

# How Should South Africa Strengthen Evaluation and Evaluators?

Looking at experiences and  
perspectives from South Africa

SAMEA AND DPME INITIATED RESEARCH

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DONNA PODEMS, MPA, PHD

# Design and Purpose of the Research

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- This is an exploratory study.
- The study aims to inform a roadmap that provides a way forward for 'professionalising' evaluation in South Africa.
- Or not.



# The Study

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- Managed by DPME and SAMEA
- Funded by DFID
- Includes a general literature review (Lit Review Report), Comparator lit review and semi-structured interviews with 10 countries (Comparator Report), Situational analysis lit review and semi-structured interviews (Situational Analysis Report)
- Also now includes four Open Forums, the Evaluation Café, and an electronic survey to those members of the SAMEA list-serve
- These data will be used to inform the development of a Roadmap



# History in a



- Shift in government brought changes ---Institutional oversight in the Constitution, need for government to demonstrate the benefits of its policies and their implementation to its citizens (Goldman et al., 2012)
- Civil society faced a shift in donor funding and their accountability requirements; requirements that in the past were often non-existent
- Explains the rapid growth of evaluation and the resulting need for 'competent' evaluators in South Africa (Podems, Goldman & Jacob, 2014)
- SAMEA has engaged to some level with professionalising, and strengthening, evaluators since 2009 (Open Forum)

# Key Stakeholders in

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- Civil Society: SAMEA and other key actors such as SANAC
- Government: National and Provincial, and in particular DPME
- Donors: Local and international, Foundations, CSI
- Academia: Various institutions -- PhD, Masters, various diploma courses, and/or coursework as part of a degree
- Private Sector: Consultants and consulting firms, South African and others
- CLEAR AA and science research councils

# Some Facts

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- Evaluation has developed as a field of practice rather than a traditional academic discipline (King et al, 2008).
- Evaluation professionals have a mixed history of educational and experiential backgrounds and this has led to various understandings of what is a 'competent' evaluator.

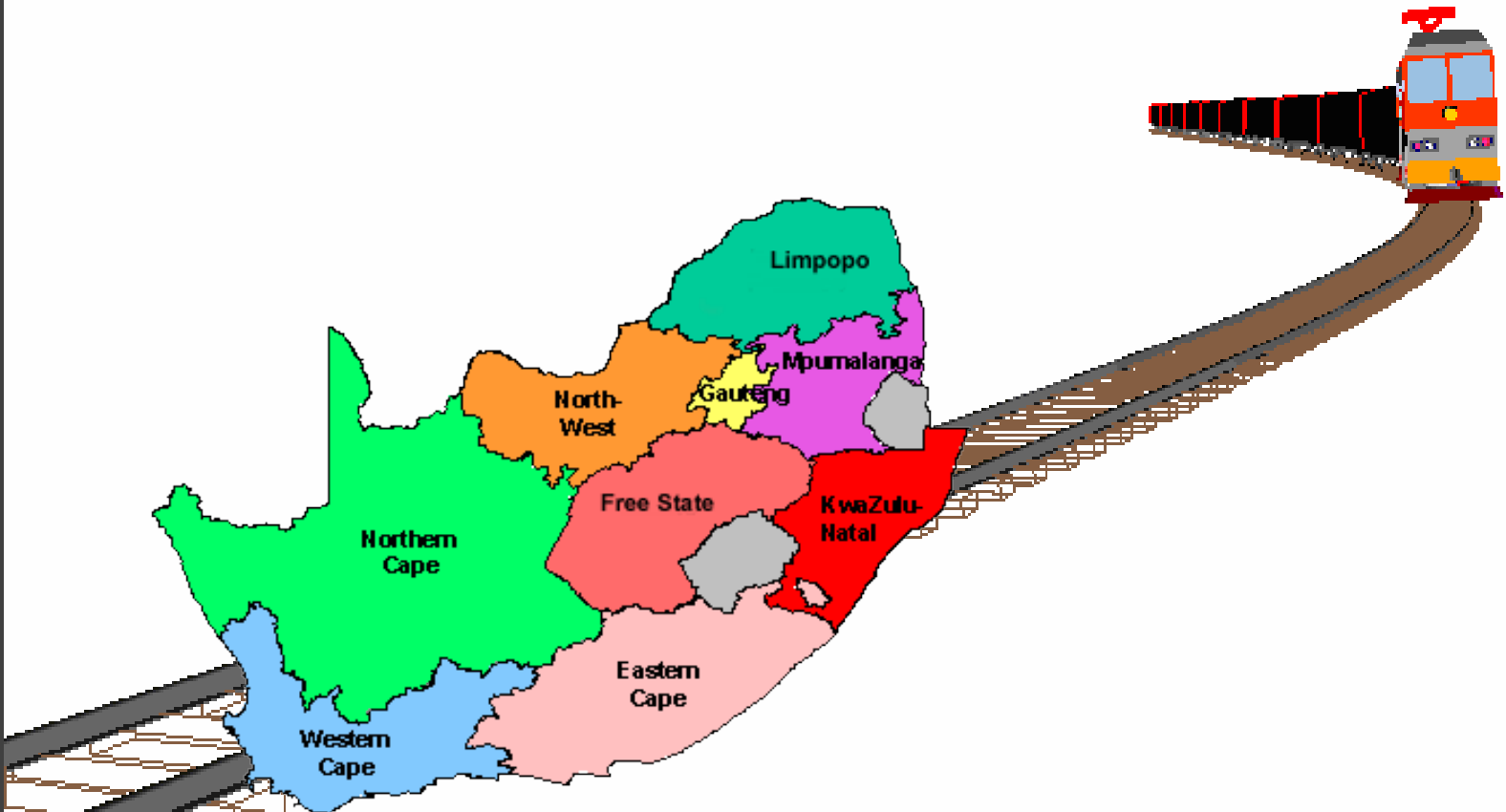
# The



# Context

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- IDEAS
- German Evaluation Society DEG EVAL
- UNAIDS
- EES and UKES (VEPR) --- Development not designation
- Canada (CES)- Credentialing or credifying
- Japanese Evaluation Society (JES)- Certification for education
- **Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association (anzea)**
- **Russian Evaluation Society**
- **American Evaluation Association**





# What Do We Mean by Professionalisation?

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- Credentialing or some type of designation
- Peer review/mentorship for personal growth not designation
- Clear pathways to become an evaluator and advance knowledge and skills
- Accredited academic courses, Association, Journal

# Challenges

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- We do not have a large pool of competent **evaluators** (and there is a lot of evaluation work). Strong indication of 'poor' quality evaluations (e.g. lack research approach, evaluation methodology, findings not used). Anyone can call themselves an evaluator.
  
- An EvalPartners survey of evaluators around the world noted a general feeling that there needs to be improvements in professional standards. "The biggest concerns...were...that because [evaluation] standards are not well defined, and because demand for evaluation is increasing, anyone can call themselves an evaluator" (Rugh, quoting the EvalPartners' Report, p.g. 2).

# Who Identifies as an Evaluator?

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## (EMERGING DATA)

- Some academics that teach programme evaluation, but not all
  - Consultants that mainly conduct evaluations, but not all
  - A few programme managers in NGOs, but not most
  - Some SAMEA members, but not all
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- Further explored with the survey being sent out next week via the SAMEA list serve.

Eventually we want a large pool of quality evaluators.

In the immediate future, do we want more evaluators, or do we want a smaller pool of quality evaluators?

# Is Evaluation Moving Towards Being a Profession in South Africa?

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## Some characteristics or criteria

Source: <http://ieg.worldbank.org/blog/professionalizing-evaluation>. Posted by Kate McKegg on Wednesday, April 29, 2015 - 19:56).

- **A specialized and unique body of knowledge, theory and skills**

There needs to be access, for those wishing to gain entry to the profession, to high quality training and education; as well as exposure to practice, and the ability to gain mastery of techniques and skills in order to develop the requisite professional expertise to practice.

*To some level, this is starting to happen and gaining momentum.*

- **A profession is also distinguished by having an ethical disposition**

It sees itself as having a wider responsibility and orientation towards the public interest; i.e., it is not simply there to protect and further its own interests.

*Evaluation inherently has this, yet it is not explicit in South Africa.*

- **A profession also has a high status credential**

At the very least a graduate degree from an accredited tertiary education organization; as well as some form of professional designation or licensing that requires the testing of performance.

*Should we aim for this?*

- **A profession has professional autonomy**

Control over the recruitment, training, admission, credentialing and licensing of its professionals. It also has control over the guidelines, ethical standards, administrative rules, quality assurance and disciplinary processes of those in the profession.

*This is not the case in South Africa.*

- **Those in a profession should also demonstrate a loyalty to the occupational group**

They are expected to demonstrate collegial behavior and occupational solidarity, as well as a visible and practical commitment to ongoing professional development as part of their responsibility for the quality of their work. The existence of a professional association representing these interests is also a key characteristic of a profession.

*To a large degree this is happening.*

- **A profession has a relatively high degree of prestige and status**

There is demand for professional services; there are substantial monetary rewards, respectability and a recognized place in the upper regions of the occupational ladder for those in the profession.

*To some degree this is happening in South Africa.*

# Some Emerging Findings

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## Diversity of evaluation community in RSA – hard to identify

- Emerging evaluators, those who have been practicing evaluation for >10 years, those that are involved in gov't and NPOs that do M&E in some form, commissioners of evaluations, and finally those that teach evaluation (diversity within those groups)
- Different stakeholders have different expectations/needs of 'professionalisation'

## 'Professionalisation' of evaluation in RSA needs to consider the RSA development agenda (two sides)

- Power dynamics ---deciding who is, who is not, and how to become, an evaluator; the need to be aware of and address factors that present barriers to the field of evaluation; not limiting entry to the field
- At the same time, **poor quality evaluations = poor quality evidence**. There is a strong need for generating credible evidence to understand which social development programmes work, which do not, and how to improve them. Sub-standard evaluations (and evaluators) will not deliver this evidence.



# Next steps

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- Findings of situational analysis to be submitted next week
- Survey to go out in early August to SAMEA list serve
- Last open forum in Pretoria set for August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015
- Roadmap provided September 14<sup>th</sup> 2015
- **SAMEA Conference – Strand on Professionalisation**

# The Road to Professionalisation or...The Road not Taken?

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**Dr. Donna Podems (Team Lead)**

**Dr. Cheryl Goldstone**

**Ms. Lungiswa Zibi**

**Ms. Liezel De Waal**

**Ms. Daleen Botha**