Using Pragmatic Principles to Structure Impact Evaluation

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My Front Door
Evaluating the Impact of KSP Program

Specific intervention Implemented

Specific Intervention Plan

KSP Program

Outcome 3
Benefits to citizens

Outcome 2
Plan finalised

Outcome 1
Commitment to Intervention

What does KDI want to know about KSP?
e.g.: Is the KSP a valuable program?
Impact Evaluation (IE) is a major Form of evaluation practice\(^1\). Purpose is to discover:

- nature/extent of outcomes
- factors affecting outcomes (causality), and
- judgment: *is this a program of worth?*

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Impact Evaluation (IE)

IE relevant across most substantive areas of action (international development [ID], education, health, criminology, etc).

This presentation draws from experiences across jurisdictions.
Impact Evaluation (IE)

However, IE practice can be difficult and costly. Commissioners should be selective about the use of IE in terms of value for money.
Impact Evaluation (IE)

Quality and strength of Intervention determines ultimate outcomes.

More likely that long-term effects will occur if intervention has:

- a well developed theory of change (e.g. reduction in AIDS infections in Australia), and is

- Continuous, e.g. reduction in road toll in Victoria, Australia, (reduction from 1064 to 230 over a 40 year period).
Evaluation Plan essential for all studies: Plan must include:

- Evaluation purpose
- Program description
- Key questions
- Study design
  - Methodologies and Methods
- Reporting/Dissemination

“Designing an Evaluation Plan is a work of Art” (Cronbach)
Key Questions

Design

Methodologies  Methods

Findings
Generic Evaluation Questions

• What are the (intended and unintended) effects of this intervention?
• Has the program been implemented as planned?
• What aspects of implementation has influenced these outcomes?

Methodologies and Methods

Mixed designs most appropriate to answer evaluation questions.
## Major Methodologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches</th>
<th>Specific Variants</th>
<th>Basis for Causal Inference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
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<td>Statistical</td>
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<td>Theory-based</td>
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<td>approaches</td>
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<td>Participatory</td>
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<td>Synthesis studies</td>
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Example: Linking Questions and Methodologies: 
*The Indonesian Child Survival Evaluation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are the activities being implemented?</td>
<td>Qualitative document analysis and interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are the impacts on infant and child mortality?</td>
<td>Quasi-experimental comparative pre- and post-analysis in districts with and without programs, for diseases targeted and not targeted by the interventions, using local area data from hospital records.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 shows range of methods, literature strong on mixed-method designs. But little discussion of evaluation theory to strengthen mixed-method approaches.
Pragmatic Principles in Impact Evaluation:

Pragmatism: concerned with practical consequences or values: truth and action are to be judged by practical consequences: valuing of something that works.

Principles to Evaluation Action:

• While there are philosophical differences between paradigms of enquiry, the methods that each paradigm encourage can be mixed and matched to achieve the combination for a given enquiry.

• What is most important and what should drive all methodological decisions are the practical demands of a given study.

• Given the complexity of many evaluation problems what will work best is a combination of different methods.
An Evaluation Design consistent with Pragmatic Principles is:

- Responsive, in terms of knowledge of the context and the information needs of stakeholders
- Consequential, in terms of being able to be implemented given limitations set by resources, and
- Practical, in terms of recognising the evaluator’s experience of what does and does not work.
Using Pragmatic Principles in Impact Evaluation

Principles can be presented as a set of decisions in the design phase:

• Are the salient questions answerable?

• Can we develop methodological strategies for these questions, given restraints due to factors such as:
  – resources,
  – time and timing of the study,
  – available information sources, and
  – evaluator skills?

• Can we implement this design?

• Are the findings usable?
Using Pragmatic Principles in Impact Evaluation

Choice Scenarios:

• [1] **Compromise**: a mono-method is desirable but not possible for contextual reasons, but a mixed-method design will be good enough.

• [2] **Better than**: a mixed-method design is the only way to go.
Indonesia Child Survival Evaluation: Reflections

Design and implementation:

• commissioned after previous evaluation was unproductive

• new evaluation team: 12 person weeks for the study (four evaluators)

• selected set of designs and measures: (i) clear to all stakeholders (ii) weaknesses of one data collection approach offset by strengths in another (iii) for which information was readily available from recipients and providers under new program and old program

• findings presented as ranges (uncertainties) rather than precise averages
Indonesia Child Survival Evaluation: Reflections

Findings:

• while each measure offered a different view of quality, findings generally converged
• found quality was lower under new program, but not below a reasonable standard, more people receiving service and costs lower.

Evaluator (Datta) says:
Despite several limitations, many of which the evaluators have stated, the report succeeds in giving credible answers within the practical constraints of resources. . . . A large part of the report's success is the adroitness with which the information from many sources was cleverly sought out and stitched together. Particular care was taken to rule out competing explanations for both changes and lack of change (p37).

**Future Directions for KSP and KDI**

For the KSP

- Clarify the Program Theory of the KSP
  - Assume that KDI will engage in joint evaluations of the KSP
  - Be clear about the choice of intervention for evaluation
  - Be clear about reasons for undertaking an evaluation
  - Adopt Pragmatic Principles as the basis for research designs

More generally

- Develop evaluation capacity at KDI
- Develop methodological capacity at KDI
- Encourage the development of an Evaluation Society in Korea
Moving along?