

Collaborative Action Evaluation: A Catalyst for Empowerment

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“To generate knowledge about persons without their full participation in deciding how to generate it, is to misrepresent their personhood and to abuse by neglect, their capacity for autonomous intentionality. It is fundamentally unethical!”

(Heron, 1966)

Introductory Comments

- **Evaluation – programs, people & practice**
- **Concerns practice with people in communities**
 - What is the relationship between the evaluator and those delivering the program?
 - What should be accepted as evidence upon which to base practice?
- **An evaluation approach that counters the currency academic / orthodox evaluation**
- **Based on Freire, Reason, Heron**
- **An evaluation approach that changes the way people work, think and relate to others**

Why Evaluation?

Efficiency

Effe

**Maximize ability to
enhance health status
in communities**

**ce
on**

**Evidence for
Decision-making**

Accountability

Comparison of Evaluation Traditions

	Orthodox Evaluation	Social Science Evaluation	Collaborative Action Evaluation
Paradigm	Empiricist or positivist	Human science	Emancipatory paradigm
View of Participants	Subjects	Informants	Partners
View of Evaluator	Methodologist	Facilitator	Social activist
Values	Objectivity	Subjectivity	Relational ontology
Focus	Facts and theories	Individual experiences	Collective understanding
Purpose	Empirical knowledge or Individual behavioral change	Meaning and understanding	Systemic change
View of Evaluation	Collecting evidence	Explication	Transforming practice and structures



How does the traditional evaluation process disempower?

Phase 2:

Collects data and 'leaves the scene' in order to produce analytic results

- **No opportunity for participants to reflect, examine and learn from data.**
- **No opportunity to develop data analysis capacity.**
- **Produces anxiety and cynicism about the process and alienates participants**

How does the traditional evaluation process disempower?

Phase 3:

Returns to announce judgment based on analysis

- 'Relevance' arises too late for improving evaluation
- Participants feel 'outside' of the process as objects of analysis

“Orthodox evaluation methods, as part of their rationale, exclude participants from all the thinking and decision-making that generates designs, manages and draws conclusions from the evaluation. Such exclusions treat the participants as less than self determining persons, alienates them from the inquiry process and from the knowledge that is its outcome, and thus invalidates any claim the methods have to a science of persons”.

(Reason, 1994)

Collaborative Action Evaluation

Collaborative Action Evaluation (CAE) plans and simultaneously implements and investigates change through a series of iterations. The CAE process ensures that all who are interested in the outcome of the evaluation, participate and collaborate in every aspect of it from its initiation to its conclusion. CAE creates evidence upon which to base practice and catalyzes change to practice. CAE is, therefore, collaborative, participatory, empowering, systematic and transformative.

Collaboration ...



To work together especially in a joint intellectual effort

Or...

To co-operate treasonably,
as with an enemy occupying one's country

Collaboration...

Collaboration is the creation of a synergistic alliance that honours and utilizes each person's contribution in order to create collective wisdom and collective action. Collaboration is not synonymous with co-operation, partnership, participation or compromise. Those words do not convey the fundamental importance of being in relationship nor the depth of caring and commitment that is needed to create the kind of reciprocity that is collaboration. Collaborators are committed to, care about and trust in each other. They recognize that, despite their differences, each has unique and valuable knowledge, perspectives and experiences to contribute to the collaboration.

Assumptions

- **Truth is a matter of consensus**
- **Facts have no meaning except within a value framework**
- **Causes & effects do not exist**
- **Phenomena can only be understood within the context in which they are studied**
- **Evaluators are subjective partners with stakeholders**
- **Worthwhile learning is often personal, obscure, and private**
- **Only some learning appears as behavioural change**
- **Many things that exist are not empirically verifiable**

CAE Principles

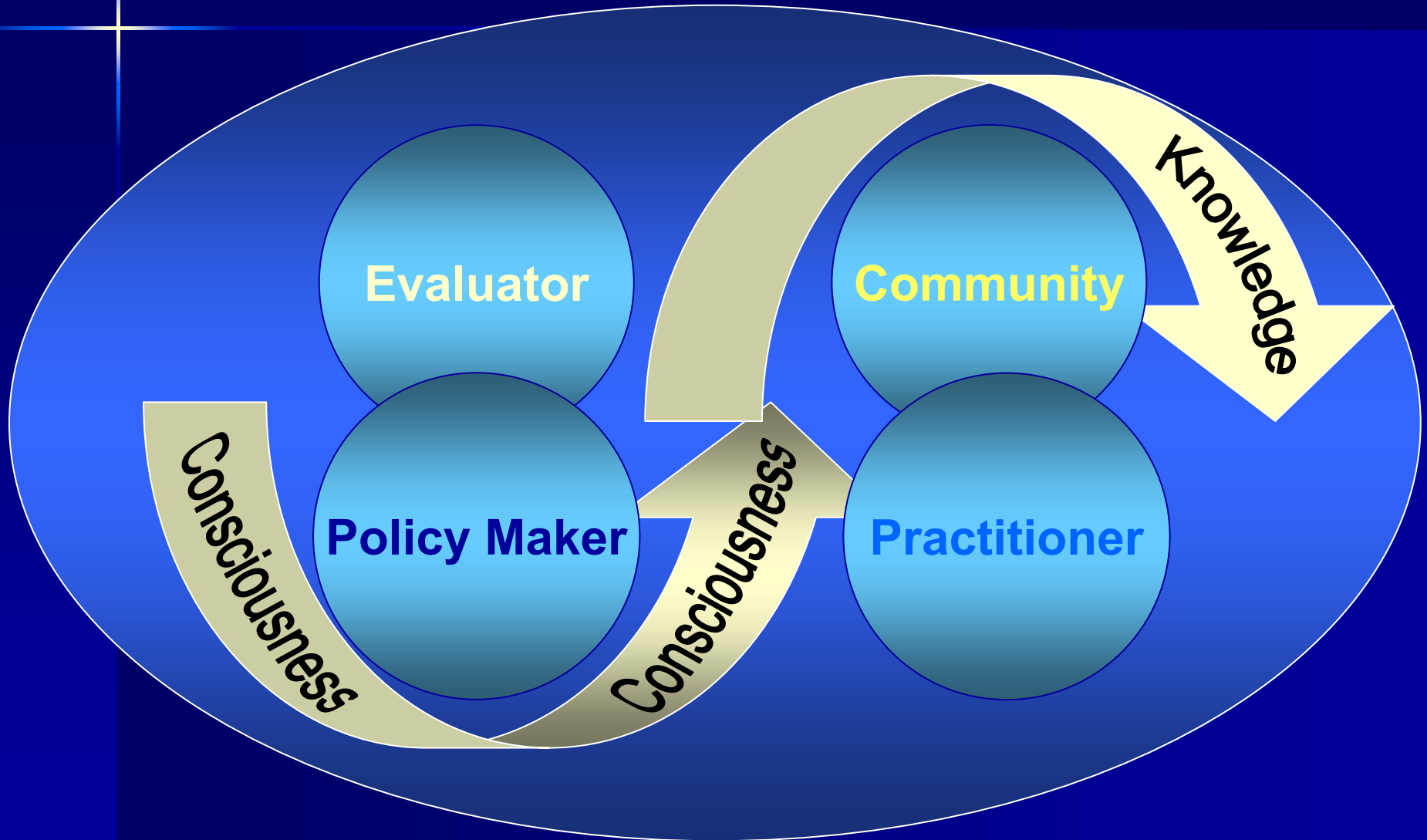
- **Participation & Collaboration**
- **Iterative -Reflection, Planning & Action (Praxis)**
- **Change**
- **Relevance**
- **Empowerment**
- **Sustainability**

Knowledge...

- **Different types of knowledge...**
 - ◆ **Experiential**
 - ◆ **Presentational**
 - ◆ **Propositional**
 - ◆ **Practical**

Knowledge

...Transformation of Consciousness



Praxis: The Relationship Between Theory and Practice

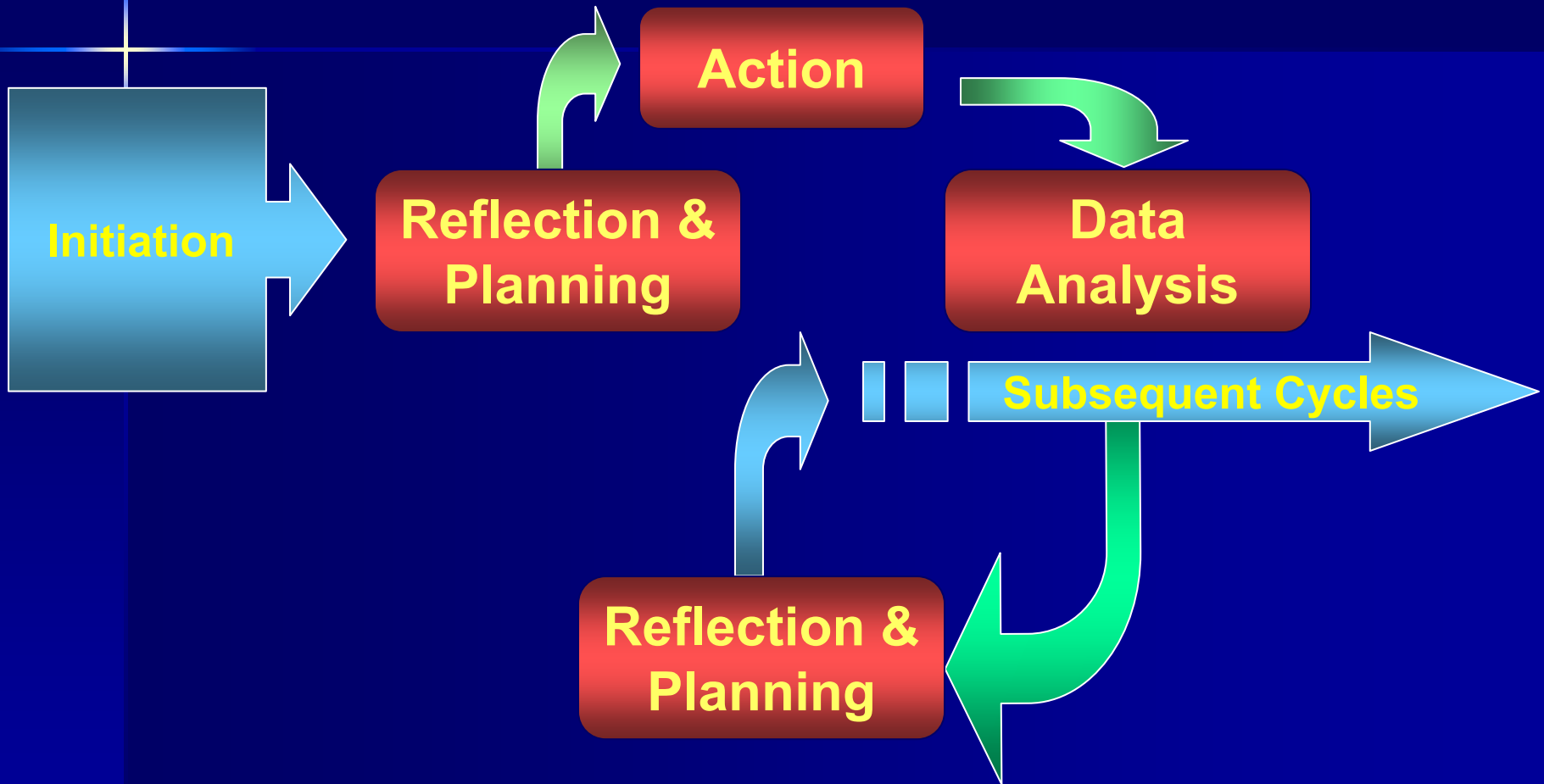


- *Praxis is like a dance between theory and practice - each informing the other*
- *Not a linear relationship between theory and (action) practice*
- *A reflexive relationship in which both action and reflection build on one another*

“The act of knowing involves a dialectical movement which goes from action to reflection and from reflection to new action”

(Freire, 1972, p.31)

CAE Protocol – Iterations



Data Collection Methods (Participatory)

- **Reflective narrative accounts of practice**
- **Critical incidents**
- **In depth interviews**
- **Taped interactions**
- **Peer observations**
- **Journal writing**
- **Audio taping actions or reflections as they are occurring**
- **Focus groups**

Empowering & Transformative Processes

Creating collaborative relationships

- ◆ Developing partnerships
- ◆ Negotiating power
- ◆ Creating participatory environments

Reflection-in-Action

- ◆ Reflection in action
- ◆ As a dialectic (praxis)

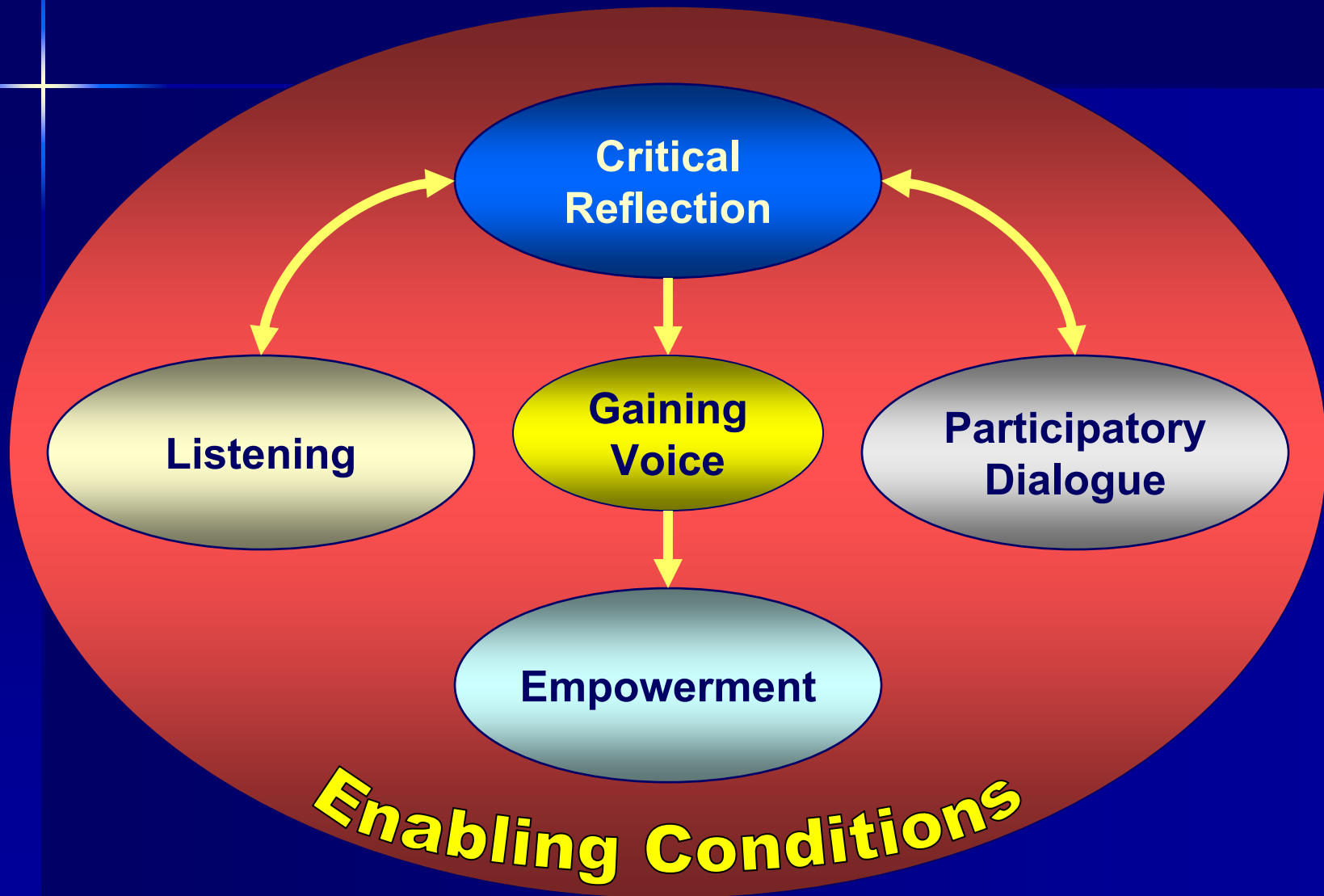
Engaging in Critical Dialogue

- ◆ Listening
- ◆ Critical questioning
 - problem posing
- ◆ Critical thinking

Empowering process...

- **“People become master of their thinking by discussing their thinking and their views of the world explicitly or implicitly which are manifest in their own suggestions and those of their comrades” (Freire, 1972, p 35)**

Empowerment as “Voice”



It is possible to inquire systematically and rigorously into a complex field of human action, and to do justice to its wholeness without distorting or fragmenting it; it is possible to co-opt busy practitioners into committed inquiry into their own professional and personal processes; it is possible for co-researchers to descend into the confusion that is real life without the protective clothing of questionnaires, experimental designs, and other forms of defensive armour and to emerge with worthwhile understandings (and evidence for practice) (Reason, 1988)