

### **Using a framework to describe an evaluation model.**

*Note... This section is taken from Cookingham, "Evaluation model as a concept," 2012; Retrieve from [www.EvalFrank.com](http://www.EvalFrank.com), Evaluation models or approaches.*

The concepts of framework, approach (Stufflebeam, 2001) or model (Madaus, Scriven and Stufflebeam, 1983), and design are hierarchical. Different evaluators may describe them differently; I find it helpful to see the hierarchy moving from abstract framework to generic model to a specific design (evaluation plan).

#### **Framework.**

A framework is a conceptual structure for organizing ideas. The five fundamental issues that undergird practical program evaluation (Shadish, Cook and Leviton, 1991) is an example of a framework. The five issues are (p.35):

- Social programming – What are the important problems this program could address? Can the program be improved? Is it worth doing so? [If it is not worth improving], what is worth doing from an evaluation perspective?
- Knowledge use – How can I make sure my results get used quickly to help this program? Do I want to focus on rapid use of results? If not, can my evaluation be useful in other ways?
- Valuing – Is this a good program? By which notion of "good"? What justifies the conclusion about the goodness of the program?
- Knowledge construction – How do I know all this? What counts as a confident answer to such a question? What causes that confidence?
- Evaluation practice – Given my [limits], and given the seemingly unlimited possibilities, how can I narrow my options to do a feasible evaluation? What is my role [worth] as educator, methodological expert, or judge of program? What questions should I ask, and what methods should I use [to answer them, or to discover other important questions]?

Other frameworks can be structured around approaches to inquiry (case study, experimental, survey, focus groups, etc.) or purpose of evaluation (add to a body of knowledge, determine attribution, demonstrate accountability for achieving goals, etc.).

#### **Model.**

A model is the detailed description of an evaluation approach to dealing with the five issues. See Stufflebeam (2001) for examples of a variety of models and then describe those of interest in terms of these five fundamental issues.

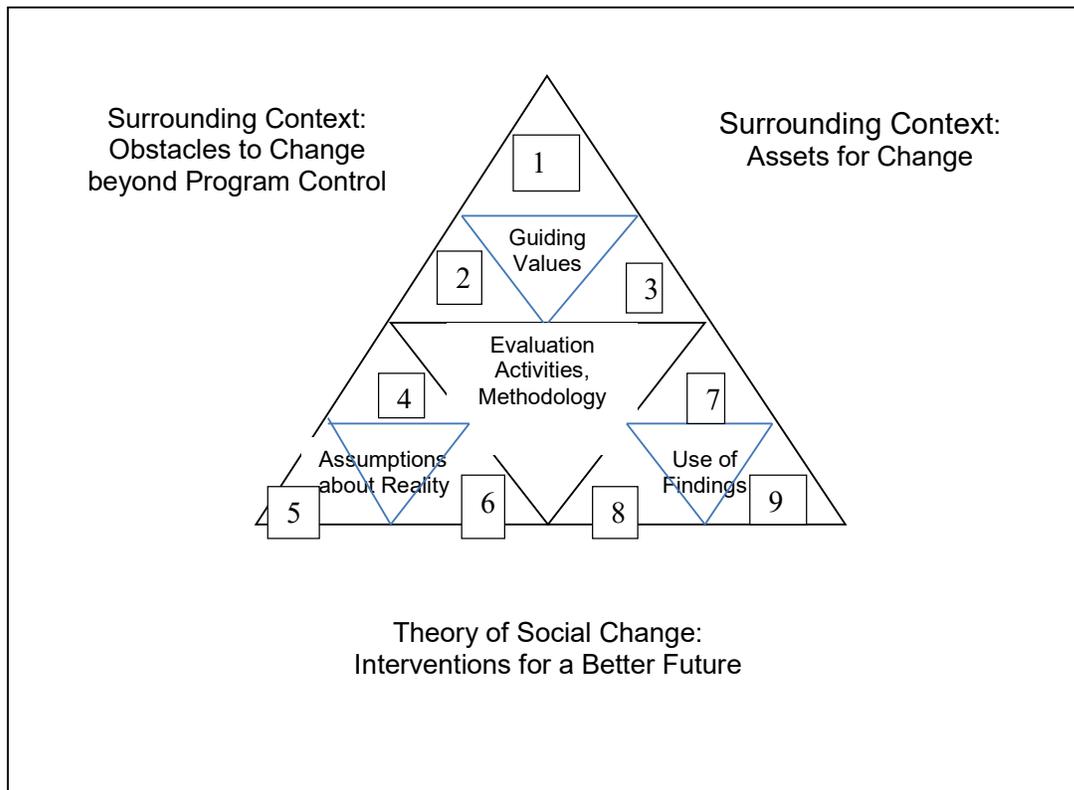
#### **Design.**

This is a description of what data will be collected, how it will be collected, and how it will be analyzed as a particular model, or combination of models, is applied to the evaluand.

#### **Application.**

I have organized the evaluation framework described above into a graphic that can show at a glance the defining features of an evaluation model.

## General Framework for an Evaluation Model



The General Framework simply reorganizes the five components described above to show that evaluation activities (the center of the framework) are determined by the evaluator's understanding of:

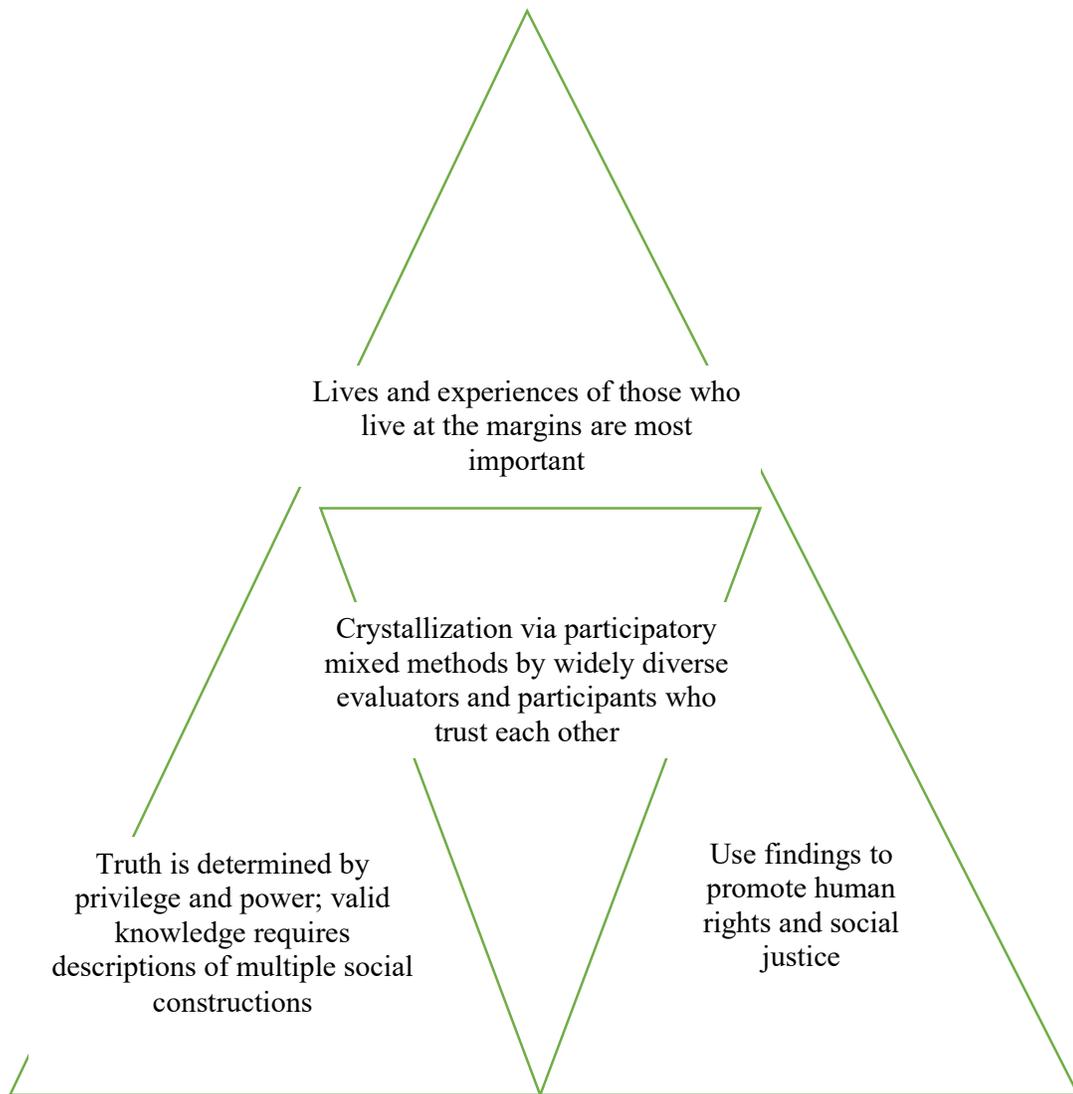
- Surrounding context within which the program is embedded and the underlying assumptions that support the implementation of the program (theory of social change). Two clusters of factors in the context are the obstacles to change (risks) and the assets for change in the program setting. This is the domain of the social programming component.
- Values that guide interpreting evidence to conclude to what extent the program is good and bad, helpful to some stakeholders and harmful to others, worth the cost, etc.
- Assumptions about reality and how you know what is real is the essence of the knowledge construction component. Different sets of assumptions in this area define very different evaluation activities.
- Utilization factors that influence how different groups will interpret and use conclusions and recommendations.

The purpose of having three aspects for guiding values, assumptions about reality and use of findings is to provide a visual overview of the defining features for a model. There is nothing magical about three aspects per supporting component. The intellectual effort to identify the nine aspects that influence evaluation activities may help one understand what differentiates one model from others beyond the particular terminology that advocates use. In a particular case seven aspects may be sufficient while in another case twelve aspects may be necessary.

**Mertens' Transformative Research and Evaluation as a model.**

I have prepared the following description of Mertens' (2009) model of evaluation based on the features that distinguish it as a model for me. Tarsilla's (2010) article helped me organize the content in the model.

Evaluation Model  
Mertens' Transformative Research and Evaluation



### ***Theory of social programming.***

The main objective of transformative evaluators' work is to bring about not only social change but also social transformation (i.e., a more radical and structural modification of attitudes, behaviors, and mentality in society) so as to counteract inequalities existing in today's world. ...The evaluator should focus on furthering human rights... The evaluators' primary task should be to contribute to the solution of "intransigent social problems" and that, in doing that, they should also challenge the status quo, as necessary (Tarsilla, 2010, p108).

Emphasis is placed on community strengths and obstacles to communities becoming effective change agents. Communities gain strength when their rights are honored and respected.

### ***Guiding values.***

- The evaluation needs to be "imbued" [permeated] with the values of the communities where the evaluation is done (Tarsilla, 2010, p103). These same values should guide the entire exercise from planning to reporting findings.
- Places central importance on lives and experiences of those who live at the margins.
- Every person must be treated with dignity and respect and avoidance of harm must be the primary principle.
- Whatever benefits come to the evaluator (including royalties from publications) should be shared with those who participated in the evaluation.
- Authentic representation of diversity in understanding...Presentation of a balanced view of perspectives, values and beliefs.
- The evaluator should show what he or she did to be trusted by the participants in the evaluation, and to develop a sense of mutuality.

### ***Assumptions about reality and true knowledge.***

- All knowledge reflects power, privilege and social relationships in society (Tarsilla, p105). Privilege influences accepting one version of reality over another.
- Critical subjectivity is the path toward the ideal of true objective knowledge. Evaluators need to question their preconceived notions about how the evaluation will produce sound knowledge for the setting that provides context for the evaluand. This is done through ongoing self-reflection and stakeholder participation throughout the exercise.
- Cultural competence is required but is not attainable by an evaluator working outside his or her culture. To allow a better understanding of the complexities of the local culture, include local evaluators on the evaluation team. (Tarsilla, p105, 107)
- Appreciative inquiry reveals important aspects of reality that are often overlooked.
- Within a culture there are multiple realities that are socially constructed. Participatory approaches are important for revealing views of reality from a variety of perspectives.
- Constellations of values shape perceptions of reality.

### ***Use of evaluation findings.***

- Use of findings to promote human rights and further social justice is the most critical factor in transformative work. This involves developing, critiquing, and refining policy as well as in advocating actions that support changes in policy (Tarsilla, p109).

- Community members that provide information in an evaluation exercise have some sort of ownership for the information. This means that their ideas about using the evaluation findings must be honored.
- Use a multitude of options for reporting. This is important for addressing power issues between academic stakeholders and community stakeholders, which is an important sub-objective in an evaluation exercise.
- Findings should extend participant knowledge of program operations and social relationships, especially regarding privilege and power.

### ***Evaluation activities, methodology.***

- Prior to collecting data learn as much as you can about the culture of the communities (study relevant literature, talk with evaluators who have done evaluation in the culture, and read evaluation reports from that culture). Throughout the exercise check with local partners who are conversant in the local language and English about your understanding of relevant aspects of culture.
- Methods of inquiry give priority to inclusive stakeholder involvement in the exercise. Evaluators should seek out those who have not been heard either because do not want to speak up, or because they are out of sight (marginalized).
- Mixed qualitative and quantitative methods are the norm for transformative evaluation.
- Think of the evaluation methodology as a crystal with many facets with each facet representing a voice. Crystallization rather than triangulation characterizes the methodology.
- Dialogical methods are critical. Interaction between evaluator and participants to identify the focus and the information to be collected.
- Cultural complexity is accommodated.
- Context and history are examined especially regarding discrimination and oppression.
- Deconstruct the concept of validity.
- The Evaluator must have a heightened self-awareness and a cultivated critical subjectivity; he or she should be open to being transformed by the Evaluation exercise as it unfolds.

### **References**

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