

The background of the top half of the cover is an abstract, textured composition. It features a central globe-like shape with a grid of latitude and longitude lines, rendered in a golden-brown color. The globe is set against a backdrop of soft, painterly textures in shades of light blue, teal, and white. Scattered throughout are small, glowing golden particles and faint, ethereal patterns that suggest movement and transformation.

TRANSFORMATIONAL EVALUATION

FOR THE GLOBAL CRISES OF OUR TIMES

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EDITORS



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CHAPTER 11

Evaluation for Transformation: What Will It Take?

ROBERT PICCIOTTO

Abstract. Given recurrent health emergencies, rapid environmental degradation, pervasive insecurities and the rising popular anger that the unmet promises of modernity in liberal and authoritarian regimes alike have triggered, populism is on the rise, the knowledge professions are threatened and social transformation is imperative. Thus, evaluation faces its own transformation challenge. New policy directions will be required to transform the enabling environment of evaluation practice. Specifically, the process that the neoliberal and evidence-based waves of evaluation diffusion induced, which transformed evaluation into a private good, must be reversed. For evaluation to restore its public good character, it must break the chains of the market-based governance model currently in place and increase its influence by moving up the occupational ladder. This implies acquiring all the interrelated features of professionalism: an ethical charter, expert knowledge, proven competencies and self-management. There is no shortcut.

Introduction

Transformation first emerged as a fashionable buzzword in a corporate world beset by rapid change (Bucy, Hall and Yakola 2016). Fuelled by the climate change crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now a universal preoccupation of policymakers confronted by recurrent health emergencies, rapid environmental degradation, pervasive international criminality and unprecedented financial volatility.

Evaluators are striving to rise to the occasion. They recognize that transformed evaluation methods and mindsets are required. Even before the COVID-19 crisis hit, evaluation conferences, publications and blogs had highlighted the need for new thinking and new methods, but the evaluation community has yet to recognize the full implications of the transformation challenge. Thus, its professionalization initiatives have been modest, scattered and uncoordinated¹.

The chapter is in five sections:

- First, it takes stock of the human progress associated with past development transformations, as well as the risks to humanity associated with current public policies.
- Second, it probes the widespread discontent found within and outside the evaluation community.
- Third, it identifies gaps in the evaluation community consensus regarding what must be done.
- Fourth, it demonstrates that four specific interrelated professionalization challenges must be met for evaluation to be transformative.
- Fifth, it offers concluding remarks.

Past Transformations: Achievements and Drawbacks

The imperative of a basic reorientation in policy directions is not unprecedented. A major transformation challenge faced policymakers 75 years ago when the international development mission emerged out of the ashes of World War II. For the first time in world history, official and public opinion in Western societies acknowledged the need to attend to the 'urgent problems

¹ The International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation has deliberately limited its role as a neutral source of information on professionalization actions undertaken at national and regional levels, which have been few and far between.

of economic development of underdeveloped countries' (United Nations 1949, 251). Thus, the victorious allies adopted international aid as a major foreign policy instrument, and economic development became the primary public policy objective of the governments of less-developed countries.

At the same time, evaluation, the 'new kid on the block' of the academy, came into existence. It embraced an inspiring mission: connecting the then highly esteemed social sciences with government policymaking for the good of all (Shadish and Luellen 2005). This was a time of optimism, faith in government and belief in international cooperation. In relatively short order, a handful of far-sighted evaluation pioneers assembled a toolkit of evaluative methods, launched specialized publications and created evaluation associations.

The Great Convergence

A major transformation of the world economy ensued. The admixture of growth-oriented policies, official development aid and foreign direct investment was providential for many developing countries. Although it left more than 1 billion people in 47 least-developed countries behind, it induced a gradual convergence in average per capita incomes between the North and the South. Lifted by increased prosperity in emerging market economies, average global per capita incomes increased from \$3,300 in 1950 to \$18,000 in 2019 (Roser 2019; Statistics Times 2021).

By the 1990s, driven by the dynamic economies of Asia, the developing world began to become the engine of the global economy. As a result, despite sharply increased within-country inequalities, global inequality declined (Bourguignon 2016), as did the share of the absolute poor of the world population (Revenga and Dooley 2019). Whereas some 60 per cent of the world population lived in extreme poverty in 1950, only 10 per cent did before the COVID-19 pandemic struck (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina 2013).

Social indicators improved as well. By 2019, global average life expectancy (73 years) reached higher levels than in any country in 1950 (Roser, Ortiz-Ospina and Ritchie 2013). The prevalence of chronic undernourishment and catastrophic famines also declined with the advent and dissemination of new agricultural technologies (Roser and Ritchie 2019). Literacy, especially female literacy, became widespread².

² The gender gap in literacy is declining for all regions, with Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and East Asia and the Pacific having nearly closed this gap, although other regions are far behind. More information available at Wadhwa 2019.

Other markers of human security and welfare followed suit. The global number of battle deaths fell dramatically (Roser 2016), as did homicide (Roser and Ritchie 2013) and genocide deaths (Roser and Nagdy 2013). Improvement in global well-being indicators have been variously ascribed to Enlightenment values, scientific progress and international cooperation (Pinker 2018). Irrespective of their antecedents, these remarkable achievements have come with a heavy price tag for society and the natural environment.

Social Costs

While nearly half of the world is still striving to subsist on \$5.50 a day or less, the world's richest 1 per cent have secured twice as much wealth as close to 90 per cent of the world population. Social cohesion has been sorely tested under the sway of extraordinary increases in inequality. With globalization in full swing, the world witnessed a massive reallocation of labour-intensive work towards emerging market economies, combined with de-industrialization in developed nations.

In Western countries, working-class earnings eroded because of runaway outsourcing to low-wage countries and automation. In Australia, Canada, Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States, mortality rose due to drug overdose, alcohol and suicide (Case and Deaton 2020). This epidemic of distress spared most college-educated citizens so that unequal access to higher education aggravated the social costs of income and wealth inequalities.

A Planet at Risk

The 2008 financial crisis demonstrated the huge risks to livelihoods associated with financial globalization. Even more insidious and deadly, the silent climate change crisis will inflict escalating damage on societies and the natural environment (Patton 2020). Given persistent international reliance on carbon-intensive economic policies, the world is heating up; it is as if humanity is facing the fate of proverbial frogs immersed in water gradually reaching the boiling point.

The fossil fuel-based energy dependence of the world economy is mostly driving climate change, but human diets are also to blame. Animal agriculture, increasingly dependent on cruel and polluting factory farming, is responsible for 13 per cent to 18 per cent of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the relentless growth of the livestock economy

worldwide has been detrimental to human health because red and processed meats increase the risk of cancer. The stark reality is that current policies and consumption patterns are not sustainable. Four to five planets would be needed to accommodate all countries at current Western per capita income levels.

Public Discontent and Its Consequences

Unsurprisingly, huge public demonstrations have called on governments to step up the actions that are patently and urgently needed to restrict the rise in global temperatures to 1.5°C, the modest goal agreed under the 2015 Paris Agreement. Students, workers and professionals have joined climate strikes. Popular protests, often led by youth movements, have spread in reaction to air pollution, plastic waste and rising sea levels.

The Davos policy consensus of the rich and famous has long praised disruptive innovation and favoured marginal feel-good policy improvements. This narrative is no longer persuasive (Guardian 2019). Global opinion surveys confirm that distrust of elites and dissatisfaction with the workings of liberal democracies are rife. The growing popular discontent is tied to economic grievances, politicians' unresponsiveness to popular demands and widespread suspicion of out-of-touch intellectuals (Wike, Silver and Castillo 2019). As a result, populism has spread, distrust of science has risen and the public is turning to authoritarian leaders.

Democracy in Decline

Whereas in the 1990s, after the implosion of the Soviet Union, democracy was on the march, the prevalence of liberal democratic regimes began to fall in 2005, just as it had in the 1930s. The latest aggregate Democracy Index that the Economist (2019) Intelligence Unit compiled was the lowest recorded since the index was first published in 2006.

In 2019, only 22 countries, home to 430 million people, were full democracies, whereas more than one-third of the world's population lived under strict authoritarian rule. In Russia, Turkey, Hungary, Poland, the Philippines, Brazil, India and the United States (which was downgraded from the full democracy to the flawed democracy category in 2016), authoritarian leaders rose to power. In sub-Saharan Africa, 23 countries saw their democracy scores decline, whereas only 11 improved.

The Policy Context

Given the stubborn facts described above, it is high time for a fundamental transformation of policy frameworks. They should be directed away from runaway, inequitable, unsustainable growth towards enhanced human security. This requires diligent precautionary policies that hedge for the worst in the face of rare but potentially catastrophic systemic risks (Taleb 2007). It also means a dominant role for the state and competent administration. Unfortunately, in many countries, governments have taken a back seat and let business interests shape policies characterized as socialism for the rich and capitalism for the poor.

It is time to confront the powerful lobbies that have captured policy-making. Powerful, profit-driven, unregulated, digitalized companies have undermined social cohesion. The social media they have created act as echo chambers for fact-free opinion and extremist politics. Taxation of the super-rich has declined, individual and corporate tax dodging have become widespread, regressive value-added taxation that penalizes the poor has risen, budget austerity has constrained social spending and global monopolies have escaped regulation.

What Kind of Transformation?

Meeting the new transformation challenge will not take place absent an understanding of what has happened. The hard-won lessons of experience must be drawn. Given that the fruits of innovation and growth have not been equitably shared and that the future of the planet is threatened, the New Public Management ideas that have shaped policy should be discarded (Ventriss 2000). Yet the rich and powerful remain committed to rigid neoliberal doctrines and will seek to exploit the disorientation that the COVID-19 catastrophe has caused to secure adoption of radically conservative policy measures.

This would be a repeat of their past behaviour, for example when they exploited the fears that the 9/11 attack elicited to erode civil liberties; allowed real estate developers to displace thousands of poor households to make room for luxury hotels and apartments following the ravages of the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Haiti earthquake and Hurricane Katrina and took advantage of debt crises to push through economic shock therapies and budget austerity policies (Klein 2007).

Thus, the shape of the coming social transformation is in doubt. Although capitalism has captured the commanding heights of the global economic system, it has taken different forms in the liberal meritocratic

states of Western industrialized countries and political capitalist states such as China (Milanovic 2019). It is far from clear which of these two capitalist typologies will prevail, because in both cases, the economic and political elites have come together with predictable results: growing inequality and corruption that could in time trigger a popular backlash.

The Anatomy of Disenchantment

What explains the sharply contrasting policy beliefs prevalent in contemporary society? According to Max Weber (2002), modernity arose following the erosion of religious faith and magical thinking as soon as the Enlightenment demystified contemplation and rejected the sacramental mediation of salvation. Suddenly, rationality overcame superstition, work became valued for its own sake and profit making that had previously been despised as a manifestation of greed and avarice became honourable. Science acquired prestige, but its success in disenchanting the world has been neither complete nor definitive, because reason without faith is alienating, and science cannot answer questions about values and morals. Magical thinking, rejection of scientific findings and distrust of expertise are making a comeback. All knowledge occupations, including evaluation, have become vulnerable to the populist backlash.

In the wake of disenchantment, a decisive shift of focus from faith-based tradition to rational action gradually transformed everyday life and laid the foundations for the triumph of capitalism. Social action, driven by custom and routine, and affective social action, driven by instinct, impulse, anxiety or desire, were hemmed in. Reason displaced emotion and made room for scientific inquiry, private enterprise and democratic debate. This paved the way for the march of modernity and the ascent of liberal democracies, which in turn triggered a revolution of popular aspirations fuelled by a universal culture of individualism, egalitarian ambition and deep longings for the wealth and status that less than 1 per cent of the world population enjoyed.

The huge chasm that divides the elite from the masses has opened a space that demagogues, cultural supremacists and brutal extremists now occupy. The new hypercapitalist, neoliberal world has encouraged 'the suspicion – potentially lethal among the hundreds of millions of people condemned to superfluosity – that the present order, democratic or authoritarian, is built upon force and fraud; they incite a broader and more apocalyptic mood than we have witnessed before. They also underscore the need for some truly transformative thinking about the self and the world' (Mishra 2018, 346).

Evaluation Rationalities

The intellectual legitimacy of evaluation is grounded in theoretical rationality, whereas its social legitimacy hinges on the other kinds of rationality it adheres to as a guide to action. When evaluation is institutionalized, formal rationality dominates so that power captures evaluation. When practical rationality has the upper hand, powerful interests induce self-serving evaluative biases. Only substantive rationality at the service of instrumentally rational and ethical evaluation is socially legitimate.

It follows that the same secular forces that transformed the world have shaped the trajectory of the evaluation occupation. At the outset, evaluation pioneers strove to inject rationality into the untidy world of politics. Thus, Donald T. Campbell, a scientist, humanist and generalist, joined the evaluation ranks in the mid-1960s when colleagues induced him to champion quantitative methods in social research (Picciotto 2019a). The ideal 'experimenting society' shaped by the *experimental wave* of evaluation diffusion was an open plea to policymakers to subject social programmes to systematic, quantitatively rigorous evaluation (Campbell 1971).

Although this technocratic vision was compelling, the *dialogic wave* of evaluation diffusion, an even more inspiring model of inclusive, value-driven evaluation, replaced it in the 1970s. These were the halcyon days of evaluation as a force of good, but the faith in evaluation that it elicited evaporated when this exceptionally innovative period of evaluation history came to an end when a *neoliberal wave* engulfed the evaluation discipline in the 1980s.

This is when market thinking infiltrated all sectors of society, and value-free management consultants working across borders were recruited to serve decision makers subservient to free-wheeling capitalist interests. The same ethos is sustaining the *evidence-based wave* that characterizes evaluation diffusion today. The evaluators that surf this wave do not challenge neoliberal ideas. They advocate a renaissance of scientific experimentation while stressing accountability, value for money and customer satisfaction under the slogan 'what matters is what works!' (Vedung 2010).

In parallel and paradoxically, disenchantment with evaluation spread just as evaluation crossed borders. By now, propelled by the development cooperation industry, evaluation practice has become genuinely 'international in the sense of being at the same time more indigenous, more global and more transnational' (Chelimsky and Shadish 1997, xi).

Evaluation Disenchantment

Transformational evaluation, which Donna Mertens (2005, 422–423) defines as evaluation that pursues ‘the goal of bringing society to a point of greater equity and justice’, has captured the imagination of evaluation practitioners, but the mood of influential evaluation thinkers has nevertheless darkened.

As the neoliberal and evidence-based waves washed over evaluation practice, belief in the public interest mission of the evaluation discipline faltered, and eminent evaluation thinkers began to ask the same questions about evaluation that they have routinely asked of others: Does evaluation ‘work’? What has been achieved and at what cost? The results of this introspection have been sobering.

Thus, Peter Dahler-Larsen (2012, 231) has deplored the high transaction costs and the detrimental effects of linear evaluative thinking on creativity and innovation: ‘it is time to consider...whether the marginal utility of evaluation may be decreasing and whether there are sometimes good reasons for evaluation fatigue’. He has also observed that ‘in recent years, we have witnessed a boom in evaluation... It is as if there is no limit to the feedback loops...as if the insatiable evaluation monster demands more food every day’ (Dahler-Larsen 2012, 1).

By now, goal achievement evaluation has become integrated as an administrative routine in all sectors of the world economy. Co-opted, institutionalized and routinized, evaluation is now shaped by buyers’ preferences, the range of evaluation questions has become more restricted and manager-oriented evaluations tend to neglect the public interest. These shifts in orientation of evaluation practice have blurred the boundaries between evaluation and other knowledge occupations.

Specifically, evaluation has become conflated with auditing, inspection and other means of social control that the public perceives as costly, ritualistic and disruptive. The illusory comfort offered to managers facing the realities of an uncertain and turbulent operating environment has sustained intrusive oversight, detailed record keeping, intense bureaucratic scrutiny, constant pressure to demonstrate rapid results and mandatory use of simplistic performance measures.

To be sure, not all evaluation thinkers are resigned to the current submissive status of the evaluation occupation. They remain wedded to the lofty evaluation ideals present at the creation of the discipline. For example, Robert Stake (2016) has consistently asserted that evaluation can serve the pursuit of equity; Karen Kirkhart (2015) has advocated advancing social

equity through evaluation and Jennifer Greene (2012) has encouraged evaluators to commit to equity-minded, critical evaluative habits.

Nevertheless, these professions of faith in evaluation coexist with gnawing self-doubt because evaluation, once a public good, is now bought and sold in a market where evaluators frequently yield control over their work to commissioners beholden to power holders. By now, evaluation is widely perceived as an enterprise that evaluators, decision makers, and evaluation commissioners jointly own; that is, the substantive rationality on which the ethical foundation of evaluation rests has given way to the practical and formal rationalities that the rich and the powerful have mobilized.

Gradually, evaluation models that emphasize social justice, democracy and inclusivity have lost ground to a usage-focused culture geared to the achievement of managerial goals. All too often, evaluation is relegated to the fulfilment of managers' needs for data gathering, and the biased computer algorithms of the new information economy have escaped evaluation while assuming enormous influence as standard management instruments wielded by value-free data scientists.

In parallel, evaluators have been pushed towards the periphery of policymaking. Thus, evaluation is now widely conceived as an enterprise rather than a vocation, a business venture rather than a special calling, 'one tool among many for the improvement of policies, learning and social change' (Furubo and Stame 2019, xv) These trends must be reversed for evaluation to meet the huge transformation tasks implied by the diagnostic offered in the previous section.

Gaps in the Evaluation Community Consensus

Thankfully, the evaluation community has seized on transformation as an objective worth striving for. The transformation vision is akin to a flickering light at the end of a dark tunnel. It implies radical changes in evaluators' mindsets towards risk management, conscious citizenship and planetary well-being assessment (Ofir 2019b). It draws on transformation theory that knits together the complexity sciences, systems thinking, feedback loops and network effects.

The need for refinement in evaluation competency frameworks to address the challenges of sustainable development and the digital revolution more effectively is also acknowledged (Ofir 2019a). In parallel, the mainstream evaluation community has focused on shifting the focus of the evaluation enterprise from assessments of individual interventions to

systemic policy changes, but with few exceptions (Mathison 2016), the current consensus has not reckoned with the broader implications for evaluation of the demise of democratic capitalism, the surge of neoliberalist ideas, the manufacture of popular consent by a captured elite or the rising influence of business interests on political decisions.

Although these transformation ideas are injecting fresh energy and renewed hope within the evaluation community, most evaluation thinkers, managers and practitioners have yet to come to terms with the extent to which the enabling environment for evaluation has become inimical to democratic, culturally sensitive, transformative, independent evaluation (Picciotto 2015).

In the contemporary evaluation scene, results-oriented evaluation clients who hold the purse strings and impose tight constraints on evaluation practice have set aside progressive evaluation models. Asking evaluators to break away from the intellectual straitjackets imposed by commissioners is a tall order because evaluation is now a commodity subject to market forces (Mathison 2016).

Evaluation community leaders have focused on the supply side of the evaluation market, yet power holders dominate the neglected demand side in a market in which economists, auditors and management consultants have the upper hand and independent evaluators committed to social and environmental justice must summon extraordinary courage and strike painful compromises as they struggle to secure contracts in an increasingly competitive market.

How then can the evaluation community overcome the pervasive conflicts of interest that mar evaluation practice in pharmaceutical evaluation, education evaluation and financial evaluation, as Ernest House (2016) conclusively documented? How can client-centred, utilization-focused (Patton 2008) or developmental evaluations that Michael Quinn Patton (2010) has brilliantly advocated for embrace empathy, cultural sensitivity, inclusiveness, self-awareness and reflexivity within the constraints imposed by having 'skin in a game' that vested interests control?

Because evaluators cannot readily bite the hands that feed them while making a living, how realistic is Thomas Schwandt's (2019) vision of a post-normal evaluation future grounded in ethical accountability, co-production, practical reasoning and support for citizen engagement in democratic decision-making processes? Is his caricatural depiction, offered in jest, of evaluators' submissive roles as scientific watch dogs, policy guide dogs or subservient lapdogs closer to the uncomfortable contemporary

reality? What then is to be done to ensure that those who pay the piper do not call the evaluation tune (Datta 2016)?

This is where the promise of professionalization comes in. Talcott Parsons (1968) visualized an ideal world in which the professions would acquire enough power to minimize the tyranny of the state and the excesses of capitalistic exploitation. This is the direction of travel that the evaluation community should adopt if, beyond its confirmed status as a legitimate and distinct discipline³, it opts to pull itself up by the bootstraps to play a more influential and effective role in society.

What Will It Take?

Vision without reality is hallucination. It should be clear by now that evaluation must be fundamentally transformed to help transform society and address the interrelated, systemic policy dysfunctions at the local, national and global levels that have led humans to deplete the planet's resources, aggravate inequalities and increase the vulnerability of society to recurrent, catastrophic disruptions in lives, jobs and social cohesion.

Facing Reality

Evaluation is still an infant industry. Globally, all evaluation associations and networks that EvalPartners surveyed have a combined membership of 32,000, and this includes double counting of members who belong to more than one association. This is less than one-fifth of the membership of a single association of internal auditors (e.g. the Institute of Internal Auditors has 175,000 members). There are some 1.2 million accountants and auditors employed in the United States alone. Growth in evaluation practice will require market diversification well beyond the government sector.

The market-led revolution that has swept over the global system since the turn of the century also means that the evaluation community should expand its scrutiny of the private sector and the growing philanthropic sector. It should target social impact funding initiatives, Big Data algorithms, and non-governmental organizations. It should build stronger relationships with community-level organizations and advocacy groups. It

³ Many social researchers reject evaluation's claim to the status of an autonomous discipline, let alone a profession. They do not think that it is sufficiently systematic, coherent or theory driven – 'a helter-skelter, mishmash, a stew of hit-or-miss procedures' (Davidson 2005).

should master the new information technologies and find cost-effective ways to deliver adequate, timely evidence to decision makers.

This implies a new way of doing business and vigorous evaluation advocacy. The evaluation brand should be more sharply defined and better protected. Currently, the wider public is poorly informed about what evaluation stands for. Evaluators are regularly confused with auditors and social researchers. High-quality tertiary evaluation education is scarce⁴. The discipline has yet to reach universal agreement on guiding principles, ethical guidelines and competencies for evaluators.

Evaluators do not control access to the evaluation discipline, and as a result, the quality of evaluation work is highly variable. Anyone can pose as an evaluator. It is high time for the evaluation world to face up to these realities. To be sure, evaluators have recognized the need to adapt their methods, refine their competency frameworks and raise their sights from individual interventions to systematic examination of higher-plane systems and policies. They have also sought to build evaluation capacities and develop training opportunities.

The Limits of the Current Consensus

Evaluation community leaders have neglected to recognize the full implications of the transformation challenge for their practice: the need to enhance the influence of evaluation as a specialized, autonomous knowledge occupation. Although it evokes special privileges, a professional label would add prestige and enhance the influence of evaluation practitioners in society. As a result, the enabling environment would be transformed so that it recognizes evaluation as a profession, ensures that all sectors of society understand and appreciate the value of evaluation and explicitly includes evaluation through national policies and other governance and regulatory instruments.

These changes on the demand side of the market were among the Global Evaluation Agenda (GEA) goals that the evaluation community adopted at a historic meeting held in Kathmandu (Nepal) in 2015 – the Year of Evaluation (EvalPartners n.d.). Although professionalization has become a central concern of communities of practice in evaluation, no consensus

⁴ Although there are 25,000 universities in the world, the American Evaluation Association (AEA) has identified only 80 university evaluation programmes worldwide.

has materialized as to what this means for the evaluation community, given persistent concerns about the dark side of professionalization.

Evaluators remain ambivalent and divided regarding the desirability of systematic professionalization⁵, and evaluation associations have sorely neglected the advocacy dimension of their remit.

Scepticism is certainly warranted. All professions must guard against unreasonable barriers to entry, elitism, self-serving practices, bureaucratization and ossification. Evaluation is not immune to the risks that monopolistic practices, professional self-interest and a narrow focus on methodologies and technicalities pose to innovation, creativity and intellectual openness. The restrictive characteristics of professionalization should be resisted, and paths towards evaluation excellence should be laid for young, emerging evaluators.

This said, without full-scale professionalization, evaluation will continue to be marginalized, evaluation disenchantment is likely to persist and the gap between lofty aspirations and results will grow. Fortunately, the basic elements of a sound professionalization strategy are at hand; an authoritative 'sociology of the professions' literature has identified four main drivers of professionalization. They are summarized here.

Adopt a Professional Ethos

First, the determination to work in the public interest is a prerequisite for securing the franchise to operate with autonomy in the public sphere. For example, such professions as medicine have adopted charters that champion the primacy of patient welfare and the promotion of social justice in the health industry.

In a powerful essay, Thomas Schwandt (2017) has deplored the glaring absence of vigorous discussion of what evaluation aims to add to society and the social good it seeks to serve. This must be done for a *professional ethos* to be defined and enforced. As things stand, evaluation simply means 'the process of determining merit, worth, or significance' (Scriven 2007, 1). This widely accepted definition is elastic and permissive. It implies that evaluation may focus on one, two or all three of these evaluative dimensions.

This ambiguous remit has allowed compliance audits (merit) and consumer guides (worth) to masquerade as evaluations. It has failed to put values and the public interest at the core of what evaluation should be in

⁵ Ian C. Davies captured the collective progress towards professionalization, as well as the widespread doubts still prevalent in the evaluation community in his preface to Davies and Brummer (2015).

the age of transformation. Missing from the widely accepted evaluation definition is the moral obligation for evaluators to promote the public good and take an ethical stance that they can defend with scientifically acceptable evidence (Scriven 2016).

Adopting a more demanding professional ethos would also tighten boundaries around evaluative inquiry. It would no longer allow exclusion of basic moral concerns. The ethical guidelines that evaluation associations issue would have to be expanded and improved. They currently concentrate on individual evaluators and neglect the evaluands. Newly upgraded ethical standards would address the responsibilities of evaluation commissioners. They would make clear that merit assessments include ethical evaluation of social interventions goals, that worth assessments comply with progressive values and that significance assessments would focus on the public interest.

Thus, new forms of formal and practical rationality reflecting the common good would be mobilized to buttress the substantive rationality of the evaluation discipline. Once evaluators take control of their own work and commit to a common professional ethos, all evaluations would make adequate room for expert estimation of the indirect and unintended social and environmental effects and would address the ethics of all evaluation participants. Evaluators would be enjoined to refuse evaluation assignments intended as subterfuge (e.g. evaluations commissioned to delay needed action, to duck responsibility, for window dressing or for public relations). They would subject evaluation terms of reference to critical review.

Upgrade Expertise

Abundant evidence has been adduced to demonstrate that modern economies require specialization, which in turn explains the ascent of professions. Thus, selected individuals who have undergone specialized education at the tertiary level followed by substantial exposure to skilled practice and periodic updating of their expert knowledge have come to perform sensitive and complex tasks that affect human welfare and facilitate the smooth functioning of society.

Meeting the accountability and learning requirements of society, especially in a context of rapid transformation, is a specialized task. Evaluation is not an amateur sport. Evaluators are not mere technicians. They cannot aspire to handle the multidisciplinary dimensions of their practice without a solid general education at the tertiary level. Furthermore, they need to have a firm grasp of specialized evaluation methods, appreciate their potentials and understand their limitations.

Although experience and practice are critically important, formal education is a pillar of professionalism. Evaluation work defies standardization. Evaluators are not only craftsmen and technicians; they also have privileged access to relevant and valid theories and a capacity to mobilize expertise from a wide range of disciplines. They are equipped with up-to-date knowledge, specialized skills and sound judgment.

Hence, evaluation professionalism cannot be divorced from the institutionalization of occupational expertise through high-quality tertiary education. Unfortunately, evaluation has yet to find its rightful place in the academic sun. Evaluation departments in universities are a rarity. Few universities have recognized that evaluation is not social research and that the standard curriculum should make room for evaluation.

Control Access to the Practice

Controlled access to the practice is a defining feature of all jurisdictional contexts within which professions operate in modern societies, although the potential restrictions on entry can be modulated over a wide range. Different models have been adopted in various combinations within diverse country contexts to select members fit to join the professional cadres of meritocratic governance systems.

A person qualified to perform a job or task earns designation after validation by a professional body acting to safeguard the reputation of a discipline. Credentialing confirms proof of completion of specified training and experience. Certification uses a variety of instruments to confirm possession of the basic knowledge, skills and experience required to perform professional work. Licensing implies legal control over the ability to practice, including the power to remove the license if professional standards are not being adhered to.

Thus, the enabling environment for professions is not monolithic. It depends on the national administrative and legal context and the leadership orientation of the sponsoring occupational group. Governments, professional associations, accredited academic establishments or a combination of these can exercise control over entry, but such screening is needed to enhance service quality and facilitate consumers' choice of service providers by managing the risks that users face when they select professional experts through personal contacts, word-of-mouth testimonials or trial employment. Designation, credentialing and licensing systems are all designed to reduce transaction costs in the evaluation market and limit prohibitive malpractice risks.

Ensure Professional Autonomy

Professionalization scholars define professionalism as the existence of set of institutions that allow members of an occupational group to make a living while controlling their own work (Freidson 2001). The principles that animate professions differ fundamentally from those of competitive markets and of public or private bureaucracies. In Eliot Freidson's words (2001, 221), members of a profession even 'claim the right to judge the demands of employers or patrons and the laws of the state, and to criticize or refuse to obey them'.

In its ideal form, it is the profession itself that directs all aspects of its governance through such things as controls on recruitment, quality of training, approval of professional guidelines and enforcement of ethical standards. This allows regulation of the supply of professional services, prices and fees. All contemporary models of professionalism stress the importance of self- management and autonomous control over occupational practices.

The need for autonomous self-management became self-evident once evaluation was commodified. This implies setting administrative rules, conducting peer reviews of work quality, disciplining members and in extreme cases stripping them of their designation. These measures can be considered monopolistic and self-serving, but the need to minimize the market disorder that inevitably prevails when quacks and amateurs can enter the fray with impunity, thus triggering distrust, confusion and poor service quality, amply justify them.

Concluding Remarks

What then are the takeaways from this chapter? First, the retrospective it put forward highlighted the economic gains, as well as the severe social shortfalls and existential risks, associated with past economic transformations. To be sure, transformation is an overused term, but it captures the fresh receptivity to change that widespread public dissatisfaction with the state of the world triggers. The dominant free market thinking that has swept over society since the mid-1980s delivered economic growth, but it shaped socially and environmentally unsustainable outcomes. The resulting disenchantment that sociologists presaged did not spare evaluation.

A Limited Consensus

The evaluation community has recognized the transformation challenge. It has begun to refurbish its assessment criteria to address transformational change. It is seeking to be more relevant, timely and technology savvy. It is tightening its competency frameworks. It is shifting its focus from individual interventions to the higher plane of policy. It is adding to the evaluation toolkit by drawing on systems thinking and connecting to the complexity sciences. It is exploring the premises and principles that should govern evaluation in the Anthropocene Age. These are much-needed supply-side reforms, but the demand side of evaluation practice also needs to be transformed.

Ethics Matter

Transcendent values add moral substance to the technical content of any discipline. Recapturing the ideals that evaluation evinced in its formative years is key to its future, but to do so, evaluators must face reality; evaluation has been commodified and captured, and it needs to break free from the shackles of power holders and the tyranny of market forces. A dominant role for ethics would give meaning to and justify evaluation independence and self-management. Hence, formal attachment to a distinctive, demanding professional ethos is a fundamental prerequisite of evaluation transformation. All evaluations should be progressive.

Evaluators will be able to distinguish themselves from auditors, management consultants and social researchers primarily by putting their social conscience to work. This implies a tighter definition of what evaluation is – as well as upgrading of evaluation principles and guidelines. Putting the public interest at the core of evaluation practice would contribute to the effectiveness of evaluation advocacy and facilitate brand differentiation. In turn, this would help nurture a latent public demand for principled, no-holds-barred evaluation. It would help evaluation grow.

Knowledge Is Key

A combination of general knowledge and deep specialization is what the state, as well as consumers, managers and citizens, expect of professionals. To gain full social recognition as an autonomous expert knowledge occupation, evaluation will have to make its way in the university world. Without further progress in this direction, evaluation will not secure the public franchise it needs to operate in the public sphere, secure the support of the state or elicit tolerance for its independence of decision makers.

Selectivity for Quality

Controlled access to the practice is a defining feature of professionalism. One source of opposition to systematic selection processes for access to the practice is rooted in the neoliberal notion that consumers should be free to hire anyone they wish, but evaluation is a public good. Poor-quality evaluation can destroy effective social programmes or give credence to misguided policy interventions.

Another rationale for resisting restrictions over entry is that it contributes to elitism and social stratification, but the alternative to thoughtful selectivity over membership in the evaluation profession has been tolerance of substandard-quality work. Ensuring that evaluators are equipped with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to exercise competent independent assessments of transformative social interventions is a collective responsibility that can only be satisfied through prudent access to the professional label.

The Self-Management Imperative

Finally, all contemporary models of professionalism stress the importance of self-management and autonomous control over occupational practices (Freidson 2001). Without professional autonomy, there is no collective accountability and no way to tap economies of scale in administration, manage the risks associated with weak standards or avoid capture of the occupation by vested interests or the state.

Self-management implies freedom in setting administrative rules, peer reviewing work quality, disciplining members and in extreme cases stripping them of their designation. These measures can be considered monopolistic, but the need to minimize the market disorder that inevitably prevails when quacks and amateurs can enter the fray with impunity and trigger distrust, confusion and poor service quality amply justify them.

Self-management would open up space to restore evaluation to the status of a vocation rather than a mere commercial enterprise; embed progressive, democratic values into its professional ethos; privilege inclusion and gender equality in its values framework; connect evaluation capacity-building initiatives with governance reforms and support professional development of young evaluators.

The Bottom Line

For evaluation to generate results and acquire influence, it will need to rise to the upper tier of the occupational ladder and acquire all the requirements

of professionalism. The four antecedents of professionalism sketched above are interrelated. Without demanding ethics, evaluation is easily captured and cannot be distinguished from other knowledge occupations. Without expert knowledge, evaluation would not add value to society. Without proven competencies and control over entry, evaluation quality is bound to be mixed. Without self-management, evaluation would remain submissive to vested interests. There is no shortcut.

Although they should do their utmost to manage the risks associated with the self-serving attitudes, elitist dispositions and monopolistic features of professionalism, evaluators will have to embark on an arduous professionalization journey to make a significant difference in the coming policy transition. Professionalization would facilitate widespread adoption of the necessary changes that the evaluation community has already endorsed. It would imply adoption of a demanding reform agenda focused on the demand side of evaluation practice. This is an exceptional transformation challenge, but these are exceptional times, and as Carol Weiss (1998, 325) famously opined, 'evaluation is not a stroll on the beach'.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the enormous challenges humanity is facing. It has been facilitated by other crises as climate change, biodiversity loss, economic exploitation, and increased inequity and inequality. The UN Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on climate change call for transformational change of our societies, our economies and our interaction with the environment. Evaluation is tasked to bring rigorous evidence to support transformation at all levels, from local to global. This book explores how the future of the evaluation profession can take shape in 18 chapters from authors from all over the world, from North and South, East and West, and from Indigenous and Decolonized voices to integrative perspectives for a truly sustainable future. It builds on what was discussed at the IDEAS Global Assembly in October 2019 in Prague and follows through by opening trajectories towards supporting transformation aimed at solving the global crises of our times.

By combining practical experiences with perspectives drawn from new initiatives, this book offers invaluable insights into how evaluation can be transformed to support transformational change on the global stage.

Indran A. Naidoo, Director of the Office of Independent Evaluation of IFAD

Across continents, educational systems, and historical complexities, this book builds up the language we all should speak about our field. A mandatory read for all young evaluators.

Weronika Felcis, Board member of EES and Secretary of IOCE

After reading these chapters you will have a sharper look at what is relevant when managing or doing an evaluation, and you will notice that 'business as usual' will no longer be an option.

Janett Salvador, Co-founder of ACEVAL, Former Treasurer of ReLAC

This book offers original, visionary discourse and critical perspectives on the challenges evaluation is facing in the post COVID-19 pandemic era.

Doha Abdelhamid, Member of the Egyptian Academy of Scientific Research and Technology

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