



Opinion Makers Section

Note on “outcomes profiles evolution and no need for synthetical impact indexes” in Public policies Evaluation”.

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Traditionally, in evaluation of public policies, the public value chain of public activities begins from operations (their human and financial cost or inputs), and then postulate outputs or effective realisations, and immediate outcomes and then more hypothetical synthetic or systemic impact. The whole chain is presented with the convention of a logical diagram of impact. (logically, “if causes, then some effects”).

The synthetical impact is generally estimated by monitoring the evolution (the delta) of a proxy extracted in the mine of context data. This is for example the employment impact or the carbon print.

When mastering a public program, there is generally an attempt of targeting and getting the best evolution of a synthetical index of impact comparing to the target is the supreme goal.

But, as it is well known, there is a lot of postulates for accepting the synthetical index. We also know that, taking account of imprecision in each outcome measure, and confronted to the irrelevance of a lot of synthesis algorithms, we argue that it is really an innovation in Public policies Evaluation to propose to stop before getting the most synthetical index of impact. Less aggregating and more comparing intermediate results would be a sufficient and excellent approach. So we could be the advocate of a more Multidimensional or multicriteria evaluation. Comparisons of the evolution of outcomes profiles should be adequate for monitoring the program.

In our different case studies, the main purpose is to take the outcomes of programmes for each period, and to compare these profiles year on year without having to calculate a synthetic impact index.

We could examine the universities rankings issues with the same considerations. Is it useful to have a general ranking like the Shanghai ranking between the totality of universities in the world or should it be better to consider only profiles and deny any interest in the final weighted arithmetic mean between the notations captured in five dimensions.

The new experimentation of a European multidimensional ranking (Cherpa consortium, (Center for Higher Education and Research Performance Assessment)) in an outgoing train and it will be a demonstrator of the potential superiority of a non-outranking tool.

See. Baslé, M. (2008). Economie, consuel et gestion publique. Suivi et évaluation de politiques publiques. Editions Economica. Paris