Mentoring Emerging Evaluators – Sharing Experiences from the Global South

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Abstract. *This chapter describes a mentoring program the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) is implementing to support emerging evaluators. Building a business case for mentoring, the authors attempt to establish evidence for what has and has not worked, and suggest how the program can be carried out effectively. Links between mentoring and the professionalization of evaluation, and the potential benefits of the IDEAS program are discussed, as well as different models of mentoring; mentoring policies and procefdures; how they should be developed, and by whom; the importance of recognizing mentors for the work they do; and reverse mentorship, with young evaluators mentoring older professionals in social media and the use of digital technology. Summaries of presentations made by three of the authors at a panel discussion of young and emerging evaluators at the 2015 IDEAS Global Assembly describe mentoring experiences in Nigeria, the Middle East and Eurasia, and Nepal. The*

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chapter offers conclusions drawn from discussions about the pilot mentoring program, and what it portends for young and emerging evaluators, especially in the Global South, as they position themselves in readiness for the evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Emerging evaluators often lack the portfolio of experience required of professionals. One solution to this challenge lies in strengthening the professional capacity and credibility of less experienced evaluators. The International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) is piloting a mentoring program for young and emerging evaluators to create opportunities to help them build specific professional skills.

Many young evaluators, as well as those entering the field in a career shift, are disadvantaged in terms of consultancy and job placement because of a lack of experience. Over the past decade, mentoring has proliferated as an intervention strategy for addressing the needs of young people for adult support and guidance throughout their career development. This chapter draws on experiences shared at a panel discussion at the Global Assembly of IDEAS in Bangkok in October 2015. The specific aims of this discussion were to allow young and emerging evaluators to share some of the challenges they are experiencing as they enter the evaluation profession; to brainstorm on how context-specific challenges can be addressed in such a way as to set emerging evaluators on a stable footing in the profession; and to share best practices from across the continents so that emerging evaluators can learn from the challenges of others, and how they have been addressed.

There is ample evidence of the positive contribution of mentoring to improvement in skills development, social and professional competence, and intellectual development, as well as the development of the vocational skills needed for professionalization of the evaluation discipline, while positioning mentees for professional satisfaction in their practices.

IDEAS REACHING OUT TO YOUTH

IDEAS is a global membership organization focused on the evaluation of development that brings together evaluation practitioners from all the corners of the world to help develop their professional skills while enhancing networking among members and recruiting others into the evaluation profession. In order to promote the inclusion of youth, IDEAS has initiated a youth membership category for evaluators up to age 30, with a reduced annual fee. The mentoring program is to be spearheaded by young evaluators themselves, under the guidance of senior evaluators as mentors.

ABOUT EMERGING EVALUATORS

Emerging evaluators often lack the portfolio of experience that is required by potential employers and the commissioners of consultancy assignments during the hiring process. One possible solution for enhancing the skills set and credibility of less experienced evaluators involves the establishment of

a mentoring scheme that pairs emerging evaluators with more experienced counterparts. Established evaluators are able to mentor upcoming evaluators in various ways, including working with them on assignments. Through involving youth in evaluation, we are also enhancing their individual development and encouraging their active involvement in decisions that will affect their lives. The strategy involves setting up partnerships with development organizations globally in order to create opportunities for students and youth evaluators to benefit from the advice of senior evaluators, and give them the hands-on experience they need to build specific professional skills. A strategy known as reverse mentorship will also be employed, in which youth evaluators will mentor older members in new and emerging trends in development evaluation, including but not limited to the use of digital technology and social media.

THE CONCEPT OF MENTORING

Mentoring programs for youth are commonplace in today's society: more than 5,000 such programs in the United States serve an estimated 3 million young people (MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership 2006, as quoted in DuBois et al. 2011). In a typical program, each youth is paired with a volunteer from the community, with the aim of cultivating a relationship that will foster the young person's positive development and wellbeing (DuBois et al. 2011).

A mentoring relationship is most often defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists a less-experienced person (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the mentee's professional and personal growth. Evaluators are educators: their success is judged by what others can learn from their work. Mentoring is generally viewed as one component of a more comprehensive youth development strategy: these strategies can help youth gain the competencies they need to meet the challenges of adolescence and become successful adults (Foster 2001).

Over the past decade, mentoring has proliferated as an intervention strategy for addressing the needs of young people for adult support and guidance in the development of their careers. Widespread expansion of youth mentoring programs in the United States was inspired by the release of a report on an evaluation of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, a community-based mentoring program. Findings from this research provided evidence of associations between mentoring and a range of positive youth outcomes, and were widely embraced by policy makers and practitioners (Tierney, Grossman, and Resch 1995). Sharing experiences is a way of building community, highlighting commonalities, engaging in practices of cathartic release, and often shining light on other matters that might otherwise remain hidden. To share experiences is to articulate them, and to articulate them is to gain power over them, rather than to feel "stuck" (Vallabha 2015).

As human beings, we live in social groups where we learn our norms, values, and behaviors by the example and coaching of others. Mentoring happens in all organizations, whether it is fostered as a development strategy or encouraged as an informal process. People are constantly learning

from others, adopting modeled behaviors and attitudes, and absorbing the culture and perceived values of the organization or professional environment through their personal interactions with other members of the organization.

In the context of the IDEAS mentoring program, it is not age alone that affects the relationship between a mentor and a mentee. A mentee may be older, but changing careers. Or he or she might be an experienced evaluator who needs help learning how to use qualitative analysis software from a colleague who has experience with this skill.

DEVELOPING THE CASE FOR MENTORING: ESTABLISHING THE EVIDENCE

Because individuals may experience mentoring at various life stages, it is not surprising that there are three distinct streams of mentoring: youth mentoring; academic mentoring; and workplace mentoring. Youth mentoring involves a relationship between a caring, supportive adult and a child or adolescent (Rhodes 2002).

Mentee motivation and involvement in the evaluation profession may be greatly influenced by mentoring. Role modeling can expose mentees to the field of evaluation and to social opportunities that can open their eyes to different possibilities and motivate them to seek out new experiences. Those who have been mentored are more likely to see the need to go the extra mile in order to be fully engrossed in the profession: this can involve many different matters currently under debate regarding professionalization, including certification and accreditation, as well as other forms of recognition.

A mentoring relationship can promote career success. Mentors can impart specific knowledge and expertise that contributes to mentee learning and skill development (Eby et al. 2008; Kram 1985). Mentors can also facilitate professional networking by introducing mentees to influential individuals within academic and organizational contexts: these important career contacts can in turn lead to career success in terms of salary, promotions, and job offers (Kram 1985). Anecdotal evidence abounds of those who have been successful in evaluation practice as a result of the networking and informal mentoring they have received through working with more advanced or senior evaluators. This certainly is a positive step toward professionalizing not only the individual, but the discipline as well.

A study of youth development interventions concluded that a wide range of youth development approaches, including mentoring, result in positive behavioral changes, such as improved interpersonal skills and relationships, and increased self-control and academic achievement (Foster 2001). For example, the mentored professional will most certainly see the need to pursue academic or professional courses that are geared toward building their capacity in evaluation.

At IDEAS, the emphasis is on workplace mentoring, which occurs in an organizational setting, and the purpose of which is the personal and professional growth of the mentee (Kram 1985). The mentor may be a supervisor; someone within the organization who is outside the mentee's chain of command; or an individual in another organization (Eby 1997). Mentoring at

different developmental stages tends to serve different functions or purposes. Youth mentoring is often aimed at reducing risky behavior, or improving social and academic functioning; academic mentoring tends to target student retention, academic performance, and adjustment to college life; while workplace mentoring aims to enhance the personal and career development of employees (Eby et al. 2008).

A study of the top 200 executives in 50 large U.S. companies revealed that mentoring is one of the most effective tools in personnel development (Chambers et al. 1998). Another study, by the Institute of Management, involving 1,500 U.K. managers revealed that mentoring is one of the two most powerful leadership development tools used in organizations. It has also been reported that 71 percent of Fortune 500 and private companies use mentoring in their organizations, and that 77 percent of U.S. companies surveyed said that mentoring had improved both the retention and performance of employees.[1]

In addition to correlations with higher educational aspirations, the research shows that mentoring is correlated with other positive developmental outcomes, including changing attitudes (higher self-esteem, and stronger relationships with adults, including with teachers and peers) and better behavior (Bruce and Bridgeland 2014). In 2002, DuBois and colleagues published a meta-analytic synthesis of findings from 55 evaluations of youth mentoring programs that had been published through 1998 (DuBois et al. 2002). These findings indicated that, on average, youth participating in mentoring programs had benefited significantly in each of five outcome domains: emotional/psychological, problem/high-risk behavior, social competence, academic/educational, and career/employment (DuBois et al. 2002, 2011).

Studies have shown that many young adults are entering the labor force without even the limited skills that are necessary to attain a job in the first place, such as interviewing skills, conflict resolution, and effective communication (Eccles and Gootman 2002). Mentoring has been linked with a myriad of intellectual skills and development, including good decision-making skills, in-depth knowledge of more than one culture, knowledge of both essential life skills and vocational skills, and rational habits of mind, such as critical thinking and reasoning skills. One study found that nearly all young adults who had formal mentoring relationships (95 percent) found these experiences to be "helpful," half of which (51 percent) found the relationship to be "very helpful." Similarly, nearly all youth in informal mentoring relationships (99 percent) said their experience was "helpful," seven in 10 (69 percent) reporting it as "very helpful" (Bruce and Bridgeland 2014).

All of these studies can be summed up in one statement: there is ample evidence of the positive contribution of mentoring to improvement in skills development, social and professional competence, and intellectual development, as well as the development of the vocational skills that are needed for professionalization of the discipline: it also positions mentees for professional satisfaction in the practice.

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[1] Chronus, https://chronus.com/how-to-use-mentoring-in-your-workplace.

WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF A MENTORING PROGRAM FOR IDEAS?

Organizations recognize that workforce demographics have changed dramatically in recent years. Youth are becoming employed in large numbers, thanks to the global youth bulge. More and more graduates are joining the workforce as junior professionals in evaluation practice, while some are developing interest in the profession while they are still in university. There is a need to provide sufficient growth opportunities for potential future professionals in the practice. Senior evaluators also need to be mentored in new and emerging evaluation methodologies, including the use of digital technology and social media: they could benefit from the proposed reverse-mentoring program.

These are the potential benefits of the IDEAS mentoring program for the organization:

- Recruitment of new members to the organization and discovery of talent
- Development of leadership for the future survival and prosperity of IDEAS
- Communication of values, goals, and plans of the organization globally
- Demonstration of personal and professional standards among members
- Implementation of equity initiatives
- Fostering of shared values and teamwork
- Building a strong global learning organization in evaluation practice
- Development of cross-organizational networks
- Increase in morale and motivation among both junior and senior professionals

DEVELOPMENT OF A MENTORING PROGRAM

The IDEAS Board has appointed a mentoring program coordinator, who proposed the program. The program coordinator then formed a task force of five people, which has been approved by the Board to develop the mentoring program policy, as well as to oversee its implementation. Members of the task force represent a cross-section of the organization, including potential mentors and mentees, as well as stakeholders who bring value to the process. The duties of the task force include the following:

- Determining the goals of the program
- Choosing the proper mentoring model
- Developing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) template for the mentoring partnership
- Negotiating the MOU with major institutions commissioning development evaluations
- Selecting eligible evaluation training programs/institutions
- Defining criteria for mentors and mentees

- Defining other critical components of the program
- Matching the participants
- Monitoring the pilot
- Evaluating the results at the end of the pilot program

The mentoring panel at the Global Assembly was sponsored by the U.K. Department of International Development (DFID), among others, but no other funds could be raised. Thus, many of the more ambitious plans turned out to be unrealistic. Similar initiatives in the European Evaluation Society and the American Evaluation Association were largely voluntary in nature; this seems to be a more realistic way forward for IDEAS as well.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE IDEAS MENTORING PROGRAM

The mentoring program at IDEAS aims to achieve the following:

- **Induction and skills enhancement.** Helps new members settle into the organization; facilitates potential and skill development for new members, both young evaluators and those just entering a career in evaluation; seeks to enable skills to be passed on by experienced, highly competent professionals to others who need to develop specific skills.
- **Networking and career development.** Helps both mentors and mentees in the planning, development, and management of their careers; helps them become more resilient in times of change; and more self-reliant in their careers. Offers young professionals visibility and the opportunity for networking, which helps them to explore and plan their career pathways. Also helps both mentors and mentees gain a greater awareness of opportunities and activities that can broaden their professional experience.
- **Education support and practical orientation.** Helps bridge the gap between theory and practice; complements formal education and training through sharing the knowledge and hands-on experience of competent practitioners. Offers mentees the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills by observing and understanding the mentor's practical experience.
- **Leadership and development of competencies.** Encourages the development of leadership and professional competencies that are more easily gained through example, guided practice, or experience than through theoretical education and training.
- **Global visibility and organizational development.** Will expand IDEA's culture of cooperation and commitment through sharing the values, vision, and mission of the organization, and will give IDEAS an enhanced visibility globally.

The program proposes the following models of mentoring:

- **One-to-one mentoring**—matches one mentor with one mentee
- **Group mentoring**—assigns one mentor to work with several mentees
- **Team mentoring**—involves more than one person working with the same mentee
- **Computer online mentoring**—uses computer-based opportunities to develop relationships through online communication
- **Peer mentoring**—young people experienced in evaluation mentor other young people who are just entering the evaluation profession

In order to realize and sustain the program, IDEAS needs to find mechanisms for arranging mentoring on a voluntary basis, without giving up on the effort to mobilize resources for the program that are needed for purchasing mentoring software; covering the administrative costs for staff managing the program; and the costs of training for mentors and mentees, among other things. There will also be a need to provide mentors with formal recognition for all they do for young and emerging evaluators. This recognition can take many forms, such as awards—for example designating a mentor/mentee match of the year—as well as gifts and/or letters of appreciation.

Three of the case studies presented at the Global Assembly in Bangkok in October 2015 are summarized below.

NIGERIA CASE STUDY

In a presentation titled "Evaluation Capacity Development for Emerging Evaluators: A Nigerian Experience," Taiwo Peter Adesoba observed that describing an emerging evaluator is sometimes a tricky task, because there seems to be no globally agreed-upon definition in terms of age, educational requirements, job experience, and so on. Just as a plant has hurdles to overcome when emerging from the soil, so emerging evaluators have particular needs while they are trying to establish themselves in the evaluation profession. A major challenge for young evaluators, especially in low- and middle-income countries, is weak evaluation capacity, which leads to their exclusion from evaluation activities. With the growing number of youth-led organizations, especially in Africa and Asia, more attention is being given to the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) components of their projects. Young development professionals are keenly interested in evaluating the impact of their own work: the demand for accountability from policy makers and other project implementers in their communities is also a factor. Although young evaluators are passionate about implementing evaluation assignments, the technical skills required to properly fulfill this passion is poor. This makes evaluation capacity development (ECD) a necessity for young and emerging evaluators.

The ECD Project in Nigeria is targeted at young evaluators aged 18-30 with less than two years' experience in M&E. The project was conceptualized following a survey among young evaluators in which about 81 percent of respondents said they had never had formal training in M&E: 92 percent of them did not belong to any voluntary organizations for professional evaluation (VOPEs), and 100 percent of them said they needed mentoring. The

objectives of ECD programs are to improve youth inclusion not only in project implementation, but in its evaluation; to promote and advance the practice of the evaluation profession; and to increase youth participation in decision making for sustainable development. The participants in the first phase of the ECD were 24 (7 males; 17 females) emerging evaluators ranging from 21 to 33 years who work for local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the Ondo and Ekiti states. They take on M&E roles in their organizations, but have only limited experience. About 20 percent of the trainees had attended M&E training previously. None of them belonged to any VOPEs in Nigeria, and many had never attended an evaluation conference. The ECD covered the basics of M&E, and its application to their organizations' projects.

Some of the lessons learned during the two-day training were tailored toward the project areas of the trainees. Assignments and group work were aimed at the areas of HIV prevention, economic empowerment, and gender programs. After two days of intensive training, group work, and discussions, the participants showed a good understanding of the basics of M&E. Some have gone on to find online evaluation webinars, and two of the trainees have gotten internship opportunities with NGOs in other parts of the country. However, better results could be achieved if the trained young evaluators had access to mentors who could provide them with additional guidance.

Adesoba concluded that capacity development of emerging evaluators for sustainable development will bring about better results if well-qualified evaluation professionals are available to provide on-the-job mentoring, through either short-term internships or evaluation job placements.

THE MIDDLE EAST AND EURASIA: SAVE THE CHILDREN CASE STUDY

In his presentation "The Future of Evaluation," Ahmed Tammam discussed the challenges faced by emerging evaluators in the Middle East and Eurasia (MEE) region. He observed that M&E is a critical component in the advancement of evidence-based interventions, and that it consequently enhances efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Evaluation is a profession, and grooming new leadership for the future of this profession is needed: thus, investment in developing the capacities of young evaluators is an emerging priority.

Tammam noted that the evaluation profession is far ranging. Therefore, support from experienced evaluators is key in order for young evaluators to advance in such a robust profession, which has so many specific and different areas of work. Evaluation is a growing career path, but visibility, employment, and networking opportunities can be very limited for young evaluators.

He further noted that talented young evaluators in the MEE region are increasingly lobbying donors to fund only successes, and described a case study of Save the Children in the MEE region as an example. Save the Children is a child rights–based organization, working in 12 countries in the Middle East and Eurasia, with operations that support children in developmental contexts (as in Egypt and Georgia), as well as in an emergency contexts (as in Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen). With the expansion of needs in the

region and the limitation of resources, there is a push to focus only on what works best for children. Consequently, there is a need for effective evaluation, and thus for evaluators.

In 2014, the program quality department of Save the Children at the MEE regional office began a process of investing in the talents of local emerging evaluators by recruiting an evaluator from a country office to manage the M&E tasks on the regional level. One of the mandates of the recruited evaluator was to begin to establish a cadre of talented young evaluators. A capacity-building process for emerging young evaluators was undertaken, promoting intra-learning and providing opportunities for these individuals to gain more knowledge and enhance their experience as emerging evaluators. This interactive learning program was mentored by senior program-quality staff who helped the emerging evaluators map the real needs in their countries.

As a result, an interactive mapping exercise of local M&E needs and capacities was conducted by the emerging evaluators, and a regional think tank was created. Through this process all of the young evaluators gained on-the-job experience. Two of them offered to support other country offices; another five were given the authority to be part of the operationalization process of the Vision and Position Paper of the Eurasia region (Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kosovo, and the Northwest Balkans), which aims to align the efforts of five countries to work together on subregional programs in order to maximize benefits for children and to efficiently utilize the limited funding opportunities, by pushing donors to fund success.

In conclusion, Tammam noted that strengthening young and emerging evaluators through enhancing the learning environment and providing opportunities for mentorship are key not only to developing the young evaluators' future, but the future of the evaluation profession as well.

NEPAL CASE STUDY

Tara Devi Gurung presented a case based on her anecdotal experience as an emerging evaluator in Nepal, and also from a desk review of the available literature about development evaluation, and the role of the young and emerging evaluators in Nepal.

In her presentation, "Evaluation Challenges and Opportunity for Emerging Evaluators: A Nepalese Experience/Case," Gurung noted that evaluation, which assesses the results of policies, programs, and projects, is an integral part of the development process. Evaluation is particularly critical in the context of Nepal, which has a complex social structure, a high poverty rate, gender discrimination, dynamic forces of globalization sweeping traditional societies, and numerous development projects aimed at the population. These factors, in addition to greater competition for limited resources available for international development are pushing donors, program participants, and evaluators to seek more rigorous, but still flexible, systems for monitoring and evaluating development and humanitarian interventions.

Many of the current approaches to evaluation are unable to address the changing structure of development assistance, and the increasingly complex environment in which it operates. Innovative evaluation approaches

and practices are particularly important in such situations. However, it is challenging for emerging evaluators to carry out innovative evaluation, since this calls for a high level of expertise.

Emerging evaluators are those who have recently joined the profession and have limited experience. They are not necessarily young, although most of them are relatively young. Many of them are disadvantaged in terms of consultancy and job placement because they lack sufficient experience. There are only limited forums for sharing and disseminating best practices; developing quality and ethical protocols; enhancing the capacity of new evaluators; and researching evaluations. There are limited resources for evaluation that collects lessons drawn from evaluations around the world; produces knowledge through research undertakings; and supports the development of curricula for and carries out basic and advanced training in evaluation. Moreover, there is no academic institution in Nepal that offers a university degree in evaluation. Lack of specific acts, rules, and regulations for evaluation has posed even more challenges for evaluators in Nepal. Available guidelines focus only on governmental M&E, and do not cover other sectors.

In this context, it is difficult to raise funds for evaluation research, capacity building, and activities related to the promotion of evaluation in Nepal. The funding agencies have a tendency to support already established organizations and firms rather than new evaluators. Often the potential for innovation, and the expertise of emerging evaluators, are overlooked by the commissioners of evaluations. Better representation, and the active engagement of young and new evaluators in the decision-making process are needed in order to bring their ideas and perspectives into evaluation.

Gurung concluded that effective evaluation is crucial in order to assess the progress and impact of the efforts of the government policy to "Build a New Nepal" through accelerated development inclusive of all castes, ethnic groups, and genders. Evaluation is gradually becoming an integral part of development plans, projects, and emergency operations in Nepal. Gurung predicts that this will lead to a rise in skilled evaluators, including emerging evaluators in the near future.

CONCLUSION

The IDEAS mentoring program aims to enhance induction and skills development, networking and career development, education support and practical orientation, leadership and competencies development, global visibility, and organizational development for young and emerging evaluators.

Mentoring at a variety of developmental stages tends to serve different functions or purposes. Workplace mentoring is aimed at enhancing employees' personal and career development: this is the kind of mentoring that IDEAS is piloting. In general, mentoring has been linked with a myriad of intellectual skills and development, including good decision-making skills, in-depth knowledge of more than one culture, knowledge of both essential life skills and vocational skills, and rational habits of mind such as critical thinking and reasoning skills. There is ample evidence of the positive contribution of mentoring to improvement in skills development, social and professional

competence, and intellectual development, as well as the development of the vocational skills that are needed for professionalization of the evaluation discipline, while also positioning mentees for professional satisfaction in their practices.

Studies have shown that, among other benefits, youth participating in mentoring programs have benefited significantly in social competence, academic and educational progression, as well as career or employment advancement. The three cases discussed in this chapter demonstrate that there is a country-level need for supporting young and emerging evaluators through mentoring in order to advance their professional competence and career prospects. These cases demonstrate further that capacity development of emerging evaluators will ensure that more well-qualified evaluation professionals are available to provide on-the-job mentoring through short-term internships or evaluation job placements. They also demonstrate that strengthening young and emerging evaluators through enhancing the learning environment, and providing opportunities for mentorship are key, not only to developing the future of young evaluators, but for the future of evaluation as a profession in general. Overall therefore, these studies build a strong business case for the mentoring of young and emerging evaluators.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Part III
Regional Perspectives