

The ultimate evaluation question: Is it enough to have TExT when you do not have TITLE?

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The ultimate evaluation question: Is it enough to have TExT¹ when you do not have TITLE?¹

¹List of abbreviations

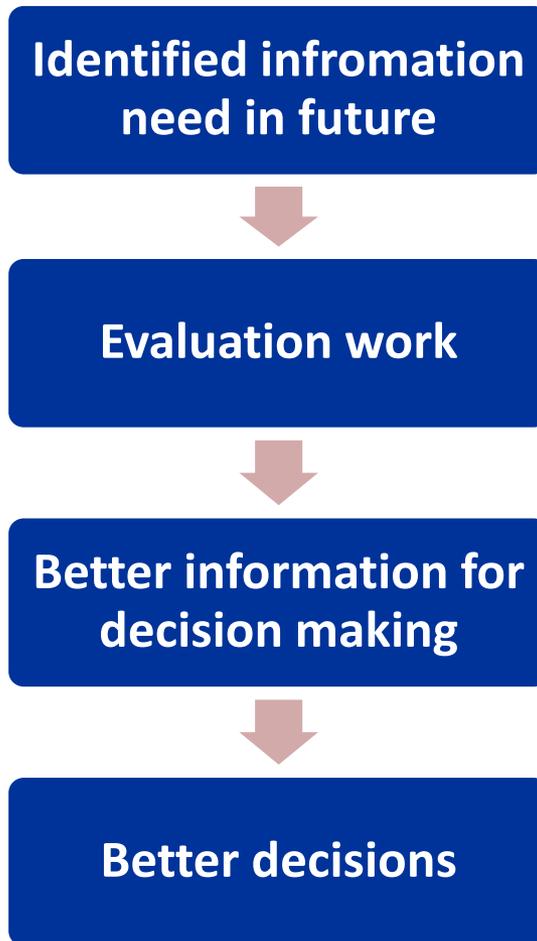
TExT = Technical Expertise and Training

TITLE = True Intent To Learn from Evaluation (Martini, 2015)

Objectives

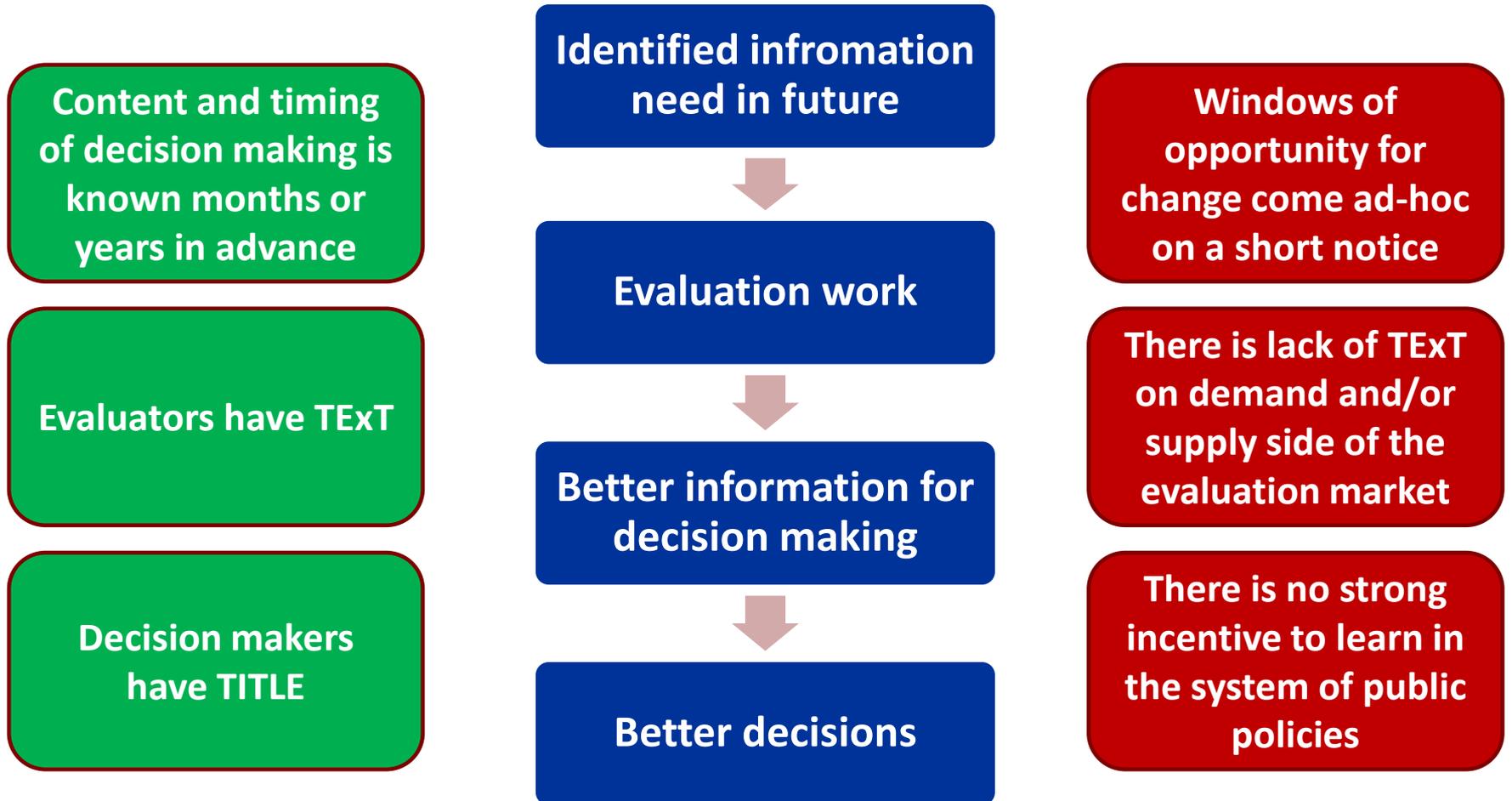
- Beside amusing people with cute acronyms, we would like to stimulate some real discussion on the use(fulness) of evaluation.
- Ambition of pointing out where the conventional wisdom now stands and hope of moving it just few inches forward.
- We move from the widespread, although rarely officially recognized, disappointment and disillusionment with Evaluation, particularly with the EU-sponsored variety.
- Our main point is that no quantity of TExT – which obviously still sorely needed—will not make up for the lack of TITLe on the part of those who decide on funding, commissioning and most importantly using evaluation.
- And we have some suggestions what to do...

Classical theory of change of evaluation



Any assumptions here?

Alternative hypotheses



Can you suggest any tests of these assumptions?

Windows of opportunity for change come ad-hoc on a short notice

What to do:

- (Internal) evaluation team has to become „knowledge broker“:
 - Even on a short notice one can scan academic journals for relevant knowledge
 - There are evaluations of similar policies in similar circumstances
- => Need for TExT not only how to generate new knowledge, but also how to access relevant already existing knowledge.
- (Btw. how many evaluation projects behave like it's the first time someone is doing any research in the particular field?)

There is lack of TExT on demand and/or supply side of the evaluation market

What to do:

- First – to learn
- Second – to learn
- And third – to learn and then check that learning shall not become just empty words or a fashionable phrase

There is never enough of TExT. TExT is necessary, but not sufficient condition...

There is no strong incentive to learn in the system of public policies

As this is probably the most serious problems, some considerations first:

- It's not surprising that the decision makers lack the TITLE, as **most people act in conformity with the system**. Here, the framework of European Funds is not helping much.
- **You are what you measure.**
- Where is the focus: Spending, error rate (maybe add ex ante conditionalities and performance framework indicators).
- Not much incentives to learn in the regulations. If, then only in preambles, as a wish, **not as a systemic condition**.

There is no strong incentive to learn in the system of public policies

What to do:

- Act on the policy environment: Support public discussion of evaluation results, invite media. Gain TExT in publicity of evaluation.
- Problem could be at the too generic level of recommendations: as a part of evaluation project, **check, plan and do the change** (at least as a pilot). **Show** that the change is possible.
- Act on the system – keep on suggesting to place incentives to learn. (See theory of accountability, accountability overload). Accountability to learn is difficult to introduce, requires brain both on the side of the accountee and the accountant.

Alternative theories of change?

Are there other mechanisms how evaluations can lead to learning and improvement?

- Managers with evaluation background may have more TITLE.
- Some requirements on evaluability of policies may improve the policies even without evaluation.



**Thank you for your
attention**

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