




Evaluability: A wider perspective and key aspects

Vladimír Kváča
*Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs,
Czech Republic*
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What do I understand by Evaluability

Evaluation should in the end contribute to designing and implementing better policies (programmes, projects).

Evaluability is a quality of public administration that enables such a learning process.

This concerns three main aspects:

- The whole system of management of public policies (are the policy-makers able to use evaluation in their work?) – Issue of evaluative culture.
- The way the policies are formulated (are the policies clear enough to be evaluated?) – Issue of formulation of goals.
- The evaluation itself (is evaluation done properly?) – Issue of evaluation quality.

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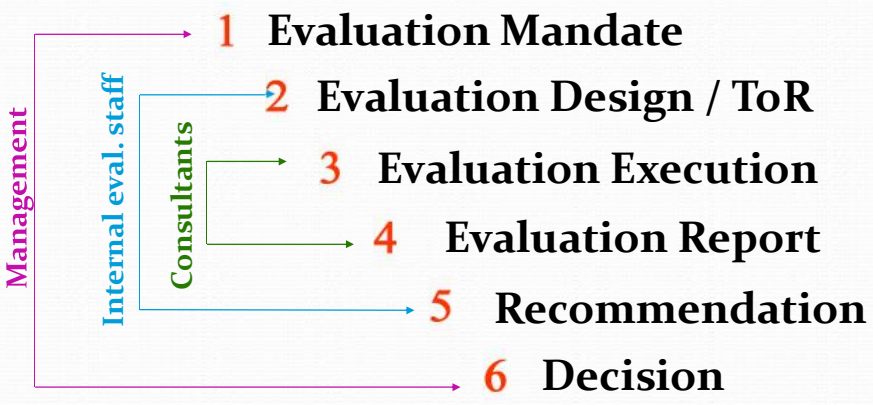
Evaluative culture

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Our experience of capacity building in evaluation




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graph LR
    subgraph Management
        M1[1 Evaluation Mandate]
        M6[6 Decision]
    end
    subgraph Internal_eval_staff
        I2[2 Evaluation Design / ToR]
        I5[5 Recommendation]
    end
    subgraph Consultants
        C3[3 Evaluation Execution]
        C4[4 Evaluation Report]
    end
    M1 --> I2
    I2 --> C3
    C3 --> C4
    C4 --> I5
    I5 --> M6
  
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Unless it is the management who asks (evaluation) questions about the policies and who impatiently waits for answers, the positive influence of evaluations is limited.

=> Capacity building in evaluation is important at all levels – the (external) consultants, the (internal) evaluation officers and at management level as well.

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Formulation of goals

Goals and indicators used for measuring them

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- In order to have evaluable policy (or programme in example that follows), clear expression of goals is important.
- However, the top level of public administration (politics) tends to set vague and unclear goals as a result of political consensus.

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Goals of the operational programmes and their measurement

- There are high level political targets for cohesion policy set up at the European (Europe 2020) level. These targets are „macroeconomic“ (like 75% employment rate).
- But these variables (employment rate) frequently depend on many factors, which are out of control or influence of cohesion policy.
- There is also evident effort to be more oriented on measurable results of operational programmes.
- **So, how can be the targets of operational programmes set?**
- **For which targets the management authorities can be fairly held responsible?**
- **Key concepts:**
 - Theory of change / intervention logic
 - Targets
 - Indicators

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Barca's five lessons of present period

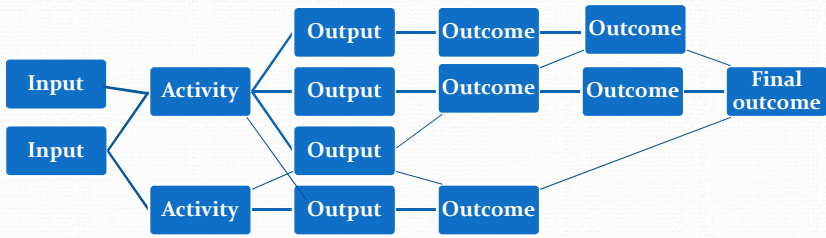
1. The concepts of input, output, outcome/result and impact not being clearly distinguished.
2. Indicators being assigned a marginal ("technical") role in programming documents, their selection being postponed until after the approval of the documents.
3. No standards or methodological principles for indicators being set and monitored by the external agency in charge for the development grants.
4. Context indicators – dashboard/scoreboards of indicators aimed at describing the overall national or regional context and at detecting strengths and weaknesses – being confused with outcome indicators, aimed at capturing the dimensions of well-being on which policy can reasonably claim to have an effect.
5. The achievement (failure) to achieve targets being confused with policy achievement (failure), as if no factors other than policy were at work.

Barca, F.: Outcome Indicators and Targets
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Theory of change

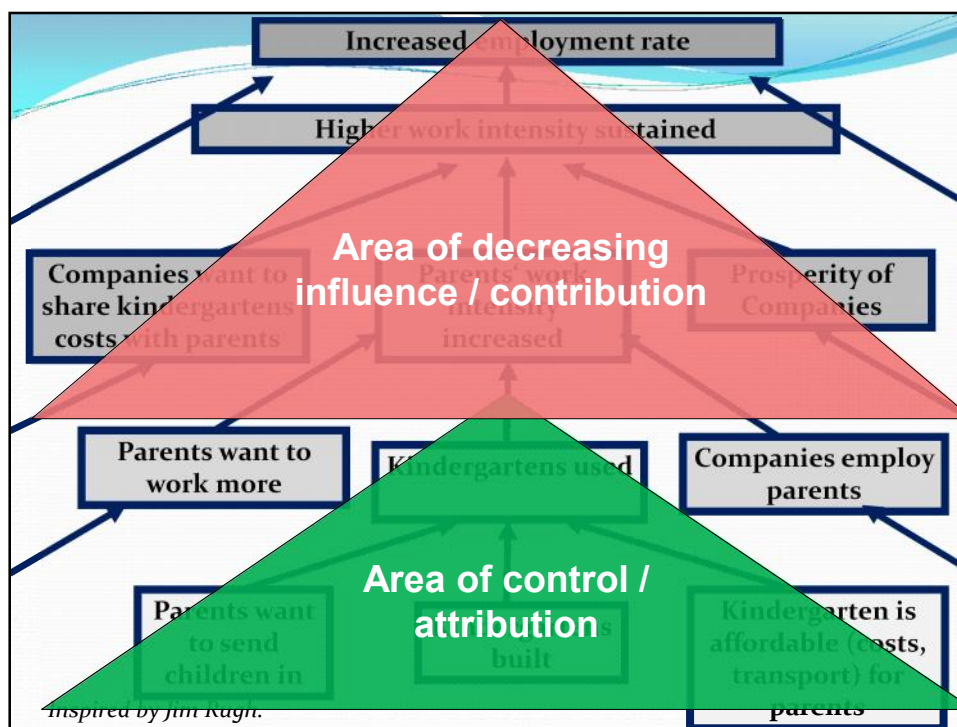
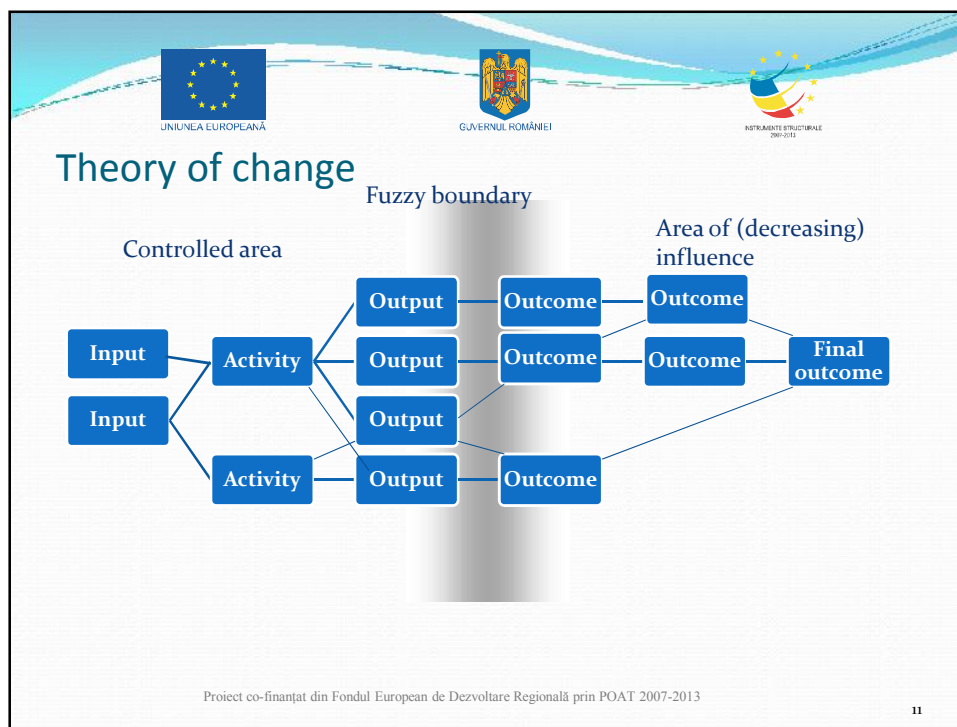


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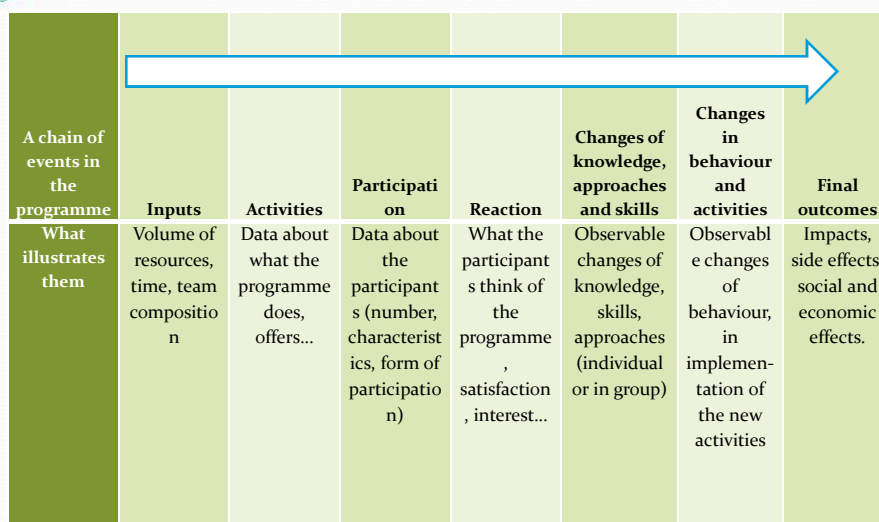
graph LR
    Input1[Input] --> Activity1[Activity]
    Input2[Input] --> Activity2[Activity]
    Activity1 --> Output1[Output]
    Activity1 --> Output2[Output]
    Activity1 --> Output3[Output]
    Activity2 --> Output4[Output]
    Output1 --> Outcome1[Outcome]
    Output2 --> Outcome1
    Output3 --> Outcome1
    Output4 --> Outcome2[Outcome]
    Outcome1 --> Outcome3[Outcome]
    Outcome2 --> Outcome3
    Outcome3 --> FinalOutcome[Final outcome]
  
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Generally:

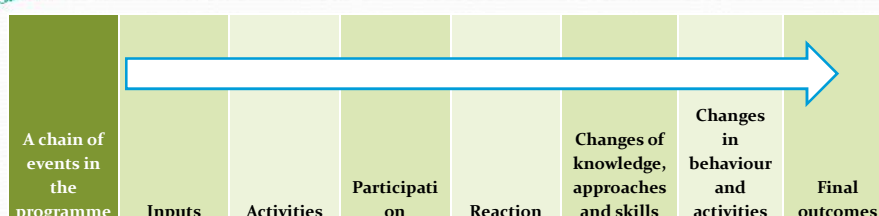


Source: according to Michael Q. Patton

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Implementation vs. Response to the implementation



Implementation of the programme

If this area is OK, we are doing the things right.

Response to the implementation of the programme

If this area is OK, we are doing the right things.

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	Controlled area	Area of influence
Programme influence	Inputs, activities and outputs are fully controlled by the programme „Attribution“ Everything within the controlled area happens only due to the programme	Outcomes (on several levels) are out of control of the programme, often also out of significant influence. „Contribution“ Programme must have a credible theory of change/intervention logic so that the activities of the programme persuasively positively contribute to the final political targets
Political goals	Usually there are not top political goals here	Usually there are top political goals here
Causality	Preceding level is sufficient condition of the effect on the following level	Preceding level is not sufficient condition but should be necessary condition of the effect on the following level

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	Controlled area	Area of influence
Managerial tools	Monitoring , process oriented evaluation	Impact evaluation , monitoring of context indicators (of outer environment)
Responsibility	For mistakes (that means activities are not executed, outputs are generally not achieved)	For repeating mistakes (outer environment does not react according to the assumptions, outcomes do not appear => it is necessary to revise theory of change)
Sanctions possible for	Not meeting the monitoring indicators targets at output level.	Not taking into account of evaluation findings when modifying actions. Repetition of things that do not work.

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Targets

- Programme can have only such targets that can be attributable to it.
- Ideally in the controlled area and on the border line with area of influence.
- Targets that are too far in area of influence are unfair, because the programme cannot influence them. Such targets cannot be used for management.
- In case that the targets are only on activity and output level there is a danger of right doing the wrong things.


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Indicators

- In ideal case the indicator measures precisely the target (purpose of the intervention).
- Frequently, in case of lack of expertise or difficulty of measurement of phenomenon in question, proxy indicators are used.
- Strong correlation between proxy indicator and real goal of the intervention is presumed.
- E.g. education is measured by the variable asking whether a person has or has not obtained a certificate (like high school diploma).
- Usually this connection is logical and applicable – educated people have a diploma, because they attended a relevant school, where they have studied, fulfilled all conditions and all this effort was finally crowned by getting the diploma as a symbolic act.

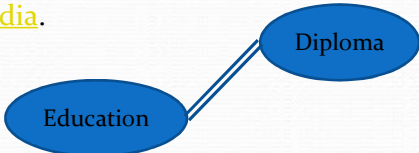


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Problem of proxy indicators

- There is a problem with using the proxy indicators: If the proxy indicator is used for setting of the target, presumed correlation disappears.
- The school is remunerated for the number of diplomas granted, which leads to the effort to grant as much diplomas as possible which often means decreased requirement on students...
- The result is a perverse incentive followed by undesirable behaviour (decreased quality of education).
- See [„Goodhart's law“ at wikipedia](#).



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Proxy indicators – how to resolve the problem

- The best way is to avoid to use proxy indicators.
- Alternatively it is usable to anticipate potential undesirable behaviour and eliminate it by another indicator (often using a combination quantity and quality indicators).
- As a result we have a system of indicators for one goal.
- It is impossible to judge a quality of the proxy indicator separately, but only in context of relevant set of indicators.

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How to set indicators of an OP?

- Take the political targets on the highest level (final outcomes, like Europe 2020) as given.
- Describe the programme theories of change (on the basis of the knowledge of the causes of the problems to solve) that credibly contribute to given final outcomes.
- Put the indicators into the theory of change. In controlled area and on the boundary indicators could be used as quantified targets, in the area of influence **only as context indicators**.
- Target doesn't have to be totally precise, a value range is suitable. Always it should be clear what is normatively required value, value range or direction of change.
- Target can also be qualitative, e.g. creation of system that fulfils concrete parameters.

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Problems to be solved

- The results-based approach doesn't mean only measuring whether quantitative targets were met. This would lead to just-meeting-the-figures performance.
- There is a challenge in adding mechanisms which would be able to modify the quantitative targets depending on a development of outer environment (depending on context indicators?).
- That means there is a challenge of introducing flexibility into operational programmes and keeping responsibility for targets at the same time.
- Evaluation has a key role here.

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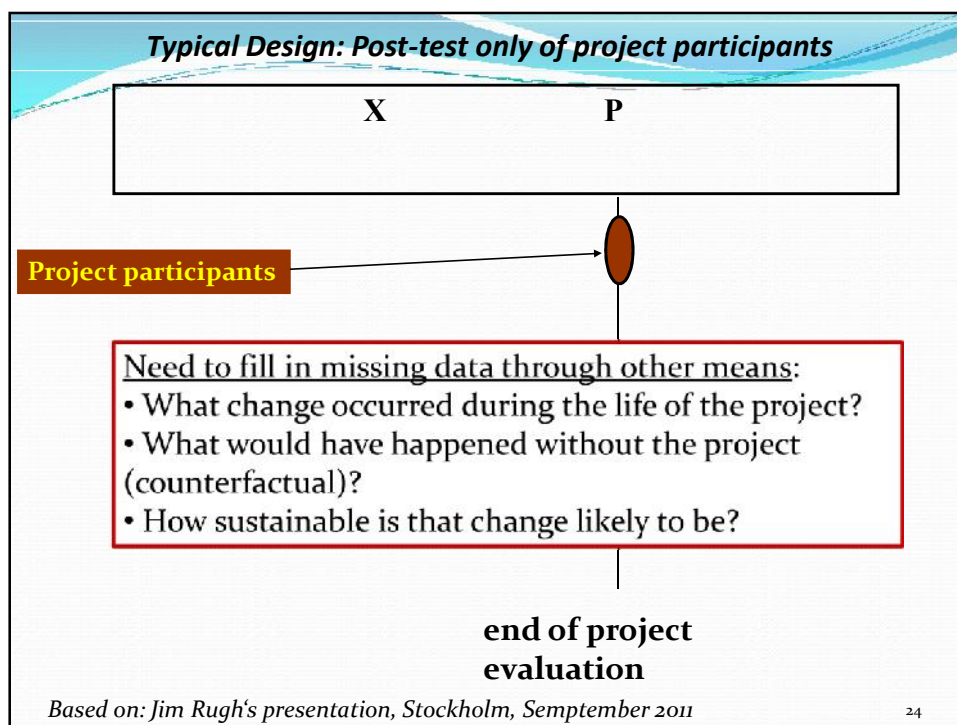
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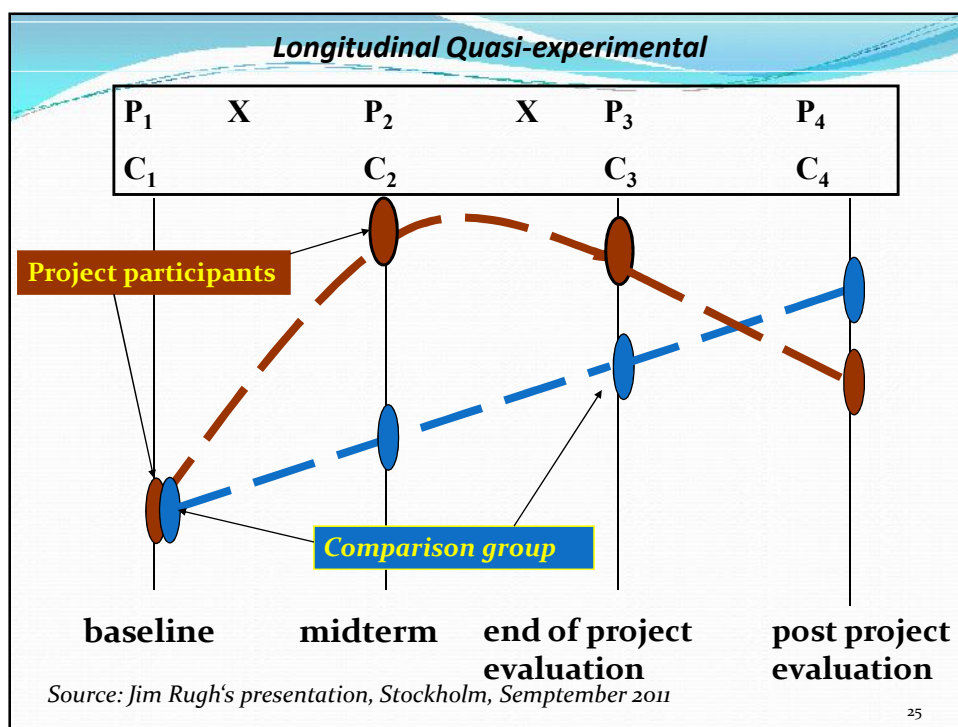





Evaluation quality

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- Go for a better design than „one group post-test only“.
- Evaluation design should be known before the operation starts, incl. draft of evaluation question. This requires monitoring system to be adjusted to evaluation needs and to be able to collect baseline data.
- From current practices it is obvious that large parts of evaluation budgets are spent on re-doing insufficient or not well planned monitoring – this takes money and time.

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- Evaluation should be regarded as one of the main instrument to allow necessary responsible flexibility in OP execution / planning.
- Monitoring and a system of indicator-based targets answers the question „are we doing the things right“?
- Evaluation should periodically check if „we are doing the right things“ – do the originally expressed assumptions still hold? Are the programme goals still relevant? Are the targets/indicators free of perverse incentives? What change is caused by us?

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Thank you for your attention

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