8 COMPARING THE VALIDITY OF TWO SETS OF EVALUATION PRINCIPLES[1]

Adding Value to Both

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter provides a comparative analysis between the evidence-based principles for collaborative approaches to evaluation (CAE) and those associated with the DECI (Developing Evaluation Capacity in Information Society Research)-hybrid approach. The CAE principles were derived from a research project that gathered insights from 320 evaluators who practice CAE. The DECI principles emerged from an action and implementation project within which a number of partner projects were mentored in utilization-focused evaluation (UFE) combined with research communication (Ramírez & Brodhead, 2013). The comparison provides an opportunity to assess the validity of both sets of principles in terms of their convergence. This chapter addresses two research questions: i) To what extent are the CAE principles reflected in the evaluations facilitated by the DECI projects? and ii) In what way do the DECI-hybrid experiences and principles complement or question the CAE principles? The findings confirm a high level of alignment between the two sets of principles and suggest that the hybrid approach provides an operational example for CAE.

INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND CONTRIBUTION

It is the view of some authors that CAE and UFE belong to a family of evaluation frameworks that promote the use of evaluation for decision-making, with emphasis on engaging the people who will be the actual users of the evaluation findings (Christie & Alkin, 2012). Others see CAE as an umbrella under which UFE is located alongside

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a wide range of practical and transformative approaches characterized by evaluators engaging program community members in the coproduction of evaluative knowledge (Shulha, Whitmore, Cousins, Gilbert, & Al Hudib, 2016). While the CAE family includes transformative approaches, there are some claims that use-focused evaluations are more aligned with what has been labelled *practical participatory evaluation* (Brisolara, 1998; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). Given the obvious allegiance to enhancing use of many members of the CAE family, there is obvious proximity between CAE and UFE approaches, which provides the backdrop for this chapter: a comparative study of two initiatives that have independently yielded worthwhile sets of evaluation principles to guide projects where evaluators work in tandem with program community members.

As described in Chapter 1 of this volume, eight principles to guide CAE practice were derived from a multiyear research project that gathered insights from 320 evaluators who practice CAE (Shulha et al., 2016).

> CAE is a class of evaluation approaches where evaluators work together with members of the program community (stakeholders) to implement evaluations and produce evaluative knowledge about programs, projects, strategies, and/or other interventions. The CAE principles are premised on the understanding that context matters and that any CAE project should be collaboratively designed and developed based on stakeholder information needs and interests. (Cousins, Shulha, Whitmore, Al Hudib, & Gilbert, 2015, p. 1)

In a second instance, and through an entirely separate process, a different team of researchers [the authors of this chapter] experimented with UFE through a capacity development research project called DECI. During a first DECI phase, a team of evaluation mentors helped five research projects in Asia design and complete five UFEs. The initial approach adhered closely to Patton's (2008) fourth edition of the UFE book. UFE is an approach to evaluation that emphasizes the use of the findings and the process. The central premise is that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use. In UFE, evaluators facilitate a learning process with attention to how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings and experiences. *Real people* means that stakeholders have a name and designation; they are expected to participate in their individual rather than institutional roles. In designing a UFE, the attention is constantly on the intended use by intended users. UFE does not prescribe any specific content, method, or theory. It is a decision-making framework, as opposed to a methodology. UFE can support a wide variety of evaluation methods. It is a process for learning and making decisions in consultation with those stakeholders who can benefit from the evaluation. It is based on the knowledge that intended users will more likely utilize an evaluation in which they have ownership. Users can include beneficiaries, project managers, and funders.

During the second DECI phase, we decided to introduce communication strategy building into the process based upon the premise that many of the communication planning steps echo those of UFE. We also hypothesized that the two approaches would yield added value when combined. Three teams of evaluators and communication advisors integrated UFE with communication mentoring with over a dozen project partners across the globe. From the collection of reports and case studies on this work, the DECI team (leaders and mentors) gleaned a set of guiding principles to underpin this evaluation-communication hybrid approach. While the approach followed in both DECI projects was based on UFE, the addition of the communication dimensions to the second project has brought added value, which, in this chapter, we refer to as the *DECI-hybrid approach* (Ramírez & Brodhead, 2017b).

Consistent with the overarching purpose of this book, this chapter seeks to answer two research questions:

- To what extent are the CAE principles reflected in the evaluations facilitated by the DECI projects?

- In what way do the DECI-2 experiences and principles complement or question the CAE principles?

As the origin of the principles in question, as well as the methodology used for their derivation, differ, this comparison is meant to assess the extent to which there is convergent validity and to explore the complementarity of the principle sets.

METHODOLOGY

Our motivation for this comparison was an early intuition that the two sets of principles overlapped, even though they emanated from two contrasting studies, and that the DECI-hybrid approach had not yet been systematically compared with other published work. We also acknowledge a professional bias toward participatory action research, which made the notion of collaborative approaches to evaluation an appealing framing of our work.

The methodology for this comparison took the following steps: First we summarized the two principal development projects along with attention to the different procedures from which each set of principles emerged. The CAE principles emerged from a four-year multiple-method study that garnered contributions from 340 invited evaluators working mostly, but not exclusively, in developed country contexts (see Chapter 1). Eight principles were derived along with associated *contributing factors* (Shulha et al., 2016). In contrast, the DECI-hybrid approach and its 10 principles

arose from a single project that test-drove a capacity building approach [in evaluation and communication] across multiple project locations, many in the international development sector.

We began our reflective analysis by developing a table where the CAE principles were contrasted with the overall DECI-hybrid approach. We also noted related *actions* and *indicators* that had been developed earlier for each CAE principle (Cousins, Whitmore, Shulha, Al Hudib, & Gilbert, 2015) that appeared relevant as pointers for implementation mechanisms. For each CAE principle and associated action, we produced a comparison with DECI implementation mechanisms. We subsequently produced a complementary table contrasting the CAE principles and its *Supportive Factors*, and the principles in the DECI-hybrid approach, with remarks and summaries of similarities and differences. We shared these tables with the larger DECI team with the following instructions:

a. *Validate the comparison*—the following questions may be useful:
   - To what extent are the CAE principles reflected in the evaluations facilitated by the DECI projects?
   - In what way do the DECI-2 experiences and principles complement or question the CAE principles?
   - More specifically, what is similar, what is different, what is complementary, what does not align, etc.?

b. *Introduce examples* from our case studies that illustrate the comparisons:
   - Draft short statements/paragraphs or quotes from the case studies that illustrate the similarities/differences between the principles.

c. *Share the changes that you would consider making in your practice*, as a result of the CAE principles and the analysis.

We received responses from six members of the DECI team and revised the tables accordingly.

While we did not prescribe a set of parameters to guide evaluations; the DECI team shares a commitment to evaluations that are useful, to mentoring experiences where stakeholders gain ownership over the process, and where emphasis is placed on ensuring that the research findings are shared with relevant audiences and partners. So *in lieu* of an analytical framework to guide the comparison, we relied on a team that has shared a common approach; essentially, a way of thinking and acting (that is encapsulated in 10 principles that guide the DECI-hybrid approach). The team also contributed to the closing section with examples of how the CAE principles may change the practice of our team's future applied work. A single comparative table was prepared with suggestions from our reviewers, as a synthesis of the above effort, and included in this chapter.

BACKGROUND OF THE CAE AND DECI INITIATIVES

CAE Principles

The CAE principles were derived from multiple accounts by evaluators on their experiences using collaborative approaches. They provide a framework with eight complementary elements of collaboration. According to the authors,

> The CAE principles should be understood to be evidence-based, systematically developed and supportable, yet dynamic and subject to change over time. In addition to the aforementioned intended uses and applications the research team encourages systematic field-testing and practice-based study of the principles with a long-term goal of revising them downstream. We invite members of the global evaluation community to consider participating in this endeavour. (Cousins et al., 2015, p. 2)

As described in Chapter 1 of this volume, the CAE team produced the principles during a four-phase study spanning 2011–2014. Ultimately, 320 evaluators, mostly from North America, generated narratives about successful and unsuccessful experiences including perceived reasons for success (or lack of it). On this basis, the researchers determined the enabling and limiting factors at play. Ultimately, this led to the development and validation of a set of eight overarching principles, dimensions, and contributing factors as shown in Figure 1. A subsample of 57 evaluators who practice CAE validated the set of eight principles through review and comment.

FIGURE 1 ■ CAE evidence-based principles (from Shulha et al., 2016, p. 194)
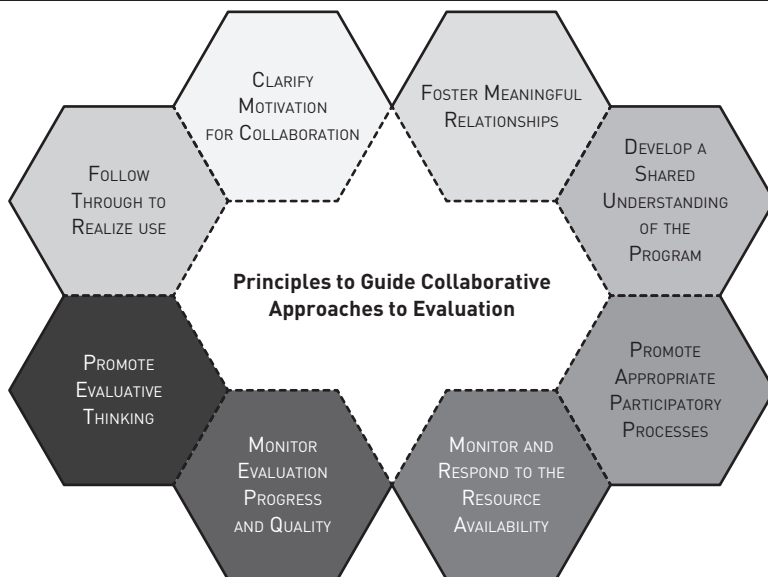
Why the CAE Principles?

According to Shulha et al. (2016), the principles are intended to guide and inform practice and understanding in, for example,

    i.   planning, developing, and implementing CAE projects;

    ii.   reflecting on/analyzing completed CAE projects;

    iii.   informing CAE training and educational program development;

    iv.   developing/reviewing organizational evaluation policy; and

    v.   designing empirical research on CAE.

The CAE team emphasized that the principles "are conceptualized as a set of interdependent considerations" and not a menu (p. 198). They are not prioritized step-wise but proposed as a loose temporal order. Their application is seen as being contingent on context, circumstances, and specific dynamics of a given situation. The principles overlap and attention given to any principle depends entirely on the context within which the program resides (see Chapter 1; Cousins et al., 2015).

DECI Principles

The DECI project is supported by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), whose mandate is to promote research capacity building in development contexts. DECI-1 tested the relevance of UFE with IDRC-funded research partners in Asia; with DECI-2 the mentoring was offered to partners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and as noted, DECI-2 combined UFE and research communication (DECI-hybrid approach). Research communication provides research projects and organizations with strategic planning to engage with partners, improve networking, and plan for the dissemination of findings from the start of the project. Some DECI team members had previous experience in communication planning and in evaluation, but none had ever explored the benefits of combining them as a hybrid approach.

The DECI principles have emerged from the implementation of a number of mentoring experiences where partner projects were supported in the design and implementation of their own UFE project and communication planning. Central to UFE is the practice of engaging stakeholders as *primary evaluation users*, a process which enables users to gain ownership of the evaluation design and its outcomes. This approach has great potential to enhance the learning (as opposed to accountability) side of evaluation, a hallmark of collaboration in evaluation.

The DECI projects have been unique in terms of the combination of objectives. On the one hand, they were research projects in capacity development. However, they also included a service provision to partners whereby they received mentoring in evaluation and during DECI-2 in evaluation and communication. This hybrid approach turned

out to have added value in terms of enhancing a reflective culture within the partner projects, which in turn often led the partners to both describe and update their theories of change. The DECI research team had the mandate to engage with IDRC research projects as peers: our role was to *test-drive* the capacity building process, while providing the partner projects with a concrete capacity building service. The commitment to research in our work meant that we could invite the project partners to experiment and learn with the DECI-2 team, enabling a peer mentoring relationship to develop, as opposed to an expert-focused one (Ramírez & Brodhead, 2017b).

The DECI-2 partners were essentially research networks including a few research grant recipients. The research topics were grouped under the umbrella of IDRC's Networked Economies program that supports work in *open development*—including open education, open science, open data, cyber-security and privacy, and digital innovations. Many of the projects had a *field-building* component in the sense that they were exploring emerging fields of applied research, especially in the Global South. The partners were based in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and North America.

DECI-2 provided the mentoring through regionally based teams of mentors in the international development sector: two in East Africa, two in Asia, and two in Latin America. Each team included a mentor in evaluation and another in communication. The mentors played the role of coaches that shared the steps of UFE and research communication, and they became peers in exploring options with the partners as the work progressed. The fact that DECI-2 was a research project in capacity development allowed the team to take on this collaborative approach to action-learning. The main authors of this chapter were coprincipal investigators for DECI-2 and worked both as mentors for some projects and as a support team for each mentor team.

The introduction of both evaluation and communication in DECI-2 was experimental and allowed for variations; in some instances, UFE led the process and helped the partners to understand their decision-making logic, which was then mirrored to a large extent in the communication planning process. In other instances, communication was the starting point and evaluation was added on. As the process unfolded, the partner projects developed their evaluation plans and communication strategies. The mentors assisted them in their implementation, and the evaluations and communication activities were completed by each of the project teams.

In many instances, as evaluation findings emerged, they informed research-intervention decisions, very much in line with the tenets of developmental evaluation (Gamble, 2008; Patton, 2011; Patton, McKegg, & Wehipeinhana, 2016; Ramírez, Quarry, & Guerin, 2015). For example, several projects began launching their communication strategy early during implementation with a focus on audience research, an early focus on networking purposes, and a subsequent shift to dissemination ones. They used emerging findings to adjust their communication work. This process is consistent with Patton and Gamble's emphasis that developmental evaluation (DE)—an approach that helps monitor progress of a model-in-the-making; it provides short feedback loops to help project implementers obtain evidence for course-correction of

innovative work (Ramírez, Kora, & Shephard, 2015; Ramírez, Kora, & Brodhead, 2017)—fits best under UFE; they referred to it as UFDE. The mentors took a leading role in producing a case study for each completed effort. The case studies were reviewed and approved by the partner projects, which fostered their reflection on the process. This reflection had benefits in terms of consolidating the use of the findings and appreciating the value of the process.

In June 2016, the full DECI-2 team attended a project workshop in Cape Town, South Africa, along with IDRC officials and two regional project partners. The focus of the workshop was to take stock of the progress and focus on future directions. One of the outcomes was an agreement to simplify the process and bring it down to its essential steps. In doing this simplification, the DECI team sought to make the hybrid approach clearer, more concrete and less overwhelming. After the workshop, the steps were boiled down to the essentials, a set of guiding principles emerged, many that were derived from the originating approaches. The principles that guide the DECI-hybrid approach (henceforth DECI-hybrid principles) appear in Box 1.

Box 1: DECI-Hybrid Principles

- Utilization-focused evaluation is a decision-making framework.
- Research communication enhances use of findings for influence.
- Attention is paid to readiness from the beginning.
- Training is demand-driven and provided through just-in-time mentoring.
- Course correction of project strategy is expected and planned.
- Utilization is the focus from initial project design to completion.
- A collaborative, learning, and reflective process is embedded.
- Participation and shared ownership are fundamental.
- The process builds individual and organizational capacity.
- Complexity and evolving contexts are addressed.

We now turn to a brief description of how each principle has been operationalized:

- *Utilization-focused evaluation is a decision-making framework*. By focusing on evaluation *uses* or *purposes*, and on *key evaluation questions* (KEQs), partners discussed and refined their own ideas about why their projects were being carried out and how—and their hopes for verifying their outcomes.

- *Research communication enhances use of findings for influence*. By focusing on communication purposes and stakeholders, partners discussed and refined their ideas

about the different audiences for their research—who is it that will use the research results, and how could they engage with them throughout their program of work.

- *Attention is paid to readiness from the beginning.* The mentoring was most effective when the projects had senior management buy-in, adequate resources allocated to evaluation and communication, and staff who were keen to learn about the approaches and follow the process and had some evaluative or research skills.

- *Training is demand-driven and provided through just-in-time mentoring.* Just-in-time mentoring allowed the partners to receive support at the key moments that coincided with their project schedules. The mentors were able to adjust the support to each specific moment and circumstance.

- *Course correction of project strategy is expected and planned.* In research and other experimental and complex efforts, the unexpected arose frequently, and by discussion and refinement, the partners were able to adjust the trajectory/strategy of their work for maximum impact. In the case of a project partner in the Cook Islands, they needed to revise the *user*, *use*, and KEQs entirely due to changes in election and political conditions.

- *Utilization is the focus from initial project design to completion.* The ongoing attention to actual use enabled the mentors and the partners to focus the effort on the purposes that were urgent and of most interest to the primary evaluation users. In the case of a partner in Cambodia, their urgent need was to convince the government that their app was a viable alternative to the existing solution for Tuberculosis screening. Two important events promoted the evidence of effective use of the app: an ICT4D Conference in May 2015, and the Sub-Technical Working Group for TB Control in Sept 2015. The team was able to successfully use and communicate the findings from the UFE in both events.

- *A collaborative, learning, and reflective process is embedded.* Person-to-person discussion was a mechanism by which ideas were refined and improved. By embedding a form of reflection, partners adjusted and enhanced their work and took it forward—especially by clarifying assumptions about how change was expected to unfold. In the case of the partner in India, the team enabled peers and community members to use a mobile geomapping app to identify and report maternal health violations of tea garden workers. Typically, tea garden workers are women and belong to indigenous tribes. Poor reporting of health violations by peers and community members led to team reflection on their theory of change related to the app. The underlying assumptions had not addressed centuries of marginalization and patriarchy that had silenced the voices of those being oppressed. In the hybrid approach, the UFE process helped to untangle underlying gender and equity issues and guided the development of key evaluation questions, use, and users.

- *Participation and shared ownership are fundamental.* UFE and ResCom are participatory by nature; they enable the primary evaluation users and the project teams to own the design of their strategy.

- *The process builds individual and organizational capacity.* When project teams owned the decision-making process to design evaluation and communication, they gained capabilities in both areas, which in turn strengthened the organizations that hosted the projects. For example, the manager of the partner in Assam India, admitted that the data he had from the UFE experience gave him the self-confidence to play a new role that he had never done before, which was meeting journalists from the *Guardian* and *Time* magazine. Here he felt enabled to take leadership in explaining the project and giving them case stories of things that happened to women tea workers in India.

- *Complexity and evolving contexts are addressed.* Action research in the real world is based in complexity and changing contexts; by acknowledging this situation and embracing it as a reality, the partners' research remained grounded, evolving and changing to remain relevant. With a partner in Australia that anchored the secretariat to manage a range of innovative projects in ICT for development, the decision of the funder to withdraw led to a change in the UFE process. The original KEQ, use, and user intended to study the outcomes of current projects had to be abandoned with the evolving context. The KEQ and users were now directed to potential funders and what evidence they would be interested in to understand the role and efficacy of the secretariat to identify and support innovative projects in ICT for development.

In contrast with the CAE principles, the DECI principles are displayed as a list, though without a suggestion of hierarchy. The principles encompass the full process, yet some may take prominence over others; for instance, some projects opted to delay attention to research communication and focused more on the UFE. Other principles were consistently relevant, as was the case of *readiness*. In addition, and with regard to the final principle, not all aspects of the research projects were complex, although all went through some form of adaptation as their contexts evolved and as findings emerged. Having described the two sets of independently developed principles, we now turn to our main interest in the chapter, a comparative analysis of the sets.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CAE AND DECI-HYBRID PRINCIPLES

The CAE principles are worded commencing with an active verb, suggesting desirable actions or recommended directives. Those in the DECI-hybrid approach read like statements, and they also suggest desirable actions. They constitute generalizations that apply across multiple case studies (Ramírez & Brodhead, 2017b; Ramírez, Quarry, Brodhead, & Zaveri, 2018). The CAE principles are not presented as a menu; rather, they serve as a guide, with the flexibility to apply them selectively. This is consistent with the hybrid approach, through a process that—in our words—requires a form of *practical wisdom* (Ramírez, Quarry, & Guerin, 2015). Practical wisdom "is the

ability to do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason" (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010), and under emerging circumstances, that will most often not repeat themselves. So, while the syntax in each set of principles differs, both are constructs that seek to shape an approach, with consideration of contextual factors and adaptations that are always necessary to adjust to each situation.

As shown in Figure 2, the hybrid approach developed by the DECI-2 project follows a set of steps in UFE and communication planning that can work in tandem. The steps follow a sequence although there are overlaps among them as well as iterations. Some steps can be combined—especially the *readiness assessment* and *situational analysis*—while others follow a parallel and complementary logic (Ramírez & Brodhead, 2014). For instance, the *target audience* in research communication might be different from the users in UFE, and the methods and media channels in research communication are different from the tools and data collection methods in UFE (for more information see Ramírez & Brodhead, 2017a). They are introduced here to provide the background for the analysis of CAE principles from an applied perspective. This step is complemented by a second comparison that is detailed in the next section of this chapter.

The CAE principles are associated with actions and indicators (See Chapter 1; Cousins et al., 2015). In Table 1, we compare them with the application of the DECI-hybrid approach where we have added examples from our practice.

FIGURE 2 ■ Mentoring steps in the DECI-hybrid approach
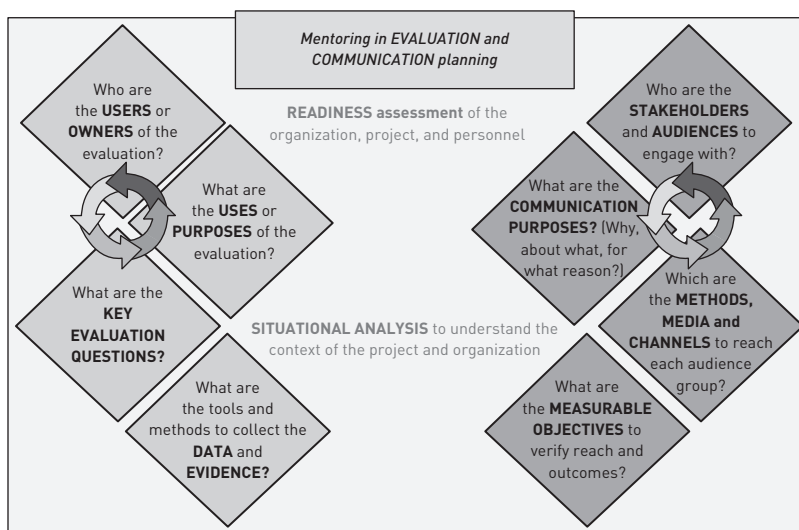
Source: Based on material licensed under a CC-BY 4.0 License, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

TABLE 1 ■ Comparison of CAE and DECI-Hybrid Principles

CAE Principles		DECI-Hybrid Principles		Comparison
Principle: **Supportive Factors**	**Action**	**Association With CAE Principle**	**Mechanisms/Remarks**	
Clarify motivation for collaboration • Evaluation purpose • Evaluator and client expectations • Information and process needs	Assess through consultation and document examination: Who are the important stakeholders and what do they value?	• UFE is a decision-making framework • Research communication enhances use of findings for influence • Attention is paid to readiness from the beginning	• UFE begins with primary evaluation users defining evaluation uses or purposes • Readiness addresses evaluator and stakeholder expectations • Communication planning integrates communication needs/purposes of communication and identification of key stakeholders and target audiences	• The commitment to engagement is shared. • CAE is collaboration-centered; hybrid approach is use-centered (collaboration subsumed in users being engaged with process).
Foster meaningful relationships • Respect, trust, and transparency • Structured and sustained interactivity • Cultural competency	Openly discuss, listen, and negotiate decision-making processes and boundaries	• UFE is a decision-making framework • Research communication enhances use of findings for influence • A collaborative, learning, and reflective process is embedded	• In UFE, the evaluators become facilitators of learning • Communication planning addresses linkages and media • Audience analysis enhances the understanding of relationships	Both approaches place emphasis on fostering meaningful and transparent relationships, with the hybrid approach adding a step-by-step review as part of communication planning.

CAE Principles		DECI-Hybrid Principles		
Principle: **Supportive Factors**	**Action**	**Association With CAE** **Principle**	**Mechanisms/Remarks**	**Comparison**
Develop shared understanding of program • Respect, trust, and transparency • Structured and sustained interactivity • Cultural competency	Openly discuss, listen, and negotiate decision-making processes and boundaries	• UFE is a decision-making framework • Research communication: enhances use of findings for influence • Attention is paid to readiness from the beginning • A collaborative, learning, and reflective process is embedded	• When users focus on evaluation uses and key evaluation questions, and on communication purposes and audiences, they express and challenge their understanding of the program logic • The readiness and situational analysis puts organizational and project contexts under the microscope	Close overlap: both sets committed to situation analysis, exposing differences and promoting shared understandings of program logic.
Promote appropriate participatory processes • Control of decision-making • Diversity of stakeholders • Depth of participation	Negotiate what form the collaboration will take	• UFE is a decision-making framework • Attention is paid to readiness from the beginning • Participation and shared ownership are fundamental • Course correction of project strategy is expected and planned	• Differences in users' real power is a shared concern • The hybrid emphasizes constant vigilance on the readiness side • The real level of participation is a constant concern in both cases	Both approaches share a concern with the meaning of participation and the challenge of bringing in stakeholders or users with different perspectives that may be difficult to harmonize. In CAE, this is a central part of the approach. In the hybrid, UFE is not promoted as *participatory*, although user engagement is fundamental in the approach.

[Continued]

TABLE 1 ■ (Continued)

CAE Principles		DECI-Hybrid Principles		
Principle: **Supportive Factors**	**Action**	**Association With CAE** **Principle**	**Mechanisms/Remarks**	**Comparison**
Monitor and respond to resource availability • Budget • Time • Personnel	Negotiate resources for the evaluation in advance; periodically re-evaluate during process	• Attention is paid to readiness from the beginning • Utilization is the focus from initial project design to completion • Participation and shared ownership are fundamental • The process builds individual and organizational capacity	• Adjusting the scope of the effort according to the resources is a shared concern • The hybrid addresses this from the start with a readiness review • The hybrid engages the users to focus the evaluation plan on the basis of the budget and time available	Both approaches address this critical step of alignment between expectations and resources.
Monitor evaluation progress and quality • Evaluation design • Data collection	Take steps to ensure data quality as per professional standards of practice	• UFE is a decision-making framework • The process builds individual and organizational capacity	• In UFE, the steps associated with focusing the evaluation and evaluation design emphasize rigor • Primary users are exposed to the data collection decisions, which enhances their capacity development • Step 8 of UFE (simulation of use) allows for verification of evaluation questions that may need adjustment	The hybrid principles do not single out evaluation standards, while CAE does. In our practice, we address this in the Evaluation Design. In a few instances, we have included specific references to evaluation standards in the final report—when it required emphasis (Ramírez et al., 2017).

CAE Principles		DECI-Hybrid Principles		
Principle: Supportive Factors	Action	Association With CAE Principle	Mechanisms/Remarks	Comparison
Promote evaluative thinking • Inquiry orientation • Focus on learning	Assess facility and comfort with systematic inquiry and develop informal plan for growth and development	• The process builds individual and organizational capacity • Training through demand-driven, just-in-time mentoring • Attention is paid to readiness from the beginning • A collaborative, learning, and reflective process is embedded • Course correction of project strategy is expected and planned	• DECI has had a capacity building objective as an integral part, and mentoring is the main delivery process • Readiness assessment includes attention to a commitment to learn • The reflective process enables users to verify their learning about the process	Both approaches share a commitment to promote evaluative thinking.
Follow through to realize use • Practical outcomes • Transformative outcomes	Plan to formally or informally follow through after the findings have been established	• Utilization is the focus from initial project design to completion • Research communication: enhances use of findings for influence • Complexity and evolving contexts are addressed	• Step 11 in UFE is about facilitation of use of the findings and of the process • The communication aspect of the hybrid pushes the project to address uptake early on • In dynamic projects, the iterative use of findings to adjust strategy becomes a means to maximize outcomes	Both approaches place emphasis on ensuring utilization takes place, which in some cases can contribute to transformative outcomes.

The narrative below is explanatory, and it is structured based on the CAE principles, with a commentary that describes the similarities and differences with the DECI-hybrid principles and their operationalization.

Clarify Motivation for Collaboration

This CAE principle emphasizes motivation, whereas in the hybrid, the emphasis is on *encouraging readiness* by primary users willing to co-own the learning process and other key stakeholders willing to support and allocate resources. In the DECI-hybrid approach, when we seek collaboration, we mean readiness to learn from the findings as well: the motivation is use. During the readiness assessment, we review the team member's ability and commitment to take on the role of evaluation and communication mentor, and we complete a stakeholder analysis to confirm the choice of *primary intended users* (PIU) and explain the roles they play, as well as our role. Often, we end up with a smaller team of committed PIUs, plus a circle of PIUs who have limited time but a high stake in the outcomes. We also establish communication actors and interests and their preferences with regard to what media and methods they favor. As the project unfolds, the facilitator or mentor moves away from doing to advising/facilitating. In UFE, the success of the evaluation is measured by the use of the findings and not necessarily by the quality of the collaboration. And the communication outcomes are measured by the extent to which there is effective dialogue, which can have significant implications in terms of how the evaluation findings are interpreted and put to work. A common feature is that without quality in collaboration there will be little or no use.

Foster Meaningful Relationships

During the readiness assessment the DECI team[2] emphasizes the value of PIUs taking ownership of the process; we underline the value of PIUs collaboration as they learn through negotiation about the evaluation design and decision-making. On the communication side, there is emphasis on breaking the stakeholder groups into different audiences with specific interests, roles, and engagement. This combination is key for the DECI-hybrid facilitator to develop meaningful relationships with the right people—that is, those who represent relevant constituencies and will use the evaluation findings. In essence, the attention on communication means that *meaningful relationships* are addressed systematically.

In the hybrid approach, the UFE and communication planning steps ensure that linkages, methods and media, and interconnections among stakeholders inform the evaluation plan and/or communication strategy. The relationship between the mentor

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[2]Throughout this analysis there is reference to the DECI team, which is often shorted to *we*.

and the mentee is a key success factor that can help foster meaningful relationships between the mentee and the primary intended users. In the context of the hybrid approach, relationships become meaningful when they help build capacity, as we see from the following example:

> The evaluator of the Cyber Stewards Network project acknowledged that the mentorship she received was one of the most important enabling factors for successfully conducting UFE. According to her, "it was incredibly valuable because it made the process come to life and more do-able." The evaluator said that the mentorship helped her gain deeper insights about the UFE steps rather than just going through the theory. The mentorship also helped her gain confidence on how to do UFE, to the point that she gave a presentation to an academic audience on her experience. (Citizen Lab case study; Navas et al., 2016, p. 11)

With the Australia-based Information Society Innovation Fund (ISIF) project, we also supported the mentee to collaborate with the Board of Directors, including some members with whom she had never interacted. The mentee's collaborative process resulted in more direct interest of the Board members in the project, raised the importance and profile of the mentee, and resulted in new relationships and connections with potential donors.

Transparency and a dedicated effort to address relationship building are shared by both sets of principles.

Develop Shared Understanding of Program

As a result of the evaluation and communication planning process, we assist the partner in clarifying evaluation and communication strategies. This often leads partners to review their Theory of Change (ToC) based on both the plans; and the DECI team can engage the PIUs in revising the ToC if needed. Some partners revised their ToC with our assistance, as a means of updating their evolving strategy (based upon a better understanding of their program assumptions) to obtain stronger results.

The DECI-hybrid approaches' inclusion of the communication dimension brings in a complementary set of challenging questions to the users. The hybrid's focus on organizational readiness addresses the organizational context directly. In several cases, the hybrid has had developmental evaluation dimensions whereby findings are used immediately to adjust strategy. This adaptation has been especially the case with evaluation questions that focus on the performance of the project's communication strategy. In other cases, UFE can challenge basic elements of a project, such as its underlying assumptions, how to communicate with its audiences, or its objectives. This process enhances the shared understanding of the program because it invites PIUs and project implementers to be explicit about them.

For instance, when evaluating a regional conference:

> As the evaluator guided the primary users into the formulation of the
> key evaluation questions, it was necessary to revisit the objectives of the
> conference to make sure that the questions would be relevant. To most
> people's surprise, the conference did not have any written objectives, so the
> U-FE process encouraged the primary users to write down whatever they
> understood the objectives of the conference to be. (CONDATOS case study;
> Navas et al., 2016, p. 6)

Promote Appropriate Participatory Processes

The actual collaboration happens through engagement of key stakeholders for the identification of PIUs, who are the ones who then define the evaluation purposes or uses and formulate key evaluation questions. PIUs also identify the evidence needed, where to source it and what data collection and analysis tools would be most cost effective. We facilitate this process with a focus on arriving at an evaluation design and communication strategy that supports the sharing and use of the findings. PIU engagement is a fundamental part of the overall process. In the hybrid approach, vetting the PIUs is central and can be difficult, as the level of participation will be mixed and internal institutional hierarchies may block those most committed to the process, a challenge with which we are sometimes confronted.

The use of *appropriate* in the CAE case raises the question as to on what basis that may be judged, but the notion emphasizes the adaptation to each context. It calls on the evaluators to create a relationship of trust, while also adhering to some standards to ensure that weaker users can maintain a seat at the table. Although it encourages stakeholder engagement and has some components that may involve their participation, UFE is not required to be entirely participatory, but it does call for users to be involved during the design phase. This CAE principle embodies the three dimensions of collaborative inquiry: control of decision-making, diversity of stakeholders, and depth of participation (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998), each with a sliding level that encourages a reflection of participation. The CAE dimensions are a relevant reference for UFE especially as part of every readiness assessment.

Monitor and Respond to Resource Availability

We engage the primary evaluation users in defining the priority uses and key evaluation questions based on our resource allocation (and theirs). We find that this phase is especially resource-intensive for the evaluators and this commitment needs senior management buy-in to obtain sufficient allocation of time and budget. This is part of the readiness-assessment that is done prior to starting the evaluation process. Both approaches can be negatively affected by staff turnover.

In the case of DECI-2, support to the AFRINIC[3] program could not take off properly because staff kept changing such that readiness could not be confirmed. During DECI-1 with a project in Mongolia, we realized that human resources related to evaluative thinking were limited, and we needed to suggest adding on a staff member. With a regional network in Asia and the Pacific, we scanned the Brisbane-based host organization to find who could assist the evaluation contact person during the UFE process and settled on a person with market research background to help. We learned that some *basic* evaluative thinking skills were necessary for UFE.

The DECI-hybrid approach turns this challenge into an organizational capacity building opportunity; the emphasis on utilization becomes a tool to focus attention on priority questions where there is a sense of urgency. In the DECI-2 project experiences, the level of effort during the early steps is significant and partners are advised of this from the beginning given the resource implications.

In the case of a research network dedicated to open and collaborative science for development (OCSDNet), the initial resource allocation to work with the hybrid approach was minimal. However, as the process evolved, internal resources were redirected and our support was focused on reviewing network achievements and on a communication strategy to disseminate their (collaboratively produced) manifesto.

Monitor Evaluation Progress and Quality

We often relate the Evaluation Design document to the standards of evaluation practice, including promoting cost-effectiveness and the practicality of data collection. The UFE process includes a simulation step that helps assess the relevance of the data and data collection feasibility. This step allows for making adjustments before spending resources in data collection and analysis.

The hybrid does not include a principle that is explicitly aligned with evaluation standards; yet, we have introduced them while helping the users elicit key evaluation questions and agreeing on data collection protocols. UFE includes a simulation step that helps assess the quality and relevance of the expected data before they are collected. This might not be a principle, but it highlights the fact that the hybrid approach pays careful attention to relevance and usability of data before collection.

Promote Evaluative Thinking

In our experience, evaluative thinking happens through experiential learning. Having the primary evaluation users review the case study that the team prepares is a key learning moment in the meta-evaluation stage. We also review their organizational readiness to learn about evaluation at the very beginning to demystify the process and

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[3]AFRINIC is the regional Internet registry for Africa based in Mauritius that hosted an IDRC research project.

to identify individuals who are open to learning more about evaluation. Emphasis has shifted from the traditional focus on accountability by adding the importance of learning to improve effectiveness.

The DECI case studies[4] document how this process has occurred at the mentor and partner level: an evaluative way of thinking is engendered through experiential learning; and the same is true in the communication field—audience analysis and critical selection of methods and media becomes second nature. In the DECI-hybrid approach, emphasis is placed on just-in-time mentoring as the means of enabling users to learn through practice. This implies a reflective process. According to the evaluation mentor,

> the U-FE process created a space for reflection and discussion about important aspects of our communication practice. These conversations allowed us to know and understand many assumptions that had not been made explicit to all the team members. It also made us aware of the importance of having a communication strategy for our work and to agree on its essential elements. The PIUs said that the U-FE strategic learning process was very useful to reflect on the [FEP][5] unit's objectives and goals. (ADC case study; Navas, 2017, pp. 5–6)

Follow Through to Realize Use

Since our work is UFE-based, we flag Step 11 (facilitation of use) from the beginning and allocate time to facilitate this process, not only to ensure that the findings are used but to reflect on the evaluation process itself as well. The communication dimension means that facilitating use is embodied in a communication objective, which means that this aspect is not left to chance. The production of a case study (Step 12 in UFE) has also become a practical tool to reflect on both use and process.

In UFE, the *facilitation of use* provides a dedicated step that is flagged from the beginning. The hybrid includes a principle about complexity and adjusting to evolving context that is not emphasized in the CAE list.

UFE seems to highlight the importance of use much more than the CAE principles. In our experience the involvement of the stakeholders through the process led to early and unexpected uses. Before their evaluation reports were finalized, one partner in Australia was using the findings for marketing purposes; another in Mongolia devised a new application procedure to identify highly innovative projects; and another in India dramatically revised its next phase planning.

Evaluators embracing UFE have to be extremely attentive to use and to transmit the same attitude to PIUs. This can be illustrated through the following excerpt:

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[4]Available at https://evaluationandcommunicationinpractice.net/?s=case+study&post_type=

[5]Freedom of Expression and Privacy

Our unit had such an enormous growth through 2016 that it would have been very easy to lose sight of what we were trying to accomplish, but the U-FE process became our guide. For instance, the table we made to identify our target audiences and our communication objectives with each of them, helped us to be very intentional and strategic at achieving such objectives, especially when it came to influencing the different government and non-government sectors that make up the digital ecosystem. It's not that we looked at it every day, but we had a sense of ownership and awareness. (ADC case study; Navas, 2017, p. 8)

DISCUSSION

The above comparison shows a close alignment between the CAE principles and actions, and the principles and practices followed by the hybrid approach. While we found no specific instances where one approach contradicts the other, the hybrid practices emphasize issues that may be only implicit in the CAE principles, such as the notion of *readiness*. Readiness has multiple dimensions that are relevant to most of the CAE principles, namely the existence of an organizational or project culture that is committed to learning and the presence of a space for learning that is not eclipsed by funder-imposed evaluation tools and indicators. In CAE, there is reference to *meaningful relationships*, which is welcome and aligned with the hybrid approach. Yet one can ask, meaningful in whose terms? What does one *anchor* the collaboration on? In both cases, this challenge means that we want those with no voice to be able to be included as well.

We also noted that two of the hybrid principles (*the process builds individual and organizational capacity* and *complexity and evolving contexts are addressed*) are not explicitly addressed in the list of CAE principles. In the hybrid approach, *following through* depends to a large extent on the facilitator/mentor's agility and expertise in creating, developing, and sustaining the collaborative relationships with mentees. Nevertheless, they appear to be implied in some of the CAE principles, but they are emphasized more directly in the DECI-hybrid approach.

The hybrid asserts its value as a decision-making process, while the CAE material implies this use. The hybrid is less explicit about its participatory nature, while most of the CAE principles emphasize collaboration. Both seek to build a way of thinking and reflection while the hybrid one may be more intentional in its capacity building goals. The CAE principles do not speak directly to complexity and evolving contexts, while the hybrid does, especially to emphasize the added value of helping projects adjust their strategy as the evolving context demands.

Nevertheless, the overriding spirit of both sets of principles is complementary and provides practitioners with a range of guidelines aimed at promoting collaboration. Having said this, the DECI-hybrid approach does not assume that collaboration is

always the route to follow. Rather, the hybrid builds the capacity of users to figure out when collaboration may be appropriate and when not. The hybrid leans on the notion in UFE of readiness assessment, which includes the relationships among possible primary evaluation users. In some instances, they may have had a collaborative rapport that has since broken down. For example, one of the DECI partners in South Africa ended up in court with a private sector organization that could have been a collaborating partner.

One dimension that neither sets of principles captures is the *practical wisdom* needed *for evaluators to translate this material into each specific context* (though Shulha et al., 2016 do refer to collective wisdom in their paper). Adjusting the language, the style, the tone, and the intensity of the evaluation steps to each context is done by instinct and intuition. No guide or set of principles will replace the importance of experience. The same could be said for communication planning and implementation. Providing this skill set for future evaluators is a shared challenge for both the CAE and the hybrid approaches. Practical wisdom is achieved through mentored practice (Ramírez, Quarry, & Guerin, 2015; Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010).

Another important observation, implied above, but worth making explicit is that the DECI-hybrid approach includes adherence to implementation mechanisms that really help evaluators and program community members operationalize the DECI principles. While the CAE principles are accompanied by a set of recommended actions for evaluators and indicators in the form of questions to pose (see Chapter 1; Cousins et al., 2015), our sense is that these implementation guides are relatively underdeveloped and would benefit from further explication.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis reveals the extent to which the CAE principles are reflected in the hybrid approach and vice versa. The issue of readiness emerges as a central theme of this chapter. For DECI, this analysis constitutes an opportunity to reflect on our work judged against the CAE principles that were derived from a different and wider range of collaborative evaluation experiences.

What the DECI-Hybrid Approach Gains From CAE

The DECI principles are best explained through their practice. In a similar manner, the CAE ones become more accessible when clarified by their supportive factors and actions. While both approaches share the notion that the principles are not a checklist, nor a sequence, the visual display of the CAE one (Figure 1) enhances this message. As the DECI-hybrid approach evolves further, the development of a comparable visualization would be likely to benefit users, particularly one that addresses the implementation issues and considerations. The hybrid can also stand to gain by introducing an explicit principle that is not yet present, namely the focus on quality.

What CAE Gains From the DECI-Hybrid Approach

The CAE principles constitute a gleaning from a significant number of informants with multiple experiences. In contrast, the hybrid ones emanate from a team of action-researchers working with a common set of steps that have been honed through practice (see Figure 2 and Ramírez & Brodhead, 2017a). While the inquiry process has been different, the high level of alignment constitutes a validation of the CAE principles. Where CAE could be enhanced in practice is by adding the concept of readiness, especially when this factor is flagged before an evaluation contract is signed, as it establishes the preconditions that may otherwise not be addressed. Of relevance as well is how questioning assumptions is an important by-product of the UFE part of the hybrid. CAE refers to stakeholders, not users of findings; it may be that UFE's bias toward users *with names and designations* is specific enough to avoid generic or institutional designations. CAE may also benefit from a more dedicated attention to communication dimensions. Many of the principles imply communication, but without a systematic planning effort, there is the risk that assumptions about how change happens will remain hidden. The evidence from our comparative analysis suggests that the DECI-hybrid approach provides a concrete operationalization of the CAE principles.

In the evaluation theory tree developed by Christie and Alkin (2012), the work by Patton is located in the *use* branch. Both Christie and Alkin and Patton assign the central role of designing the evaluation to a diverse group of stakeholders. Patton highlights the importance of systematically identifying the evaluation *primary intended users* so that they can gain a sense of ownership over the evaluation and become interested in the findings' utilization. Fetterman and Wandersman (2005) go further and suggest that evaluation should be a process of empowerment. Cousins and other authors refer to practical participatory evaluation, underlining the importance of organizational learning as the axis of this branch; and Preskill (as cited in Christie & Alkin, 2012) reinforces this theme by referring to transformational learning. As mentioned before, there is an overlap between UFE and practical participatory approaches that emphasize use (Brisolara, 1998). Cousins and Whitmore (1998) suggest that transformative participatory evaluation has rooting in the global south, with the emphasis dependency theory. They therefore differentiate two streams of participatory work, the practical and the transformative, and the CAE principles are explicitly considered to be an umbrella for both streams.

As such, in addition to fostering use, CAE seeks to enhance transformation where circumstances warrant such goals; the CAE principles embody this aspect in practice. In the principle *follow through to realize use*, the authors make it clear that use is broadly defined and inclusive of transformational outcomes (see Chapter 1; Shulha et al., 2016). The DECI-hybrid approach does not emphasize transformation in its principles; instead the emphasis (from UFE) is placed on utilization of findings and of process. Nevertheless, Step 12 of UFE (meta-evaluation) has turned out to be an effective space for reflection and learning with the partner. In several instances, we have

witnessed changes in organizational culture; in others, we have seen changes in organizational structure. The extent to which we could call them *transformational* remains unclear, as well as the level of attribution to our action versus other contextual factors. Nevertheless, the issue is worthy of ongoing consideration and inquiry.

Following are salient themes that emerged from our analysis:

- The importance of the stakeholder's participation

- Collaborative work among the different stakeholders

- Flexibility to suit each context

- Reflection and empowerment of those who receive the evaluation results

Upon reflection, we find that those UFE experiences where the partners were able to own the full process had the most profound outcomes; and they represent cases where UFE appeared to overlap the most with CAE. While this finding does not confirm that UFE and CAE belong to the same family of approaches (indeed the proponents of CAE consider it to be an umbrella under which UFE falls), it does show that transformative outcomes provide a connection. In other words, they may constitute two complementary, but at times different, lenses through which the practice of evaluation can be viewed. The addition of the communication dimension strengthens the DECI-hybrid approach by making linkages, relationships with stakeholders—a parallel and integrated domain. Nevertheless, the two approaches remain well aligned. However, are there elements of CAE that may influence how the hybrid approach evolves further? The following are some examples proposed by the DECI team of mentors-facilitators.

One team member liked the idea of understanding an *organization's motivation* to engage in a UFE effort, especially in the context of DECI. He would consider including this element as part of the readiness assessment because in some cases, he has observed that some projects do UFE just for the sake of looking good for a funder, not because they are really interested (especially at the project's management level). He also found that fostering *meaningful relationships* is vital for a successful UFE process. He works quite hard on this and engages mentees or primary intended users. One CAE principle that he would consider adopting more proactively in his future practice would be talking more explicitly about the importance of meaningful relationships, as well as listening more carefully to identify and overcome barriers to such relationships. He added that he would be more proactive about explaining to project managers and implementers about his *need to better understand the program* that will be evaluated. Sometimes he feels he jumps into the evaluation topics without spending enough time to understand the program, which makes him go back to clarify basic things later on.

Another team member mentioned that, while collaboration is celebrated in the book, CAE can possibly provide a broader and *deeper view of circumstances* under which

evaluation can be enhanced or limited by collaboration. The CAE reference to three dimensions of collaborative inquiry can enrich the readiness assessments done in UFE.

This chapter has presented a comparison of two sets of principles that emerged from very different processes. The analysis showed that the CAE principles were well reflected in the evaluations facilitated by the DECI projects. It also showed how the DECI-hybrid approach complements the CAE principles, with the focus on use as opposed to collaboration and with the addition of communication as a second lens that ensures relationships and stakeholder engagement are strategically integrated into a learning process.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. A key CAE principle is to clarify the motivation collaboration; something that the hybrid approach refers to as readiness. If you were a practitioner seeking to apply CAE, the hybrid approach, or another combination, what are the guiding questions that you would ask to confirm readiness in your context?

2. In the concluding section of the chapter comparing CAE and UFE, there is a statement that CAE could benefit from "more dedicated attention to communications dimensions" (p. 28) and "the addition of communications as a second lens" (p. 31). As a practitioner, what communications dimensions would you suggest? How would this play out with the CAE principles?

3. The comparison between the two approaches followed a three-step process: i) comparing the principles and CAE actions with a summary of comparable steps in the DECI-hybrid approach; ii) elaboration of the hybrid approach with emphasis on implementation mechanisms; and iii) a principle-to-principle comparison with attention to similarities and differences. What variations or alternative convergent validation strategies would you suggest might add value to this comparative methodology?

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