



Applying Evaluation to Development Policy

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Evaluation:

**The best mechanism for improving
policy in democratic societies**

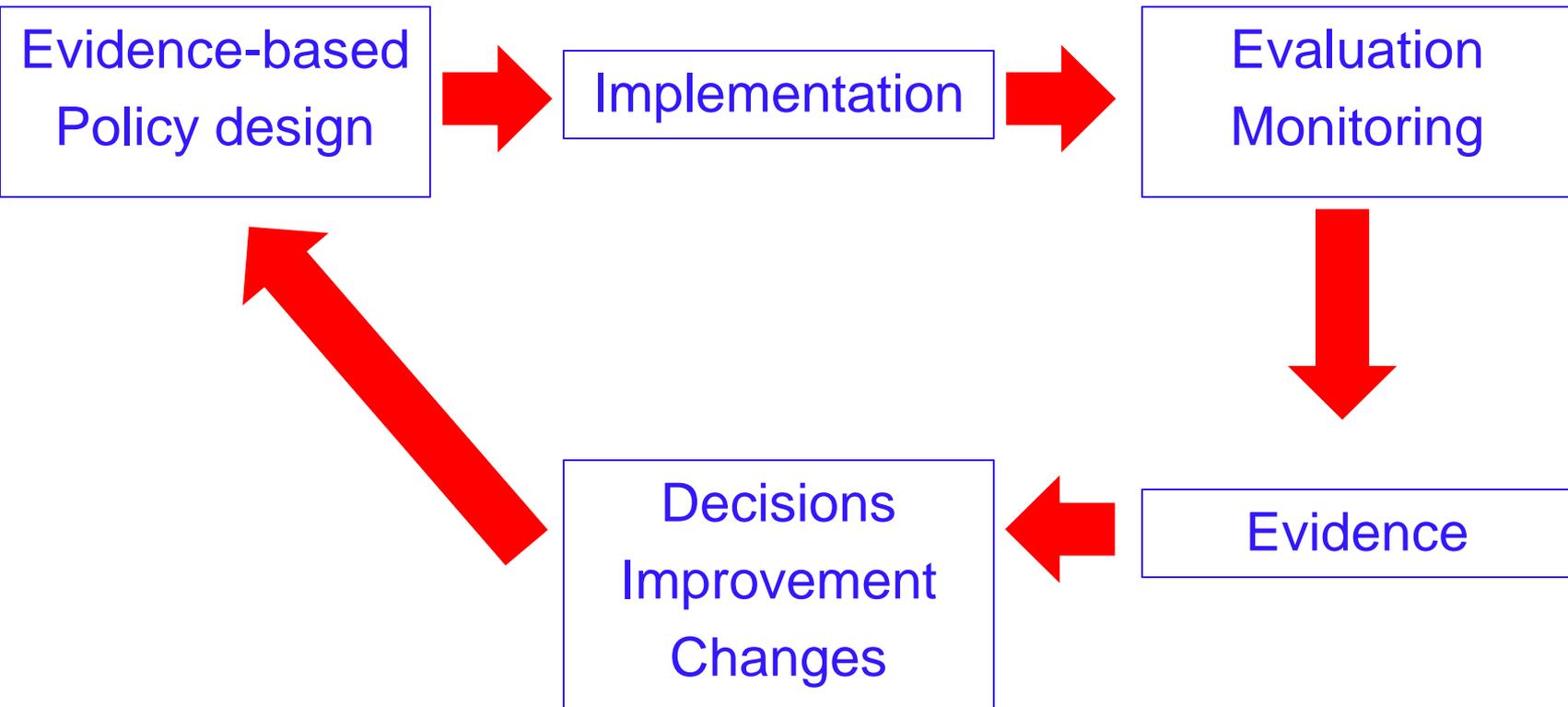
Contents:

- 1. The paradox of “too little supply of evidence and too little demand for existing knowledge”**
- 2. The complexity of evaluating development effectiveness**
- 3. Understanding the actors**
- 4. Relevant experiences**
- 5. Towards better informed policy**

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Normally you would expect



Unfortunately...

- Very seldom are social policy decisions taken, based on scientific (or other) evidence
- Not enough evidence is yet available on what are the most effective actions/interventions under different circumstances

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At least 5 relevant aspects

- Heterogeneity (focus on the “*average*” individual)
- Context (difficult to replicate *exact* conditions; same intervention can have different effects (uncontrolled environments))
- Multidimensionality (unintended, secondary effects, general equilibrium)
- Temporality of benefits (when will full effects be observed?)
- Identification of mechanisms involved (isolation to identify causality)

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Actors involved

- External donors, investors
- High level decision makers
- Evaluators
- Program operators/practitioners
- Constituencies, public opinion, beneficiaries

External donors, investors

- Evaluation requires investing resources
 - Public good nature of evidence
 - Underlying motive: “social responsibility” vs impact
 - Donations can have other motives (e.g. tax exemptions)
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- Principal-agent problem with executors
 - Investing in evidence today increases impact tomorrow
 - Accountability to stake holders
 - Genuine interest in reaching certain objective

High level decision makers

- Timing
- Interest groups
- Normative factors
- Institutional arrangements, capacity
- Politics (politically unviable; risk of negative results)
- Funding

- Use as mechanism for communicating good results
- Generating information for improving policy (identifying areas for improvement)
- Transparency in use of resources
- Accountability

(external) Evaluators

- Require time for generating data, performing analysis
 - Academically interesting vs irrelevant in practice
 - Irrelevant academically vs relevant in practice
 - Political feasibility of implementing results
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- Generation of credible, solid evidence
 - Sound feedback to policy
 - Generation of knowledge

Practitioners (executors)

- Producing data requires cost, effort and political capital with unclear benefits for day-to-day activity
- Managing discontent from “control” groups
- Shifting from outputs to results based management is a tortuous change of paradigm (change in day-to-day processes, activities)
- Practitioners become constituencies

- Evidence to improve the impact of day-to-day effort
- Support element for introducing necessary changes
- Clarifies exact objectives and potential effects (road map)
- Support for dealing with tough day-to-day decisions

Constituencies, public opinion, beneficiaries

- Negative consequences for entitlements (beneficiary interest groups)
- “Bad use” can inhibit evaluation efforts by government
- Enhanced transparency and accountability
- Clarity on purpose of programs
- Mechanism for active citizen participation
- Comparison of record by different parties, political groups, etc.

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5 practical cases

1. The Evaluation Program at the Ministry of Social Development: Evaluating One Programs Useful, but Not Enough
2. The Introduction of Poverty Measurement: Evaluation Requires Investing Political Capital
3. The System for Planning and Evaluation at the School Level: Time, Training, and Capacity Building and Resources to Implement Change Are Fundamental for Making Evaluation Usable
4. Evaluating Education Attainment at the High School Level: In Order to Use Information, it Is Necessary to Understand It and Generate the Capacity to Employ It
5. The Creation of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Programs (CONEVAL): The Need to Institutionalize Change and Creating the Right Incentives

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Next necessary steps:

✓ Institutionalizing evaluation for generating evidence:

- Creation of institutions with broad evaluation mandate
- Evaluation enforcement (not only rely on good will)
- Preferably compulsory by law
- Availability of resources guaranteed
- Technical capacity build in producers and users

✓ Using evaluation evidence:

- Congress key actor for using evaluation to define budget
- High level policy makers with technical capacity and vision
- Role of media for disseminating information in a responsible way and making government accountable for use (promoting good use of evaluation results)

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