Bringing out the best in times of uncertainty:
Finding the right hat or hats for collaborative evaluation roles

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The relevance of role now

- Increased uncertainty
- Increased awareness of complexity
- Increased pressure to reassure

And possibly
- Increased motivation to collaborate?
What is evaluation culture?

Evaluation culture encompasses the behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes and norms of our evaluation communities. It influences evaluators’ career paths and determines the way that evaluation is conducted and communicated.

Adapted from the Royal Society 2019
Who do we think we are?

- Uncertainty of role: do we experience this?
- Giving the impression of certainty
- Contributing to change
- Our values and ‘their’ values
- Being useful and effective

What can we do?
The Proper Role of the Evaluator?

Which hat to wear ... today?
The Proper Evaluator?
The proper role for an evaluator

- Comparative analysis of five theorists’ positions
- How understanding of value, methods, use and purposes result in different roles for evaluators
- How these differences affect evaluators’ responsibilities
- Proposes a resolution of the evaluator’s role and its limitations

The proper role for an evaluator

- Scriven:
  - gives higher authority to evaluators
  - does not resolve personal bias
- Campbell:
  - methodologist/social scientist but is that evaluator?
  - focus on the ‘science’ and the outcome
- Stake:
  - facilitator role but no account of clients’ expectations
  - local political contexts ignored?
- Weiss:
  - range of contexts and evaluation as education not elaborated
  - risk of being the ‘servant’ of certain stakeholder groups
- Rossi:
  - no single ‘proper’ role acknowledged
  - does not link contexts to roles and responsibilities
A resolution ...

- Value
- Methods
- Use
- Purpose
Proper? Improper?

P: precise? personable?
R: rigorous? realistic?
O: organised? open?
P: principled? people-oriented?
E: evidence-focused? evidence-aware?
R: reasoned? reliable?

I: innovative
M: maverick...
Multiple Personalities

Detective; Designer; Judge;
Honest broker; Creative consultant;
Organizational analyst; Leader;
Devil’s advocate;
Change agent; Counselor; Follower;
Communicator; Mediator; Technical
geek; Diplomat; Negotiator;
Problem solver;
Public relations agent

Adapted from Koskey, K (2019) (and Grubbs, 2009;
Mark, 2002; Patton, 2007; Skolits et al., 2009)
Pre Evaluation Stage
Detective: Learn about the context
Negotiator: Agree on the parameters of the evaluation
Designer: Develop the evaluation plan

Active Evaluation Stage
Diplomat: Build relationships and trust
Researcher: Implement the plan
Judge: Judge the merit, value, worth
Reporter: Communicate results to stakeholders

Post Evaluation Stage
Advocate: Promote appropriate uses of evaluation findings
Reflector: Engage in self-reflection

Koskey, K. (2019) University of Akron
David Fetterman:

I think it is about making evaluation more accessible to people, demystifying it, and placing it in more people's hands. If you have ever watched "un-boxing" videos on YouTube, you can appreciate both the anticipation and the sheer joy you see on people's faces as they open up a box of some new treasure. This is all part of the un-boxing of evaluation – watching people's faces as they discover the power and the beauty of evaluation.

2019 Better Evaluation
EVALUATOR ROLES in EVALUATION MODELS

Goal-Based Model
Evaluator directs the evaluation process.

Empowerment Model
Team has total authority and resources to evaluate. Evaluator is empowerment facilitator.

Participatory Model
Evaluator guides evaluation process. Evaluator is facilitator and resource.

Developmental Model
Evaluator supports teamwork. Ownership is shared by all. Evaluator is advisor to program team.

CES Essential Skills Series 2007
Your ways of working

- How do you define your role/s in evaluation?
- How do our roles maximise the usefulness of evaluation?
- Do evaluators have a role in change?
- Do evaluators need to change their roles?
Co-production ... what is it?

- co-design the services being delivered
- share decision making in relation to the staffing and other resources for service delivery
- co-deliver services as volunteers or as paid workers
- take an active part in the evaluation of services, such as helping design evaluation activities, interviewing or gathering feedback from other beneficiaries.

See https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide51/what-is-coproduction/defining-coproduction.asp
Co-production ... why do it?

Strengths in evaluation:
- Sharing responsibility and creativity
- Bringing different knowledge together

Challenges in evaluation:
- Definitions and boundaries
- Resources and skills
- Acceptability of the evidence – good enough?
Co-production is a slippery concept and if it is not clearly defined there is a danger that its meaning is diluted and its potential to transform services is reduced. At the same time, a definition that is too narrow can stifle creativity and decrease innovation.

SCIE (2013) Co-production in social care: what it is and how to do it
Co-production ... and/or?

Critical collaboration
- the critical friend in a safe space

Cover-up collaboration
- tokenistic and focused on particular agendas

Trusting collaboration
- need for strong, confident, open-minded approach that puts others (sector, organisation) ahead of self-interest
The art of the nudge or the ‘nudger’

1. Practicing servant leadership
2. Sensing programme energy
3. Supporting common spaces
4. Untying knots iteratively
5. Paying attention to structure

Bringing out the BEST!

- Recognition of power as it’s there and shifts
- Pluralistic perspectives needed as no best way
- Several/multiple roles but depend on relationships between evaluator and clients
- Reliance on internal commitment
- May be only one chance...
Trying to wear many hats...

Always consider an element of co-production?
Always checking in with other people?
Always checking in with ourselves?
A certain space in uncertainty?

- Can co-production strengthen evaluations and interventions by establishing reliable relationships?
- Does it open up a more certain space in which uncertainty can be explored with and through evaluation evidence?
Thank you!

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