

Utilization-Focused Evaluation

with

Michael Quinn Patton
September 21, 2010

Utilization- Focused Evaluation

4th Edition



Michael Quinn Patton



Patton 2010

1st edition	1978
2nd edition	1986
3rd edition	1997
4th edition	2008

Research-based Approach

- Original follow-up study of the use of 20 federal health evaluations
- 35 years of research on use

Evaluation
and
Research:
Same or different?
And why?

Foundational Premise:

- ✓ **Research** and **evaluation** are *different*
- and therefore...

Foundational Premise:

- ✓ Research and evaluation are different
– and therefore...
- ✓ Evaluated by different standards.

Evaluation Standards

- ❖ **Utility** – ensure relevance & use
- ❖ **Feasibility** – realistic, prudent, diplomatic & frugal
- ❖ **Propriety** – ethical, legal, respectful
- ❖ **Accuracy** – technically adequate to determine merit or worth

For the full list of Standards:

www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/standardschecklist.htm

Evaluation Models

U-FE is one among many.....



Here's this week's new-and-improved evaluation system.

Can you find the double entendre.



Utilization-Focused Evaluation (U-FE)

A decision-making framework for enhancing the utility and actual use of evaluations.

U-FE begins with the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use. Therefore, evaluators should facilitate the evaluation process and design any evaluation with careful consideration of how everything that will be done, from beginning to end, will affect use.

Use Distinctions

- Instrumental Use
- Conceptual Use
- Misuse

USE

- Take use seriously by evaluating use, the source of our own accountability and ongoing learning/professional development
- Different from dissemination
- Different from producing reports
- Groundwork laid and expectations set at the beginning
- Doesn't happen naturally or automatically

An ancient example

What lessons about making evaluation useful do you extract from this example?

Summary Lessons on Useful Evaluation

- Clearly identify primary intended users
- Clearly identify primary intended uses
Goal: Intended use by intended users
- Negotiate FOCUS -- get agreement on criteria
- Establish a clear ACTION framework
- Distinguish empirical questions from value questions
- Select methods appropriate to the question
- Facilitate actual use of the findings

Goal of U-FE

Intended Use
by
Intended Users

Intended Evaluation Users

From...

Audiences to...

Stakeholders to...

Primary Intended
Users

Connotative differences?

Personal Factor

Critical success factors:

There are five key variables that are absolutely critical in evaluation use. They are, in order of importance:

- People

- People

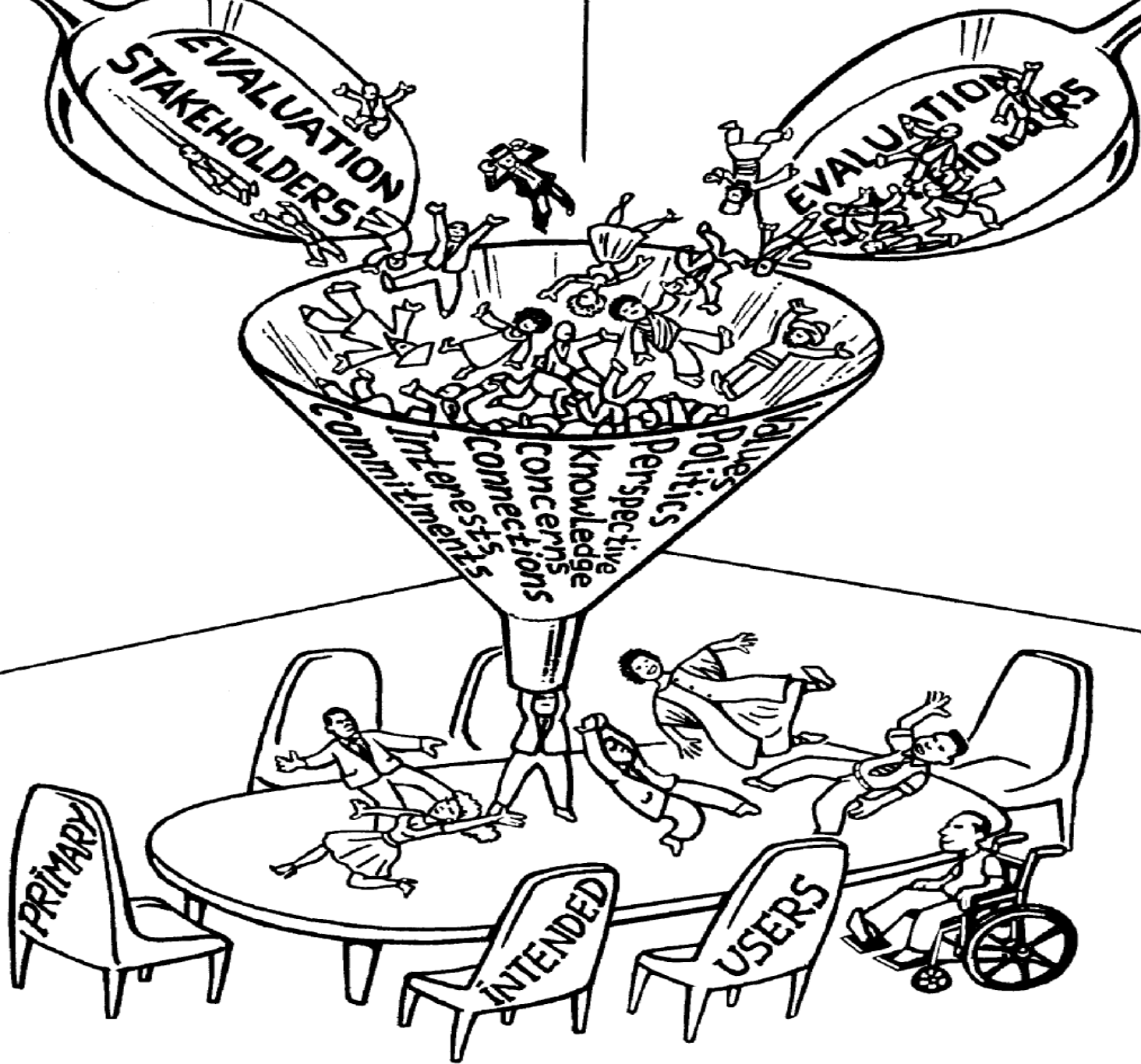
- People

- People

- »PEOPLE

Identify and Involve

Primary Intended Users



Intended Use
by
Intended Users



Facilitating
Intended Use Options

Different Evaluation Purposes

- **For making judgments**

Commonly called *summative evaluations*:

- **For improving programs**

Commonly called *formative evaluations*

- **For ongoing development**

Sometimes called *developmental evaluations*


Lessons Learned Purpose

- **Knowledge building**

Meta-evaluation, lessons learned, effective practices

Additional purpose distinctions

- **Accountability**
- **Monitoring (M & E)**



We're sure
this evaluation will
completely meet ALL
the information needs
of absolutely
EVERYONE.

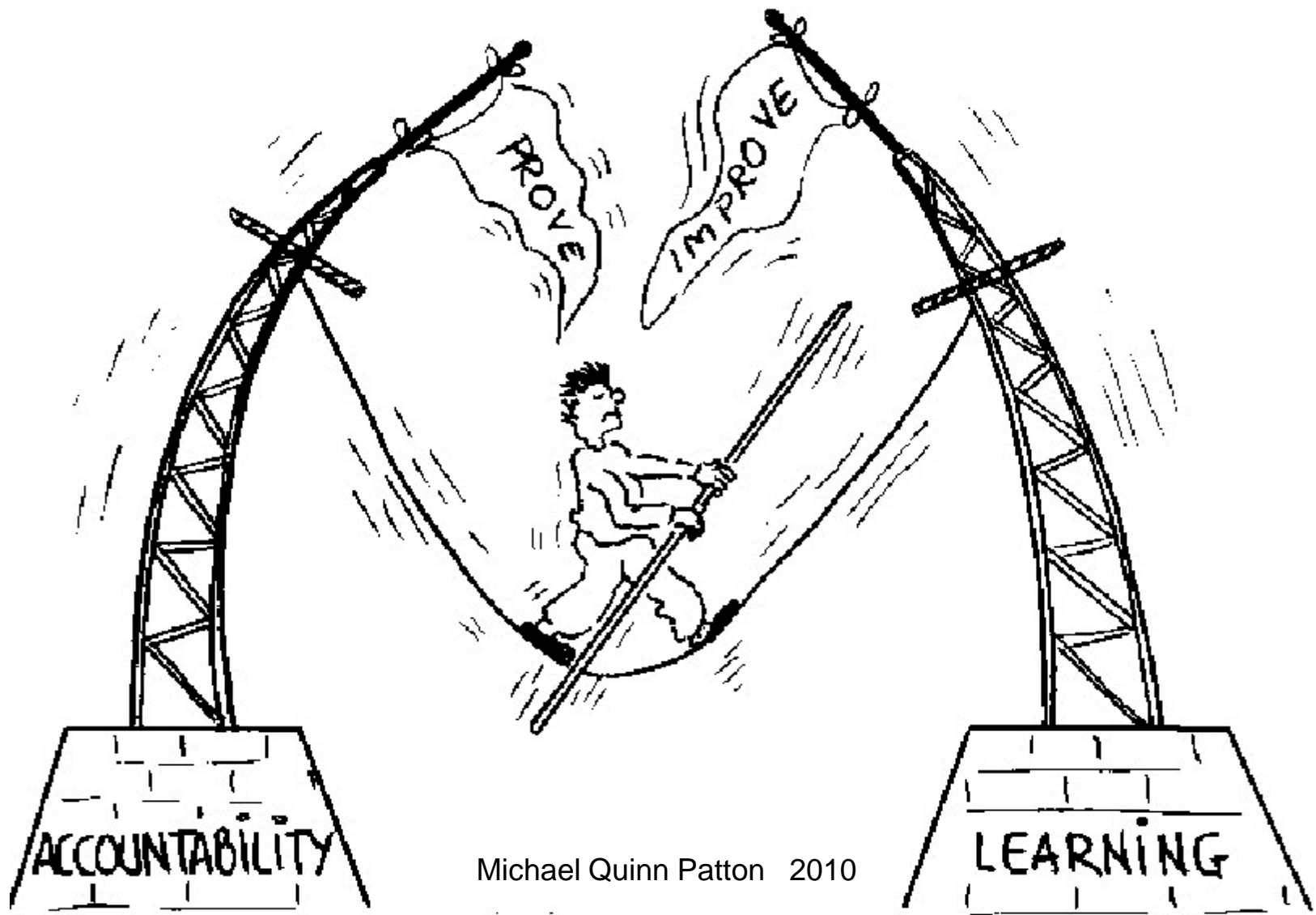
Would you
buy a used car
from this
evaluator?

Tensions

Different intended uses serve different purposes and, typically, different intended users.

Thus the need to FOCUS
and manage tensions
between and among
different purposes.

Balancing Different Purposes



Michael Quinn Patton 2010

Premises of Utilization Focused Evaluation

- No evaluation should go forward unless and until there are primary intended users who will use the information that can be produced
- Primary intended users are involved in the process
- Evaluation is part of initial program design - The primary intended users want information to help answer a question or questions.
- Evaluator's role is to help intended users clarify their purpose and objectives.
- Make implications for use part of every decision throughout the evaluation – the driving force of the evaluation process.

Important trend

- Capacity-building:

Evaluation capacity-building as a priority to support use

Process Use

Process use refers to and is indicated by individual changes in thinking and behavior, and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture, that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process. Evidence of process use is represented by the following kind of statement after an evaluation: "The impact on our program came not so much from the findings but from going through the thinking process that the evaluation required."

Process Uses

- Enhancing shared understandings
- Focusing programs: What gets measured gets done
- Supporting and reinforcing the program intervention, e.g., feedback for learning
- Capacity-building for those involved, deepening evaluative thinking
- Program and organizational development, e.g., evaluability assessments

New Direction

Infusing *evaluative thinking* as a primary type of process use.

Capacity-building as an evaluation focus of process use.

Some 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.

Utilization-Focused

Methods Decisions

Shaping of an issue over time

The morphing of the **paradigms debate** (qualitative vs quantitative) into **the Gold Standard debate** (randomized control trials as the alleged "gold standard" for impact evaluation)

GOLD STANDARD:

METHODOLOGICAL
APPROPRIATENESS



not

Methodological
orthodoxy or rigidity

- **No single design or method is universally “strongest”**
- **Multiple ways of establishing causality**
- **Dangerous to privilege one method, creates perverse incentives**

The Challenge:

Matching the evaluation design to the evaluation's purpose, resources, and timeline to optimize use.

And the beat goes on...

**Evaluation as an
ever-evolving field**

Reference

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