



Concept Symposium 2016

Governing the Front-End of Major Projects

Towards an Optimal Evaluation System



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The scope of the Concept evaluations is in line with approaches of the OECD/DAC and its member countries. In many aid programs, collection of background/baseline data, project planning, monitoring and evaluation are intertwined in a Result Based Management Approach. An issue intriguing for me is the match between the current KS Project Design Documents, the two stages of quality assurance and the Concept evaluation system. I wonder especially whether the intended beneficiaries are clearly identified and their situation taken stock of before and after the intervention.

I have in some cases noted a discrepancy between the scope of projects almost solely focused on infrastructure and issues of their use and utility (e.g. Halden Prison, Svalbard Research Park and Remmen Building), but also noted the evaluation recommendation that the initial use of the infrastructure/facility have not been elaborated. This raises the issue of the project designs and also the timing of the evaluations.

I would like to learn more about the use and utility of Concept evaluations by the specific authorities and other stakeholders. I have found the synthesized reports on lessons on various parts of the transportation sector actively communicated. It still seems worthwhile to dwell on links back to public and private stakeholders.

During recent years many aid donors have been concerned with the relatively high number of poor quality evaluations being prepared, and have initiated "Evaluability Assessments", addressing the extent to which an activity or project can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion, given the data availability and the systems able to provide for data. In this session I propose that we especially discuss the possible use of evaluability assessments in Concept projects.

Towards Improved Evaluation Management

Current Norwegian Evaluations (1)

Evaluations seldom target policy makers and management.

Doubtful whether ordered reports provide adequate information to project management. Norwegian Ministry of Finance (DFØ 2015).

Few provisions made for results to be used:

Evaluation as ritual vs. truth-seeking process



Current Norwegian Evaluations (2)

Processes and strategies for evaluation work are not properly described and anchored in the key project documents

Evaluations need to have higher quality, and be more closely monitored and better integrated with the performance management system:

Ministry of Finance/DFØ



Formative/Summative Evaluation

“Formative Evaluations” often perceived as having greater value since it can correct current projects

The motivation for “Summative Evaluation”

1. Evaluation of effects, effectiveness, impacts, etc.
2. The prospects for success in the operation phase
3. Needs for corrections in similar type of **future** projects by improving project designs and implementation
4. Basis for “overall sectoral/program studies”



Process Utility of Evaluations (1)

Primary Users

More engagement of key stakeholders in ministries/regional government as inputs to evaluations, without compromising independence of evaluators

Example of stakeholder view:

"Greatest impact for me to go through the thinking process that the evaluation required"



Process Utility of Evaluations (2)

Secondary Users

Communication of results also to secondary users:

- Research: common syntheses of lessons in a sector/area

- Various media: Info to politicians, other public administration, national and local stakeholders, general public



Theory-based Evaluations

Situation theory:

Size of the “problem”; Paths to development;
Size of the “problem” over time; Causes of the “problem”
Assessment of the “problem” after x years if nothing is done

Causal theory:

How interventions combined will solve the “problem”

Normative theory:

How preferable the changed situation is

Intervention theory. Presuppositions of how a project or an organizational change may have desired impact



Evaluability Assessment

Given the nature of the project design and data availability, what are the **prospects to carry out a worthwhile evaluation**, including the ability to provide it.

Likely use and usefulness:

Evaluability Assessments can inform the set-up for the design of the project itself as well as the M&E Framework (including monitoring and evaluation)

In Norwegian aid, evaluability assessments are made in some cases by the evaluation department, but just ahead of an evaluation

In Australian aid and some other donors agencies evaluability assessments are made at the project design stage to improve the theory of change, project design, set the learning questions, enrich the stakeholder engagement strategy and serve as the basis for evaluations.

The latter is most advantageous



Project Design as Described in Theory of Change

- Clarity of long-term effects/impacts and steps to reach these
- Relevance of project to beneficiary groups
- Plausible connections between input, output, outcome and impact
- Valid and reliable indicators at output, outcome and impact levels
- A testable critical causal chain



Project Design as Described in Theory of Change

- Context: Make explicit the assumptions about the roles of other actors outside the project
- Complexity: Define multiple interactions between different project components
- Consistency in all project documents (design, work plans, M&E)
- Agreement with all (or most) stakeholder groups how project objectives will be achieved?



Information Requirements (1)

- Critical data including baseline data
- Data on a comparable control group
- Data for all relevant indicators



Information Requirements (2)

- Data on all relevant indicators
- Data for comparisons with alternatives
- Existing monitoring systems with the capacity to deliver results



Institutional Aspects of Evaluations

- Ensure accessibility to and availability of stakeholders for interviews
- Ensure coordination requirements with intended beneficiaries and other stakeholders
- Map the interests for (the project and) the evaluation by various stakeholders
- Ensure accommodation of the various interests in the evaluation design
- Ensure that the risks of the project have been analyzed and maneuverability in case of unintended effects

