

How to Evaluate Collaboration within Research and Innovation

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Outline

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Introduction

- Political decisions are made to improve and strengthen regional development within the European Union
- SMEs need access to knowledge, competence and collaboration, to increase their opportunities to develop competitiveness
- Ongoing evaluation is prevalent in many research and development projects today to follow up the intended results
- Ongoing evaluation – learning evaluation – a process oriented and forward-looking approach to support development
- Ongoing evaluator contributes to increase efficiency and effectiveness
- Imply that the ongoing evaluator continually should participate in activities to support the project management

Introduction, continued....

- Evaluation theories reflect assumptions on how to design the evaluation
- Program theories reflect assumptions on how to conceptualize an intervention program for evaluation purposes
- A project that conforms to the strategy for growing and development within a southern region in Sweden 2014-2020, within collaboration within research and innovation
- The simulation and innovation project is continually evaluated
- The collaboration in the project includes academia, private and public organizations

Aim of the paper

- The purpose of this paper is to
 - analyze how collaboration within research and innovation can be evaluated, by creating an intervention theory, using a specific project as an example

Research method

- An action research method has been used, inspired by participative action appreciative research (PAAR) method
- PAAR synthesizes the action research and participatory action research brings together action and reflection with the participation of stakeholders
- Concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of human purposes and to identify and amplify current achievements and produce practical solutions – the main purpose in ongoing evaluation
- Need for collecting data, views and information, from project managers, thematic leaders and sub-project leaders responsible
- Important to collect and evaluate information from other stakeholders
- Information from different parties helps to create legitimacy and credibility for the evaluation

Research method, continued....

- Both primary and secondary data has been collected
- Document describing the decision and organization of the project, together with activity reports
- Interviews with all project, thematic and sub-project leaders as well as a few stakeholders, together with participation in the conventions “IT and health” arranged by the project
- Participation in steering group meetings and project meetings
- A deductive content analysis was used in order to develop the intervention theory for the project
- For the development of the intervention theory a program theory was used, together with the project application and the decision document for the project as well as interviews

Theoretical framework

- Evaluating program implementation
 - Evaluation is a systematic and thorough assessment of efforts that have been performed
 - Activities are studied – specific actions or arrangements, programs or policies – called intervention
 - Ongoing evaluation – a continuous activity of assessment, to suggest changes in the intervention – learning evaluation
 - Both retrospective and formative in its character
 - Expected to give continuous suggestions and advices to the intervention managers – involved in all processes
 - Valuation criteria often based on the goals of the intervention
 - Valuation criteria should guide the data collection and used as measures
 - Scientific methods should be used
 - Intervention – inflow, transformation, outflow – feedback – beyond the outflow (outcomes)

Theoretical framework

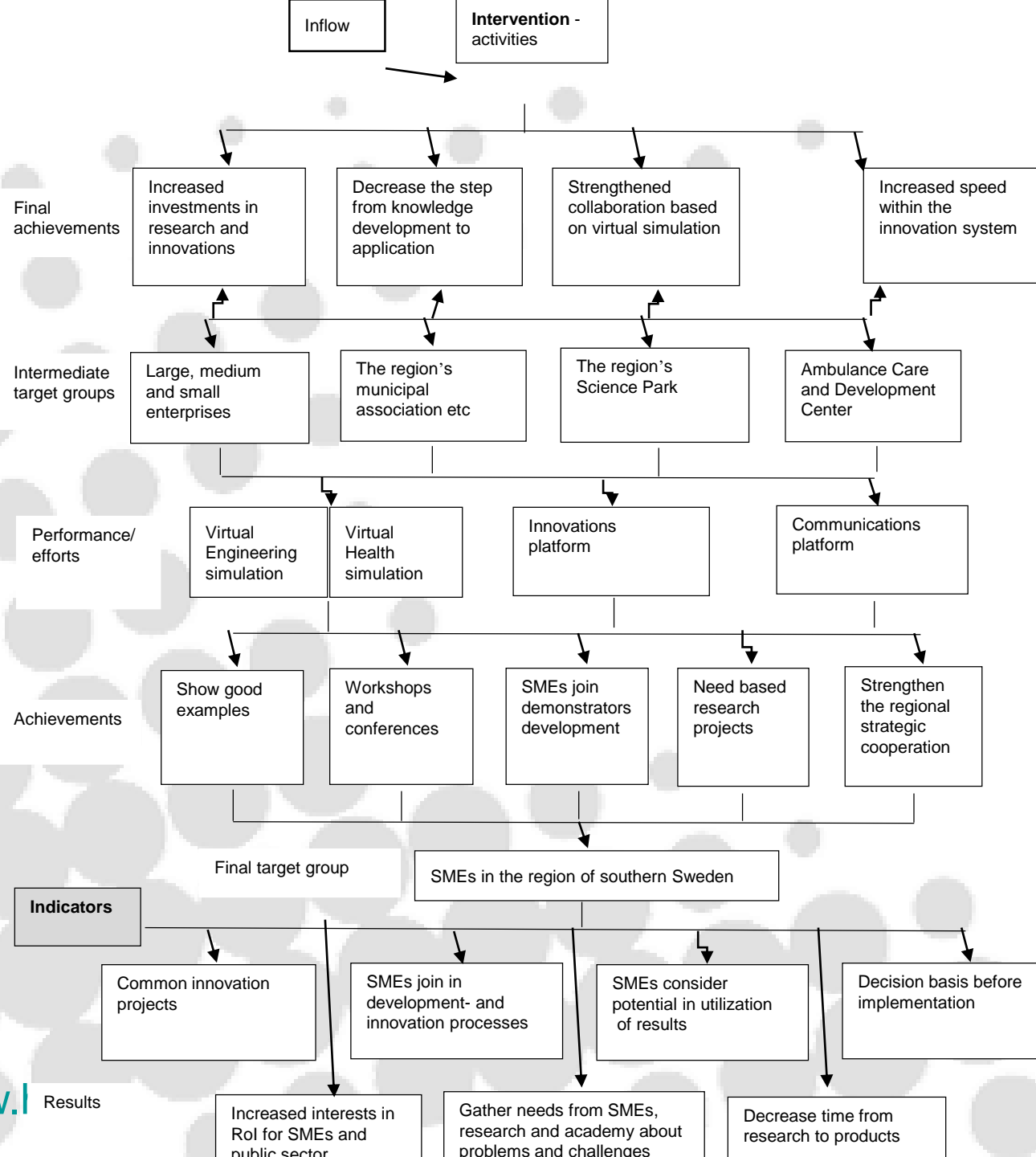
- Developing an intervention theory
 - An intervention theory, based on a program theory, is a useful tool for evaluation
 - Two components; a theory of change and a theory of action
 - Intervention theory describes how the intervention is supposed to have an impact in the society
 - Include “if-then” statements, express cause and effect
 - Interventions is interpreted and arranged in an intervention theory
 - A frame of reference, a conceptual framework for the ongoing evaluation
 - Interest to evaluate causes and effects of actions performed

Results and analysis

- The intervention theory will be used as a structured analytical tool for the further ongoing evaluation
- Interpretation and arrangement of an inherent intervention theory for the simulation and innovation project, INNO18, at a university in the southern part of Sweden
- The intervention theory can be further developed and refined in the following process
- Consist of activities that are developed, processed and refined in order to reach the prescribed results – results are based on certain final achievements and results – the outflow denotes what is aimed to provide to the target group
- The target group is the final receivers of the intervention

Results and analysis

- The outflow, or the result, describes what is happening when the final achievements reach the target group, and what the action of the target group can lead to
- An intervention can also have intermediate target groups
- Mechanisms are milestones for how the target group can be affected in order to act in compliance with the intended results
- Ongoing evaluation is concentrated on the content of the intervention and its performance and results – should consider the causes and effects between activities and the final achievements and results
- A few activity indicators exist as instrument, contributing to final achievements and results
 - Number of enterprises receiving support - 25
 - Number of enterprises receiving support for introducing new products at the market - 20
 - Number of enterprises collaborating with research institutes – 5



Discussion

- The presented intervention theory for the innovation project is a first version - it is planned to be refined and developed
- Further development in collaboration with the project leader, the thematic leaders, the sub-project leaders and the steering committee
- The intervention theory hopefully support the innovation project and the ongoing evaluation
 - choose which aspects that should be further evaluated
 - refine evaluation questions for the ongoing evaluation
 - focus on important aspects
 - use in dialogues with project members and related actors
 - Evaluate how the indicators are contributing to the final achievements and results
 - Broadening and deepening the ongoing evaluation about the related actors' perception of the innovation project and its intended results

Conclusion

- An intervention theory is created, and is interpreted and structured for the innovation project based on documents and interviews
- The intervention theory should be further refined, and discussed with the project management and the steering committee
- Certain aspects of the project can be more important to evaluate, and the intervention theory can support the selection of aspect of consideration
- The intervention theory can be used to evaluate the causes and effects, and if the innovation project is reaching its intended final achievements and results

Thankyou for listening!

Questions?

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