Meta-Evaluation, or: how to evaluate Evaluations – Approaches, Methods and Findings

September 6 – 10, 2021

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Contents

   a) Description of contents

Do evaluations always provide the 'right' information? Are they valid, reliable, correct in a sense? Can we believe their findings? And after all, what is the merit of our work to society, or at least for the people who read our reports?

Not only evaluators contemplate about such questions from time to time. More and more commissioners and political decision-makers want to know if they can trust evaluations and what they can actually learn from them. Moreover, the added value of such exercises for providing the empirical basis for decision making remain often obscure. Hence it is no wonder that the demand for meta-evaluations rises.

We all know what evaluations are good for and how we should implement them, don't we? There are numerous textbooks, training programs, podcasts, which provide methodological and practical guidance. Complying with such standards and following scientific codes of conduct should warrant valid, reliable and useful findings. – But can we prove it? How do we actually find out about the methodological quality of an evaluation, the validity and reliability of its findings, and eventually the usefulness of its conclusions and recommendations? Basically, how can we distinguish a good one from a bad one?

These are exactly the questions we want to answer in this workshop. We discuss criteria that help us decide if we can trust an evaluation, how we can assess its methodological quality, check if it was appropriately prepared and implemented, and eventually of use. We further jointly design a meta-evaluation from the development of an analysis grid to suitable methods for content analysis. Going beyond the evaluation report, we dive into the potentials of meta-evaluation as an instrument for organizational learning.

So, if you want to know how to evaluate an evaluation, come in and find out. Bring along – actually please send it a few days in advance – an evaluation you always wanted to know how good it is. Afterwards you will know (better).

   b) Objectives

The participants …

   o   are able to assess the quality of an evaluation according to common standards.
   o   know which criteria should be used therefore and how they can be applied.
   o   evaluate evaluations in practice and thereby learn about the added value of a systematic approach to it.
   o   will gather an overview about practical tools and applications for meta-evaluations

Schedule

Please define exact times for synchronic/plenary-sessions for each day and the main contents of those sessions.

The synchronous online sessions take place from Monday to Friday from 1:00 – 4:00pm CEST.

<u>Monday 06.09.2021</u>

- o Introduction into Meta-Evaluation
- o What makes a good evaluation? – Quality criteria for evaluations
- o Participants' presentations of example evaluations
- o Outside class: Reflecting own's evaluation quality under consideration of quality criteria

<u>Tuesday 07.09.2021</u>

- o Developing an analysis grid for a meta-evaluation
- o Practical group work: development of an analysis grid
- o Outside class: Drafting a recipe

<u>Wednesday 08.09.2021</u>

- o Presentation of group work results
- o Finalization of an exemplary meta-evaluation analysis grid
- o Small-team work: Application of the analysis grid
- o Outside class: Meta-evaluating two evaluations

<u>Thursday 09.09.2021</u>

- o Presentation and discussion of meta-evaluations
- o Tools and methods for analyzing meta-evaluation results
- o Outside class: Analyzing meta-evaluation results

<u>Friday 10.09.2021</u>

- o Aggregation of individual meta-evaluation and results synthesis
- o Findings from meta-evaluations conducted at CEval
- o Wrap-up and feedback

Please send an evaluation report that you want to include in the group work to s.silvestrini@ceval.de until Friday 03.09. at the latest. You may also include the Terms of Reference, the Inception Report and any annexes if available.

Some links with reading material:

- o Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (2018): EVALUATION. Meta-evaluation of Project and Programme Evaluations in 2015–2017. Online publication:
  https://um.fi/documents/384998/385866/meta_evaluation_report_2018
- o Austrian Development Agency (2019): Meta-Evaluation of ADA Project and Programme Evaluations – Executive Summary. Vienna: Austrian Development Agency. Online publication:
  https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Evaluierung/Evaluierungsberichte/2019/Management_Response/Executive_Summary_ADA-Meta_Eval.pdf
- o World Vision (2017): Meta-Evaluation of 29 evaluation reports of World Vision Germany. Online publication:
  https://www.worldvision.de/sites/default/files/pdf/Bewertung%20der%20Qualität%20der%20Evaluationen%20.pdf
- o DANIDA (2004): Meta-Evaluation. Private and Business Sector Development Interventions:
  https://www.oecd.org/derec/denmark/36478191.pdf