

Evaluation Methods: Tensions between Expectations, Resources, and Competencies

Manfred Max Bergman
Chair of Methodology and Political Sociology
University of Basel

Tensions between Expectations, Resources, and Competencies

- Context
- Evaluand and Evaluation Method
- Data
- Analysis
- Interpretation

Context

- Historical, political, social, cultural contexts
- Institutional norms and ideologies
- Evaluation habits
- Relationships
- Actors' context
 - Commissioners
 - Evaluators
 - Other Stakeholders

Evaluand and Evaluation Method

- Who are the target audiences for the evaluation?
- What is the evaluand?
- Who selected the evaluand and what were the explicit and implicit motives for its evaluation?
- How much agreement is there in what the evaluand is and how it will be evaluated?
- What is the explicit and implicit theoretical framework, within which the evaluand and the evaluation is located?
- How suitable is the theoretical framework and for whom?

Data

- Which elements are potentially relevant in relation to the evaluand?
- Which of the potentially relevant elements are selected for the evaluation?
- Why were these and not other potentially relevant elements selected?
- What is the data collection method to collect the selected elements?
- Is sampling necessary and what are the consequences?
- How does the specific collection method limit the assessment of the evaluand?
- Do multiple data collection methods increase the validity of the data?

Analysis 1: General

- Is the planned analysis suitable for the data and the evaluand?
- How are the data analysed and what are the consequences for that particular analysis?
- How limited are the generalisations from the analysis?
- Do multiple data analyses methods increase the validity of findings?

Analysis 2: QL vs. QN Myths

- Inductive vs. deductive research
- Ontology
- Epistemology
- Generalisation
- Scientific value
- Causality
- Mixed methods

Interpretation

- Which alternatives exist in relation to the interpretation of the results of the analysis?
- Do the specific results support the general recommendations?
- Are the recommendations understandable for the target audience?
- Are the recommendations suitable for the context?

Conclusions

Evaluation as a form of negotiation:

- Relationships
- Resources
- Expectations among and between evaluators and commissioners
- Objectivist expectations and non-objectivist evaluation methodology
- Relations between aims, theory, data, analysis, interpretation, and recommendations
- Scientific and policy-oriented forms of communication, including recommendations