



SESSION NUMBER & TITLE
Parallel session 1: Learning in action: Expanding the evaluation toolbox?
SESSION TAKE AWAY
The COVID-19 pandemic and identification of recovery measures presented many challenges for traditional forms of independent post-evaluation. Evidence-based decision-making in an evolving context called for rapid assessments and actionable (timely and succinct) “need to know” findings and insights. Discussants will reflect on (a) their experience as evaluators in developing and using a decision maker-oriented evaluative learning approach; (b) the strengths, challenges and potential synergies inherent in such early and ‘fast-lane’ assessments; and (c) and their applicability beyond crisis response as a complementary tool to traditional post-evaluation.
SUBTHEME
Innovations in evaluation
ORGANIZATION/S
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) World Health Organization (WHO)
PANELIST/DISCUSSANT #1: [Rachel Thompson, Executive Director, Board of Directors, ADB]
2 KEY MESSAGES 1. When we do things for the first time or with new modalities or technologies, early learning insights can help us deal with some of the uncertainty we will inevitably face. 2. If we don't have an early sense of what is working, and why, then how can we best allocate scarce resources to greatest impact?
PANELIST/DISCUSSANT #2: [Riccardo Polastro, Chief Evaluation Officer, Evaluation Office, WHO]
2 KEY MESSAGES 1. Early learning and evaluative assessments originated from real-time evaluation (RTE) in evaluating humanitarian response to its evolution prior to, during and after COVID-19. Method could be qualitative and quantitative. 2. RTE should have light footprint and speedy in contributing to decision making. Evaluator has to be a facilitator and have a good feel of the environment, including stakeholder. RTEs feed into ongoing response/intervention. Compared with ex-post evaluation, RTEs don't have to wait, but derived from planning and close to monitoring. Challenges/issues: a) There is multiplicity in real-time evaluations and duplication of wrong time evaluation b) How do we get stakeholders involved in evaluation and accountability? c) Lack of experience of evaluators and budget
PANELIST/DISCUSSANT #3: [Veronique Salze-Lozac'h, Chief Evaluator, Evaluation Department, EBRD]

2 KEY MESSAGES

1. EBRD goes for transition towards market economy, instead of the development culture of evaluation. Early learning assessments could be perceived as intrusion or investigation, hence should be short, and capture as much as possible early learnings, in a short time. Make sure one doesn't raise too much expectations.

2. RTE can be a phased approach. Lessons which can be captured only at a specific period of the implementation stage during early learning assessment/real-time evaluation. We also use the term "suggestions" instead of recommendations for this kind of evaluation. Report should be quick and fast, and short and crisp.

Other important points:

- a) When to use RTE has to be considered
- b) We act fast but what does it mean? Acting fast should not be detrimental to quality.
- c) Early learning assessments should be grounded by evidence not about impressions.
- d) Need to be agile, adapt to the situation, understand what information are requested.
- e) Manage expectations – RTE is not going to give solid responses in all fronts. Impact is not included. Relevance, efficiency and early effectiveness could be assessed.
- f) Conscious of potential bias to what is not working
- g) Draw lessons for replication
- h) Make sure to have learning loops working

PANELIST/DISCUSSANT #4: [Megan Kennedy-Chouane, Head of Evaluation Unit, Development Cooperation Directorate, OECD]

2 KEY MESSAGES

1. OECD worked with two sister networks, (i) MDB independent evaluation units, and (2) UN evaluation groups in responding to issues in early learning assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Definition between crisis and urgent had to be clarified.

2. OECD took a phased approach in evaluating the pandemic, and considered time and source of evidence. Being accountable for learning, these phases include:

1st phase – Gather evidence from previous evaluations and produce a policy brief

2nd phase – Synthesize and share evidence, which amplified learning

3rd phase – Evaluate the pandemic

Challenges:

- a) Tend to confirm what others are saying
- b) Lack of ability to benchmark

PANELIST/DISCUSSANT #5: [Irene Bain, Head, Learning and Evaluation, CEIU, AIIB]

2 KEY MESSAGES

1. Institutional learning is intentional. Institutions should be learning through doing, building a learning culture takes work. Learning and evaluation is a shared responsibility. Everyone has a role.
2. Early learning assessment attenuates the relationship between learning and accountability – look in a different lens other than ex-post evaluation. It is important to develop a process for early learning assessment factoring in whether learning make one more accountable.

Other important points:

- a) Time and scale are two factors to be considered for RTE or early learning assessments
- b) Relationship between early learning assessments and ex-post evaluation is important to ensure continuity

MODERATOR: [Marvin Taylor-Dormond, Managing-Director, CEIU, AIIB]

3 KEY MESSAGES

1. Early learning through real-time evaluation has enhanced formative evaluation.
2. Instead of just asking what works and what doesn't, one may also ask these questions: why does it work? And why it doesn't work?
3. When conducting real-time evaluations/early learning assessments, engagement of stakeholders, which includes respecting the officers implementing interventions, has to be considered.

Q&A SUMMARY

What is the difference between rapid assessment vs real-time evaluation?

- Rapid assessment is quick and fast, and can be done during and post-implementation, while RTE has to be done during the implementation of the intervention.

Is there a different use between monitoring and real-time evaluation?

- Terminology should not be dogmatic but focus on the objective
- Not necessarily a concern.
- Monitoring involves keeping track of results, while evaluation already applies judgment
- RTE should not be used all the time. Ex-post evaluation should still be done

Evaluators are not the only ones evaluating, encourage everyone to be involved

SESSION COORDINATOR

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