Webinar on Meta-evaluation Approaches to Improve Evaluation Practice

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Meta-evaluation: the concept

- **Michael Scriven, “Thesaurus of Evaluation”:**
  “The evaluation of evaluations - indirectly, the evaluation of evaluators- represents both an ethical and scientific obligation when the wellbeing of others is at stake”.

- **Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation:**
  1994. Standard A12 Metaevaluation: “The evaluation itself should be formatively and summatively evaluated against these and other pertinent standards, so that its conduct is appropriately guided and, on completion, stakeholders can closely examine its strengths and weaknesses”.
  
  2011. Standards E2 Internal Metaevaluation & E3 External Metaevaluation

- **Michael Q. Patton:**
  “The evaluation of the evaluation based on a series of norms and professional principles”.

- **Cooksky & Caracelli:**
  “Systematic reviews of evaluations to determine the quality of their processes and results”.
What are other meta-evaluative approaches?

There has been more focus on evaluation synthesis methodologies around evaluation results (Olsen & O’Reilly, 2011).

**Evaluation synthesis**  
*synthesis evaluation*  
Summarizing evaluation results

**Systematic review**  
Use of a rigorous peer-review protocol to summarize evidence around a research question

**Meta-evaluation**  
Evaluation of evaluations (their designs, processes, results and utilization)

**Narrative/Research review**  
Descriptive account for summarizing findings

**Meta-analysis**  
Statistical procedure for comparing findings of quantitative evaluations

Source: modified from (Olsen & O’Reilly, 2011).
It is important to distinguish between two very different exercises:

**EVALUATION SYNTHESIS**

Synthesizing evaluation RESULTS (from which meta-analysis is a type)

The focus is on interventions and policies

**METAEVALUATION**

Evaluation of evaluation PROCESSES (how evaluation is conceived, done and used)

The focus is on the evaluation of those interventions and policies

1. **Quality control of evaluations:**

   “¿Who evaluates the evaluator?” (Scriven).

   It is related to the control of the bias of the evaluator and to ensure the credibility of evaluations.

2. **Comparative analysis of the evaluation function in various countries (Rist, 1990, Ballart, 1993 and Derlien, 1998)**

   More than focusing on the quality of the studied evaluations, it does it on their contribution to the development of that evaluation function in a policy field, an organization, institution or political system.

https://www.collaborationprimer.ca/evaluation/
MEv functions (II)

3. Choice of which evaluation results can be synthesized

The knowledge about the quality of evaluations that MEv generates can be used to help in the decision making about what studies to be included in evaluation synthesis.

4. Identification of evaluation training needs

The MEv of multiple studies help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluative practice in order to develop evaluation capacity programmes.
Types of MEv

ACCORDING TO THE ROLE OF THE META-EVALUATION

Formative: MEv used as an instrument for improving and changing the ongoing evaluation design and implementation, for improving the ongoing evaluation design, for illuminating and control for bias in evaluation.

Summative: its role is the recapitulation of completed evaluation efforts, in order to assess the quality, impact or utilization of evaluation work. The main purpose is focused on accountability.

Ascriptive: MEv is done for research purposes. In this case, MEv is conducted simply to enlarge or refine our body of evaluative knowledge, for benefit to the discipline, for the sake of the knowledge gained, not just for the specific evaluation under scrutiny (Scriven, 2012).


https://usabilitygeek.com
Types of MEv

ACCORDING TO THE MOMENT OF THE META-EVALUATION

*Ex-ante (provaluation):* MEv is carried out before the evaluation process is implemented.

*Ex-postfacto (retrovaluation):* MEv is carried out when the evaluation is already done.

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<th>Planning</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>Implementation phase</th>
<th>End</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-ante Assessment</td>
<td>Ex-ante Evaluation</td>
<td>Accompanying Evaluation</td>
<td>Ex-post Assessment</td>
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<td>Impact Assessment</td>
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ACCORDING TO THE AGENT WHO META-EVALUATES

*Internal:* MEv carried out by the evaluators themselves, as an internal control (auto-MEv).

*External:* Done by someone not involved in the assessed evaluation process, being an external control.

Source: adapted from Buselo, 2001; Bustelo, 2002; Stufflebeam, 1974 & 2001; Cooksy & Caracelli, 2005; Scriven, 20011; Yarbrough et al, 2011.
ACCORDING TO THE CONTENT OR EVALUATION PHASE META-EVALUATED

**Design MEv:** Focused on the plan, structure of an evaluation study (conception, rationale, purpose, objectives, context adequacy, internal coherence, scope, stakeholders’ identification, the expectancy of usefulness and utility of evaluation). Contract agreements such as Terms of Reference can inform about the design evaluation.

**Process MEv:** Focused on the implementation of the evaluation, how the study is carried out (implementation strategies including effective stakeholders’ involvement, procedures to ensure quality control of evaluation, realism of the calendar and cost-effectiveness, difficulties in the implementation, consideration of ethical issues).

**Results MEv:** Focused on the quality of findings and information produced by the evaluation study (justification of epistemological and methodological choices, quality and completeness of findings, interpretations, judgments and recommendations, and their inclusion in evaluation documents).

**Utilization MEv:** Focused on the potential effects of the evaluation, including aiding decision making and facilitating organizational learning (actionable recommendations, timely dissemination of results to previously identified stakeholders).

Source: adapted from Buselo, 2001; Bustelo, 2002; Stufflebeam, 1974 & 2001; Cooksy & Caracelli, 2005; Scriven, 20011; Yarbrough et al, 2011.
First example: MEv of gender policies in Spain

- **Unity of analysis:** eleven gender equality plans (evaluated or not), discourse analysis about evaluation of the national agencies executing the gender plans.

**Meta-evaluation criteria (analysis dimensions)**

| 1. Evaluation planning and evaluative strategies | - Responsiveness to their context  
- Clarity of the evaluation objectives  
- Institutional structures for the evaluation  
- Different types of evaluations used  
- Resources used in evaluations |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2. Key elements of the evaluations                 | - Stakeholders involved in the evaluation processes  
- Moment and timing of the evaluation  
- Evaluation criteria and indicators  
- Procedures and tools for data collection and analysis |
| 3. Utilization and impact of evaluations           | - Adequacy and usefulness of the produced information  
- Communication and dissemination of evaluation results  
- Impact of the evaluation in policies and organizations |
The logic of those evaluation questions and for judging the evaluation processes was built around six main criteria:

1. The centrality of the evaluation process in the institution conducting the evaluation;
2. Responsiveness of the evaluation to the plan or policy context and clarity (explicit) of the evaluation purposes;
3. Clarity and centrality of evaluation criteria (of what is evaluated). The techniques for data collection and analysis should be chosen after the evaluation criteria are defined, and not vice versa;
4. Adequate management of evaluation resources, including (i) a good use of the different types of evaluation, (ii) the existence of adequate co-ordination structures which allow a reliable and collaborative information gathering, (iii) a good management of times and timetables, (iv) enough resources investment in evaluation;
5. Enough elaboration of the gathered information during the evaluation processes (systematic judgment of the information in the light of the evaluation criteria previously set);
6. The existence of good communication and dissemination processes of the evaluation results and reports
It is necessary to distinguish between:

- **Evaluation of gender policies**
  As a policy tool, the evaluation might be especially fruitful for capturing the important changes and shifts on gender policies, for improving them, as well as for answering to what extent these policies are successful. As an integral part of the intervention, evaluation might guide developments, further needs and new areas for development.

- **Evaluation from a gender perspective**
  As part of the policy making process, and following the aim of the gender mainstreaming strategy, evaluation is an important part to be conducted under a gender perspective, with a gender lens.
Gender Responsive (Meta)evaluation

How gender is included in the different evaluation phases?

Phase 1. Commission of an evaluation: Terms of Reference (ToR)

a. Definition of ToR:
   - Inclusion of gender content in the ToR: requirement of sex & gender analysis
   - Inclusion of gender expertise in evaluation team

Phase 2. Evaluation Design & implementation

b. Selection of the evaluation approach and the evaluation questions:
   - Inclusion of evaluation questions which tackle a gender dimension and ask about how differently an intervention can impact women and men.

c. Methodological design:
   - Epistemological approach, Mixed-methods, inclusion of sex & gender analysis.

d. Field work:
   - Gender-sensitive communication & ways of approaching and gathering info.
   - Women & Men in evaluation teams.

e. Evaluation report & communication:
   - Gender-sensitive conclusions and recommendations

Phase 3. Dissemination and use

f. Conclusions & recommendations dissemination
   - Gender-sensitive dissemination, reaching both women & men strategic needs.

g. Information management for use and incidence:
   - Fostering learning and accountability on gender issues.
Second example: MEv of 40 evaluations in Senegal

**Twelve MEv criteria covering evaluations design – process - results-utilization, with associated dimensions and rubrics**

- Analyze completeness of documentation, discard reports if needed.
- Decide relevance of dimensions, merge if needed.

Identify purpose and type of MEv:
- Theoretical function; ascriptive, summative, exposi, external MEv.

Choice of MEv criteria and questions:
- Test in 16 reports and develop quality dimensions and rubrics.

Review of academic MEv literature:
- Analysis of actual practice of 23 MEv aid devt.eval

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name of the Meta-evaluation (or similar) analysed</th>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>The CGIAR at 31: An Independent Meta-Evaluation of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (Ingram, Fostved, &amp; Lele, 2003a); (Ingram, Fostved, &amp; Lele, 2003b); (Lele, Barrett, Eicher, &amp; Gardner, 2003)</td>
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<td>Meta-Evaluation of research studies, evaluations and reviews conducted by the UNICEF Pacific Office during programme cycle 2003-2007 (Baba, 2007)</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Are SIDA Evaluations Good Enough? An Assessment of 34 Evaluation Reports (Forss et al., 2008)</td>
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<td>Evaluation in German Development Cooperation – A System Analysis (BMZ, 2009)</td>
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<td>UNIFEM Global Meta-Evaluation (Ljungman, 2010)</td>
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<td>Independent External Evaluation of the International Labor Office Evaluation Function. (Mathison, Williams, Arora, &amp; Sutherland, 2010)</td>
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<td>Performance of (Asian Development Bank) ADB Assistance to Agriculture and Natural Resources—Evidence from Post-Completion Evaluations. (ADB, 2010)</td>
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<td>Meta-review of AusAid education sector evaluations (Shah &amp; Patch, 2011)</td>
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<td>A Meta-Evaluation of Foreign Assistance Evaluations of USAID (Eriksson, 2011)</td>
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<td>Decent work results and effectiveness of ILO operations: A meta-analysis of project evaluations, 2009-2010. (C. Henry, Engerhardt, &amp; Standa, 2011)</td>
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<td>Meta-Evaluation of GEF climate mitigation evaluations (Worlen, 2011)</td>
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<td>UNICEF Quality Review of 2010 Evaluation Reports (Barnes, Dinsmore, &amp; Watson, 2011)</td>
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Evaluation standards, checklists and guidelines used in the MEv

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards and checklists</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Joint Committee on Standards Programme Evaluation Standards (PES) (Yarborough et al., 2011)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Programme Evaluations Meta-evaluation checklist (PEC-MEC), (Stufflebeam, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Key Evaluation checklist (KEC), (Scriven, 2012)</td>
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<td>5. Key Aid Evaluation Checklist (KAEC), (Ryoh, 2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Meta-Evaluation Checklist (MEC), (Scriven, 2011)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Context, Input, Process and product (CIPP), (Stufflebeam, 2007)</td>
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<th>Practitioner-oriented norms, standards and criteria</th>
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<td>8. Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) criteria for evaluating development assistance (DAC-OECD), (DAC-OECD, 2010)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. United Nations Evaluation Group quality checklists for ToR and inception reports (UNEG-2), (UNEG, 2010c)</td>
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<td>11. United Nations Evaluation Group quality checklists for evaluation reports (UNEG-3), (UNEG, 2010b)</td>
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<th>Guidance for evaluators and evaluators' competencies</th>
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<th>Sustainable development assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td>15. Guidelines for the Practical Assessment of Progress towards Sustainable Development (Bellagio principles), (Pintér et al., 2012)</td>
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EVALUATION UTILIZATION

General information

- Channels of communication of evaluation findings:
  - General workshops
  - Separate workshop by stakeholder type
  - E-distribution of report
  - Report on a website
  - Report on a library in country

Meta-evaluation

11 Sufficient level of actionability of recommendations

- How good and targeted recommendations are to ease their potential uptake
  - Well-targeted
  - Not well-targeted

- Clarity of information about follow-up mechanism of recommendations’ implementation
  - Clearly mentioned
  - Not mentioned

12 Adequacy of dissemination of evaluation findings

- Clarity of channels of communication of findings:
  - Clearly described
  - Not clear/mentioned

- Level of accessibility of evaluation report:
  - Easy
  - Not easy
Conclusions about the usefulness of MEv

- MEv can be useful for the improvement and development of the evaluation function in many settings, especially in settings with limited evaluation culture and low level of evaluation institutionalization;

- The use of standards, guidelines and professional competencies of the evaluation discipline can guide the critical reflection about a set of real-world evaluations, surpassing the narrow conception of evaluation quality;

- The review of evaluation reports need to be complemented with interviews in order to grasp dimensions related to evaluation utilization and to better understand the constraints of real-world evaluation processes (evaluation design vs. real delivery, responsiveness to information needs of different audiences, etc);

- Following the trends of evaluation professionalization, research whose object of study is the evaluation function can help to the improvement of its usefulness to public policy making and development effectiveness.
Some bibliographic resources


Some bibliographic resources (IV)


Some bibliographic resources (V)


https://www.slideshare.net/DawitWolde/meta-evaluation-and-evaluation-disseminationmanual-3

https://www.slideshare.net/davidpassmore/metaevaluation-theory

https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247262


https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/strengthening-accountability-in-aid-for-trade/the-oecd-meta-evaluation-overview-of-evaluations_9789264123212-8-en#page1
Dear members,

Following EvalForward’s recent online discussion, we would like to invite you to a webinar on the use of evaluation synthesis and meta-analysis in evaluation. Based on the experience of different agencies in using this approach, participants will discuss the on how to improve the quality and use of synthesis and meta-analysis in development evaluations and learn about their potential application in different development interventions.

WEDNESDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2019  
15:30 - 16:30 Central Europe Time

Speakers: Carlos Tarazona - FAO, Thania de la Garza - CONEVAL, Andrew Fyfe - UNCDF, Tina Tordjman-Nebe - UNICEF.

If you are interested in participating, please contact luca.furio@fao.org and we will send you further information and instructions on how to connect.

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To know more about synthesis and meta-analysis in development evaluation:

https://www.evalforward.org/events/webinar-use-synthesis-and-meta-analysis-development-evaluation
Thank you, merci, gracias!

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