The Institutionalisation of Evaluation in Europe

Edited by Reinhard Stockmann
Wolfgang Meyer · Lena Taube
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Editors

The
Institutionalisation
of Evaluation
in Europe
The idea for this book, which is the first in a series, matured slowly over time and received input from a variety of sources. First and foremost, was our practical work as evaluators in developing countries. Over the last few decades, we have conducted hundreds of evaluations in countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa. Due to the participatory approach of CEval (Stockmann 2008: 248ff.1; Stockmann and Meyer 2013: 206ff.2), these activities were associated with capacity building measures right from the start, in order to qualify partners in developing countries, so that they could carry out their own evaluations. In addition, with the support of the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), we took advantage of our opportunity as part of the Saarland University within the framework of university cooperation to strengthen academic teaching and research in the field of evaluation. On behalf of the BMZ (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung = Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) and with the support of GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit = German Society for International Cooperation), we implemented the “Blended Learning Master Evaluation” at the Uganda Technology and Management University (UTAMU), which is based on the Saarbrücken


evaluation master’s programme. We are connected to the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR) and the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador (PUCE) by a long-term university partnership that, in collaboration with the GIZ/DEval project FOCEVAL (Fomento de Capacidades en Evaluación), extends far beyond teaching- and research-related capacity building measures.

Participation in international conferences, mostly in Latin America, Africa and Asia, has strengthened our opinion that evaluation is developing particularly dynamically outside of the countries where it originated. However, since the focus of the international donor, teaching and research areas in the field of evaluation is very much fixed on the developments in North America and, to a much lesser degree, in Europe, there is a lack of research on evaluation taking place beyond these regional boundaries. This becomes particularly clear when one considers the pioneering work of Furubo et al. (2002)3 and the follow-up study by Jacob et al. (2015).4 Although the book is titled International Atlas of Evaluation, the case studies cover twelve European countries, two from North America, three from Asia, one from Africa and none from Latin America or the Caribbean!

The stark contrast between, on the one hand, our own experiences and the impressive dynamics of the institutionalisation of evaluation outside of North America and Europe and, on the other hand, the lack of attention given to research in these regions, gave rise to the idea that the venture to provide a comprehensive overview beyond our own borders was one worth attempting.

The first opportunity presented itself when we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Center for Evaluation (CEval) at Saarland University in 2012 with an international conference in Saarbrücken. Instead of looking back on past years of success, we dared to take a look into the future. The contributions were so well received that we decided to publish them with Palgrave Macmillan under the title The Future of Evaluation: Global Trends, New Challenges, Shared Perspectives (2016). This was the first publicist step on the path that led to this volume. Back in May 2015, a workshop with international participants took place


at the CEval of Saarland University in order to discuss the idea and begin with the project design. At the EES conference in Maastricht in September 2016, the concept, which now had a theoretical and methodological basis, was presented and discussed.

Finally, the idea grew into a global project includes a bold plan to publish one case study volume each for Europe, America, Africa and Asia, analysing the institutionalisation of evaluation within the political, social and professional systems.

Because we are, after all, Europeans and we are most familiar with Europe, we decided to start with this European volume. The American volume will follow soon in 2020. Most of the articles have already been submitted. The African volume (2021) and the Australian-Asian volume (2022) are to follow.

It takes a lot of heart, persuasiveness, support, perseverance and many hard-working heads and hands to be able to carry out such a mammoth project! Therefore, first and foremost, we want to thank the authors of this first volume, who agreed to write their case studies based on the analysis framework we developed, in order to ensure the highest possible comparability across all countries.

We would also like to thank Saarland University, which granted us the freedom needed to research this project. Thanks are due to our many hard-working and patient colleagues who have helped with and supported this project. Especially heartfelt thanks to: Christine Nolte, Angelika Nentwig, Selina Röhrig, Myriel Mohra, Felipe Ramirez Kaiser, Nicole Ebel and Fabian Otto. Last but not least, we would like to thank our publisher Palgrave Macmillan for agreeing to publish all four volumes.

We hope that the first volume on the institutionalisation of evaluation in Europe will pique your interest and meet your expectations. If so, then you may look forward with us to the following volumes—in which you may even want to participate.

Saarbrücken, Germany

Reinhard Stockmann
Wolfgang Meyer
Lena Taube
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PART I

Introduction
CHAPTER 1

The Institutionalisation of Evaluation
Theoretical Background, Analytical Concept and Methods

Wolfgang Meyer, Reinhard Stockmann and Lena Taube

1 Introduction

The global development of evaluation is remarkable. Starting from North America, during the past 50 years, evaluations are conducted in a steadily increasing amount of countries, policy fields, types of organisations and technical forms. In the course of an administrative modernisation that can also be observed worldwide, evaluations are used to make measures, projects and programmes more effective and efficient, to supply decision makers with information and assessments in order to enable rational
decision-making processes. Evaluations serve to measure success, accountability, legitimise political and administrative action and sometimes also—and this is the other side of the coin—by means of evaluations decisions already taken are to be rationalised and justified at a later date. Evaluations are used ex ante for regulatory impact analysis, on-going for implementation adjustment or for impact analysis. In recent decades, the evaluation portfolio has continued to diversify both horizontally and vertically.

This goes hand in hand with a professionalisation process that can be observed worldwide. More and more training courses are offered at universities, academic and non-academic training centres, inside and outside public and private organisations, and—not to forget—in the internet. Furthermore, the number of evaluation journals, textbooks, articles and studies has increased in tsunami terms. Quality standards for evaluations have been developed in many countries, associations and networks have been established and certification systems are being developed (Stockmann 2013). After almost 50 years of development history, it is now time to take some global stocktaking, because research on evaluation is still underdeveloped (Coryn et al. 2017) and merely concentrated on North America. Hence, many parts of the world are not well integrated into the scientific publishing system (Altbach 2003) because most of the important journals are in English and publications in other languages—even in other universal languages like Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, Russian or Spanish—are almost not recognised (Jacob 2005; Widmer et al. 2009). Studies on evaluation are, therefore, clearly biased and incomplete. This is even true for the most important work, the “International atlas of evaluation” edited by Jan-Eric Furubo, Ray C. Rist and Rolf Sandahl (2002). While many European countries are included (Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom), almost all African (with the exception of Zimbabwe) and Asian countries (with the exception of China, Japan and South Korea) and all Latin American and Central Eastern European Countries are missing. Nevertheless, from a European perspective the atlas (and its update by Jacob et al. 2015) is a wonderful reference for “The institutionalisation of evaluation in Europe”.

Again, the focus in this volume is on Europe (including Eastern Europe). But this volume marks the beginning of a book series that also focuses on the other continents. This is all the more important as evaluation is developing particularly dynamically there. For this reason, the Europe volume will
be followed by three further volumes that examine the institutionalisation of evaluation in America, Africa and Asia.

The reason for this order is just pragmatic: for the editors, the access to authors was easier (and faster) here than in other areas and an early start at the European Evaluation Society (EES)-conference in Maastricht 2017 was possible.

All four publications are based on the same theoretical and methodological concept, which leads to a common analysis grid. In this way, a high degree of systematic comparability across countries and continents is to be ensured.

The chapter is structured in such a way that the current state of research on the institutionalisation of evaluation is briefly discussed before the theoretical and methodological concept applied to all four volumes is presented. Afterwards, the selection of countries for the European volume and the challenges to be mastered with the production of the volume will be discussed. A total of 16 countries and the role of the European Union (EU) will be covered. The Europe volume concludes with a synthesis chapter in which the most important results are worked out in cross-section and, as far as possible, attempts are made to explain the different degrees of institutionalisation of evaluation.

2 State of Knowledge

As already mentioned above, Furubo, Rist and Sandahl provided the first systematic overview about evaluation systems in 21 different countries and three international organisations. The purpose of the research was to describe the countries’ individual systems as well as global trends and developments, and to explain these developments regarding possible driving forces and consequences. The methodological approach was to conduct country case studies oriented on nine indicators. In 2015 an update was presented by Jacob, Speer and Furubo,\(^1\) offering a cautious longitudinal comparison. The finding in this longitudinal comparison was a general ‘lift’ effect of institutionalisation in all countries, or like Furubo and colleagues state it “evaluation culture has matured over the last decade” (Jacob et al. 2015, p. 23). While the former forerunner countries from 2001 (United States of America [USA], Canada, Australia and Sweden) remained quite

\(^1\) Using the same indicators to ensure comparability.
static at the high level they achieved previously, others fulfilled huge efforts to catch up and thereby managed to establish themselves at the rankings top (such as Spain, New Zealand and Japan). This ranking can be considered as very useful to get a first impression about the actual state of evaluation in a country, but two points lead to a limited comparability, namely that evaluation, evaluation culture and the institutionalisation of evaluation lack a clear definition, and the fact that in the update from 2015 different experts have been questioned than in 2002, which might have induced a shift in the results. Besides that, it seems that no theoretical deduction of the indicators took place and an indicator measuring training and education is missing. The focus lays, like already mentioned above, clearly on the European and North American continent, while all Latin American countries and nearly all African and Asian countries were left out. Still the findings presented by Furubo and colleagues are important contributions towards how evaluation is institutionalised. It has been possible to work out three different internal driving forces for the development of evaluations. Those are the political constellation, the fiscal situation and constitutional features. External driving forces might be significant external pressures by donor countries or organisations (cf. Stockmann and Meyer 2014; Furubo et al. 2002; Jacob et al. 2015).

Another publication dealing with the institutionalisation of evaluation was presented by Widmer et al. (2009). This aims to capture the development of evaluation in a systematic way in 10 different topic areas, thereby comparing Switzerland, Germany and Austria. It covers the institutionalisation of evaluation, focusing on the constitutional and other legislative foundation of evaluation as well as the anchoring of evaluation in parliament, government and administration, different topic areas and the use of evaluations as well as sectoral and national trends. The obvious difference in comparison to Furubo and colleagues is the focus on specific sectors. Each chapter is written by a different expert from the specific sector in the specific country. Each thematic rubric ends with a comparison of all three countries. Thereby it is possible to identify differences and similarities of the countries and sectors. To enable the already mentioned comparisons the authors set a strict framework for the chapters and defined evaluation as systematic, transparent and data based. The authors had to follow this definition. It can be criticised that the methodological approach of the single chapters is not systematic—some relied only on their own expertise in this area while others carried out written surveys or systematic analysis of databases (cf. Widmer et al. 2009). Still the book provides a detailed
description of the differences and similarities of all three countries regarding the institutionalisation of evaluation.

Two studies about National Evaluation Policies have been conducted by Rosenstein in 2013 and 2015. In 2013 Rosenstein carried out an internet research of 115 countries and found that 20 already possess a written, legislated evaluation policy, while others are either developing a policy (23) or conducting evaluation routinely without a policy (34). 38 did not provide any information indicating that they are developing one at the moment (Rosenstein 2013). These findings have to be interpreted very cautiously due to the fact that the study of Rosenstein was performed solely in the internet, which can lead to a false categorisation, if one is not familiar with the country’s political system, language or other issues. The cross-country comparison about different legislation of evaluation can be seen as a starting point for further research, but systematic assessment of the quality of governance as well as the development of evaluation will be necessary (cf. Stockmann and Meyer 2016).

In the ‘Future of evaluation’, by Stockmann and Meyer (2016), more than 30 different authors from 20 countries placed in all continents provide an overview about the professionalisation of evaluation in their countries. The focus lays, like the title expresses, on the future of evaluation, meaning how evaluation will develop in different countries around the world. Topics covered in this book are challenges, which might be able to weaken, stop or reverse the increase of evaluation or the question, if there will be a globalisation process leading towards ‘one’ evaluation culture, or if there will be differentiation of the evaluation culture according to the political culture of various countries and their specific use of evaluation. The strength of the publication clearly lays in the provision of a new viewpoint towards evaluation, also including countries that are normally not on the radar of evaluation research. But although the editors provided indicators to ensure comparability, these were not systematically explored in all contributions. Therefore, also this publication does not provide a systematic analysis of the institutionalisation of evaluation in different countries (cf. Stockmann and Meyer 2016).

Criticism of the analyses presented so far clearly shows that a uniform theoretical and methodological approach is necessary to carry out an analysis across countries and continents, from which an analysis grid can be deduced that is binding for all case studies. The theoretical approach starts with the institutions.
3 Institutions—Some Theoretical Remarks

Institutions are one of the most important objects of social sciences from its early beginnings. In sociology, for instance, classical sociologists like Emile Durkheim or Max Weber paved the way for an intensive discussion on the role of institutions as bridges between society and individuals (e.g. Stachura et al. 2009; Traugott 2013). Especially in the middle of the twentieth century, Talcott Parsons and the structure-functionalist school emphasised the importance of institutions and, among others, dominated the thinking about professions and professionalisation (e.g. Parsons 1939; Brante 1988). Institutions are seen as stabilising elements of society and—in Parsons (1939, p. 457) own words—the “study of the institutional framework within which professional activities are carried on should help considerably to understand the nature and functions of some of these social ‘constants’.”

As a consequence of this, Parsons and the structural functionalists were criticised for overemphasising stability of societies formed by social institutions. This debate led to modernisation theory, still the most important concept of social change in sociology. In this theoretical tradition, the driving force of change is social differentiation: it refers to a horizontal process through which different functional areas of society—e.g. politics, law, science, the economy et cetera—emerge, each exhibiting their own functional principles (cf. Luhmann 1983, 1988). The central trigger of differentiation is specialisation, which results in more efficient processing of a common task within the framework of division of labour between individuals, groups or subsystems. The necessity for this can arise from intrinsic development processes (e.g. technological progress), changed extraneous influences (e.g. climate change) or new individual needs (e.g. altered consumer behaviour). The constantly advancing trend towards social differentiation creates pressure for change on existing subsystems, which then try to stabilise themselves by adapting their institutions (e.g. Alexander 2001).

The theory of social differentiation (Schimank 1996) is, therefore, at the core of modernisation models, primarily looking at change from a traditional to a modern society based on an increasing degree of complexity. There is no consensus about the subsystems to be analysed and several slightly different solutions are offered in sociological literature: Lerner (1968) characterised the modern age by a growing, self-supporting economy, democratic participation in the political process, a culture oriented towards secular, rational norms, and a performance-based society which is
equipped with personal freedoms and is geographically, socially and intellectually mobile. Talcott Parsons (1971) identified markets, administration, the rule of law and democracy as hallmarks of modern age, Anthony Giddens (1996) capitalism, industrialisation, the nation state and its monopoly of power, Wolfgang Zapf (1991) competitive democracy, market economy and an affluent society, and Ronald Inglehart (1998) changes in values, rising standards of living and democracy. Pollack concludes that the majority of modernisation theorists agree that the most important factors revolve around the economic and political discussion, that is economic markets and democratic forms of participation, and that individual dimensions do not emerge independently of one another but are rather interwoven in an intricate way (Pollack 2016).

Following this theoretical concept, (modern) society thus consists of specialised subsystems operating in accordance with their own logic, exhibit independent structures and processes, following their own codes and rules of communication, and developing their own internal dynamics. The relative structural and cultural independence of a subsystem is based on its specialisation for particular social tasks, which enables better, more tailored and efficient processing. Although the functionally differentiated subsystems can be distinguished from one another using these criteria, the dividing lines between them are neither invariable nor impervious (cf. Pollack 2016).

For their purposes, subsystems require outputs of other subsystems, which also create their own specialisations due to their own performance. For example, the economic system is influenced by laws and rules which have been made by the political system. The scientific system is in a similar position. With the cultural system on the one hand, having a determining influence on which research questions are dealt with, and the political system on the other hand, determining—through the allocation of financial resources—to what extent and in how much depth these questions can be examined by academics. The respective societal subsystems are therefore mutually dependent and connected to each other through institutional rules for managing these interdependencies.

These institutional rules for managing interdependencies between subsystems opens the door for the question how these developing processes may be shaped and managed. Rules and systems of governance are necessary to stabilise the amorphous relationship between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of a (sub)system. Here system boundaries are promoted along with
regulating and channelling of ‘cross-border traffic’ between the subsystems at the same time (cf. Kapitanova 2013, p. 257). Such institutions include formal and informal systems of control for opening and closing the system, govern exchange between subsystems necessary for system integration, facilitating mutual monitoring of transactions and incursions which break the rule (cf. Armingeon 2016). Subsequently, Schimank (2001) sees in ‘subsystem interdependencies’ the key to understanding modern societies. Moreover, the conflicts and difficulties derived from (dis-)functionality within and between subsystems have to be solved by ‘man-made’ rules—being social innovations with side-effects and non-foreseeable consequences in each of the subsystems.

The economic approach on institutions was totally different from these sociological enquiries. Starting point was Ronald Coase famous article on the ‘nature of the firm’ (Coase 1937), trying to answer the question why corporate actors are existing in economy and what are their advantages in market exchange. By bringing in the term ‘transaction costs’, Coase way of thinking influenced a lot of economists, finally forming ‘institutional economics’ as an important school (Voigt 2019). These economists focus merely on the role of institutions for cooperation and exchange. In this context, institutions are seen as bridges between different actors bringing them together for joint and successful collective action.

Finally, one has to mention the huge amount of literature and discussions on institutions in the political sciences (Peters 2019). The roots of this way of thinking can be traced back to Greek philosophers like Aristotle and includes famous politicians like Montesquieu or the former US president Woodrow Wilson. Peters (2019, p. 7ff.) emphasises the holistic structuralism of this old institutionalism in political science and the birth of modern political science was somehow related with a critical perspective on this traditional way of thinking about the political system. Especially in the second part of the twentieth century, behavioural and more individuum oriented approaches like rational-choice theory dominated the way of thinking before the ‘new institutionalism’ was introduced by March and Olson in the 1980s (1983). For them:

> Political institutions are collection of interrelated rules and routines that define appropriate action in terms of relations between roles and situations. (March and Olson 1989, p. 21)