

## Designing Evaluations 1: Frameworks & Evaluation Questions

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### *Frameworks & Evaluation Questions*

Evaluations need to be *designed*

- This starts with an ITT or specification leading to a strong proposal and methodology
- Weak evaluations nearly always start with a poor ITT and a badly thought out methodology
- As part of work of the helpdesk, we have reviewed the quality of many structural Fund evaluations
- Poor quality evaluations were often traced back to weak designs

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### Designing Evaluations

- A 'design' is more than a method
- Interview surveys, case-studies, statistical analyses of labour market data, observational studies, all can be part of different designs
- A design involves a deep understanding of what we want to know, the programme context in which we are working and of the capabilities of different families of methods
- On the basis of this understanding we can consciously choose which of the many ways we could evaluate any programme

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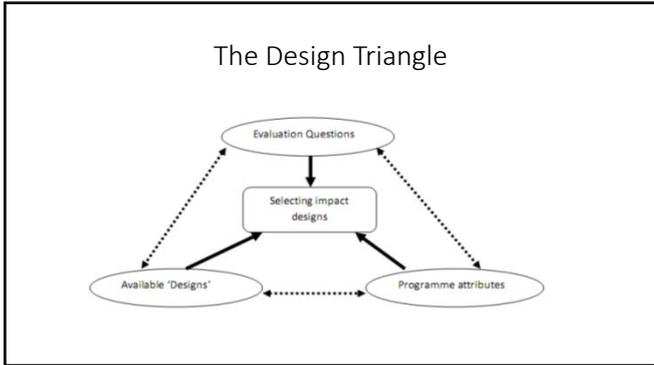
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### Designing Evaluations

The 'Design Triangle' suggests we need to match:

- Evaluation Questions (what we want to know )  
with the
- Characteristics of Programmes (the 'object' to be evaluated)  
with
- Available designs and their capabilities (what these designs can do given the Evaluation Questions being asked and the characteristics of Programmes)

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### Importance of Evaluation Questions

- Historically evaluations were structured around generic criteria such as Effectiveness; Relevance; Efficiency; Coherence; and Sustainability
- These criteria-led evaluations often produced evaluations that lacked specifics and were not useful for policy purposes. Nowadays we tend to operationalise criteria into more specific *Evaluation Questions*
- Evaluation Questions (EQs) are also a crucial link between evaluation purpose and how we make methodological choices

*Evaluations need to answer clear and answerable questions!*

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Importance of Evaluation Questions

- EQs are not the same as an 'interview question' – they are 'high-level' question able to be analysed and studied
- EQs focus on the relationship between a programme and real world 'consequences' 'effects' and 'results'
- EQs that only focus on the internal operations of a programme and do not try to illuminate the relationships between programmes and real-world effects are not EQs!
  - Most evaluations will have a number of prioritised EQs – each addressing a specific point of interest in a programme

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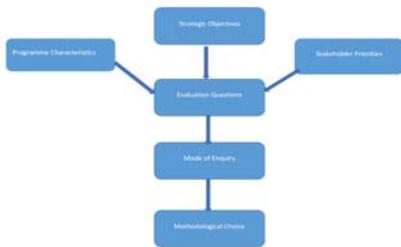
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Centrality of Evaluation Questions




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Evaluation Questions and Strategic Objectives

- Strategic Objectives refers to the policy goals that justify a programme – in our case through the various programme priorities – strengthening research; access to ICTs; enhancing competitiveness; promoting social inclusion etc. - that are intended to contribute to 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth'
- Evaluation Questions need to relate to these goals and priorities although monitoring/indicator exercises that are not necessarily evaluative will also address results

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Programme Characteristics

- Evaluation Questions have to take account of programme characteristics
- There are many ways to characterise a programme – in terms of sectors; objectives, their degree of innovativeness etc.
  - For the purpose of specifying EQs, characteristics should first be understood in terms of an ‘intervention logic’, ‘theory of change’ or ‘programme theory’ set into a wider context
- Theories of Change can be variously described but usually cover the sequencing of a programmes cycle set into a wider socio-economic and regional context

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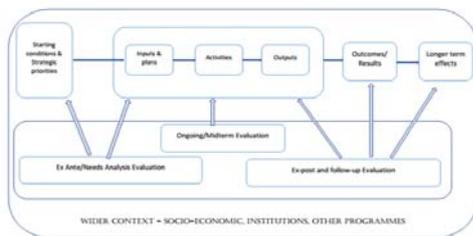
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Programme Characteristics




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Programme Characteristics

When we discuss methodological choices there are other kinds of programme characteristics that also have to be considered. These include for example:

- Innovativeness of programme goals and delivery
- Simplicity or complexity of the intervention
- Types of outputs envisaged – whether they are material, behavioural, new services, new institutional arrangements
- Timescales and trajectories of change
- How bounded or embeddedness programmes are in relation to other programmes, activities and systems

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Stakeholder priorities

- Evaluations like programmes have stakeholders
- Stakeholders will want answers to *their* questions
- Stakeholders are the users of evaluation – they are also often the gatekeepers to evaluation data and provide necessary cooperation for evaluators
- The credibility and legitimacy of an evaluation will often depend on how far the questions of stakeholders are prioritised

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Evaluation Questions and Evaluation Purposes

*EQs fall into broad types, related to the purpose (or purposes) of an evaluation. These will include:*

- Accounting for Results
- Better Management and Delivery
- Learning and improvement
- Capacity development and sustainability

It is also worth differentiating between 'High Level' EQs from subsidiary EQs – in order to decide on evaluation priorities and where efforts should be concentrated

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Accounting for Results

At a *high level* we may want to know:

- Have programmes achieved their objectives?

In greater detail we may want to know:

- Can results be shown to be consistent with the ToC/Intervention Logic?
- Can we demonstrate that the programme caused the result?
- Who were the programme beneficiaries & how did they assess its results?
- Have results occurred consistently and if not, how can we explain differences across programmes?

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### Better Management and Delivery

At a *high level* we may want to know:

- How well-managed was the programme?

In greater detail we may want to know:

- Were resources well-targeted?
- Were resources efficiently spent?
- Did delivery/implementation proceed as planned?
- Were mid-course corrections needed and why?

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### Learning and Improvement

At a *high level* we may want to know:

- What have been the lessons for programming and policy in future?

In greater detail we may want to know:

- Could a similar programme be better targeted and delivered if it was to be repeated?
- Are there new ideas about how to achieve similar results through other means?
- Do these kinds of programmes contribute sufficiently to strategic policy goals?

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### Capacity development and sustainability

At a *high level* we may want to know:

- Has the programme helped create new capacities and networks?

In greater detail we may want to know:

- Will new capacities continue to generate the kinds of results that the programme intended?
- Are these capacities likely to be self-sustaining and economically viable?
- Have capacities been created in civil society or in public administrations?
- If there is little evidence of sustainability, why is this?

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### Conclusions

- This session has provided a number of frameworks to consider when deciding on Evaluation Questions
- EQs are shaped by Strategic objectives; Stakeholder priorities; and Programme characteristics
- We have also seen that there are different 'types' of EQs that relate to the main purposes of an evaluation
- Working through these kinds of frameworks should also help when prioritising EQs – remembering that we can't evaluate everything!
- Finally the 'Checklist' can be a useful aide memoire when applying the principles described in this session

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