



On evaluation and accountability

Johann Mouton

CREST

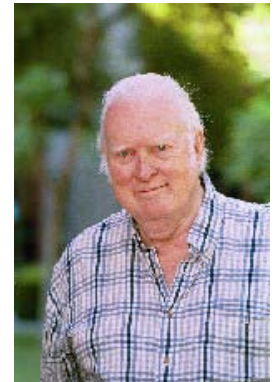
Carnegie Conference, Nairobi

16 November 2010





- Society requires a science of valuing because it requires systematic, unbiased means of knowing if its products, personnel and programmes are good.
- *It is crucial to see that the evaluation point of view is not the manager’s point of view, and it is not simply the consumer’s point of view; it is a point of view which should stand above identification with either of these parties, but make clear to each the importance of the other (1980)*
- *Bad is bad and good is good and it is the job of evaluators to decide which is which (Michael Scriven, 1986)*





Theme 1: Shifts in evaluation (theory) practice since its origins in the 1960's

Theme 2: Good practice in programme evaluation

Theme 3: Lessons learnt from our evaluation studies of Carnegie programmes



THEME 1

SHIFTS IN EVALUATION THEORY AND PRACTICE



- The 1960's witnessed the emergence of the first systematic approaches to programme evaluation with the establishment of the experimental tradition in the USA (Campbell, Stanley, Cook)
- Interventions were viewed as “social experiments” which meant that the existing methodologies of experimental design could be applied to them
- The emphasis was on designing studies that would maximise internal validity (establishing cause and effect) and control for any extraneous threats to validity
- The logic of programme evaluation design was basically equated with the logic of experimental design (random assignment, pre- and posttest measures and control groups)

The shifts



The history of programme evaluation of the past forty years can be read as a systematic rejection of the dominance of the experimental model with a concomitant broadening of the “ambit” of evaluation practice through the inclusion of additional aspects of interventions.

- ❑ The inclusion of process (Naturalistic and Responsive Evaluation Approaches)
- ❑ The appreciation of utility in addition to technical quality (Utilization-focused Evaluation)
- ❑ Recognition of concerns of justice and building capacity (Democratic & Empowerment Evaluation Approaches)
- ❑ Inclusion of context (Realistic evaluation)



Theme 2

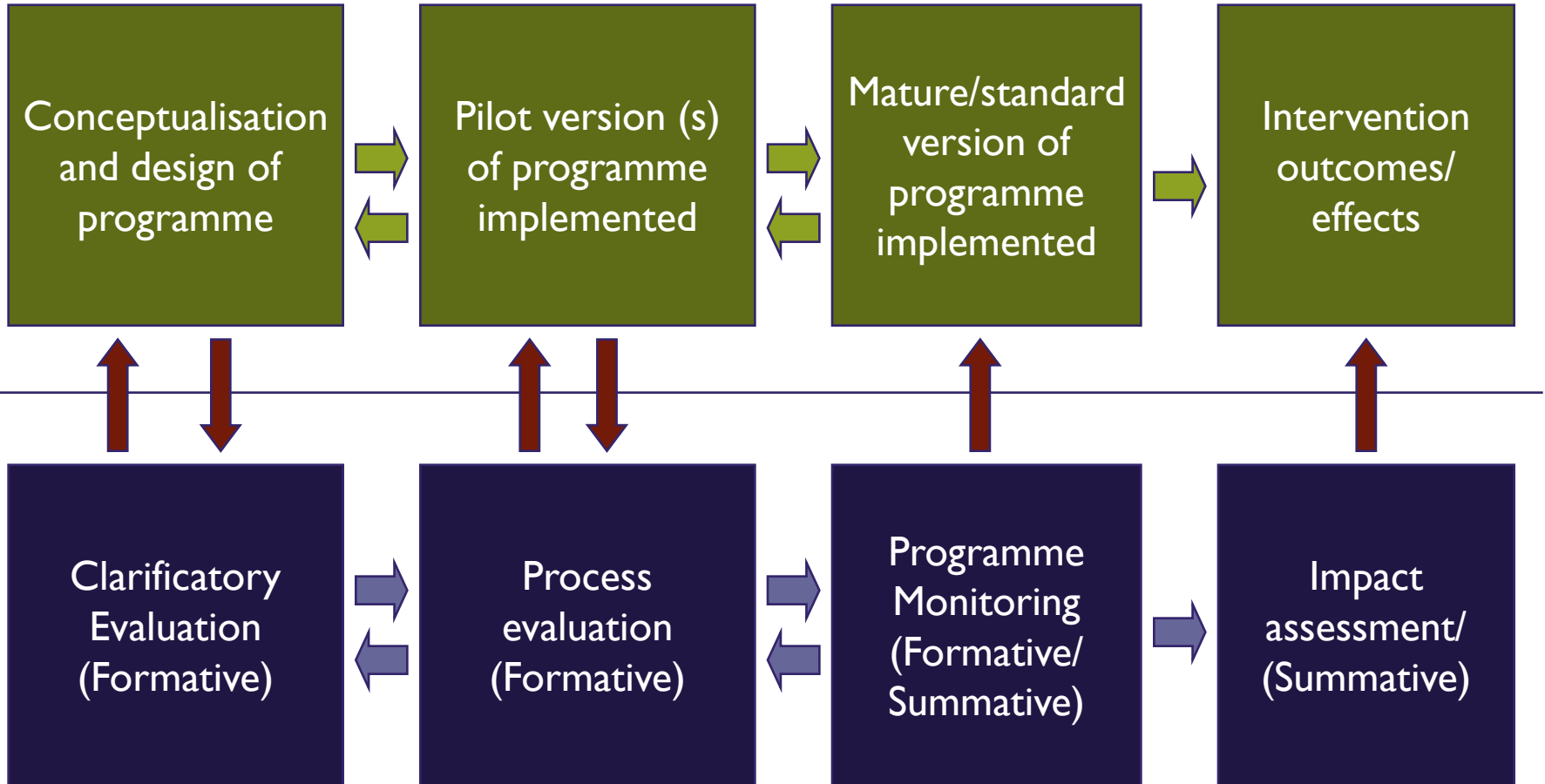
GOOD PRACTICE IN PROGRAMME EVALUATION



- Doing comprehensive evaluations, that combine
- Formative and Summative purposes;
- That are theory-driven (articulating the implicit theory of change of the intervention);
- Are methodologically sophisticated (utilizing the full range of qualitative and quantitative methods); and are
- Context-sensitive (understanding the systemic and institutional dynamics that affect the potential success or failure of such interventions)



Intervention Life Cycle



Evaluation Studies



Theme 3

LESSONS LEARNT FROM CARNEGIE EVALUATIONS

What have we learned from our Carnegie evaluations?



- Overcoming the compliance culture - the one-sided focus on outputs/deliverables (and more recently the obsession with quantitative indicators)
- Project management have to understand that programmes incorporate different degrees and levels of accountability
 - Degrees of accountability (horizontal) - Compliance at the level of outputs and deliverables vs. accounting for short-to – long-term outcomes and impact
 - Levels of accountability - Understanding how programmes impact at different levels in universities which are complex institutions

What have we learned from our Carnegie evaluations?



- A more collaborative and responsive evaluation approach place new demands both on the institution and on the evaluators
 - A comprehensive evaluation approach – which requires that project staff theorize their interventions, be realistic about expected outputs and outcomes and also monitor their own implementation rigorously – places more demands on the team
 - Evaluators provide technical support, do training and ongoing capacity building but also conduct monitoring and ultimately impact assessment – this results in a constant redefinition of their different roles and the potential for role-conflict and confusion.

So does evaluation contribute to a culture of accountability?



- Yes if we understand that “a culture of compliance” does not equate to a “culture of accountability” (within the prevailing discourse of managerialism and corporatism)
- But we must also understand that credible evaluation studies perform other additional functions that imply a richer notion of “institutional accountability”:
 - The results of good evaluation research should build “a culture of learning” in order to continuously improve one’s programmes
 - Good evaluation research should contribute to a ‘culture of evidence-based decision-making’ at the institution level



THANK YOU