

Developmental Evaluation in Practice

Session DeGEval Conference

Friday 17.09.2021: 12:45 - 14:15, Zoom



Round 1

Short presentation of your programme

At Robert Bosch Stiftung, within our three areas of support (Education, Health and Global Relations) we bundle our work in topics (f. ex. Inequality, Immigration Society and School Development). Each topic is assigned a budget and a team to initiate systemic change.

What is “being developed” in your programme?

The strategy of each topic. We start from an in-depth analysis of the current situation which identifies system dynamics, main actors and possible entry points and approaches for the Robert Bosch Stiftung. We then draft a Theory of Change (including a Theory of Action) and start to implement and to fund projects “asking evaluative questions, applying evaluation logic, and gathering real-time data to inform ongoing decision making and adaptations” (M.Q. Patton 2011: p. 1).

Round 1 (2)

What is your main reason for using DE?

Given volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous conditions, our topic strategies need to be emergent and adaptive. DE just seems to be the appropriate tool for evidence-based decision making and adaptive management.

What are your expectations, what can be achieved (compared to traditional evaluation)?

DE means generating meaningful data at the right time for each topic. We expect to better understand what is happening and what might be done.

We also expect DE to favor effective cooperation and learning processes, engaging a wider range of stakeholders such as partner organizations and beneficiaries.

Round 2

How did you go about introducing DE? What did you do differently compared to a “traditional evaluation”?

We developed DE (or MEAL) through a series of consultations and workshops in each topic, involving the entire team.

This included the following steps:

1. Describing the desired change (long-term and medium-term)
2. Mapping the pathways of change
3. Identifying critical assumptions
4. Formulating learning questions
5. Selecting appropriate monitoring and evaluation approaches and instruments
6. Defining the adaptation and learning process for each team

Round 2 (2)

What went well? Where did you experience challenges, which?

We are at an early stage, but things are going well.

Challenges are to develop easy-to-use monitoring and evaluation tools, to align multiple accountabilities and to anchor DE within the team. We are trying to overcome them by external consultancy and training, making conflicts of goals explicit, ensuring independent and “more objective” assessment where needed, embedding “MEAL-coordinators” as a designated role within the team, and emphasizing a structured and planned learning process.

Round 3

How has DE made a contribution? What have you gained?

Putting the team in the driving seat has fostered the acceptance of DE and the use of M&E instruments overall.

DE helps to bring in data from multiple sources = multiple perspectives and to enhance the use of evaluation.

What are preconditions for using DE successfully? For which kinds of programmes, people, institutions, circumstances would you recommend it?

Decision-makers need to understand DE and there should be a mandate "to develop" your programme, otherwise expectations are not met.

You should find yourself in a "complex" situation, otherwise DE might be a waste of resources.



Round 3 (2)

What are limitations for using DE? For which kinds of programmes, people, circumstances would you recommend it?

DE in practice is not the “systematic, rigorous, and meticulous application of scientific methods” as Wikipedia defines evaluation. It generates data “good enough to move on”. You will have to decide where to apply more rigorous impact analysis and external assessment.

Unless your organization is a “single purpose organization”, DE means living without a standardized organization-wide measurement framework, because things are constantly moving.

Thank you



Frieder Bürkle
Senior Manager Monitoring & Evaluation
Future Issues and Foundation Development

Frieder's responsibilities at the Robert Bosch Stiftung include providing overall guidance and developing tailor-made solutions for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of programs and focus topics.

+49 711 46084-271
frieder.buerkle2@bosch-stiftung.de
www.bosch-stiftung.de

