

Final Progress Report

Sustainability Science Program

September 1, 2007 - May 31, 2008

Name: Fred Carden

Date: May 16, 2008

Your field(s): Evaluation, development studies

Your degree program, institution and (expected) graduation date:

- Practitioner Fellow
- Director Evaluation, International Development Research Centre (Canada)

Faculty host(s) at Harvard name and department:

- Bill Clark, HKS
- Carol H. Weiss, GSE

Description of SSP-related research activity, including a title:

Innovation, change and metrics: the challenges of measurement in a complex world

2. Abstract (one paragraph):

My interest, as a practitioner-fellow, would be in looking at questions related to the application of Outcome Mapping (Earl, Carden & Smutylo, 2001) in knowledge-to-action settings and strengthening the use of outcome mapping as a tool for measuring at the interface, or boundary, between knowledge and action. What role can Outcome Mapping play in responding to this larger measurement challenge? How could it play that role? What are the gaps in our understanding of both Outcome Mapping and complex systems that could help us adapt the approach and its concepts to “measuring the unmeasurable” in complex and large-scale systems? What are the contributions that could be made to measuring innovation?

Identification of the problem you address (1 sentence to a paragraph):

As part of the team that developed Outcome Mapping (OM) as an approach to measurement in the largely undefined and unmeasurable world of development research, I am interested in the evolution of that methodology and its application in an increasingly wide range of knowledge-to-action settings. In the final analysis I came to the issue of causality as crucial. Ongoing research will be developed into a working paper and publishable paper.

Key question asked about the problem (1 sentence to a paragraph):

There are two important dimensions that require further exploration. This first is that Outcome Mapping (OM) has some potential in thinking about the design and measurement of change in big organizations and systems. We think that in many situations, the issue is one of changes in behaviour as the key to system change. But so far OM has not entered that domain in a significant way. Some tentative forays have been made and we think they show promise. But if we are going to expand and extend our thinking and action in this domain, we have to get our thinking clear and we have to consider the possibility that there are some new elements that are needed. This is related to how we understand and address causality.

The methods by which you answered that question (1 sentence to a paragraph):

- First semester focused on broadening the search beyond the evaluation literature to the Sustainability Science literature. Organizational learning with LILA at GSE,
- Second semester included field work with the Thai Research Foundation and the Institute of Technology, Bandung, Indonesia.
- Engagement with other groups exploring related questions (e.g., NONIE: Network of networks on impact evaluation, Global Action Network, RealWorldEvaluation – see below)

Principle literature upon which the research drew (methodological and substantive, e.g., innovation, incentive-based environmental management, science and technology studies):

- evaluation literature, complex adaptive systems literature, philosophy of science,

Geographical region studied (if appropriate):

- Focus is global, field work is SEAsia (Thailand, Indonesia)

A description of the final product(s) you have/are aiming to produce (e.g., article in X journal):

Presentations on findings on causality to IDRC and CIDA and at the European Evaluation Society (October 2008); leading to a CID working paper; then an article for a peer-reviewed journal.

Description of major other intellectual or professional advancement activity(ies) over the past academic year, including working title(s) (e.g., PhD qualifying paper, dissertation, non-SSP research project paper, job search):

Advisory Group (ongoing) to the Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation on measuring impact beyond the limits of random evaluation (NONIE is a network of the major development organizations including the UN Evaluation Group, OCED DAC

Evaluation Network) including input to two working papers (not yet public)

Member (ongoing) of the Global Action Network Impact Community of Practice (ICoP), that is working with global advocacy organizations on determining how they can assess their work (inter alia, Global Water Partnership, Transparency International, Extractive Industries Transparency International, International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development)

External Expert Member of the Performance and Evaluation Committee of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (ongoing); participation in October meeting of the Committee

Peer Review For King's College London of a review of the impact of research on **policy** -

http://www.psi.org.uk/research/project.asp?project_id=182

Participant, Oxford Futures Forum

Other Ongoing and Planned other Professional Activities:

Teaching at the University of Edinburgh Summer School, May 2008

Participating in a closed SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) workshop on the use of humanities and social science research

Exploration of a review of the impact literature with one or several colleagues for publication in a peer-reviewed journal is under consideration. Most of the impact evaluation literature is either grey literature, or focuses on one approach to impact evaluation; there is a value in creating a survey of the literature with a focus on environment and natural resources.

Peer review for a research competition for the African Health Initiative of the Doris Duke Foundation

3. Please list citations for reports, papers, publications and presentations that built on your fellowship research (please list full citations here, paragraph length abstracts, and attach copies of URLs if possible):

While most of these products were underway prior to the commencement of the Fellowship, the Fellowship opportunity was central to their completion.

Book:

2008 Knowledge to Policy: making the most of development research. Ottawa & Delhi: Sage & IDRC. (negotiations for a French edition are well advanced)

SYNOPSIS: Does research influence public policy and decision-making and, if so, how? These long-debated questions continue to be the subject of earnest discussion amongst scholars, researchers, and the international community of development agencies, donors, and practitioners. For development agencies and donors, responding to these questions contributes to the larger question of how development aid affects public policies in the South. Over the past 35 years of supporting research in the South, Canada's International Development Research Centre has gained considerable experience in fostering research-policy links and, for the past few years, has carried out a learning-oriented evaluation to observe whether and how the research it was supporting in the South was influencing public policy and decision-making. This book encapsulates results of that evaluation. Part 1 presents the key findings, part 2 presents summaries of the 23 case studies from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and part 3 addresses the methodology used in the study.

FEATURES: The key findings and case studies are presented in a reader-friendly, journalistic style, giving the reader a deeper grasp and understanding of approaches, contexts, relationships, and events. No other research-for-development publication has assessed such a wide variety of in-depth case studies and comparable experiences from the developing world. Specialists will appreciate the indepth examination of the unique and novel methodology used during the evaluations. The book includes a foreword by Carol Weiss, Beatrice B. Whiting Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a preface by Maureen O'Neil, President of IDRC.

Chapters in books:

2008 *"Using Comparative Data: A systems approach to a multiple case study"*, in, Handbook of Case-Centred Methods, edited by David Byrne and Charles Ragin. Sage. Forthcoming.

This chapter presents the methodology used to carry out a study of the influence of research on public policy. This study was initiated by the International Development Research Centre (Canada) to get a better understanding of how the research we support has an influence on public policy. The intent was to inform both the agency and the researchers it supports on the factors that affect influence so that they could take these into account. A multiple case method was used. Twenty-five case studies were initiated. Of these, twenty-two cases were completed within a twelve month period and two additional cases were completed the following year and included in the analysis. These studies covered a wide range of fields of research in countries as varied as Ukraine, Tanzania, Vietnam, Guatemala. This complexity called for a careful design to ensure some learning

from this cross section of cases. At the same time, the diversity of cases strengthened our confidence in any common findings.

“Understanding Influence: The episode studies approach”. in Diana Tussie, editor. Understanding the dynamics of trade policy influence: the role of research. Amsterdam: Martin Nijhoff-Brill. *Forthcoming*.

This chapter introduces the reader to the methodology of episode studies in order to help with navigation through the cases. It presents a framework for understanding the episode studies, a framework constructed from the cases as well as related work in this field. In defining episodes of policy change we can include several notions of policy. However, some kinds of policy will be far more readily identifiable as formal, discreet policies, for example, a legislative decision, and changes in this kind policy, or lack of change, are relatively easy phenomena to recognize. With more interactive conceptions of policy, such as those concerned with the processes by which stakeholders are included or excluded from negotiations, it may be far more difficult for researchers to recognize that such aspects of policy have changed. This is partly because such changes are less visible, but also because those changes may be incremental (i.e., here are no clear boundaries between ‘unchanged’ and ‘changed’) and may also take place over relatively long periods of time.

Articles:

2007 *Process Use: the case of rPCR, with Sarah Earl*. New Directions for Evaluation. 116, Winter: 61-73.

This chapter presents a case report of Canada’s International Development Research Centre’s success in revamping its project reporting system. The new process has transformed the organization’s culture and deepened evaluative capacity, thus promoting accountability for the management of public funds and the ability to learn and improve.

2007 *“The real evaluation gap,” in Alliance: For philanthropy and social investment worldwide*” 12, 4: 53-54.

The status quo in development evaluation is not good enough. While evaluation is relatively strong in North America and Europe, in other parts of the world, it is quite weak. If evaluation is to blossom in the South (Africa, Asia, Latin America), evaluation research cannot remain the preserve of northern-based institutions with northern values. This simply reinforces the status quo and strengthens existing inequalities in evaluation practice. If donors want evaluation to be part of the development process and not simply for the purpose of donor accountability and learning, they need to support researchers in the South. It is critical that the citizens, development researchers and professionals of southern nations lead the way in building the field of evaluation research and practice in their regions. That is the real evaluation gap.

Principal collaborators outside Harvard (list name and institution):

As a practitioner returning to my organization, they are of course my key collaborators.

If you are moving to a new position, please list your contact information there: Return to previous position:

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