
Concepts and Contexts of Creative Evaluation Approaches

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Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation
Volume 17, Issue 40, 2021

JMDE
Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation

ISSN 1556-8180
<http://www.jmde.com>

Background: Creative Evaluation (CE) is an unformed constellation of evaluation approaches that is based on varied understandings of creativity. Although creativity in evaluation has been consistently valued and needed by evaluation practitioners and researchers, the use of the term CE is currently limited in its applications as it has been developed inconsistently and often in isolation to the broader evaluation practice. The authors review examples where the term CE is being used, to present this constellation of approaches and group them under concepts and contexts, aiming at fostering an exploration into CE.

Purpose: This paper examines the use of term Creative Evaluation by reviewing a set of examples from varied settings like educational programmes, cultural industries and social work and aims to present the reader with a better understanding about the contexts and concepts associated with CE. The authors discuss the transdisciplinary nature of evaluation along with a review of historical developments in evaluation theory and practice that help identify the emergence of responsive, flexible and problem-solving driven approaches to evaluation that can showcase a growing connection between creativity and evaluation.

Keywords: *creative evaluation; creative methods; creative approaches; creative thinking; transdisciplinary evaluation; evaluation*

Setting: Not applicable.

Intervention: Not applicable.

Research Design: Desk review was utilised for the preparation of this paper.

Findings: There are different conceptualisations of the term CE applied in a variety of disciplinary and practice contexts. The term CE is used to describe both the process of applying creative thinking and the process of employing creative methods in the evaluation process. Creative thinking indicates a broader application of creativity that shapes the evaluation process and often results in the development of novel methods while creative methods indicate a more targeted use of methods that employ creative practices to achieve a specific evaluation goal like increasing engagement in the evaluation process.

Introduction

Evaluation theory and practice have always been in constant development reflecting the various reasons why evaluation is seen as important, valuable and responding to contextual needs. Since the 1990s, there has been an increased interest in diverse approaches to evaluation like participatory evaluation, collaborative evaluation, empowerment evaluation, inclusive evaluation, developmental evaluation, democratic evaluation, post-normal evaluation and learning evaluation, and more recently feminist evaluation and sustainability-ready evaluation. This diverse environment for evaluation theory and practice, has led to evaluation being seen as a process that can learn from a variety of disciplines, such as social sciences, data science and design, and can serve a variety of purposes like to facilitate learning, produce new knowledge and instigate change in behaviours and cultures. Within this context, examples where the term Creative Evaluation (CE) is being used as an unformed and underexplored evaluation approach—are being observed.

CE as a concept was introduced by evaluation expert Michael Quinn Patton in 1981 in his book *Creative Evaluation* as a call to action for evaluators to think more creatively within their own practice (Patton, 1981). Creative Evaluation received praise for its versatility in thinking about evaluation problems, but it was also criticised for failing to address the reality of a time where evaluation practice had to adapt to a changing social and economic situation in which the job market and budgets were shrinking (Mokros, 1983; Rubin, 1989.). More recently, the term CE has been used to describe ways to think creatively about evaluation like conducting creative data collection (Christensen, Nielsen, Rogers, & Volkov, 2005), ways to apply evaluation into creative settings like art, education and teaching (Stuart, Maynard, & Rouncefield, 2015; Daykin, Gray, McCree, & Willis, 2017; Davis, 2009), or ways to embed

evaluation into creative processes (Harvey & Kou, 2013). There have also been more ‘holistic’ approaches to CE (Manohar, Smith, & Calvo, 2016), where evaluation processes are embedded into projects and are used at various stages in an inclusive and creatively engaging way. These diverse examples of the CE term, however, are not supported by theories, rationales or discussion in literature and the term Creative Evaluation itself remains undefined and its meaning underexplored. Consequently, it is important to state that CE, in this paper, is not understood as a new evaluation theory or an evaluation model but rather as a constellation of approaches¹, of ways of dealing with applying creativity into evaluation processes. What can we learn from these early examples of CE use? Could CE develop into something more than what it currently is, for example an evaluation model, a methodology or a theory? The authors review examples where the term CE is being used, to present this constellation of approaches and group them under concepts and contexts, aiming at fostering an exploration into CE.

Evaluation as a Transdiscipline

Examining the development of evaluation from a professional practice to a field-specific discipline and finally a transdiscipline is important when considering how evaluation has evolved to respond to contextual circumstances. In the *Evaluation Thesaurus* evaluation is described as a transdiscipline “a discipline that focuses on issues essential to other disciplines but itself has the attributes of a discipline. Statistics, logic, psychometrics, and evaluation are all examples of transdisciplines. Transdisciplines lead to applications of knowledge across a broad range of other disciplines. Evaluation, for example, is used in education, health, human services, engineering, environmental studies, and so on. Because evaluation is a transdiscipline, there is an ongoing debate within the profession and practice about the relative importance of knowledge about

¹ Here, the term “approach” is used to describe the ways of dealing with applying creativity into evaluation processes rather than to refer to

evaluation approaches as conceptual collections representing groupings of models sharing similar principles. (Smith, 2010)

evaluation qua evaluation and knowledge about the discipline most closely associated with the evaluand” (Scriven, 1991).

A disciplinary characteristic of a transdiscipline is that it can be characterised by its study and development of methods, tools and theories for application between and within other disciplines (Scriven, 1991). Approaching evaluation as a discipline that has standalone status but is also used as a methodological and analytical tool in other disciplines similar to statistics or design (Coryn & Hattie, 2007) is a useful way to build on existing evaluation theories and frameworks whilst adapting methods and tools to contextual needs.

The transdisciplinary character of evaluation that Scriven describes has evolved along with the increased diversity in evaluation methodologies, theories and practices during the 1990s (Patton, 2002). As evaluation increasingly became more useful and even necessary to companies and organisations, public services, governments and research, it learned to adapt more effectively in different contexts and environments. Recently, the social innovation agenda has particularly contributed towards that direction, as numerous programs are trying to respond to complex social problems through novel and innovative solutions that create value to the whole of society (Buckland & Murillo, 2013; Lindberg & Portinson Hylander, 2017). Exploratory processes, co-design and co-creation approaches that emphasise input from various stakeholder groups have become popular in evaluation practices especially in sectors like education, public health and social work when dealing with issues related to management, entrepreneurship and public management (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). Developmental Evaluation (DE) is a good example of how evaluation practices are being developed to fit varied needs, purposes, environments and contexts. From health and social care services seeking capacity building to reduce inequalities (Harper & Dickson, 2019) to educational programs seeking to create workable models for social innovation (Lawrence, Rallis, Davis, & Harrington, 2018), DE is being adopted as a flexible evaluation model that can be adapted to fit the particularities of each context but can also be

developed and delivered within a context by the actors involved.

Design is another transdiscipline that is being developed to offer novel approaches to innovation and problem-solving that are applicable to a variety of contexts. Within contexts of innovation, management and sustainability, design practice employs evaluation as part of the design process. This can be motivated by the need to create problem-based evaluations of designs (Shakibamansesh & Ghorbanian, 2017; Owen, 2007), it can be part of the life-cycle assessment for numerous design fields like product design, graphic design, industrial design and service design (Kim, Kara, & Kayis, 2014; Suhariyanto, Wahab, & Rahman, 2018; Steenis, van Herpen, van der Lans, & Ligthart, 2017; Hsiao, Hsu, & Lee, 2012; Coughlan & Mashman, 1999; Evans, Wallace, Cheshire, & Sener, 2005), or it can be used to evaluate the design process itself (Isaksson, Keski-Seppälä, & Eppinger, 2000; Aish & Hanna, 2017; Dong, Garbuio, & Lavallo, 2016; Nikander, Liikkanen, & Laakso, 2014; Tromp & Hekkert, 2016). A key common characteristic between transdisciplines like evaluation and design is the synthesis process; the process of bringing together elements from different disciplines and flexibly applying a variety of methods and theories to complex situations. The process of synthesizing is a creative process itself as it involves the application of imagination in considering alternatives, possibilities and solutions. The ability for adaptability, flexibility and applicability which is common to other transdisciplines as Scriven describes them, is a key element of what makes the plurality and diversity of evaluation methods, frameworks, theories and practices a welcomed environment. Within this environment of diverse, responsive and adaptive activity is where we find creativity becoming an area of focus and use for evaluation.

Instigators of Creativity in Evaluation

By examining the historical developments of evaluation theory and practice, it is possible to identify the emergence of responsive, flexible

and problem-solving driven approaches to evaluation that can showcase a growing connection between creativity and evaluation. This section discusses factors that have contributed to the emergence of creative approaches in evaluation.

Evaluation is continually evolving in response to developments in society, economy, culture and politics. For example, early program evaluation was focused on self-improvement (such as through the Great Society Initiative and The War on Poverty; Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1991, p.22; Albaek, 1998), and evaluation was used to provide rational, systematic, data-based feedback on the interventions that Governments were implementing (Dahler-Larsen, 2006, p. 143, 2012, p. 10). Later, such as in the 1970's, evaluation was concerned with developing approaches that were more inclusive of stakeholders (Vedung, 2010; Picciotto, 2020; Baur, Abma, & Widdershoven, 2010) to address the discrimination of marginalised groups (Frierson, Hood, Hughes, & Thomas, 2010; Hood, Hopson, & Kirkhart, 2015; Rist, Fernández, & Martin, 2016), to utilise and acknowledge local expertise (Alvik, 1995; World Health Organisation, 1978; Haldane et al., 2019) and multiple ways of knowing (Lincoln & Guba, 2004, p. 228). This era of exploration into complex social issues was a catalyst for many diverse evaluation approaches that later emerged, such as participatory evaluation, collaborative evaluation, culturally responsive evaluation, empowerment evaluation, feminist evaluation and sustainability-ready evaluation, as it gave recognition to issues that were previously unvoiced. As new needs in society were being highlighted, the adequacy and efficacy of traditional approaches to evaluation in responding to the complexity society posed was questioned (Preskill, Gopal, Mack, & Cook, 2014, p. 226; Lincoln and Guba, 2004, p. 226). The changing relationship between state and the public has also affected the shape of evaluation practice. For example, the rise of New Public Management during the 1980's marked an era of parsimony in which all spending needed to be meticulously accounted for, and evaluation became an essential tool for evidencing accountability (Chelimsky, 1997, p. 5; Henkel, 1991, as cited in Sanderson, 2001). Prominent evaluators

such as Michael Quinn Patton (1981), and Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (1989) published books during the 1980's, calling evaluators to think differently about evaluation research and practice. Lincoln and Guba (1981) particularly raised the issues of ethnocentrism and androcentrism in evaluation practice (Cousins, Whitmore, & Shulha, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1981) which led to calls for a more pluralistic approach to evaluation (Lincoln and Guba, 2004, p. 235). This highlights ways in which evaluators were responding to the needs of society and critically thinking about evaluation practice, such as the changing roles of evaluator and stakeholders within evaluations. These are all essentially examples of evaluation responding to the complexity that society poses. Complexity has become a key issue which evaluation, amongst many other practices, has increasingly been aiming to understand and effectively address (Walton, 2016; Gerrits & Verweij, 2015; Picciotto, 2020). As awareness of complex issues has risen, evaluators reflected on the evaluation methods they used (Picciotto, 2020; Preskill et al., 2014), and as a discipline it recognised that a broader range of evaluation approaches needed to be embraced to effectively address societal complexity (Walton 2016; Stern et al., 2012; Patton, 1981, p. 21).

What can be seen through examining the evolution of evaluation practice is growing recognition that alternate approaches to evaluation can also provide valuable contributions to knowledge (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2013, p. 1). Authors such as Dahler-Larsen (2006, p. 143), Cousins et al. (2013); and Albaek (1998) have highlighted the limitations of selecting methods that favour rigor and accountability over approaches which prioritise contextual significance and learning. This can be also seen through the changing role of the evaluator, evaluation's emergence as a transdiscipline (Scriven, 2008; Coryn & Hattie, 2007) and the increase in the diversity of methods used to evaluate (Mertens, 2008, p. 10; Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2013, p. 1).

A cluster of issues that have greatly shaped evaluation practice are those relating to social inequalities which include issues regarding race, sex, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation/preference, age,

physical and mental ability, religion, and nationality (Ward Hood & Cassaro, 2002). Politically and socially, society has been dominated by the voices of select groups (Sielbeck-Bowen, Brisolara, Seigart, Tischler, & Whitmore, 2002; Patton, 2020; Podems, 2010) and many groups went, and still go, without adequate representation (Jandhyala, 2012; Sielbeck-Bowen et al., 2002). Evaluation practitioners have responded to these inequalities by generating approaches, such as transformative participatory evaluation (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998), empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, 2015), culturally responsive evaluation (Hood et al., 2015) and feminist evaluation (Podems, 2010) to address these issues. These approaches challenge the hierarchy of the relationships between evaluator, stakeholders and evaluand. They use strategies to ensure all voices are equally heard (Cousins and Whitmore, 1998) and that no individual is overwhelmed by the demands of those in positions of power (Podems, 2010; Ward Hood & Cassaro, 2002). They also prevent perpetuation of stereotypes by ensuring relevant groups are included throughout the evaluation process (House & Howe, 1998) and they recognise and value the insight that individuals can provide about their contexts (Chelimsky, 2006, p. 34).

Rethinking the role of the evaluator, stakeholders and participants in evaluation has been key to addressing a variety of complex and systemic issues. There are many evaluation approaches, that indicate that there has been a shift in the role of the evaluator from assessor to facilitator. These approaches are often referred to collectively as collaborative approaches to evaluation CAE (Cousins, Shulha, Whitmore, Hudib, & Gilbert, 2020; Searle, Merchant, Chalas, & Lam, 2017) and include collaborative evaluation (O'Sullivan, 2012; Rodriguez-Campos & Rincones-Gómez, 2012), participatory evaluation (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998), empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, 2019), utilisation-focused evaluation (Patton, 2011b), developmental evaluation (Patton, 2011a), deliberate democratic evaluation (House & Howe, 2000; Howe & Ashcroft, 2005) and culturally responsive evaluation (Hood et al., 2015; Chouinard & Cram, 2020) though this is an unexhausted list. In these

approaches the role of evaluator and the stakeholders has become more immersive in the evaluation process (Shulha & Cousins, 1997; O'Sullivan, 2004, p. 23) and knowledge is produced collectively (Cousins et al., 2020). Higher stakeholder involvement is considered important to: address complex problems (Preskill et al., 2014; Kania & Kramer, 2013), to evaluate context specific issues (Hood et al., 2015), to facilitate learning (Dahler-Larsen, 2009, Chapter 17, p. 307; Patrizi, Heid Thompson, Coffman, & Beer, 2013; Preskill, 2008), to generate positive stakeholder-evaluator relationships (Patton, 2011b) and to improve utilisation of the evaluation (Patton, 2005). In addition to the role of evaluator expanding beyond assessment, the boundaries of who can be an evaluator have also expanded. As well as academic evaluators, who were historically commissioned to conduct evaluations for governments, there has been an emergence of public-sector practitioners encouraged to conduct evaluative research (Vedung, 2010). This also indicates how the transdisciplinary character of evaluation is traversing a multitude of different sectors to generate new knowledge and how a broader scope of knowledge is being acknowledged as valuable (Alkin & King, 2016; Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 2004, p. 228).

Through exploration of the developments in evaluation practice it is possible to see how evaluation has become responsive to changes in society, and how as a practice it has adapted in order to deal with the intractable issues (Manzini, 2015, p. 12) society poses. Evaluators have developed new evaluation frameworks and approaches that are novel, innovative and driven by problem-solving, and through involving stakeholders in new and creative ways within the evaluation process these approaches to evaluation provide new insights and generate new forms of knowledge. Creativity and flexibility are being encouraged in evaluative practice (Rodríguez-Campos & Rincones-Gómez, 2012, p. 161) with many evaluation examples that are reactive to context (Fitzpatrick, 2012; Cousins et al., 2013), proactive (Stufflebeam, 2003), diverse (Waapalaneexkweew & Dodge-Francis, 2018), inclusive (Chouinard & Milley, 2018), reflexive (Fetterman, 2019), adaptive (Schwandt, 2019), non-linear (Patton, 1994) and useable

(Cousins & Earl, 1992; Patton, 2011b). This has led to the diversification of evaluation practice and encouraged evaluators to think divergently about the approaches and methods they use to evaluate.

Creative Evaluation Concepts and Contexts

In this section we discuss CE uses by reviewing examples from disciplines and practices like evaluation, education, social work, arts and design where the term CE has been used by the authors to describe their evaluation approach. The examples suggest that the term CE is being used in a variety of contexts—the contextual settings within which CE is being applied—often involving different conceptualisations of creativity. The term CE is used in contexts like community engagement, educational programmes, arts and the cultural industries. In terms of concepts, we have observed that the term CE is used to generally describe a creative approach towards conducting an evaluation and that there are two main narratives attached to this approach, one being the application of creative thinking and the other being the application of creative methods as part of conducting an evaluation. As the use of the term CE is still limited, we have observed several other examples where creative thinking or creative methods are being employed and embedded within existing evaluation methodologies and frameworks where the authors are not referring to those elements as ‘creative’. For example, Campbell and Mark (2006) examine program and policy evaluation and employ negotiation techniques to improve stakeholder dialogue; Edmonds, Bilda, and Muller (2009) developed a three-viewpoint method, that includes the viewpoints of the artist, the curator and the evaluator, to evaluate interactive artworks which led to the development of an evaluation framework for evaluating audience experience based on design protocols. There are also examples in evaluation practice where arts-based inquiry has been integrated into evaluation methodology (Simons & McCormack, 2007) in an effort to produce different ways of knowing and understanding.

Although this work is relevant to the creative methods approach in evaluation, it is not being examined in this paper as the aim is to present the reader with evaluation examples in relation to creativity rather than targeting a specific creative medium—arts—and examine how it has been applied in evaluation practice. Finally, there are examples where the term CE is associated with the assessment of creativity itself in art, design, digital systems, computational and educational contexts (Barbot, Besançon, & I Lubart, 2011; Jordanous, 2012; Candy, 2013, Christensen & Ball, 2016). It is important however, to separate between evaluating creatively by applying creative thinking and creative methods and evaluating creativity by evaluating the creative process itself. The above indicate that there is a need to further examine the use of the term CE in contemporary settings and to explore its potential contribution to evaluation practice.

Creative thinking and creative methods are discussed here as CE conceptualisations and reflect the narratives presented by the authors of the CE examples reviewed in this paper. Creative thinking is a process where imagination is applied in the consideration of alternatives, possibilities, other ways of thinking and doing things. Psychological theories suggest that the process of creative thinking involves two components, the generative component where novel ideas are created and the evaluative component where the ideas are assessed on their value and usefulness (Finke, Wart, & Smith, 1992; Basadur et al., 1982; Ellamil, Beeman, & Christoff, 2012). Creative thinking, often applied in problem-solving contexts, can involve practices like redefining a problem or a goal in different ways, or finding new types of solutions and applying them across various domains of knowledge, which can often promote a trans/multi/cross-disciplinary approach in the problem-solving process. This can also relate to the transdisciplinary process of synthesizing by bringing together elements from different disciplines and flexibly applying methods and theories to complex situations. Creative thinking requires being open to new ideas and possibilities and it is often applied when seeking to produce original and innovative outcomes, a message similar to that of Patton’s Creative Evaluation. In the

examples reviewed in this paper, creative thinking is being understood as the process of applying creativity towards the whole of a project's evaluation that in turn can result to the development of creative methods and tools. On the other hand, creative methods are understood as the employment of creative methods and tools for a specific purpose like gathering feedback without necessarily applying a creative approach to the whole of a project's evaluation. However, this binary grouping should not exclude a flexible overlap between the two—creative thinking and creative methods – and it is being used here by the authors to help the reader understand how the term CE is being used in the following examples.

Marentakis, Pirrò and Weger (2017) use the term CE to describe a novel way to evaluate interactive art in an attempt to move away from Human Computer Interaction (HCI) related approaches that focus on usability engineering and are metrics-driven. They describe CE as a process that uses creative practices in the context of interactive systems evaluation and that invites participants to articulate their interactive experience using artistic practice. Their approach involved other artists as participants producing videos and artworks that showed their thoughts and feelings about the interactive artworks and presented the results along with the interactive artworks as a public event. This was followed by the participants also writing two paragraphs as commentary to their video/artwork post-participation. The choice to use mediums that focus on showing instead of saying was made as a rich non-verbal alternative evaluation technique proposition for interaction design. The authors observed increased engagement and motivation to participants which they relate to CE and the fact that they placed the responsibility for the evaluation outcome on the participants themselves.

Manohar et al. (2016) use the term CE in a design context to explore and evidence the value of the co-design approach in consultation and engagement processes. They developed and tested evaluation tools through creative co-design workshops by deliberately embedding them into engagement activities. The use of CE is better described in this context as creative engagement through the

evaluation process. The aim was to capture evidence of impact in a meaningful format that would be visible to the relevant communities and the researchers making evaluation a collaborative process. For example, 'The Evaluation Game Tool' was co-created as part of a workshop with a range of public sector partners to determine what is working, why, what could be better and to help generate ideas for future improvements. Through co-creation workshops researchers were able to evaluate the short-term success of their consultation and engagement processes, and by collecting data on the use of the tools co-created during workshops they were also able to evaluate the long-term success.

The narrative of creative methods on the other hand describes an evaluation approach where the application of methods and tools based on arts, technology and design is used to achieve an original and innovative outcome. Creative methods like methods for data collection, are often applied within an existed evaluation model and are described as more engaging, accessible and inclusive by the authors. These methods often fit participatory-driven approaches to evaluation, where the evaluation processes create opportunities for participants to engage in the process of valuing. Creative methods can mean many things like developing a novel tool to engage with participants or employing a novel method for collecting data, using art-based activities to collaboratively work on a problem with stakeholders, or using creative methods to communicate impact to the public.

In *Evaluation Practice for Projects with Young People: A Guide to Creative Research* (Stuart et al., 2015), the term CE is being used to describe tools employed as part of an evaluation approach in social work settings, that is participatory, engaging and meaningful and that relates to the needs of young people, practitioners and organisations. CE tools are used as "important mechanisms that can support the engagement of young people in evaluation and that can transform evaluation into a meaning-making exercise for young people rather than a box-ticking exercise or interrogation" (Stuart et al., 2015). The authors propose several creative tools like shields, line outs, journey maps, Lego and creative canvases. This is also supported by an online learning space where several other

creative tools like I Poems, Mask Making, Dream Boards, Puppetry and Blob people are made available. In this context, CE is explored with the use of specific tools that use creative practices in their design.

At a youth educational program 'Extension' (Boleman, Rollins, & Pierce Jr., 2009), a new 'creative evaluation strategy' - as described by the authors - is used at a youth wildlife camp. This evaluation strategy utilises a tri-fold display method to allow participants to 'showcase' what they learned during their time at the camp and to measure impact. Participants were invited to design a tri-fold display using arts and crafts and reflect on their experience with the program. Participants were invited to build the displays as communities and to tell others about their experiences which supported them in building critical life skills. The authors point out that evaluation in their organisation is used as a mechanism to measure program effectiveness by addressing outputs (satisfaction), outcomes (knowledge, skills, behaviours), and economics (monetary benefits or money saved), and that this new CE method has been developed to measure a behavioural outcome. This is another example where a CE method is developed around the participants' involvement in creative tasks.

Christensen et al. (2005), explore creative data collection methods in educational settings and provide a number of examples that reflect the particularities of the evaluation context and environment. Christensen et al. suggest creative applications of already existing methods which also indicates a process of thinking creatively about methods. An example is the use of Post-it Surveys, a technique developed by Judy Machen of the Bradbury Museum in New Mexico, USA, which is a data collection method where participants are encouraged to answer questions on Post-its while also interacting with other participants' answers and comments. Christensen et al. suggest applying this method in educational settings as a convenient way to collect data at all times from a range of participants, even for those who attend a setting sporadically. Other examples of creative data collection approaches are the Kiddie Focus Groups where the focus group design is adapted to fit the 'young children' audience; Naïve Notions were mock-up

exhibits and interviews applied in a museum setting aimed to address existing misconceptions about the gravity of exhibits; Archival Data, which a method that utilises guest books, gift shop purchases linked to postal codes and donation boxes as an unobtrusive means for collecting data in drop-in programs and finally The Talk Aloud method, another creative approach to data collection similar to the think-aloud methods used in usability testing, asks participants to say what they see or what they are thinking as they encounter an exhibit or experience a component of a nonformal education program. The authors invite evaluation practitioners to adjust the methods to their own settings and needs.

The examples reviewed in this section suggest that currently the term CE is not being used as a comprehensive standalone evaluation approach but rather as an exploratory practice or as a constellation of approaches where creative methods are being employed in order to serve specific evaluation needs like increasing engagement or finding new ways to collect data on soft issues. The different conceptualisations of creativity expressed using the term CE and its broad applications in contextual settings, also suggest that CE has the potential to be further explored and developed in collaboration with other evaluation approaches, theories and models rather than as a standalone evaluation approach. What drives CE currently, as observed through the examples reviewed in this paper, is the application of creativity—thinking and practice—as a means of offering solutions to evaluation problems and finding alternative ways of conducting evaluation (engagement, data collection, reporting). Although creativity in evaluation has been consistently valued and needed by evaluation practitioners and researchers, the use of the term CE is currently limited in its applications as it has been developed inconsistently and often in isolation to the broader evaluation practice. Therefore, a more systematic exploration of creativity and evaluation is required to be able to examine and evaluate CE's potential and contribution to evaluation practice and research.

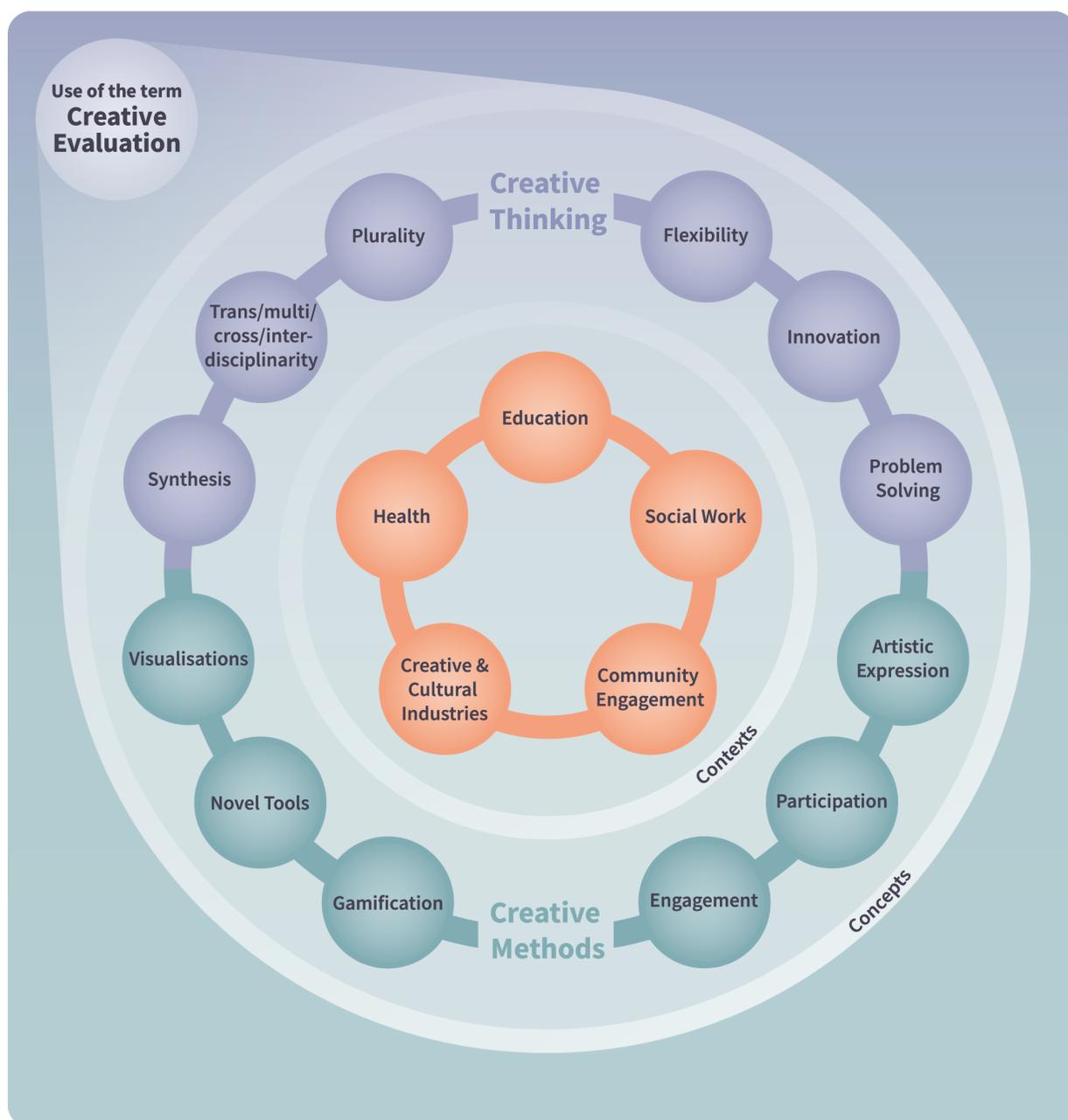


Figure 1: Visualisation of concepts and contexts based on the examples reviewed in the paper where the term CE is being used.

Conclusions

The examples reviewed for the purpose of this paper indicate that there are different conceptualisations of the term CE and that those are applied in a variety of disciplinary and practice contexts. The term CE is used to

described both the process of applying creative thinking and the process of employing creative methods in the evaluation process. Creative thinking indicates a broader application of creativity that shapes the evaluation process and often results in the development of novel methods while creative methods indicate a more targeted use of methods that employ

creative practices in order to achieve a specific evaluation goal like increasing engagement in the evaluation process. The authors have also observed that the term CE has been used to describe the evaluation of creativity in arts, design, computational and educational settings. The different conceptualisations of the term CE can create confusion as to what CE means and how it is being used.

At the same time, the contextual settings within which CE is being used, like social work, arts, education and design, indicate that the term CE is used within settings that have historically been using creative processes within their practice like educational settings. However, it is possible that creative approaches to evaluation are being applied in other disciplinary and practice fields that do not characterise them as creative.

All the above indicate that more research and practice into creativity and evaluation is needed. There is a need to better understand the use of the term CE as a constellation of approaches rather than an evaluation theory or model and there is also a need to explore its applications within the contemporary evaluation landscape where new evaluation techniques continue to emerge and creativity is often viewed as a way to address complex problems and systems. The diverse environment within which the term CE is currently being used and developed indicates that CE approaches have the potential to be adaptable, flexible and applicable. As a next step, the authors suggest that a further exploration into how creativity can be built into evaluation models, frameworks, methodologies, methods and tools within a trans- and multi-disciplinary context has the potential to make valuable contributions to evaluation theory and practice in the future.

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