

ProgettoValutazione

L'Associazione per lo Sviluppo della Valutazione e l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche (ASVAPP) è un centro di ricerca non profit nato nel 1997 che opera a supporto di fondazioni di origine bancaria e di numerosi enti pubblici. Attualmente sono soci sostenitori dell'ASVAPP la Compagnia di San Paolo e la Fondazione CRT. Sono soci ordinari il CSI-Piemonte e l'IRES-Piemonte.

ProgettoValutazione

è il braccio operativo che cura le iniziative condotte dall'associazione.

Il contributo di ASVAPP alla guida EVALSED

Evalsed is an online resource providing guidance on the evaluation of socio-economic development. It promotes exchange of experience and good practice as well as increasing the relevance of evaluation in decision-making. Whilst the resource has a specific focus on evaluation in EU cohesion policy, it is also relevant to the evaluation of other socio-economic development tools.

Evalsed is currently under development. In the policy debate, there is an ever increasing focus on the need for evidence on the performance of cohesion policy. Policy makers need to know "what works?" and "why?". The experiences of ongoing evaluation for 2007-2013 and the thematic ex post evaluation of the 2000-2006 period also demonstrate the greater potential for evaluations of themes or interventions to deliver credible results. Evalsed has traditionally focused on programme evaluations. Evalsed consists of two parts: THE GUIDE and three SOURCEBOOKS.

The GUIDE is designed primarily for decision-makers - specifically those who design and manage evaluations in order to enhance decision making on socio-economic development policies. It defines the role of evaluation in socio-economic development, discusses various ways to develop evaluation capacity, elaborates on evaluation methods as well as providing guidance on how to design and implement evaluations and how to ensure their quality. The SOURCEBOOKS are of particular interest to practitioners and those wishing to impart or acquire evaluation skills. The three SOURCEBOOKS cover the following issues: evaluation approaches for particular themes and policy areas, evaluation methods and techniques and evaluation capacity building.

During 2009 the second sourcebook "Methods and techniques" was partially replaced and the new section "Counterfactual Impact Evaluation" written by Alberto Martini of ASVAPP has been added. This section is focused on the counterfactual approach and the following are the main issues of the new material available on the European Commission website.

An introduction illustrates the two conceptually distinct sets of questions behind impact evaluation. The first set of questions is devoted to establishing whether a given intervention produces the desired effects on some dimension of interest. The key question here: "does it make a difference?" This is answered by identifying and estimating causal effects through counterfactual methods. The second set of questions is primarily devoted to understand why an intervention produces intended and unintended effects, for whom and in which context. The key question here: "why and when does it work?". This is answered by identifying the theory of change behind the program and assessing its success by comparing theory with actual implementation. The second chapter aims to explain the counterfactual logic and its limitations: it introduces randomized controlled trials, clearly stating their limited relevance within the evaluation of cohesion policy; finally, it explains the logic of non-experimental methods and how they deal with the problem of selection bias as well as natural dynamics bias. The ensuing four chapters explain in accessible language the main counterfactual methods for estimating impacts, namely statistical matching based on the propensity score, difference-in-differences, discontinuity designs and instrumental variables. All the chapters contain a revised bibliography.

La revisione del Sourcebook 2 "Methods and Techniques" è stata commissionata dalla **DG Regio** della Commissione Europea.

La DG Regio gestisce le politiche di coesione economica, sociale e territoriale dell'UE, volte alla riduzione delle disparità di sviluppo fra le regioni e gli Stati membri.

La DG Regio amministra tre importanti fondi:

- il Fondo europeo di sviluppo sociale (FESR)
- il Fondo di coesione
- Lo Strumento per le politiche strutturali di preadesione (ISPA)

Ulteriori informazioni su:

www.ec.europa.eu

Introduction to Counterfactual Impact Evaluation

Quantifying and explaining the effects of interventions is at the heart of the evaluation of socio-economic development programmes. For policy makers to make informed decisions, it is important to understand what works or what does not, as well as why, for whom and in which contexts. This is a formidable list of questions, and the available analytical methods provide at best tentative and incomplete answers to most of them. Thus it is of fundamental importance to clarify which methods can answer which questions, under which circumstances.

The logic of Counterfactual Impact Approach

The Introduction to Impact Evaluation identified two separate sets of questions, one dealing primarily with quantification of effects, the other with their explanation. The first relying on counterfactual methods, the second on theory-based methods. In this section we deal exclusively with the first set of methods, devoted to quantifying whether a given intervention produces the desired effects on some pre-established dimension of interest.

Questions related to the sign and magnitude of programme impacts arise frequently in the evaluation of socio-economic development programmes. Do R&D subsidies increase the level of R&D expenditure by subsidized firms? Do targeted ERDF funds increase per capita income of the assisted areas? Do urban renewal programmes contribute to the economic development of urban neighbourhoods? Does support to SMEs increase their employment levels? Does investment in new public infrastructure increase housing values?

In other words, the evaluation problem has to do with the "attribution" of the change observed to the intervention that has been implemented. Is the change due to the policy or would it have occurred anyway? Answering these questions is not as straightforward as it might seem. The challenge for quantifying effect is finding a credible approximation to what would have occurred in the absence of the intervention, and to compare it with what actually happened. The difference is the estimated effect, or impact, of the intervention, on the particular outcome of interest (be it per capita GDP, R&D expenditure, housing values or employment levels).

Difference-in-Differences

Difference-in-differences or double differencing is based on the precondition that outcome data (for example, firm sales) are available for beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (assisted and non assisted firms), both before and after the intervention (say, the year preceding and the year following the receipt of assistance).

Propensity Score Matching

The matching strategy is based on the possibility of observing all the relevant characteristics X of both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and to pick the non-beneficiaries that "look alike" beneficiaries along these characteristics.

Discontinuity Design

The strategy is based on the idea of discontinuity in treatment around a threshold, which applies mainly to those situations in which some units are made eligible for the intervention and others are made ineligible by some well defined rule, typically some administrative rule.

Instrumental Variables

The instrumental variables identification strategy is based on the idea of involuntary variation (in the official jargon instrumental variables): those situations in which the receipt of treatment is partially determined by an extraneous factor.

The full version is available on:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evalsed/sourcebooks



Lo studio è stato realizzato da:
Alberto Martini

Progetto Valutazione
Via Vitaliano Donati, 17
10121 Torino
Tel. 011 533 191
Fax 011 5130 721

www.prova.org