

The relationship between evaluation quality and results – Conclusions from a rigorous thematic meta-evaluation on German Development Cooperation

Evaluation 2018, Cleveland, USA

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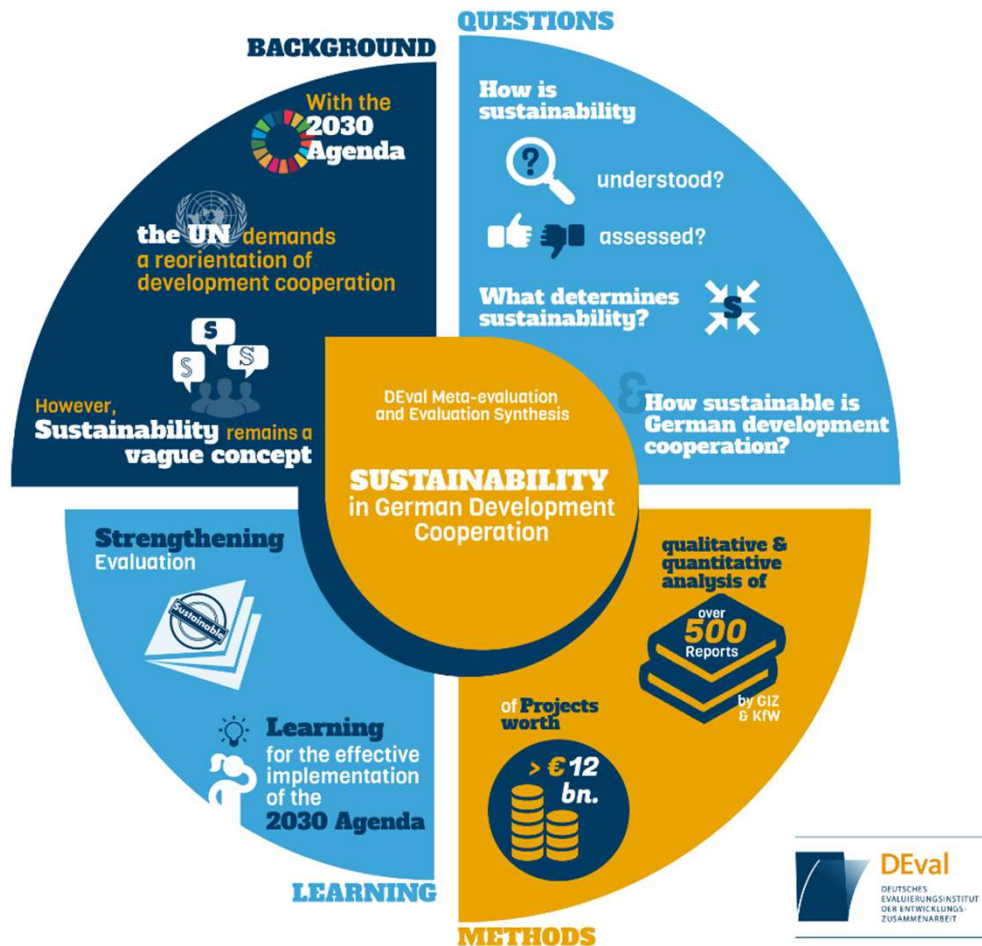
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Motivation

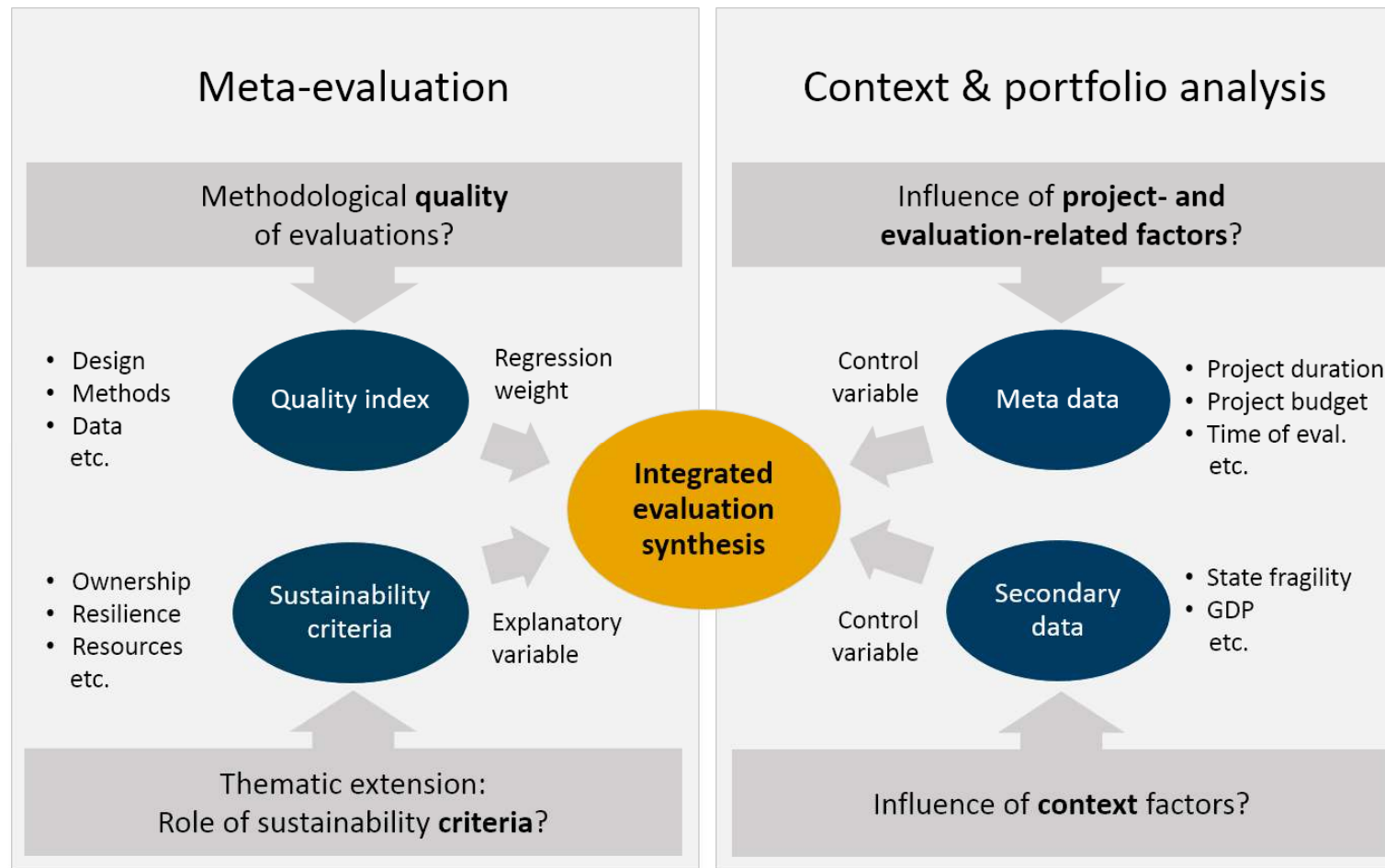
- An growing number of evaluations of (development) projects and programs increases the potential for strategic learning across single observations
- A range of potential protocols: Meta-analysis, meta-regression, systematic reviews, synthesis studies, etc.
- However, aggregating knowledge from a heterogeneous evidence base remains a methodological challenge
- How to deal with evaluation quality in evaluation synthesis?
- What do we know about the empirical relationship between the quality of evaluation and evaluation results?

The case: Meta-evaluation and evaluation synthesis of sustainability in German Development Cooperation

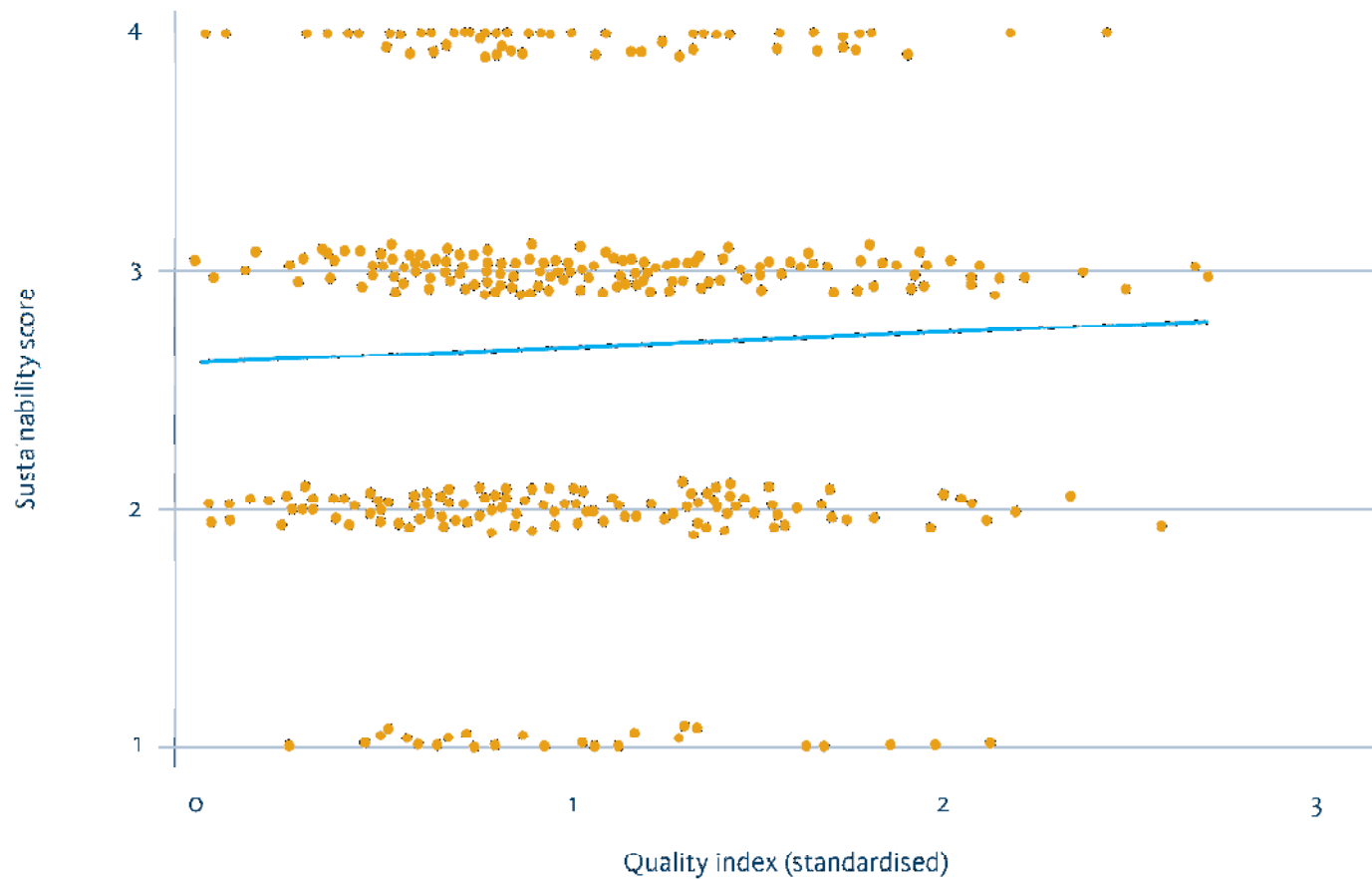


- First systematic and comprehensive meta-evaluation in German Development Cooperation
- Representative sample of 513 evaluation reports from N=1015 project-level evaluations between 2006-2016
- Sustainability score: 1 (high) – 4 (low)

Quantitative evaluation synthesis design (ordinal logistic regression model)



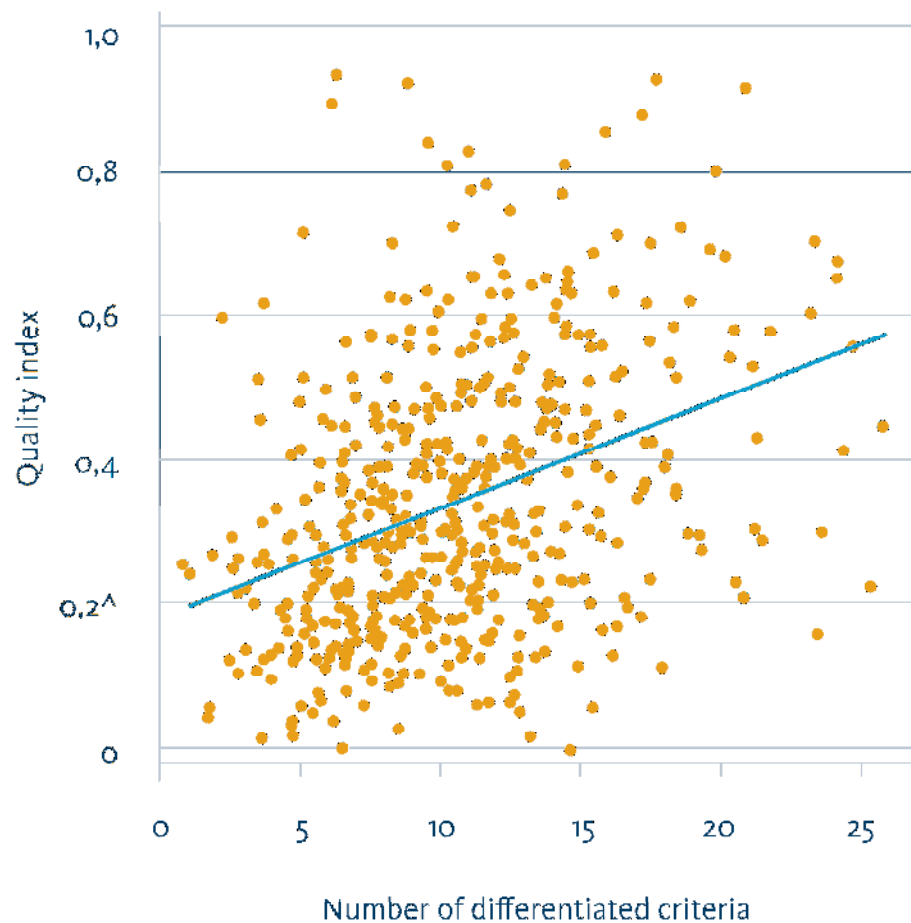
Relationship between evaluation quality and the outcome



Result:

- No evidence supporting the assumption that evaluation quality has a direct influence on the project ratings

Relationship between evaluation quality and evaluation criteria



Result:

- High quality evaluations include more judgement criteria into the analysis
- No correlation between quality and the positive or negative influence of single judgement criteria on the outcome of interest

Effect of evaluation characteristics on evaluation results

- Timing → the later we measure, the more critical the result
- Evaluation management → centralized evaluations are more critical
- Different cultures to report on performance → controlling for all other factors there are still systematic differences among implementing agencies

Conclusion

- No evidence supporting the common assumption that evaluation quality has a direct influence on the project ratings
- So does evaluation quality matter?
- Yes, quality matters: We learn more and more in-depth.
- Other characteristics of the evaluation itself, such as timing or (de-)centralized organization, are all related to the evaluation results and have to be considered in the course of evaluation synthesis.

Questions for the „round table“

- What is your experience with the relationship between evaluation quality and evaluation results?
- What about the relationship between evaluation quality and the usefulness of evaluations?
- How do you include information on the quality of evaluations in your evaluation synthesis designs?



Thank you very much – Dankeschön!

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SUSTAINABILITY IN GERMAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

*Meta-evaluation
2018*



SUSTAINABILITY IN GERMAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

*Evaluation synthesis
2018*



Explanatory power of the regression model

Dependent variable: Sustainability score (1-4)

	Ordinal logistic regression model	
	% of correct predictions	AIC
Basic model	52	405.19
+ average DAC score	64	303.64
+ project characteristics	61	305.37
+ characteristics of the implementation context	62	306.83
+ evaluation characteristics	65	305.64
+ sustainability assessment criteria	74	238.44

Result:

- Including the specific informations gained in the meta-evaluation increases the explanatory power of the model by a significant margin

The integrated approach at a glance

Strengths

- + No arbitrary threshold between the best and second best evidence
- + High sensitivity with regard to a continuous quality distribution
- + Full inclusion of different evaluation designs from various sectors, regions, etc.
- + High representativeness of the evidence base
- + Systematic integration of meta-evaluation and evaluation synthesis

Challenges

- A minimum level of comparability between the type of evaluations/studies is needed
- The overall quality distribution has to be above a minimum standard
- High labor intensity at the stage of the extended meta-evaluation