

The logic of development effectiveness

Should the entire evaluation community take notice?

“It is now time to broaden our focus and attention from aid effectiveness to the challenges of effective development”

The Busan Declaration

*Robert Picciotto
King's College, London*

What is effectiveness?

No consensus prevails: the term is used loosely, ambiguously or interchangeably with

- **Efficacy**: the degree to which intended goals have been achieved (e.g. the Millennium Development Goals in the UN)
- **Quality**: the extent to which agreed *efficiency* or other standards are met (e.g. the Paris Declaration endorsed by donors)
- **Compliance with a particular policy agenda**: (e.g. the Istanbul Principles favoured by NGOs)

Why worry about this definition - and why now?

- Definitions are policy tools
- Effectiveness is about assessing the merit, worth and value of things – so is evaluation
- Evaluation should serve the public interest in a rapidly evolving social context
- Why then export the development effectiveness instrument to the rest of the evaluation community?

First, because citizens' concerns everywhere are converging

- The clamour of the Arab street, labour unrest in South African mining communities and the Occupy protests of OECD countries have much in common
- The richest 0.5% own a third of the world's wealth while over two thirds of the world's population share only 4%
- The problems of others have become our own

In other words we all live in developing countries now!

- The economic crisis started at the heart of the developed world
- The industrial democracies are no longer the beacon of economic and social policy
- The north-south model of international relations has become anachronistic
- OECD countries are enduring the same adjustment process that developing countries endured in the 1980's

The same social issues face rich and poor countries ...but solutions differ

- The “happiness” agenda parallels the new development definition: freedom to fulfil human potentials
- No two countries can rely on the same mix of policies
- Hence the demand for tailor made evaluations focused on prosperity, equity and sustainability

Development evaluation comes to the rescue !

- The history of evaluation resembles a succession of waves
- But under the surface a strong undercurrent has always prevailed: internationalization
- By now development evaluation has begun to merge into the mainstream of the discipline – just in time!

Assessing outcomes

In international development effective *outcomes* are characterized by:

- *Relevance*: are the objectives consistent with the beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' policies?
- *Efficacy*: extent to which the objectives were achieved or are expected to be achieved taking account of their relative importance
- *Efficiency*: a measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) has been converted to results

Two other criteria complement the trilogy of outcome ratings

Sustainability: the likelihood of continued benefits from an intervention after the intervention has been completed

Impact: the positive and negative, primary and secondary, long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended

Impact evaluations = *attribution* of results to the intervention

- Experimental methods are powerful but they are costly, poorly adapted to adaptable interventions, constrained by ethical considerations and skills intensive
- Mixed methods tailor made to individual cases should be adopted to address *attribution* especially for interventions conceived as social experiments

All five criteria matter

- Relevance = *doing the right things*
- Efficacy = *doing things right*
- Efficiency = *doing things economically*
- Sustainability = *management of risks*
- Impact = *making a difference over time*



An intervention is successful if it has achieved its relevant objectives efficiently, in a sustainable fashion and with a positive long term impact on public welfare

Striking the right trade-offs

- The development effectiveness instrument enhances *learning* through judicious tradeoffs:
 - Relevance vs. efficacy
 - Efficacy vs. efficiency
 - Outcome vs. sustainability
 - Outcome vs. impact
- It also enhances *accountability* by relating results to the promises made

Effectiveness is not synonymous with performance

- Social programmes rely on *partnerships*
- To avoid blurred accountability, free riding and blame shifting evaluation should address *contribution*:
 - How well did individual partners perform against their distinctive obligations?
 - What might be done to improve individual partners' performance?
- Hence performance ratings are distinct from effectiveness ratings – a good practice

Some interesting variants

- In the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) *poverty impact* as well as *innovation* and *replicability* are explicit performance criteria
- In the humanitarian domain:
 - The term *connectedness* is used instead of sustainability and
 - An additional *coherence* criterion addresses the need for consistency among policies and for coordination among partners

Effectiveness criteria work *ex-ante* as well as *ex-post*

- *Ex ante* effectiveness appraisal is key to quality
- Too many interventions lack:
 - baseline data
 - cogent objectives
 - verifiable success indicators and/or
 - robust monitoring and evaluation arrangements.
- Evaluators contribute to quality management through “evaluability” assessments

Sound effectiveness criteria are only part of the solution

They only contribute to organizational learning and accountability if they are

- ✓ used by competent evaluators familiar with state of the art evaluation methods and practices
- ✓ as part of a coherent and responsive evaluation work program
- ✓ in the context of a results oriented self evaluation and monitoring system
- ✓ backed up by independent assessments that attest to the validity of self evaluation claims

Conclusions

- Development effectiveness criteria have proved their worth at project, programme and policy levels
- They have displaced measures mistakenly focused on inputs and outputs
- They are aligned with the results oriented stance favoured by policy makers everywhere
- They are fit for use in all domains of evaluation practice within well managed evaluation programmes that display independence and excellence

Three questions - to kick off the debate

Evaluation everywhere is now about overall spending - not just individual interventions.

- *What should be evaluated?* Beyond the public sector, should private and voluntary sector spending be subject to independent assessment?
- *Who should evaluate?* If evaluation focuses increasingly on partnerships are joint evaluations the future?
- *How should evaluation processes be designed?* Can joint evaluations promote organizational accountability and learning?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !

**Does any of this
resonate?**