

# **Evaluation in the Making**

## Contexts and Methods



# Evaluation in the Making

## Contexts and Methods

Edited by

**Agnieszka Haber**  
**Maciej Szałaj**



MINISTRY  
OF REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT



## ***Evaluation in the Making. Contexts and Methods***

Agnieszka Haber, Maciej Szałaj – editors

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The book, which we are pleased to present, is a reflection of the debate going on in the Polish evaluation community. Our institution has always played an active role in this discussion. The Polish Agency for Enterprise Development has been involved in evaluation research for over ten years now. We were able, thus, to become one of the pioneers of this field among Polish public administration.

Publishing is one of the most important areas of our evaluation activity. The texts which you will find here are a selection of articles published under a PAED series devoted to issues linked with the area of evaluation research. The authors represent a group of researchers and scientists from leading Polish universities and institutions who have a rich experience in the evaluation of public interventions. This book has been divided into two main thematic axes dedicated to the most sensitive aspects of evaluation process – the methodological framework and socio-organisational context.

It is widely agreed that methodology is one of the most important elements of evaluation. Correct selection and skilful application of methods thereof are essential for the success of any research. PAED has always put an enormous stress on the methodological aspects of its evaluations. Over the past years, we have frequently applied innovative research approaches.

We need to particularly point here to the assessment concept based on the Propensity Score Matching method, elaborated in cooperation with Professor Jarosław Górniak. It proved to be a solution providing particularly reliable knowledge on the effects of structural policy. The application of that method has raised a wide discussion on the accuracy of the approaches prevailing to date, and has set a specific trend in the practices of Polish evaluation practice. Other important directions for shaping our know-how were the applications of network analyses, which are currently one of the most dynamically developing areas of social science. We have also attempted to extend the scope of online methods use. The reflections accompanying these projects are presented in the chapter: „Methods of evaluation”.

Contexts of evaluation are another key theme of this book. Its popularity in the local debate results from the tension arising between the dynamic development of evaluation activity (reinforced by formal requirements of EU funds expenditure) and the weakness of institutional traditions as regards reflective public management. There is a risk that the evaluation practice will suffer from – misperceived – mimicry consisting in literal application of guidelines or codes of best practices. The problem was discussed on many occasions – also during the Evaluation Conference organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Regional Development. The texts published in the chapter “Evaluation in organisations and society” explore the question of optimum strategy for running evaluation studies and application of their results.

We hope that you will find this volume interesting and helpful. We are also positive that the topics discussed here will fit well into the areas of your expertise as the issues and concepts considered by the authors refer to universal challenges faced by the practitioners and recipients of evaluation studies, regardless of specific contexts of their activity.

We also strongly encourage you to share your opinions and reflections with the authors and publishers of the book. Any such comments will serve as an ideal foundation for further, international discussion.

**Bożena Lublińska-Kasprzak**

Chief Executive Officer

Polish Agency for Enterprise Development

This is a publication devoted to evaluation - the key tool for improving the quality of administration - which is gradually becoming an integral element of evidence-based policy. This book is a selection of professional and academic considerations concerning theoretical aspects of evaluation along with its practical implementation – in particular in the analysis of EU intervention effects. The book – elaborated by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development – fits perfectly into the mainstream works of the National Evaluation Unit at the Department of Structural Policy Coordination in the Ministry of Regional Development.

In the process of supporting the development of evaluation methodology, the National Evaluation Unit prepares manuals and guidebooks on the problems and issues relating to the evaluation of public intervention effects (e.g. infrastructural interventions). A grant competition for academic and scientific circles had been organised since 2008. It aims at the creation and development of innovative research methodology. To estimate the macroeconomic impact of the Cohesion Policy, on-going cooperation is being maintained with three independent research and development centres which prepare autonomous macroeconomic models for the administration.

Numerous trainings and information initiatives ensure the development of the evaluation potential of administration. We organise many discussion panels and conferences which help to build evaluation culture in Poland. Since 2005, an evaluation conference ([www.konferencja-ewaluacja.pl](http://www.konferencja-ewaluacja.pl)) is being organised in cooperation with the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development. It is the most important initiative in this field of expertise in Poland (over 300-400 participants, both Polish and international speakers representing diverse circles). Moreover, since 2008, in cooperation with Warsaw University, we run gratuitous post-graduate studies entitled *Academy for the evaluation of socio-economic development programmes*. This initiative – thanks to the involvement of European and world-scale experts as lecturers – gives students an opportunity to become acquainted with the most up-to-date theories on the methodology and techniques of evaluation and their practical uses in managing development policy.

I hope you will find the book interesting and inspiring in your work and that it will become an incentive to develop the methodology of evaluation studies further and to seek innovative research methods and techniques. I also hope that the papers presented herein serve as an impulse for the discussion over the most important challenges of development and practical applications of evaluation studies' methodology in managing public programmes.

**Piotr Żuber, PhD**

Director of Department of Structural Policy Coordination  
Ministry of Regional Development



**Part I**

**Evaluation in Organisation  
and Society**



**Dariusz Zalewski**

## **Possibilities and limitations concerning the use of evaluation outcomes by public institutions**

### **“Diabolic exercise”**

It has been explained in many ways what evaluation functions are. Therefore, there is no reason to quote well-known textbook definitions once more. The career behind this term seems to be inseparable from two phenomena; first of all – from the expansion of the public sphere and the growing significance of administration liable for the implementation of specific tasks. Second – from the disappointment by the efficiency of these tasks' implementation by administration organised according to classic rules formulated by M. Weber. Obviously, we need to remember that evaluation itself has a much longer history - it dates back to the beginnings of the 20th century, and such figures as Florian Znaniecki had their share in its development – than the critique of Weberian bureaucracy and, accordingly, the search for new organisational forms for the public administration for a more effective and efficient task execution. For the sake of completeness, it needs to be added, that evaluation researches, as a tool for evaluation of social intervention programmes executed, are used not only within public administration, but their development owes most to its specificity or imperfection.

The increased interest in evaluation researches in Poland is strongly related to the Polish accession to the European Union. The reason is banal and relates to the obligatory requirement to evaluate public programmes financed by the EU<sup>1</sup>. The charming appeal of evaluation is visible in almost every official EU document dedicated to this issue. The first sentence of one of the European Commission's documents is the following: “Evaluation may be regarded by some as a diabolical exercise. However, if evaluations are well conducted, and if the results of evaluations are used by decision-makers, they can contribute to improved public programmes, as well as to increased transparency, accountability and cost-effectiveness”<sup>2</sup>.

Although evaluation has many functions and its value should be assessed through its complexity of functions and objectives set before it, the evaluation of rationality of incurred costs seems to be central for the achievement of specific objectives, due to the fact that public administration is the largest recipient of its outcomes. This idea has been well reflected in the following sentence: “Evaluation is to deliver criteria, methods and measures to assess rationality of public activities, functioning in the public sector **analogue** analogically to the market mechanism of the private sector”<sup>3</sup>. Obviously, we could argue that such

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<sup>1</sup> *European Commission Initiative Sound and Efficient Management 2000* (known as SEM 2000) includes evaluation as a key element for the improvement of management culture of the Commission itself. The key innovation of SEM will be the requirement for the covering of all EU programmes with systematic evaluation, see “Evaluating UE Expenditure Programmes: A Guide”, European Commission, 01.1997, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Evaluating UE Expenditure Programmes...*, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> W.R Shadish, T.D. Cook, L.C. Leviton, *Foundations of Program Evaluation: Theories of Practice*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, London 1991, p. 19, quoted after K. Olejniczak, *Theoretical Basis for Ex-post Evaluation*, in: A. Haber (ed.), *Ex-post Evaluation. Theory and Practice*, PARP, Warsaw, 2007, p. 19.

reduction of evaluation research functions is unjustified and comparing its role to the market mechanism is inaccurate, insofar as the state differs from the market and the logic of public administration's activities differs from the one of a private enterprise. However, the critique of public administration, inspired mostly by neo-liberal classical economics and public choice theory representatives, has led to the situation where it is the market, with its competition and striving for economic efficiency, has become the reference platform for reforms proposed for public sector management. The role of evaluation, conversely, would be answering the question whether public programmes executed are effective in the economic sense.

There is the reason to believe that expectations regarding evaluation are too high. If so, on the one hand, what are the possibilities and on the other hand, what are the limitations in using evaluation outcomes in administrative practice? The answers to these questions seem interesting in the context of the public sector's efficiency sought for, that "Holy Grail" for all reformers, as smartly put by V. Wright<sup>4</sup>. The analysis will concentrate upon external limitations in the possibility to use evaluation outcomes despite the awareness that its applicable value depends equally, if not more, on the evaluation process' internal factors (appropriateness of methodological assumptions, observance of research standards, researcher's competence etc.). Such selection has been dictated by popularly formulated (often contradictory) expectations towards evaluation research from various societies, in order for their outcomes to contribute to the increased efficiency of the public programmes executed.

This chapter has been structured so as to clearly present the expectations towards evaluation and its possibilities and limitations. Since the significance of evaluation may be different according to various public tasks' execution concepts, we will briefly present the proposals for changes in the public administration and potential consequences for the evaluation of social intervention programmes. It is recommended that this text inspired a discussion on evaluation possibilities and limitations, not only among academics, since they always find time to argue, but also among representatives of administration, liable for the execution of public tasks.

## **A few words on the administration reforms and their consequences for evaluation**

The role of evaluation in the process of efficient expenditure of public funds, the extent to which it can contribute to rational allocation decisions, depend largely on who and how executes public services.

Nearly thirty years ago Milton Friedman with his wife Rose, published a book entitled *Free to Choose*, in which they accessibly presented the rules governing the rational allocation of financial resources, in regards of two pairs of variables: whose money we spend (own one or somebody else's) and who we spend it on (for ourselves or somebody else). As a result of joining those two pairs of alternatives we obtain reply matrix, consisting of four variants: own money for own purposes (1), own money for the purposes of others (2), other persons' money for own purposes (3) and other persons' money for the purposes of others (4)<sup>5</sup>. In criticizing the lack of allocation rationality of the public administration, the Friedmans concentrated on variants 3 and 4, proving that expenditure of public money is a premise signifying the waste of these funds, since there are no sufficient incentives to start rational strategies for acting so as to optimise benefits obtained by beneficiaries in relation to incurred public costs. The

<sup>4</sup> V. Wright, *Paradoxes of Administrative Reform*, in: W.J.M. Kickert W.J.M., *Public Management and Administrative Reform in Western Europe*, Edward El-gar, Cheltenham 1997, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> M. Friedman, R. Friedman, *Free Choice*, Wydawnictwo Panta, Sosnowiec, 1994, p. 111.

representatives of public choice theory, who base their analyses on microeconomic assumptions of neo-liberal economy, make similar statements. *Nobody spends somebody else's money as carefully as he spends his own* – wrote W. Mitchell years ago, analysing the functioning of the public sector as part of the public choice theory<sup>6</sup>.

Comments made by the Friedmans rather did not contribute to the development of evaluation research, and their intention was to show that the public administration mainly cared for its own interests, instead of public ones. One of possible conclusions we could make out of the neo-liberal critique of the public sector's functioning would be that the outcomes of evaluation research could be helpful, if not decisive, in the discussion on the efficiency of programmes executed by public institutions. This is confirmed by the tone of various statements made by the representatives of political establishments, particularly visible for the EU politicians, who treat evaluation outcomes as the factor rationalizing the decision making process in the public sector. "Evaluation is an indispensable part of modern public sector management practise" - wrote E. Liikanen, member of the European Commission responsible for budget and administration<sup>7</sup>.

Obviously, we must remember that evaluation is only a tool intended for the assessment of various social intervention programmes, undertaken not only by the public administration, and thus, on no account can be treated as a functional remedy for various problems, the functioning of the public sector breeds. However, if we would like to respond to such accusations, often justified, towards public institutions, or deliver the information about costs and effects of administration's functioning to the administration, it seems that we should refer to this activity's evaluation outcomes, which we can obtain as part of evaluation researches undertaken. We should however be aware not only of various limitations for the use of research results, but also of the fact, that significance of evaluation may be different depending on by whom and how the specific tasks traditionally belonging to the public sector will be executed as part of mutual bonds between the state and the market.

## **"Commercialisation of State" and evaluation**

Proposals for radical changes in the public administration, which appeared, among others, in the 1980s, formulated mainly by the Chicago School economists and supporters of the public choice theory, referred to the rules behind the free market with its benefit maximisation logic. The common experience was that the public administration failed to solve various problems, although it had been established to solve them, and its allocation efficiency was significantly lower than that of private entities operating in the market. The justification of the maintenance of the public sector and its administration, included in the *market failure* slogan, was countered by the *government failure slogan*. Thus, comparing the public administration's activity to market enterprises (whether a right or not is another issue), neo-liberal economists proposed, first of all, deregulation of the public sector, and second, its privatisation<sup>8</sup>.

Deregulating the public sector was mainly aiming at the reduction of state liability for solving various problems in order to extend the space for market activities. "If public deregulation is not necessary – argued George Stigler – than a lot of public sector programmes regulating the economy should be

<sup>6</sup> Quoted after: Dunleavy P., *Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, p. 173.

<sup>7</sup> *Evaluating UE Expenditure Programmes...*, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> J.E. Lane, *Public Sector Reform: Only Deregulation, Privatisation and Marketisation?* in: J.E. Lane (ed.), *Public Sector Reform. Rationale, Trends and Problems*, Sage Publications, London 1997, p. 3.

removed, including the agencies introducing those public regulations<sup>9</sup>. In short, deregulation, followed by privatisation of public sector agencies, was to provide better competitiveness between units liable for state public functions' execution, while the evaluative function was to be provided by the introduction of market rules, with their ability to effectively solve resources allocation problems. The trouble is though, that the market or quasi-market institutions allocate their resources only where it is possible to obtain a high rate of return for the invested resources. Apart from that, there are no guarantees that competition between entities rivalling for the execution of specific public services will take place in an impartial manner. However, apart from numerous problems and criticisms regarding the Chicago School or public choice theory representatives' proposals, such as ones stating that deregulation requires new forms of regulation<sup>10</sup> and privatisation increases transaction costs, it is worth noting that one of the consequences of these proposals should be the decline in evaluation research significance. This role should be largely taken over by the market, with its clear economic efficiency rule. Privatisation constitutes a reversal of the state interventionism broadening process, which was one of the key premises under developing evaluation research or, in a broader sense, implementation of the social sciences' output in solving specific problems<sup>11</sup>.

### **“Commercialisation of power” and evaluation**

Proposals for changes in the public sector formulated by neo-liberal economists were undoubtedly a serious threat to the evaluators' interests, and to some extent, to evaluation researches themselves, as it could have transpired there was nothing to evaluate or no one to evaluate for. The reformative concept of public entrepreneurship, best-known supporters of which were, in the 1990s, D. Osborne and T. Gaebler, authors of a notorious book *Reinventing Government*, certainly does not pose such threat. The proposal itself, fitting into a broader strategy of New Public Management, was neither especially new nor original, and drew upon both the public choice theory assumptions (based on the neo-liberal model of unit rationality), and the neo-Taylorian organisation and management theory. What evidently distinguishes the public entrepreneurship concept from the public services' commercialisation concept, deriving from the Chicago School, is included in different approaches towards market forces, which were to reform the public sector. Insofar as the neo-liberal economists proposed to limit the state activity in order to extend the space for the private sector, the “managerists” proposed the inclusion of market mechanisms into administrative activity in order to create the so-called internal market within the public sector. In reference to the neo-Taylorian concept of effective management, they proposed a model of target-oriented administration, and in particular, they stressed the use of efficiency and effectiveness indicators, evaluation of programmes executed, remuneration according to obtained outcomes and increasing the quality of services provided<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> G. Majone, *The rise of the regulatory state in Europe*, West European Politics, 17, p. 77–101.

<sup>11</sup> K.W. Frieske states that the beginnings of the involvement of social sciences representatives into “social practice” in the United States took place in the New Deal period, when the state extended the area of its interventionism, see. K.W. Frieske, *Sociology in Action. Hopes and Disappointments*, the University of Warsaw, Warsaw 1990, p. 78–79.

<sup>12</sup> Ph. Keraudren, H. van Mierlo, *Theories of Public Management Reform and their Practical Implications*, in: T. Verheijen, D. Coombes, *Innovations in Public Management. Perspectives from East and West Europe*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham 1998, p. 40.

In encouraging performing systematic evaluations of programmes executed by the public administration, Osborne and Gaebler indicated a number of problems that accompany the measurement of expected outcomes. Their comments, formulated on the basis of experience derived from administrative practice, were supposed to warn against certain errors to be avoided during measuring the outcomes. It is worth referring to them, without questioning their substantive reasonableness, if only to show that neither do they exploit the catalogue of possible errors likely to influence the inference stage based on evaluation outcomes, nor the reservations launched by various researchers towards evaluation.

- First of all, “there is a huge difference between measuring the process and measuring its outcomes”<sup>13</sup>. This remark sounds quite banal for each person who has been at least basically in the know of evaluation, but does not have to be that obvious for administration representatives. Basically, the authors were about the fact, that administration often concentrates on not measuring what should be the subject of evaluation. “The tendency to concentrate on a certain process is natural – managers measure what the organisations they are accredited to do, while in organisations driven by regulations and regimens people treat their work as a certain process, the course of which is defined by these regulations. If they carefully observe regulations and produce amounts they are expected to, this means they fulfil their tasks. They barely think of their work results and the influence it has on those served by a given agency. But even a perfectly performed work is a waste of time and money if it does not lead to the achievement of desired outcomes”<sup>14</sup>.
- Second, “there is a huge difference between measuring performance and effectiveness”<sup>15</sup>. An effective achievement of the goals set should be important for each organisational unit, the authors say. Performance is not and should not be a goal towards which the organisation is heading, but only a measure for its achievement. Concentration upon performance (and its measurement) in separation from the activity’s effectiveness, leads to a paradoxical situation of resource squander. “There is nothing more ridiculous than doing something you should not do at all but in a more productive way”<sup>16</sup>. Moreover, Osborne and Gaebler state that: “concentrating on performance also leads to the feeling of alienation among the public institution workers. When the authorities underline the cost of each labour unit, they often achieve only that the workers see their own segment, which hampers their intelligence and skills. (...) However, if their principals concentrate exclusively on performance - on how quickly they perform each labour unit - they begin to feel as if they were working on an assembly line”<sup>17</sup>. By the way, it is worth adding that it is clear that in their warning against negative consequences of measuring labour performance, authors go beyond neo-Taylorist tradition and refer to Organisational Humanism, marked by such names as John Dewey, Elton Mayo, Chester Bernard or Kurt Levin – inclined towards the exploration of human relations within organisations, among others, to test the relation between the satisfaction level and the level of fulfilling social and emotional needs of organisation members and the outcomes obtained by the organisation<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> D. Osborne, T. Gaebler, *To Govern Differently. How the Spirit of Entrepreneurship Pervades and Transforms Public Administration*, Media Rodzina, Poznań 1992, p. 467.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 468.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 469.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> More on this topic in, among others, J.B. McKinney, L.C. Howard, *Public Administration. Balancing Power and Accountability*, Praeger Publishers, Westport 1998, p. 159–165.

- Third, “there is also an important difference between the ‘programme results’ and ‘policy results’ covering a larger scope”<sup>19</sup>. According to Gaebler and Osborne, what is important from the social point of view refers to the results of more broadly understood “policy”; particular programmes are only a part of. There is a persuasive example given by the authors. The institutions executing the programmes consisting in looking for jobs for social assistance clients, often calculated the number of persons for whom the jobs had been found and the amount of their pay, not taking into account the number of persons receiving an unemployment benefit, the period of collecting a benefit, etc. What were the consequences of it? “Persons directly supervising the programme might counter that they are responsible for the number of jobs found but not for the number of persons receiving a benefit and they will be right. It is the general policy in this area, i.e. rules governing who qualifies for the benefit, the relation between the benefit and the remuneration for unskilled and low-paid job and the number of jobs like that likely to be found, that influences the number of the latter. However, if the assistance department does not measure both sets of numbers, it may seem to its workers that they are doing a great job, finding jobs for their clients and thus getting rid of them, while in fact the line of clients is getting longer. This is what has happened in many states for 10 years now. (...) Such statistics underline the significance of measuring both programme results and the policy”<sup>20</sup>.  
Gaebler and Osborne also formulate a number of practical recommendations for the public administration, which should be interested in gaining valuable information from evaluation research.
- The first recommendation, to *carry out both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis*, has its own vast bibliography and there is no reason to do any additional clarifications in this matter<sup>21</sup>.
- • Secondly, *beware of easy bits amateurs*. This is about not allowing oneself to fall into a trap of easy solutions, which were to attest to the programme’s effectiveness. Referring to the American public sector’s practice, the authors state the following: “Service providers usually give numbers they are expected to give, even if they have to simplify their work or avoid the regulations. If they are to find jobs for a thousand persons per year, they will choose a thousand persons for whom finding a job is the easiest and then train them. (...) This is how social assistance centres worked in the first years of implementing the Act on Vocational Training Participation”<sup>22</sup>.
- Third, *be prepared for strong opposition*, which means more or less that reliable information about performance and effectiveness may pose a serious threat to an existence of a given organisational unit. Authors give a couple of examples for such situation: the State of Florida, which liquidated the programme rewarding schools for improved work quality and the State of Arizona, which ceased to publish data concerning the rate of vocational and postgraduate schools’ graduates who’d found jobs. The reason was banal: - “the college and vocational schools conceded that such information poses a threat to them, since it reveals how they actually prepare young people to taking up a job”<sup>23</sup>.
- Four, *involve service providers and subordinates into the measurement method creation process*. This recommendation refers to models known from the organisation and management theory, such as *Organisational Humanism* referred to above, recommending cooperation to work out common solutions and avoid intra-organisational conflicts. In the words of authors, “the best way to break the

<sup>19</sup> D. Osborne, T. Gaebler, op. cit., p. 470.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 471.

<sup>21</sup> M. Jasiński, M. Kowalski, *False contradiction: qualitative or quantitative methodology?* in: A. Haber (ed.), *Ex-post Evaluation. Theory and Practice*, PARP, Warsaw, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> D. Osborne, T. Gaebler, op. cit., p. 476.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 477.

opposition against the introduction of methods measuring the work performance and quality is to involve service providers and all workers into the process of creating them"<sup>24</sup>.

- Five, *submit measure methods to annual revision and modification*.
- Six, *do not use too many or too few measures*. This truly Aristotelean recommendation of temperance is based on the conviction that it is possible to develop as part of cooperative measure creation strategy. "If (...) workers and service providers are actively involved in creating measurement methods and they are allowed to regularly adjust them, they usually remain moderate in creating measures"<sup>25</sup>.
- Seven, *beware anti-incentives*. This is about avoiding situations leading to inefficient outcomes, from the point of view of "overall policy". "Measurement methods primarily assumed in the Act on Vocational Training Participation encouraged service providers to look for easy bits. Such anti-incentives can scupper efforts leading to the creation of work performance measures. In order to avoid them, organisations should test them before introduction, trying to find all possible avoidance methods utilised by cunning service providers"<sup>26</sup>.
- In the eighth recommendation the authors call for "concentrating on the maximum use of work performance data. The sole creation of measures does not guarantee that managers will use them to change the operating methods of institutions managed and that legislative bodies will utilise them to change directions and methods of financing programmes and institutions"<sup>27</sup>. In brief, it is not recommended to delay the use of available data and apply "the policy of completed facts" based on gathered information on efficiency and effectiveness of activity.
- Nine, *commission the measurement to an independent, objective institution*. If people are to rely on data then they must believe they are objective. Therefore it is good to make use of the independent institution's services"<sup>28</sup>. Implementation of this recommendation faces certain obstacles, though. The trouble is not only with the question whether the "belief" in the objectivity of delivered data, as suggested by Gaebler and Osborne, actually makes them objective. We can abandon this scientifically fundamental question of "objectivity" of reality and possibility to become familiar with it, since authors' intentions are very clear. What they were about was that they recommended that performance and effectiveness measurement of executed programmes were carried out by external organisations, independent of contractors. Objectivity of obtained outcomes' evaluation should then be treated as a function of independence and evaluating institution. This raises a problem with the so-called independence of an evaluating institution, which could deliver objective information to the administration. We could obviously say, in accordance with authors' suggestion that independence means as much as the lack of personal and equity links between the evaluation institution and programme executing organisation. But such reductionist interpretation of "institutional independence" is unreliable, insofar as it does not take into account the complexity of various points of view and interests in the public sphere. Barely are there good justifications for the situation where the so-called independent institution (be it private or public) evaluating the programme, would not take into account the contracting authority's expectations in its evaluation. Doubtlessly, taking into consideration contracting authority's viewpoint or interests should influence the final evaluation outcome, even if its outcomes are based on well-prepared research tools. The final evaluation result is

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 478.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 479.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 478–479.

not only, or even not in the first place, a result of applying certain research standards, but of stipulating them in the pre-research phase.

Moreover, we could attempt to prove that decisions made in the public sphere are most often not shaped according to empirical stipulations, free of personal values and viewpoints of decision-makers, but in compliance with them. Outcomes of various evaluation researches used in discussions about penal policy, sexual education, abortion etc., serve mostly as an instrument strengthening the viewpoints or values of involved parties and the objectivity of outcomes incompliant with expressed viewpoint is usually questioned, rather than viewpoints changed. There is a lack of any premises (and empirical evidence) to believe that evaluation researches well carried out by independent institutions, e.g. concerning rehabilitation programmes for dangerous criminals, will make the capital punishment supporters abandon their views on penal issues or otherwise - will make avid supporters of capital punishment out of avid supporters of rehabilitation. In short, the problem of independence and objectivity of evaluation researches' outcomes is tangled up in the structure of interests and values defining the dynamics of decision-making processes in the public sphere.

## Hopes and disappointments concerning evaluation

G. Majone, known for his scepticism towards the possibility of defining rationality of decision-making process in the public sphere according to purely empirical stipulations of evaluation researches, emphasises that "professional evaluation constitutes merely a small part of an overall public policy criticism and evaluation process, in which all politically active members of democratic community participate in different, but equally useful ways"<sup>29</sup>. Acknowledging the significance of evaluation, as a vast and developing branch of policy analysis, devoted to "gathering, verifying and interpreting information on the implementation and effectiveness of existing public policies and programmes", Majone states that it is not sufficient for the efficient provision of social services to prepare a theoretically optimal action plan. "It is even more important to get to know how the programme implementation actually goes, who benefits from it and who loses, whether the programme meets intended objectives and if not, how it could be improved or ceased"<sup>30</sup>. For example, the evaluation of programmes for the activation of the unemployed, particularly popular in the EU, does not usually include information about who benefits from them and who loses, since it is assumed in silence that increasing the number of jobs is in everybody's interest, therefore it is justified to include the costs of such training courses in citizen taxation costs.

We could argue that the controversy presented is more ostensible rather than real, since defining the "winners" and "losers" as a result of certain public programmes and policies, the level of meeting intended objectives or methods of implementing various programmes, belongs to the set of evaluation tasks. It is hard not to agree with Majone, though, who believes that: "It seems that many evaluators assume that these are purely empirical stipulations, neither linked to the choice of values, nor to personal views. In reality, values and views play a great role in evaluation, not only due to the ambiguity of outcomes in practice - difficulties with ascribing certain reasons to specific outcomes, with outcome measurement and the evaluation of intended effects, with discerning erroneous concepts and failures in executing them – but to an even larger extent due to inevitable differences in views concerning the types of evaluation

<sup>29</sup> G. Majone, *Evidence, Arguments and Persuasion in the Political Process*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warsaw 2004, p. 249.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

criteria, which are rational, justified or politically acceptable in a given situation. Such obscurities and differences in opinions cannot be solved by means of improved measurement and verification methods, but they can be presented and explained via discussion and mutual persuasion<sup>31</sup>.

Majone's arguments clearly point at the limited persuasive potential of evaluation researches' outcomes and, as the author suggests, it will be rather fruitless to look for ever more refined measurement methods. The trouble is that, among others, the **"output"** evaluation outcome depends on the "input" material available to evaluators and its collection is not only a matter of applying one research technique or the other, but also certain arrangements of viewpoints, values or interests between the parties interested in the programme execution and evaluation. Application of specific research standards is something completely different than stipulating them and in order to become aware of persuasive potential of obtained evaluation outcomes, it is necessary, in Majone's opinion, to discern the stipulation of standards and the application of standards<sup>32</sup>.

Discussing specific evaluation standards, e.g. arrangement of basic programme evaluation criteria among the interested parties, with all consequences to the final evaluation outcomes, may protect evaluators from various accusations, e.g. that they are not measuring something they ought to measure or they have not taken into account significant aspects of the programme under evaluation or the problem the solution of which was supposed to be the outcome of the programme. Such accusations may be raised particularly often when the evaluation outcomes pose a threat to more or less articulated interests of certain groups involved in the programme execution or affected by the effects of its implementation<sup>33</sup>. All those who implement programmes disturbing a specified interest system, also when they have empirical evidence that retaining status quo is disadvantageous for all and the proposed change is in line with Pareto progress criteria, should bear in mind those risks. However, referring to the argument that "numbers don't lie" may be as irritating and incomprehensible to one group or the other, as the past attempts of ardent Marxists to persuade "opposing" workers that they were the bearers of a "false class awareness", but this must be changed for their benefit as part of "objectified" historical processes.

Applying specific evaluation criteria e.g. efficiency and effectiveness of activity, conditions the final evaluation outcome in an obvious way. The application of specific criteria is to a large extent a consequence of social roles the actors involved in the evaluation process play. The same programme will be evaluated differently by an economist, for whom it is most important to look for efficiency and effectiveness of executed programme, and by a lawyer, for whom it is important to evaluate its compliance with the law in force. There is nothing wrong in evaluating the programmes from different points of view. It is important to hold on to diversity of various viewpoints since "as long as the opinions expressed from the perspective of one specific role are not presented and falsely interpreted as opinions referring to all possible roles or expressed on their behalf, we are dealing with a safe state of multiple or pluralistic evaluation"<sup>34</sup>. The only trouble is with the fact, that various viewpoints overlap each other in evaluation practice, and it is a mistake to assume a certain universality of conclusions resulting from evaluation in a

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>33</sup> "The key evaluators' dilemma can be very easily defined: most public policy researches underline the fact that effective reforms must be granted acceptance from those groups they concern the most. However, many of those affected by reforms are either reluctant or hostile towards them and it is no surprise, since their jobs are at peril; only the most eccentric turkeys await holidays", see V. Wright, *The Paradoxes of Administrative Reform*, in: W. Kickert (ed.), *Public Management and Administrative Reform in Western Europe*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham 1997, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> G. Majone, op. cit., p. 251.

sense that they should be equally significant for actors playing different social roles. "Perhaps the biggest problem is when it is assumed that conclusions from the evaluation carried out for the use of a specific role are equally significant from the perspective of other roles using different evaluative criteria. Since the roles and criteria do not match, it is almost inevitable that evaluation conclusions will turn out to be inconclusive"<sup>35</sup>.

A trouble appears particularly when there is an emphasis placed upon a little "mythologised" efficiency and effectiveness of achieving intended objectives, while in such cases it is almost always about the so-called rationalisation of public expenditures, and in fact, costs limitation. This problem is special, since the most important role in the public programmes evaluation process is most often attributed to the efficiency and effectiveness criteria, oftentimes forgetting that increasing the two, according to an economic rationality standard, can disturb many vital interests or values shared by main actors involved in the programme. On the other hand though, not taking these interests into account may end up in a situation where striving for decision rationalisation may lead to opposite effects and significant squandering of resources (the case of Augustów ring road).

The methods to increase efficiency and effectiveness recommended in evaluation reports may also be at variance with the work culture within an organisation executing a given programme or valid professional standards. Moreover, as indicated by V. Wright, analysing paradoxical consequences of public administration reforms undertaken, evaluation may produce totally unexpected outcomes from the point of view of the so-called public expenditure rationalisation, which is the basic objective. "The fourth paradox is the fact that while cost reduction is the intention of many reforms, the final result of some of them may turn out to be completely opposite. Let us take "evaluation" as an example, this contemporary madness ignoring labour force costs. Evaluation may identify resource waste areas but also reveals differences not only in performance, but also in general outcomes achieved: some people can be treated relatively more badly. These differences were previously hidden. The result will be an exertion of political pressure to remove such differences. In line with an intention, transforming citizens into clients with rights clearly specified by objectives may influence the programmes' quality improvement, but this also creates expectations and remedy pressure (for revealed inequalities – annotation D.Z.) often by means of legal action"<sup>36</sup>. If Wright's remark is correct, then hopes that due to constant evaluation of public programmes or administrative actions their economic efficiency could be increased, seem to be futile, insofar as they do not take into account the complexity of interpersonal relations and multiply false convictions about a simple relation between stimulus and effect, included in conventional, mechanistic organisation and management theories.

G. Majone maintains that apart from taking into account the roles allowing discerning evaluation criteria, it is also useful to refer to three different evaluation modes: output, input and process mode<sup>37</sup>. An output mode seems to be particularly attractive, since the evaluation carried out on the basis of obtained outcomes appeals the most to decision-makers' imagination. We need to remind that all attempts to rationalise public expenditures and to optimize the outcomes of researches undertaken in the public sphere are based on the tendency to measure and quantify the outcomes. It is not without reason

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> V. Wright, „Paradoxes of Administrative Reform“, in: W.J.M. Kickert, *Public Management and Administrative Reform in Western Europe*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham 1997, p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> In the output mode, evaluation concentrates on the outcomes of a specific action. In the input mode, evaluation emphasizes resources, skills and people, while in the process mode, it is transferred onto methods used to transform inputs into outcomes; see G. Majone, *Evidence, Arguments...*, op. cit., p. 253.

that the platform of reference for the public administration operation critics is the market and a private enterprise with their attributed ability to measure achieved outcomes. This assumption is logical, as well as it is in-built in methodological evaluation canon, namely in order to be able to evaluate an executed programme in the best possible way, one has to measure its outcomes. Referring to purely economic rules of evaluating social intervention programmes is troublesome, though, not only because the logic of market and state and functions they have are different. The trouble is that, among others, the outcomes are not always quantifiable, objectives are not unambiguously specified and measurement tools often fail. However, it is even more problematic that the relation between registered outcome and its reason is often doubtful and we depend more on intuition than scientific evidence.

E. Babbie accurately points out that: "one of potentially most onerous aspects of evaluation research is to stipulate whether an evaluated programme was a success or a failure. The aim of the foreign language teaching programme may to help students in better language learning, but how large is the sufficient progress? The aim of the programme for visiting spouses in prison may be to boost the moods among prisoners, but how much do they need to be boosted to justify the programme? As you can expect, there are no concluding answers to such questions. This dilemma has become a basis for the cost – benefit analysis in an obvious way. Unfortunately, situations you usually deal with during evaluation researches scarcely can be submitted to a simple economic calculation<sup>38</sup>.

It seems though, that expectations the evaluators have towards cost – benefit analysis are also over-exaggerated in a sense that its outcomes are at times undermined as biased, since the analysis itself is rather based on subjective assumptions becoming an economic model. While remembering that the cost-benefit analysis is only one of the tools used in evaluation researches, we need to be aware of a limited value of outcomes. R. Formaini, in his suggestively entitled book *The Myth of Scientific Public Policy*, persuades that there is no such thing as an "objective" cost-benefit analysis; therefore outcomes we obtain from it are not "objective", in a sense that they do not deliver certain and admissible-to-everyone knowledge needed to evaluate an executed programme<sup>39</sup>. Accusations launched by Formaini are of an ontological-epistemological nature and concern the assumptions of neo-classical economy, which are incorrect in his view, regarding the nature of social order, upon which the cost-benefit analysis is based. "Cost-benefit analysis and neo-classical economy are symbiotically linked to each other by the fact that the cost-benefit analysis could not be carried out without assumptions offered by neo-classical methods. When analysts measure, define and aggregate costs and benefits, they do it within the neo-classical structure of assumptions made. It is legitimate then to argue that the cost-benefit analysis is a 'child' and the neo-classical economic theory a 'father'". (...) Thus, it is necessary first to get to know the basic assumptions of neo-classical economy to understand the cost-benefit analysis<sup>40</sup>.

The discussion on the ontological bases under models of analysis, countering the model of an "economic human being" with a "sociological human being" and outcomes obtained as part of them is a canon of scientific inquiries. There is no reason to reconstruct this discussion here. It only needs to remind us about the fact, that what may be an outcome objectified as part of applied theoretical assumptions, on the basis of which it is possible to make rational decisions for ones, for the others may be no more than a projection of assumed motifs or attitudes, which cannot form the basis for making generalised theoretical explanations or actions undertaken in practice. The accusation towards scientific *Public Policy*

<sup>38</sup> E. Babbie, *Social research in practice*, PWN, Warsaw 2004, p. 376.

<sup>39</sup> R. Formaini, *The Myth of Scientific Public Policy*, Transaction Publishers, 1990, p. 39–65.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

made by Formaini, is nothing else than an attempt to expose shortcomings of the *homo economicus* model. It could be judged as legitimate also for evaluation researches, the supporters of which often claim that if they are carried out according to a carefully prepared methodology, their outcomes are the basis for making rational decisions. Formaini's conclusion is that "*Public Policy* based on scientific pillars, this dream that had grown since the Renaissance and perhaps reached its peak towards the end of this century, is a myth, a theoretical illusion. It has existed in our minds, analyses and methods only because we are looking to discover it, but we are bound to discover what we are looking for"<sup>41</sup>.

## Conclusion

A conclusion stating that all limitations that evaluation is prone to, make its outcomes of little use in decision-making processes, particularly concerning the rationalisation of public expenditures, seems to be as illegitimate, as stating that the outcomes of carefully carried out evaluation, sticking to all tenets, provide a certain backing for the rationalising decisions in the public sphere. However, stating that "truth lies in the middle" is burdened with the same probability of error as indicating either of extreme opinions. Moreover, the dispute should not take place according to the logic of "who's right" and on the basis of what sort of arguments we are likely to agree with one or the other side of this dispute. We should rather seek consensus in order for the evaluation researches' outcomes, even if we agree they are imperfect in many ways, to constitute a specific value for the public administration responsible for making certain decisions in the public sphere.

The problem is basically nil for "decisionists", to quote G. Majone, as rational decisions should be made on the basis of information brought by a carefully carried out cost-benefit analysis. However, since opponents indicate plenty of imperfections of this approach, mostly of ontological-epistemological character, there is a question what to do with a huge amount of "produced" information as part of social intervention programmes' evaluations. If we were to accept "decisionists'" opinions, questioning the usefulness of evaluation analyses for the decision rationalising process, without any reservations, then we would have to admit, to some extent, that striving to allocation rationality based on outcomes' evaluation starts to contradict itself in a sense that wishing to rationally expend public money we do not obtain any certain knowledge, for which we still have to pay.

The proposal of the evaluation research critics, carried out according to the economic model's assumptions provides for the inclusion of evaluators' efforts into a broader democratic debate devoted to the stipulation of public programmes execution criteria and standards and their evaluation. Public administration should be one of the debate's parties, which would not blindly use information received from evaluation undertakings. In other words, the value of evaluation would not consist in allowing to making a rational decision that would maximise benefits at specified costs or minimise costs at specified benefits on its basis, but in its valuable contribution to discussion between the parties representing different viewpoints or interests. "Currently – claims Majone – it is more necessary to facilitate broad dialogue among supporters of various criteria than developing 'objective' outcome indicators, which is a traditional evaluation analyses' objective"<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> G. Majone, op. cit., p. 264.

If we succeeded in making use of the evaluation outcomes in a broader debate about the legitimacy of social interventions, their costs and benefits, as well as criteria according to which the intervention outcomes would be evaluated, then we could be sure that evaluation has got its contribution in the democratic process of arranging various rationales or viewpoints. In present-day democracies suffering from legitimacy deficit, such function as evaluation seems to be very attractive for at least two reasons. The first reason is that while provoking a debate, the legitimacy of a decision-making process in public administration is somehow increased; the second reason is that such debate, based on outcomes obtained in accordance with scientific standards of empirical research, brings a specific knowledge potential which can contribute to a more sublime perception of public policy shaping process, in the words of Majone. This certainly does not mean that evaluation research outcomes, the public administration should perhaps use, will free us from various manipulations regarding the information resources, since science itself is not free from such temptations, however this is a topic for a different discussion.

It is important though, to broadly discuss possibilities and limitations of the use of evaluation research outcomes among public administration representatives, since the quality of social intervention programmes executed depends on public administration. If it were to transpire that administrative system decision-makers overestimate evaluation possibilities, then evaluation outcomes would not necessarily reflect an actual value of executed programmes. The last one, in the words of "anti-decisionists" is not always calculable. Scepticism towards evaluation should not obscure its possibilities since many social intervention programmes can be successfully submitted for evaluation, at the same time delivering a lot of valuable information about various aspects of executed programmes. The discussion around evaluation should therefore take place both among academics as part of interdisciplinary or paradigmatic exchange of opinions, and among representatives of administration, among others. Due to their experience, they can contribute much more to the processes of improving evaluation researches than it seems from the perspective of academic chair. What does it mean for the process of administrative decision-making? Certainly, evaluation cannot replace common sense and experience generated in everyday course of administrative practice, often referred to as incremental. We need to bear in mind though, that following specified schemes may bring about petrification of decision-making structures, while evaluation outcomes can protect us from such danger. The Aristotelean praise of temperance seems to be a reasonable proposal the public administration should also make use of.

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***Agnieszka Haber, Maciej Szalaj***

## **Social capital – the prerequisite and the effect of successful evaluation**

For the last three decades, social capital has been one of the most popular notions appearing in the field of social sciences. Apart from numerous references which can be found in expert literature, the term can often be encountered in the public debate on civic activity and efficiency of public institutions. Social capital is often a kind of a “lifeline”, helpful to many journalists and other commentators of daily events when they have to explain the original cause of development divide, reform failures or pathologies in public space. It can be safely assumed that social capital has settled in colloquial language. It has also found a fertile ground in the jargon of students of sociology, political science or other, more ephemeral scientific disciplines.

The presence of reflection, focused on social capital, has been visible for some time also in the area of evaluation practice and theory. It was reflected most clearly in the subject matter of the latest European Evaluation Society Conference. Uticited was based on a multi-aspect approach to relations between the evaluation and various forms of social capital. In this context, this chapter is a voice in the current discussion which involves international community of evaluation practitioners and recipients.

However, undisputed “social capital mania” is not the main reason why this text is published in the present volume. The perspective of social capital - provided that it is applied selectively - is of great cognitive value in terms of organisational (institutional) description of the evaluation study environment. It allows to reflect some crucial but - usually ignored - conditionalities for embedding evaluation in the practice of public institutions and their social partners.

An outline of the origin of the notion of social capital will be presented in the first part of the chapter along with a variety of its definitions and applications. Also, a proposal for selective understanding will be indicated. This will be restricted to key organisational aspects of the evaluation process that have a particular importance within the context of the Polish institutional culture.

In the second part, the double role of social capital in the area of evaluation will be discussed. The significance of social capital - both as one of the preconditions for conducting successful evaluation research, and one as the outcome of properly managed evaluations - will be mentioned.

The third part will serve as a summary where significance and characteristics of social capital are outlined against other types of capitals and resources available to public institutions. It will also be indicated how particular forms of the capital can be “invested” in developing evaluation system and culture, and thus in high quality evaluation research providing useful results for a wide range of recipients.

## Social capital – origin, definitions, functions

The term “social capital” was introduced for the first time in early 1970s by Pierre Bourdieu, one of the most well-known European sociologists of the previous century. Several years later, Americans took up considerations on social capital, adopting initial assumptions somewhat different than Bourdieu. Thus, two main and dominant to this day approaches have been formed. Their common elements are a direct derivative of the adopted analogy towards other, “classic”, forms of capital (physical, financial) and concentrate on the ability to invest in social relations, which can generate unusual profits that no other form of capital could provide.

Bourdieu, unlike American authors, emphasised both positive and negative aspects of investing in social capital, which he defines in neutral categories as a “set of real and potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or to put it differently with membership in a group - which provides each member with support in a form of capital possessed by the collective, reliability which gives them access to the credit in the widest sense of this word”<sup>1</sup>.

Social capital, according to Bourdieu, is an attribute of individuals, but through aggregation it can strongly influence the whole of social relations, particularly the form of social structure and hierarchy. The example provided by Bourdieu was the class system, based on social capital, with institution of knighthood for securing privileged position of one of social groups.

Whereas according to the American tradition, social capital is perceived to belong to whole communities, which was reflected in positive connotations related with this term. Under this approach, social capital as a resource, available without distinction to all community members (regardless of what subgroups, coalitions or coteries they belong to) is expected to bring general social profits. James Coleman defines social capital as: “a social good (...) group of entities, having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate joint actions of both individuals and institutions which remain within the structure. Just like other forms of capital, the social capital is productive – it enables achieving certain goals, which would be unattainable if this capital was absent (...)”<sup>2</sup>.

Francis Fukuyama brought considerations over social capital further. The main point of his research is the influence of social capital on development through reduction of transaction costs and thus through increased efficiency. In his opinion: “social capital is important for efficient functioning of modern economy and sine qua non condition for stable liberal democracy”<sup>3</sup>.

This concept - very popular today won wide renown in early 1990s as the works by Robert Putnam, the continuator of Coleman’s thoughts, were published.

Putnam provided an empirical illustration of social capital functioning on the example of contemporary Italy and United States. The main theses of his works focus on the realisation that economic and legal factors are not the only ones that determine the level of socio-economic development as well as the efficiency of democratic institutions. According to Putnam’s thesis, it is social capital that makes a difference in many cases. He defined it as a term referring to “such characteristics of social organisation like trust, standards and relations which can increase social efficiency by facilitating coordinated actions”.

<sup>1</sup> P. Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital*, in: J.G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Social education*, Greenwood Pres, New York 1986, p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> J.S. Coleman, *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital*, *American Journal of Sociology*, no 94, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> F. Fukuyama, *Social capital, civil society and development*, *Third World Quarterly* 2001, no 1, p. 7.

Assuming this, Putnam brings the common element for all definitions of social capital, saying: "just like other forms of capital, the social capital is productive – it enables achieving certain goals, which would be unattainable if this capital was absent"<sup>4</sup>.

The concept of social capital, understood as a unique resource of the community, was an attractive reply to cognitive challenges aroused by disintegration of bipolar balance of world powers and turbulence observed in transition countries, which - as many experts expected - should be smoothly adopting patterns of advanced Western democracies. As a result, social capital was included as heuristic device in numerous research projects commissioned by key international institutions. Their results became a part of public debate and have been quite often in policy making worldwide

Through reports bearing the logos of honourable institutions, social capital made its way to the language of manifests and programmes, covered, in time, with certain pathos. Precision of understanding the notion itself was also obliterated as were its relations with processes of vital importance for the modern world. Social capital was also defined with certain irony as "something of cure-all". In order to preserve its basic values and explain the term of social capital at the same time, it is necessary to strip the unnecessary pathos off the interpretation. This shall be done in the next part of this work.

## **Social capital in the processes of evaluation exercises**

Connecting social capital with issues of evaluation requires great care for the precision of applied terms. The scope of interest here will be limited therefore to instances of social capital within public institutions that conduct evaluation and stakeholders who are recipients of its results. It will also be assumed that social capital constitutes a supra-individual property, thus belonging to specific communities, understood, for the purpose of these considerations, both, as personnel of particular institutions or other groups involved in creating and implementing given public undertakings, and as the society. Our understanding of social capital is marked with clearly positive valuation, although we do not deny that there are instances of the negative social capital within the scope in question (e.g. corruption mechanisms, so called "set-ups), appropriating the state, not transparent public-private relations, exclusions etc.)<sup>5</sup>. Assuming this allows proposing a thesis on two functions that social capital fulfils in terms of evaluation research and being at the same time both a necessary prerequisite and outcome of successful evaluation.

## **Social capital as prerequisite for successful evaluation**

Successful evaluation should fulfil at least several criteria. First, an evaluation research should fulfil specified quality requirements in terms of accordance and credibility of the methodology applied. Second, an appropriate arrangement of evaluation process is necessary, so it is set within practices of action embedded in a given institution. Hence, the importance of social capital should be discussed by reference to the following aspects of evaluation process:

- 1) planning, implementation and management of evaluation process,
- 2) institutional perception of evaluation process outputs.

<sup>4</sup> R.D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Znak, Kraków 1995.

<sup>5</sup> See more T. Kazimierczak, *Kapitał społeczny a rozwój społeczno-ekonomiczny – przegląd pojęć*, in: T. Kazimierczak, M. Rymśza (ed.), *Kapitał społeczny. Ekonomia społeczna*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warsaw 2007, s. 54–55.

Each evaluation process creates unique connections and relations. Newly created bonds modify the existing social capital and create chances for using resources and their exchange between inter-organisational units (see Fig. 1). More or less dynamic networks of relations and contacts with many participants are created, which play a role in the strategy for evaluation projects implementation, as well as in the later stage of receiving and using its results. Networks based on cooperation<sup>6</sup> used in evaluation projects allow not only for quick identification of information needs, adjusted to actual needs of institutions, but also for effective planning (conceptualisation), preparation (operationalisation) and implementation of evaluation process

Fukuyama indicated that ability of an organisation to make use of development opportunities lies in the social capital, including skilful cooperation inside an organisation and within the external environment in order to implement common interests. Such ability to join into groups constitutes a considerable derivate of social capital serving in such cases as a source of trust between different parts of the organisation, This kind of trust should be regarded here also as an important and measurable economic value<sup>7</sup>.

Within the context of the Polish administration culture evaluation, however, is often perceived as a somehow awkward practice, imposed by formal requirement related to EU structural funds and procedures.. One of the key barriers hindering institutional settlement of evaluation in this environment is the perception of evaluation projects as a control activity aimed at ensuring accountability of persons responsible for implementation of the given area of public activity<sup>8</sup>. Accountability, however, in the aforementioned sense, is connected with the paralysis of institution caused by distrust, which makes it impossible to take up cooperation between individuals or units directed at deriving benefits from evaluation process.

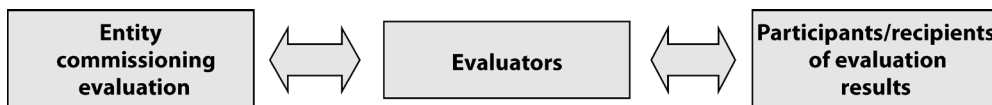


Fig. 1. Actors of the evaluation in an organisation

Source: Authors' own work.

The above problem reflects a broader phenomenon which characterises Polish public culture. Trust deficiencies constitute one of major characteristics of Polish society<sup>9</sup>. Literature on this subject often indicates that the quality of public institutions is closely related to the level of trust. This regularity is also observed in relation to evaluations which became doomed to fail when put in the "hostile" context of

<sup>6</sup> Every participant develops the network through bringing new contacts, knowledge, abilities and competence, thus further catalysing and developing organisational resources and possibilities of a given evaluation project.

<sup>7</sup> F. Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and The Creation of Prosperity*, PWN, Warsaw 1997.

<sup>8</sup> It should be stressed that here we discuss the accountability in a meaning closer to the one already known from the public debate and not the one referring to social responsibility of public officers. Enforcing social responsibility is an immanent element of every democratic system, being also one of the original functions of the evaluation used often to this day.

<sup>9</sup> See more:

1) European Social Survey, <http://www.ads.org.pl/pobieranie-zbioru-danych.php?id=15>;

2) Kapitał intelektualny i społeczny w Polsce – raport doradców premiera, [http://www.zti.com.pl/instytut/pp/referaty/ref42\\_full.html](http://www.zti.com.pl/instytut/pp/referaty/ref42_full.html);

3) World Values Survey, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>.

distrust. In the best case they encounter serious barriers, first - within the native organisation. Because the institution which commissions the evaluation is not really interested in its results, and evaluators which conduct the study encounter a specific wall of distrust, preventing appropriate planning of the study (e.g. through getting to know the intricacies of the studied programme, diagnosing information needs of an institution). Success, within the meaning of an institution operating in this manner, would be a formal implementation of evaluation study, with minimal popularisation of its results, not to mention the practical use of recommendations following the study.

The term social capital gives an interesting analytic perspective in this case, due to stressing the importance of trust in the process of its creation, maintaining and multiplying. Using this option, we can state that social capital (especially in the form of relations based on trust) constitutes a resource necessary for conducting successful evaluations. Its absence, even when evaluators are highly competent and sufficient budget is secured, will always be a limitation impossible to overcome even by strengthening other available resources.

Weakness of trust relations is without a doubt the evidence of the absence of necessary conditions for conducting successful evaluation; however, it is not an argument for desisting from all evaluation efforts. According to rhetoric often used by advocates, the evaluation should be an "invitation to development" for public institutions and civil society institutions. Experiences of countries where evaluation is an integral part of public management, indicate that this slogan has some empirical confirmation. Their adaptation to our domestic conditions is possible if we assume that deficiencies of social capital will be supplemented which of course is a difficult but not unattainable challenge.

In order to transform social capital into both, an attribute of entities dealing with evaluation, as well as the ground for efficient evaluation, a reverse of thinking is necessary; a reverse which will teach organisations how to work on social relations in their complex environment.

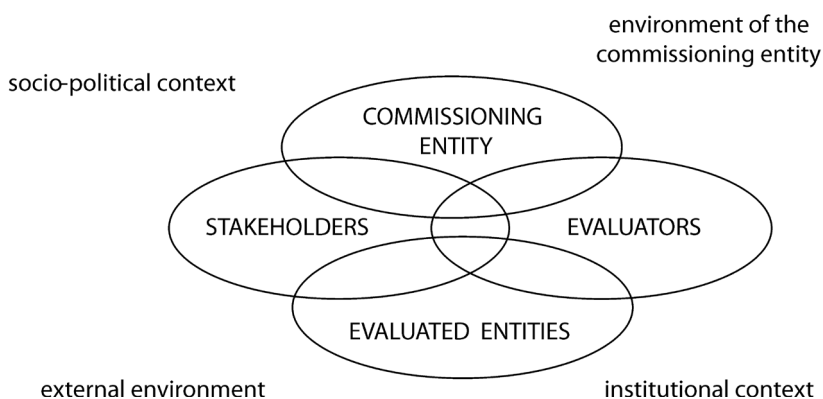


Fig. 2. Environment and context of evaluation

Source: Authors' own work.

Key factors which help organisations to understand complex environment and derive the greatest possible benefits from developed social capital should be the basis of such thinking<sup>10</sup>:

<sup>10</sup> V. Allee, *Return on Knowledge*, Executive Excellence 2000, no 9. Provo, Birmingham 2000, p. 2, in: W. Dyduch, *Kapitał społeczny organizacji pożywką dla przedsiębiorczości i innowacyjności*, [http://www.zti.com.pl/instytut/pp/referaty/ref42\\_full.html](http://www.zti.com.pl/instytut/pp/referaty/ref42_full.html).

- **Multidimensional view.** Organisations should be the beneficiaries of their own organisational behaviours and at the same time understand assumptions, values and ideas which support and develop those behaviours.
- **Dynamic relationships.** Creating maps of relations which take place between organisation participants allows to perceive emerging trends and to understand existing relationships, contacts and correlations in the organisation.
- **Commonly shared patterns.** Dealing with complexity is easier when participants of the organisation share the same way of thinking, behaving or cooperating.
- **Group work.** Individuals left on their own cannot comprehend the complexity or the entirety of the system. Comprehending it requires group effort. Learning in the “knowledge economy” is a process consisting in cooperation and great social capital outlays.

Accumulation of social capital, in a form which interests us, requires a long-term and systematic work on inter-institutional relations. An important role falls in this respect to evaluation units located currently within structures of most institutions in Polish administration both at the central and local level. Activities of these units should have the form of a large scale animation with the purpose of building permanent relations within institutions and with key external partners.

Formulating this in more practical categories, building trust towards evaluation should include a whole catalogue of activities which can potentially contribute to “disenchanted” evaluation, i.e. overcoming the notion of its strictly controlling, accountable character.

Collecting social capital for evaluation exercises requires taking up multidimensional activities at various levels of institutional hierarchy, inter alia, in such areas, as building the abovementioned trust and creating knowledge-based culture, cooperation, activity, innovativeness, experimenting, learning from errors and accepting failures. The simplest activities include:

- trainings/analyses concerning principles of evaluation, addressed separately to persons who manage a given institution and to other key persons who are actual or potential collaborators of the evaluation unit;
- development of competence of evaluation unit employees, in such areas as: 1) verification of reliability of external evaluators work as well as planning and methodology of evaluation exercises, 2) interpersonal and managerial competence necessary for correct management of a complex process of evaluation and animation of processes: a) creating permanent relations of trust b) communication, c) building cooperation network;
- constructing dynamic cooperation networks with scientific institutions, evaluation units and professional associations, oriented at similar groups of institutional problems or the same area of research issues;
- building dynamic cooperation networks within the institution: creating relations of trust through involving persons responsible for assessed area in processes of consulting and distribution of evaluation results;
- creating platforms for exchanging information and experience in areas of evaluation projects (conferences, meetings, professional seminars, but also Internet websites, Internet project databases etc.);
- devoting sufficient time for the exchange of information which facilitates precise formulation and receipt of feedback from each and every partner of the evaluation process (activities in this area allow for decreasing incomprehension, wrong interpretation, wrong reception of a message and strengthen cooperation).

The catalogue of activities outlined above is only a set of examples of initiatives used for building relations of trust which allow accumulation of social capital necessary for successful evaluations. The range of activities in this area is very wide and their conditional selection should be preceded every time by an in-depth analysis of specific nature of a given case. However, it should be stressed that building relations inside the institution should be seen as one of full-scale activities for creating - so frequently brought up - "evaluation capacity" of public administration. Similarity of certain activities to techniques typical for marketing practices, human resources management or public relations is not depreciating at all, provided that fidelity to professional principles is maintained. Evaluation studies do not lose their credibility then, but gain much more as regards their usefulness and adjustment to recipients' needs.

## **Social capital as an outcome of successful evaluation**

Social capital, understood as a necessary condition for successful evaluation is an issue generally much less known and thus we have devoted more attention to it. Connecting the term social capital with evaluation is more often focused on the second role from among those mentioned before, i.e. multiplying social capital through evaluation results. It is a trend of analyses coming from the popular concept of democratic (participatory) evaluation. As indicated above, involving institutional partners in evaluation processes is a practice used for building relations of trust, necessary as a prerequisite.

In the second role we discussed, social capital is used in the environment characterised by sufficient resources of social capital at the "initial stage". Participatory democracy is a form of opening institutions to external partners through building trust, cooperation and communication. In a model interpretation, external partners are invited to actively participate in the process of evaluation.

Direct involvement of social partners in the processes of managing public undertakings - and in evaluation as a part of these processes - causes an increase in social capital through strengthening the significance of civil society institutions. As Robert Picciotto indicates, evaluation "allows overcoming asymmetry between citizens as principals and the State as an agent (...), as well as helps to solve dilemmas of collective action and develop cooperation between citizens and the authorities"<sup>11</sup>.

The scope in which the evaluation contributes to the accumulation of social capital is related to the subject of democratic evaluation, i.e. democratic functions of evaluation. Social capital is then strengthened by providing information on effects of public policies and public spending. Including evaluation results in the public debate encourages citizens to take up collective actions aimed at ensuring their common interest. As Picciotto observes: "whenever the market is inefficient in allocating rare goods (and it basically is like that in case of public funds - authors' note), participation is related to hierarchy. In such situation, evaluation is forcing transparency and minimises «stealing a ride». Participation in evaluation is related to decentralisation and privatisation. Creation of active civil society in a global scale created a new type of evaluation, closer to a function of social advocate. (...) Openness of decision-makers to opinions of employees, clients, makes it easier to agree on premises and weak points of public programmes. Independent evaluation helps to expose the false renown of groups of interests or allows supporting their arguments"<sup>12</sup>. This way, through the access to information, transparency of public institutions performance and effects of public policies, active society may redefine its opinions, better understand the essence of problems and thus actively affect public policy.

<sup>11</sup> R. Picciotto, *Economy of Evaluation*, Państwo i Rynek 2006, no 2; see also: Intellectual and social capital in Poland – report of advisers to the prime minister: [http://pliki.innowacyjnosc.gpw.pl/Kapital\\_Intelektualny\\_Polski.pdf](http://pliki.innowacyjnosc.gpw.pl/Kapital_Intelektualny_Polski.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> R. Picciotto, op. cit.

Evaluation which is deeply rooted in social capital is knowledge on knowledge. By promoting transparency and responsibility, it contributes to the increase in quality of public services and constitutes a counterbalance for highly defined interests. Nothing undermines politicians and bureaucrats' claims as much as the actual assessment of results of their actions. Thus, evaluation brings benefits in the form of improvement of expenditure efficiency and sensitivity of organisations regarding clients' needs<sup>13</sup>.

## Social capital as an attribute of building evaluation capability

The idea of social capital gains particular significance in the developing vision dynamic public administration orientated at, efficient solving of public problems, where basic, strategic resource is knowledge and the value of an institution is decided by its intellectual capital. This idea is the key to solve problems inside organisations as well as to maintain bonds with "external world". W. Dyduch, M. Szczepankiewicz, E. Szczepankiewicz indicate that similar to other forms of capital, social capital serves the purpose of increasing efficiency of functioning and development of an organisation, mainly through facilitating cooperation among participants<sup>14</sup>.

This concept is particularly important regarding the evaluation. Mainly because on the Polish market we now have to deal with: 1) relatively young, dynamically forming market of demand/supply for evaluation studies, 2) relatively new institutional structures appointed for tasks related with the assessment of public interventions, 3) deficiencies in baseline resources (human, financial, information, structural, intellectual capital, cultural capital etc.), and thus 4) low evaluation capability.

The interpretation of human capital adopted herein comprises treating it as a component of the individuals' ability to cooperate within social groups, organisations and social institutions of various types (not only economic) aiming at the achievement of common goals. Skilful use of social capital, i.e. knowledge and abilities possessed by individuals, large or small social groups, is a source of future satisfaction, reinforcing efficiency of activities taken up by an organisation in the area of evaluation as well as a catalyst for development, innovativeness of various evaluation approaches.

In the literature on the subject it is clearly indicated that organisations with a great amount of social capital are more inclined to entrepreneurially take up risks and introduce new activities than organisations which limit spontaneous group creation. It is so because social capital is a form of social structure in an enterprise and strengthens proactive behaviour of people within this structure<sup>15</sup>. Understanding social capital as an involvement of individuals in creating a network of connections constitutes a premise for explaining a tendency for innovation<sup>16</sup>. Social connections are the reason for creating reciprocity of activities within the network, and the network, in turn, is a ground for the development of trust, increased inclination to take up risks and innovative actions. Networks facilitate coordination, communication as well as cooperation and reinforce reputation of participants, which allows for solving problems within a

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<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> W. Dyduch, M. Szczepankiewicz, E. Szczepankiewicz, *Kapitał społeczny podstawą zdobywania przewagi konkurencyjnej w Nowej Ekonomii*, in: M. Moszkowicz (ed.), *Strategie i konkurencyjność przedsiębiorstw po dziesięciu latach transformacji*, Politechnika Wroclawska, Polanica-Zdrój 2001, p. 193–202.

<sup>15</sup> M. Bratnicki, *Dylematy i pułapki współczesnego zarządzania*, in: W. Dyduch, *Kapitał społeczny organizacji pożywką dla przedsiębiorczości i innowacyjności*, [http://www.zti.com.pl/instytut/pp/referaty/ref42\\_full.html](http://www.zti.com.pl/instytut/pp/referaty/ref42_full.html).

<sup>16</sup> P. Bullen, J. Onyx, *Measuring Social Capital in Five Communities in NSW*. Internet, materials from website <http://www.mapl.com.au> in: W. Dyduch, op. cit.

group<sup>17</sup>. Success of organisation settled in social environment depends on skilfully built network of social contacts, which supports innovative actions<sup>18</sup>.

Orientation on instantaneous building of abilities and skills which allow the implementation of tasks set forth before the evaluation requires methodical building of evaluation resources. In current conditions of sufficient financial and material capital as well as market and institutional deficiencies regarding knowledge, information and human resources, it seems that it is possible only through<sup>19</sup> - participation in networks of institutional and project connections based on reciprocity, cooperation and trust based on social capital.

There is no doubt that it constitutes a foundation for benefits and efficiency of entrepreneurial organisations, inter alia, because it helps decrease costs of seeking and flow of information. Networks of social contacts decide on who is first to learn about, about such issues as methodological and technical innovations, new resources of knowledge, contractors' activities, new entities, conducted research and analyses, key experts in a given field etc. Moreover, due to the possibility to build new and efficient connections quickly, they allow to maximise the use of available resources (through the largest number of network participants), develop innovative approaches and solutions as well as decrease transaction costs (of coordination and cooperation).

Although a mixture of network, reciprocity, trust and standards is undoubtedly a chance for creating an efficient "evaluation environment", which has commonly shared and developed resources (including most important ones – information, knowledge and intellectual resources), available to every participant of the network, it is not easy to create new network connections. Mainly because organisational units are not always ready to become network participants or because they do not always want to share their resources, which can be their source of advantage.

Building sustainable relations therefore depends on the change of the way of thinking and activity of key leaders – aware animators of a number of systematic activities for the benefit of building a widely understood evaluation potential.

## Conclusion

Experienced entities which commission and implement evaluation know that the success of evaluation, that is, its purposeful, reliable, efficient and effective implementation and usage depends mainly on non-material resources.

Social capital constitutes without a doubt one of the fundamental resources, necessary for conducting good evaluation on one hand and "consumption of results" on the other. However, in the light of subsequent studies on the system of social values in Poland, taking into account deficiencies – existing in such areas as trust, pro-social activity of citizens, ability and will to cooperate etc., thus the deficiency of social capital – derivation from this capital is currently highly limited for evaluation processes. This situation is a challenge not only for evaluators, public institutions and non-governmental organisations but also for the society.

<sup>17</sup> C. Sirianni, L. Friedland, *Social Capital and Civic Innovation: Learning and Capacity Building from the 1960s to the 1990s*, Internet, materials from website: [http://www.cpn.org/sections/new\\_citizen-ship/theory.html](http://www.cpn.org/sections/new_citizen-ship/theory.html), in: W. Dyduch, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> L. Steier, R. Greenwood, *Entrepreneurship and the Evolution of Angel Financial Networks*, *Organization Studies* 2000, no 21, EGOS, p.165, in: W. Dyduch, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> Compare: P. Bullen, J. Onyx, op. cit.

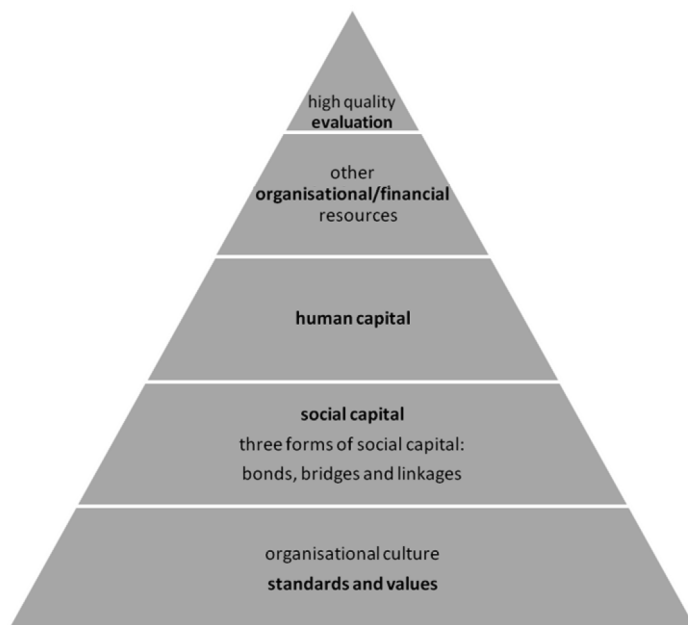


Fig. 3. Foundations of high quality evaluation

Source: Authors' own analysis.

We hope that this paper on evaluation in the context of social capital will allow the Reader to better understand complex relations and environment of evaluation projects; however we are fully aware that the above can only serve as an introduction to further discussion.

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