

### Insights from Webinar Three: Training Evaluators to be Relevant in 2021

The Evaluation Centre's third webinar on evaluator competencies sparked a rich discussion around what kinds of training are needed to help evaluators play a meaningful and relevant role in the context of present-day challenges and realities – including, challenges brought about or heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, increased attention to inequities and an awareness that interventions need to do a better job addressing such inequities, as well as issues of sustainability. Below is a table that highlights some of the insightful comments and questions that were shared by different webinar participants through the webinar's chat function. These comments and questions include important ideas around “unlearning”, evaluator resilience, the value of storytelling and bringing in more voices, as well as looking beyond individual interventions to the local, political and historical contexts in which such interventions are embedded. Taking these ideas seriously and exploring their potential will be critical for developing an agenda for evaluator training that positions evaluators to be relevant in 2021 and beyond.

<p><i>“I find the idea of “unlearning” very helpful. My experience of teaching people to “unlearn” within the context of realist evaluation studies is hard, time consuming, an emotional journey encountering many resistances and at times, just impossible.”</i></p>
<p><i>“De-centre the single project and take a broader view of the situation. Rather than evaluation telling the story of a single donor, shift our “commissioner” to a broader system. Our current accountability aligns with the evaluation market more than the development objectives.”</i></p>
<p><i>“Thanks for highlighting that program evaluations occur within local, political, historical contexts! Very important to understand these broader factors to be truly disruptive within the field (apply principles of equity).”</i></p>
<p><i>“The idea of trying to include everything is misleading, if we think in complex systems terms. Boundaries are mobile, they change according to problems, according to new findings in the process of evaluating, etc. We definitely need to change evaluation’s epistemology to one which leads to complex systems. In times of these urgent global challenges, I don’t see how we could escape from this.”</i></p>
<p><i>“We are encouraged to stay away from emotional language in our reports actually :). I think there is a lot of room for more story-telling, voices in the evaluation reports (interludes).”</i></p>
<p><i>“Evaluators within institutions have more leeway in influencing evaluation practice, but consultants are hired to do a job. They have a limit in changing the process to something broader, especially for an organization with its own capacity issues – which they all have. No, the world is not becoming more complex. It is just the latest way people are framing their understanding. Therefore, interventions need to be more focused and targeted and not try to include everything – the way the SDGs do – or address massive issues that no country and no organization can resolve.”</i></p>
<p><i>“Wouldn’t simulations and modelling further steer the investigating social processes through mere binary variables, while concealing the true political intent of development as it continues to remain hidden behind the cloak of rational planning?”</i></p>
<p><i>“The concept of resilience really resonated with me and is relevant specifically in today’s unprecedented times.”</i></p>

