DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION EXEMPLARS

Also Available

Developmental Evaluation:
Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use
Michael Quinn Patton

Developmental Evaluation Exemplars

Principles in Practice

Edited by

Michael Quinn Patton
Kate McKegg
Nan Wehipeihana

THE GUILFORD PRESS
New York   London

In memory of

Brenda Zimmerman (1956–2014)

Pioneer in applying complexity science to social innovation,
coauthor of *Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed*,
and champion of developmental evaluation

About the Cover: The blue, swirling imagery of the Paua shell (New Zealand
abalone) symbolizes the dynamic complexity and nonlinearity of developmental
evaluation. The tough and resilient outer shell conceals the highly iridescent
mother of pearl inner layer that, once revealed, is revered by Māori for its beauty,
intrigue, and artistry.

Preface

Developmental evaluation provides *evaluative* information and feedback to social innovators, and their funders and supporters, to inform adaptive *development* of change initiatives in complex dynamic environments. Developmental evaluation brings to innovation and adaptation the processes of asking evaluative questions, applying evaluation logic, and gathering and reporting evaluative data, to inform and support the development of innovative projects, programs, initiatives, products, organizations, and/or systems change efforts with timely feedback. This book presents the current state of the art and practice of developmental evaluation through 12 case exemplars. The book also answers common questions about developmental evaluation; presents a synthesis of patterns, themes, insights, and lessons drawn from the case studies; and, for the first time, identifies and explains the essential guiding principles of developmental evaluation.

The Developmental Evaluation Niche

The developmental evaluation niche focuses on evaluating innovations in complex dynamic environments because these are the types of environments in which social innovators are working. *Innovation* as used here is a broad framing that includes creating new approaches to intractable problems, adapting programs to changing conditions, applying effective principles to new contexts (scaling innovation), catalyzing systems change, and improvising rapid responses in crisis conditions. Because social innovation unfolds in social systems that are inherently dynamic and complex, and often turbulent, social innovators typically find themselves having to adapt their interventions in the face of these system characteristics. Funders of social innovation also need to be flexible and adaptive in alignment with these

characteristics. Developmental evaluators track, document, and help interpret the nature and implications of innovations and adaptations as they unfold, and help extract lessons and insights from both processes and outcomes to inform the ongoing adaptive innovation process. At the same time, the evaluators' work provides accountability for funders and supporters of social innovations, and helps them understand and refine their contributions to solutions as they evolve. Social innovators often find themselves dealing with problems, trying out strategies, and striving to achieve goals that emerge from their engagement in the change process, but that could not have been identified before this engagement, and that continue to evolve as a result of what they learn. Developmental evaluators help identify and make sense of these emergent problems, strategies, and goals as social innovations *develop*. The emergent/creative/adaptive interventions generated by social innovators for complex problems are significant enough to constitute *developments*, not just improvements; thus the need for *developmental* evaluation.

Traditional evaluation approaches advocate clear, specific, and measurable outcomes that are to be achieved through processes detailed in a linear logic model. Such traditional evaluation demands for upfront, preordained specificity don't work under conditions of high innovation, exploration, uncertainty, turbulence, and emergence. In fact, premature specificity can do harm and generate resistance from social innovators—as, indeed, it has—by constraining exploration; limiting adaptation; reducing experimental options; and forcing premature adoption of a rigid model not because such a model is appropriate, but because evaluators, funders, or other stakeholders demand it in order to comply with what they understand to be good evaluation. Developmental evaluation emerged as a response to social innovators' criticisms of traditional evaluation and their expressed need for an alternative way to evaluate their work.

Developmental evaluation involves evaluative thinking throughout. Judgments of merit, worth, significance, meaningfulness, innovativeness, and effectiveness (or such other criteria as are negotiated) inform ongoing adaptive innovation. Such evaluative judgments don't just come at the end of some fixed period (e.g., a 3-year grant); rather, they are ongoing and timely. Nor are evaluation conclusions reached and rendered by the evaluators independently. Developmental evaluation is a collaborative, interactive process. Because this process is utilization-focused, and because it unfolds in complex dynamic systems where the particular meaning and significance of information may be difficult to predetermine, making sense together of emergent findings involves the developmental evaluators' interpreting patterns in the data *collaboratively* with social innovators, funders, advocates, change agents, and systems change supporters. Through this empirically focused interaction, developmental evaluation becomes an integral part of the innovative process.

History of Developmental Evaluation

The first article describing developmental evaluation as a distinct approach was written by a coeditor of the present volume, Michael Quinn Patton, and published

in *New Directions for Program Evaluation* (Patton, 1992); it described a developmental evaluation of an experimental educational diversity initiative. In 1994, the predecessor journal to the *American Journal of Evaluation*, then called *Evaluation Practice*, featured 20 evaluation theorists and practitioners speculating on the future of evaluation. Patton's contribution to this group of articles (Patton, 1994) focused on developmental evaluation and predicted that in an increasingly complex world, it would become an important evaluation option.

In 2006, Patton had the opportunity to coach a group of Canadian evaluators on developmental evaluation in a series of workshops and consulting sessions sponsored by the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, based in Montréal. Two of the participants in that coaching experience are contributors to this book, Mark Cabaj and Jamie Gamble. Based on that experience, Gamble wrote *A Developmental Evaluation Primer* (published in 2008 by the McConnell Family Foundation, and still available for free download on its website).

The first full-day workshop ever conducted on developmental evaluation took place in New Zealand in March 2009; it was organized, sponsored, and cofacilitated with Patton by another coeditor of this book, Kate McKegg. The first developmental evaluation workshop in the United States was conducted for The Evaluators' Institute in San Francisco in 2010.

The first book-length description and explanation of this topic was *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use* (Patton, 2011). In the short time since, developmental evaluation has become recognized and established as a distinct and useful approach. At the annual conference of the American Evaluation Association in 2013, there were over 40 presentations on developmental evaluations. The increasing attention garnered by developmental evaluation has raised questions about its essential elements and practical questions about how to do it, which this book has been written to answer. But by far the most common question is this: "Where can I find good examples of developmental evaluations?" Until now, there has been no such collection of exemplars. Using our knowledge of and relationships with skilled practitioners, we set out to solicit and bring together in one place a diverse set of high-quality, insight-generating developmental evaluation case studies. These case studies constitute the core of this book.

How We Selected the Developmental Evaluation Exemplars

Global Relevance

This book is being completed during the International Year of Evaluation (2015) as declared by the United Nations, the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation, the EvalPartners international network, and national evaluation associations around the world. The 12 case exemplars include examples from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, and the United States. They also include an international agricultural initiative working in Africa and South America; a People-to-People Reconciliation Fund Program with projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina,

Burundi, and Israel/the West Bank/Gaza; and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict working worldwide.

Diversity

The innovations evaluated include programs in sustainable agricultural development, poverty reduction, education, community-based arts, supports to homeless youth, health care provision, early childhood systems change, access to college, preventing conflict, and reconciliation among people in areas of conflict. There are local community-based initiatives, programs in Indigenous communities, national efforts at systems change, and a global network. The cases include innovations undertaken by philanthropic foundations, nonprofit agencies, international organizations, universities, community-based organizations, and government reform initiatives. One developmental evaluation has been going on for over a decade and is still developing. Another decade-long national initiative has recently been completed, with the developmental evaluation providing the documentation for what happened and what was achieved. Other examples are in midstream and still evolving, having been in development and operating for a few years. Some examples have been completed that involved years of engagement. One has just completed its first year.

Balance

The cases provide examples of extraordinary success, modest success, rollercoaster-like ups and downs, and some failures.

Reflective Practitioners

The value of case studies ultimately depends on a combination of description of what happened; analysis of major developments and turning points; and deep, honest reflection to generate and share insights and lessons. Reflective practice is a special competence, not to be taken for granted. Of particular importance is the integrity to present "the good, the bad, and the ugly." You'll find all of these qualities and more in the chapters of this book. Our contributors are skilled reflective practitioners.

Authorial Partnerships

Developmental evaluation is a collaborative process between social innovators and evaluators. Honoring the principle of co-creation is essential: The innovation and evaluation develop together—interwoven, interdependent, iterative, and co-created—so that the developmental evaluation becomes part of the change process. Therefore, the case examples in this book are jointly authored by those implementing the innovations and the developmental evaluators who worked with them. Indeed, such joint authorship is a major part of what makes these cases exemplars.

This made the writing process more time-consuming, more laborious, more negoti-ated, and more multiperspectival. It also made the resulting cases more balanced and indicative of the value of co-creation.

The Ongoing Development of Developmental Evaluation

Developmental evaluation is still developing—and will continue to do so. This book is a milestone in the field's own development, or so we hope, but it is by no means the final story. Daily we hear about new applications, new initiatives, and new insights being generated by developmental evaluators as reflective practitioners. Developmental evaluation has truly become a global community of practice.

Acknowledgments

We want to thank all of our contributors. They were responsive to our editorial feedback and suggestions. They worked hard to produce faithful reports of com-plex, multifaceted initiatives and multidimensional, mixed-methods developmental evaluations in the incredibly confining space of book chapters. Then they graciously acquiesced to our final cuts when, on occasion, their contributions exceeded in length what we could include. Each chapter could become a book. We are delighted and honored to have the opportunity to present readers with at least a glimpse of how to engage real-world complexities within the limitations of a chapter. Although no chapter constitutes the "whole story" (as if that can ever be known or told) of the initiative it describes, we think you'll find a lot to engage you in your own reflective practice.

We want to express special appreciation to Senior Editor and Publisher C. Deb-orah Laughton of The Guilford Press. She is a consummate, hands-on, meaning-focused, clarity-of-message-oriented *editor*. Yes, an actual *editor*—someone who improves chapter titles, enhances the quality and clarity of writing, and helps sepa-rate the wheat from the chaff *in the service of readers*. Editing is becoming a lost art in academic publishing. We're talking about editing that makes a book better—that supports book editors in deciding what to keep, what to discard, and how best to present what is kept. C. Deborah Laughton has a keen editorial eye, an astute edito-rial mind, and a willingness to spend time applying both. She also has a diplomatic editorial tone in offering suggestions and an irrefutable rationale for those sugges-tions she offers: to improve the experience for readers. She did her best for you, dear readers. Any failures in this regard are our own.

Dedication

As the manuscript of this book was being prepared for the publisher (December 2014), Brenda Zimmerman was killed in a tragic automobile accident in Toronto.

She pioneered the conceptualization and application of the *simple–complicated–complex* distinctions that are the bedrock of identifying the niche of developmental evaluation as complexity-centered. Distinguishing the complicated from the complex was central to *Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed*, which Brenda coauthored (Westley, Zimmerman, & Patton, 2006). Brenda's work on complexity and her contributions to *Developmental Evaluation* were featured in Chapter 4 of the book by that name (Patton, 2011). Michael reflects that without Brenda there would have been no *Getting to Maybe,* and *Developmental Evaluation* (Patton, 2011), had it been written at all, would have been a very different book. In her extensive keynote speaking, training, teaching, writing, and consulting, she promoted developmental evaluation as particularly appropriate for complex social innovations. We dedicate this book to her contributions, and in doing so we acknowledge life's uncertainties, which are brought deeply home to us all at times of much-too-soon loss of those we've come to care about.

MICHAEL QUINN PATTON
KATE McKEGG
NAN WEHIPEIHANA

REFERENCES

Gamble, J. (2008). *A developmental evaluation primer.* Montreal: J. W. McConnell Family Foundation.

Patton, M. Q. (1992). Developmental evaluation: An approach for empowerment-oriented and multicultural programs. *New Directions for Program Evaluation, 53*, 17–33.

Patton, M. Q. (1994). Developmental evaluation. *Evaluation Practice, 15*(3), 311–320.

Patton, M. Q. (2011). *Developmental evaluation: Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use*. New York: Guilford Press.

Westley, F., Zimmerman, B., & Patton, M. Q. (2006). *Getting to maybe: How the world is changed*. Toronto: Random House Canada.

Contents