OF CHILD POPULATION, NURSERIES, DAYCARE CENTERS AND RECEIVED CALLS FOR NEGLECTED CHILDCARE IN CIUDAD JUÁREZ
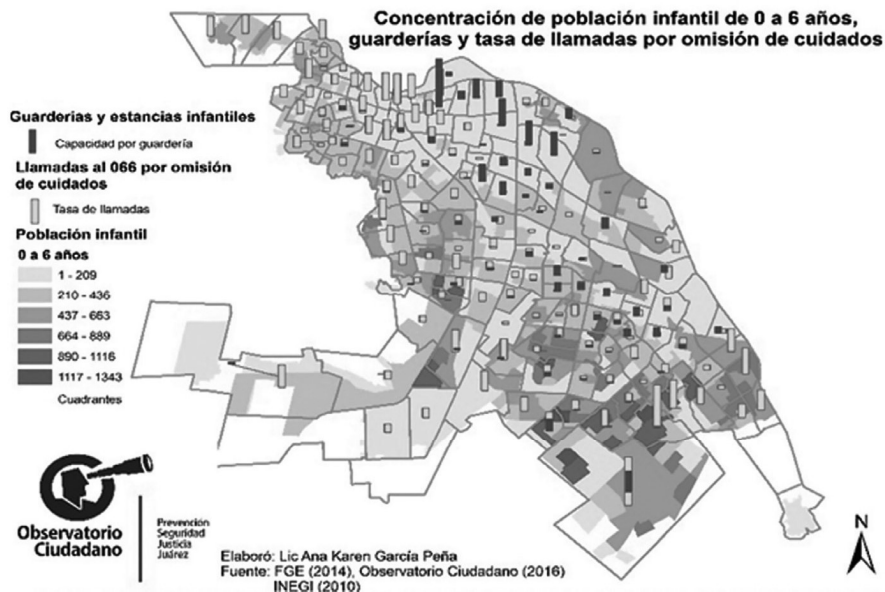
Source: Trust for citizen competitiveness and safety.

As one can conclude from this analysis, the main social problem lies in the impossibility of the boys, girls and adolescents of many families in vulnerable situations to access childcare facilities that are free or affordable according to their economic situation.

That is how the increase in childcare facilities became a promise during the political campaign of the state's current government. In February of this year –recognizing that 180,000 boys and girls of Chihuahua have been detected

to be in need of childcare–, it announced an investment of 30 million pesos for opening 150 Daily Childcare Homes and 15 million pesos for granting scholarships to girls and boys that cannot pay a minimal tuition (Government of the state of Chihuahua, 2017).

This public policy –aimed at solving part of the problems discussed above– caused unease among the members of the Child Welfare Center Network, a group of 71 organizations dedicated to offering low cost childcare services in the city. They publicly expressed that they felt excluded from the benefits of this social policy (La Polaka, 2017).

From that point on, the Child Welfare Center Network requested work meetings with members of the civil society and different branches of government for defining the real needs of childcare (Bustamente, 2017). That is how several interest groups with veto powers came up, demanding a governance process that should gather state government agencies –like de Secretariat and Sub-secretariat of Social Development and the State's Parliament Commission on Infancy; the Secretariat of Social Development, as a municipal agency– and groups of organizations dedicated to childcare.

The process of governance in Chihuahua was taken as a case study, with the purpose of documenting and analyzing the dynamics adopted by different interest groups, which can be useful for identifying certain determining factors that may have a positive or negative influence in the implementation of principles of participation, transparency, accountability, efficiency and coherence considered by Cerillo (2005) as basic in the process of governance.

To achieve this purpose, we began by recognizing that the governance process is complex and that the description of its principles is necessary –but not enough– to analyze the inner relations and identifying factors that affect the obtained results. That is why, we resorted to Hufty's Analytical Framework of Governance (2010) as a point of reference to analyze this case study in terms of the following broad analysis categories: the actors involved, the problems prescribed by all of those involved, focal points, regulations and processes.

The applied methods for collecting information included participatory action research, observation during meetings between the Child Welfare Center Network and agencies of the state's government, analysis of newspaper sources, interviews with the different actors involved and the configuration of a panel of experts.

The participatory action research methodology was used because the diagnosis of the problem of childcare began with social actors, turning them in fellow participants in the processes of recollecting information, making decisions, critical thought and action (Colmenares, 2011).

The three following methods were useful for gathering information on behaviors, as well as documenting and analyzing the agreements and discussions set forth in this process of governance. For their part, information was obtained from the panel of experts following four childcare models which, together, declared to look after more than 10,500 girls, boys and adolescents: Nurseries from the Mexican Institute of Social Security (*Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, IMSS*), Daycare Centers of the Secretariat of Social Development (*Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, SEDESOL*), Daily Childacare Homes and Childcare Welfare Centers. The municipality's Office of Social Development and the state's Sub-Secretariat of Social Development also participated representing government organizations.

The representatives of the different models of childcare operating in Ciudad Juárez presented their advantages and features, the problems they face and the requirements for promoting the opening of more childcare facilities. On their part, the representatives of the government agencies presented their respective work plans and projects for childcare in the city.

After having described the conditions that favored the surge of a process of governance related to childcare, in this article, we will continue with the analysis of different concepts of governance that exist and their general implications on a government's actions, thus showing its complexity and the need to resort to the concept of public action as an adequate framework that allows us to explain the emergence of governance processes, as well as the results of its implementation.

Then, by using the Governance Analytical Framework as reference, we will review the concrete experience of the governance model in childcare, therefore, we will analyze the emergence of the different actors that were part of this process, we will describe the different perspectives from which interest groups perceived the main problem, the regulations that influenced the participants' behaviors and attitudes, as well as the focal points –understood as the spaces and alliances where the agreements and resulting negotiations of the process took place.

Finally, we will conclude by delineating some final considerations around the case study –specifically with the intention of identifying the lessons that came from this analysis and could be useful for strengthening the basic principles to be considered in a model for local governance.

THE COMPLEXITY OF GOVERNANCE

In general terms, whenever we talk about governance, we refer to the spaces of interaction among several interest groups which are resorted to for establishing dialogues and agreements in the decision-making process of specific topics. These spaces of interaction are possible in both the public and the private spheres.

The term "governance" gathered strength in the public sphere, once the efficiency of government actions in the world began being questioned; once the impossibility of the State's omnipresence to solve all of the challenges and problems in increasingly complex societies was recognized (Aguilar, 2016). In this sense, Aguilar argues that the government is a legitimate and necessary agent for managing society but, due to its inability to define the future of social interest by itself, it must resort to collaborating with different actors and become an articulator of the actions of several actors.

It then implies the transition of a traditional model of intervention in public affairs to a collaborative one, in which the government –although still considered to be the key actor in the definition and implementation of public policies– converges with several different perspectives and purposes geared towards a joint analysis, creation, implementation and assessment of public policies. This kind of collaboration requires a type of coordination that, according to Jessop (quoted by Carmona, 2005), implies the actions of different actors and interacting mechanisms to become institutionalized and formalized, and which are resorted to achieve common objectives in public affairs. Therefore, the interrelations between civil society, the State and the market –the sectors whose borders are increasingly blurred– had to be reconsidered (Peters, 2000; Le Gales,1995 quoted by Carmona, 2005).

In this sense, Mayntz (2005) describes governance as an alternative way to govern and contrarian to the model of hierarchical control, for resorting to a more cooperative model in which state and non-state actors participate in mixed public-private network.

Based on the cooperative nature of this concept, good governance is considered to be the one that guarantees the participation of all actors involved in the matters at hand; the one whose participants have the possibility of making their corresponding decisions; and the one in which agreements are reached. For this to happen, the following principles are suggested as basic: participation, transparency, accountability, efficiency and coherence (Cerrillo i Martínez, 2005).

For Cerrillo (2005), governance is based on the participation of different actors with interests, resources or perspectives that could be incorporated in the collective decision-making process, in turn, limited by a series of established

regulations and agreements. Also, it must prove to be a transparent process, open to questioning the decisions it reaches and are applied by the public sector, to pursuit the agreed results and to show political leadership and an institutional commitment to carry agreements through.

As a pillar of governance, the participation of citizens encompasses all kinds of individual or collective actions that have a public purpose and go beyond the private realm to affect the decision-making processes of public policies. In this sense, the CLAD (2009) defines it as a process of social construction of public policies that, according to the general interest of a democratic society, has the capacity to channel, respond or extend the economic, social, cultural, political and civil rights of people and the rights of organizations or groups that integrate them, as well as of indigenous communities and people.

This form of intervention of private actors in public activities is considered to be useful (Baño: 1998), since it is supposed to improve public administration, affect public policies, control administrative actions and serve as an opposition to public servants considered to be experts. That is why the exercise of citizen participation in governance is based on the obligation of all private individuals or legal entities that manage public resources to give the necessary information to explain and justify the actions that were carried out (Schedler, 2008).

For his part, Prats (2005) understands governance as "the structure or guidelines that emerge within a sociopolitical system as a common result of the interaction efforts of all involved actors". In function of this concept, he asserts that the success of the interactions of the different actors is influenced by the recognition of all the parties involved; that the problems to be solved are complex, dynamic and diverse; and that is why neither the public nor the private actor possess the whole knowledge and the resources for the implementation of public policies. Therefore, governments must become facilitators of social and political interactions; must create or favor spaces for negotiating and facilitating agreements aimed to solve public problems.

For Rosenau (1992), governance is a phenomenon that encompasses both government institutions and informal institutions that may employ non-governmental mechanisms and include those persons and organizations looking to satisfy their interests and desires. All of the aforementioned is to establish shared goals that may or may not become legal responsibilities.

It is clear that there is great variety of definitions in literature that describe the ethical principles of governance. To a large extent, this is because this is not the exclusive process of a certain type of organization, hierarchical level or specific subject –normally, problems are approached from a multidisciplinary perspective, with no certain temporality, specific territoriality or a particular number of actors (Carmona, 2005). If added to a polysemic concept, we

include the fact that the cultural, economic, political and perception factors of all the participants involved exercise an influence in the process, we will see an increase in the complexity of their implementation.

This complexity can be seen in texts such as "The White Book of the Europpean Union" (Europpean Communities Commission, 2001) and Carrillo's contribution (2005), which recommend a general frame of reference of common principles to which the process of governance must be circumscribed to. In a more detailed manner, there are manuals that offer guidelines to carry out governance exercises (CEAM, 2012) (*Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano,* 2015) and make special emphasis in implementation methodologies considered to be repeatable, but are also adjusted to the technical specifications of a particular subject.

Even though, governance is not considered to be a regulatory concept. Each society decides to develop their own forms of governance, decision-making or conflict resolution systems among its members, regulations and participant institutions (Hufty, 2010); it is recommended to resort to this process as an useful element in those contexts characterized by a credibility crisis in the actions of its government, and where collective decisions must be made for looking for efficiency in the fulfillment of objectives and the effectiveness in the use of public resources (Santos, 2014).

GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ACTION

The recognition of the complexity of the process of governance is manifested in the difficulty to define a concept that allows a greater depth exploration of the surge and inner relations in which agreements are reached. Durán (quoted by Cabrero, 2005) criticizes the concept of governance because he considers it to be more of a sentence than a method or a theoretical framework to explore the subject –which lacks the analysis that allows to expose the functioning of the political system and the surge of the reached agreements; and recommends to resort to the concept of public action to identify the participating actors and how did they come up, as well as to understand the logic of these actors to produce an efficient action.

The concepts of governance and public action are not unconnected since the first one references the change of the second one and emphasizes the collective sense of the public action that, in turn, allows the understanding of the real dynamics being implemented (Cabrero, 2005).

Public action is not reserved to the exclusive use of governments. This concept is supported by the recognition that governments do not monopolize neither politics nor work in public topics, therefore, society resorts to different

ways to build and qualify public problems, aside from the capacity to come up with answers, contents and processes to take them on. (Thoening, 1997).

So, public action implies a shared responsibility among government and civil society. Because the government's presence and actions are not the only requirement to give meaning and direction to public policies: society and its actions are required as well, because it helps to define a problem and offer resources that contribute to its solution (Santos, 2014).

Durán (quoted by Amaya, 2010) defines public action as: "the capacity to define collective goals, of mobilizing the necessary resources to pursuit them, of making the decisions imposed by its attainment and to assume the consequences that result from it". That is how public action becomes an instrument of government that allows the coordination among public and social actors to articulate the resources that are dispersed at the moment (Santos, 2014).

While governance is used as a concept that refers to the changes that public action goes through, local governance refers to the demarcated process of a specific territory where the government is closer to its citizens, there is an urgent nature to solve public problems and it becomes relevant because it usually found in areas of greater conflicts like those related to economic development, public services and social policies (Santos, 2014).

In the local realm, governance can become the perfect means to address collective actions that result in actions that are more efficient, cooperative and articulated with society (Carmona, 2005).

Even when all authors agree that governance is a process that favors the solution of public problems, they recognize deficiencies in the local administrations that make them difficult. The experiences analyzed by Santos (2014) show that there is a lot to do in that sense, asserting that municipalities have not managed to implement a public policy process that opens the door to evaluation, transparency and accountability, even when it has been demonstrated that it is possible to institutionalize the developed processes.

WHO IS WHO IN CHILDCARE?

Strategic actors

Since several decades ago, Ciudad Juárez has had a civil society with wide experience in the social sector. Several Civil Society Organizations (*Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil, OSC*) have developed and implemented models of childcare, placing this topic in the political arena and influencing the approach of public polices looking to guarantee the rights of boys, girls and adolescents to access childcare. For their part, all three branches of government

have implemented public policies of childcare in the city, but they still seem not to be enough.

As it is seen in the following table (See Table 1), federal government takes care of 5,966 boys and girls in 106 nurseries of its own or through which it grants subsidies for every child that is looked after (IMSS nurseries, subrogate nurseries of the IMSS and daycare centers). Civil society offers a low cost model just as Daily Childcare Homes and Child Welfare Centers do so[1]. Together they take care of 3,087 children, in a total of 84 facilities.

TABLE 1. MAIN CHILDCARE MODELS IN CIUDAD JUAREZ

	Child Welfare Centers	Ministry of Social Development (Sedesol)	Day Care Centers (IMSS)	Daily Care Homes
Number of organizations	71	77	29	13
Ages of girls and boys attended	4 a 12 years old	From 1 year old to 4 years old, to 6 years old children with disabilities	45 days to 4 years old	From 18 months to 6 years old / From 6 to 9 years old
Girls and boys attended	2,850	1,800	4,166	237

Source: The authors with data from representatives of each of the childcare models on March 24, 2017.

With no intention of dismissing the work carried out by the public and private sectors in the benefit of childcare, in this occasion we will focus on identifying the strategic actors that participated in the process of governance subjected to study. By strategic actors, we refer to any individual or organization that have veto powers over a policy due to their control over certain resources of power from their public position, manufacturing factors, information and ideas; and because they have the capability of carrying out social mobilizations or because they are considered as moral authorities (Prats, 2003).

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1 They receive the support of the municipality of Ciudad Juárez, in a model that is –up until totally– considered to be unique in the country.