An Introduction to Developmental Evaluation

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2. Defining Developmental Evaluation (DE)
3. The “DE Difference” (Key principles that distinguish it)
4. “Isn’t DE the Same things As...?”
5. When to do and not do DE
6. Setting up a Developmental Evaluation
7. Global Context
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GLOBAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

**CHALLENGE 1: Addressing complexity and changing programmatic contexts**

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**
- Siloed disease-focused programs and funding
- Donor-driven agendas
- Fragmented technical assistance
- Discipline-focused expertise
- Analog data systems
- One-size-fits-all service delivery

**EMERGING CONTEXT**
- Integrated health systems and financing
- Country-owned health strategies
- Collaborative and cross-sectoral partnerships (including public-private)
- Multi-disciplinary expertise and teams
- Digital HMIS, mobile ICT, and big data
- Tailoring patient-centered health services to social diversity and context
GLOBAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

CHALLENGE 2: Getting decision makers to use evaluation result

“I can honestly say that not a day goes by when we don’t use those evaluations in one way or another.”

Written by Mark M. Rogers and illustrated by Lawson Sworh

What is your team’s experience with evaluation?
What is Developmental Evaluation ("DE")?

A learning-focused approach to evaluation aimed at building capacity to use evidence to adapt complex programs in real time and supporting the timely utilization of evaluation findings.

-Michael Quinn Patton
**Summative Evaluation:** Judges a program’s merit or worth for continuation, replication, or scaling

**Formative Evaluation:** Establishes baselines or fine-tunes a program when a summative evaluation is expected

**Developmental Evaluation:** Assesses how a complex program changes over its life course; making timely improvements and innovations
### Key Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Evaluation</th>
<th>Developmental Evaluation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Detached</strong></td>
<td><strong>Embedded</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluator is detached from the project and typically has limited interaction with implementers</td>
<td>Evaluator physically co-locates and partners with project implementers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rigid</strong></td>
<td><strong>Flexible</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracks and measures project results using pre-defined methods and frameworks</td>
<td>Tailors evaluation design and methods to emerging priorities and situational dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Episodic</strong></td>
<td><strong>Iterative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collects, analyzes, and delivers evidence at discrete point in time-based on pre-determined design</td>
<td>Collects and analyzes evidence in real-time and iteratively engages users in learning over project life course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Judgement-focused</strong></td>
<td><strong>User &amp; Learning focused</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Renders external judgement of a project's success or failure, usually based on donor priorities</td>
<td>Focuses on priorities of intended evaluation users; embraces failure as learning opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linear-thinking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complexity-thinking</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on linear cause-effect models; context is noise</td>
<td>Sensitive to uncertainty and emergence as well as non-linear dynamics in process and outcome</td>
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Adapted from “A Developmental Evaluation Primer” Gamble JAA, 2008. JW McConnell Family Foundation
The "DE Difference"

Detached vs. Embedded

**Traditional Evaluation**
Evaluator is **detached** from the project and typically has limited interaction with implementers.

**Developmental Evaluation**
Evaluator is **embedded** and **partnered** with project implementers.
THE “DE DIFFERENCE”

Rigid vs. Flexible

DE tailors evaluation design and methods to emerging priorities and situational dynamics

DE is not a method, protocol, or plug-and-play tool, but a broad approach encompassing different designs and methods

Rapid participatory assessment
Surveys
Mapping and Visualization
Structured Observation
Outcome Exploration
Secondary analysis
## THE “DE DIFFERENCE”

### Episodic vs. Iterative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now What?</th>
<th>What?</th>
<th>Why?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So What?</td>
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</table>

**DE Follows an iterative Inquiry Framework**

to guide **evidence generation and learning**

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### What?
- What do we see? What is emerging as the innovation/activity takes shape?
- What does data tell us?
- What variations in effects are we seeing?
- What are the indicators of change or stability?
- What are "we" doing differently?
- What cues can we capture to see changing patterns as they emerge?

### Why?
- What sense can we make of emerging data?
- What do initial results reveal about expected progress?
- Why are we seeing what we are seeing, what factors are driving outcomes and processes?
- How have different values, perspectives, and relationships influenced the innovation and its outcomes?

### So What?
- What constitutes success (in terms of integration-stakeholder perceptions)
- What constitutes reliable evidence of change? How do we know?
- What effect are current changes likely to have on us, our clients, our extended network and our field of inquiry and action?
- How is the larger system or environment responding to the innovation?
- Where is change needed most? At what levels and domains?

### Now What?
- What are our options? What are our resources? When and how can we act – individually or collectively – to optimize opportunities in this moment and the next?

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Adapted from "A Developmental Evaluation Primer" Gamble JAA, 2008. JW McConnell Family Foundation
Examples of real-time adaptation learning

Gavi Full Country Evaluations (2013-2016)
• Qualitative and quantitative investigation of vaccine partnership networks
• brought new understanding to Gavi about the importance of sub-national networks of partners as well as the fragmented provision of technical assistance
• to be addressed in the new Partnership Engagement Framework *(system-wide change)*

USAID Boresha Afya - Integrated Health Services in Tanzania (2017-2021)
• Outcome Harvesting detects unanticipated outcomes; for example
• Evidence of increased male partner engagement on ANC and FP actually due to men and women gaming the system; subverts project goals
• initiates dialogue between implementing partners and government to review and modify guidelines *(targeted-course correction)*
THE “DE DIFFERENCE”

Judgement-focused vs. User & learning focused

Who needs to get the information?
When do they need it?
How best to share knowledge?

Intended Users

Stakeholders

Audiences

DE focuses on intended use of the evaluation by intended users from beginning to end

Uses various tools for tracking learning and adaptive management

Darling et al. 2016. Emergent Learning Framework. The Foundation Review, 8:1
THE “DE DIFFERENCE”

Linear-thinking vs. Complexity-thinking

In complex dynamic systems, with high uncertainty and change, fixed interventions may be failing to detect unanticipated, emergent outcomes and adapt to change.
Addressing Complexity

Splash and Ripple

The rock is like a material Input, the person holding the rock is like a human resource Input. The act of dropping the rock is like an Activity. When the rock reaches the water, it creates a SPLASH. These are your Outputs. The RIPPLES, spreading out from the splash are like your Outcomes, short, intermediate and long term. The edge of the pond represents the geographic and population boundaries of your project.

https://www.wvi.org/article/enrich-programme
But what happens to the ripples (outcomes) when meet with changing situation? 

How predictable are the ripples when faced with:

Wind or high waves? (shocks)

Less water than anticipated? (shortage)

Newcomers who want to throw sticks instead of rocks? (disruptive innovation)

https://www.wvi.org/article/enrich-programme
Addressing Complexity

ACUTE Shocks

Displacement
Disasters
Outbreaks

Political cycles
Migration
Workforce flux
Ecological change

Chronic and cyclical changes

Technology
Networks
Investments

Innovation

Governance
Financing
Delivery Systems
Partnerships
Environment
Technology
Social structures & culture
Economy

Embedded systems
Addressing Complexity

Some Complexity-Oriented Methods

- Process Mapping and Theory of Change
- Geo-spatial Mapping
- Root-cause Analysis And Outcome Harvesting
- Most-significant change
- Social network mapping and Agent-based modelling
- Casual-loop diagrams / Stock and flow diagrams
“Isn’t DE the same thing as...?”

No... but there is a family resemblance!

Monitoring?
• Both involve continuous tracking and generating evidence
• Monitoring is based in fixed framework and pre-determined indicators; DE is more flexible and dynamic
• Monitoring addresses What’s happening? but not Why?; DE can deep dive to answer Why?

Process Evaluation?
• DE uses a lot of process assessment and is prospective in approach
• Process evaluation can be purely retrospective and may not use embedded or real-time approach
• Process evaluation may not always be linked to outcomes; DE also uses outcome-oriented methods like Outcome Harvesting and Most-significant change.

Quality Improvement?
• Both involve iterative evidence generation and learning
• PDSA, Six Sigma, Lean Management, etc. have specific methodologies/certification; DE has more flexibility
• QI/CQI are organizational management tools aimed at problem solving in a team; DE also uses outcome-oriented methods like Outcome Harvesting and Most-significant change. (Laycock et al, 2017, BMJ Open,7, Torres Strait Health Services Study)

Implementation Research (IR)?
• IR is big box approach to delivery science; like DE uses different designs and methods
• IR is fairly new approach developed in public policy and global public health; DE has lineage and pedigree in M&E and social science going back to 1980s.
• Some, but not all IR designs involve iterative, adaptive management and embedded research
When to do, and not do DE?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DE is appropriate when my project ...</th>
<th>DE is not appropriate when my project when...</th>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Operates in rapidly changing, or highly volatile environment that affect outcomes</td>
<td>✗ Stakeholders have limited time or willingness to engage with routine feedback from evaluators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ When outcomes are difficult to measure or predict because of non-linear and interdependent variables</td>
<td>✗ Stakeholders are averse to negative findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Has undefined or untested theory of change</td>
<td>✗ A high level of certainty and inflexibility is required in design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Is piloting a novel intervention</td>
<td>✗ Stakeholders are not amenable to exploration and experimentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Operates in socially and operationally complex environments with multiples partners, expectations, and values.</td>
<td>✗ Stakeholders have limited capacity or willingness to adapt the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Has limited evidence of effectiveness in the local context and can benefit from deeper exploration and learning</td>
<td>✗ There is a low level of rapport and trust between program staff and evaluator</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(Adapted from Patton 2015)

Mostly about operational and situational factors

Mostly about stakeholder attitudes and readiness
Setting up a Developmental Evaluation

**Key considerations**

- Assess evaluation needs, objectives, including existing or other planned evaluations
- Determine fit of DE to context
- Determine readiness of stakeholders (assessment and self-assessment tools)
- Recruit and build capacity of Evaluator/Evaluation Team
- Conducting stakeholder mapping and analysis; define intended users
- Engage and sensitize stakeholders, especially intended users to DE and continue to build readiness (on-going process); hold an Enculturation Workshop
- Design evaluation and budgeting and determine deliverables; but don’t overplan; *Have a plan and hold it lightly* (Glenda Eoyang)
- Set expectations embedding evaluators and user engagement process
Setting up a Developmental Evaluation

Ideal evaluator capacities:
- Technical skills (mixed method design and analysis,)
- Holistic perspective and Problem solving skills
- Effective communication and empathy
- Leadership

“Just to be on the safe side, let’s look into evaluation models that don’t involve working with people.”
When to do, *and not do* DE?

- Independent, embedded
- Encompassing
- In-house, embedded
- Targeted
Common DE Challenges

• Un-readiness or resistance of client
  o Organizational structures and resources not conducive to adaptive management
  o Biases and assumptions around evaluation

• Requirements around reporting and evaluation products not aligned with iterative and real-time approach

• Trade-off between breadth and depth and what is realistic to achieve

• Embedding evaluators requires rapport, trust, and management of expectations with partners

• Potential for evaluator and stakeholder fatigue with continuous engagement, without appropriate planning

• Resource intensive to have full time evaluator or evaluation team through project cycle

• No unified framework for design, can be difficult to know where to start

When to do, and not do DE?
CIRCLE DE of Boresha Afya

- **WHAT**: 4-year DE of a Boresha Afya, a USAID initiative to improve integrated, client-centered health services delivery in 3 geographic zones of Tanzania

- **WHO**: USAID Tanzania Mission, Government of Tanzania (President’s Office, Regional Administration and Local Government), Key Implementers (Deloitte, EGPAF, Jhpiego), CIRCLE Project

- **WHEN**: 2017-2021
Setting up a Developmental Evaluation

DE Start-up Timeline and Steps

USAID Health Research Program Blog:
Seven Steps to Setting up a Developmental Evaluation
Developmental Evaluation has been part of the development space for 3 decades, but only now gaining traction in global health.

**Gavi Full Country Evaluations:** [https://www.gavi.org/results/evaluations/hss/full-country-evaluations/](https://www.gavi.org/results/evaluations/hss/full-country-evaluations/)


**USAID CIRCLE Project (DE of Boresha Afya):** [https://www.harpnet.org/blog/](https://www.harpnet.org/blog/)


*Investments in a Complexity Methods from Developmental Evaluation:*

**Outcome Harvesting:** (USAID, World Bank Group, UNDP, Ford Foundation, DFID, Other partners, Global Community of practice)
Developmental Evaluation Resources

CIRCLE DE Blogs
https://www.harpnet.org/project/circle/

Texts by Michael Quinn Patton and others

www.betterevaluation.org
THANK YOU!

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