Event Evaluation Instructor's Manual

3: Theory

Lecture 5

3.1 Introduction (p.24)

If students have not had any introduction to theory, including epistemology, ontology, paradigms and methodology, now is the time. Since we do not have the kind of sceientific theories that enable us to both explain and predict with certainty, we are left with "theories in development", "theory fragments", "constructs", "models", "propositions" and "frameworks". All these terms need to be clear to learners.

3.2 Theories of evaluation (p.25)

The first task is to distinguish between "theory-driven evaluation", the kind of theory that leads planners to believe that, for example, festivals can create social capital, and "theories of evaluation" (i.e., what types there are, and the paradigms they represent) that come from the mainstream evaluation literature.

Emphasise this excerpt from the book:

"Evaluation theorists Alkin and Christie (2004) and Christie and Alkin (2008) argued that evaluation theory has its roots in both 'systematic social inquiry' and the need for 'social accountability and fiscal control'. They distinguish between theorists who emphasize one of three branches: 1) methods (largely concerned with validity and hence control groups, experiments and quasi-experiments, statistical analysis, and the generalizability of results that helps create knowledge); 2) how evaluation is used and by whom; and 3) the concept and practice of valuing."

Looking ahead, the "complexity model" is my own contribution, specific to events and tourism, and the role of "logic models" in theory development becomes important.

Experimental or quasi-experimental methods are the *sine qua non* of positivistic evaluation, the kind typical of health and education services where it is deemed to be essential, given the large sums of money involved and the critical importance of getting programmes and policies right, to prove cause and effect. But these methods are unlikely to become popular or needed in tourism and events, and examples in the literature are rare.

Instead, this book and the companion book on impact assessment feature "goal-attainment" models and methods, as these are the bread and butter of practitioners. Events are created for one or more purposes (often there are complex stakeholder interests involved) and evaluators want to demonstrate goal attainment - not be proving cause and effect (that would be ideal) but by gathering and analysing the right kinds of evidence.

"Goals-free evaluation" should be discussed as an alternative, but I cannot see it becoming well established in our fields - it is not only difficult, but is not realistic in a political context. Nevertheless, evaluators must avoid the "tunnel vision" that comes with goal-attainment models; there is a fuller discussion and a diagram on that topic later in the book.

Also discuss "realist evaluation", especially as it relates to non-positivistic paradigms and social interventions - as discussed in the next sub-section "uses". You could effectively bring stakeholder theory and collaboration theory into the discussion here. In the *Impact Assessment* book I introduce the Theory of Change model (easily located online with a Google search) that is an elaboration of logic models designed for social interventions.

Theories of evaluation include a utilization-focused approach, in contrast to the traditional experimental methodology. Each of these starts with the proposed ultimate use (or perhaps the client's needs and goals), not some positivistic notion about discovering the truth. The central notion is that stakeholders have to be involved from the beginning, and the evaluation has to be designed to enable them to use the results.

I like the idea of "appreciative inquiry" which aims to identify strengths, or success factors, and how to build on them. Continuous improvement is a hallmark of sustainable development - always setting higher goals.

The CIPP model (Context, Input, Process and Product) (p. 28)

Figure 3.1 (below) is Stufflebeam's CIPP model from the mainstream literature (found in Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003) but I have added points to illustrate an events-specific application. This is a good introduction to subsequent material. The terms "formative" and "summative" are defined later, but can be introduced here.
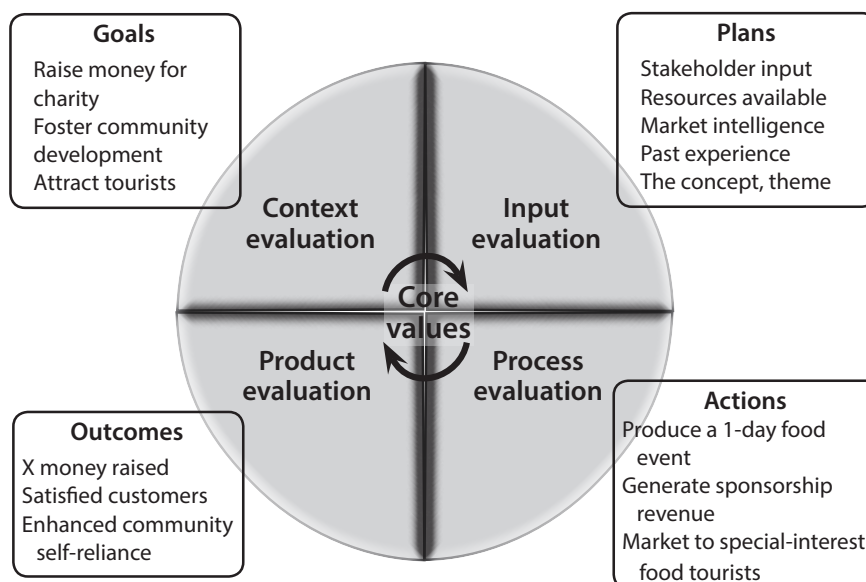

Goals
Raise money for charity
Foster community development
Attract tourists

Plans
Stakeholder input
Resources available
Market intelligence
Past experience
The concept, theme

Context evaluation

Input evaluation

Core values

Product evaluation

Process evaluation

Outcomes
X money raised
Satisfied customers
Enhanced community self-reliance

Actions
Produce a 1-day food event
Generate sponsorship revenue
Market to special-interest food tourists

Figure 3.1: CIPP applied to a charity event, adapted from Stufflebeam, in Kellaghan & Stufflebeam (2003).

Exercise:

A case study would be beneficial here, perhaps with a field trip or guest lecturer, plus documentation. Use a local example of an event to discuss and analyse these elements of the model:

☐ Context: were important needs addressed? who took the initiative? was there a feasibility study: what are the goals? how is the event owned and organised? who are the key stakeholders?

☐ Input: what resources were required, and how were they obtained? are they adequate? are there financial problems evident? what evidence is there that market intelligence or research was considered? does the event concept and design reflect identified needs or economic demand?

☐ Process: Is the event being marketed well - and in what ways? Is the design/concept well executed? are there evident problems or areas for improvement at the event? who is monitoring the event and how are incidents dealt with?

☐ Product: Did the effort succeed - were goals attained? what evidence is there on externalities or unforeseen outcomes? have customers and stakeholders given feedback?

Lecture 6

3.3 Continuum of event evaluation complexity (p. 28)

I wanted some logical way of separating the two companion books, and it became clear to me that most evaluation challenges in the events field fall into the less-complex category. See the ensuing discussion in the book of practitioner-identified evaluation challenges, mostly derived from a workshop in Indianapolis I held with IUPUI in 2017, attended by both festival and tourism professionals. This list is a good starting point for a discussion about local issues, and could be a good basis for research or term-paper project with the aim of confirming or adapting the model.

My contention is that most event evaluation projects will be to identify and solve a problem or otherwise assist in decision making. The most complex, as elaborated upon in two chapters in this book, is evaluating organisational efficiency and effectiveness. Above the line are more complex evaluation challenges that are more likely to be found in tourism, or from a tourism and economic perspective on events. Event portfolio managers will have the toughest job of all, namely evaluating long-term, cumulative impacts within a sustainability paradigm.

Exercise:

> The complexity model can certainly be refined, or even challenged, through empirical research. A group of local practitioners could be consulted or surveyed on what they actually do by way of data collection/monitoring and evaluation. Have they a system in place? What are the most common forms of evaluation or related challenges? How do different ownership and event types influence evaluation?

3.4 Evidence and proof (p.31)

This is a very important discussion, as much of the evaluator's work will be focussed on: (a) the rather mundane work of collecting and analysing *data* (often as part of monitoring trends and performance indicators) or to support decisions, identify and solve problems, and (b) collecting and analysing *evidence* to determine goal attainment or assign value.

Note that evidence is not the same as *facts or proof*, these terms have to be clearly differentiated. One of the main skills evaluators have to learn, often through experience, is what evidence means to various stakeholders. In other words, what data, facts, or analysis will be accepted as pertinent and convincing evidence, and how much evidence is needed to determine goal attainment, make a decision, or assign value.

Introduce the principle of *triangulation*, being the use of multiple (three or more) pieces of relevant evidence to achieve a complete evaluation.

Exercise: Learners should be able to relate this discussion to their own studies or work experience. For example, ask: "What is suitable evidence of your academic performance - or competence to do your job? Who decides that? Where does the evidence come from?"

It is almost a universal complaint from students that they do not like the ways in which they are evaluated, but can they come up with better methods and measures?

3.5 Systems theory and thinking systematically (p. 31)

Thinking systematically is a necessary skill for planners and evaluators. We do not need to know everything, but we need to be able to relate what we do know to the bigger picture - and there always is a bigger picture, otherwise called the 'context'.

Discuss the two meanings of "system" as both are relevant to evaluation. In systems theory a system consists of inter-dependent elements, and all systems are sub-systems of something larger. There is no such thing as a "closed system" especially when it comes to events and their constant struggle to obtain resources (i.e., "inputs") and justify their existence through evaluation. We also develop models or frameworks that encourage thinking systematically, being sets of principles or procedures. In this second meaning, a CIPP or logic model is a system.

Figure 3.3: This simple model illustrates what it means to think systematically about an event: where its mandate, information and resources come from (inputs from the immediate and wider environments) and what its outputs and outcomes/impacts are. Outputs are intended, such as audience satisfaction or money raised. Outcomes are impacts, and not always the desired ones - negatives and unexpected outcomes have to be identified, and stakeholders like residents and tourism agencies are good at doing that.

Perhaps the most important point is that events are produced for a purpose, they always have explicit or implicit goals. And in many cases events are designed as *transforming processes* to implement a policy such as economic development or social improvement. In this sense, inputs are converted to desired outputs by the event, it cannot be viewed in isolation.
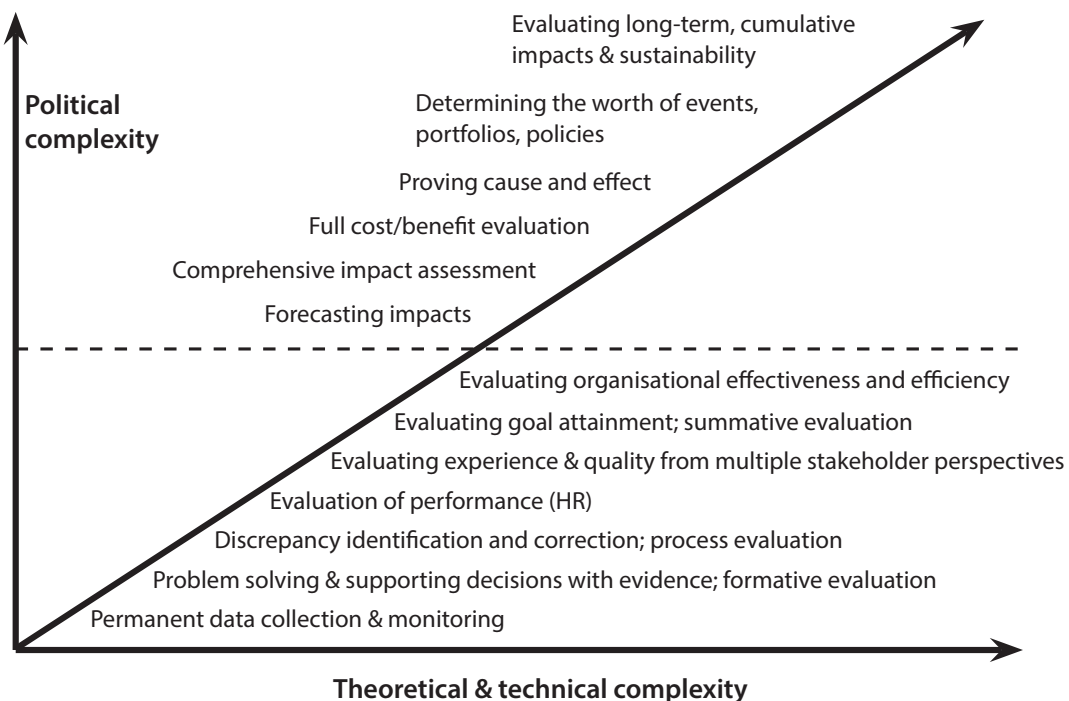

Figure 3.2: Evaluation complexity model

Managers have an obligation to evaluate their *efficiency and effectiveness,* and this is done internally, within the organisation. Stakeholders also evaluate events and event-tourism, applying their own criteria and making judgments about support, involvement or opposition. Evaluations done internally are for problem solving and continuous improvement,

whereas evaluations done FOR external stakeholders are for accountability purposes. Stakeholders might also commission their own evaluations of an event, or simply pass judgement on the basis of whatever evidence is available to them - a phenomenon that suggest strongly that event producers do their own thorough, professional evaluations and distribute the results widely.
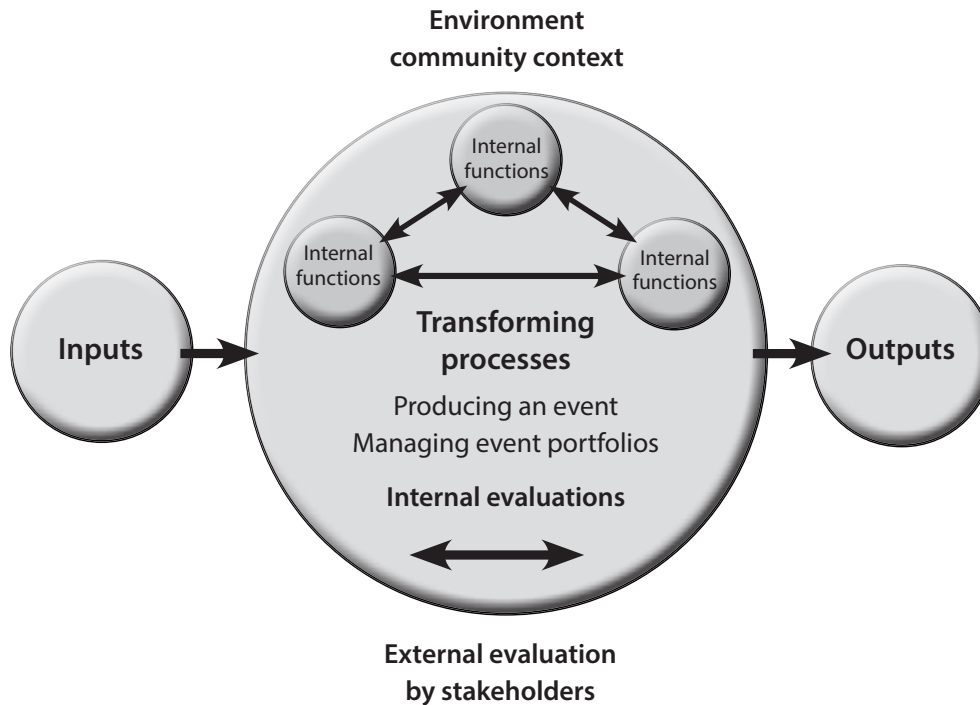

Figure 3.3: A systems model

Exercise:

To encourage systematic thinking, have small groups develop a concept for a new event using the terms in Figure 3.3. In other words, can they explain why the event is a "transforming process" within its community context, specify its goals and intended outputs, state clearly what inputs it requires, and how its success will be evaluated both internally by management, and externally by stakeholders. As to "internal processes", the event concept has to state what the programme will accomplish, and additional actions beyond the event (such as consultations, investments, training) that will add to the transformational nature of the event.

Questions

Q: How does evaluation contribute to theory development? Be sure to define "theory".

A: "Theory" can be defined in the traditional way of theories that both explain phenomena and enable prediction, or as models, frameworks, constructs. Evaluation contributes by testing hypotheses such as "we can create a benefit by doing the following" (i.e., the logic model), or through meta-analysis of many similar evaluations.

Q: Distinguish between theories of evaluation and theory-driven evaluation. Mention the three main branches of evaluation theory.

A: The three branches of theories of evaluation: (1) how to assign value to events, tourism and their outcomes (2) how to construct knowledge (3) how to use knowledge gained through evaluation. Theory-driven evaluation starts with a theory about how actions will yield desired results, with the evaluator determining if actions succeed and how - or why not.

Q: What types of evaluation challenges are high, and low, on technical, theoretical and political complexity? Explain what "complexity" means in this context.

A: Discuss political, theoretical and technical complexity as it affects evaluation. Basic data collection and monitoring are low on all three, although not all events or organisations support this simple task.

Q: How are "proof" and "evidence" different? Give examples.

A: We seek "proof" through experimentation or other positivistic, quantitative methods, whereas "evidence" can take many forms including perceptions of impacts or feelings of satisfaction. The key is: who decides what evidence is relevant and sufficient when making a decision?

Q: Distinguish between "facts" and "data" and discuss how they can form part of "evidence".

A: A fact should, by definition, be indisputable, but this only happens when the evidence is sound. Anything can serve as data: opinion, perception, attitude, numbers or observations.

Q: Define "system" and explain how an event can be viewed as a system. Explain these relevant terms: "input, output, outcome/impact, transforming process."

A: This requires a description of Figure 3.3 and an example, as developed in the suggested Exercise.

Q: Why do external stakeholders do evaluations of events?

A: Mention the need for accountability to those who support events, or to the general public, and the desire of interest or lobby groups to determine the negative impacts or externalities that events might not document.

Essay-Style

Q: Explain the difference between theories of evaluation (elaborate on use, methods, value) and theory-based evaluation (give an example).

A: As an essay, as opposed to the short-answer question above, the answer should start with the three branches of evaluation theory, then work through an example of an evaluation that is based on theory. This will become easier when logic models have been discussed. One theory often cited in the literature pertains to the roles of events in generating social capital - is that familiar to students? How could it be used in designing and evaluating an event?

Q: How does thinking systematically aid the evaluator, particularly when it comes to involving stakeholders? Include an illustration of a systems model for an event.

A: The model could be like Figure 3.3, or the CIPP model. The answer should deal with the roles of evaluators including a consideration of externalities and unintended outcomes. Thinking systematically should also have the evaluator question basic assumptions about the logic of events as transforming processes, question goals that were or were not based on full stakeholder consultations, challenge attitudes or organizational culture that leads to the same old approaches, etc. In other words, take nothing for granted, question everything.

Q: Why is cost-benefit evaluation more complex than evaluation to solve a particular problem for event managers? Explain how complexity is related to politics, and what the evaluator must do to meet the complexity challenge.

A: A full discussion of cost-benefit analysis will have to wait for the companion book on Impact Assessment wherein I advocate replacing CBA with my BASE model (Benefits and Costs Evaluation). But students should be able to image how challenging it is to document and evaluate all the possible costs and benefits of an event, or policy, or portfolio, from all stakeholder perspectives. To meet the complexity challenge requires systematic thinking, stakeholder consultations, and skill in evaluation methods.