The need-to-knows when commissioning evaluations

Rick Davies, Stockholm, 27 June, 2016

What type of questions should I pose if a consultant proposes the use of QCA?

- What about the evaluation questions that are not about causal attribution?
- What will you say if anyone asks about average net effects of the project?
- What will you say if people ask how generalizable the findings are outside this population?
- Have you got enough cases?
- Do you have at least a loose ToC that will guide choice of conditions?
- Have you got sufficient diversity of cases, given the range of causal conditions that you want to explore
- If diversity is limited, how will you deal with this?
- Have you got cases with and without the outcome of interest?
- Are you likely to have many cases of conditions where there will be missing data?
- What other methods will you use in association with QCA?
- Have you/your team got both sectoral and (QCA) technical skills?

What questions can be answered with QCA?

- Questions about complex forms of causality
  - What works in what contexts
- Strong evidence about configurations but less so about causal mechanisms behind them (where more supporting within-case analysis is needed)
- Causes of an effect as well as effects of a cause
- NOT
  - Scale of effect
  - Average effect

When would it be advisable to ask for a QCA in a ToR and what should I then ask for?

- When there is a "loose" theory of change
- When there is diversity of context and interventions
- Where programs are trying to be adaptive / participatory/ decentralized

- ?Where there are some hypotheses that could be tested, but other alternative explanations also need exploring (via algorithmic search)?

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How do I quality assure a QCA-proposal and a QCA-evaluation?

- Raw data must be available
- Coding protocol must be available
- Sensitivity analysis, if dichotomization of data is involved, especially of outcomes
- Key measures of solutions should be available: consistency, coverage (raw and unique)
- Cases and conditions rejected and why so
- If intermediate solutions, what assumptions made
- Venn diagram?