

Synthesise data from one or more evaluations

Bringing together data into an overall conclusion and judgement is important for individual evaluations and also when summarising evidence from multiple evaluations.

Synthesise data from a single evaluation

To develop evaluative judgments, the evaluator draws data from the evaluation and systematically synthesises and values the data.

There are a range of methods that can be used for synthesis and valuing.

Methods

Processes

- [Consensus conference](#)

A consensus conference is a formal public meeting, which gives the general public the chance to contribute to and be involved in the assessment of an issue or proposal.

- [Expert panel](#)

Expert panels are used when specialized input and opinion is required for an evaluation.

Techniques

- [Cost-benefit analysis](#)

This method compares the total costs of a programme/project with its benefits, using a common metric (most commonly monetary units), which enables you to calculate the net cost or benefit associated with the programme.

- [Cost effectiveness analysis](#)

Cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) compares the relative costs of the outcomes of two or more courses of action and is considered an alternative to cost-benefit analysis (CBA).

- [Cost utility analysis](#)

Cost utility analysis (CUA) develops an overall measure of utility or value based on the preferences of individuals.

CUA is useful for evaluating, and comparing, programs that aim to reach the same goal in non-monetary terms.

- [Lessons learnt](#)

Lessons learnt can take the form of describing what should or should not be done, or describing the outcome of different processes.

- [Multi-criteria analysis](#)

A multi-criteria analysis (MCA) is a form of appraisal that measures variables such as material costs, time savings and project sustainability as well as the social and environmental impacts in addition to monetary impacts.

- [Numeric weighting](#)

Numeric weighting involves developing numeric scales in order to rate performance against each evaluation criterion and then adding them up for a total score.

- [Qualitative weight and sum](#)

Using qualitative ratings (such as symbols) to identify performance in terms of essential, important and unimportant criteria.

"In QWS:

- [Rubrics](#)

A rubric is a framework that sets out criteria and standards for different levels of performance and describes what performance would look like at each level.

- [Value for money](#)

Value for money is a term used in different ways, including as a synonym for cost-effectiveness, and as systematic approach to considering these issues throughout planning and implementation, not only in evaluation.

Approaches

- [Social return on investment](#)

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a systematic way of incorporating social, environmental, economic and other values into decision-making processes.

[Synthesise data across evaluations](#)

These methods answer questions about a type of intervention rather than about a single case – questions such as “Do these types of interventions work?” or “For whom, in what ways and under what circumstances do they work?”

The task involves locating the evidence (often involving bibliographic searches of databases, with particular emphasis on finding unpublished studies), assessing its quality and relevance in order to decide whether or not to include it, extracting the relevant information, and synthesizing it. Different options use different strategies and have different definitions of what constitutes credible evidence.

Methods

- [Best evidence synthesis](#)

Best evidence synthesis is a synthesis that, like a realist synthesis, draws on a wide range of evidence (including single case studies) and explores the impact of context.

- [Lessons learnt](#)

Lessons learnt can take the form of describing what should or should not be done, or describing the outcome of different processes.

- [Meta-analysis](#)

Meta-analysis is a statistical method for combining numeric evidence from experimental (and sometimes quasi-experimental studies) to produce a weighted average effect size.

- [Meta-ethnography](#)

Meta-ethnography is a method for combining data from qualitative evaluation and research, especially ethnographic data, by translating concepts and metaphors across studies.

- [Rapid evidence assessment](#)

Rapid Evidence Assessment is a process that uses a combination of key informant interviews and targeted literature searches to produce a report in a few days or a few weeks.

- [Realist synthesis](#)

A realist synthesis is the synthesis of a wide range of evidence that seeks to identify underlying causal mechanisms and explore how they work under what conditions, answering the question "what works for whom under what circumstances?" rather than "what works?"

- [Systematic review](#)

A systematic review is an approach to synthesising evidence from multiple studies. Systematic reviews use methodical approaches and criteria to identify relevant studies for inclusion, assess their quality, extract data and synthesise evidence.

- [Textual narrative synthesis](#)

Dividing the studies into relatively homogenous groups, reporting study characteristics within each group, and articulating broader similarities and differences among the groups

- [Vote counting](#)

Vote counting is a simple but limited method for synthesizing evidence from multiple evaluations and involves comparing the number of positive studies (studies showing benefit) with the number of negative studies (studies showing harm).

Resources

Websites

- [Campbell Collaboration](#)
- [Evidence for Policy and Practice Information Centre \(EPPI-Centre\)](#)

Extrapolate findings

An evaluation usually involves some level of generalising of the findings to other times, places or groups of people.

For many evaluations, this simply involves generalising from data about the current situation or the recent past to the future.

For example, an evaluation might report that a practice or program has been working well (finding), therefore it is likely to work well in the future (generalisation), and therefore we should continue to do it (recommendation). In this case, it is important to understand whether or not future times are likely to be similar to the time period of the evaluation. If the program had been successful because of support from another organisation, and this support was not going to continue, then it would not be correct to assume that the program would continue to succeed in the future.

For some evaluations, there are other types of generalising needed. Impact evaluations which aim to learn from the evaluation of a pilot to make recommendations about scaling up must be clear about the situations and people to whom results can be generalised.

There are often two levels of generalisation. For example, an evaluation of a new nutrition program in Ghana collected data from a random sample of villages. This allowed statistical generalisation to the larger population of villages in Ghana. In addition, because there was international interest in the nutrition program, many organisations, including governments in other countries, were interested to learn from the evaluation for possible implementation elsewhere.

Methods

- [Analytical generalisation](#)

Analytical generalisation involves making projections about the likely transferability of findings from an evaluation, based on a theoretical analysis of the factors producing outcomes and the effect of context.

- [Statistical generalisation](#)

Statistical generalisation involves statistically calculating the likely parameters of a population using data from a random sample of that population.

Approaches

- [Horizontal evaluation](#)

Horizontal evaluation is an approach that combines self-assessment by local participants and external review by peers.

- [Positive deviance](#)

Positive deviance (PD) refers to a behavioural and social change approach that is premised on the observation that in any context, certain individuals confronting similar challenges, constraints, and resource deprivations to their peers, will nonetheless

- [Realist evaluation](#)

Realist evaluation is a form of theory-driven evaluation, but is set apart by its explicit philosophical underpinnings.

Resources

Blog post

- [Will that successful intervention over there get results over here?](#)

This blog post and its associated replies, written by Jed Friedman for the World Bank, describes a process of using analytic methods to overcome some of the assumptions that must be made when extrapolating results from evaluations to other settings.