

An Introduction to Empowerment Evaluation: Teaching Materials

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment evaluation is an evaluation approach which entered the evaluation arena in 1993 (Miller & Campbell, 2006). It was initially introduced at the American Evaluation Association conference by David Fetterman. Since its inception, it has been utilized in a variety of contexts including individualistic, organizational, institutional and community-based settings (Fetterman, 1998). Empowerment evaluation draws its origins from empowerment theory, community psychology, and action anthropology. It emerged in rejoinder to Positivist models which have been criticised as being too value-free in their aim to maintain objectivity (Potter, 1999). Its primary aim is “to help people help themselves” (Fetterman, 1996, p.5). Thus, it endeavours to improve existing policies and programmes, in addition to providing capacitation skills for community growth. Empowerment evaluation can essentially be classified as a model which falls within the realm of Critical-emancipatory approaches to programme evaluation (Potter, 1999) since it aims to challenge the status quo via its recognition of social problems. This set of teaching materials is designed to introduce individuals to empowerment evaluation and, it is intended to be a resource for facilitating an introductory lecture on the topic. The materials consist of a PowerPoint presentation and a set of content notes to assist the facilitator.

OVERVIEW OF LECTURE FORMAT

Target Group(s):

- i. Under graduate students familiar with basic programme evaluation theory.
- ii. Alternately, programme personnel with no prior knowledge of programme evaluation theory.

Teaching Material Aim:

This set of materials is intended to provide the educator with a resource for facilitating an introductory lecture relating to empowerment evaluation.

Lecture Objectives:

- 1) To provide students and/or personnel with a basic introduction to empowerment evaluation.
- 2) To present students and/or personnel with a concise overview of the key tenets, facets and steps of empowerment evaluation.
- 3) To provide crucial definitions relating to empowerment evaluation terminology in order to enhance general understandings of the topic.
- 4) To help facilitate some critical engagement with empowerment evaluation approach.

Basic Lecture structure:

<u>Description</u>	
Time allocation:	<u>45 – 90 minutes</u> , depending on existing knowledge levels and the time spent on the discussion questions.
Method:	Traditional lecture format interspersed with critical group debate/discussions. These discussions should be based on the discussion questions contained within the PowerPoint presentation.
Materials:	A PowerPoint presentation providing key definitions, general information, and class discussion questions. Facilitator notes related to the content of the introductory lecture.
Variation Ideas:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ This method can be used with students of all skill and knowledge levels. The facilitator should ensure that the pace and ‘pitch’ of the discussion fits with the background and pre-existing knowledge levels within the learner group.❖ Discussion questions could be utilized for small participatory sub-group activities, where a sub-group representative needs to report back responses to the main group after a set time period.❖ Furthermore, the facilitator can supplement additional questions into the lecture for class discussion.

CONTENT NOTES FOR FACILITATOR'S USE

Introduction

Empowerment evaluation is an evaluation approach which entered the evaluation arena in 1993 (Miller & Campbell, 2006). It was initially introduced at the American Evaluation Association by David Fetterman. Since its inception, it has been utilized in a variety of contexts including individualistic, organizational, institutional and community-based settings (Fetterman, 1998).

Empowerment evaluation's international popularity has been attributed, in part, to the timing of its availability on the internet (Fetterman, 1998). Additionally, since evaluators were already utilizing participatory self-assessment techniques, they were relatively receptive to empowerment evaluation upon its introduction (Fetterman, 1998). Three of the key contributors shall be briefly introduced to provide a background to the approach.

Key Contributors

i) David Fetterman

David Fetterman works in the fields of educational evaluation, ethnography, educational technology, and policy analysis. He has his Ph.D. from Stanford University in educational and medical anthropology. He is also a Professor of Education at the University of Arkansas. Fetterman has conducted extensive multi-site evaluation research on local, state and international levels.

Although Fetterman is recognized for his contributions to the development of ethnographic evaluation, his most recent focus has been on developing empowerment evaluation. He has used this approach across the world, including: Australia, Brazil, Ethiopia, Finland, Japan, Nepal, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. Moreover, Fetterman conducted a five year Tobacco Prevention Empowerment Evaluation for the Arkansas Department of Health.

Fetterman has written two books and a variety of seminal texts (many of which have been published in internationally accredited Journals) on the theory and application of empowerment evaluation.

ii) Marc A. Zimmerman

Dr Zimmerman's research primarily focuses on empowerment theory, and the health and resiliency of adolescents. Dr. Zimmerman is a Professor and Chair of Health Behaviour and Health Education. He is also a Research Scientist at the Centre for Human Growth and Development as well as a Psychology Professor. Zimmerman's work on empowerment theory includes measurement and analysis of psychological and community empowerment (i.e. the application and development of empowerment theory).

iii) Abraham Wandersman

Dr Wandersman is a Professor of Psychology. He has his Ph.D. in social psychology, environmental psychology and social organization and change from Cornell University. He is co-editor of the book titled "*Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self Assessment and Accountability*". In 2000, he was elected president of Division 27 (Community Psychology) of the American Psychological Association.

Theoretical Alignment

Empowerment evaluation is largely based on Zimmerman's theory of empowerment (Fetterman, 1996). Empowerment can be defined as "a construct that links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviours to social policy and social change" (Rappaport, 1981, as cited in Zimmerman, 1995, p. 569). However, definitions of 'empowerment' have begun to flourish.

Empowerment evaluation also draws its origins from community psychology and action anthropology. Its primary objective is "to help people help themselves" (Fetterman, 1996, p.5). It is a model that aims to improve existing policies and programmes, in addition to providing capacitation skills for community growth. Empowerment evaluation can essentially be classified as a model which falls within the realm of Critical-emancipatory approaches to programme evaluation (Potter, 1999). It aims to challenge the status quo because it recognises the importance of social problems as well as attaining social justice. Empowerment evaluations emerged in response to Positivist models which have been criticised as being too value-free in their aim to maintain objectivity (Potter, 1999).

Definitions of empowerment evaluation

Empowerment evaluation was initially defined as “the use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination” (Fetterman, 1996, p.4). Since its inception as an evaluation model, it has been quite controversial. The most current definition of it is:

“Empowerment evaluation: An evaluation approach that aims to increase the probability of achieving program success by

- (1) providing stakeholders with tools for assessing the planning, implementation, and self-evaluation of their program, and
- (2) mainstreaming evaluation as part of the planning and management of the program/organization.” (Wandersman et al., 2005, p.28).

Thus, the initial definition has been revised in order to provide a more elaborate description and to enhance its overall clarity (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007). It is not envisaged as a ‘new’ definition but rather a more comprehensive one. It emerged as a response to criticisms directed at empowerment evaluation (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007).

Programme participants are encouraged to perform their own evaluations with the assistance, guidance and coaching of the evaluator (Fetterman, 1996). Essentially it involves group cooperation. It does not overtly empower any particular group but rather teaches skills to foster self-empowerment. In essence, it is democratic (Fetterman, 1996) since it encourages active participation in the evaluation process and provides a platform for discussing relevant concerns. This is comparable to some of the underlying principles of democratic evaluations.

Furthermore, it aims to alter the evaluation context. Thus, the assessment of the programme’s worth is not the final stage (Fetterman, 1996). This is because the merit of a programme is fluid and will change as the context transforms over time. Programme participants develop evaluation skills and learn to critically appraise their progress continually through the evaluator’s supervision and training (Fetterman, 1996). Thus,

philosophically, self-determination is intended to be a fundamental outcome keystone of this approach (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007).

Ten principles have been identified by Wandersman and colleagues (2005) that aim to guide empowerment practices and form a conceptual framework. The ten core values that are intricately linked to empowerment evaluation will be concisely overviewed. The order in which they appear does not indicate any hierarchy of significance (Wandersman et al., 2005).

Ten principles of empowerment evaluation

The ten principles of empowerment evaluation include the following: Improvement, Organisational Learning, Community Ownership, Inclusion, Democratic participation, Social Justice, Community knowledge, Evidence-based strategies, Capacity building, and Accountability. These principles are suggested to be associated with the process of an empowerment evaluation (Miller & Campbell, 2006).

The first principle relates to **improvement**. This means that through empowerment techniques, the evaluator aims to help the programme (its participants, staff and so forth) achieve positive and/or successful outcomes as decided by the relevant stakeholders (Wandersman et al., 2005). **Organisational learning** augments improvement if there is both a process and a structure to facilitate learning. In order for organisational learning to effectively occur, the environment must be receptive to transformation and be committed to engage in long-term solutions through systematic inquiry into consequential changes in order to promote new knowledge through problem-solving (Wandersman et al., 2005).

Community ownership refers to the democratic principle that “the community has the right to make decisions about actions that affect their lives” (Wandersman et al., 2005). The underlying rationale is that an evaluation will be most beneficial to a community where it enables them take command of choices which affect them. **Inclusion**, in this instance, is the invitation and encouragement of legitimate stakeholders’ participation in terms of decisions to be made (Wandersman et al., 2005).

Democratic participation is based on the premise that with appropriate access to information, relevant stakeholders are able to make rational, informed decisions about what action needs to be taken (Wandersman et al., 2005). Thus, in order for this to be attained, deliberation and genuine collaboration are crucial activities which need to occur during the evaluation process. Additionally, the democratic ideals of fairness, due process, and transparency are also vital (Wandersman et al., 2005).

Social Justice implies a commitment to just and equitable distribution of resources, prospects, responsibilities, and authority (Wandersman et al., 2005). Empowerment evaluators need to recognise that societal inequalities are present in many contexts and it is their role to help restructure these conditions and improve the lives of communities (Wandersman et al., 2005).

Community knowledge in empowerment evaluation relates to the recognition that information known by relevant stakeholders is valuable and useful and should be shared because it is an essential resource (Wandersman et al., 2005). Thus, the evaluator should develop a variety of methods to uncover, validate, disseminate, and alter knowledge within the evaluation context. Additionally, empowerment evaluation equally values **evidence-based strategies** (Wandersman et al., 2005). Accordingly, empirical information is viewed as an important source for developing interventions to address community needs; although such strategies should not be employed without considering the contextual issues within the community (Wandersman et al., 2005).

Capacity building is one of the main aims of empowerment evaluation. The goal is to enhance stakeholders' abilities to conduct their own evaluations in order to improve programme development and execution (Wandersman et al., 2005). This principle enhances the mainstreaming of evaluation and demystifies the process. Consequently, the evaluator's involvement will decrease over time as communities' capacities are enhanced (Wandersman et al., 2005).

Finally, the last principle of empowerment evaluations is **accountability**. Through gathering information on the programme's processes, results-based accountability can be achieved (Wandersman et al., 2005). Thus, programme staff can be held responsible for their plans and actions in terms of self-driven evaluations. There is an interactive

relationship between the donor(s), evaluator, and programme personnel in terms of both process and outcomes based accountability (Wandersman et al., 2005).

The abovementioned principles are an essential means for guiding empowerment evaluations. Five facets of empowerment have also been identified and each one will be briefly discussed below.

Five facets of empowerment evaluation

The five facets of empowerment evaluation include the following features: Training, Illumination, Facilitation, Advocacy, and Liberation. These concepts are intended to be outcome-based principles (Miller & Campbell, 2006) and they shall be described below.

Training is the first facet. It involves teaching stakeholders to conduct their own evaluations with the intention of promoting self-reliance (Fetterman, 1996). The underlying rationale is that doing so should explicate the evaluation process. The end-goal is to promote the use of evaluation methodology and principles for future programme development (Fetterman, 1996).

Illumination refers to the idea that the processes, techniques, and the underlying philosophy of evaluation are revealed to stakeholders since they are regarded as active scholars in empowerment evaluations (Fetterman, 1996).

Facilitation relates to the role the evaluator plays. The evaluator aims to coach, guide and supervise stakeholders in evaluation techniques and teach them evaluation processes (Fetterman, 1996). The main motivation is to empower individuals and organisations so that they can begin to utilize evaluation in the long run especially with respect to important programme decisions (Fetterman, 1996).

Advocacy relates to the evaluator's role to allow programme personnel to decide on the nature and purpose of the evaluation (Fetterman, 1996). Additionally, since programme personnel are assumed to be capable of rational decision-making that they should determine their own solutions through active participation and social transformation (Fetterman, 1996).

Finally, **Liberation** relates to the progression of stakeholder empowerment. Through the philosophies underpinning empowerment evaluations, programme personnel should develop new capacities and skills to allow them to redefine their future roles and objectives (Fetterman, 1996). Thus, empowerment evaluation can be viewed as a resource for programme personnel to improve their lives in the long-run.

Steps for empowerment evaluation

Fetterman (1996) suggests a few sensible steps that can be useful when conducting an empowerment evaluation. The first is **taking stock** of the programme. This includes determining the programme's current position in light of its strong points and its limitations. The second suggestion put forward is **establishing goals** in relation to future outcomes that are geared toward programme improvement (Fetterman, 1996). Thirdly, **selecting and developing strategies** to enable programme personnel to achieve their desired outcomes. Finally, deciding on the **kinds of documentation** programme personnel would need to produce in order to monitor progress and eventual outcomes (Fetterman, 1996).

These steps are not necessarily the only means for conducting an empowerment evaluation but serve as a guide for evaluators. It may also be important to give staff and participants an opportunity to define their programme's intended function at the outset as this may help shape the nature of the evaluation.

Critiques of empowerment evaluation

Despite empowerment evaluation's popularity, it is also a highly contested approach (Miller & Campbell, 2006). Although this section does not purport to be exhaustive in terms of the critiques levelled against it, it will provide a succinct overview of a few of the academic critiques¹.

¹ The scope of this lecture is not to cover each critique in depth but rather to discuss a few in order to promote critical engagement with the topic by the learners.

Firstly, it has been argued that it lacks conceptual clarity which makes it relatively indistinguishable from a variety of other participatory and collaborative approaches to programme evaluation (Miller & Campbell, 2006). Since it draws on discourse relating to social change and from illuminative evaluation jargon, in its pursuit for social justice, it has been posited that it has become conceptually ambiguous (Miller & Campbell, 2006). Furthermore, through its emphasis on democratic processes to augment buy-in and participant ownership, it further entrenches its indistinct conceptual boundaries given that it shares numerous similarities with other capacity-building approaches (Miller & Campbell, 2006). Thus, it becomes complicated for an evaluator to implement.

Aligned with this criticism, is that it requires specificity with regard to the mechanism(s) which ought to catalyze social changes (Miller & Campbell, 2006). It fails to elucidate the connection between processes that result in power-shifts or how the realization of social justice is achieved in practice (Miller & Campbell, 2006). This is problematic since it is unclear in which context(s) this approach would be most suitable or where it will not be viable. Its ecological utility had not been made explicit nor have programme characteristics been identified which would enable decision-making processes relating to the suitability of its implementation (Miller & Campbell, 2006).

A second criticism which has been levelled at empowerment evaluation is that there is a lack of accord in its practical implementation (Miller & Campbell, 2006). There appears to be insufficient clarity in terms of identifying programme evaluations which falls within the ambit of an empowerment evaluation framework (Miller & Campbell, 2006). Thus, the unanimity of its execution has been disputed. In response to this criticism, Wandersman et al. (2005) attempted to advance empowerment evaluation theory by developing the ten principles. They argue that these ten principles, if used in combination with one another, would distinguish empowerment evaluation from similar approaches to programme evaluation.

Another critique of empowerment evaluations is that there is scant empirical evidence to suggest that it meets its intended purpose (Miller & Campbell, 2006). It has been argued that the means for assessing the success of an empowerment evaluation are under-developed and as a result, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that it is, in fact, an

empowering approach. However, this argument could also be levelled against a variety of other critical-emancipatory approaches to evaluation methodology (Miller & Campbell, 2006).

Other critiques include its over-reliance on self-study which may thwart the evaluation's objectivity; and the lack of rigour between differing evaluations which can result in ersatz evaluations (Miller & Campbell, 2006). The abovementioned criticisms suggest that although empowerment evaluation is still a relatively recent approach, it still requires revision in order to promote its overall value and scientific rigour.

Conclusion

In summary, empowerment evaluations use active and democratic participation in order to advance existing programmes and improve the lives of individuals involved in them (Wandersman et al., 2005). Its central goal is empowering others through training and facilitation in order to enhance self-sufficiency (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007). The role of the evaluator should diminish with time as programme personnel gain the requisite skills to continue to conduct their own evaluations with sufficient accuracy and rigour. This model is especially helpful in relation to develop, evaluate and improvement of social programmes intended to address community problems (Fetterman, 1996). It is essentially a tool for social transformation using empowerment as its intended outcome.

RECOMMENDED READINGS FOR STUDENTS

Fetterman, D. M. (1996). Empowerment Evaluation: An Introduction to Theory and Practice. In D. M. Fetterman, S. J. Kaftarian, A. Wandersman (Eds.), *Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self-Assessment & Accountability* (pp. 3 – 27). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fetterman, D., & Wandersman, A. (2007). Empowerment Evaluation Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 28, (2), 179 – 198.

Wandersman, A., Snell-Johns, J., Lentz, B. E., Fetterman, D. M., Keener, D. C., Livet, M., Imm, P.S., & Flaspohler, P. (2005). The Principles of Empowerment Evaluation. In D. M. Fetterman & A. Wandersman (Eds.), *Empowerment Evaluation Principles in Practice* (pp.27 – 41). New York: Guilford Press.

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR LEARNER ASSESSMENT

Write a short essay on one of the following topics:

(10 to 15 pages, 1.5 spacing, and using Times New Roman, font size 12)

[Counts ...% of coursework mark]

- a. Critically discuss the utility of empowerment evaluation. You may wish to select a particular context to discuss, or you may choose to examine a wider-variety of settings. Consider both its suitability and impracticality in your argument.

OR

- b. Locate a case study (an existing programme evaluation) which utilized the empowerment evaluation approach. Critically analyse its adherence to the principles and facets of empowerment evaluation theory. You may wish to discuss the rationale the evaluator(s) mentions concerning the use of empowerment evaluation. You may also examine limitations to the case study and possible recommendations for future empowerment evaluations based on your observations.

REFERENCES

- Fetterman, D. M. (1996). Empowerment Evaluation: An Introduction to Theory and Practice. In D. M. Fetterman, S. J. Kaftarian, A. Wandersman (Eds.), *Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self-Assessment & Accountability* (pp. 3 – 27). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
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- Fetterman, D., & Wandersman, A. (2007). Empowerment Evaluation Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 28, (2), 179 – 198.
- Miller, R. L., & Campbell, R. (2006). Taking Stock of Empowerment Evaluation: An Empirical Review. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(3), 296 – 319.
- Potter, C. (1999). Programme Evaluation. In M. Terre Blanche & K. Durrheim (Eds.), *Research in Practice: applied methods for the social sciences*. (pp. 209 – 226). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
- Wandersman, A., Snell-Johns, J., Lentz, B. E., Fetterman, D. M., Keener, D. C., Livet, M., Imm, P.S., & Flaspohler, P. (2005). The Principles of Empowerment Evaluation. In D. M. Fetterman & A. Wandersman (Eds.), *Empowerment Evaluation Principles in Practice* (pp.27 – 41). New York: Guilford Press.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

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Lecture Overview:

1. Introduction
2. Key Contributors
3. Overview of theoretical alignment
4. Definition(s)
5. Principles of Empowerment Evaluation
6. Facets of Empowerment Evaluation
7. Steps of Empowerment Evaluation
8. Critiques of Empowerment Evaluation
9. Conclusion

1. Introduction

- ❖ Empowerment evaluation (hereon referred to by the acronym EE) is a programme evaluation approach.
- ❖ It entered the evaluation arena in 1993 (Miller & Campbell, 2006).
- ❖ Since its inception, it has been utilized in a variety of contexts including individualistic, organizational, institutional and community-based settings.
- ❖ EE's international popularity has been attributed, in part, to the timing of its availability on the internet (Fetterman, 1998).
- ❖ Additionally, since evaluators were already utilizing participatory self-assessment techniques, they were receptive to EE upon its introduction (Fetterman, 1998).

2. Key Contributors

i) David Fetterman

David Fetterman works in the fields of educational evaluation, ethnography, educational technology, and policy analysis

Fetterman has conducted extensive multi-site evaluation research on local, state and international levels

Although Fetterman is recognized for his contributions to the development of ethnographic evaluation, his most recent focus has been on developing EE

He has also written two books and a variety of and seminal texts (many of which have been published in internationally accredited Journals) on EE.

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Dr. Zimmerman is a Professor and Chair of Health Behaviour & Health Education

He is also a Research Scientist at the Centre for Human Growth and Development and he is a Psychology Professor

Zimmerman's work on empowerment theory includes measurement and analysis of psychological and community empowerment (i.e. the application and development of empowerment theory)

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Dr Wandersman is a Professor of Psychology

He has his Ph.D. in social psychology, environmental psychology and social organization and change from Cornell University

He is co-editor of the book *Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self Assessment and Accountability*

In 2000, he was elected president of Division 27 (Community Psychology) of the American Psychological Association

3. Theoretical Alignment

- ❖ Empowerment evaluation is largely based on Zimmerman's theory of empowerment (Fetterman, 1996).
- ❖ Empowerment can be defined as "a construct that links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviours to social policy and social change" (Rappaport, 1981, as cited in Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995, p. 569).
- ❖ However, definitions of 'empowerment' have begun to flourish

Discussion Question

How would you define empowerment?

- ❖ EE also draws its origins from community psychology and action anthropology.
- ❖ EE's primary objective is "to help people help themselves" (Fetterman, 1996, p.5).
- ❖ Empowerment evaluation is a model that aims to improve existing policies and programmes, and to provide skills for community growth.
- ❖ Empowerment evaluations can essentially be classified as a model which falls within the realm of critical-emancipatory approaches to programme evaluation (Potter, 1999).
- ❖ EE aims to challenge the status quo because it recognises the importance of social problems and attaining social justice.

- ❖ Empowerment evaluations emerged in reaction to Positivist models which have been criticised as being too value-free in their aim to maintain objectivity (Potter, 1999).
- ❖ It was initially defined as “the use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination” (Fetterman, 1996, p.4).
- Since its inception as an evaluation model, it has been quite controversial.

Discussion Question:

How would you choose to define EE and why?

4. Definition

- ❖ The most current definition of EE is:

“An evaluation approach that aims to increase the probability of achieving program success by

- (1) providing stakeholders with tools for assessing the planning, implementation, and self-evaluation of their program, and
- (2) mainstreaming evaluation as part of the planning and management of the program/organization.”

(Wandersman et al., 2005, p.28).

- ❖ Thus, the definition has been revised in order to provide a more elaborate definition (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007).
- ❖ It is not envisaged as a 'new' definition but rather a more detailed one.
- ❖ It emerged as a response to criticisms directed at empowerment evaluation (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007).
- ❖ It suggests that programme participants are encouraged to perform their own evaluations with the assistance, guidance and coaching of the evaluator (Fetterman, 1996).

- ❖ Essentially it involves group cooperation.
- ❖ It does not overtly empower any particular group but rather teaches skills to foster self-empowerment.
- ❖ In essence, it is democratic (Fetterman, 1996) because it encourages active participation in the evaluation process and provides a platform for discussing relevant concerns.
- ❖ Furthermore, it aims to alter the evaluation context and the assessment of the programme's worth is not the final stage (Fetterman, 1996).

- ❖ This is because the merit of a programme is fluid and will change as the context transforms over time.
- ❖ Programme participants develop evaluation skills and learn to critically assess their progress continually through the evaluator's supervision and training (Fetterman, 1996).
- ❖ Thus, **self-determination** is a crucial aspect of empowerment evaluations (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007).
- ❖ EE's ten principles shall be outlined and discussed below.

5. Principles of Empowerment Evaluation

- ❖ There are *ten principles* that are an essential means for guiding empowerment evaluations. These principles are suggested to be associated with the process of an empowerment evaluation (Miller & Campbell, 2006).
- ❖ They include:
 1. Improvement
 2. Organisational Learning
 3. Community Ownership
 4. Inclusion
 5. Democratic participation
 6. Social Justice
 7. Community knowledge
 8. Evidence-based strategies
 9. Capacity building
 10. Accountability

- ❖ **(1) Improvement** - this means that through empowerment techniques, the evaluator aims to help the programme (its participants, staff and so forth) achieve positive and/or successful outcomes as decided by the relevant stakeholders (Wandersman et al., 2005).
- ❖ **(2) Organisational learning** augments programme improvement if there is both a process and a structure to facilitate learning.
- ❖ **(3) Community ownership** refers to the democratic principle that “the community has the right to make decisions about actions that affect their lives” (Wandersman et al., 2005).

Class Discussion:

Q: *What do these principles suggest about the evaluator’s role in EE?*

- ❖ **(4) Inclusion**, in this instance, is the invitation and encouragement of legitimate stakeholders’ participation in terms of decisions to be made (Wandersman et al., 2005).
- ❖ **(5) Democratic participation** is based on the premise that with appropriate access to information, relevant stakeholders are able to make rational, informed decisions about what action needs to be taken (Wandersman et al., 2005).
- ❖ **(6) Social Justice** implies a commitment to just and equitable distribution of resources, prospects, responsibilities, and authority (Wandersman et al., 2005).

- (7) **Community knowledge** in empowerment evaluation relates to the recognition that information known by relevant stakeholders is valuable and useful and should be shared because it is an essential resource (Wandersman et al., 2005).
- (8) **Evidence-based strategies** (empirical information) are viewed as an important source for developing interventions to address community needs; although such strategies should not be employed without considering the contextual issues within the community (Wandersman et al., 2005).

- ❖ (9) **Capacity building** is one of the main aims of empowerment evaluation. The goal is to enhance stakeholders' abilities to conduct their own evaluations in order to improve programme development and execution (Wandersman et al., 2005).
- ❖ (10) **Accountability** is the last principle of empowerment evaluation. Through gathering information on the programme's processes, results-based accountability can be achieved (Wandersman et al., 2005). Thus, programme staff can be held responsible for their plans and actions in terms of self-driven evaluations.

6. The five facets of Empowerment Evaluation

❖ The five facets of EE are intended to be outcomes-based principles (Miller & Campbell, 2006) and include the following:

1. Training
2. Illumination
3. Facilitation
4. Advocacy
5. Liberation

❖ (1) **Training** involves teaching stakeholders to conduct their own evaluations with the intention of promoting self-reliance (Fetterman, 1996).

❖ (2) **Illumination** refers to the idea that the processes, techniques, and the underlying philosophy of evaluation are revealed to stakeholders since they are regarded as active scholars in empowerment evaluations (Fetterman, 1996).

❖ (3) **Facilitation** relates to the role the evaluator plays. The evaluator aims to coach, guide and supervise stakeholders in evaluation techniques and teach them evaluation processes (Fetterman, 1996).

❖ (4) **Advocacy** is that the evaluator allows programme personnel to decide on the nature and purpose of the evaluation (Fetterman, 1996).

- ❖ **(5) Liberation** relates to the progression of stakeholder empowerment. Through the philosophies underpinning empowerment evaluations, programme personnel learn new skills which allow them to redefine their future roles and objectives (Fetterman, 1996).
- ❖ Thus, empowerment evaluation can be viewed as a resource for programme personnel to improve their lives in the long-run.
- ❖ Fetterman (1996) suggests a few sensible steps that can be useful when conducting an empowerment evaluation.

7. Steps for empowerment evaluation

- ❖ The first is taking stock of the programme. This includes determining the programme's current position in light of its strong points and its limitations.
- ❖ The second suggestion is establishing goals in relation to future outcomes that are geared toward programme improvement (Fetterman, 1996).
- ❖ Thirdly, selecting and developing strategies to enable programme personnel to achieve their desired outcomes.
- ❖ Finally, deciding on the kinds of documentation programme personnel would need to produce in order to monitor progress and eventual outcomes (Fetterman, 1996).

- ❖ The abovementioned steps are merely a useful point of departure – they are not meant to be all inclusive.

Discussion Questions:

In small groups (3-4 members), please attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What methods can programme participants and evaluator(s) utilize to 'take stock' of the programme?
2. Who should establish the programme goals and why?

Each group needs to report back their responses to the larger group for discussion purposes.

8. Critiques of empowerment evaluation

- ❖ Despite EE's popularity, it is also a highly contested approach (Miller & Campbell, 2006).
- 1) EE lacks conceptual clarity:
 - ❖ EE is relatively indistinguishable from a variety of other participatory and collaborative approaches to programme evaluation (Miller & Campbell, 2006).
 - ❖ Thus, it becomes complicated for an evaluator to implement since it shares many similarities with other approaches.
 - 2) Mechanisms of change are undefined
 - ❖ It fails to elucidate the connection between processes that result in power-shifts or how the realization of social justice is achieved in practice (Miller & Campbell, 2006).
 - ❖ Thus, it is unclear in which social context (s) this approach is suitably utilizable (Miller & Campbell, 2006).

3) *Lack of accord in terms of its practical implementation*

- ❖ A variety of case studies may be reported as empowerment evaluations but often share few implementational characteristics.
- ❖ This results in insufficient clarity with respect to identifying an evaluation which falls within the ambit of an empowerment evaluation framework (Miller & Campbell, 2006).
- ❖ In response to this criticism, Wandersman et al. (2005) attempted to advance EE theory by developing the ten principles of EE.

4) *Lack of documented evidence of its success*

- ❖ Another critique of empowerment evaluations is that there is scant empirical evidence to suggest that it meets its intended purpose (Miller & Campbell, 2006).

- ❖ It has been argued that the means for assessing the success of an empowerment evaluation are under-developed and as a result, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that it is, in fact, an empowering approach.

- ❖ Other critiques include its over-reliance on self-study which may thwart the evaluation's objectivity; and the lack of rigour between differing evaluations which can result in ersatz evaluations (Miller & Campbell, 2006).

Discussion Question:

Can you think of any other potentially problematic aspects related to EE?

9. Conclusion

- ❖ In summary, empowerment evaluations use active and democratic participation in order to advance existing programmes and improve the lives of individuals involved in them (Wandersman et al., 2005).
- ❖ Its central goal is empowering others through training and facilitation in order to enhance self-sufficiency (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007).
- ❖ The role of the evaluator should diminish with time as programme personnel gain the requisite skills to continue to conduct their own evaluations with sufficient accuracy and rigour.
- ❖ This model is especially helpful in relation to developing, evaluating and improving social programmes intended to address community problems (Fetterman, 1996). Thus, it is essentially a tool for social transformation using empowerment as its intended outcome.

References

Note:

SUGGESTED STUDENT READINGS APPEAR IN WHITE FONT

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