

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

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Abstract: This article explores some of the opportunities open to evaluators as organizational development practitioners and the particular competencies and comparative advantages evaluators can bring to such initiatives. Examples include: (1) making systems connections between program culture and organizational culture (and therefore between program effectiveness and organizational effectiveness); (2) organizational mission fulfillment assessment (in contrast to and in relation to program goal attainment); (3) results-oriented, reality-testing leadership development as an organizational development effort to enhance the appropriate, effective, and ongoing use of outcomes evaluation at senior organizational levels; (4) reflective practice and action research built on evaluation logic and processes for organizational development; (5) knowledge management for learning organizations through identification and use of high quality (empirically supported and triangulated) lessons learned; (6) evaluation facilitation as a way of enhancing organizational communications; (7) process uses of evaluation for organizational learning and capacity building; and (8) developmental evaluation as a form of organizational development in teams.

Résumé: Cet article explore quelques-unes des occasions qui s'offrent aux évaluateurs en tant que praticiens du développement organisationnel et décrit les compétences et atouts qu'ils peuvent apporter dans de telles initiatives. Par exemple: (1) création des liens systématiques entre la culture du programme et la culture organisationnelle (et par conséquent entre l'efficacité du programme et l'efficacité organisationnelle), (2) évaluation de la réalisation de la mission de l'organisation (par opposition et par rapport à la réalisation des buts du programme), (3) développement du leadership orienté sur les résultats et mettant la réalité à l'épreuve afin d'améliorer l'utilisation appropriée, efficace et permanente de l'évaluation des résultats dans les échelons supérieurs de l'organisation, (4) réflexion et recherche active fondées sur une logique et des processus d'évaluation pour le

développement organisationnel, (5) gestion du savoir pour les organisations autodidactes au moyen de repérage et d'utilisation des grandes leçons apprises (appuyées et démarquées de manière empirique), (6) facilitation de l'évaluation comme moyen d'améliorer les communications dans l'organisation, (7) utilisation de l'évaluation pour jauger l'apprentissage organisationnel et l'exploitation du potentiel, et (8) évaluation du développement comme forme de développement organisationnel en équipe.

■ The profession of program evaluation has developed parallel to the professions of management consulting and organization development (OD). This article will explore some of the opportunities open to evaluators as OD practitioners and the particular competencies and comparative advantages evaluators can bring to OD. In so doing, I'll illustrate with examples from my own hybrid OD/evaluation experiences and consultancies.

OD consultants advise on and facilitate a variety of change processes, including solving communications problems; conflict resolution; strategic planning; leadership development; team work; human resources development; diversity training; shaping organizational culture; organizational learning; and defining mission, to name but a few OD arenas of action. Sometimes their methods include organizational surveys and field observations, and they may facilitate action research as a basis for problem solving. Professional evaluators have a great deal to offer organizational development initiatives and processes. Evaluation's niche is defined by its emphasis on reality testing based on systematic data collection for improvement, judging merit and worth, or generating knowledge about effectiveness. The processes of evaluation support change in organizations by getting people engaged in reality testing, that is, helping them think empirically, with attention to specificity and clarity, and teaching them the methods and utility of data-based decision making. It includes exposing them to and training them in the logic and values of evaluation (Patton, 1997, p. 89) in support of becoming learning organizations, an example of what I've called the process use of evaluation, that is, helping people in organizations learn to think evaluatively so as to build evaluation into the organizational culture and engage in evaluation as part of ongoing organizational development (Patton, 1997, pp. 87–113).

Many program and project evaluators have been self-limiting in the face of organizational development opportunities by defining the

primary unit of analysis for evaluation as the program or project. The question of organizational effectiveness can feel quite different from program or project effectiveness. It may be helpful to begin, then, by looking at some of the implications of changing the unit of analysis.

THE ORGANIZATION AS THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS

First, the evaluation situation typically becomes more complex at the organizational level. There may be more stakeholders to deal with, more levels of stakeholders, and therefore greater challenges in sorting through various interests, interpersonal dynamics, and organizational politics. The environment surrounding and influencing an organization may also be more complex and dynamic compared to the environment of a single program. On the other hand, operating at the organization level may increase the possibility of having impact by being able to deal directly with those who have the power to make changes.

Second, because programs and projects are usually embedded in larger organizational contexts, improving programs and projects may be linked to and even dependent on changing the organizations of which they are a part. John Brandl, now Director of the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, made this point a decade ago in his 1988 keynote address to the American Evaluation Association in New Orleans. Focusing especially on the effectiveness of government programs, he argued that evaluators needed to examine, understand, and assess the ways being part of larger bureaucracies affected program and project effectiveness. He went on to suggest that factors affecting staff motivation, efficiency of program processes, and incentives to achieve outcomes would be found at the organizational level more than at the program or project level. Thus, improving programs necessarily means developing greater organizational effectiveness. This point deserves elaboration through an example and review of supporting data.

Systems Interconnections between Levels and Units of Analysis

In 1993, I directed an evaluation synthesis in search of overarching themes, patterns, and lessons learned that cut across the diverse experiences and evaluations of 34 separate Aid to Families in Poverty (FIP) programs supported by The McKnight Foundation in Minneapolis. The synthesis team consisted of five analysts. I had

overall thematic integration responsibility while my four evaluation colleagues focused on integrating findings from the four cluster areas of the FIP initiative: employment; effective parenting/family stability; child care; and comprehensive poverty programs.

Our analytical process began with review of specific evaluation findings from separate projects. Then we began looking for patterns across projects. We examined patterns of participant outcomes and project implementation. We found that effective projects shared some common characteristics, including:

- • Effective staff are highly responsive to individual participants' situations, needs, capabilities, interests, and family context. In being responsive and respectful, they work to raise hopes and empower participants by helping them make concrete, intentional changes.
- Effective projects support staff responsiveness by being flexible and giving staff discretion to take whatever actions assist participants to climb out of poverty.
- Flexible, responsive projects affect the larger systems of which they are a part by pushing against boundaries, arrangements, rules, procedures and attitudes that hinder their capability to work flexibly and responsively — and therefore effectively — with participants

The importance to project effectiveness of themes like individualization, responsiveness, flexibility, and empowerment were certainly not unique to this families-in-poverty initiative. Indeed, as these themes emerged from the data, we were struck by the extent to which these motifs reinforced existing wisdom about how best to work with people, run effective organizations, and support community development (Schorr, 1988). What is of interest for our purposes here is the extent to which we found interconnectedness of these patterns at different levels of operation and impact.

An important breakthrough in our synthesis came when we understood that project and agency-wide cultures were systemically interrelated. More generally, changes in participants, staff, programs, agencies, policies, and the poverty environment were interconnected and influenced each other. We found consistency in the meaning and direction of patterns at these different levels of analysis. Systems consist of interdependent parts such that a change in one part affects other parts and the entire system. In examining FIP pat-

terns across projects and host agencies, we found that *how people are treated affects how they treat others*:

*responsiveness reinforces responsiveness
flexibility supports individualization and
empowerment breeds empowerment.*

As noted above, we found that effective projects emphasized the importance of individualized, responsive, and respectful work with families in poverty. But we also found that staff generally could not (or would not) be individually responsive and supportive if they were part of organizational environments that were rigid and bureaucratic. We found that staff tended to treat participants the way they were treated as professionals within their organizations. If the program administration and environment were rigid, rules-oriented, and punitive, the staff tended to be rigid, rules-oriented, and blaming with participants. If the program environment and administration were flexible, responsive, nurturing, and supportive, staff in that environment were more likely to interact with participants in ways that were responsive, nurturing, and supportive.

The systems connection between projects, programs, and organizations operated in both directions, however. Programs developed cultures that affected entire agencies and systems of which they were a part. The receipt of prestigious and relatively flexible philanthropic funding gave projects a certain degree of power, confidence, and autonomy such that they could make demands on their host organizations and cooperating units of government to be responsive and flexible. In many cases, when projects began implementation, they found that they could not do what needed to be done to assist participants because of agency or government rules and restrictions. Ordinarily projects lack the power or confidence to challenge system barriers to effectiveness. Many projects, however, with the open support of the independent philanthropic foundation funding the project, formulated strategies to overcome system barriers and thereby create a more flexible and responsive environment for themselves. Even as project staff were often called on to be advocates for families in poverty and help those families become assertive in overcoming system barriers they encountered, so also staff became assertive in working to change organizational and system barriers to program effectiveness. In some cases, then, projects changed the agencies in which they were housed, moving those host agencies toward greater flexibility and responsiveness. The evaluation syn-

thesis, by highlighting these interconnections, led to further organizational development efforts, especially with regard to evaluating mission attainment, for we also found that *the linkage between effective programs and effective organizations often depended on sharing a strong sense of mission.*

ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION

Questions of organizational effectiveness can shift the focus from program goal attainment to organizational mission. Thus, mission-oriented evaluation can be an organizational development approach that involves assessing the extent to which the various units and activities of the organization operate in a way that is consistent with its mission. An example will help illustrate how assessing mission fulfillment at the organizational level is different from (and is related to) goal attainment at the project or program level.

For example, I evaluated the extent to which grants made by the Northwest Area Foundation over five years were congruent with its philanthropic mission. The Board used that assessment at a retreat to review and then revise the organization's mission. The process of clarifying the foundation's mission with staff and board directors had at least as much impact as the findings.

The importance of evaluating mission attainment derives, in part, from a central theme in the literature on organizational development and effective management: *organizations of excellence have a strong sense of mission.* One of the things alleged to distinguish quality organizations is clarity about and commitment to a strategic vision articulated through a meaningful statement of mission. Management, resource allocation, and decision making at every level are then supposed to be focused on and consistent with that mission.

The call for strategic mission as the guiding force in modern organizations was partly a reaction against narrow "management by objectives" (MBO) approaches which reduced organizational effectiveness to the aggregation of highly specific indicators of quantitative output. In contrast to management through long lists of measurable objectives, an organization with a clear commitment to a strategic mission looks at the big picture to monitor how basic values and an overarching vision are manifest in every aspect of the organization's functioning. It is partly because of the Northwest Area Foundation's commitment to and focus on mission and vision as the

basis for operational effectiveness and efficiency that the Foundation received unusual and very public accolades in the spring of 1990. *Business Week* magazine recognized the Foundation as one of the five best-managed foundations in the country by naming the Foundation's President one of the top non-profit executives in the United States. But actual data about mission attainment or consistency between projects, programs, and mission was lacking. Thus, the Foundation committed to formally evaluate mission fulfillment.

Making the Foundation's mission the focus of evaluation posed special methodological challenges that I can only briefly touch on here because my "mission" in this article is to illuminate the possibilities for evaluators to engage in OD work, not to provide a methods primer for such work. Methods for evaluating individual philanthropic grants are well-developed: the evaluator identifies and measures the attainment of the project's goals. However, the Northwest Area Foundation had funded 550 grants valued at about \$55.4 million from 1986 through 1990. The challenge for this evaluation was to capture, and then communicate, the big picture — *the Foundation's mission fulfillment* — over this five-year period.

Capturing the big picture meant finding ways of measuring the Foundation's aggregate contribution and impact. It meant standing back in order to get a perspective on the complex mosaic of the Foundation's overall approach, composite accomplishments, and total portfolio. Most of all, it meant seriously testing the assertion that mission was the fountainhead from which all else in the organization flowed. A major focus of this organization-level evaluation, then, was to examine the extent to which individual grants (projects and programs) supported the Foundation's mission. Individual grants were evaluated — and those evaluations aggregated — not only the basis of whether individual grants attained their goals, but on the extent to which grants contributed directly to the Foundation's mission.

As far as I could determine there were no precedents in philanthropic evaluation for this kind of comprehensive, holistic, and all-encompassing mission-level evaluation of a foundation's grant making. At least the evaluation literature I reviewed, and the colleagues with whom I consulted, colleagues active in and knowledgeable about philanthropic and non-profit evaluation, knew of no precedents. They suggested, quite frankly, that few foundations would be willing to undergo such scrutiny, in part because few have sufficient clarity of mission to even imagine such an assessment much less actually undertake it.

The necessary first step in evaluating the Foundation's mission was to clarify that mission. A lengthy introductory section of the evaluation report analyzed in great detail the substance, content, and changing focus of the Foundation's mission over time. I examined the Foundation's published statements of purpose in Annual Reports, Guidelines for Grant Applicants, Newsletters, End-of-Year Reports to the Board, and internal memoranda. I drew on interviews with Board members (both past and present), staff, grantees, and other people knowledgeable about the Foundation. It was necessary to present in some detail what I learned so that the intended users could understand fully the multiple dimensions of the Foundation's mission. It turned out that the Northwest Area Foundation had not adopted a singular and fixed statement of mission. The Foundation's mission was made up of nuances of meaning which have evolved over time and varied in important ways during the last five years under review. The evolutionary nature of the Foundation's mission did not mean that the Foundation lacked a clear *sense* of mission. It meant only that there was no single, formally approved, official, and fixed statement of mission to which one could point and say: this is the definitive mission statement of the Northwest Area Foundation. The Foundation had focused its resources generally on the economic revitalization of the Northwest region of the United States by "informing public dialogue" and "building sustainable capacity." This yielded three primary mission dimensions:

Informing Public Dialogue,
Building Sustainable Capacity, and
Revitalizing the Region's Economy.

I rated every individual grant against these mission dimensions. In addition, I rated the extent to which each grant attained its proposed goals, the grant's region-wide impact, and the sustainability of the grant's activities and impacts. The results showed great variation in the extent to which individual grants were consistent with and contributed to the Foundation's mission. The analysis identified the kinds of grants that contributed most to the Foundation's mission as well as the characteristics of those that contributed the least. I also examined how the various mission dimensions related to each other and how such variables as grant size and duration related to mission fulfillment. Finally, the evaluation included a survey of grantees, key influentials, and foundations to assess their understanding of the Foundation's mission and their assessment of mission fulfillment. The results showed that The Northwest Area

Foundation was making the greatest contributions on the mission dimension of individual and organizational capacity building. The next highest rated dimension was informing public dialogue. Grant contributions to economic vitality rated lowest. Seventy percent (70%) of the grants rated made a high contribution (a rating of 7 or higher on a 10-point scale) on at least one of the three mission dimensions. Conversely, 30% of the grants evaluated did not make a significant direct contribution to either capacity building, public dialogue, or economic revitalization. In other words, most grants that contributed significantly to the Foundation's mission did so primarily in terms of one — and only one — of the three central themes; 25% contributed on two dimensions (usually capacity building and public dialogue); and only 6% made direct, immediate contributions on all three mission dimensions.

In addition to rating grants' contributions to the Foundation's mission, I also evaluated the goal attainment of each grant on the same kind of 10-point scale used to measure mission contributions (where a ten represented complete attainment of all project goals and a one represented failure to attain any project goals). The results showed that 83% of all grants rated a seven or higher on the goal attainment scale; nearly half (49%) had ratings of a perfect 10 while only 6% fell in the lowest grouping with ratings of three or less. However, and this, I think, is the key point for organizational development, *high goal attainment ratings were only modestly correlated with high mission fulfillment ratings*. The 83% high project goal attainment rate contrasts to the 70% composite mission fulfillment support rate (the percentage of grants rated seven or higher on any one of the three mission dimensions).

The most dramatic difference between individual projects' goal attainment levels and their contributions to the Foundation's mission occurred among 25 grants that had the lowest levels of mission contribution, that is, grants that scored three or lower on all three mission dimensions — capacity building, public dialogue, and economic vitality. Seven (28%) of these lowest-rated grants had perfect 10s on goal attainment and over half (56%) rated seven or higher. Only six were outright failures (rated 1 on goal attainment) with a third (32%) in the lowest category of goal attainment (ratings of 1 to 3). Another way of looking at the relationship between grant goal attainment and the three mission dimensions was to examine the correlation coefficients among these dimensions.

Correlation of Goal Attainment Ratings with Ratings on the Three Mission Fulfillment Dimensions

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|-------------------|---------|
| Capacity Building | r = .41 |
| Public Dialogue | r = .23 |
| Economic Vitality | r = .13 |

These results reflect variations in the degree to which grants supported the Foundation's three mission themes. The key point here, with regard to assessing organizational effectiveness, is that *a project's goal attainment can be quite high while its contribution to overall organizational mission fulfillment can be quite low, and vice versa. A positive, mutually reinforcing relationship between project effectiveness and organizational effectiveness cannot be assumed.* Indeed, the Northwest Area Foundation mission fulfillment assessment showed frequent and significant discrepancies between project goal attainment and mission fulfillment. These results were used to reshape the organization's mission and reorient its grant-making processes. Use of the results, indeed, the very organizational mission assessment itself, depended on strong leadership and a genuine commitment to mission clarity and effectiveness.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

Organizational development and leadership development often go hand-in-glove together. Attention to organizational effectiveness is, in part, a leadership function. Use of evaluation findings and processes often depends on the support, understanding, involvement, and leadership of senior people in an organization. Thus, evaluators can contribute to leadership development, and thereby organizational development, by training senior people in evaluative thinking and developing their capacity to understand and use evaluation.

Under the auspices of the Minnesota Council on Foundations and the Non-Profit Leadership Forum (a leadership group of non-profit executives), we have set up "Outcomes Learning Labs for Leaders" aimed at non-profit executives and funders. This three-year effort is being supported by The McKnight Foundation with a full-time facilitator, a former agency executive. Each module of the Outcomes Lab is a six-month hands-on commitment by agency executives and senior staff. I'm the outcomes and adult learning consultant, and I facilitate the initial full-day of training. After an initial one-day workshop on outcomes, evaluation, organizational learning, and sys-

tems change, small lab groups are formed to meet for ten sessions, three hours per session, over the next six months. The labs include a mix of non-profit agency executives from human services and funders (e.g., government executives, government staff, philanthropic executives and staff). Each lab participant, both agency executive and funder, must undertake an outcomes project of some kind in his/her organization. These organizational change projects are the focus of lab interactions, analyses, and discussions. The professional lab staff person facilitates all lab groups. Participants are taught to explore issues in depth through questioning deeply, being sure of context, and making systems analyses, before getting into solutions with each other. In a given six-month period, 100 participants engage in the lab process in 10 small-group labs. At the end of the six months, we have a closing workshop. Most groups continue to meet on their own.

The project is funded for three years to do six sequences, so 600 executives and funders will have gone through the Outcome Learning Labs when they're completed. This opportunity is offered without financial cost to participants, but they must commit to attend all sessions. These labs are specifically designed to demystify outcomes, develop sophistication about agency-wide implementation of evaluation, and elevate community commitment to ongoing evaluation. Cautions about misuses of outcomes measurement and performance monitoring are part of the workshops and labs, as is work on looking at theories of change and logic models as part of outcomes thinking and evaluation. In addition, the labs get key "movers and shakers" actually doing outcomes evaluation work. A major goal of the labs has been to promote the message that outcomes management and evaluation are intertwined, mutually reinforcing leadership functions. That's why the labs have targeted executives and senior staff. Our strategy has been to put outcomes on the community agenda by getting the commitment of leaders and helping them feel comfortable with and knowledgeable about outcomes management as a leadership function. The scope of the project is aimed at achieving a critical mass of informed leaders and making this a prestigious (and therefore attractive) experience for non-profit leaders, senior government officials, and philanthropy executives. *A central theme is evaluation as results-oriented, reality-testing leadership.*

Most writings about internal evaluation assume a separate unit or specialized position with responsibility to conduct evaluations. From the perspective of organizational development, however, it is more effective and sustainable to treat evaluation as a leadership function

of all managers and program directors in the organization. The person responsible for internal evaluation then plays a facilitative, resource, and training function in support of managers rather than spending time actually conducting evaluations. Every manager then receives training in how to build outcomes evaluation into ongoing program goal attainment and mission fulfillment processes. Performance measurement is tied to reporting and budgeting systems. Keys to making this approach to internal evaluation work, in my judgment, are three-fold: (1) results-oriented performance measurement becomes defined as a leadership function of every manager, not just a reporting function to be delegated as far down as possible in the department; (2) the overall responsibility for evaluation use resides at the highest levels of the organization, in the executive team and board; and (3) the internal evaluator has explicit responsibility to support organizational learning and development, not just produce reports. This last point is particularly important because so often internal evaluation is delegated to relatively lower levels in organizations and treated as a reporting, sometimes even clerical, function. Indeed, being given an evaluation assignment is often a form of punishment agency directors use, or a way of giving deadwood staff something meaningless to occupy themselves with. It is clear that, for internal evaluators to be useful and credible, they must have high status in the organization and real power to make evaluation meaningful.

Elevating the status of evaluation in this way is most likely to occur when evaluation is conceived of as a leadership function rather than a lower level data-management task. The Outcomes Learning Labs for Leaders, therefore, identify and emphasize four functions of results-oriented, reality-testing leadership. In this framework, evaluation becomes a senior management responsibility focused on decision-oriented use rather than a data-collection task focused on routine, internal reporting.

Four Functions of Results-oriented, Reality-testing Leadership

- Create and nurture a results-oriented, reality-testing culture.
- Lead in deciding what outcomes to commit to and hold yourselves accountable for.
- Make measurement of outcomes thoughtful, meaningful, and credible.
- Use the results — and model for others serious use of results.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND ACTION RESEARCH

Reflective practice (Schön, 1983, 1987) and action research (Stringer, 1996) are processes for facilitating organizational change. Evaluators have a great deal to offer in facilitating such developmental processes because we can keep the work empirically grounded and systematic. I've been working for several years with a suburban adult and community education program in facilitating a reflective practice process for staff development and organizational change. We meet monthly at which time we get reports from staff about their action research observations for the last month. The focus of these observations is whatever issue the group has chosen the previous month. The reflective practice process involves: (1) identifying an issue, interest or concern; (2) agreeing to try something; (3) agreeing to observe some things about what is tried; (4) reporting back to the group individually; (5) identifying patterns of experience or themes across the separate reports; (6) deciding what to try next, i.e., determining the action implications of the findings; and (7) repeating the process with the new commitment to action. Over several years this process has supported major curricular and organizational change. Evaluation is ongoing and feedback is immediate. The process combines staff and organizational development and evaluation. My role as facilitator is to keep group members focused on data-based observations and help them interpret and apply findings. There are no formal reports and no formative or summative judgments in the usual evaluation sense. There is only an ongoing developmental process of incremental change, informed by data and judgment, that has led to significant cumulative evolution of the entire program. They have become a learning organization. An example of such learning may help elucidate its use at the organizational level. As participants in a comprehensive adult learning centre, students enter the organization through an intake process aimed at determining which of several different programs would be most appropriate. For example, the centre offers a high school diploma program, career enhancement certificates, compensatory adult education assistance, welfare-to-work programs, adult literacy programs, and English as a second language (ESL) programs. A central part of intake involved working with potential students to identify their goals. The reflective practice group undertook an action research study to find out how students experienced this goal-setting exercise. That students should set their own goals and should set them immediately upon entry into the organization involved longstanding and deeply held beliefs at the very core of the organiza-

tion's philosophy. It was a shock, therefore, for staff to discover that incoming students hated the goal-setting exercise, had great difficulty knowing what an acceptable goal might be, and therefore, in most cases, simply acquiesced to the coaching of counselors about what goals they should have. This led to a fundamental rethinking of what kinds of experiences to offer new, incoming students and what kinds of support and understanding were needed before asking students to make fundamental choices about future directions.

This activity could have been framed as a standard evaluation of intake, but by framing it as an action research/reflective practice process for organizational development, the group approached the exercise without a lot of the negative psychology they brought to what they thought of as "evaluation." Moreover, the intake process affected the entire organization, not just one or a few programs. It was, then, an organizational development activity using evaluation thinking and methods. In a new book, Preskill and Torres (1998) have extensively examined *Evaluative Inquiry for Learning in Organizations*.

LESSONS LEARNED

Common needs on the path to becoming a learning organization include building institutional memory, finding ways to monitor and understand change, and, perhaps most important, learning lessons from experience. The search for lessons learned has become pervasive, the Grail quest of organizational development. Evaluators will recognize lessons learned as knowledge about what works and does not work that can guide future action.

The problem is that all kinds of drivel passes for lessons learned (including a lot generated by cluster evaluations). I regularly see all kinds of undifferentiated, non-prioritized lists of presumed lessons learned, few of which are accompanied by empirical evidence. One item will admonish staff to start meetings on time. The next item will pontificate about staying mission-focused. And the next homily is about attending to incentives. I am now working with several colleagues (notably Ricardo Millett and Kathy Zurker of the Kellogg Foundation) and organizations on what we're calling high-quality lessons learned: knowledge derived from screening according to specific criteria, for example:

1. practice wisdom and experience of practitioners;

2. experience from program participants/clients/intended beneficiaries;
3. evaluation findings — patterns across programs;
4. basic and applied research;
5. expert opinion;
6. cross-disciplinary connections and patterns;
7. assessment of the importance of the lesson learned; and
8. strength of the connection to outcomes attainment.

The idea is that the greater the number of supporting sources for a lesson learned, the more rigorous the supporting evidence, and the greater the triangulation of supporting sources, the more confidence one has in the significance and meaningfulness of a lesson learned. Lessons learned with only one type of supporting evidence would be considered a “lessons learned hypothesis.” Nested within and cross-referenced to lessons learned will be the actual cases from which practice wisdom and evaluation findings have been drawn. A critical principle here is to maintain the contextual frame for lessons learned, that is, to keep lessons learned grounded in their context. For ongoing learning, the trick is to follow future supposed applications of lessons learned to test their wisdom in action. I now meet quarterly with the senior and field staff of some organizations to help them identify and test lessons learned. These are viewed as organizational and staff development sessions though my role centres on keeping the discussion focused on evaluative thinking and empirical referents for hypothesized lessons.

PROCESS USE

Using the processes of evaluation for organizational development and learning can be useful quite apart from the findings that may emerge from those processes. Reasoning like an evaluator and operating according to evaluation’s values have impacts. As noted at the beginning of this article, when I refer to process use, I mean using the logic, employing the reasoning, and being guided by the values that undergird the profession. Those of us trained in the methods of research and evaluation can easily take for granted the logic that undergirds our methods. Like people living daily inside any culture, the way of thinking of our culture — the research culture — seems to us natural and easy. However, to practitioners, decision makers, and policy makers, our logic can be hard to grasp and quite unnatural. I’m talking about what appear to be very simple, even simplistic, notions that have profound effects on how one views the world.

Thinking in terms of what's clear, specific, concrete, and observable does not come easily to people who thrive on, even depend on, vagueness, generalities, and untested beliefs as the basis for action. They're in the majority. Practitioners of evaluation logic are a small minority. The good news is that our way of thinking, once experienced, is often greatly valued. That's what creates demand for our services. Learning to see the world as an evaluator sees it often has a lasting impact on those who participate in an evaluation — an impact that can be greater and last longer than the findings that result from that same evaluation. Process use, then, refers to and is indicated by individual and group changes in thinking and behavior, and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture, that occur among those involved in an evaluation-type activity (regardless of whether it is so named) as a result of the learning that occurs during that activity. Evidence of process use is represented by the following kind of statement after an evaluation: "The impact on us came not so much from the findings we generated but from going through the thinking process that the developmental work required."

Examples of Evaluation Process Use for Organizational Development

Evaluation both depends on and facilitates clear communications. Shared understandings emerge as evaluation logic pushes the senders of messages to be as specific as possible and challenges listeners to reflect on and feed back to senders what they think they've heard. Shared understandings are especially important with regard to expected results. For example, board members and program staff often have different notions of what an agency or program is supposed to accomplish. The processes of clarifying desired ends and focusing staff efforts on accomplishing those ends by evaluating actual accomplishments ought to be primary board functions, but few boards fulfill these functions effectively (Carver, 1990).

I'm often asked to facilitate board or staff retreats to help participants learn and apply the logic and discipline of evaluation to formulating the organization's mission and goals. The feedback I get is that the questions I pose as an evaluator (e.g., What specific results are you committed to achieving and how would you know if you accomplished them?) are different from those they are asked by non-evaluators. It's not so much that other facilitators don't ask these questions, but that they don't ask them with the same seriousness and pursue the answers with the same rigor and intensity. The very process of formulating a mission and goals so they can be evaluated will usually have

an impact long before data are actually collected to measure effectiveness. In this way, evaluative questioning and facilitation can be understood as an organizational development activity.

A parallel use of evaluation is to increase shared understandings between program managers and line staff. Following the admonition that “what gets measured gets done,” managers can work with staff under the guidance of an evaluator to establish a monitoring system to help everyone involved stay focused on desired outcomes. While the data from such a system may ultimately support decision making, in the short run the impact is to focus staff attention and energy on priority outcomes. The process needs to be facilitated in such a way that staff can speak openly about whether board and administrative expectations are meaningful, realistic, and attainable. In other words, done properly, evaluation facilitates shared commitments to results from top to bottom and bottom to top for improved communication between staff at different levels of program implementation within an organization.

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

I introduced the term “developmental evaluation” (Patton, 1994) to describe certain long-term, partnering relationships with clients who are, themselves, engaged in ongoing program or organizational development. These clients incorporate me into their decision-making process as part of their design teams because they value the logic and conceptual rigor of evaluation thought, as well as the knowledge I’ve picked up about effective programming based on accumulated evaluation wisdom. My role is to ask evaluative questions and hold their feet to the fire of reality testing. Evaluation data are collected and used as part of the ongoing organizational development process, to be sure, but quite above and beyond the use of findings, these development-oriented decision makers want to have their ideas examined in the glaring light of evaluation logic.

Developmentally-oriented programs have as their purpose the sometimes vague, general notion of ongoing development. The process is the outcome. They eschew clear, specific, and measurable goals upfront because clarity, specificity, and measurability are limiting. They’ve identified an issue or problem and want to explore some potential solutions or interventions, but they realize that where they end up will be different for different participants — and that participants themselves should play a major role in goal setting. Or-

ganizational leaders learn to observe where they are at various points along a journey and make adjustments based on dialogue about what's possible and what's desirable, though the criteria for what's desirable may be quite situational and always subject to change.

Developmentally-oriented leaders in organizations and programs don't expect (or even want) to reach the state of stabilization required for summative mission or goal level evaluation. These leaders don't aim for a steady state of effectiveness modeling because they're constantly tinkering as participants, conditions, learnings, and context change. At most, they may discover and articulate principles of intervention and development (lessons learned), but not a traditional model that says "do X and you'll get Y." Rather, they aspire to continuous progress, ongoing adaptation and rapid responsiveness. No sooner do they articulate and clarify some aspect of an organizational process than that very awareness becomes an intervention and acts to change what they do. They expect to be forever developing and changing — and they want knowledge-generating and ongoing learning approaches that support development and change.

Moreover, they don't conceive of development and change as necessarily improvements. From a developmental perspective, you do something different because something has changed — your understanding, the characteristics of participants, technology, or the world. Those changes are dictated by your current perceptions, but the commitment to change doesn't carry a judgment that what was done before was inadequate or less effective. Change is not necessarily progress. Change is adaptation. As one design team member said:

We did the best we knew how with what we knew and the resources we had. Now we're at a different place in our development — doing and thinking different things. That's development. That's change. But it's not necessarily improvement.

Developmental programming calls for developmental evaluation in which the evaluator becomes part of the design team helping to shape what's happening, both processes and outcomes, in an evolving, rapidly changing environment of constant interaction, feedback, and change. The developmental perspective, as I experience it, feels quite different from the traditional logic of programming in which goals are predetermined and plans are carefully made for achieving those

goals. Development-focused relationships can go on for years and, in many cases, never involve formal, written reports.

The evaluator becomes part of the organization's strategic development team or management team, not apart from the team or just reporting to the team, but fully participating in decisions and facilitating discussion about how to evaluate and understand whatever happens. All team members, together, interpret evaluation findings, analyze implications, and apply results to the next stage of development. The purpose of evaluation-type inquiries (though, again, they may not be called that) is to monitor effectiveness across many dimensions as the world changes and the journey unfolds. It's a highly dynamic, interactive process of mutual engagement. My evaluation perspective informs and undergirds my facilitation of such developmental processes.

It will be clear to the reader, I trust, that my evaluation role in each of the organization development efforts herein reviewed involved a degree of engagement that went beyond the independent data collection and assessment that have traditionally defined evaluation functions. Lines between evaluation and development became blurred as I worked with clients collaboratively in teams. I have found these relationships to be substantially different from the more traditional evaluations I conducted earlier in my practice. My role has become more developmental.

One reaction I've had from colleagues is that the examples I've shared above aren't "evaluations" at all but rather organizational development efforts. I won't quarrel with that. There are sound arguments for defining evaluation narrowly in order to distinguish genuinely evaluative efforts from other kinds of organizational mucking around. But, in each of the examples I've shared, and there are many others, my participation, identity, and role were considered evaluative by those with whom I was engaged (and by whom I was paid). There was no pretense of external independence. My role varied from being evaluation facilitator to full team member. In no case was my role external reporting and accountability.

Developmental evaluation certainly involves a role beyond being solely an evaluator, but I include it among the things we evaluators can do because organizational development is a legitimate use of evaluation processes. What we lose in conceptual clarity and purity with regard to a narrow definition of evaluation that focuses only

on judging merit or worth, we gain in appreciation for evaluation expertise. When Scriven (1995) cautions against crossing the line from rendering judgments to offering advice, I think he underestimates the valuable role evaluators can play in organizational design and development based on cumulative knowledge. Part of my value to a design team is that I bring a reservoir of knowledge (based on many years of practice and having read a great many evaluation reports) about what kinds of things tend to work and where to anticipate problems. As a profession, we know a lot about patterns of effectiveness, I think — and will know more over time. That knowledge makes us valuable partners and facilitators in organizational development efforts. Crossing that line, however, can reduce independence of judgment. The costs and benefits of such a role change must be openly discussed, acknowledged, and assessed.

CONCLUSION

In this article I've explored some of the opportunities open to evaluators as organizational development practitioners and the particular competencies and comparative advantages evaluators can bring to OD. I've illustrated with examples of the systems connections between program culture and organizational culture (and therefore between program effectiveness and organizational effectiveness); organizational mission fulfillment assessment (in contrast to and in relation to program goal attainment); results-oriented, reality-testing leadership development as an organizational development effort to enhance the appropriate, effective, and ongoing use of outcomes evaluation at senior organizational levels; reflective practice and action research build on evaluation logic and processes for organizational development; knowledge management for learning organizations through identification and use of high quality (empirically supported and triangulated) lessons learned; evaluation facilitation as a way of enhancing organizational communications; process uses of evaluation for organizational learning and capacity building; and developmental evaluation as a form of organizational development in teams. These are just a few examples of the ways that my background as an evaluator has opened up opportunities to consult and work in organizational development initiatives. A rapidly emerging set of related opportunities has emerged in community development — but that's another article...

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