Developmental Evaluation

with

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Evolving Understandings

I keep changing what I said. Any person who is intellectually alive changes his ideas. If anyone at a university is teaching the same thing they were teaching five years ago, either the field is dead, or they haven't been thinking.

Noam Chomsky

"The Professor Provaocateur," The New York Times Magazine, Nov. 2, 2003: 13.

Interpretive Frameworks

- May 2003 *Harvard Business Review* "The High Cost of Accuracy." Kathleen Sutcliffe and Klaus Weber.

  They concluded that "the way senior executives interpret their business environment is more important for performance than how accurately they know their environment."

They further concluded that it is a waste of resources to spend a lot of money increasing the marginal accuracy of data available to senior executives compared to the value of enhancing their capacity to interpret whatever data they have. Executives were more limited by a lack of capacity to make sense of data than by inadequate or inaccurate data.

In essence, they found that interpretive capacity, or "mind-sets," distinguish high-performance more than data quality and accuracy.

Original Primary Options

Formative

and

Summative

Evaluation

(Mid-term and End-of-Project Reviews)

Improvement

versus

Development

Evidence-based Practice

Evaluation grew up in the "projects" testing models under a theory of change that pilot testing would lead to proven models that could be disseminated and taken to scale:

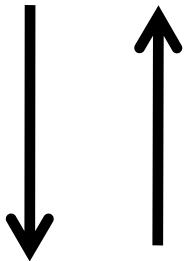### The search for *best practices*

and *evidenced-based practices*

Fundamental Issue:
How the World Is Changed

Top-down dissemination of "proven models"

versus

Bottoms-up adaptive management

Models vs. Principles

Identifying <u>proven principles</u> for adaptive management

(bottoms-up approach)

versus

Identifying and disseminating

<u>proven models</u>

(top down approach)

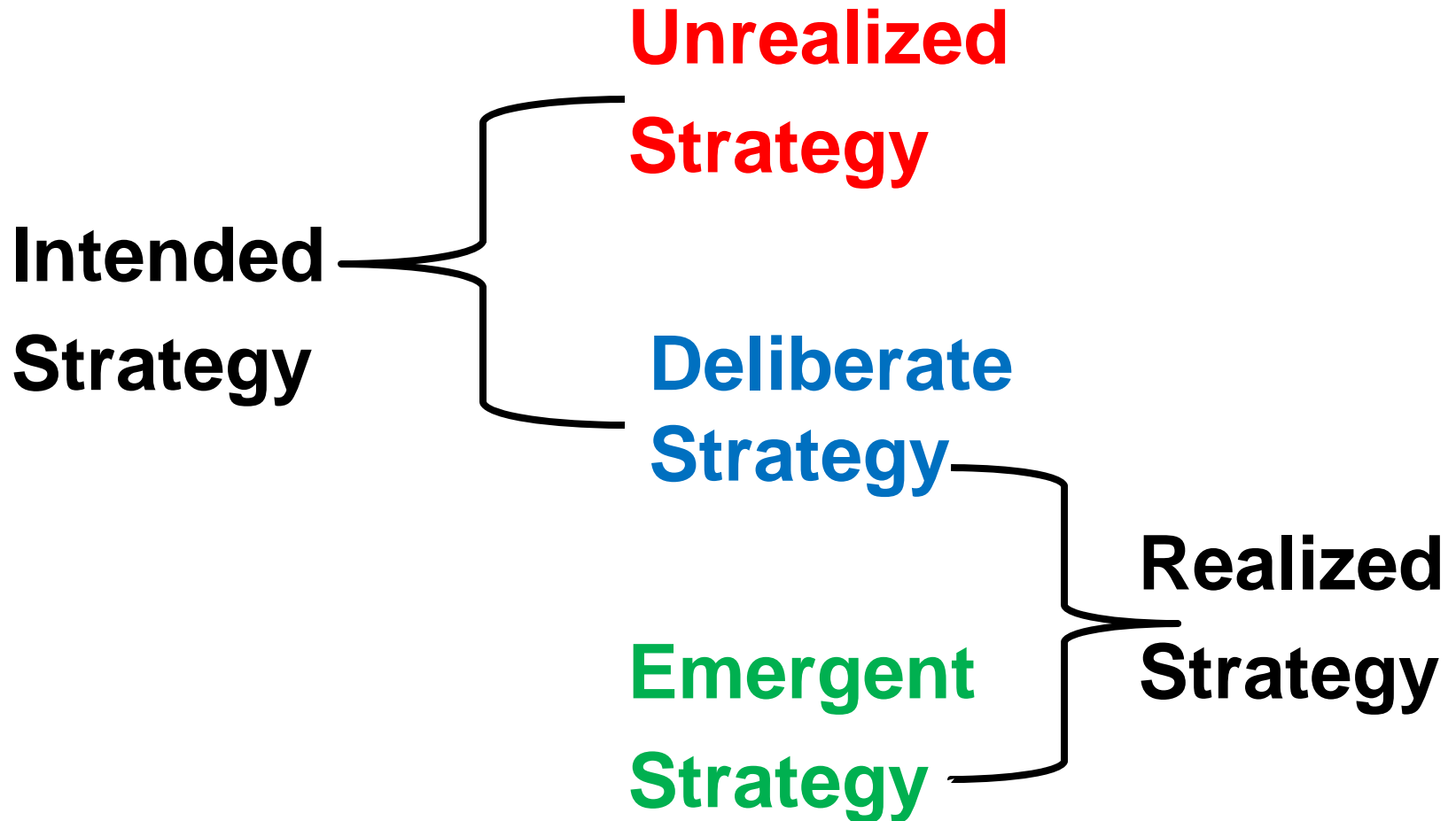# Conditions that challenge traditional model-testing evaluation

- **High innovation**
- **Development**
- **High uncertainty**
- **Dynamic**
- **Emergent**
- **Systems Change**

Adaptive Management

Mintzberg on Strategy
Two types of strategy: Intended & Emergent

Unrealized Strategy

Intended Strategy

Deliberate Strategy

Realized Strategy

Emergent Strategy

Re-conceptualizing Use

- **Use is a process not a event**
- **Use involves an interaction not just a report**
- **Use involves training for use not just delivery of results**
- **Use is a leadership function**

Some Evaluation Premises:

- **Evaluation is part of initial program design, including conceptualizing the theory of change**
- **Evaluator's role is to help users clarify their purpose, hoped-for results, and change model.**
- **Evaluators can/should offer conceptual and methodological options.**
- **Evaluators can help by questioning assumptions.**
- **Evaluators can play a key role in facilitating evaluative thinking all along the way.**
- **Interpretative dialogue is critical.**
- **Designs can be emergent and flexible.**

Contingency-based Evaluation

- Situational analysis & responsiveness
- Context sensitivity
- Clarify and focus on intended users: stakeholder analysis
- Clarify and focus on intended uses
- Methodological appropriateness
- Criteria for evaluating the evaluation: credibility, meaningfulness

Seeing Through A Complexity Lens
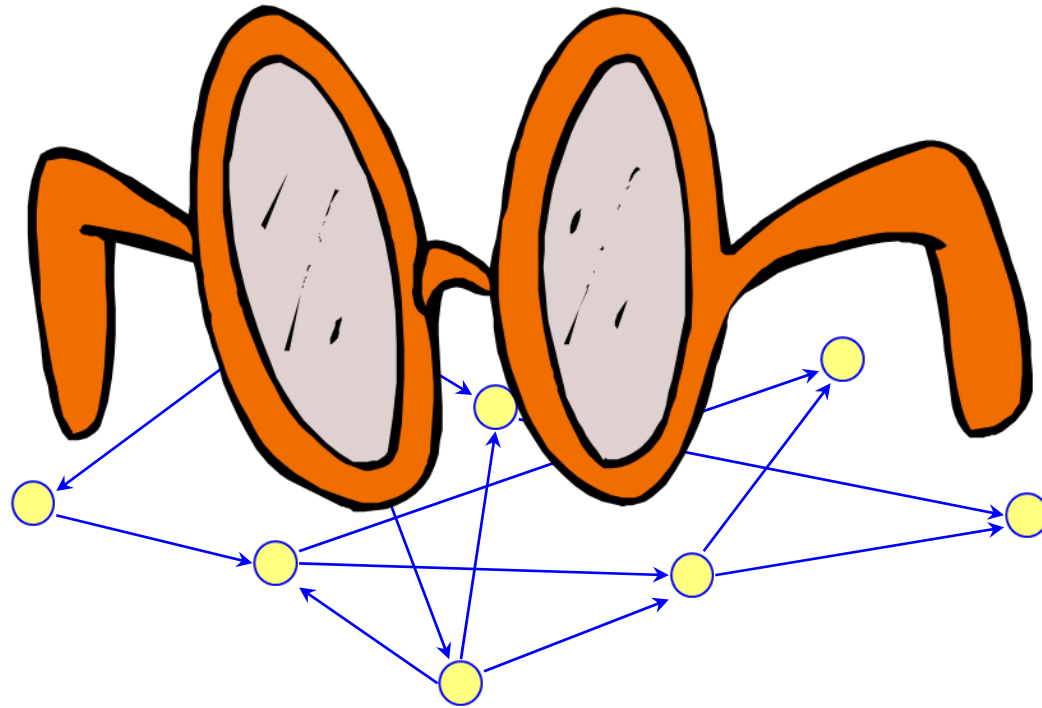
"You don't see something until you have the right metaphor to let you perceive it". Thomas Kuhn

Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed? 2006

Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman, Michael Q. Patton
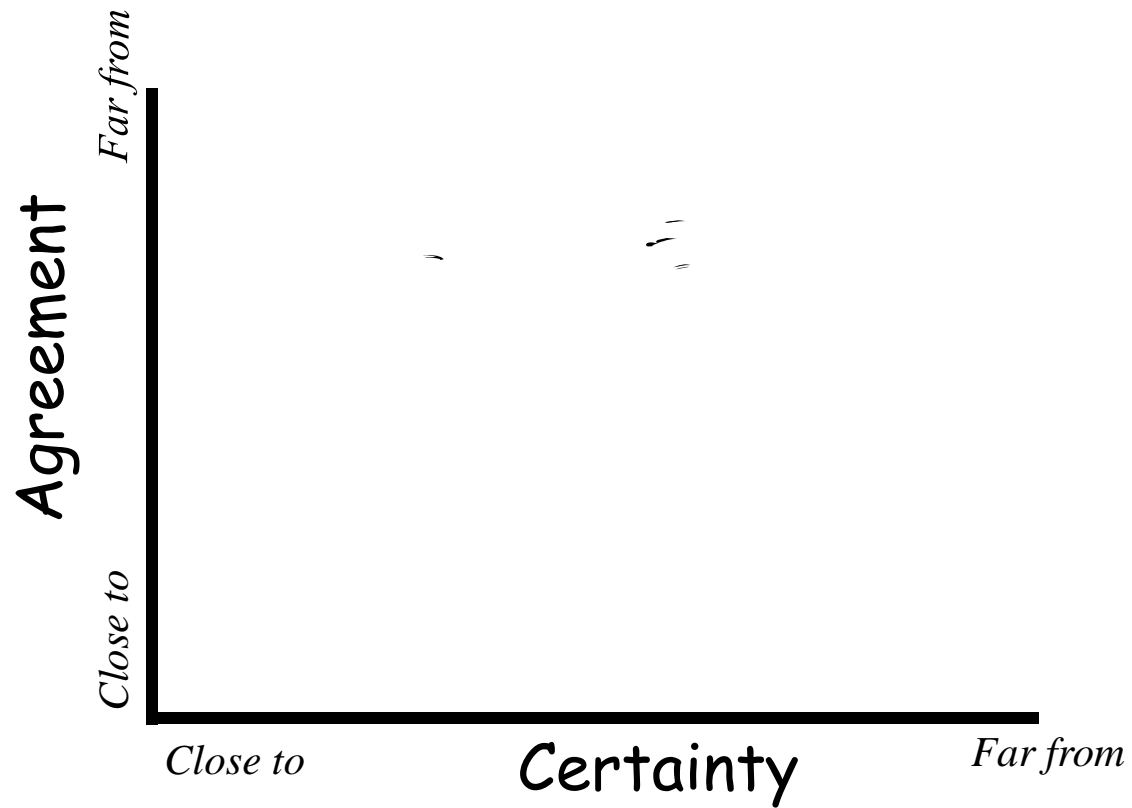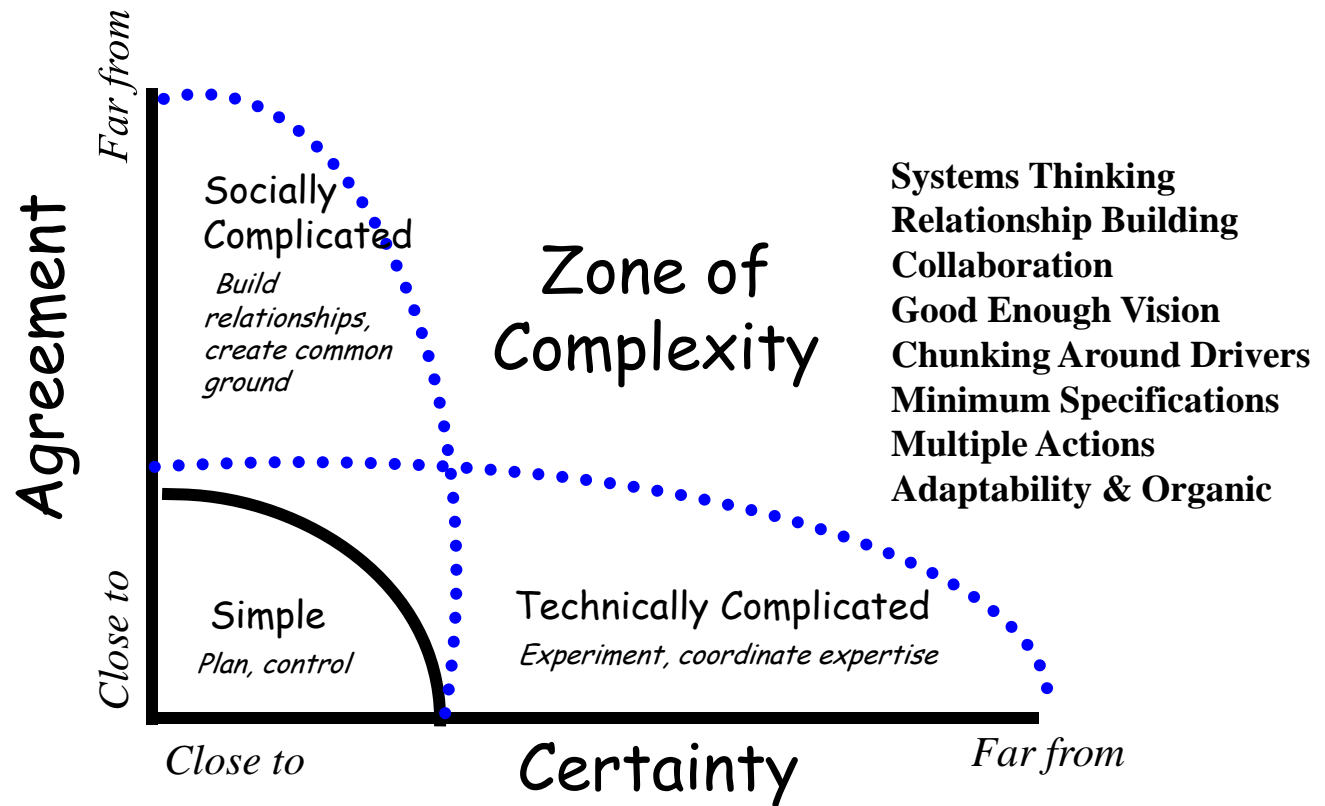
Random House Canada,

Conceptual Options

- **Simple**

- **Complicated**

- **Complex**

Types of Community Issues
The Certainty/Agreement Matrix

Know When Your Challenges Are In the Zone of Complexity

Agreement

Far from

Close to

Socially Complicated

Build relationships, create common ground

Zone of Complexity

Simple

Plan, control

Technically Complicated

Experiment, coordinate expertise

Systems Thinking
Relationship Building
Collaboration
Good Enough Vision
Chunking Around Drivers
Minimum Specifications
Multiple Actions
Adaptability & Organic

Close to   **Certainty**   *Far from*

Simple (Known arena of action)

- Tight, centralized connections.
- Can identify and make sense of patterns.
- Linear cause and effect.
- Best practices identifiable within the current context (which of course may not be self-evident or known to others – hence importance of context).
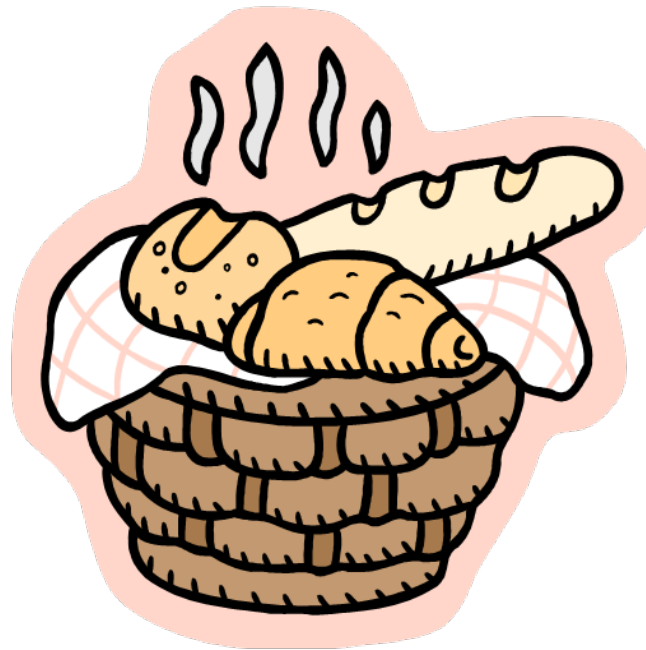
Simple   *Complicated*   *Complex*

Following a Recipe   A Rocket to the Moon   Raising a Child

■ **The recipe is essential**

■ **Recipes are tested to assure replicability of later efforts**

■ **No particular expertise; knowing how to cook increases success**

■ **Recipes produce standard products**

■ **Certainty of same results every time**

Complicated (Knowable arena)

- Relationships are looser but still clustered around a central core.
- Cause and effect is dynamic, multi-dimensional, and enmeshed in system relationships.
- System relationships can be modelled and understood.
- Expertise and coordination needed.

Simple
Following a Recipe

- The recipe is essential

- Recipes are tested to assure replicability of later efforts

- No particular expertise; knowing how to cook increases success

- Recipes produce standard products

- Certainty of same results every time

Complicated
A Rocket to the Moon

- **Formulae are critical and necessary**

- **Sending one rocket increases assurance that next will be ok**

- **High level of expertise in many specialized fields + coordination**

- **Rockets similar in critical ways**

- **High degree of certainty of outcome**

Complex
Raising a Child

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23

Socially complicated

Implementing human rights agreements, like gender equity or outlawing child labor

Environmental Initiatives

- ❖ **Many different and competing stakeholders**
- ❖ **Diverse vested interests**
- ❖ **High stakes**

Socially complicated situations

pose the challenge of coordinating and integrating many players

Stakeholder Mapping

High Interest/ **Low Power** *THE INVOLVED*	**High Interest/** **High Power** *THE PLAYERS*
THE CROWD **Low interest/** **Low Power**	*CONTEXT SETTERS* **Low Interest/** **High Power**

Complex

- Centre is loosely connected to network.
- Cause effect difficult to track; nonlinear, interdependent relationships
- Highly context dependent.
- Outcomes emergent, not predictable.

Simple
Following a Recipe

Complicated
A Rocket to the Moon

Complex
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...expertise ...pecialized

...ination

...e similar in ...al ways

...egree of ...rtainty of ...outcome

- **Formulae have only a limited application**

- **Raising one child gives no assurance of success with the next**

- **Expertise can help but is not sufficient; relationships are key**

- **Every child is unique**

- **Uncertainty of outcome remains**

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Complex Nonlinear Dynamics

- <u>Nonlinear</u>: Small actions can have large reactions. "*The Butterfly Wings Metaphor*"

- <u>Emergent</u>: Self-organizing, Attractors

- <u>Dynamic</u>: Interactions within, between, and among subsystems and parts within systems can volatile, changing

- <u>Getting to Maybe</u>: Uncertainty, unpredictable, uncontrollable

Simple
Complicated
Complex

Following a Recipe
A Rocket to the Moon
Raising a Child

■The recipe is essential

■Recipes are tested to assure replicability of later efforts

■No particular expertise; knowing how to cook increases success

■Recipe notes the quantity and nature of "parts" needed

■Recipes produce standard products

■Certainty of same results every time

- Formulae are critical and necessary

- Sending one rocket increases assurance that next will be ok

- High level of expertise in many specialized fields + coordination

- Separate into parts and then coordinate

- Rockets similar in critical ways

- High degree of certainty of outcome

- Formulae have only a limited application

- Raising one child gives no assurance of success with the next

- Expertise can help but is not sufficient; relationships are key

- Can't separate parts from the whole

- Every child is unique

- Uncertainty of outcome remains

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30

"A Leader's Framework for Decision Making" by David J. Snowden and Mary E. Boone, *Harvard Business Review,*

November, 2007:

Wise executives tailor their approach to fit the complexity of the circumstances they face.

Example

The McGill-McConnell Leadership Program Example

Simple elements

Complicated elements

Complex elements

Simple outcomes

- **Increase knowledge and skills of participants**

  <u>Evaluation</u>: Pre-post data and documentation of learning

Complicated Impacts

- **Change participants' organizations**

Evaluation:

Case studies

of

organizational change

Complex Vision

- Infuse energy into the moribund not-for-profit (voluntary) sector

- Make the sector more dynamic

- Create network of leaders who actively engage in change

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35

Evaluating the Complex

- **Real time follow-up of network connections and actions**
- **Follow-up is an intervention**
- **Rapid feedback of findings permits infusion of resources in support of emergent outcomes**

<u>Process Use</u>

Infusing ***evaluative thinking*** as a primary type of <u>process use.</u>

Capacity-building as an evaluation focus of

process use.

Paradigms and Lenses

- **The importance of interpretive frameworks**

- **Complexity as an interpretive framework**

<u>Complex Situations</u>

- **Highly emergent (difficult to plan and predict)**

- **Highly dynamic, rapidly changing**

- **Relationships are interdependent and non-linear rather than simple and linear (cause-effect)**

Contingency-based
Developmental Evaluation

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION DEFINED

Evaluation processes, including asking evaluative questions and applying evaluation logic, to support program, product, staff and/or organizational **development**. The evaluator is part of a team whose members collaborate to conceptualize, design and test new approaches in a long-term, on-going process of continuous improvement, adaptation and intentional change. The evaluator's primary function in the team is to elucidate team discussions with evaluative questions, data and logic, and facilitate data-based decision-making in the developmental process.

Other names

➤ Real time evaluation

➤ Emergent evaluation

➤ Action evaluation

➤ Adaptive evaluation

CONTRASTS

Traditional evaluations…

- **Testing models**

Complexity-based, Developmental Evaluation…

- **Supporting innovation and adaptation**

Traditional Evaluation…

- **Render definitive judgments of success or failure**

Developmental Evaluation…

- **Provide feedback, generate learnings, support direction or affirm changes in direction in real time**

Traditional Evaluation…

- Render definitive judgments of success or failure

- **Measure success against predetermined goals**

Developmental Evaluation…

- Provide feedback, generate learnings, support direction or affirm changes in direction

- **Develop new measures and monitoring mechanisms as goals emerge & evolve**

Traditional Evaluation…   Developmental Evaluation…

- **Evaluator external, independent, objective**

- **Evaluator part of a team, a facilitator and learning coach bringing evaluative thinking to the table, supportive of the organization's goals**

Traditional Evaluation…

Developmental Evaluation…

- **Evaluator determines the design based on the evaluator's perspective about what is important. The evaluator controls the evaluation.**

- **Evaluator collaborates with those engaged in the change effort to design an evaluation process that matches philosophically and organizationally.**

Traditional Evaluation…

- **Design the evaluation based on linear cause-effect logic models**

Developmental Evaluation…

- **Design the evaluation to capture system dynamics, interdependencies, and emergent interconnections**

Traditional Evaluation…

- **Aim to produce generalizable findings across time & space** .

Developmental Evaluation…

- **Aim to produce context-specific understandings that inform ongoing innovation**

Traditional Evaluation…   Developmental Evaluation…

- **Accountability focused on and directed to external authorities and funders.**

- **Accountability centered on the innovators' deep sense of fundamental values and commitments – and learning.**

Traditional Evaluation…   Developmental Evaluation…

- **Accountability to control and locate blame for failures**

- **Learning to respond to lack of control and stay in touch with what's unfolding**

- **And thereby respond *strategically***

Traditional Evaluation…

- **Evaluation often a compliance function delegated down in the organization**

Developmental Evaluation…

- **Evaluation a leadership function:**

  Reality-testing, results-focused, learning-oriented leadership

Traditional Evaluation…

- **Evaluation engenders**
  fear of failure.

Developmental Evaluation…

- **Evaluation supports *hunger for learning*.**

Conditions

- **High innovation**
- **Development**
- **High uncertainty**
- **Dynamic**
- **Emergent**

Challenge:

Matching the evaluation process and design to the nature of the situation:

Contingency-based Evaluation

References

Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed?
Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman, Michael Q. Patton, Random House Canada, 2006

Utilization-Focused Evaluation, 4th ed.,
Michael Quinn Patton, Sage, 2008.

Developmental Evaluation, Michael Quinn Patton, Guilford Press, forthcoming.

Resources

The J.W. McConnell Foundation on *Developmental Evaluation*

http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca/default.aspx?page=139