



Evaluation for transformational change

Managing many ideologies and levers to advance change

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Why is Evaluation NOT about eventual judgment and so status quo...



- ▶ Cannot assume that evaluation is about effecting change or being transformational
- ▶ Vested interests has defined evaluation away from its construct as judgmental, independent - lets focus on learning and not “making a judgment about past value for learning and accountability, for any critical dialogue that initiates or motivates change”
- ▶ Today, it has a plural identity:
- ▶ *A tool and extension of management - scientific good news, to justify program continuance ..evaluation must justify more funding and evaluation units must be loyal to the institutional direction*
- ▶ *Primarily being about learning*
- ▶ *Not needing to make recommendations, but working in a collective and participatory manner for joint understanding and learning*

The “let us be relevant mantra”



- ▶ Much of evaluative pitch – even in international evaluation units – has not been transformative, either in topic or process
- ▶ The pitch towards utility – to whom, evaluand or governance bodies and stakeholder,
- ▶ Empowering, if ever, who benefits, and what does it mean in SDG era with promise of citizen centered
- ▶ Bolstering arguments through evaluation - the evaluand uses for perpetuation or justification
- ▶ The notion that independence comes from outsourcing work to external parties and this brings credibility is disputed
- ▶ Dominant discussions in evaluation networks may not reflect new practices in evaluation, greater activity now in the global south

Explicitly – what is transformational evaluation



- ▶ Classic, full confidence in entrenched leadership and decision-makers to act on evaluative evidence, evaluation is a management tool (clientism)
- ▶ A serving the evaluand means learning is emphasized – a utility focused evaluation is quite different – largely internal – limited external accountability
- ▶ Global thrust from citizens and Boards for credible evaluation, question of independence high on global agenda as it is an issue of credibility
- ▶ Independent, does not privilege entrenched SQ, seeks broad solicitation of views, views decision-makers as evaluand
- ▶ The client is the citizen, the thrust is normative, democratic, transparent, accountable
- ▶ A serving the higher ideal – democratic ethos, privilege marginal voices but focus on voice of potential and actual beneficiaries – independence allows space to solicit views and privilege emphasizing diverse views

Why independent evaluation counts



Its credible, its trusted

- ▶ Fundamental difference between evaluation that pitches internally (clientism) and externally (democratic)
- ▶ More time needed to justify exercise, who you report to, how credible are you
- ▶ The use of consultants for independence - a hangover of a bygone era shows buying services does not guarantee independence, the south have moved to build its own capacity

It has more space to move

- ▶ Independence connotes authority and authenticity, and get heard
- ▶ Easy to justify entry point, has power to resist pushback, less treats to excise sensitive points from powerful positions and voices
- ▶ Build a professional cadre, operating within policy and norms and standards, fundamental shift now in evaluation models, from contract to conduct

What we learnt from Independent Country program evaluations at UNDP



- ▶ Appreciated that independent evaluations are conducted and feedback provided for information, accountability, course correction and learning – the ICPEs feed into next program cycle and has direct utility
- ▶ Created external accountability due to management responses with commitments being in globally accessible evaluation reports
- ▶ One can draw themes and recurrences, with critical mass of work – 35 countries per annum, indicating where the impacts are

Importance of evaluation process



- ▶ We build communication bridges through evaluation
- ▶ It is critical that evaluation engages with purported beneficiaries, and captures perspective of the historically marginalized
- ▶ Transparency in sharing preliminary findings and conclusions is vital - irrespective of whether it is sanctioned or not
- ▶ Independence gives access into the space of the evaluand and other stakeholders, and providing feedback to them is also possible due to independent stance



Returning to the question

If we see evaluation as transformative, this requires an evaluative orientation that is robust and independent

Evaluation is not meant to validate the evaluand, but show performance, this means moving from clientism and utility emphasis to normative, democratic and transformational

- ▶ Let us reflect on evaluations in our agencies - have they met the transformational standards of being”
- ▶ Independent in topic decision, approach, process?
- ▶ Effectuated change by challenging rather than validating?
- ▶ Sought to bring about a more reflective and democratic climate, by encouraging the critical and reflective rather than marginalizing
- ▶ Advanced transparency by sharing critical pieces that give voice to the traditionally marginalized?





