Innovation in evaluation

Webinar: Wednesday 16 May 2018, 9:00-10:30am (EST)

Professor Patricia Rogers, BetterEvaluation
www.BetterEvaluation.org
Innovations in evaluation

• Types of innovation
• Where is innovation most needed?
• How can we support innovation in evaluation?
• Some particular innovations
POLL 1: Where are you calling in from?

1. Africa
2. Asia
3. Central or South America
4. Europe
5. Oceania
6. North America
7. Antarctica
Evaluation is challenging.

Innovation occurs when current abilities are not enough to meet the challenges.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s model of flow as related to challenge and ability

Retrieved from:
What is innovation?

A change
at least in that setting

That adds value
Types of innovation

**Invention**
New technology or new process

**Transfer or translation**
Bringing in an idea from another setting or another purpose, and possibly adapting it

**Bricolage**
Gathering together existing elements in a new way

**Systematisation**
Documenting and making explicit and systematic some existing practices
Which innovations are most likely to be adopted?

Everett Rogers’ theory of innovation

The importance of:

1. Relative advantage - in terms of effectiveness or cost-effectiveness
2. Compatibility with existing systems
3. Ease of use (and learning to use)
4. Trialability
5. Potential for reinvention
How to support appropriate use of innovations

1. Gather existing knowledge about the innovation, including possible technical support
2. Do a trial in one or more sites and visibly evaluate it
3. Share learnings
4. Provide support for further uptake
Innovation across the range of tasks in evaluation
Using the BetterEvaluation Rainbow Framework

The BetterEvaluation Rainbow Framework prompts you to think about a series of key questions. It is important to consider all these issues, including reporting, at the beginning of an evaluation. The framework can be used to plan an evaluation or to locate information about particular types of methods. An expanded version of the framework showing options or methods for each question can be downloaded from our website: http://betterevaluation.org/plan.

1. MANAGE an evaluation or evaluation systems
   - Manage an evaluation (or a series of evaluations), including deciding who will conduct the evaluation and who will make decisions about it.
   - Understand and engage stakeholders: What needs to be involved in the evaluation? How can they be identified and engaged?
   - Establish decision making processes: Who will have the authority to make what type of decisions about the evaluation? Who will provide advice or make recommendations about the evaluation? What processes will be used for making decisions?
   - Decide who will conduct the evaluation: Who will actually undertake the evaluation?
   - Determine and secure resources: What resources (time, money, and expertise) will be needed for the evaluation and how can they be obtained? Consider both internal (e.g. staff time) and external (e.g. previous participants’ time) resources.
   - Define ethical and quality evaluation standards: What will be considered a high quality and ethical evaluation? How should ethical issues be addressed?
   - Document management processes and agreements: How will the evaluation’s management processes and agreements be documented?
   - Develop planning documents for the evaluation: What needs to be done to design, plan and implement the evaluation? What planning documents need to be created (evaluation framework, evaluation plan, evaluation design, evaluation work plan)?
   - Review evaluation (do-meta-evaluation): How will the evaluation itself be evaluated including the plan, process, and report?
   - Develop evaluation capacity: How can the ability of individuals, groups and organisations to conduct and use evaluations be strengthened?

2. DEFINE what is to be evaluated
   - Develop a description (or access an existing version) of what is to be evaluated and how it is understood to work.
   - Develop initial description: What exactly is being evaluated?
   - Develop programme theory / logic model: How is the intervention understood to work (program theory, theory of change, logic model)?
   - Identify potential unintended results: What are possible unintended results (both positive and negative) that will be important to address in the evaluation?

3. FRAME the boundaries for an evaluation
   - Set the parameters of the evaluation – its purposes, key evaluation questions and the criteria and standards to be used.
   - Identify primary intended users: Who are the primary intended users of this evaluation?
   - Decide purpose: What are the primary purposes and intended uses of the evaluation?
   - Specify the key evaluation questions: What are the high level questions the evaluation will seek to answer? How can these be developed?
   - Determine what ‘success’ looks like: What should be the standards and criteria for judging performance? Whose criteria and standards matter? What process should be used to develop agreement about these?

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Innovations needed to address SDGs

• Assessing inclusion/exclusion and distributional effects of interventions I
• Understanding complicated cause-and-effect relationships
• Embedding evaluation in decisionmaking processes
• Actively supporting learning, including acknowledging mistakes and failures
• Using big data and other technology ethically and appropriately.

Caroline Heider, IEG, May 2018
POLL 2: Where is innovation most needed for you?

1. Developing a theory of change for the intervention
2. Framing the evaluation to meet different needs
3. Answering descriptive questions about what has happened or the situation
4. Answering causal questions about what has produced changes
5. Answering evaluative questions about the value of interventions
6. Reporting findings and supporting people to use them
7. Managing evaluations (including governance and participation) or the evaluation system
For each of the following innovations, consider ...

CHOOSING
1. Do you think this might be useful for you to use? Why or why not?
2. What other information and assistance would be useful to have in order to make this choice?
3. How might you get this?

USING
1. What other information and assistance would be useful to have in order to use this innovation well?
2. How might you get this?
Some common challenges in evaluation

1. Paying attention to unintended negative outcomes
2. Including the effect of other interventions and factors
3. Framing evaluations around intended uses of primary intended users
4. Measuring the hard to measure
5. Understanding equity effects
6. Investigating cause and effect when a counterfactual is not possible and/or causality is complicated
7. Making values transparent and systematic
8. Communicating findings to time poor users
9. Involving the least powerful beneficiaries in conducting and deciding about the evaluation
Challenge:
Paying attention to unintended negative outcomes

Innovation 1:
Negative program theory

http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/negative_program_theory/

Better student learning outcomes

Increased teacher salaries
Challenge:
Paying attention to unintended negative outcomes

Innovation 1:
Negative program theory

http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/negative_program_theory/

Better student learning outcomes

- More experienced teachers retained
- More talented people attracted into teaching
- More time for teaching (no need for second job)
- Obligation to undertake additional training

Increased teacher salaries
Challenge:

Paying attention to unintended negative outcomes

Innovation 1:

Negative program theory

http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/negative_program_theory/

Worse student learning outcomes

Increased teacher salaries
Challenge:
Paying attention to unintended negative outcomes

Innovation 1:
Negative program theory

Worse student learning outcomes

Less money for other educational needs

Less dedicated people attracted into teaching

Ineffective teachers more likely to stay

Negative relationships with parents

Context:
Fixed budget

Increased teacher salaries

http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/negative_program_theory/
Challenge:
Including the effect of other interventions and factors

Innovation 2:
Triple row/triple column logic models

https://www.betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/triple_column
Challenge:
Framing evaluations around intended uses of primary intended users

Innovation 3: Data rehearsal

Evaluation purpose: inform improvements in terms of matching participants and training (either by targeting or by changing content)

Data collected: end of course questionnaire including
(a) overall satisfaction and
(b) level of management experience

Rehearsal of findings:
60% of participants did not find the training program useful
60% of participants were experienced managers

Would this meet the needs of the intended users?
**Challenge:**
Framing evaluations around intended uses of primary intended users

**Innovation 3:**
Data rehearsal

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Challenge:
Framing evaluations around intended uses of primary intended users

Innovation 3:
Data rehearsal

Implications for:
- What data to collect
- How to collect it (each linking data for each case)
- How to report it

Consider data rehearsal for different scenarios:
- Positive outcomes
- Negative outcomes
- Ambiguous outcomes
Challenge:
Understanding equity effects

Innovation 4:
Collecting, analysing and reporting disaggregated effects
Challenge:

Understanding equity effects

Innovation 4:
Collecting, analysing and reporting disaggregated effects

- Children in the highest-risk families, however, appeared to be unfavorably affected by Early Head Start participation. (p.342)

- The Early Head Start programs had almost no statistically significant impacts on parenting among the parents in families with more than three risks, however, and the impact that was significant was an unfavorable impact on harshness toward the child during the parent interview. A few other impacts on parenting among these parents were relatively large and unfavorable.

- The impacts of Early Head Start on the cognitive and language development of children in the families with more than three risk factors, however, were unfavorable. p 343

Challenge:

Measuring the hard to measure

Innovation 5: Big data

Challenge:
Measuring the hard to measure

Innovation 5: Big data


ESTIMATING POVERTY LEVELS IN CÔTE D’IVOIRE

In another study (Smith et al., 2012), researchers used CDRs to map poverty levels in Côte d’Ivoire. No full survey of the country’s population has been published since a civil war in the 1990s. Researchers used anonymized CDRs of five million Orange telecommunications customers between December 2011 and April 2012 to assess both the level of activity among subscribers and locations where calls were made. Higher levels of mobile communication and wider range of calls are a proxy indicator for prosperity. Using this data, poverty levels of eleven regions of Côte d’Ivoire were quantified. The estimate was validated when compared with a multi-dimensional poverty index created by University of Oxford, which uses indicators such as poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standard and threat from violence among other factors. This research validated the possibility of making poverty maps using CDRs.

The previous three studies show that in countries where information regarding census, socioeconomic levels or poverty indicators is lacking, CDRs may be used to estimate these variables on an ongoing basis, thus augmenting and complementing survey data.

CDRs can provide a proxy indicator for assessing regional poverty levels, and can valuably augment national surveys in estimating changes associated with a growing economy.

Figure 5. Figure 5A shows poverty map estimated based on the anonymized in the eleven major regions of Côte d’Ivoire, where the darker areas indicate higher estimated poverty level. Figure 5B shows the Department poverty levels as approximated by the model used on regional level indicating the finer granularity possible when using CDRs. Source: Smith et al., 2012.
Challenge:
Investigating cause and effect when a counterfactual is not possible and/or causality is complicated

Innovations:
Process tracing
EvalC3
QuIP
Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Request for Proposal for Summative evaluation of the WHO Rapid Access Expansion Initiative

“The evaluation of impact must use methodological alternatives to traditional counterfactual approaches ie assessing with confidence that the RAE initiative had an impact through the use of non-counterfactual mixed methods approaches”
Challenge:
Making values transparent

Innovation 6: Rubrics

Rubrics can also be generic, to be applied across a range of questions/criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Rating</th>
<th>Performance Descriptors for Answering Key Evaluation Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Performance is clearly very strong or exemplary in relation to the question. Any gaps or weaknesses are not significant and are managed effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Performance is generally strong in relation to the question. No significant gaps or weaknesses, and less significant gaps or weaknesses are mostly managed effectively.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>Performance is inconsistent in relation to the question. Some gaps or weaknesses. Meets minimum expectations/requirements as far as can be determined.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Performance is unacceptably weak in relation to the question. Does not meet minimum expectations/requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient evidence</td>
<td>Evidence unavailable or of insufficient quality to determine performance.</td>
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Challenge:
Making values transparent

Innovation 6:
Rubrics

Innovation 6:
Rubrics

Challenge:
Making values transparent

**Rubrics may be very criterion-specific, e.g. Parent & whānau engagement in education**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Highly effective</strong></td>
<td>- Parents/whānau are extremely well-informed, confident and highly engaged in their children’s education in ways that maximise the children’s potential.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Parent and whānau knowledge and perspectives are well respected, highly valued and fully integrated in ways that benefit the children’s education.</td>
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<td>- Māori content and language are clearly evident and infused in ways that are appropriate for local whānau.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minimally effective</strong></td>
<td>- Levels of parent/whānau/caregiver engagement are just sufficient to support children’s education, although there is significant room for improvement.</td>
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<td>- The school demonstrates understanding of Māori, Pasifika and other cultures, including the concepts of whānau, co-parenting and other family structures.</td>
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<td><strong>Poor or Detrimental</strong></td>
<td>- Any one or more of the following:</td>
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<td>- Levels of whānau engagement are extremely low or are deteriorating – to an extent that adversely impacts children’s education</td>
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<td>- Whānau report being talked “at” or down to, made to feel unwelcome or stupid, or that their perspectives are disrespected or sidelined</td>
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<td>- Information is either withheld or presented in ways that prevent meaningful whānau involvement</td>
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Source: MOE projects (various)

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<td></td>
<td>12. Positive deviance</td>
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POLL 3:
Which innovation is potentially most useful for you?

1. Negative program theory
2. Triple-row logic models
3. Data rehearsal
4. Big data
5. Collecting, disaggregating, and reporting by sub-groups
6. Rubrics
Support for choosing and using innovations in evaluation

1. Professional development workshops – face-to-face and virtual

2. Online resources – explanation, guidance, examples

3. Peer support – learning circles, community of practice, peer review

4. Short-term external support – technical advice, mentoring, coaching, expert review

5. Recruitment of additional staff

6. Sub-contracting implementation
Support for choosing and using innovations in evaluation

Search for online information by innovation
Support for choosing and using innovations in evaluation
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Search for online information by evaluation task
2. Develop reporting media

What types of reporting formats will be appropriate for the intended users?

Written

Executive Summaries: including an executive summary which is a shortened version of the full report.

Final Reports: ensuring they are readable, straight to the point, and use a writing style that promotes understanding regardless of who the target audience is.

Interim Reports: presenting the interim, preliminary, or initial evaluation findings.

Memos and email: maintaining ongoing communication among evaluation stakeholders through brief and specific messages about a particular issue.

News media communications: sharing news relating to evaluation findings through press releases.

Bulletins, newsletters, briefs, and brochures: highlighting particular findings or angles on an evaluation using shorter communications such as bulletins, briefs, newsletters, blogs, and brochures.

Postcards: collecting information quickly in order to provide a short report on evaluation findings (or an update on progress).

Website communications: disseminating information such as that coming from evaluations via a range of web-based tools.

Presentations

Conference: discussing a set topic or theme in a large group of people at a set venue.

Displays and exhibits: drawing attention to particular issues and existing in community engagement.

Flip charts: providing a useful way of interacting with your audience and therefore allowing you to present your own ideas and results and also to immediately record input, feedback and ideas from your audience.

Information contacts: providing a contact person for all media and public enquiries about a project or program.

Posters: presenting your evaluation findings in the form of a poster provides a good opportunity to get your message across in a clear way while also providing opportunities for feedback.

PowerPoint: organizing and communicate information coming from evaluations in the form of a slide show which can be used at a meeting or conference.

Teleconference: facilitating discussion of evaluation findings via telephone.

Verbal briefings: providing specific information to an audience of interested participants allowing for a structured question and answer format based on that information.

Video: highly flexible and immediate medium which allows you to make an emotional meaningful connection with the audience.

Videoconference: gathering data, communicating information about an evaluation, reporting findings, receiving feedback, and planning for utilization.

Web conference: bringing people together from around the world using the Internet.

Creative

Cartoons: allowing readers to see a point differently, add humour, and break up large sections of prose.

Photographic reporting: making your report more appealing to readers and also making the key messages more memorable by including photographs.

Poetry: communicating the experience of participants can be achieved by presenting some of the findings in the form of a poem.

Reporting in pictures: presenting information in an alternative way and therefore increasing understanding of your results.

Theatre: communicating evaluation findings and engaging intended users in responding to them.

Graphical design

Arrangement: Descriptive text and its related data visualization should be arranged so they appear together on a page. Narrative text should be left-justified.

Color: Blocks of background color can help group cognitively-similar items or set off reporting elements like sidebars. Text intended for narrative reading should be set in black or dark gray on a white or very light background.

Images: Written reports and presentations should always include images. Beyond just charts and graphs, photographs or drawings increase the relevancy of the material to the audience and make the report more engaging.

Type: Generally speaking, serif fonts support readability in long narrative-style documents produced on paper. Sans serif fonts are easier to read in electronic reporting media.

Presenting your report in a creative manner may be the most relevant means to get your information across if the context allows for it. You may consider working with an artist or a graphic designer to produce creative displays.

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Week 16: Infographics to make your evaluation results go viral

17th April 2014 by Joitske

Continuing our season of blogs on presenting evaluation findings in ways that will get them read (and hopefully used), Joitske Hulsebosch, an independent consultant, contributes her ideas on how to present your findings in the form of an infographic. Catch up on recent contributions from Rakesh Mohan and Patricia Rogers on sharing evaluation findings.

It is not always evident that lessons from evaluation travel across borders: I remember clearly talking to a colleague who was disappointed that the loans provided by NGOs were not being evaluated by NGOs or institutions. Many institutions believe that evaluation results should be handled internally, so many evaluations have not been shared with stakeholders. Yet, there are many development professionals who are aware of the need for evaluation and are often too busy to produce reports or to make results available. The example I’ve described took place before social media in organisations.

Related Content

- Week 15: Fitting reporting methods to evaluation findings – and audiences
- Week 13: Producing engaging and accessible evaluation reports
- Week 22: Using social media to communicate evaluation findings
Support for choosing and using innovations in evaluation

Search for professional development events
Support for choosing and using innovations in evaluation

Events

BetterEvaluation lists events as a service to the evaluation community. We do not officially endorse these events unless they are noted as a BetterEvaluation event.

Here is some upcoming events of interest to the evaluation community. Please don’t hesitate to suggest an event.

Open online courses

Effective and Creative Evaluation Report Writing - In this course, students will learn best practices for effective and creative report writing specific to evaluation reports. Learning points and practical exercises are combined to develop skills in putting together an effective and engaging evaluation report.

Cutting-Edge Monitoring & Evaluation: A Guide for Practitioners - This course lays the ground for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) by considering challenges in current M&E practice, introducing a tool-box of evaluation techniques and showing where these can be best applied.

How to Be a Successful Evaluation Consultant - This course provides the opportunity to learn how to establish, manage and maintain an evaluation consultancy.

Managing the Politics of Evaluation - This course considers some of the challenges that evaluators and evaluation managers face when striving to have an impartial evaluation of a programme.
Support for choosing and using innovations in evaluation

Share your experiences and recommended resources (including examples)
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