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Process Evaluation and Organizational Development

Stara Zagora, March 2007



Evaluation in a nutshell

- Evaluation is a part of organizational development.
- It is a systematic way of measuring and demonstrating results of organizational development.
- The target is to show the actual results and possible failures of development processes AND to describe the process and the circumstances to support learning and future planning.
- Main targets are measuring the development process and pointing out the key problems and good practices, also giving advice and suggestions.
- Key Issues:
 - Collecting data of the development and/or changes and
 - Comparison with objectives – in context to the circumstances

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Targets of evaluation

- Main objectives of evaluation are to MEASURE results and to SUPPORT decision making in the future.
- This happens by increasing the knowledge and supporting the learning processes.
- Important: JUDGING people or departments shall NOT be a key issue – evaluation is not an "inspection".
- Development actions with premeditated target-orientation can easily be evaluated.
- The results may include short statements or views of the development process and suggestions for decision-makers.

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History

- Evaluation of development processes is an old tradition – however, as a systematic procedure it is not.
- It is a question of systematic learning process and dissemination of results.
 - Example 1: British Fleet and the health of sailors in the 18th century – later also Napoleon and the logistical systems.
 - Example 2: Nowadays the public health care and education in several countries.
- Common issues for both of them: Well defined objectives and carefully measured results.
- A typical result: "Target A was achieved, target B was not achieved. The reason for this was ... and in the future we should do ... instead".

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Evaluation in practice

- Usually evaluation is targeted to a precise development process.
- In practice it is a comparison between premeditated objectives and achieved results in current circumstances.
- For this process the objectives must be clarified and simplified from general level to very detailed level.
- These detailed objectives are compared with the actual results which may be measured in different ways and combinations of them:
 - Statistical or other numerical data (number of customers, sales...)
 - Interviews of target groups or experts (opinions, views...)
 - Questionnaires to the target groups etc. (experiences...)

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Modern examples (from Finland)

- Health care: Most development projects and their results are evaluated in order to improve the future decision making and process management.
- Regional development: All projects (e.g. road construction, cooperation projects) are evaluated from different perspectives including environmental issues, traffic, well-being etc.
- Private companies: Similar methods are nowadays used for evaluation of investments and other development issues in companies – often through quality systems.
- EU-programmes: All results of EU-funded programmes and large EU-funded projects are evaluated by external evaluators who describe the targets, the circumstances in which the work was conducted – and the results including suggestions for future development work.

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A very recent evaluation (2007)

- Two large Finnish public health care units planned increasing their co-operation in order to improve the quality of treatment and to save costs in a three-year project.
- Only three of seven departments were able to achieve cooperation benefits. Two departments failed to achieve their goals and in two other departments the funding was suspended at the beginning since the treatment policies were too different.
- Failure? Not necessarily. The evaluation showed the most critical problems and their location (insufficient management skills, different treatment policies and lack of cooperative skills).
- Result of the evaluation: management issues are emphasized and cooperation is now increased in areas where the results are most likely to be achieved.

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Pros and cons of evaluation

- Evaluation gives detailed information and independent views of the process in question.
- Future planning decisions are easier to make and they lead to positive results more often than earlier.
- Evaluation adds costs in short term – usually however the costs are worth the investment.
- Some people are afraid of evaluation results and the criticism in them – despite the fact that the targets of evaluation are development and learning.

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Bulgaria and EU accession

- European Union requires external, independent evaluation for all development programmes they finance.
- Programme level evaluation requires some project level evaluation (since programmes consist of several projects).
- In Finland the number and quality of evaluation work has increased rapidly since 1995 (after joining the EU).
- Foreign evaluators may be used during the first years – later most evaluations must be made by Bulgarians – no one else knows the local culture, circumstances and local language.
- Later this growing expertise in practicing evaluation can be used for national development planning.

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