Final meeting: ESF MOForum on Evaluation of Funding Schemes and Research Programmes

16 – 17 November 2009 Dublin, Ireland

Theme 1: Good Practice for Devising and Implementing Evaluation Strategies

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Good Practice for Developing Strategies for the Evaluation of Funding Programmes

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Whose best practice?

- For commissioners of evaluations
  - who may be evaluators some of the time (internal evaluators)
- For evaluators
  - who may be full time or part time

- Two sides of the same coin?
- Both have control over the evaluation
  - Better have them working together?
Why Evaluation?

• Tests fitness for purpose of institutional frameworks, assesses value for money
  • Allows us to make qualified judgements about relative achievement of science and scientists – part of the management of science by scientists and funders

• Contributes to our understanding of scientific enquiry
  • How is science done, what are the characteristics of a scientific field – (your field) growth, decay, dependence on other fields
Evaluation – Organisational Priority?

- Costly “non-core”
- Ex post (how can it be relevant to the future?)
- Interfering (interacting!) science, scientific and wider communities
- Evaluation is not neutral – it means applying criteria
What makes Evaluation challenging?

- Phenomena are complex – uncertain outcomes
- List of actions – lots of types of linked activities
- There funding modes (7) and there are aspects to each mode with quality control dimension
  - publicity, recruitment, applications, review (peer / expert review, real time monitoring / management, dissemination
- Evaluation => research?
- But resistant phenomena
  - Ethical: “do no harm”
  - Practical: “double blind trials”
  - Political: “antipathy”
What makes Evaluation even more challenging?
A Gaming environment

Expect gaming by:

- Researchers -
  - Citation clubs – ?Chaos Solitons and Fractals ?

- Journals -
  - Folia Phoniatrica et. Logopaedica

- Evaluators trying to impress funders?
Evaluation: supply chains and eco-systems

- Interdependencies of activities - missions
- Variety of standards - measures (policy mix)
- Linkages between actors and flows - material
- Multiple users of evaluation findings – messages
- Best practice involves a strategic view - coordination
Mission: A Context of Evaluation
Implication, Consistency and Causation

- Does the mission imply the concept
  - Programme, infrastructures,
- Does the design follow the concept?
- Is the design implemented as intended?
- Does the implementation cause the outputs?
- Do the outputs cause the impacts?
- Are the impacts consistent with the mission?

- => change of Mission, change of Concept?
Measures

- Whose measures? Yours or Theirs?
- Evaluator discretion – relies upon:
  - professional expertise
  - contribution of evaluation community
- Ensure relevant comparisons with other organisations and their activities
- Remember – the community can come up with its own measures
  - Hirsch
- Meta-analysis?
Materials (Data)

- Availability
- Coverage
- Timeliness
- External access
- Impact - accumulate
- Non-invasive methods (c.v. analysis)
- Quality control within the funding organisation – publication records –
- Grant rules to help with attribution
- Sharing data with other funding bodies?
Messages

- Who should hear? How do they listen?
  - Decide at the outset
- Openness - “evaluator chicken”?
- Evaluators and Evaluation community
  - Commit at the start to create trust
  - Accept critically methodological developments
  - Encourage publication in the literature
Best Practice - Strategy

- Evaluation should serve Mission
  - Interventions are consistent
- Measures
  - Broad enough to capture desired and unintended effects
  - Above all - relevant to the Mission
- Material
  - Available in time to evaluation, give and support access to data
- Messages
  - Determine use from beginning – gives confidence to evaluation
Best Practice: Some Tactics?

- Put the Board off –
  - Better to be late and right than early and wrong

- Dialogue with the Evaluation – this is research
  - You can provide context - you know your Programmes
Thank you