



Addressing the Public Policy Evaluation Imbalance: A Realistic Approach

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The Problem

- Evaluation not relevant to policy
- ‘Follow the money’ follies
- Nature abhors a vacuum – so do policy-makers
- Fools rush in

Wrong Turns

Not – more big ticket evaluation

Not – more scorecard support

Not – more methods driven thinking



The Proposed Solution

- Relevance *then* rigour
- Change the evaluand
- Change the approach
- Reposition evaluation



Relevance

- Is there a (real) need?
- Is this need (or could it be) addressed by someone (or something) else?
- Is this initiative relevant to (stated) priorities (and mandates)?



Change the Evaluand

- Move 'up' from programs (and 'down' from public policies)
- Look at policy 'instruments' (carrots, sticks, sermons, hybrids)
- Focus on policy instruments in key target 'systems' (contexts, cultures)
- Consider institutional arrangements to implement

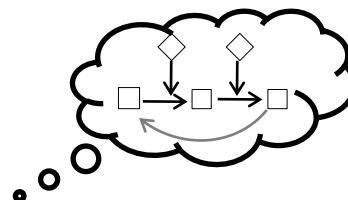


Change the Approach

- Issues



- Use of Theory



- Evidence



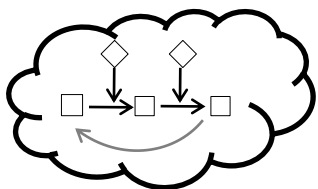


Issues



- **LESS:** Aggregates, averages, summary, efficiency-effectiveness and simple minded “value for money”
- **MORE:** Relevance and addressing how we value what works (to what extent) for whom in what conditions and why?

Results logic



- **LESS:** Linear, one-way, unexplained, context-absent box and wire diagrams
- **MORE:** ‘Situated’, described, systems oriented models describing theories of implementation as well as theories of change with key actors





Lines of Evidence



- **LESS:** ‘Standardized’ approaches ranked by pre-determined hierarchies of ‘value’...and approach ‘worship’...in studies conducted by cloistered ‘experts’.
- **MORE:** Flexible, adapted and integrated measures and approaches fundamentally guided by issues and results logic (theories of change and implementation) and drawing on a diversity of sources and perspectives using networks and communities as active participants.
- **MORE:** Meta-accumulation and applied use of knowledge



Reposition Evaluation

Evaluation

- Lense and language
- Integral to all public management functions
- *All* public policy instruments considered

Evaluators

- Facilitator, Educator
- Synthesist-Analyst
- Critical friend



Conclusions

In order to address the imbalance, public policy evaluation must:

- See itself as less of an independent ‘function’ and more of a ‘lense’ for public management
- Move ‘outside-in’, recognizing systems needs – then looking at policy instruments as the evaluand
- Engage, engage, engage – evaluation is a team sport
- Integrate:
 - Approaches
 - Stakeholders
 - Processes
- Evaluators act as facilitators, educators and ‘critical friends’
- Cultivate (rather than engineer) the process



Questions

- Does the critique of current evaluation as practiced in your world ring true? Is there an imbalance?
- Can the notions of ‘outside-in’ analysis, relevance before rigor, evaluating policy instruments and adjusted ‘realist’ approaches be effectively incorporated into performance planning, measurement, reporting and general public management? Can this help address the imbalance?
- What are the implications for public performance management and evaluation?
 - Strategically
 - Structurally
 - ‘Politically’