



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

ACHIEVING RIGOROUS IMPACT EVALUATION THROUGH CONCEPTUAL CLARITY AND COHERENCE



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OVERVIEW

- Introduction: Background to my work and doctoral research
- Scope of my presentation:
 - Findings from a meta narrative review
 - Lack of conceptual clarity
 - Lack of coherent evaluation methodology
 - Recommendation
 - Towards rigorous impact evaluations through conceptual clarity and coherence
 - Rigorous impact evaluation begins with a theory of change

The formalisation of postgraduate medical and dental education



UK postgraduate trainers:

Clinical Supervisor & Educational Supervisor





Edge Hill University



Meta Narrative Review

- Evaluations of formal, continuing professional development's impact on the workplace practices of healthcare professionals
 - Positivist, post-hoc measurement of pre-determined outcomes
 - Under theorised mix of quantitative and qualitative data
 - Theory based & realist impact evaluations

Wong, G., Greenhalgh, T., Westhorp, G., Buckingham, J., & Pawson, R. (2013). RAMESES publication standards: Meta-narrative reviews. *BMC Medicine*, 11(1), 20. doi:10.1186/1741-7015-11-20

Meta Narratives at a glance

| Meta Narrative | Strength | Weakness |
|---|--|---|
| 'Impact equates to knowledge gains. Evaluation means testing' | Specific, pre-determined indicators of impact Quantifiable findings | Inappropriate definition Monolithic definition Causality as unproblematic |
| 'Impact means knowledge gains, evaluation means testing, but talking to learners is trendy' | A step towards understanding the 'learning to impact' trajectory | Under theorised Localised Not generalisable |
| 'Impact is the result of causal mechanisms firing in open, complex systems, some of which we may have expected' | Causality is theorised Theoretically generalisable findings Some specific indicators of impact | No pre-determined indicators of impact |

Rigorous Impact Evaluation through Conceptual Clarity

Threats to conceptual clarity found in the literature:

Impact as a monolithic concept

'Impact' assumed to be mutually understood

"...the impact of this course on the learners."

Impact as post-intervention learning gains

...inadequate for CPD!

Towards Conceptual Clarity

Multifaceted nature of impact:

the impact of what on what? (cf. Kirkpatrick)

Yet more multi-faceted:

when does impact begin?

how long does it last?

how often must it be apparent for us to claim we have evidence of it?

in which 'sites' will it be apparent?

how is it enabled or thwarted?

Rigorous Impact Evaluation through Coherent Evaluation Design

- Threats to coherence found in the literature:
- Lack of conceptual clarity leads to incoherent evaluation methods

Impact = learning gains

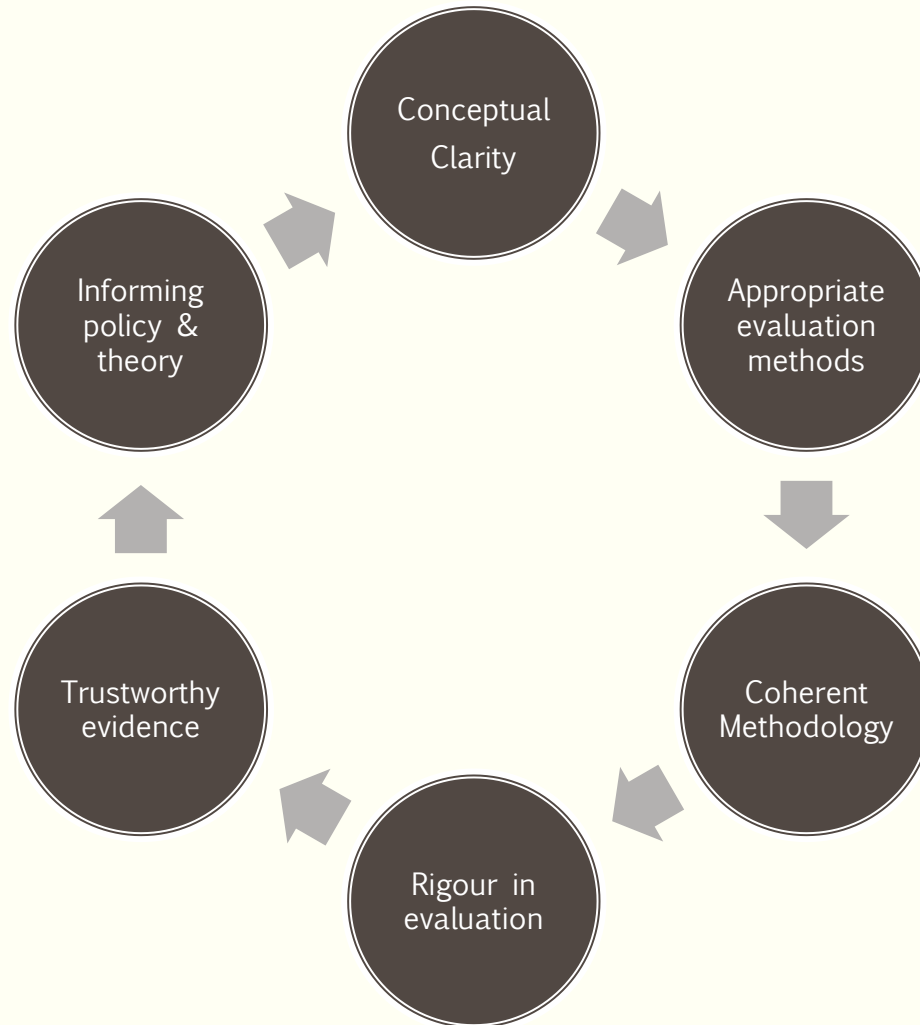


Impact evaluation = assessment of learning

Post-intervention, self-report methods

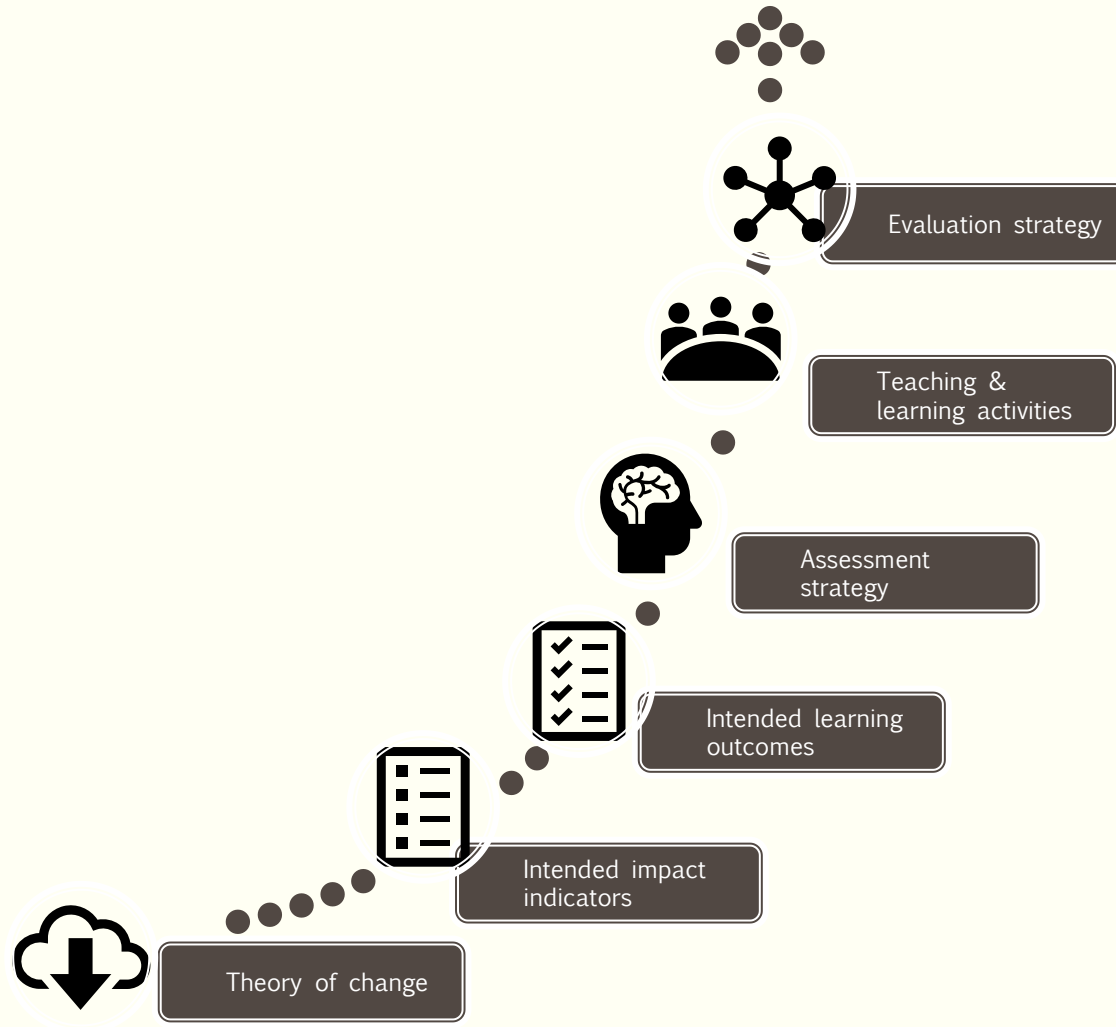
Immediate, one-off evaluation

Towards Methodological Coherence



Introduction > Scope > Findings > Recommendations

Rigorous Impact Evaluation of CPD through Coherence



Introduction > Scope > Findings > Recommendations



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

QUESTIONS...?