

Approximating the amount of quality

There is no direct method of evaluating programs. Quality can only be approximated.
Reliance on interpretation is always high.

Fundamental question:

What is the quality of the program?

Constituent questions:

What is the quality of the outcomes?

What is the quality of the process?

What is the quality of the staffing and other input?

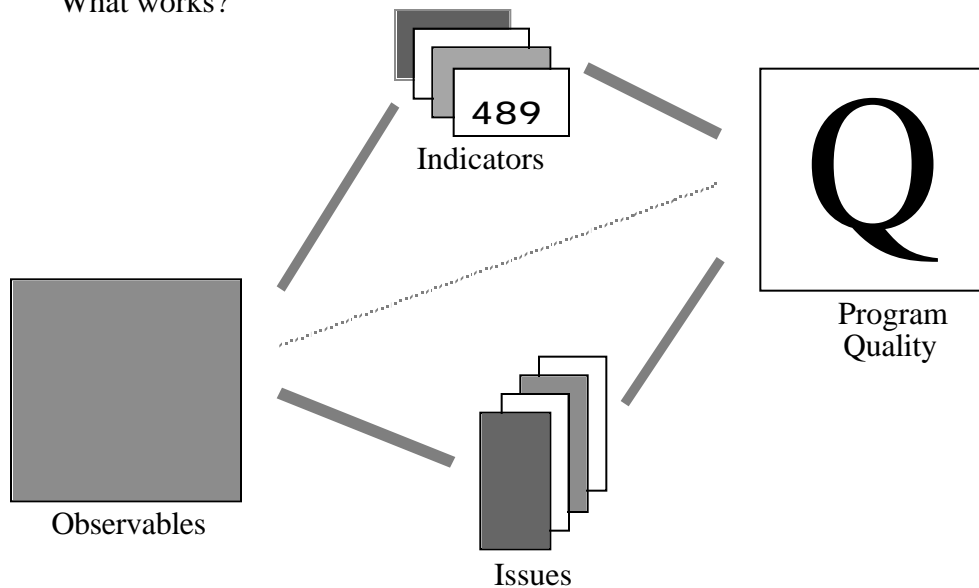
More answerable questions:

Is the program in compliance with obligations?

Does the program meet the needs and expectations of clients?

Is the program productive?

What works?



The most common way of indicating program quality is with indicator variables such as increase in test scores or satisfaction ratings of participants, but these regularly understate what we mean by program quality and require substantial interpretation by the evaluator or others. Representing program quality simply by an unordered aggregate of observations is confusing. One good alternative is to use issues to organize or structure observations but to rely on the evaluator to prepare an interpretation of the quality of the program based on the issues raised. In all cases, because the actual observations or their aggregates are but weak approximations of quality, the role of interpretation is central.