

CHAPTER 1

An Introduction to Collaborative, Participatory, and Empowerment Evaluation Approaches

David M. Fetterman, Liliana Rodríguez-Campos,
Abraham Wandersman, Rita Goldfarb O'Sullivan,
and Ann P. Zukoski

Collaborative, participatory, and empowerment evaluations are stakeholder involvement approaches to evaluation. They have become increasingly popular over the last couple of decades.¹ They are being used throughout the United States and internationally. They address concerns about relevance, trust, and use in evaluation. They also build capacity and respond to pressing evaluation needs in the global community.

Over the past couple decades, members of the American Evaluation Association's (AEA) Collaborative, Participatory, and Empowerment Topical Interest Group (CPE-TIG) have labored to build a strong theoretical and empirical foundation of stakeholder involvement approaches in evaluation. Their efforts include identifying the essential features of collaborative, participatory, and empowerment evaluation. Defining and differentiating among stakeholder involvement approaches to evaluation serves to enhance conceptual clarity.² It also informs practice, helping evaluators select the most appropriate approach for the task at hand.

DIFFERENTIATING AMONG THE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT APPROACHES

AEA's CPE-TIG, composed of practicing evaluators from around the world, has endorsed this initiative and contributed to differentiating

between collaborative, participatory, and empowerment evaluation. In addition, a long list of colleagues recommended that evaluation approaches to stakeholder involvement be differentiated (Miller & Campbell, 2006; Patton, 1997a, 2005; Scriven, 1997, 2005a; Sechrest, 1997; Stufflebeam, 1994), and many have helped to define and identify similarities and differences among these approaches (Fetterman, 2001a; Fetterman, Deitz, & Gesundheit, 2010; Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1996, 2015; Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2004; Rodríguez-Campos & Rincones-Gómez, 2013; Shulha, 2010; Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2002).

One essential way to highlight the difference between approaches is to focus on the role of the evaluator (see Figure 1.1):

- Collaborative evaluators are *in charge* of the evaluation, but they create an ongoing engagement between evaluators and stakeholders, contributing to stronger evaluation designs, enhanced data collection and analysis, and results that stakeholders understand and use. Collaborative evaluation covers the broadest scope of practice, ranging from an evaluator's consultation with the client to full-scale collaboration with specific stakeholders at every stage of the evaluation (Rodríguez-Campos & O'Sullivan, 2010).

- Participatory evaluators *jointly share* control of the evaluation. Participatory evaluations range from program staff members and participants participating in the evaluator's agenda to participation in an evaluation that is jointly designed and implemented by the evaluator and program staff members. They encourage participants to become involved in defining the evaluation, developing instruments, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting and disseminating results (Guijt, 2014; Shulha, 2010; Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2002). Typically, "control begins with the evaluator but is divested to program community members over time and with experience" (Cousins, Whitmore, & Shulha, 2013, p. 14).

- Empowerment evaluators view *program staff members, program participants, and community members as the ones in control* of the evaluation. However, empowerment evaluators serve as critical friends or coaches to help keep the process on track, rigorous, responsive, and relevant. Empowerment evaluations are not conducted in a vacuum. They are conducted within the conventional constraints and requirements of any organization. Program staff and participants remain accountable to meeting their goals. However, program staff and participants are also in



FIGURE 1.1. Comparison of stakeholder-involvement approaches to evaluation by evaluator role. From freshspectrum.com. Courtesy of Chris Lysy.

the best position to determine how to meet those external requirements and goals (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2010).

The chapters in this book are designed to help further distinguish one approach from another. The essentials of collaborative, participatory, and empowerment evaluation are presented in separate chapters in order to help practitioners compare and contrast approaches. In addition, case example chapters are used to illustrate what each approach looks like in practice.

COLLABORATIVE EVALUATION

The collaborative evaluation *essentials* chapter presents the definition, advantages, and essential features of this approach (see Chapter 2). The essential features focus on the Model for Collaborative Evaluations (MCE), a comprehensive framework guiding collaborative evaluation.

Components of the model include (1) identify the situation, (2) clarify the expectations, (3) establish a collective commitment, (4) ensure open communication, (5) encourage effective practices, and (6) follow specific guidelines. Chapter 2 also discusses collaboration guiding principles, the role of the collaborative evaluator, and specific steps to implement a collaborative evaluation.

Chapter 2 is followed by two case examples to demonstrate how the approach is applied. The first case example is a collaborative evaluation of an aquarium (see Chapter 3) that offers ecological and environmental stewardship education to the public. Programs for school students also include education about natural and human-induced threats to marine life. With over 80% of marine pollution originating from land sources (e.g., pesticides, untreated sewage), engaging students in learning environments such as Xplore! is essential to expanding their understanding about the causes and impact of pollution on marine life. In addition to pollution prevention, students in the Xplore! program learn about rescue, rehabilitation, and release for marine animals in distress.

The MCE is used to demonstrate the utility of this stakeholder involvement approach to evaluate an educational program about marine life. The chapter discusses the rationale for using a collaborative evaluation approach, including the development of a shared vision, sound evaluation, and improved outcomes. The chapter also highlights the interactive, supportive, and helpful nature of the relationship between the evaluator and the client in a collaborative evaluation.

The second case example is a collaborative evaluation of a multisite, multipurpose, multiyear early childhood Quality Care Initiative (see Chapter 4). Comprehensive, community-based programs for young children and their families have expanded over the past 20 years. These programs work with federal, state, local, and nonprofit organizations to integrate efforts in support of health and nutrition services, education, daycare and preschool centers, training of early childhood caretakers, screening and assistance for special needs students, literacy interventions, and parent education. In the Quality Care Initiative evaluated, 53 grantees provided multiple services to young children and their families in all these areas so that they would arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed. This is a critical contribution to our society. Over 60–70% of children younger than age 6 years regularly attend an early childhood program. “Children who attend high-quality early childhood programs demonstrate better math and language skills, better cognition and social skills,

better interpersonal relationships, and better behavioral self-regulation than do children in lower-quality care” (Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, 2005). Early childhood quality care is an investment in our future.

Chapter 4 focuses on four cyclical collaborative evaluation techniques applied to this early childhood Quality Care Initiative evaluation: (1) review program status, (2) develop evaluation plans, (3) implement the evaluation, and (4) share evaluation findings. This chapter also emphasizes the role of change, specifically organizational and programmatic change. The development of these childhood quality care programs required changes in almost every facet of their operations, from policies to personnel. Those who perform collaborative evaluations are accustomed to these transitions and understand that these programmatic changes require a continual adaptation of evaluation strategies to respond to client needs.

PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

The participatory evaluation *essentials* chapter provides a definition of the approach (see Chapter 5). It also highlights two participatory evaluation streams: practical and transformative. It discusses the advantages associated with using each approach. Concerning essential features, Chapter 5 explains how participatory evaluation is based in part on an organizational learning theoretical framework. It also discusses the conditions required to conduct a participatory evaluation. The chapter’s primary contribution, as it is in each of the *essentials* chapters, is the guiding principles. The evaluator’s role and the steps required to conduct a participatory evaluation are also explored.

Two participatory evaluation case examples are presented in Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 describes the use of a participatory evaluation approach to evaluate a community health improvement initiative, focusing on heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. There are over 1.5 million heart attacks each year. They are the number-one cause of death for men and women in the United States: one in three deaths are due to cardiovascular disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), heart disease and stroke cost over \$316 billion in health care costs and lost productivity in 2011 (<https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/learn-prevent/cost-consequences.html>).

Approximately 9.3% of the population had diabetes in 2012. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body can't use insulin properly. It is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. The total cost of diagnosed diabetes was \$245 billion in 2012 (American Diabetes Association, 2012). These two diseases alone point to the importance of these programs for our nation.

Chapter 6 presents the rationale for using a participatory evaluation. Multiple sets of stakeholders were engaged in the evaluation process of this community health improvement initiative, from planning through analysis and dissemination. The role of the advisory group was central to the evaluation, including the funder, the health system leading the project, and the evaluation team. This chapter also discusses specific steps, including (1) decide if a participatory approach is appropriate; (2) select and prepare an evaluation team; (3) collaborate on creating an evaluation plan; (4) conduct data collection and analysis; and (5) share results and develop an action plan. The synergistic relationship between program staff and the evaluation team is also described.

The second participatory evaluation case example presents an evaluation of a national, community justice program for high-risk sex offenders (see Chapter 7). This program was created in response to a significant problem that merits our attention. Approximately 20 million out of 112 million women (18.0% of the population) in the United States have been raped during their lifetimes (Kilpatrick, Resnick, Ruggiero, Conoscenti, & McCauley, 2007). According to Black and colleagues (2011), 81% of women who experienced stalking, physical violence, or rape by an intimate partner reported significant short- or long-term impacts. There are programs designed to respond to the needs of those impacted by sex offenders. In addition, there are programs designed to address sex offenders themselves. These latter programs provide concrete management strategies, from initial intake to community treatment programs (Abracen & Looman, 2015; Wilson, McWhinnie, Picheca, Prinzo, & Cortoni, 2007).

Chapter 7 discusses a participatory evaluation of a program designed to address high-risk sex offenders. It begins by reviewing participatory evaluation principles of practice, reinforcing the presentation of principles in the participatory *essentials* chapter. The chapter also describes the phases of the participatory practice: (1) creating an evaluation advisory/steering committee; (2) identifying an evaluation focus; (3) negotiating stakeholder participation; (4) evaluation planning and training;

(5) evaluation plan implementation; and (6) data analysis and interpretation. The role of the participatory evaluator, context, and equitable participation are also discussed.

EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION

The empowerment evaluation *essentials* chapter defines the approach and describes two streams, much like participatory evaluation: practical empowerment evaluation and transformative empowerment evaluation (see Chapter 8). The chapter discusses advantages of using the approach and presents its essential features. The conceptual framework is guided by empowerment and process use theory, as well as by theories of use and action. Additional features include the role of the critical friend, 10 principles, and specific empowerment evaluation approaches (three-step and 10-step approaches). Chapter 8 also explores the role of the empowerment evaluator or critical friend. It concludes with a brief discussion about the utility of an evaluation dashboard to monitor progress over time.

Two empowerment evaluation case examples are presented following Chapter 8. The first is an empowerment evaluation of a comprehensive sex education initiative (see Chapter 9). According to the CDC (2008), one in four young women between the ages of 15 and 19 has a sexually transmitted infection (STI). That is approximately half of the 19 million STIs reported each year. Approximately one person is infected with HIV every hour of every day in the United States (CDC, n.d.). Evaluations of comprehensive sex education programs demonstrate that these programs can (1) delay the onset of sexual activity, (2) reduce the frequency of sexual activity, (3) reduce the number of sexual partners, and (4) increase the use of condoms and contraceptives (see Kirby, 2007; Kohler, Manhart, & Lafferty, 2008).

Chapter 9 is an empowerment evaluation of a set of comprehensive sex education programs. It combines a three- and a 10-step approach to conducting an empowerment evaluation. It describes many of the changes that occur in an evaluation when an empowerment evaluation approach is adopted. Changes include, for example, *who* participates in the evaluation; *what* information is gathered and valued; and *how* information is handled and interpreted. Another notable point is how people change the way they think in an empowerment evaluation. Chapter 9 is also self-reflective, sharing lessons learned. Issues discussed include

front-end demands and costs; rigor; reliability; use of theoretical models; pattern identification; communication; resistance; and outcomes.

The second case example is an empowerment evaluation of a doctoral program at Pacifica Graduate Institute. It was conducted by its own graduate students and their instructors (see Chapter 10). Students need to learn how to evaluate their own programs to prepare them for future roles in academic institutions and to contribute to their institutions' vitality. For example, accreditation requires self-evaluation and empowerment evaluation can be used extensively for precisely that purpose. Specifically, Stanford University's School of Medicine and the California Institute of Integral Studies have used empowerment evaluation to prepare for their accreditation reviews (Fetterman, 2012).

The use of the three-step approach to empowerment evaluation at Pacifica Graduate Institute was enhanced with technology and rubrics. These were provided courtesy of Google, which has developed a strategy for planning an evaluation using a series of worksheets and resources that we found can enhance empowerment evaluation.

A virtual classroom strategy, combined with the strategic use of online classroom management, rubrics, and evaluation programs, facilitated learning and enhanced use of the empowerment evaluation approach. Self-, peer, and instructor assessments were closely aligned, highlighting the accuracy and validity of self-assessment. The triangulated evaluation approach also helped identify areas meriting attention and midcourse corrections. Lessons learned were reflexively mirrored back to Google to improve their evaluation capacity-building initiatives.

SIMILARITIES ACROSS THE THREE APPROACHES

Collaborative, participatory, and empowerment evaluation approaches have clear distinctions between them. However, there are many principles and practices that unite them. Chapter 11 presents the principles guiding each approach and highlights principles held in common. In addition to these principles, there are a great variety of other principles guiding stakeholder involvement approaches to evaluation. Organizing these principles according to macro-, mid-, and microlevels of analysis makes them more manageable and useful. In addition to principles, stakeholder involvement approaches to evaluation use many of the same methods and require similar skills, further demonstrating the similarities across approaches.

CONCLUSION

This collection concludes (Chapter 12) with a brief portrait of the international scope and practice of stakeholder involvement approaches to evaluation, including work in Africa, the Asian–Pacific area, Australia, the Caribbean, India, Indonesia, Latin America, Mexico, Nepal, Peru, the Philippines, southern Sudan, and Tanzania. In addition, collaborative, participatory, and empowerment evaluation approaches are applied to the same program (in a simulation) to illustrate the differences between the approaches, in terms of assumptions, roles, and community responsibilities. Chapter 12 also explores the potential utility of combining approaches (once one is familiar with both similarities and differences across stakeholder involvement approaches to evaluation).

The CPE-TIG leadership, represented by the authors in this collection, believes it is the nature of science and good practice to be precise, to define terms, and to explain differences among similar approaches in order to build on knowledge and improve practice. Differentiation of approaches helps evaluators select the most appropriate stakeholder involvement approach in the field. The more informed that the evaluator, funder, and program staff and participants are, the more meaningful, relevant, and useful the evaluation. Together, these chapters contribute to conceptual clarity, help demystify evaluation practice for practitioners, and build evaluation capacity.

NOTES

1. The CPE-TIG represents approximately 20% of the membership.
2. This view of science and practice is presented in response to the comments of Cousins et al. (2013) about differentiating among approaches (p. 15).