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In this paper we present the results of the content analysis of the evaluation policies of some bilateral and multilateral agencies of international cooperation for development. The initial purpose of this work was to feed the construction of the current Policy of Evaluation of the Spanish Cooperation. Its publication aims to share this work and provide some information about the trends in policy evaluation.

The paper begins presenting the theoretical and conceptual framework used to analyze the policy documents and evaluation guidelines. Then, we present the content analysis of the different evaluation policies analyzed, including the Policy of Evaluation of the Spanish Cooperation. The document ends with a few conclusions that point out some major trends that guide the evaluation policies in international development cooperation today.

The different dimensions of the analysis were grouped in four areas: institutional framework, concept, methodological approach and usefulness. This concentration in conceptual blocks helped to reveal a set of common concerns in the policy documents and to identify certain tendencies.

During the initial work to identify policy documents, we could observe that lately, many development agencies and organizations have undertaken a review of its evaluation policies. This might be triggered by a favorable environment towards the evaluation of public policies in general, and the evaluation of development cooperation in particular. This momentum is used by the

institutions, to enhance and improve the practice of evaluation through the renewal of their strategic documents.

We could also observe that the policies reflected a progressive incorporation of the diverse actors of the evaluation in increasingly participatory processes. This enrichment entails, however, a greater effort of coordination and clarification of roles and responsibilities. This is often adequately accompanied by lines of action to increase the capacity of the different actors.

Another element that emerges from the analysis is a conceptual concern about what is, what is not, and what a policy evaluation should serve for. In this regard, it is noted how the evaluation units operate as drivers for a change, supported by strong evaluation policies. This conceptual concern is encountered by a procedural and methodological reflection, where there is a progressive diversification in the epistemological and methodological approaches of evaluation. There has also been a clear commitment to implement tools to ensure the quality of the evaluation, and the rigor and soundness of the conclusions.

It is noteworthy as well the attention paid in all the analyzed policies to link evaluation results and the evidence needed for decisions making. We have also observed an increasing role of the communication initiatives and quality and diversity of the deliverables. Finally, and to close effectively the evaluation cycle, we found a unanimous and solid role of the management responses as the way to operationalize the recommendations made in the evaluations.

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