

Meta-evaluation: the 'evaluation of evaluations'

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COMPASS Seminar
University of Auckland
4th October 2012

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the Institute of Education, University of London



Meta evaluation

- What is it?
- What does it mean for evaluating the effects of the London 2012 Olympics?

What is evaluation?

- judgments of something's value, quality, importance, extent, or condition
- often used to refer to research evaluating whether some service or programme has achieved its objectives and not achieved some undesired outcomes

What is meta?

What is meta-evaluation?

- Meta: many meanings and often means about or beyond
- Meta-evaluation: the evaluation of evaluations

Three types of meta-evaluation

1. Meta theory on the nature and purpose of evaluation
2. Quality assessment of evaluations
3. Synthesis of findings from evaluations

Type 2: Quality assessment of evaluations

Aims:

- Trustworthiness of study findings
- Audit and development of methods
- Development of quality standards

Other variations in 'type 2' meta-evaluations

- **Evaluation phase:** (i) the design of a study; (ii) the process by which a study is undertaken; or (iii) the results of an evaluation study.
- **Criteria:** on which the evaluation judgments are made (such as quality standards).
- **Independence** of evaluator: (i) external and independent; or (ii) internal and related to the evaluation being evaluated.
- **Timing:** (i) concurrent and formative; or (ii) after the evaluation and summative
- **Manipulation** of data: (i) used as reported by the evaluations; or (ii) re-analysed
- **Methods:** A range of procedures used

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation: sound evaluation practices and procedures

30 standards of:

- i) Utility (evaluation processes and products valuable in meeting their needs);
- ii) Feasibility (effectiveness and efficiency);
- iii) Propriety (proper, fair, legal, right and just in evaluations);
- iv) Accuracy (the dependability and truthfulness of evaluation representations, propositions, and findings, especially those that support interpretations and judgments about quality); and
- v) Accountability (adequate documentation of evaluations and a meta evaluative perspective focused on improvement and accountability for evaluation processes and products).

(Yarbrough et al 2011)

Type 3: Synthesis of findings of evaluations

- Sub set of systematic reviews that are concerned with evaluation questions
- Uses methods of systematic review
- Includes aggregating (of empirical findings) and configuring (of concepts) reviews

The common stages of a systematic review

Form review team (involve 'users')



Formulate review question, conceptual framework and inclusion criteria



Search strategy + screening to identify relevant studies



Describe studies



Assess study quality (and relevance)



Synthesise findings



Communicate and engage



Map

Synthesis

Research as aggregation

Aggregating reviews predominately add up (aggregate) findings of primary studies to answer a review question...

... to indicate the direction or size of effect



Research as configuration

Configuring reviews predominately arrange (configure) the findings of primary studies to answer the review question....

... to offer a meaningful picture of what research is telling us



Philosophy:

Idealist

Realist

Relation to theory:

Generate

Explore

Test

Approach to synthesis:

Configuring

Aggregating

Methods:

Iterative

A priori

Search:

Theoretical search

'Exhaustive' search

Quality assessment:

Value study contributions

Avoid bias

Product:

Emergent concepts

Empirical findings

Review use:

Enlightenment

Instrumental

To assess whether the US sex offender notification and registration programme works

- **Method:** Realist Synthesis (multi component review configuring of causal chains + aggregation of data to test each chain)
- **Results:** Megan's Law is a programme with a long implementation chain to impact. The complexity of decision-making compounds at every point with the result that there is little guarantee of uniformity between cases as they proceed through the registration and notification process. Offenders with identical records may have very different experiences. The programme thus achieves some of its objectives in some cases but in many cases does not.

(Pawson 2002)

Special aspects of mega events synthesis 1

- Synthesis of many aspects of one intervention (rather than many similar interventions):
 - (i) variants of sub-intervention (e.g. different experiences of the Olympics);
 - (ii) range of outcomes considered (e.g. economic Vs. participation in sport).
- Levels of questions such as: Themes; Top level questions; layers of sub questions

Special aspects of mega events synthesis 2

- Various data types: Study results; raw data from programmes; additional data collection; economic modelling
- Mixed methods synthesis: many types of data with different degrees of quality and relevance in synthesis (validity, confirmatory, explanatory)
- Importance of theory driven synthesis: why should these interventions be expected to produce these hypothesized effects?

Meta-evaluation methods development

- Clarity about nature of meta-evaluation
- How this applies to mega events
- Application of ideas in meta evaluation of London Olympics (and further events)

Aims of the Olympic Games meta-evaluation

- overall objective of the study is to undertake a comprehensive and systematic meta-evaluation of the impacts and legacy of the 2012 Games.
- to provide a comprehensive initial evaluation of the additionality, outputs, results, impacts and associated benefits of the investment in the Games.
- to include indirect as well as direct effects, unintended as well as intended consequences, and intangible as well as tangible effects.

Scope of the meta-evaluation

Geography

- **East London** (Host boroughs)
- **UK** (including **Nations and Regions** breakdown)
- International (only including Government initiatives with an international impact).

Diversity

- The work will look at the impacts on the population as a whole, but will also consider the following groups separately:
 - Disabled
 - Women
 - Black and minority ethnic (BME)
 - Young people

Assessment of Impact

- Investment in venues & infrastructure, including to maximise legacy;
- Legacy programmes/projects and programmes/projects redefined in scale, timing or focus as a result of the Games;
- The staging of the Games including its inspirational effect;
- Private and third sector investment as a result of the UK hosting the Games.

Value for Money

- Phase 3, Summer 2013 – will consider value for money of Government legacy initiatives.
- Phase 4, 2020 – will consider Value for money of Government legacy initiatives and the wider public sector funding package.

Development of logic chains - example of the Economy theme

Rationale and Objectives

The 2012 Games can provide an important stimulus to the economy during the recovery period and help to support the long-term development of UK businesses and skills

The Government has a number of priorities:

- To contribute to increasing and sustaining growth in the UK economy and UK businesses
- To help more people across the UK get and stay in work and build their long-term skills
- To make the UK more welcoming and ensure all visitors receive a world class service

Outcomes/impacts

- Short-term and ongoing economic benefits – GVA, job creation and jobs safeguarded
- UK business growth / sustainability measured by net increases in / safeguarding of employment and GVA
- Increased skill levels in UK

Gross to Net Conversion

Need to take account of additionality - extent to which opportunities would not have been provided or not be available from other sources in the counterfactual scenario.

Need some consideration of extent to which programme of intervention is responsible for observed outcomes.

Adjustments for displacement, leakage, substitution, crowding out and multiplier effects, as relevant.

Activities

Legacy activity is to take place in five areas:

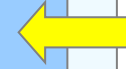
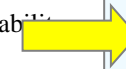
- UK business access to 2012 Games-related contracts
- Export and Trade Promotion
- Promoting the UK as a place to invest
- Employment and skills development
- Tourism

Outputs

- Total value/% of 2012 Games-related contracts made accessible by CompeteFor
- **Businesses engaged / assisted**
- People supported to improve their employability
- **People assisted in skills development**
- Number of people exposed to marketing / promotional material that uses the 2012 Games theme

Results

- **Higher proportion / value of 2012 Games-related contracts**
- **Increased and sustained employment**
- **More new businesses** and more contracts traded with existing businesses
- New businesses attracted to the UK (measured by value of investment)
- More people assisted into employment / sustainable employment
- **Increased visitor numbers**



Research questions

participation in **sport and physical activity** and the development of competitive and elite sport

economic impacts, particularly in terms of employment and GVA

social impacts, particularly in terms of volunteering and development of the 'big society'

contribution to the regeneration of **East London**

Cross Cutting

Changes in attitudes to **disability**; increased participation of disabled people in sport, economy, volunteering and culture

Contribution to **sustainable development**

Effects on **well-being**

Effects on the **international profile and reputation** of the UK, London and East London

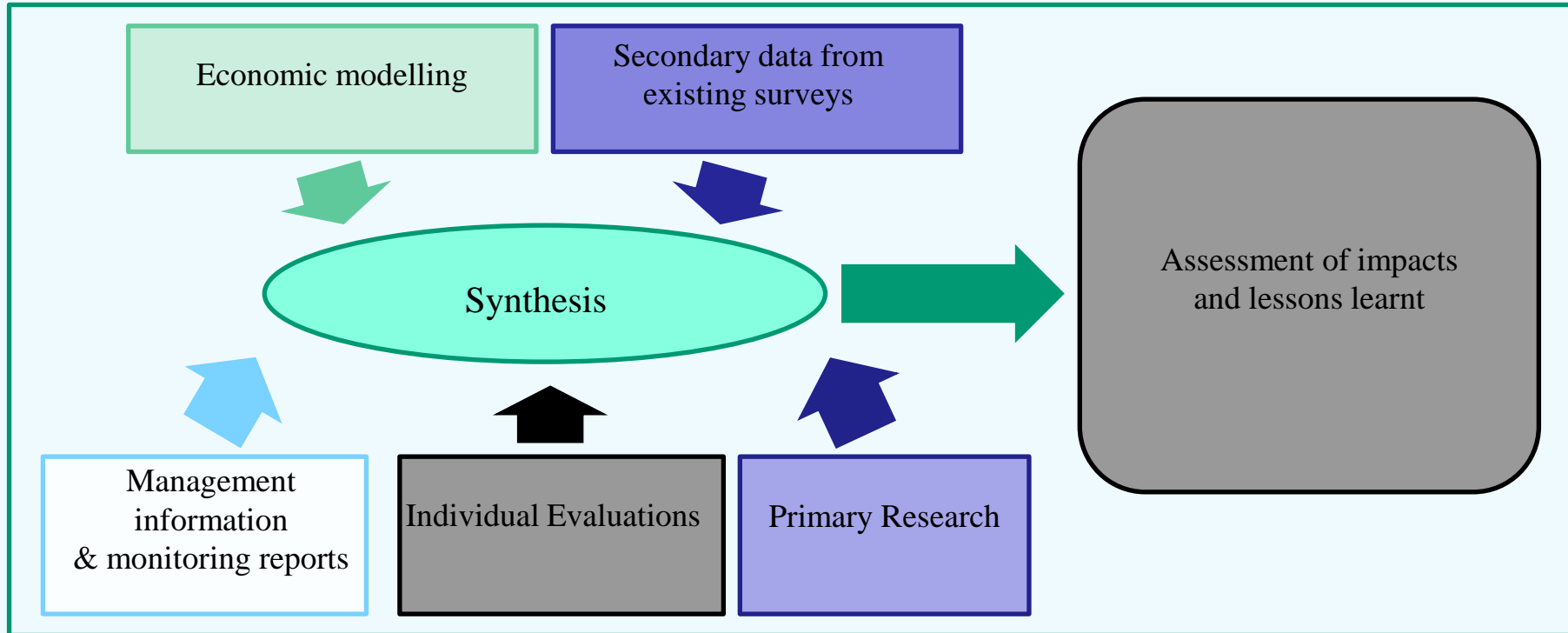
Benefits to **target groups/communities**

Value for Money

Whether impacts have been **sustained**

Lessons learned about how to maximise the benefits to the host country and city from the staging of mega-events, particularly in terms of organisational lessons and change

The Meta-evaluation framework



- Development of a 'common currency' of indicators (e.g. employment and GVA) for aggregation
- Analysis of management information data, monitoring reports and case studies, particularly for major projects lacking evaluation
- Limited project specific primary research
- Development of evidence tables (rationale, objectives, activity, outputs, results, impacts) and evidence mapping (data to address different sub-question and main questions)

Implementation issues and challenges (1/2)

- Scope: vast range of legacy activities - what's in & what's out
- Evidence availability: out of our control & need to manage gaps
- Methodological Complexities: 67 research questions; interdependencies between projects/geographies
- Baselines and counterfactuals: appropriate and realistic
- Practical Complexities: getting hold of the evidence
- Coverage: strong for some, patchy for others
- Timescales: identification of impact & evidence availability

Implementation issues and challenges (2/2)

- Aggregation and synthesis of diverse information of varying quality
- Assessing the impact and additionality of interventions in a consistent fashion...if at all
- Measuring benefits and value for money
- Measuring wider strategic impacts and added value
- Capturing and aggregating 'intangible' benefits
- Inconsistencies in the evidence base



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london 2012 meta-evaluation

Meta-Evaluation of the Impacts and Legacy of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games

From the outset the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games have aimed to deliver a lasting legacy for the UK. DCMS has commissioned a consortium led by Grant Thornton, including Ecorys and Loughborough University, to undertake a comprehensive meta-evaluation of the impacts and legacy of the Games.

The meta-evaluation will pull together the results of evaluations of individual legacy programmes, projects and initiatives, and use these along with additional research to evaluate the overall legacy of the Games. It will aim to address overarching questions such as the impact of the Games on the UK economy and on the uptake of sport.

The study will enable Government to understand and demonstrate the long-term impact of the Games to help ensure current and future programmes provide value for money.

A post Games initial evaluation will be published shortly after the Games, in spring/summer 2013. Prior to this, a number of interim outputs will also be published. Further research will be commissioned separately to look at the effect of the Games up to around 2020.

Outputs will be published here once available.

Contact us

If you are carrying out relevant research we would like to hear from you, please complete the following feedback form:

- [London 2012 Games Research Feedback Form](#) (RTF 154kb)

If you would like to receive email updates about the project including when outputs are published or for any other enquiries please email anna.woodham@culture.gsi.gov.uk.

Other London 2012 related publications

- [London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Impacts and legacy evaluation framework](#) (DCMS)
- [Employment and Skills Statistics \(ODA\) latest release](#)

Websites of interest



Related information

(RTF 154kb)

THANK YOU!

(plus thanks to London 2012 meta evaluation team colleagues for some slides)

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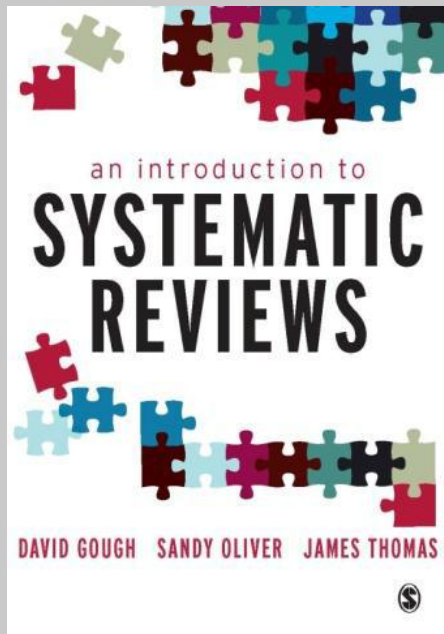
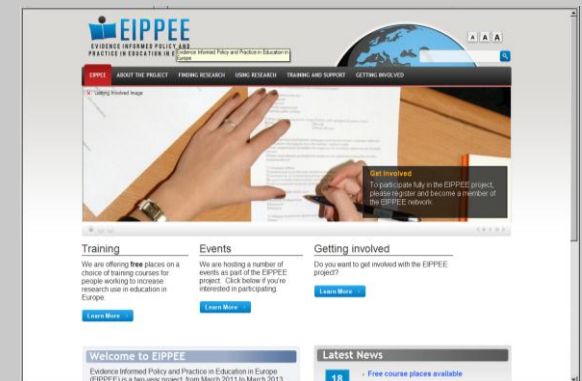
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Evidence use in Europe

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Gough D, Thomas J, Oliver S (2012).
Clarifying differences between review
designs and methods.

Systematic Reviews Journal.

<http://www.systematicreviewsjournal.com>

Outputs and timescales

