

Supporting increased use of evaluation findings in organisations

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OUTLINE

1. What we already know about evaluation use
2. What the Oxfam Outcomes Reporting process helps us see: how an organisation uses evaluation
3. The gap in the Oxfam Outcomes Reporting process: lack of practitioner instrumental use and four potential strategies in response

THEORY FOCUSED ON THE INDIVIDUAL USER

Four ways evaluation findings are used (Weiss):

1. Instrumental
2. Conceptual
3. Symbolic
4. Enlightenment

USE OF FINDINGS AND PROCESS

	Evaluation findings	Evaluation process
Instrumental		
Conceptual		
Symbolic		

1. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT EVALUATION USE AND INFLUENCE

ORGANISATION AS A USER OF EVALUATION

Some theorists consider the organisation as a user of evaluation:

- **Evaluation as organisational learning** (Preskill and Torres)
- **Organisational capacity to do and use evaluation** (Cousins, Goh et. al.)

EVALUATION AS EPISODIC

An evaluation of a particular program is only an episode in the continuing evolution of thought about a problem area

Cronbach, Ambron et. al, 1980

2. ORGANISATIONAL USE OF EVALUATION

EVALUATION NOT ADDRESSING ORGANISATIONAL TRAITS

One shot program evaluations will not provide the information to address fundamental organizational traits and characteristics which influence all programs.

Mathison, 1997

2. ORGANISATIONAL USE OF EVALUATION

EVALUATION AS 'JUST ANOTHER' SOURCE

*(for) policy-making actors... evaluation research
comprises 'just another' source of information.*

Van der Knapp, 1995

2. ORGANISATIONAL USE OF EVALUATION

THREE VIEWS OF THE ORGANISATION

- Rational
- Political
- Cultural

2. ORGANISATIONAL USE OF EVALUATION

HOW OXFAM USED EVALUATION

- A number of units at different levels within the organisation were responsible for using evaluation findings
- Findings were embedded into the organisation through programming and policy decisions
- The interests and needs of different users diverged at times

2. ORGANISATIONAL USE OF EVALUATION

HOW OXFAM USED EVALUATION

- Oxfam Australia used evaluation findings in some of the same ways individuals do: instrumentally, conceptually and symbolically
- Oxfam's use of findings went on over a long period of time
- Oxfam did not privilege evaluation use over other sources of data

2. ORGANISATIONAL USE OF EVALUATION

ORGANISATIONAL USE OF EVALUATION

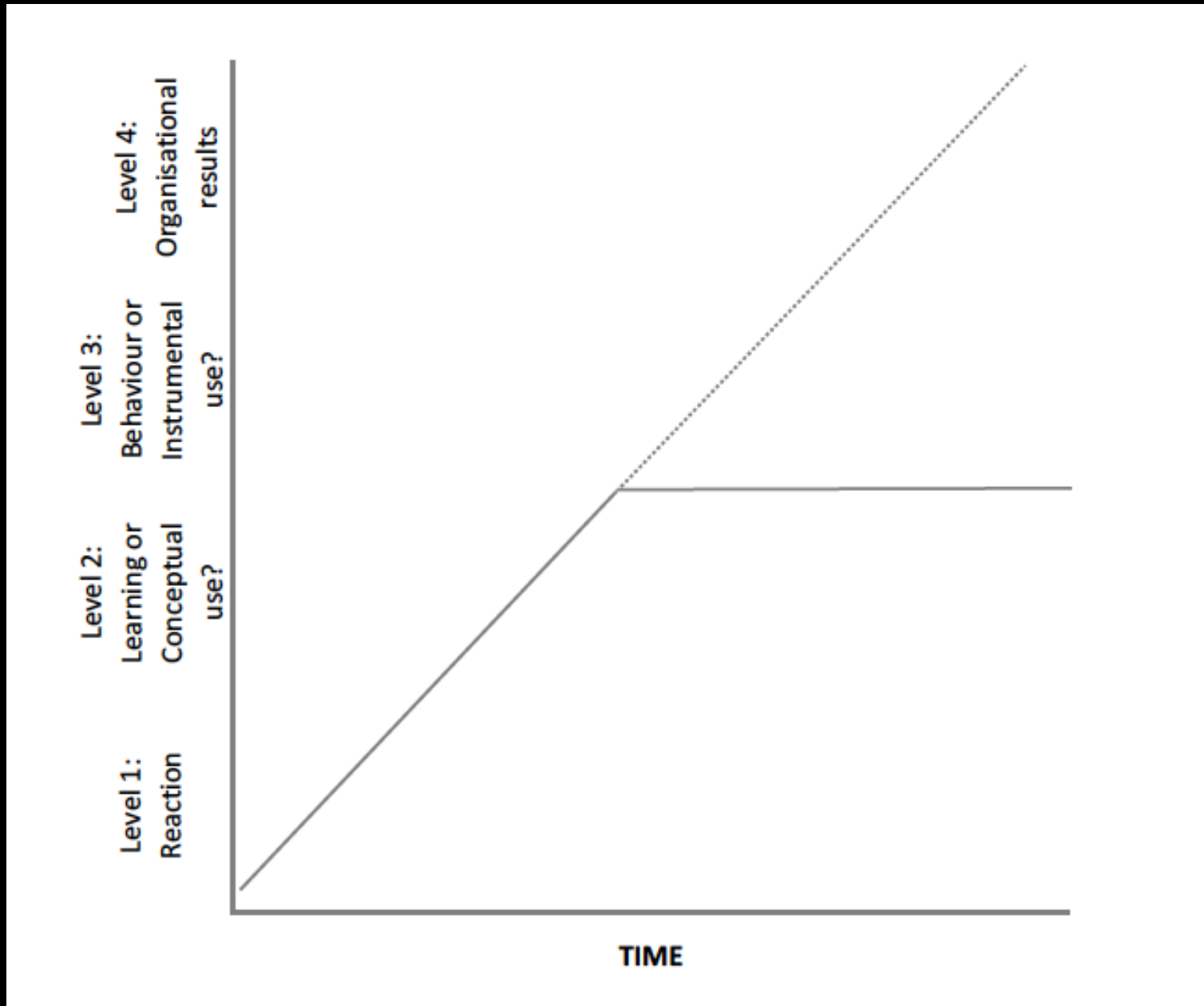
USE literature often focuses on	USE literature less often focuses on
Individual evaluators	Evaluation units within organisations
Individual programs or policies	Aggregate findings
Intended use	Unintended uses also
Use is rational	Use also political and cultural
Individuals use findings and process	Organisations can also use findings and processes

2. ORGANISATIONAL USE OF EVALUATION

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- Tensions between learning and accountability which is well documented in the literature
- Consider this as different use by different users
- Consider carefully the needs of different users
- Consider addressing different evaluation needs separately where needed

2. ORGANISATIONAL USE OF EVALUATION



3. LIMITED INSTRUMENTAL USE BY PRACTITIONERS

LIMITED INSTRUMENTAL USE INFLUENCED BY CONCEPTIONS OF LEARNING

- Conception of learning that is:
 - Cognitive
 - Individual
 - Formal
 - Blind to power

THINKING OF EACH DIMENSION AS A CONTINUUM

	Potential strategies for moving along the continuum
Cognitive-embodied	Support activities where users are acting on, not only thinking about, findings
Individual-Work unit	Support users to come together in their work unit sessions to consider and act on findings
Formal-Informal	Map out and connect to informal learning that occurs in the workplace
Blind to power-conscious of power	Power imbalances that impede effective development need to be surfaced and changed

3. LIMITED INSTRUMENTAL USE BY PRACTITIONERS

COGNITIVE-EMBODIED CONTINUUM

- Elicit the specific and particular strategies and theories in use from member's work practice rather than abstract theories at an aggregate level such as 'What is the theory of change of ACAC?'

INDIVIDUAL-COLLECTIVE CONTINUUM

- Economic Justice Week – week of collective review and analysis of evaluative data
- Campaigns, advocacy and program staff started to work together after EJ week on the interlinked issues that keep people hungry

FORMAL-INFORMAL CONTINUUM

- Strong network of members in the Gender Justice Hub within different Oxfam offices
- Links between the Gender Justice Hub members and the Melbourne based an international women's movement

BLIND TO-CONSCIOUS OF POWER CONTINUUM

- Gender inequalities in the workplace from a different case.
- Lack of transparency in the way that (male) managers made decisions in contradiction to recommendations from (female) operational staff.
- Power imbalances made it difficult for those with less power in the organization (female operational staff) to raise the issue.
- Evaluative data and building of trust over a number of years finally allowed this issue to be discussed.

3. LIMITED INSTRUMENTAL USE BY PRACTITIONERS

THREE POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Evaluation use and influence - relates to findings AND process, intended AND unintended, individual AND organisational, conceptual, instrumental and symbolic
- Learning to support actual practice changes needs specific strategies
- IF YOU WANT YOUR ORGANISATION TO USE EVALUATION FINDINGS - REMEMBER **AGIP**: ACTION, GROUP, INFORMAL, POWER

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