2019 UKES Conference Abstract Proposal

Submitted by Dr Rick Davies, Evaluation Consultant, Cambridge, UK. Email: rick.davies@gmail.com

Theme 3: Evaluation designs, approaches and methods – a spectrum of innovative practice

Presentation title

On the measurement of diversity: Explorations within a Participatory Scenario Planning process

Context

Scenario Planning (SP) is relevant to an adaptive programming agenda, because it involves identification and review of alternate futures rather than a singular vision. The exploration of alternative futures requires evaluative thinking: identification of criteria for comparison of alternatives, means of measurement and sources of evidence.

In late 2018 I implemented a pre-test of an innovative approach to SP. This used a participatory form of the evolutionary algorithm (variation, selection, reproduction…reiterated), to generate multiple parallel scenarios, some of which survived and proliferated and others which did not. Twelve participants from 8 countries engaged with the process via dedicated website. The participants were self-selected members of the Most Significant Change (MSC) email list. The SP objective was to explore how MSC could be implemented in a particular setting in Nigeria.

The completed scenarios were compared in terms of their probability and desirability. It was also possible to measure some features of these scenarios that might make a difference to these outcomes. Scenarios varied in the diversity of their contributors and contributors varied in the diversity of their collaborations. Diversity measures were borrowed from ecology and social network analysis. Analysis of this data has relevance to wider discussions about the circumstances when and where diversity is socially constructive or not (Page, 2008, Surowiecki, 2004), and to recent literature on the effects of scenario planning (Mellers et al, 2018)

Objective

To introduce participants to new and practical ways of thinking about diversity, its use and evaluation

Key lessons

Diversity can be measured and put to practical use, in a scalable way

How the session will be delivered

The UKES 2018 Conference PowerPoint presentation (and web app demonstration) will:

1. Using the ParEvo web app, show participants how the scenario planning process works
2. Explain the measures and assessments generated by the process
3. Report the very provisional findings i.e. from the pre-test only
4. Relate the findings to existing literature on the consequences of diversity

5. Encourage wider (free) use of the ParEvo web app.

References

Mellers, B., Tetlock, P., & Arkes, H. R. (2018). Forecasting tournaments, epistemic humility and attitude depolarization. *Cognition*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2018.10.021

Page, S. E. (2008). *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*. Princeton University Press.

Surowiecki, J. (2004). *The wisdom of crowds: why the many are smarter than the few and how collective wisdom shapes business, economies, societies and nations*. Little, Brown.