

Labor policies based on public-private alliances: a reflection from its conception

Políticas laborales basadas en alianzas público-privadas: una reflexión desde su concepción

Políticas laborais baseadas em parcerias público-privadas: uma reflexão desde a sua concepção



Yairín Arteaga Prado¹, Deysi Alfonso Porraspita², Daniel Negrín Reyes³

¹ Universidad de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Departamento de Preparación y Superación de Cuadros. Pinar el Río, Cuba. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7995-1655>. Email: yairin@upr.edu.cu

² Universidad de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Departamento de Preparación y Superación de Cuadros. Pinar del Río, Cuba. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8914-9482>. Email: lidice@upr.edu.cu

³ Universidad de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Vicerrectoría de Investigación, Informatización y Posgrado. Pinar el Río, Cuba. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6630-6764>. Email: daniel.negrin@upr.edu.cu

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ABSTRACT

Each country, whether developed or in transition, must design its own policies to achieve full employment. This is a term that helps establish uniformity and reduce the incidence of unfair treatment. However, the management of labor policies does not always guarantee the development of this balance and the implementation of effective development strategies. Achieving superior results requires the participation of public and private actors with diverse competences and interests who employ large numbers of workers and treasure a wealth of talent and creativity. This article is a qualitative examination, of an exploratory-descriptive type, which allows us to reflect on the theoretical conceptions of labor policies and public-private alliances, establishing the links between them, in a rearrangement of efforts to develop forms of collaboration. In this way, the main result is a link based on the development of alliances between both sectors, which is aimed at countless initiatives to strengthen public management. In this sense, it is concluded that the articulation between them transcends an opportunity to manage labor policies, given the sustainability and commitment generated in this type of alliance, in addition to assuming different responsibilities and the condition of being flexible, which would make it possible to respond to the context in which it is developed.

Keywords: alliances; management; labor policies; public sector; private sector

RESUMEN

Cada país, sea desarrollado o en transición, debe diseñar sus propias políticas para lograr el pleno empleo. Se trata de un término que ayuda a establecer la uniformidad y reducir la incidencia de tratamientos injustos. Sin embargo, no siempre la gestión de las políticas laborales garantiza el desarrollo de este equilibrio y la puesta en marcha de estrategias de desarrollo eficaces. Alcanzar resultados superiores requiere la participación de actores públicos y privados con competencias e intereses diversos que emplean grandes cantidades de trabajadores y atesoran un enorme caudal de talento y creatividad. En lo que respecta a este artículo, se realiza un examen cualitativo, de tipo exploratorio-descriptivo, que permite reflexionar sobre las concepciones teóricas de las políticas laborales y las alianzas público-privadas, estableciendo los nexos entre ellos, en un reacomodo de los esfuerzos para el desarrollo de formas de colaboración. De este modo, se obtiene como principal resultado un vínculo basado en el desarrollo de alianzas entre ambos sectores, el cual va dirigido a innumerables iniciativas para potenciar la gestión pública. En este sentido, se concluye que la articulación entre ellos trasciende una oportunidad para gestionar las políticas laborales, dada la sustentabilidad y compromiso que se generan en ese tipo de alianza, además de asumir responsabilidades diferentes y la condición de ser flexibles, lo que permitiría responder al contexto en que se desarrolla.

Palabras clave: alianzas; gestión; políticas laborales; sector público; sector privado

RESUMO

Cada país, seja desenvolvido ou em transição, deve conceber as suas próprias políticas para alcançar o pleno emprego. Este é um termo que ajuda a estabelecer uniformidade e a reduzir a incidência de tratamentos injustos. No entanto, a gestão das políticas laborais nem sempre garante o desenvolvimento deste equilíbrio e a implementação de estratégias de desenvolvimento eficazes. A obtenção de resultados superiores requer a participação de atores públicos e privados com diversas competências e interesses, que empregam um grande número de trabalhadores e possuem uma riqueza de talento e criatividade. Neste artigo, é efetuada uma revisão qualitativa, exploratória-descritiva, que permite uma reflexão sobre as concepções teóricas das políticas laborais e das parcerias público-privadas, estabelecendo as ligações entre elas, numa reorganização de esforços para o desenvolvimento de formas de colaboração. O principal resultado é uma ligação baseada no desenvolvimento de alianças entre ambos os sectores, que visa inúmeras iniciativas para reforçar a gestão pública. Neste sentido, conclui-se que a articulação entre eles transcende uma oportunidade de gerir políticas laborais, dada a sustentabilidade e o compromisso gerados neste tipo de aliança, para além de assumir diferentes responsabilidades e a condição de ser flexível, o que permitiria uma resposta ao contexto em que se desenvolve.

Palavras-chave: alianças; gestão; políticas laborais; sector público; sector privado

INTRODUCTION

Labor relations are indispensable for the achievement of the objectives set by any nation; they are closely related to public policies, which are designed to achieve national goals of economic growth and social welfare.

The analysis of labor policies includes the great variety of experiences that reflect a diversity of trends, achievements and challenges; An example of this are the scenarios described by a group of authors who envisioned a context where, in the mid-seventies, eighties and nineties, the situation in developing countries faced high levels of unemployment and underemployment, along with rapid population growth and low wage levels, Olesker (2016) focuses his reflection on Latin America where strong processes of opening and deregulation were undertaken, which weakened the national logics that had prevailed until then.

Following the vision of these scenarios, the ILO (International Labor Organization) promoted a series of actions in favor of the review and adoption of political measures for the achievement of the common good and labor justice. Actions that confined evaluations about the reduction of the risk of long-term unemployment and the extension of informal employment, strengthening social protection systems or new measures to assist the most vulnerable, contributing to a culture of social dialogue and the right to union activity, elimination of forced and child labor and the call for international cooperation.

In response, international cooperation today encompasses countless decisions that have been implemented at the global level with different models and methodological instruments towards the formation of public-private alliances, aimed at the generation of new jobs, poverty reduction, social inclusion, etc. However, it is a challenge to understand this type of alliance as a process that requires the sum of multiple actors and variables, with a joint and effective effort, allowing to offer greater opportunities for all.

International development summits and forums have served to theoretically sustain and promote public-private alliances for development (APPD in Spanish). This type of alliance has been installed in the official sphere as one of the ways in which the public and private sectors join together to solve public problems, from specific problems to problems of collective interest in terms of employment and other macroeconomic elements. This article seeks to reflect on the theoretical aspects of labor policies and public-private alliances (APP in Spanish), establishing the links between them through the analysis of the different forms or instruments for achieving the alliances. It can be said that, assuming that APP are a reality in the current context, the aim is to see to what extent these new multi-stakeholder agreements can be transformed into an environment conducive to stimulating and/or managing appropriate labor policies.

In this sense, this work achieves the progress made by research on the rise of public-private alliances, suggesting that little has been done to establish designs or forms of labor policy management based on APP, although they do constitute an opportunity. To this end, we will begin with an analysis of the definitions of labor policies and then

develop the theme of alliances, ending with reflections on the relationship between both themes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analysis started from a systemic conception, with a holistic analysis and the general orientation to conceptualize labor policies and their relationship with public-private alliances.

The classic documentary analysis was used; the exploration started from the identification of labor policies, based on public-private alliances, using the methodology of Milanés Guisado (2015), with inclusion and exclusion criteria. The objective of the search was to identify the fundamental range of different types of published and unpublished documents that represent both historical, conceptual and/or methodological frameworks, experiences and relations of labor policies with public-private alliances.

The combination of the historical and logical method made it possible to determine the evolution of APP, the background of labor policies and the location and collection of documentary sources on the relationship between the two. The procedures used were the analysis and synthesis for the decomposition of the functioning of these elements into their various parts and to establish the links between them.

The dialectical analysis provided the foundation for the new requirements for the management of labor policies based on APP, fundamentally in those localities where the context and real situation impose their application to achieve stability in their functioning and development. The procedure of abstraction is used for the analysis and decomposition of the object of study, as well as induction-deduction to determine generalities and regularities of the process of labor policies based on APP.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Labor policy definitions

The specialized literature consulted shows that most authors and institutions offer indistinct definitions of employment policies and labor policies.

Based on the above distinction, we return to Neffa's (2011) analysis when referring to employment policies in a broad way; this concept distinguishes public sector interventions, leading to changes in the structure and functioning of labor markets in quantitative or qualitative terms.

Based on this, all the instruments of economic policy (foreign trade, exchange, tax credit, by specific sectors, infrastructure), scientific, technological and innovation, social, educational, regional development, health and cultural policies can be mobilized to

generate effects on employment, but with a differentiated weight, according to the areas of public sector intervention.

Lope (2015) refers to active employment policies, aimed at reducing unemployment through the generation of new jobs and focusing on structural macroeconomic causes, and as passive those that solve unemployment by increasing the economically inactive population, providing subsidies and social policies to the unemployed.

In the study of the conceptualization of employment policies and labor policies, it can be inferred that these terms refer, without distinction, to analogous aspects and within which specific actions in the labor field predominate, aimed at improving equity, nuances that incorporate the generation of jobs, reduction in unemployment levels, and increase in the quality and productivity of work.

On the other hand, it is opportune to incorporate other valuable elements such as:

- Its essential determination as part of a political process, where the role of government involves moderating conflicts from power and influence in terms of labor relations.
- The definition of labor policies must have strong corporate relations in economic and social issues through centralized, coordinated and broad-based collective bargaining (they must involve social partners) as well as create a clearer and less conflictive environment for social dialogue.
- They must be adjusted and respond to a context that is coherently integrated by the needs of the environment and the specific circumstances, level and stage of economic development.

In view of the above, labor policies (LP) are defined as the process in which a set of guidelines regulate labor relations for the fulfillment of the reciprocal rights and duties of the parties and which contribute to promoting full, selective, freely chosen and productive employment, adjusted and in response to an integrated context consistent with the fluctuations of the economy and social actors.

Labor policies are not conceived in isolation, but are determined and established by a long list of macroeconomic policies and structural reforms.

Thus, when we speak of labor policies, they are conceived with a multidimensional, integrating, sustainability approach in relation to two basic dimensions: macroeconomic and microeconomic, which contain strategies that contribute to the economic development of a country and to social equality:

- **Macroeconomic dimension:** this is the first level in which labor policies have an impact as part of public policies, specifically in the structure of economic activity; these include economic strategies implemented by the government to promote fundamentally productive employment, supported by international labor standards, sustainable development aimed at ensuring bearable livelihoods, as well as establishing indicators (technical, economic, social and environmental). In this dimension, labor policies are materialized and can be decisions that are stabilized in devices of different nature, some of them as framework legal norms,

indicative state plans and programs, directives, among others (Ayala, 2007 cited by Tapia Góngora, 2012, p. 104).

- Microeconomic dimension: their actions are aimed at other cardinal elements such as the behavior of each economic agent individually to fulfill their own interests; they include strategies supported by national policies, recruitment, selection, training, occupational safety and health and equality, remuneration, collective bargaining, equity and social protection.

Seen in this way, labor policies, as part of public policies, contain strategies that contribute to the economic development of a country, to social equality, by stimulating labor-intensive sectors and providing the workforce with labor skills.

Theoretical conception of public-private alliances for development

Public-private alliances have become policy instruments for solving public problems. Relations and joint work between the public and private sectors are not in themselves new. A little history shows that most of the major development initiatives, launched, have been carried out through concerted efforts between public and private entities.

There are innumerable examples of this type of association being promoted from the international agenda and from the business world. It is a question of finding spaces for agreement in order to work together, generating positive effects.

1. Public-Private Alliances (APP) definitions

It is not easy to establish common characteristics that are valid for all types of public-private alliances that could be identified, since the main feature of this type of agreement is its diversity.

The specialized description of most of the literature refers indistinctly to the conceptualization of public-private alliances and public-private alliances for development (APPD), although there are other authors who do establish the difference according to the objectives, form of agreement, sectors, accountability and corporate social responsibility.

It must be recognized that there are all kinds of relationships between public and private sector institutions and that the purposes, levels of ambition, commitments made, durations, etc., may be radically different so it may be impossible to assume a definition that is valid for all cases. However, it is possible to identify common elements that have gradually distinguished understanding and are listed below:

- Voluntary collaboration between organizations in the public and private sectors.
- Willingness and clear agreement of the parties involved where interests, resources, results, risks and responsibilities are combined.

It incorporates the fact that APP, insofar as they encourage a new way of doing things, can be seen as triggers for innovation in both the public and private spheres (Pliscoff & Araya, 2012).

In this sense, public-private alliances are defined as a voluntary cooperation process between the public and private sectors, based on their competencies and on common interests, where risks, resources and benefits are shared for the management of innovative changes, promoting sustainable development and social welfare.

This concept establishes, among others, two ideas that are fundamental to understanding the approach expressed:

- *Alliances for development as a process of voluntary cooperation between the public and private sectors:* based on the recognition of the need to foster collaboration as a key success factor. It moves from conceiving public sector interventions as medium and long-term strategies that face obstacles on macro and microeconomic fronts, in a society of great challenges, in a complex environment, and where the private sector is integrated and, within its business logic of creating wealth and generating profit, includes the creation of decent employment, invests and innovates, strictly complies with fiscal obligations and other duties derived from the legal framework of the country where it operates, respects and promotes human rights, and produces goods and services within the limits of sustainability.
- *Management of innovative changes, promoting sustainable development and social welfare:* currently, in those countries that are willing to develop, the technological evolution of goods or services and of organization is a priority objective; in order to disseminate these advances, public and private investment efforts and the use of new devices must be made economically and socially profitable in order to act on social coexistence, the integration of social groups, the process of transculturation, different lifestyles, environmental challenges and economic dynamism.

One reason, one could say, to remain under the design of these alliances, is that it provides an opportunity to work more efficiently and effectively on development initiatives, thanks to the recognition of qualities and close intersectoral collaboration.

In this sense, there is an increase in the number of countries that include a definition of APP in their laws, and each one does so in a way that adapts to its institutions and the particularities of its legislation.

2. Ways to achieve the APP

In this section, we visualize approaches to forms of treatment of APP, where active actors integrate transformations in their own scheme to generate social change. To address these schemes, there are references to methodologies, procedures, guides or models; all of which are subject to interests, diverse objectives, levels from which they are managed, structural components, forms of participation and promoting organizations, which demonstrates the heterogeneity in their way of being carried out.

It is not the interest of this work to carry out a scientific-methodological analysis of the different APP instruments, but to approach the relevant aspects and take from them the contextual factors that visualize substantial changes in social development.

This analysis takes into account the accelerated behavior of APP between 2010 and 2014, both in terms of the amount of economic contributions and the number of partners, as well as the offer of cooperation and the increase in the number of countries in Latin America that approved laws and regulatory frameworks for APP.

In this stage, the APP processes proposed by international cooperation organizations and other organizations (Fundación Carolina, Ministry of National Education of Colombia, Fundación Codespa, Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (Aecid and Fundación Cideal) that focus their efforts on responding to development problems are deepened.

The study of these elements allowed us to evaluate the behavior of the research in the field of the management of the APP and some particularities are confirmed, given the already commented variability of this type of agreements. Some studies include proposals that present different sequences of stages or phases, in which it is necessary to carry out a whole series of related tasks and assume certain competencies on the part of the different partners and participants in the alliance.

What represents valid approaches to this work is clear from the following:

- The identification of allies
- The scope of action or development initiatives
- Financing and resource allocation system
- Analysis of the results or evaluation

It includes the proposal to deepen in aspects such as:

- Although elements of socialization of results of the alliances are addressed, it is important to encourage the need for internal and external communication as a strategy, which facilitates the relations between the partner entities, increasing the appropriation of the effects generated by the APP and the dissemination of the development improvements obtained with a dynamic effect for other actors in the same field of action.
- Although training elements are addressed in productive aspects and for capacity building, knowledge must be managed as a fundamental element for the development of the alliances.

The assessments made so far lead to a much more arduous analysis since it requires a realignment of government efforts to capture the needs of public and private organizations that employ workers, develop and market goods and services, and accumulate human talent and creativity.

Relationship between Labor Policies and APP

Vergara Saavedra, Araya Orellana, Donoso Zamorano and Fuster Farfán (2016) highlight the establishment of APP as efficient and effective instruments in the resolution of public problems. On the other hand, Freigedo, Fuentes and Milanese (2015) see them as opportunities for the state to implement public policies that promote strategic lines of development.

Assuming that the origins of an APP can be very varied, the experiences visualize APP as an innovative alternative that promotes the development of public policies related to: education, health, agribusiness, infrastructure, inclusive supply chain, citizen security, development strategies, fight against poverty and labor integration of people at risk of exclusion. These last two have a particularly interesting perspective on the relationship between labor policies and public-private alliances.

In the study of the specialized literature, it was not possible to find the answers to designs or programs of labor policies based on APP, but an analysis that originates in the descriptive elements of labor policies when it addresses that these contain strategies that contribute to the economic development of a country, to social equality, to promoting full employment and reducing poverty, etc.

They also join the thinking of Chávez, Cuamatzin and Morales (2018) when they propose the APP as an official argument where they visualize collaboration as an alternative of modernization and possibility of investment that drives the generation of employment; on the other hand, they suggest ways to broaden success based on changes in the labor perceptions dedicated to development, particularly if it is expected to produce more equitable and sustainable growth patterns.

In order to understand a little more the relationship between APP and LP, it is pertinent to mention the path through which labor policies travel from their formulation, as part of the operation in one of the important variables of the macroeconomy, to the way they are implemented in harmony with the evolution of economic strategies from the different levels of public administration.

To do this, we start with the analysis of the management of Zamora's LP (1990), which considers it as a process that takes shape in specific proposals and policies aimed at addressing the interests and demands of the working class with expressions of a legal, economic, political, ideological and cultural nature that cover legal, salary, training and employment, security, welfare, etc.

Ruiz Viñals (2004) reviews the operating cycle of labor policy management as part of public policies from the formulation, implementation and evaluation. Following this logic, the term cycle is taken as an effective consideration in the LP management process, where the role and functions of the government are to formulate, implement and evaluate them; the fact that each of these functions must be implemented, flexible and respond to the context in which they are developed is incorporated.

Contexts in which the experience of recent years shows a tendency to transfer important functions from the central administration to other administrative levels for the implementation of macroeconomic policies, and in which the diversity of experiences, based on APP, clarifies unlimited opportunities in the areas of socioeconomic development and the labor field.

The levels of public administration, referred to above, have their most concrete expression in municipal development and it is precisely in this framework where special interest is required, since it is considered the most fertile ground where APP can be born

and grow with good performance, since conditions such as: trust between partners, operational proximity, interest and commitment to achieving results prevail.

With this in mind, labor policies, as part of public policies, can find an alternative in APP, so that the government can conceive new dynamics that can respond to fundamentally productive employment, sustainable development, aimed at ensuring sustainable livelihoods with social participants and aligned with economic strategies.

Labor policies are not conceived in isolation, but rather integrate corporate relations and strategies on economic and social issues that must be adjusted and respond to a context integrated coherently by the needs of the environment, so it is conceived with a multidimensional and integrative approach in relation to macro and microeconomics.

Public-private alliances are seen as a way to solve public problems, and they also enhance the success of those involved, providing an opportunity to work more efficiently and effectively in development initiatives.

The knowledge to understand the materialization of labor policies, based on APP, does not describe a formula or direct experiences in this sense, but it does favor the possibility of articulation between them as an alternative to development, taking into account the situations and circumstances of the environment since these can respond to very varied criteria such as public and private institutional culture that bets on investment in human capital, social equality, promoting full employment and reducing poverty.

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Conflict of interest:

Authors declare not to have any conflict of interest.

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The authors have participated in the writing of the paper and the analysis of the documents.



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