国連文脈での評価の質保障フレームワークの構築
Toward a Quality Assurance Framework in the UN Context

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1. Introduction

Program evaluation is becoming integral to the function of the United Nations Secretariat entities. While the UN Secretariat has the central unit responsible for evaluating the UN entities, their mandates and activities, the UN Secretariat is moving toward institutionalizing the program evaluation functions through capacity building and organizational development. Among diverse evaluation functions, quality assurance is one of the least formulated area that required further considerations. Quality assurance as well as program evaluation could benefit from further conceptualization but requires empirical evidence through methodological research. To fill the existing challenge, this article synthesizes the existing literature to conceptualize quality assurance within the UN Secretariat context: definition, structures, processes and standards. This article excludes entities outside of the UN Secretariat such as funds, programmes and special agencies although information is borrowed from these entities external to the Secretariat. The article proposes recommendations for future considerations.

2. Quality Assurance: Mandate and Strategy

Program evaluation received attention from the General Assembly and the Secretary-General (United Nations Secretariat, 2021a). Quality assurance (QA) as a part of program evaluation functions aims to maintain the credibility of evaluation deliverables as evidence and lesson-learned cases for all stakeholders while sustaining the Organisation's enhancement (United Nations Secretariat, 2021b). Some publications (United Nations Secretariat, 2021a, 2021b) provide a basis for working toward establishing program evaluation capacity, one particular document plays a critical role: *Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (2016) by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). As known as the UNEG norms and standards (2016), many UN evaluation specialists refer their evaluation practices to this document. For example, The UNEG norms and standards (UNEG, 2016) include a standard on quality that strongly encourages establishing a quality assurance system. "The head of evaluation should ensure that there is an appropriate quality assurance system" (UNEG, 2016, p. 28). The goal of QA is to promote the quality of evaluations for continuous improvement and learning.

3. Definitions

Several quality assurance definitions are available in the evaluation literature. Quality control, quality review, quality assessment and quality appraisal are a few definitions available. In the literature, however, quality assurance deals with an alignment of specific interrelated concepts: accountability and quality (Clark et al., 2009). For example, Weingarten (2020) described QA as processes to ensure and surpass a quality standard at the desired level. In the UN Secretariat context, QA is used to describe this particular evaluation capacity.

Quality assurance refers to an organised mechanism to ensure the quality of evaluations at a certain threshold by applying rigorous and systematic approaches and processes to these evaluations. For example, Standard 5.1 of UNEG norms and standards (UNEG, 2016) defines quality assurance as the following "Typically invoked at the design and finalization stages of evaluation, an appropriate quality assurance mechanism looks at both the evaluation process and its products" (UNEG, 2016, p. 23).

In addition, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) use the following definitions in Table 1.

In addition to the above definitions, these organisations adopt UNEG Norms and Standards into their QA structures, processes and standards.

4. Structures

Quality assurance can take diverse structures based on its scopes, resources, schedules, and complexities. However, a critical structure in QA requires the maintenance of its objectivity through independence, impartiality, credibility, and utility. For example, UNEG Standard 5.1 (2016) described a QA structure in the following:

> Depending on the construct of the evaluation function, the mechanism can be operated with internal peer review or external review. In either case, the head of evaluation should ensure the objectivity of the review. Alternatively (or additionally), quality assurance could be provided by an internal or external expert providing guidance and oversight throughout the evaluation process. (p. 23)

Based on this UNEG description, QA can be organised as internal or external models. On one hand, an internal model organises internal resources to implement QA: conducting peer reviews by

Table 1

Quality Assurance Definitions by International Organizations

Entities	Definitions
OIOS (2014)	Quality assurance encompasses any activity that is concerned with assessing and improving the merit or the worth of a development intervention or its compliance with given standards (p. 117)
WFP (2021)	Quality assurance cuts across all phases as it includes clearance of all evaluation outputs (p. 15)
OECD (2010)	Quality control is exercised through the evaluation process (p. 17)

individual staff members and forming internal review committees by a group of individual staff members. For example, UNCTAD's evaluation unit conducts peer reviews of all evaluation reports produced by its staff members before publications. On the other hand, an external model mobilises resources from consultants, researchers or firms outside the UN Secretariat. Examples are hiring professional consultants, academic researchers, or evaluation firms to conduct individual peer reviews. While common elements across the two models exist, no clear consensus is available on the effectiveness of the two models.

Some variations are available depending on the resources and capacities. These models can be combined as a hybrid model to improve the rigour of a QA structure. For example, OIOS (2014) combines both internal peer reviews and external expert panels depending on its needs for evaluation projects. Also, WFP (2021) describes its quality assurance system as including a reference group and external panel. This panel is chaired by an evaluation manager. The panel is consulted throughout the evaluation implementation. The most important consideration in QA structures is to reflect the need, resources, and capacities of one's units to organise a suitable structure.

5. Processes

A key consensus on QA definitions across these organizations is a process dimension as described in the definition section. QA is integral to evaluation processes of these entities. However, what is unclear is whether QA should cover the entire evaluation phases or only some segments. For example, the UNEG norms and standards (2016) suggests QA at the design and finalization stages. However, all other definitions discuss the QA processes throughout the evaluation phases. While the coverage of the entire evaluation phases from the beginning to the end would be ideal, the coverage might be diverse in practice depending on the level of capacity and familiarity in QA across the UN system. Table 2 illustrates some examples.

On the other hand, some organizations subdivide their processes. For example, OIOS (2014) has a 10-step process for their QA to ensure its implementation. WFP (2021) also extends its process across the evaluation implementation: planning, preparation, inception, data collection, reporting, dissemination and follow-up. What became clear from this analysis is that these phases are arbitrary without clear consensus across these entities. This artificial nature of stages in evaluation processes pose challenges for some UN entities with less evaluation capacity as some entities might

Table 2

QA Phases Defined by UNEG, OECD, and UNCTAD

	Initial Stage	Implementation Stage	Final Stage
UNEG (2016)	Design Phase		Final Phase
OECD (2010)	Purpose, Plan and Design	Implementation and Reporting	Follow-up, Use and Learning
UNCTAD (2011)	Phase 1: Inception (Planning, Preparation and Design)	Phase 2: Implementation (Conduct the Evaluation)	Phase 3: Dissemination (USE of the Results)

be unfamiliar with these evaluation processes.

6. Standards

The use of quality assurance instruments is a common approach for some UN organisations to examine evaluation deliverables. These instruments provide systematic and rigorous approaches to examining their evaluation reports while some UN entities operationalise their quality assurance criteria by applying UNEG standards to their instruments. From examining various guidelines and publications across the UN entities, some consensus emerged. For example, the below list is a synthesis of standards from QA instruments of The Office of Internal Oversight Services Inspection and Evaluation Division (OIOS-IED, 2014), WFP (2021), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2019):

- Standard 1.   Executive summary
- Standard 2.   Methodology
- Standard 3.   Findings
- Standard 4.   Conclusion and lessons learned
- Standard 5.   Recommendations
- Standard 6.   Gender and human rights mainstreaming
- Standard 7.   Report structure

These standards included subdivided criteria with a Likert scale and/or text feedback. Some scales were also weighted to emphasise one standard over another. However, these standards are not exhaustive, and are presented as an example.

7. Lesson-Learned

Quality assurance required clarifications and syntheses as it is a least development concept of program evaluation within the UN Secretariat context. The need of building evaluation capacity across the Secretariat is increasing in recent years. Although some UN entities have established practices of program evaluation including QA, the level of capacity remains diverse based on entities' capacity levels. The article synthesized the existing literature on program evaluation in the UN to examine a consensus of QA practice in definitions, structures, processes and standards. The review identified some consensus on these areas, but these areas remained normative with limited empirical evidence. Further consensus on definitions, structures, processes and standards by conducting empirical research such as systematic review on quality assurance could improve the current status.

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