Politics, Ethics and Professionals in Policy Evaluation

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Abstract

The importance of evaluation is well acknowledged in the domain of public policy and public administration. Politics, ethics and the roles and responsibilities of professionals are closely intermingled in the domain of policy evaluation. However, their implications are often poorly understood. Since the field of evaluation is expanding quite significantly, it demands to have a substantial level of understanding about the roles and responsibilities of professional evaluators and their interface with the ethical and political aspects of policy evaluation. This paper, through a content analysis, explores the various dynamics related to the roles and responsibilities of professionals, and issues linked up with politics and ethics of policyevaluation. Without having a careful consideration of these aspects, the fundamental purpose of policy evaluation might be plunged into serious tribulation. Thus, a professional evaluator must demonstrate highest professionalism in dealing with ethics and politics.

Keywords: Policy evaluation; Professionals; Ethics; Politics

Introduction

This paper gives an explanation about issues related to politics and ethics of policy evaluation and also the role of professionals surrounding the practices of evaluation. Evaluation is generally practiced in the context of policy making (Rossi et al., 2004), and it is the final stage of policy process (Anderson, 1994). Evaluation aims at studying policies, reporting outputs, evaluating impacts of the policies on target and non-target groups in society and suggesting changes and adjustments (Dye, 2012). Evaluation comprises number of efforts by the government to determine the effectiveness of a policy. Generally speaking, policy evaluation is concerned with the estimation, assessment and appraisal of a policy policy (Anderson, 1994). It is a careful retrospective assessment of the merit, worth, and value of administration, output and outcome of government interventions as intended to play a role in future, practical action situations (Vedung, 1997). Rossi et al. (2004) define that policy evaluation is the use of social research procedures to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention policy. Evaluators use social research methods to study, appraise, and help improve social policy in every important aspects, including the diagnosis of the social problems they address, their conceptualisation and design, their implementation and administration, their outcomes, and their efficiency. More specifically, policy evaluation is a collection of methods, skills and sensitiveness necessary to determine whether a policy is needed or likely to be used, whether it is sufficiently intense to meet the need identified, whether the service is offered as planned, and whether service actually does help people in need (Posavac and Carey, 1985). Policy evaluation considers both positive and negative effects and aspects of the policy, and as such it may help the policy-making officials whether a policy should be expanded, modified, reduced, or eliminated (The Urban Institute, 1973, as cited in Stowell, 1973).

Evaluating public policy intervention is not an easy dealing for the evaluation professional scholars like Dye (2012) and Dunn (1994) have termed the whole policy process as essentially a political activity.

Sieber (1980) says evaluators work not only in the realm of social science but also in the realms of politics. In view of that, as a part of policy process, the activities related to evaluation are essentially political. Professionals in evaluation must understand the nature and complexities of politics in policy evaluation. In point of fact, the specific form and scope of evaluation depend not only on its purposes and audiences, and the nature of the policybeing evaluated, but also on the political context within which the evaluation is being conducted (Rossi et al., 2004). The practice of evaluation is surrounded by politics (Abma, 2006), and importantly, politics is not necessarily wrong or bad but part and parcel of the work of the evaluators (Abma and Schwandt, 2005).

On the other side, ethics is a very important feature of policy evaluation. All professionals are confronted with ethical dilemmas and decisions of their professional lives. Such an assumption is equally applicable to the professional evaluators as well. The everyday decisions for an evaluator about what polices to accept, what information to collect, and how and when to report the information often have ethical implications and represent ethical dilemmas for the evaluators (Newman and Brown, 1996). In evaluation, ethics is referred to a set of normative standards for resolving dilemmas that evaluators often face in regard to what they should do as professionals in performing their roles in the interests of societal desirability (Nagel, 1983). Evaluators, however, have to be seriously concerned about the ethical principles of policy evaluation since they have a responsibility to provide clear, useful and accurate evaluation reports. Moreover, they have a responsibility to society to work in a way that has the potential to improve service for people. Ethical issues, thus, are more complicated for evaluators than that of basic researchers (Posavac and Carey, 1985).

Based on the pivotal premises focused above, this paper intends to explore issues related to politics and ethics in policy evaluation since politics and ethics are two core aspects of policy evaluation. Professional evaluators have to cautiously deal with these issues in order to make successful evaluations. It is mention-worthy that the current positions and

roles of evaluation professionals, their interests, knowledge, motivation and curiosity are important to judge the results of evaluation tasks. For example; a practitioner who undertakes short-term evaluations on contract with local agencies and the tenured professonal with long-term foundation funding will likely to have divergent views on their evaluation activities (Rossi et al., 2004). For that reason, this paper explicitly looks into the divergent roles of professionals in policy evaluation. It is expected that professional evaluators would deal with political and ethical issues quite professionally and would make significant contribution to their tasks assigned. A vivid clarity and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of professionals in evaluation are vehemently relevant to explaining the dynamics of ethics and politics in evaluation. This paper expands its outlooks into this vicinity as well.

Objectives of the Paper

The objectives of this paper are as follows;

1. To explore various roles and responsibilities of the professionals in policy evaluation.

2. To assess and analyse issues related to politics of policy evaluation.

3. To assess and analyse issues related to ethics of policy evaluation.

Methodology of the Paper

This paper is written based on the secondary documents using a content analysis method. Through a heuristic document search a wide range of secondary documents i.e., academic literatures, journal articles, and online resources have been reviewed and analysed. It provides both exploratory and explanatory analyses around three major areas under study: politics, ethics and professionals in policy evaluation.

Professionals in Evaluation

Evaluation professionals are drawn from a wide variety of

academic disciplines and professions with diverse orientations and methods, and this multidisciplinary admixture has contributed significantly to the multiplicity perspective in policy evaluation, introduce the professionals in evaluation and identifies who can do evaluation and in which capacity and location? Systematic evaluation is debunked on social science research techniques. Most evaluation specialists have had some level of training in the general landscape of social research methods. Although sufficient knowledge of the concepts and methods instrumental to evaluation research is required for conducting evaluation, it is equally important to have a great deal of knowledge about problem areas under evaluation, and the nature, range and results of the interventions that have been used to address the problem. It is necessary not only so the evaluators understand the issues and contexts with which a particular policy is linked to, but so that an appropriate evaluation plan can be developed. As the evaluation activities can be so technically complicated, sophisticated in conception, costly and of such long duration-they require dedicated, committed and trained specialist who are apt in latest social science theory, policy knowledge, data collection methods and statistical techniques (Rossi et al., 2004). It is, thus, important for professionals in evaluation to have enthusiasm and commitment to learn the best skills in evaluation, strong believe in their value and use them in practice. Essentially, professionals must also think critically about the practice and the policy and try to determine what is being done and whether or not the practice is achieving its goals. Moreover, professionals must try to improving their practices (Smith, 2010). On the other hand, professional evaluators have to plan the design of the study and methods of data collection, define what information is needed and how to collect its validity and responsively and analyse data with conscientious thoroughness. Sponsors call for evaluation to meet many purposes and they often want answers quite quickly. But good evaluation requires sufficient time. Providing half-digested information, half of it wrong, is a disservice to policys, recipients, funders and sponsors (Weiss, 2013).

Newman and Brown (1996) have listed the following roles and responsibilities of the evaluator.

The Evaluator as Consultant/Administrators: In this role evaluator is responsible for obtaining contacts, establishing boundaries of the evaluation, maintaining formal records and directing staff members in the process of evaluation.

The Evaluator as Data Collector/Researcher: In this role evaluator as an expert uses multitude of tools to aid in the collection and interpretation of information. Importantly, in this role an evaluator has a contact with a wide range of policy stakeholders and works directly with policy personnel.

The Evaluator as Reporter: In this role the evaluator puts a major emphasis on communicating results to various clients, audiences and stakeholders. This role usually occurs at the end of the evaluation and still seen by some clients as the final stage of the evaluation process.

The Evaluator as Member of Profession: This role reflects the evaluator's membership in a growing peer group that is involved in a common group. There is a strong relationship among members of a profession in terms of acceptable practice, training and experiences, development of theory and commitment to further professional growth and development.

The Evaluator as Member of Society: The role of the evaluator as a member of society reflects the evaluator's personal background and overlaps with his or commitment to the profession and any other level of involvement in evaluation. Still, the boundaries of this role are vague, and frequently unrecognised by both evaluators and the clients.

Posavac and Carey (1985) have identified the following roles, responsibilities and locations of evaluators.

Work Settings for Evaluators: There are three major work settings for professional evaluators. Firstly; evaluators work for the organisation that desires certain policies to be evaluated. Such professionals are called in-house evaluators. Secondly; evaluators work with governmental or regulatory agencies on employment basis and thirdly; evaluators work in private research firms which compete with other

firms for evaluation works. In addition to professional evaluators, many individuals in educational, personnel, training, rehabilitation, management and corrections roles perform evaluations as part of their responsibilities.

Consultants Compared to In-house Evaluators: In terms of knowledge about a policy, in-house evaluators have the advantage since they better access to the people and administration of the organisation. As a result of this, they can attain more information quite easily about a policy than that of consultants who often have difficulties in regard to access. The more that is known about the actual workings of the policy the easier it is to ask the relevant questions in an evaluation.

The technical expertise of the evaluator is very important to have a better evaluation outcome. An in-house evaluator often works with a small group of people or even alone. Working alone provides limited opportunities for pragmatic feedback. In contrast, a consultant may hold the resources of working in many different areas and diverse sectors. By selecting a consultant with a specific policy area, an organisation may avoid the errors that may occur when an in-house evaluator faces problems in a new area. It is both challenging and stimulating to work in new areas and there is always a risk that inexperience in a given area may lead to oversimplification.

On the other side, evaluators can do more effective work if they are more objective, trusted by the administrators and interested in improving the policy being evaluated. In terms of trust, in-house evaluators are more likely to have found worthy of trust. In-house evaluators usually find policy directors and staff are more willing to devote time to the evaluation, to admit problems, and to share confidence than they would be with a consultant not previously known. An in-house evaluators can also be expected to have a desire to improve the organisation in which they work. Consultants might not have the same motivations. But in terms of objectivity, the role of in-house evaluators may be questioned because they know the policy designers and the staff delivering the services. It is not easy to criticise the work of people whom people know well. An in-house evaluator may also hesitate to report critical findings because of the fear

that future work may be jeopardised. The consultant, on the other hand, is unlikely to have developed personal relationship within the organisation and thus may be more objective. Non-objective evaluators might lose their credibility and their effectiveness.

Both in-house and consultant evaluators can and do perform formative (evaluation that guides to improve the performance of the policy) and summative (evaluation that informs certain critical aspects of the policy performance) evaluation. The in-house evaluators are likely to be more effective than the consultant evaluators in implementing procedures to follow for formative evaluations because formative evaluations cannot lead to a traumatic decision to end a policy. Negative results will not destroy an evaluator's role in the organisation. In contrast, a summative evaluation is wanted because there is a strong suspicion that a policy is failing, an outside evaluator will probably be more helpful than an in-house evaluator in implementing summative evaluation.

Personal Qualities: Posavac and Carey (1985) also add that in addition to technical competence, an evaluator's personal qualities are also important. Evaluators can do more effective work if they are objective and fair, trusted by administrators and concerned that policy improvements be encouraged.

In the following a brief snap on the roles and responsibilities of evaluators as professionals has been given on the basis of the suggestions proposed by some other scholars of policy evaluation.

Scriven believes that an evaluator's role is to investigate and justify the value of an evaluand. Such investigation and justification shall be supported with joining empirical facts and probative reasoning. "Bad is bad and good is good and it is the job of evaluators to decide which is which" (Scriven, 1986). It is to also note that Scriven rejects the notion that an evaluator's role is simply to provide information to decision-makers and claims that "the arguments for keeping science value free are in general extremely bad" (Scriven, 1969).

Campbell believes that evaluators should play a role of methodologist during the program evaluation (Shadish et al., 1991).

Evaluators should use scientific methodologies to design evaluative research that eliminate biases and establish a causal inference about a program and its hypothesised effects. This role of methodologist advocated by Campbell requires evaluators to employ a strong research design such as randomised experiment or good quasi-experiment to determine the causal effectiveness of the program (Shadish et al. 1991). An evaluator may also need to keep distance him/herself from the program stakeholders and work independently to find out the facts about the program. As for the dissemination of the evaluation findings, an evaluator should "write honest reports for peers even if they cannot do so for funders or the public" (Shadish et al. 1991).

An evaluator should play a facilitator role during the evaluation. The evaluator should assist different stakeholders to "discover ideas, answers, and solutions within their own mind" by conducting responsive evaluation (Stake and Trumbull, 1982 as cited in Luo, 2010). According to Stake, the responsibilities of an evaluator include spending more time observing the program and providing accurate portrayals of the program using case studies. Case studies reflect the complexities of the reality and they help readers to form their own opinions and judgments about the cases. Case studies can be "useful in theory building" (Stake, 1978 as cited in Shadish et al., 1991), and conducting responsive evaluation which allows evaluation questions and methods to emerge from observing the policy. In this approach, evaluators will orient evaluation directly to policy activities than to the polciy goals and respond promptly to the information requests of the audience and present their evaluation findings in the natural ways in which people assimilate information and arrive at understandingsso that the writings can reach maximal comprehensibility (Stake, 1980 as cited in Luo, 2010).

Weiss emphasises the evaluator's special role in promoting the use of his/her evaluation results, especially in the policy-making process. She argues that evaluation should start out with use in mind and evaluator should not leave the use of evaluation to the natural processes of dissemination and application (Weiss, 1972, as cited in Shadish et al., 1991)

Weiss claims that evaluation "should be continuing education for program managers, planners and policy makers" (Weiss, 1988). As a result, it seems that she sees the role of evaluator more as an educator, who conducts evaluation not for giving an explicit solution to a social problem, but for providing useful information to its potential users, policy-makers in particular (Luo, 2010). She urges evaluators to look beyond the instrumental use of evaluation results and conduct "enlightenment" research that "provides evidence that can be used by men and women of judgment in their efforts to research solutions" (Weiss, 1978). Wholey also believes professional evaluators should be the "educator", whose roles are to infuse useful information to the potential users of the evaluation because professional evaluators have the responsibility to provide sound information that people in authority can use to make things better (Luo, 2010).

As have been noted above, the proper roles and responsibilities of evaluation professional vary significantly on various fundamental issues of policy evaluation such as the purpose of evaluation, methods of evaluation, positions or involvement of evaluators, expertise of evaluators, access of evaluators, the use of evaluation, and expectation from evaluation. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to come to a general consensus on what should be actual roles and responsibilities of professionals in evaluation. Moreover, as Luo (2010) says, various issues such as, education background, previous working experiences, the nature and setting of social programs might also contribute to shaping the proper roles for an evaluator, and different cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds of evaluators could also affect their judgments in evaluation. As a matter of fact, there are diverse meanings and understandings about the proper roles and responsibilities of professionals in evaluation. But whatever the roles and responsibilities are, in order to retain the stronghold as professionals evaluators must maintain fundamental ethical standards and must be concerned about the politics in policy evaluation. Thus, in the following, an analysis has been placed in about the political dynamics of policy evaluation.

Politics in Evaluation

In this section, an overview on issues related to politics has been depicted. Cronchbach (1980, cited in Guba and Lincoln, 1987) asserts, "a theory of evaluation must be as much a theory of political interaction as it is a theory of how to determine facts". Chelimsky (1987, as cited in Palfrey and Thomas, 1999) urges evaluators to be aware of the politics of evaluation. We must be useful to others if we are to be successful and there is a need to understand the political system in which each evaluation operates and the information needs of policy actors who use evaluation. Failure to recognise that any issue which involves politics reduces an evaluator's strategic options and increases the likelihood that the evaluator might be used unwittingly as some stakeholder's political puppet (Patton, 2008). Evaluation inevitably serves a political agenda and becomes a tool of political activity. Evaluation is understood as inherently political and politically articulated and all evaluations operate within political constrains (Taylor and Balloch, 2005). Political considerations introduce in some way in every evaluation. Evaluation involves politics at both the micro and institutional levels, and in multiple ways as it engages com¬plex social relations and decisions about rules and resources between stakeholders, or different interest groups, that have vested interests in the outcomes of the evaluation (Legge, 1984; Patton, 1981, as cited in O'Brien, 2010). Sroife (1977, as cited in Englert et al., 1977), on the other hand, clearly writes that "formal evaluation is an inherently political process and in some instances has even greater policy consequences than do board or bond elections".

Frank Fisher (1980, as cited in Palumbo, 1987) notes that all too often in the policy literature, politics has been described in negative terms such as "pressures and expedient adjustments", or "haphazard acts"- unresponsive to a planned analysis of the needs of efficient design". But Carol Weiss in her classic article titled "Where Politics and Evaluation Research Meets" (printed in 1973 and reprinted in 1987) says that evaluation is a rational enterprise, not negative intervention. Evaluation takes place in a political context. The evaluator who fails to recognise their presence is in for a serious of shocks and frustrations. Weiss identifies

three major ways in which politics intrudes in evaluation. Firstly; policies are creatures of political decisions. They are proposed, defined, debated, enacted and funded through political processes. In implementation they remain subject to pressures, both supportive and hostile, that arise out of politics. Secondly; evaluations feed political decision making and as such its reports enter the political arena. Evaluative evidence of policy outcome has to compete for attention with other perspectives that carry weight in the political process. Thirdly; evaluation is inherently political by its very nature because of the issues it addresses and the conclusions it reaches. Evaluation itself has a political stance. By its very nature, it makes implicit political statements about such issues as the problematic nature of some policies, the unchallenageability of others, the legitimacy of policy goals and strategies, the utility of strategies for incremental reform, and even the appropriate role of social scientist in policy formation (Weiss, 1987). In addition, Weiss further states that knowing the political constrains and resistance exist is not a reason for abandoning evaluation research; rather it is a precondition for useable evaluation research. Only when the evaluator has insight into the interests and motivations of other actors in the system, into the roles that he himself is consciously or unconsciously playing, the obstacles and opportunities that impinge upon the evaluative effort, and the limitations and possibilities for putting the results to work-only with sensitivity to the politics of evaluation research-can the evaluator be creative and strategically useful as he should be (Weiss, 1987). Likewise, in a positive sense, Chelimsky (1987) states that public policy is the product of politics. Evaluation, with its purpose of providing high-quality information to decision-makers, thus, automatically claims a role for itself in the political process. Based on the idea that the best information, made available to decision makers, would surely be useful to them in making and executing public policy.

According to Patton (1987) evaluation's political inherency begins with definition. There is no single accepted definition of evaluation. Different definitions of evaluation carry divergent implications for the perspective on the political nature of evaluation. Definitions of

evaluation tell evaluators what they are going to accomplish and also affect their design, methods and measurement. Patton (2008) further states that the political nature of evaluation stems from different factors. Firstly; the fact the people are involved in evaluation means that the values, perceptions and politics of everyone involved such as scientists, decision makers, funders and policy staff impinge on the process from start to finish. Secondly; the fact that evaluation requires classifying and categorising makes it political. Categories inevitably filter the data collected. Thirdly; the fact that empirical data undergird evaluation makes it political because data always require interpretation. Interpretation is only partly logical and deductive and it is also value laden and perspective dependent. Fourthly; the fact that actions and decisions follow from evaluation makes it vividly political. It is because of the fact decisions affect allocation of resources and distribution of power. Evaluation, based on decisions, is a political activity. Fifthly; the fact that policies and organisations are involved makes evaluation political. Organisations allocate and distribute power, status and resources. Evaluation affects these allocation processes. Finally; the fact information is involved in evaluation makes it political. Information leads to knowledge, knowledge reduces uncertainty, reduction of uncertainty facilitates action; and action is necessary to the accumulation of power. Patton (2008) also confirms that evaluators may like it or not, evaluation will be influenced by political forces. The degree of politicalisation might vary, but never entirely absent.

Englert et al. (1977) have brought into notice the other side of political aspects of policy evaluation and state that the politics of evaluation is inextricably present at every stage of policy evaluation. It starts from the beginning of decision to implement a policy, decision to evaluate, choice of evaluator, measuring to the degree of success of evaluation or the methodology, implementation of evaluation, reporting the findings, use of findings and on impact of evaluation. Englert et al. (1977) further sate that the person who orders or sponsors the evaluation insists upon a set of criteria that would tend to place the policy in a given light.

The evaluator, in this case, is seriously constrained by political factors. Unrealistic time constrains could prevent the evaluators to use sophisticated research designs and create pressures for evaluator to use only available data. Moreover, budget constraints or scarce resources may also influence the evaluator's choice of research design. The impact of policy evaluation can also be lessened through repeated attacks upon the evaluation's methodology since many individuals and groups have vested interests in different programs. Those same individuals and groups would probably be defensive when their interests are threatened by an evaluation's findings. That defensiveness often takes the form of criticising the methodology that gives rise to the adverse findings. Markedly, the underlying reasons for the attack are often political, not methodological. Similarly, Agopian (1979) mentions two common political discords in policy evaluation. Policy evaluation is subject to scepticism because of two reasons. Firstly; the researcher is often viewed as the producer of biased information which threatens project funding and secondly; administrators often raise questions about the validity of research findings if these do not meet their requirements. On the negative aspect of political dimension of evaluation, Chelimsky (1977, as cited in Chelimsky, 1987) notes that evaluations often cannot be used because of bureaucratic relationships and conflicts, that some policy managers really prefer to be ignorant and that evaluations will only be used if management really wants them.

Guba and Lincoln (1987) state that evaluation is intimately involved with the value issue and as such, it inevitably serves a political agenda and becomes a tool of political activity. Consequently, any individual or group with a stake in the evaluand has a right to provide inputs based on its own value position. Evaluation acts to produce change. Any given change may be taken to mean as relatively more or less desirable by different stakeholders. Value differences that result in different constructions cannot be resolved on rational basis alone, but only through political negotiations. Similarly, Chen (2005) has brought the issue of politics in regard to mapping evaluators' interface with stakeholders, and comments that policy evaluation is conducted in political arena and

it is a kind of decision making process. In order to make best use of evaluation evaluators and stakeholders must come to consensus and agreement on certain issues. The mutual agreement and understanding can reduce the likelihood of an evaluation being attacked or criticised by someone with a purely political motive. With an absence of mutual understanding, stakeholders can easily dismiss the merit of evaluation by stating it did not evaluate what was being accomplished. Bemberger (1991) states that evaluators who are conscious or aware about the political issues of evaluation and of the political nature of their profession, they carefully focus their attention on the identification of the numerous stakeholders whose interests and concerns affect the fate of evaluations. Stakeholder groups often have conflicting political interests concerning whether the evaluation should be done at all, what should be studied, and how the results should be interpreted and disseminated. This lead to an interest in how evaluation is used and why it is not used-or is in the manner considered appropriate by the evaluators. Rossi et al. (2004) have also viewed the nature of the relationship of evaluator and stakeholder as identical to "politics of evaluation" and state that every policy is a social structure in which various individuals and groups engage in their roles and activities that constitute the policy. Every policy is a nexus in a set of political relationships among those with an association or interest in the policy. These parties are typically involved in, affected by, or interested in the evaluation.

As stakeholders are valuable in dealing with the political aspects of policy evaluation, interaction with them must be anticipated and planned accordingly as part of the evaluationIn this connection, McLemore and Neumann (1987) suggest to making a point to initiate discussions about the politics of the evaluation process with all stakeholders at each stage. These discussions frame politics as normative and not as something to deny or avoid. Explicit discussions of politics also provide opportunities to design strategies with high probability of success. They further suggest professional evaluators to be inclusive rather than exclusive in the process of evaluation. Inclusive in a sense, that it is better for them to broadly

include those who might be interested in some aspect or have some stake in the program under study and develop consensus and do mediation rather than rule out someone who later catches the evaluators unaware and unprepared. On the other hand, if evaluators are assigned to answer the questions of policy administrators and accept their terms and conditions for the study only; they might ignore the concerns of other important stakeholders, such as policy recipients (Weiss, 2013). This very fact enmeshes another important dynamic of policy evaluation because inclusion or exclusion, vested interest might invite antagonism among various actors. In this regard, the observation made by Ferman (1969, as cited in Englert et al., 1977) is quite relevant to understand the political interface with various actors in policy evaluation. Ferman's depiction of the kinds of antagonism prevail or develop among different actors provides a logical basis for a more intimate association of evaluation with politics.

Judging from the literature above one must acknowledge that politics and evaluation are intricately interwoven and that evaluation is, for sure, political. It is because of the fact that political decisions give rise to the evaluation, and political pressures influence the evaluation. The results of the evaluation, thus, have political implications (Englert, et al., 1977). However, policy evaluation does not require the evaluation researchers be politicians. Awareness and acceptance of political dynamics go a long way towards enriching the outcomes of evaluation. Understanding and embracing the political dynamics of evaluation is imperative. The result of this will bring significant outcome towards desired change (McLemore and Neumann, 1987). Therefore, it is the prime of responsibility of evaluators to understand the political system in which evaluation oper-ates and the information needs of those policy actors who use evaluation (Palfrey and Thomas, 1999).

Having all the diverse dimensions, both positive and negative, of political aspects of evaluation as mentioned above, it important to scrutinise how professional evaluators face the ethical issue of policy evaluation. The following section pays a critical look into the ethical as-pects of policy evaluation.

Ethics in Evaluation

Three interrelated terms or meanings are usually associated with the term ethics. The first focuses on the fundamental principles of moral behaviour or morality that should apply to everybody. The second includes principles of conduct developed by, and for, members of a particular profession. The third includes the systematic study of the ideal human behaviour, the concept of good behaviour (Newman and Brown, 1996). The word moral is often synonymously and interchangeably used with the word ethics. Specifically, ethics is used to the science of rules and standards of conduct and practice (Neilson, 1936 in Newman and Brown, 1996), it is the study of right or wrong behaviour and being ethical means practicing the right (Newman and Brown, 1996). According to Webster's New World Dictionary to be ethical is to conforming to the norms and to the standard of conduct of a given profession or group (Babbie, 2007). Morris defines "the term 'ethical' . . . not just in the narrow sense of conforming to accepted professional standards of conduct, but also in the broader context of dealing with what is good or bad and with moral duty and obligation" (Morris, 1998, as cited in Smith, 2002). For evaluators to be ethical means several things in addition to being morally good, as Saiber (1980) comments that being ethical means, " knowing what special obligations that evaluator has to clients, to science, and to society; understanding the role conflicts that consequently arise; recognising the ethical planning and decision making----involve a methodology that can be learned and this is as much a part of evaluation design as research methodology creatively to resolve ethical conflicts and meet one's obligations as evaluator".

Usually, ethics in day-to-day life is a matter of agreement among members of a group, and different groups have agreed on different codes of conduct, standard, principles or procedures (Babbie, 2007). The norms that govern how professionals should behave ethically are found in the professional literatures and the professional codes ethics. The values that underline the norms of professional codes are of two kinds. Firstly; concerned with the goals professionals should aim to achieve which constitutes the ends-oriented ethical principles of a profession. For

example; serving the public interest is an end commonly found in professional codes of ethics. Secondly; concerned more with ways in which professionals should behave on the job which constitutes the profession's means-oriented ethical principles. For example, being honest, objective, truthful, being loyal to employers and being competent are some of means-oriented ethical principles (Howe and Kaufman, 1983). The same ideas also hold true for professionals in policy evaluation. Standards and guidelines within the field of evaluation are generally associated with the professional organisations of evaluators in a number of ways (Bustelo, 2006), often include issues related to the design of evaluations, levels and sources of resources to be committed, methods to be used, parties to be included in conducting and overseeing the evaluation, and results sought. Evaluators have articulated essential principles, values, and standards to guide the profession in addressing these concerns as well (Schweigert, 2007).

Evaluation standards have been developed and are being used in some countries and regions in the world. Apart from the United States, countries and regions where ethical standards for evaluation have been developed include Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, Australia, UK and Africa (Picciotto, 2005, as cited in Morris, 2008). The earliest guidelines in the field of policy and policy evaluation were made available in the United States. The first and most important of all were the Standards of the Joint Committee for Educational Evaluation (JCEE), first published in 1981 and revised and endorsed in 1994. These were followed by the adoption of ethical guiding principles by the American Evaluation Association (AEA) in 1994; the Canadian Evaluation Society in 1996; and the Australian Evaluation Society in 1997. A set of evaluation guide-lines was also approved by the African Association of Evaluation in 2001. In the European context, evaluation standards and guidelines have been approved by the evaluation societies of France in 2003, Germany in 2001, Switzerland in 2000 and the United Kingdom in 2002 (Bustelo, 2006).

The Guiding Principles of American Evaluation Association (AEA) come as "a set of practice that should guide the professional

practice of evaluation, and that should inform evaluation clients and general public about the principles that can expect to be upheld by professional evaluators" (American Evaluation Association, 1995, as cited in Datta, 1999). These principles are intended to supersede any previous work on standards, principles, or ethics adopted by AEA or its two predecessor organisations, the Evaluation Research Society (ERS) and the Evaluation Network. These principles are the official position of AEA on these matters (American Evaluation Association, 2004). There are five broad principles of these guiding principles: systematic inquiry, competence, integrity/honesty, respect for people, and responsibilities for general and public welfare. The key summary of the features of the AEA principles are as follows:

Systematic Inquiry: Evaluators conduct systematic, data-based inquiries, and thus should adhere to the highest technical standards appropriate to the methods, explore with the client the shortcomings and strengths of evaluation questions and approaches, communicate the approaches, methods, and limitations of the evaluation accurately to allow others to understand, interpret, and critique their work.

Competence: Evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders, and thus should ensure that the evaluation team collectively possesses the education, abilities, skills, and experience necessary for evaluation, uses appropriate evaluation strategies and skills to work with different groups, and practice within the limits of their competence, decline to conduct evaluations that fall substantially outside those limits, and seek to maintain and improve their competencies.

Integrity and Honesty: Evaluators display honesty and integrity in their own behaviour, and attempt to ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process and thus should, negotiate honestly with clients and relevant stakeholders concerning the costs, tasks, limitations of methodology, scope of results, and uses of data, be explicit about their own, their clients', and other stakeholders' interests and values, represent accurately their procedures, data, and findings, work to resolve concerns related to   procedures or activities likely to produce misleading

evaluative information, decline to conduct the evaluation if concerns cannot be resolved, and disclose all sources of financial support for an evaluation etc.

Respect for People: Evaluators respect the security, dignity, and self-worth of respondents, policy participants, clients, and other evaluation stakeholders. They should abide by current professional ethics, standards, and regulations regarding confidentiality, informed consent, and potential risks or harms to participants, seek to maximise the benefits and reduce any unnecessary harms, conduct the evaluation and communicate its results in a way that respects stakeholders' dignity and self-worth, foster social equity in evaluation, understand, respect, and take into account differences among stakeholders

Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare: Evaluators articulate and take into account the diversity of general and public interests and values, and thus should include relevant perspectives and interests of the stakeholders, consider the potential side effects, allow stakeholders' access to evaluative information, maintain confidentiality, maintain a balance between client and other stakeholder needs and interests, take into account the public interest and good and welfare of society as a whole (American Evaluation Association, 2004).

On the other hand, the standards that are developed by the Joint Committee for Educational Evaluation (JCEE) for the evaluation of educational programs although not formally adopted by AEA, it supports the Joint Committee's standards (Hatry et al., 2004). It is mention-worthy that although JCEE standards were prepared to improve evaluations of education practices, they are applicable to policy evaluations in all types of settings (Posavac and Carey, 1985). The JCEE developed five categories of ethical standards for evaluators which include utility standards, feasibility standards, propriety standards, accuracy standards, evaluation accountability standards. The key features of these standards are as follows:

Utility Standards: The utility standards are intended to increase the extent to which program stakeholders find evaluation processes and

products valuable in meeting their needs.

Feasibility Standards: The feasibility standards are intended to increase evaluation effectiveness and efficiency.

Propriety Standards: The propriety standards support what is proper, fair, legal, right and just in evaluations.

Accuracy Standards: The accuracy standards are intended to increase the dependability and truthfulness of evaluation representations, propositions, and findings, especially those that support interpretations and judgments about quality.

Evaluation Accountability Standards: The evaluation account-ability standards encourage adequate documentation of evaluations and a metaevaluative perspective focused on improvement and accountability for evaluation processes and products (American Evaluation Association, n.d.).

Referring to the shortcomings of professional ethical guidelines, Morris (2008) warns that newcomers in evaluation profession might be tempted to conclude that they now have at their disposal on easy-to-follow road map for handling whatever ethical problems might come their way. Unfortunately, the ready-made answers provided by the professional guidelines or standards might not suffice the actual need because these are inherently general and abstract and unable to fully responsive to the complexity encountered in specific circumstances. Such conflicting situation is clearly depicted by Marby (1999, cited in Morris, 2008) who says, "Codes of professional practice cannot practice anticipate the myriad particularities of ordinary endeavours---". Davis (1999, as cited in Smith, 2002) goes even further in rejecting the Professional Principles and Standards as the sole basis for determining ethical behaviour in evaluation. Stake (2004, as cited in Schweigert, 2007) also points out that the standards cannot resolve some of the most pressing ethical concerns in evaluation, and they tend to protect "guild" interests (Veatch, 1977, as cited in Sieber, 1980). Nevertheless, we must take it for granted as stated by (Smith, 2002) that standards or guidelines are used to define best practice, and to knowingly not

follow best practices would be unethical. The standards direct the evaluators toward best practice and provide support in justifying best practices.

On the other hand, many scholars in the field of evaluation have also proposed number of ethical codes, standards or principles for policy evaluators. Some of proposals made by those scholars have been stated below:

Weiss (1998) suggests that in order to that to carry out an ethical evaluation, an evaluator must: 1. be knowledgeable about the policy or policy that will be evaluated and its context; 2. maintain a high level of technical quality and relevance of the evaluation study; 3. use balance and judgement, keeping in mind that evaluators work within a context in which the policy is the priority and the conditions for systematic study are not always ideal; 4. consider evaluation use from the start; and 5. behave ethically throughout the study (Weiss, 1998). For Weiss, 'ethical behaviour' in evaluation entails a comprehensive view of political, methodological and technical matters that comprise evaluating with integrity (Bustelo, 2006).

Bloom and Orme, (1993, as cited in Holosco et al., 2009) offer ten ethical principles for policy evaluators which include: 1. provide demonstrated help; 2. demonstrate that no harm is done; 3. involve the client in the evaluation coming to an agreement on the overall practice relationship; 4. involve the client in the identification of the specific problems and/or objectives and the data collection process, as far as possible; 5. demonstrate how the evaluation will not intrude on the intervention process; 6. stop the evaluation whenever painful or harmful to the client, physically, psychologically, or socially, without prejudice to the services being offered; 7. maintain confidentiality with regard to the data resulting from the evaluation; 8. balance the benefits of evaluating practice against the costs of not evaluating practice; 9. use the Clients Bill of Rights as an intrinsic part of evaluating practice and 10. recognise that any evaluation process reflects the values of the researcher.

Posavac and Carry (1985) state that the foremost responsibility of an evaluator in terms of ethics is to protect people from probable

harm. Evaluators must guard against harm to policy participants as well as to the staff policys evaluated. Obtaining prior agreement of potential policy participants is an effective means to protect participants from harm. Moreover, information gathered during the course of evaluation must be treated with utmost care. Evaluators clearly violate ethical principles if they conduct the research in a manner that violates people's privacy. They further stress that evaluators have the responsibility to provide clear, useful and accurate evaluation reports and have the responsibility to society in a way that has the potential to improve services for people.

Newman and Brown (1996) examine five ethical principles identified earlier by Kitchener (1984) in evaluation which include: autonomy, nonmaleficence (doing no harm), beneficence (doing good), justice (fair, equitable) and fidelity (being faithful). Autonomy includes the right to act freely, make free choices and think on own wish. Autonomy is also an obligation and it is bounded by the need to respect the autonomous right of others. Nonmalefcience is the duty to not inflict evil or undue harm. Harm can refer to physical injury or psychological injury. However, the duty to avoid harm is not absolute. It is sometimes advisable and even necessary, to inflict harm to avoid greater harm. In regard to beneficence, evaluators have the responsibility to strict to the principles of helping individuals, organisations and society as a whole. Being just is being fair, equitable and impartial. Principles of justice have a direct bearing on the everyday behaviour and decisions made by the evaluators. Evaluators need to be morally engaged in their assigned tasks. And, fidelity means being faithful, which implies keeping promises, being loyal and being honest. Regardless of other duties and promises, evaluators need to follow explicit promises and implicit expectations.

The above mentioned standards, principles and guidelines prescribed by different scholars and associations provide a general overview about ethical guidance and make a clear understanding that evaluators encounters different kinds of situations which demand a stronghold in ethical principles in order to uphold their professional integrity. But maintaining ethical standards or adhering to ethical

principles is a big challenge for professionals in evaluators. The mastery of evaluators would be how can they strict to the ethical principles? In the following a general snap-shot has been captured, as an example, to portray the common ethical challenge evaluators might encounter in discharging their professional responsibilities in various capacities. This list is not all-inclusive, but at least provides some general understandings about the possible ethical challenges for evaluators.

Morris (2005, as cited in Patton, 2008) has identified common ethical challenges evaluators face both at the beginning of an evaluation and toward the end of an evaluation. At the beginning of an evaluation, the challenges evaluator confronts include: 1. a powerful person makes it clear what the evaluation is expected to find or tries to predetermine the results and recommendations of evaluation; 2. a stakeholder asserts that certain questions are unnecessary. In this way a stakeholder tries to control what gets evaluated; 3. the funder of the evaluator or some other powerful stakeholders tries to exclude the participation or the perspectives of certain other legitimate stakeholders; and 4. the evaluator is denied access to the source or people. Toward the end of an evaluation, the challenges evaluator confronts include: 1. the evaluator is pressured to change, suppress, de-emphasise or leave out certain findings; 2. only positive or only negative findings are disseminated by certain stakeholders; 3. the report is subject to endless approval or final review delays that keep the findings from being reported in a timely way; 4. the evaluator is pressured to violate confidentiality by revealing which interviewees said what; and 5. the evaluator is accused of bias or conflict of interest those persons who do not like the findings and conclusions. Hatry et al. (2004), on the other hand, state that evaluators might be asked to answer evaluation questions which they consider unanswerable given realistic time and resource constrains or the realities of the policy design. Evaluators might be pressurised by the evaluation sponsors to slant their findings in one direction to another. Evaluators who are unable to resolve those pressures might be forced to move elsewhere

For sure, the few challenges identified above by Morris (2005,

as cited in Patton, 2008), Hatry etal (2004) have a straightforward interface with the political dynamics of policy evaluation as well. Evaluators must take proper precautionary measure to overcome the ethical challenges which they confront on their ways, otherwise the purpose of their efforts will seriously be marginalised and their competency will be seriously undermined. Nevertheless, there appears to be consensus among the scholars that the challenges associated with ethical issues cannot be avoided; they continue to arise in everyone's evaluation practice (Smith, 2002). With substantial positive efforts and mind-set evaluators can confront those challenges. In this regard, Patton (2008) has illuminated three important points: 1. evaluators need to be deliberate and intentional about their own moral groundings; 2. evaluators must exercise care, including ethical care, in selecting projects to work with; and 3. evaluators must be clear about whose interests are more and less represented in an evaluation. Newman and Brown (1996) suggest that evaluators need to make decisions based on principles and using criteria that clearly describe their value positions regarding their professional relationships and obligations. The likelihood of certain ethical problems arising can be lessened through good communication and building strong relationships with stakeholders (Konrad, 2000, cited in Smith, 2002), as well as strong planning and front-end work (Bonnet, 1998; Scheirer, 1998, cited in Smith, 2002). Smith (2002) says that reliance on a strong contract is an effective means both to reduce potential ethical problems and to deal with them when they do occur. In extreme cases, as suggested by Hatry et al (2004), evaluators can adopt the means of whistle-blowing; that is tosay, reporting to the higher authority about all odds they confront in the event of their evaluation.

Discussion and Conclusion

Political and ethical aspects are so important in policy evaluation if proper care is not taken by the professional evaluators in successfully negotiating the issues, the whole idea of policy evaluation might end in hopeless results. Consequently, professional evaluators must have through

understanding about the course of ethics and politics, and must have stronghold in dealing with them in a professional manner. Upon reviewing the existing literature on policy evaluation, it can be stated that much attention has been directed towards the theoretical and procedural aspects of policy evaluation, but no considerable attention has been paid for political and ethical aspects. For example, Chelimsky (1987) says that are not many cogent, action-oriented, systematic and specific discussions of how the integration of evaluation and politics should or could take place. This paper is, thus, an attempt to fill-in such an important gap. Correspondingly, there is a dearth of appropriate information about the roles, positions, locations and responsibilities of professionals in evaluation. It might be because of the fact the tasks assigned to evaluators are so varied, the role of evaluators are not widely understood and specified (Posavac and Carey, 1985).

This paper is written on various aspects of three important inter-related issues of policy evaluations such as: professional, politics and ethics. Starting from analysing the role of professionals in evaluation it gradually sheds light on political dynamics and that of various ethical issues and concerns. It is observed that evaluators enter into field policy evaluation with different roles and responsibilities. They might be from different academic backgrounds, but it is essential for them to be skilled and trained in the sophisticated techniques in policy evaluation. Policy evaluation takes place in political context, and for good or bad, it is essentially interwoven in every aspect of evaluation. The moment an evaluator decides to take an assignment, he/she enters into the complex periphery of politics and ethics. An evaluator not only has to be concerned about the dynamics of ethics and politics, but also has to be concerned about the pains and pleasures associated with ethics and politics. Then again, the complexity of assuming multiple roles of an evaluator might create a perplexing milieu for an evaluator on how to meet head-on the political and ethical dilemmas in policy evaluation. The assessment of the success of an evaluation of a policy largely depends on how professionally an evaluator adheres to the basic principles of ethics, and

embraces the dynamics of politics. This is why the interplay among the role of professionals, issues related to politics and ethics is so important in the terrain of policy evaluation. The analysis of this paper is a confirmatory evidence of such underlying assumption.

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