

Richard Hummelbrunner & Martin Reynolds



Bio

R. Hummelbrunner has more than 30 years of professional experience as a consultant / evaluator. In addition, he has lectured at Universities and provided training on systems concepts, as well as evaluation, to private organizations and public authorities in several European countries. He has been a regular presenter and session facilitator at the Conferences of the European Evaluation Society (EES) and is a member of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) and an active contributor to its Topical Interest Group, Systems in Evaluation.



M. Reynolds has worked at the Open University since 2000 producing distance learning course material for postgraduate courses on International Development, Environmental Decision Making, Environmental Responsibility, and Systems Approaches for Managing Change, and has published widely in these fields. He provides workshop support and facilitation for professional development in systems practice and critical systems thinking and has experience with facilitating workshops for EES and the AEA

Workshop title

'Systems thinking for enhancing evaluation practice'

Target audience

Evaluators (non-sector-specific), trainers of evaluators or evaluators responsible for professional development, commissioners of evaluation services.

Level: Intermediate/ advanced level evaluators and trainers

Workshop content

The workshop provides an introduction to three generic sets of systems tools for evaluating complex situations of change and uncertainty. These are tools for (i) getting the bigger picture of an evaluation scenario and avoiding traps in performance management and target-driven narrow-mindedness; (ii) expressing different perspectives in situations of change and uncertainty and avoiding 'best practice' dogma; and (iii) reflecting on and dealing with partiality of any evaluation in terms of inevitably not getting the full picture and dealing with inevitable biased viewpoints.

The systems tools are demonstrated using participants (evaluation) questions as a vehicle for practicing ideas through group work. This will provide participants with opportunities for guided practice. The aim is to emphasise the relevance of these ideas to any context of evaluation and skill-set used for evaluation, and by appropriately matching systems methods and evaluation questions.

Detailed workshop outline

Morning Session (3 hours total including 15 minute break)

1 Welcome and introductions (15 minutes)

- Introduction of facilitators and participants
- Agenda for the day
- Housekeeping (e.g. bathrooms, breaks, lunch)

2 Systems basics (45 minutes)

- Mini-lecture defining fundamental concepts and terms related to systems, systems theory, and systems thinking
- Plenary discussion: Relevance / implications for evaluation

3 Describing and analyzing situations - systems for evaluating interrelationships

(90 minutes)

- Mini-lecture providing overview of this category of systems approaches
 - what it covers: countering the 'target' culture
 - types of inquiry/evaluation questions addressed within this category
 - types of systems approaches that fall into this category
- Practical application in small and/or large groups
 - Guided use of approaches using evaluation questions generated by participants

4 Perceptions of a situation (1) - systems for evaluating multiple viewpoints (30 minutes)

- Mini-lecture providing overview of this category of systems approaches
 - what it covers: countering dogma
 - types of inquiry/evaluation questions addressed within this category
 - types of systems approaches that fall into this category

Afternoon Session (3 hours total including 15 minute break)

5 Perceptions of a situation (2) - systems for evaluating multiple viewpoints (60 minutes)

- Practical application in small and/or large groups
 - Guided use of approaches using evaluation questions generated by participants

6 Learning about connectedness and perceptions in situations – systems for evaluating boundary judgements (90 minutes)

- Mini-lecture providing overview of this category of systems approaches
 - what it covers – countering 'best practice'
 - types of inquiry/evaluation questions addressed within this category
 - types of systems approaches that fall into this category
- Practical application in small and/or large groups
 - Guided use of approaches using evaluation questions generated by participants

7 Tying it all together (25 minutes)

- Large group processing
 - How participants envision using systems approaches in evaluation practice
 - Strengths and potential pitfalls of systems approaches
- Questions/clarifications from the day
- Resources available

Participant evaluations (5 minutes)