



Quality Evaluations in Education Interventions

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Advancing mathematics, science and language education

Pitch

A donor perspective

Evaluation design

Single study

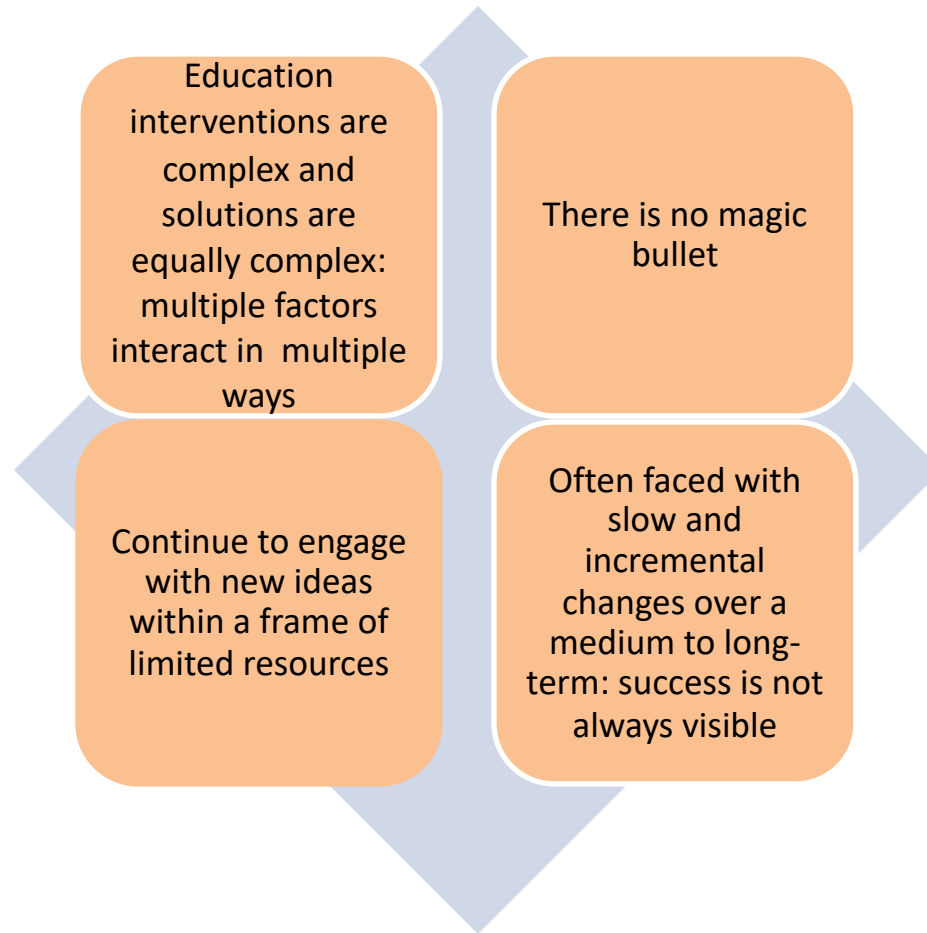
Presentation

- Introductory comments
- Evaluation design
- Brief analysis of one design

Introductory Remarks

**Increasing commitment
and support for education
evaluations**

Education change as complex endeavour



**No longer about whether we
should do evaluations,
but
about how we do quality
evaluations**

Evaluation Design

**Many ways of improving
quality of evaluations**

Evaluation design is key

Why is design important

- Provides a *systematic* approach to programme evaluation.
- Makes *explicit* what is to be evaluated, how and why.
- Aligns *the purpose of the intervention - purpose of the evaluation*.
- Informs the evaluation questions, methodology and data collection.

Evaluation design: 6 Steps

Step 1: Design evaluations side-by-side programmes

Step 2: Understand the intended purpose for evaluating

- Accountability versus knowledge/learning.
- Develop clarity about what you want to evaluate and work with experts to establish whether this is feasible: measurable and realistic within resource and time constraints.
- Processes, outcomes or impact.

Step 3: Explain the intervention logic

- Explicit theory of change, outcomes, indicators: Zenex Learner Programme example.
- Clarificatory process – opportunity to tighten the programme logic and ensure alignment between the intent, programme and outcome.
 - Are you making unreasonable leaps in the logic between intent and outcomes.

Step 4:

Develop appropriate evaluation questions

- Aligned to the intention of the intervention.
- Aligned to the purpose of your evaluation.

Step 5: Appropriate methods and required data

- Deliberate about methodological issues including what data will be collected at various levels.
- Tighten links between question and methodology: will this approach answer the question that we seek answers to.
- Don't collect data for its own sake.
 - Its better to collect key strategic data than too much.

Method

Qualitative/Quantitative

- Experimental – X causes Y, Laboratories or RCT.
- Quasi experimental - (without randomisation e.g. comparing levels of violence between genders).
- Non Experimental – correlational (learners that wrote lengthier paragraphs more frequently showed improved performance) and qualitative case studies.
- *Selecting an approach depends on what you are trying to evaluate and why.*
- *They all have strengths and weaknesses.*

Common Practice

- Programme Post-tests
- Pre-test and Post-test-Black box, would the children have learnt anyway, what made the difference, what about incremental changes in practices but not performance.
- Pre and post-test and comparison group: why and how.
- More comprehensive approaches – mixed methods.
- Make clear what the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches are.

Step 6: Defining the scope and scale

Period, coverage, geography, budget

Case Study

Case 1: Reading Catch-Up

- The Reading Catch-Up Programme was aimed at assisting Grade 4 learners to develop the appropriate competence in English in order to transition effectively into Grade 4.
- This was implemented in underperforming schools in Gauteng who were unable to absorb the GPLMS.

Case 1: Reading Catch-Up

Step 1: Evaluation was designed side-by-side with the programme.

Case 1: Reading Catch-Up

Step 2: Foregrounded knowledge focus

- Preliminary findings suggested that the programme was successful.
- There was a need to systematically evaluate the programme - know what works.
- Catch-Up Programmes are of increasing strategic importance in our context - if they work we need to implement them on a wider scale.

Case 1: Reading Catch-Up

Step 3: Logic of the intervention

1. If learners suspend their Grade 4 English (FAL) curriculum for a short period and undergo an English Catch-up Programme they will acquire the level of competence required to succeed in Grade 4, given that English is the medium of instruction.
2. If the content focuses on Reading fluency and vocabulary.
3. If learners and teachers are provided with the triple cocktail of structured lesson plans, reading resources and coaching, teaching and learning will improve which will in turn affect performance.

Case 1: Reading Catch Up

Step 4: Research Question

- What is the impact of the Catch-Up Programme on the performance of Grade 4 learners in English?

Case 1: Reading Catch Up

Step 5: Methods

RCT - The essence of the method:

- Education performance is affected by a large number of variables, especially poverty.
- if we have a large enough sample, chosen at random from the population,
- and if we randomly assign schools to Treatment and Control groups,
- any difference in Treatment and Control group can be attributed to the effect of the intervention.

Evaluation Design

Step 6: Scope and Scale

- Pre and Post-testing
- Treatment and Control groups
- Statistically significant sample
- 50 Intervention and 50 Control schools
- Uncontaminated schools - Not Gauteng

Findings

- Analysis of pre and post-test data showed that both control and intervention schools improved their performance.
- Differences in performances between the two groups was not significant.
- When the data was disaggregated by topic the data showed that the intervention group did better in spelling and grammar.
- Intervention works better for learners with better pre-test scores.

Strengths/weaknesses of the RCT design

- If we did not have the control group we would have concluded that the intervention was hugely successful.
- However, the RCT only explained **what**, but it was unable to help us understand **why** and **how**:
 - Why spelling and grammar?
 - Why did control groups improve?
 - How did training translate into the classroom practices
 - Was there increased curriculum coverage, did teachers teach more reading and writing, did learners do more reading and writing, what was the quality of the reading and writing?

Conclusion

- The purpose: should have focused on processes, outcomes and impact
- Logic: fine
- Questions: Add why and how
- Methods: mixed methods

What is Evaluation

Evaluation is a process that critically examines a program. It involves collecting and analyzing information about a program's activities, characteristics, and outcomes. Its purpose is to make judgments about a program, to improve its effectiveness, and/or to inform programming decisions (Patton, 1987).