

## **Evaluation: The International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice**

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In a time of results-based management and budgeting, the question whether or not the *inputs* have been in line with the policies of donors and partner countries is not longer really relevant. The real question is whether the *results* of our actions are in line with the policies and the problems that these policies tried to address.

(van den Berg, p. 35)

The first 2005 issue of *Evaluation* (Volume 11(1), January 2005) begins with two contributions to *A Visit to the World of Practice*, both of which focus on results-based evaluation and impact assessment within the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Please visit <http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/MDG/-home.do> for information on the MDGs.

First, Kusek, Rist, and White discuss how the shift from implementation-focused monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to results-based M&E is taking place in various developed and developing countries, which challenges are being faced in this transition, and what strategies should be considered when introducing results-based M&E, including readiness assessments, political and organizational issues, and potential challenges with implementation, reliable data collection and analysis.

Second, van den Berg discusses some methodological issues in the assessment of development cooperation. Monitoring, for example, would not assess if the right things are done in development, but only whether things are done right. Impact assessments, in contrast to monitoring, would be complicated and expensive, because impacts occurs over long terms, require increased scope of research, and rely on baseline data often unavailable. Moreover, counterfactuals have to be considered to indicate that observed outcomes in fact resulted from the intervention under investigation. Causality as the key to the establishment of impact would be reduced in the social science context to “specific causality”, because there are no general laws as in the natural sciences. To proof linkages between outcomes and impact, methods such as lab research, RCTs, and double-blind studies with comparison groups are commonly utilized by social scientist. Van den Berg argues for the methodological inclusion of historical analysis to ascertain causality, utilizing triangulation “par excellence” to insure reliability and reasoning for validity. Current evaluation practice employs triangulation only methodologically. However, using historical triangulation eliminates the need for counterfactuals to establish causality. Moreover, linear causality as established through statistical techniques is often thwarted by societal complexities. Therefore, discussions in social sciences should shift toward “conditionalities” (p. 34). Van den Berg believes “that the development community should move from causality or plausibility to contribution, and from direct linkages to necessary but not sufficient conditions for change” (p. 34).

Four articles follow. First, Saunders, Charlier, and Bonamy discuss how evaluation can be used to support change, exemplified in two international higher education case examples. Second, Kautto and Similä provide an account of evaluating “recently introduced policy instruments (RIPs)” (p. 55) supported by intervention

theories and recommend (1) the utilization of theory-based approaches, (2) the selection of criteria and establishment of causal links between evaluation criteria, (3) the selection of causal linkages for which information can readily be ascertained, (4) determination of procedures for proceeding with the criteria for which information is not readily available, and (5) consideration of potential for theory failure. Third, Byng, Norman, and Redfern provide a case example within a mental health context, utilizing realistic evaluation as coined by Pawson and Tilley in combination with analytic induction. Fourth, Shadish, Chacón-Moscoso, and Sánchez-Meca describe how meta-analysis and systematic reviews have been developed historically, utilized in Europe, and contributed to policy making and practice.

In the *Review* section of *Evaluation* 11(1), Kushner looks at a current UK Cabinet Publication entitled “Quality in qualitative evaluation: a framework for assessing research and evidence.”

The final section, *News from the Community*, discusses the fifth annual Japanese Evaluation Society (JES) and third annual African Evaluation Association conferences. The section also introduces the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE; also see this issue of JMDE). The final news from the community is the Univation/German Evaluation Society conference, which focused on network evaluation.