DEVELOPING A MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM TO IMPROVE DEMOCRATIC GOOD GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

This article explains the relationship between democratic societies' needs and evaluation approaches in terms of various paradigms, methods and values of evaluation and develops a classification in terms of the types of evaluation needed to meet the needs of a democratic society. The article also underscores the importance of M&E as a mechanism to measure the effectiveness of service delivery, so that the public sector can facilitate better democratic governance outcomes in terms of its programmes, policies, interventions, projects, democracy models and the type of evaluation required. The methodology entails a desktop analysis of literature and official documents to conceptualise and contextualise the area of investigation. The methodological approach focused on specific dimensions of unobtrusive research techniques, such as conceptual and document analysis. Generally, unobtrusive research techniques investigate social behaviour to remove bias and encourage conceptual analysis. To attribute meaning to the data, the information generated is examined through an in-depth process of intellectual analysis, integration, classification, reflection and synthesis. The article found that merely having a clear knowledge base of the history and 'state of the art' evaluation or programme evaluation theory is not a clear-cut way to ensure successful evaluation practice. Furthermore, every theory of practice is likely to be more effective in certain settings than in others. The ultimate goal is to introduce improvements to the services they provide, based on a classification of M&E findings.

Keywords: *Democracy, Evaluation paradigms, Monitoring and Evaluation, M&E practitioners, M&E approaches, Programme evaluation*

JEL classification*: ZOO*

I. INTRODUCTION

Public servants need to monitor and evaluate not only the inputs, activities and outputs of their work, but also how effective they have been in improving the life circumstances of citizens. M&E are important tools to measure the effectiveness of service delivery due to the importance of both intended and unintended outcomes and the impact of their work on the country's citizens. Programme evaluation has become increasingly prevalent in both developed and developing countries due to the pressure citizens and civil groups exert on governments to use public funds in socio-economic interventions (Cloete, De Coning, Wissink, & Rabie, 2018; Bengwi, 2017; Sithomola, 2014; Auriacombe, 2013, 2011). The article conceptually clarifies the following concepts: evaluation, evaluator, M&E, policy evaluation, programme evaluation and projects/programmes. It briefly discusses the major types of evaluation research approaches in terms a prospective or formative evaluation, ongoing evaluation, and a summative evaluation. It highlights the characteristics of democratic evaluation orientations and provides a classification of democracy models and the type of evaluation needed. Furthermore, it explains the link between democratic societies' needs and various evaluation paradigms. Notably, a philosophical point of view is used as basis to discuss various methods and values of evaluation approaches. The article then proceeds to develop a classification system that meets the needs of democratic society to improve good governance.

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

The following sections provide comprehensive conceptual clarifications of research-specific terms. However, to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity when interpreting concepts, terms that are utilised throughout the article are concisely defined below.

Evaluation: Evaluation refers to the periodic review of a policy, project or programme to determine whether there is substantial and valid progress towards

achieving specific goals (Cloete, De Coning, Wissink, & Rabie, 2018; Bengwi, 2017). Innes and Booher (1999:412-423) describe evaluation as "involving the measurement and analysis of all factors that may contribute to a policy's success or failure, along with the careful design of research to isolate the policy variable from other factors". According to Mertens and Ginsberg (2009:170), “evaluation is a systematic application of social research methods to assess the strengths and weaknesses of social interventions, including programmes, policies, personnel, products and organisation”. Further, York (1988:140) views evaluation as “a judgement of worth, to determine the extent to which objectives were achieved and to identify the reasons for programme successes and failures".

Evaluator: An evaluator is a person or system that makes a judgment about the value, importance, or quality of something (https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/evaluator). For Newman and Brown (1996:6) an evaluator as an expert in his/her field or a consultant who represents a unit that is responsible for conducting evaluations.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E): Monitoring is the “continuous assessment of the activities, social processes, realities and performance during the life of the programme or project to improve the organisation's effectiveness and efficiency in realising goals” (Bengwi, 2017:45). It is also characterised by continuous data analysis, as well as a type of action research, whereby insights and learning generated through M&E processes enrich theoretical knowledge (Bengwi, 2017). Furthermore, M&E is characterised by a “constant cycle of data collection and analysis, where information is used to bolster and sustain successful strategies during the subsequent stage of informed decision-making” (Bengwi, 2017:45). Babbie and Mouton (2011) refer to M&E as applied research; results are compared to baseline data, which is similar to a pre- and post-test experimental design scenario. With periodic evaluations, the information generated through continuous monitoring is used to earmark specific environmental changes.

Policy evaluation: According to Cloete, Wissink and De Coning (2006:248), “policy evaluation is undertaken for various reasons including to gauge progress towards the attainment of policy objectives; to learn lessons from the project or programme for future policy review or implementation strategies; and to test the feasibility of an assumption, principle, model, theory proposal or strategy”. For the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (OECD, 2002:30), it constitutes, “The systematic and objective assessment of an on-going

or completed policy, its design, implementation and results…The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability… An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision– making process of both recipients and donors… it also refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an activity, policy or programme".

Programme evaluation: According Gredler (1996:15), "…programme evaluation is a systematic inquiry designed to provide information to decision makers and groups that are interested in a particular programme, policy or other intervention". The OECD (2002:30) defines programme evaluation as follows: "An evaluation of a set of interventions, marshalled to attain specific global, regional, country, or sector development objectives". Programme evaluation constitutes various "formally coordinated governmental interventions that include ongoing activities and projects" (De Coning, Koster & Leputu, 2018).

Projects/programmes: Cranford (2003:85) defines projects as "components of programmes and they have a narrow focus, are specific, involve time-limited services or a collection of activities that will help to bring about the required change". In projects or programmes, there is generally a definite lineal connection between inputs and outcomes (Cranford, 2003). Each project is a unique process that includes a set of coordinated and controlled activities that have specific start and finish dates (De Coning, Koster & Leputu, 2018). Notably, De Coning, Koster & Leputu (2018:248) highlight that projects are undertaken to achieve a specific objective that "conforms to specific requirements, such as time, cost and resource constraints". Programmes may include elements of related work that fall outside "the scope of distinct projects in the programme" (De Coning, Koster & Leputu, 2018:248). A programme is also seen as "a time-bound intervention involving multiple activities that may cut across sectors, themes and/or geographic areas" (OECD, 2002:30). For the purpose of this article, the terms 'project' and 'programme' are used interchangeably as in most policy evaluation literature. 'Programmes' and 'projects' are regarded as mechanisms (or instruments) to implement policies or to "demonstrate the outcomes of policies at a practical level" (De Coning, Koster & Leputu, 2018:236).

III. KEY EVALUATION RESEARCH APPROACHES

There are various research approaches to programme or policy evaluation to give the evaluator a range of alternative frameworks to analyse selected public policies or programmes. Evaluation research can take place at different stages of a public policy or programme lifecycle (Cloete, De Coning, Wissink, & Rabie, 2018; Sithomola, 2014).

Prospective or formative evaluation: With a prospective evaluation, the aim is to predict or project aspects of the project or programme. It is designed in such a way that it provides policy development and implementation role-players (policy developers and managers) an accurate idea of the objectives, the procedures to be employed and guidelines on how success will be measured. Importantly, a prospective evaluation lays the foundation for all subsequent evaluation activities (Cloete, De Coning, Wissink, & Rabie, 2018; Sithomola, 2014). This evaluation orientation assesses previously established standards. Key features of these policies include specified goals, a proposal or plan that outlines how specific goals will be achieved, the concept or theory of change and the overall evaluation plan (Sithomola, 2014). Furthermore, programme evaluators can use these features to determine whether the allocated time and resources will be sufficient to meet the evaluation objectives. Typically, a prospective evaluation includes determining the needs, assessing participants' characteristics, a deliberate analysis of settings and colleting the required baseline information. It also helps decision-makers to determine whether policy efforts are headed in the right direction (Guskey, 2000 in Sithomola, 2014). Furthermore, prospective evaluation is concerned with the likely outcomes of a proposed public policy or programme. This approach has features in common with a probability assessment (Sithomola, 2014). In general, this type of assessment is applied to answer relevant questions such as "Is this programme worth implementing?" or "Will the benefits exceed the effort or resources that have been spent?" (Sithomola, 2014:20). As such, prospective or formative evaluations evaluate the likely outcomes of proposed policies, programmes and projects (Morra-Imas & Rist, 2009 in Sithomola, 2014).

Ongoing evaluation: An ongoing evaluation is "when the intention is to identify progress with potential improvements or interventions" (George & Cowan, 1999:1). This approach is commonly used during the implementation phase a bid to bolster a programme or policy's performance (Guerra-Lopez, 2008 in Sithomola, 2014). In following this approach, decision-makers and implementers

are made aware of a programme's achievements and shortcomings as early as possible (Cloete, De Coning, Wissink, & Rabie, 2018; Darrussalam, 2010 in Sithomola, 2014). As a key component within the evaluation process, continuous evaluations are undertaken to ascertain whether the programme complies to legal requirements. This approach focuses on how the programme is implemented. The evaluator applies the ongoing approach to determine whether or not the anticipated operational logic is in line with actual operations and earmarks the outcomes of the implementation (Morra-Imas & Rist, 2009 in Sithomola, 2014).

This approach helps highlight specific aspects of the programme that are either working or failing according to the desired plan. As such, an institution can learn valuable lessons with regard to relevance, effectiveness and efficiency to help improve existing programmes and provide direction to prospective interventions (Morra-Imas & Rist, 2009 in Sithomola, 2014). This evaluation approach creates a foundation for summative evaluation, as it helps improve programme processes and provides feedback regarding strong and weak elements that could influence the achievement of goals (Patton, 1994).

Summative evaluation: All evaluation activities are grounded in summative evaluation. The overall results of a public policy or programme are typically assessed with this type of evaluation. According to Patton (1994:312), "…summative evaluation judges merit and worth; the extent to which desired goals have been achieved, whether measured outcomes can be ascribed to the observed interventions and the conditions under which goals were attained that would affect generalisation and intervention dissemination". Evaluators apply this approach at the end of the evaluation to ascertain whether projected results were realised. Although it is done at the end the programme, summative evaluation provides information about the programme's value and impact (Patton, 1994).

This evaluation approach helps policy and programme implementers to make informed decisions regarding whether to continue with, replicate, upscale or terminate a certain intervention programme or public policy. Notably, various evaluation approaches complement each other on several levels (Morra-Imas & Rist, 2009 in Sithomola, 2014)). Summative evaluation plays a key role in improving a programme's efficiency and providing appropriate solutions to specific problems. This orientation requires considerable time to ensure that an object of evaluation has the desired impact on performance at various levels of the organisation or institution (Guerra-Lopez, 2008 in Sithomola, 2014). While formative and ongoing evaluations guide improvements, summative evaluations

provide decision-makers with important information so that they can make critical decisions about a policy or programme's future (Guskey, 2000 in Sithomola, 2014).

Each approach has its own specific purposes and roles. Notably, all of these approaches play an equally important role in the programme evaluation lifecycle (Sithomola, 2014). Decisions need to be made before the programme commences (prospective or formative); with inception and implementation to bolster effectiveness (ongoing); and upon completion (summative) to judge its final value and determine its future (Guskey, 2000 in Sithomola, 2014).

IV. MODELS OF DEMOCRACY AND THE TYPE OF EVALUATION REQUIRED

As contemporary evaluation research is a diverse and complex field of study, it has many unresolved issues relating to important aspects such as conceptualisation, methodology, validity, ethics, participation, empowerment, value judgement, social justice, advocacy, policy and intervention (Fetterman, 2004 in Auriacombe, 2013). These issues are interconnected and need to be reviewed carefully before undertaking an evaluation project. Undeniably, the face of democracy is ever-changing. As such, Auriacombe (2013) questions whether current evaluation methods that mostly rely on quantitative data could still be viewed as sufficient mechanisms to guide policy-making and programme development. Differently stated, can evaluation paradigms that public administrations currently apply help build a partnership between government and civil society to facilitate good democratic governance?

Evaluations contribute to developing a more democratic society and have become an integral part of information management systems, as citizens hold government accountable for their decisions (Auriacombe 2013). In this regard, Strathern (2000 in Auriacombe, 2013:720) refers to the concept of an "audit culture. Hanberger (2006 in Auriacombe, 2013) highlights that there are essentially three models of democracy, namely elitist democracy (EDE), participative democracy (PDE) and deliberative democracy (DDE). Notably, each of these evaluation models requires a different type of evaluation approach. These notions of democracy differ as to whether democracy is made for, by, or with the people (Auriacombe, 2013, 2011

& Schurink & Schurink, 2009).

Within an "elitist democracy, evaluation mainly has a rational feedback function that focuses on the accountability of decision-makers who operate within a clear mandate, as provided by the majority of citizens" (Auriacombe, 2013). In a participative democracy, evaluation mostly serves as an avenue for empowerment and self-determination. According to Hanberger (2006 in Auriacombe, 2013), the function of evaluation in a deliberative democracy is mostly used to "justify decisions and to attain conclusions that are binding, i.e. to serve the function of justification". Gutmann & Thompson (2004) concur: "This function is most associated with deliberative democracy, and thus with promoting legitimacy to collective action when many actors and institutions are involved". Notably, free reasoning, general accessibility and justifying public decisions, policies/programmes and action form the cornerstones of deliberative democracy. Only deliberative and participative democracy encourage citizens to participate public policy and evaluation (Auriacombe, 2013).

Auriacombe (2013:722) states that "evaluators' responsibilities differ with regard to the three models...An elitist democracy evaluator is regarded as an expert who has to provide information to the public in a top-down fashion...Within a participative democracy, the evaluator takes on the role of advocate, facilitator and coach to facilitate a culture of self-learning, empowerment, self-governance and participation". Here, the focus is on developing a culture of involvement among citizens, so that they can fulfill their own needs and reach their own goals. The deliberative democracy evaluator mainly acts as a mediator and counselor who aims to cultivate mutually accepted processes and build consensus through argumentation (Auriacombe, 2013).

As there are many different classifications of evaluations relating to different approaches and models, it is difficult to identify suitable evaluation methods to address the challenges of a democratic society (cf Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 2007). However, this task could be made easier if the three Democratic Evaluation Orientations (DEOs) identified by Hanberger (2006 in Auriacombe, 2013) are used as a point of departure in the evaluation process. It is clear from Table 1 that people in different democratic orientations view knowledge, truth and relevance from different perspectives. As such, public administrators need to use different types of evaluation methods. Thus, when planning and conducting an evaluation,

the public administrator needs to take a specific appropriate approach (Auriacombe, 2013).

V. DEVELOPING A CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Auriacombe (2013:716) highlights that there have been "several attempts to categorise evaluation methods...although these attempts were aimed at simplifying the confusing array of available methods they tend to further confuse our understanding of the evaluation field". As such, Auriacombe (2013:716) highlights that different evaluation methods should be presented in such a way that one deduces the main differences between, "firstly, the logic of the methods (studying the phenomenon from an 'insider' perspective (inductive) or from an 'outsider'(deductive); perspective; secondly, their ontologies (the evaluator's beliefs of how the truth (reality) should be seen); their epistemologies (the belief of the evaluator of how the truth should be studied); thirdly, their methodologies (or theories of how the evaluation should proceed and the methods used to do the evaluation); and lastly their axiologies (the role of values) in an inquiry".

The article attempts to address a classification system that should be seen in the light of the needs of public administrators operating in a democratic society. The suggested typology makes extensive use of the building blocks identified by Guba and Lincoln *(*in Auriacombe, 2013). The focus of our proposed typology is grounded within the philosopical parameters of methodology, ontology, epistemolocy, axiology and their causal linkages.

Table 1 classifies the different methods and values of these opposite philosophical evaluation approaches into two main paradigms, namely the quantitative versus the qualitative paradigm. In the middle of these two extremes lies a third approach that is both deductive and inductive, namely the pragmatic paradigm (Auriacombe, 2013).

Table 1: Different methods and values of evaluation approaches

	Logical Positivism (Objectivism; Empiricism)	**Pragmatism/Realism**	**Constructivism (Interpretivism; Naturalism)**
Methods	Quantitative. Experimental research design. A focus on internal validity and controlled settings.	Quantitative and qualitative (mixed methods or mixed methodology). Quantitative and qualitative methods are viewed as compatible. The method and paradigm underlying the method are less important than the research question.	Qualitative. Naturalistic, emergent research. A focus on natural settings and external validity. The researcher gives insight into expressed behaviour and the meanings and interpretations that participants attach to their life-worlds. First-person accounts, documents, and auto-ethnographies are used.
Axiology (role of values in inquiry)	Inquiry is value-free.	Values play a central role in interpreting results. The search for description, theory, explanation, and narrative are preceded by values, human action and interaction.	Inquiry is value-bound.

Source: (Auriacombe, 2013:723.)

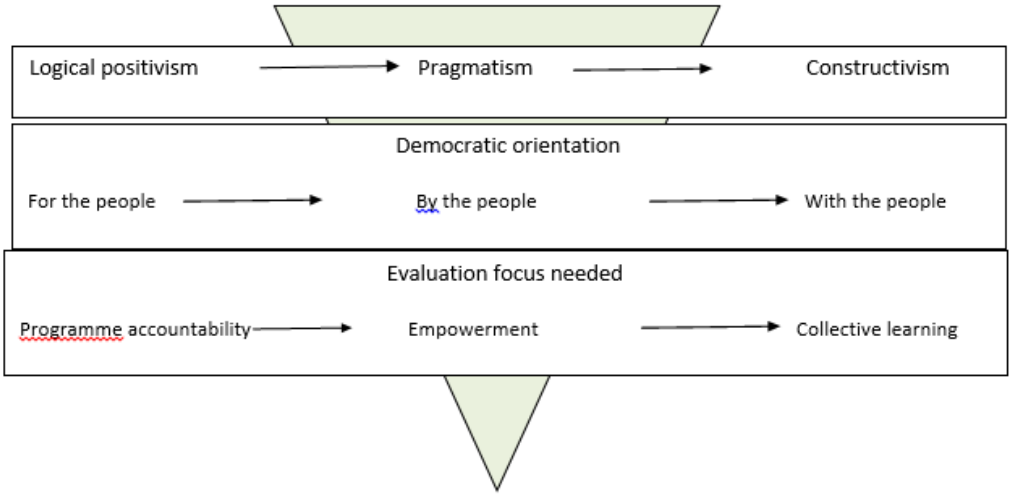
The preceding table highlights that a quantitative, qualitative or a mixed-methods research approach can be applied to evaluation studies (Hartslief and Auriacombe, 2009). As such, the research will either be: (i) deductive (drawing on prevailing abstract theories in scholarly disciplines to develop models that outline the link between programme treatments and outcomes), (ii) inductive (delineating and elucidating concrete perceptions and/or theories of programme staff and stakeholders in terms of the programme's course of action to produce desired outcomes); or (iii) user-focused (supporting target users to voice their operating theory) (Auriacombe, 2013). According to Patton (2008) blending paradigms boils down to making use of a paradigm of choices. He believes that, by following this approach, unhealthy competition between two paradigms can be solved by weaving both quantitative and qualitative methods into one paradigm.

Logical positivists' ontological viewpoints are based on a naive realistic belief in an objective external reality (Schurink & Schurink, 2009). Constructivists believe, on the other hand, construe that there is no real world or truth out there – only a narrative truth. (Schurink & Schurink, 2009). This implies that reality can only be

known by those who experience it personally. Conversely, realists or pragmatists believe that one can discover an external reality by following a systematic, interactive methodological approach (Auriacombe, 2013; Auriacombe, 2009 & Mouton, Auriacombe & Lutabingwa, 2006). In general, quantitative evaluation approaches take the form of experimental designs, while qualitative research applies methods associated with interpretivism, such as analytic induction and grounded theory. Conversely, the pragmatist/realist perspective uses both quantitative and qualitative methods (a mixed or integrated methodological approach) (Schurink & Schurink, 2009). An analysis of both the above tables shows that a combination of qualitative and quantitative evaluation paradigms can bolster our ability to conduct evaluation research. More specifically, it could aid governments in developing programmes and practices that focus on participatory management (Auriacombe, 2013).

When analysing the role of theory in the different evaluation approaches, it is clear that some are value-driven while others are value-free. More specifically, constructivist research will be value-bound, while positivist research will be value-free. With the pragmatist approach, values also play al key role (Auriacombe, 2013; Auriacombe, 2011). A comparison between different democratic orientations' evaluation needs, with the three most important evaluation approaches presented in Figure 1, "clearly shows a relationship between value-driven and value-free approaches...This link mainly lies in the way philosophical evaluation approaches (positivism, pragmatism and constructivism) can address the needs of evolving democratic orientations" *(*Hanberger (2006 in Auriacombe, 2013:723).

Figure 1: The link between democratic societies' needs with different orientations and evaluation paradigms



Source: (Hanberger in Auriacombe, 2013:726)

Figure 1 highlights that elitist democracy mainly needs rational feedback with a focus on good governance and accountability. Therefore, a logical positivistic approach will best serve this evaluation need. In contrast, participative democracy mostly requires an evaluation process that promotes empowerment and self-determination. A pragmatic approach, such as the utilisation-focused evaluation of Patton (2008) will best serve this need. Conversely, deliberative democracy's evaluation will best be fulfilled an evaluation approach that promotes free reasoning and ensures that all stakeholders participate in ongoing discussions, such as the fourth-generation evaluation method of Guba & Lincoln (1989 in Auriacombe, 2013).

Various models of democracy need different supportive tools to function efficiently. Evaluation is one such tool. Generally, when new governance models are introduced, the need for evaluation grows. This is especially the case in transitional societies, such as South Africa. Within these societies, there is a focus on strengthening a fragile democracy and developing new public management models or multi-level governance models to substitute outdated ones. As Hanberger (2006 in Auriacombe, 2013:726) explains, "…accountability and

effectiveness have become the key words in public administration…Governments are therefore expected to render effective services and to be accountable to their citizens". This is even more evident in transitional societies that are characterised by rapid change and unclear political and administrative roles. Therefore, a "democratic function of evaluation is to help increase effectiveness and rationality in public policy and democratic governance" (Hanberger, 2006 in Auriacombe, 2013:726).

Citizen participation is of key importance. Democratic governance demands that citizens participate in government structures. The participatory theory of democracy assumes that people's participation helps establish democracy. Therefore, participation is regarded as the most important quality of a democracy (Hanberger, 2006 in Auriacombe, 2013). Evaluation can also serve as a tool to help reestablish trust in government (Hanberger, 2006 in Auriacombe, 2013). As such, evaluation could serve as an avenue to recreate trust and legitimacy – especially in transitional societies. In line with this, evaluation functions could be: developing programmes and policies, legitimising those in power and implementing a democratic development model. Evaluations can also serve other democratic functions. As Hanberger (2006 in Auriacombe, 2013:727) states: "evaluations can and should have an enlightenment function or a learning function in democratic governance".

Now, more than ever, it is necessary to critically assess the current way evaluation research is implemented in a participatory democratic setup (Auriacombe, 2013). It is clear from Figure 1 that positivist evaluation approaches that provide rational feedback to citizens can no longer meet the needs of a democratic society that is based on citizen participation (Hanberger, 2006 in Auriacombe, 2013). A participatory or deliberative democracy is fostered when citizens are given an active role in public policy-making and are expected to contribute to developing and implementing a policy or programme, (Hanberger 2006, in Auriacombe, 2013). This participatory role clearly requires evaluation methods that are designed and used in policy processes where stakeholders, including citizens, are given a partnership role and responsibility. As such, a democratic function of evaluation is to help bolster the efficiency and rationality of public policy and democratic governance (Hanberger, 2006 in Auriacombe, 2013). Evaluation could thus become a democratising force where evaluators advocate on behalf of disempowered groups (Auriacombe 2013).

VI. CONCLUSION

This article focused on evaluation research methods that public administrators could use to help ensure that public policy and democratic governance meet the required needs in terms of effectiveness and rationality. The article concludes that being informed about contemporary evaluation or programme evaluation theory does not ensure successful evaluation practice. Moreover, each theory of practice is likely to be more effective in certain settings. M&E findings should be classified in order to be used as reference to improve service delivery. The article argues that better governance outcomes can be achieved by developing a new evaluation paradigm and applying innovative research methods and techniques that could streamline government's evaluation efforts. To meet the complexities, enhanced evaluation designs should be developed that will be responsive to stakeholders' changing needs. This is of specific importance in system change reform and comprehensive community initiatives that many evaluators are now attempting to implement. As citizen participation is the current focus of a democratic society, it is argued that a participatory evaluation approach would best suit the needs of a democratic society.

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