

The Role of Programme Theory (PT) in Evaluation

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VEN 13 June 2018

Overview

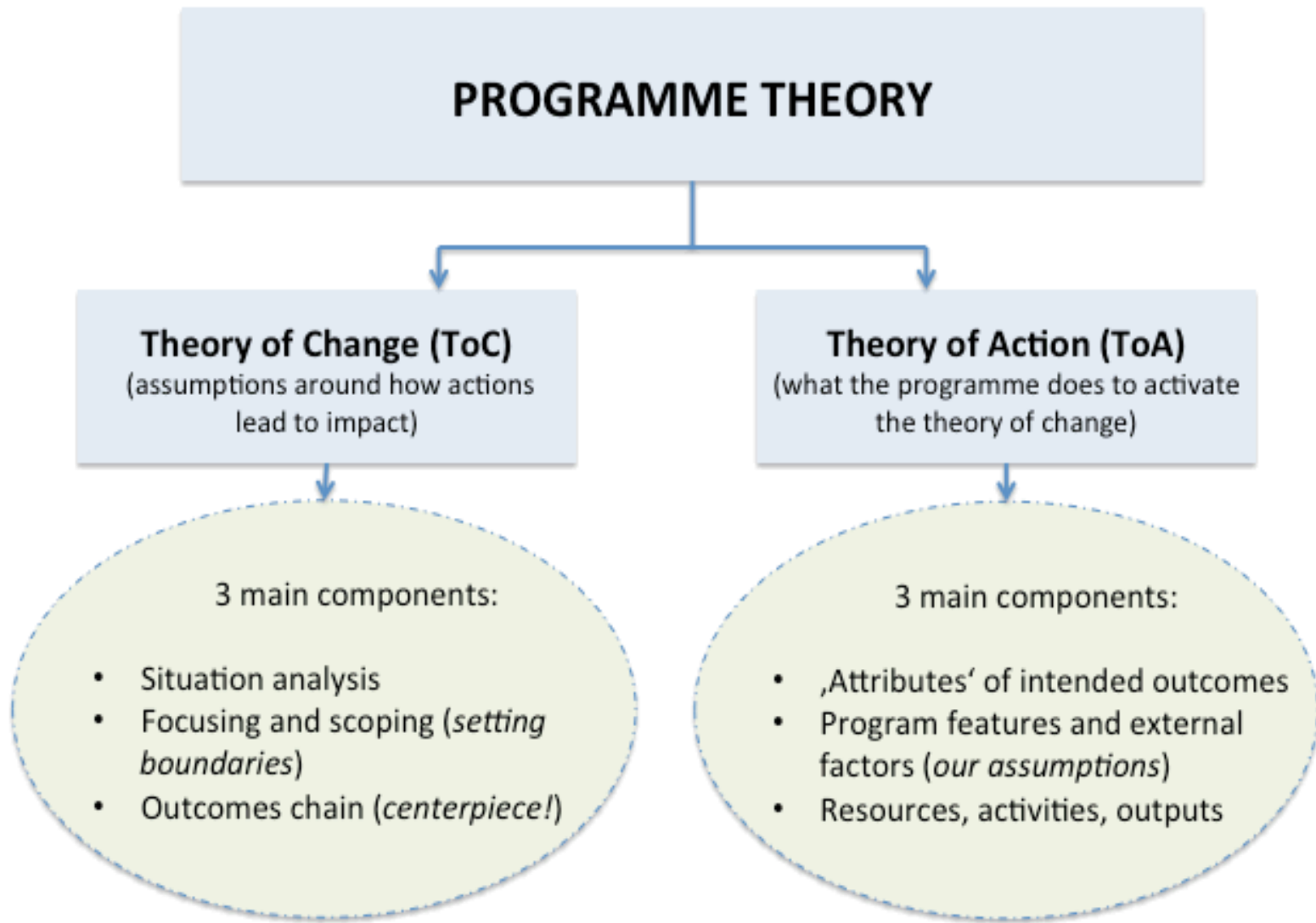
- **WHAT** is Programme Theory?
- The **ROLE** of Programme Theory for **PM&E**
- Observations from our **PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE**
- Questions for **DISCUSSION**

What is a Programme Theory?

- Expectations
- Different terms - used interchangeably?
(programme theory, programme model, theory of change, etc.)
- Different concepts & ideas, definitions - confusion

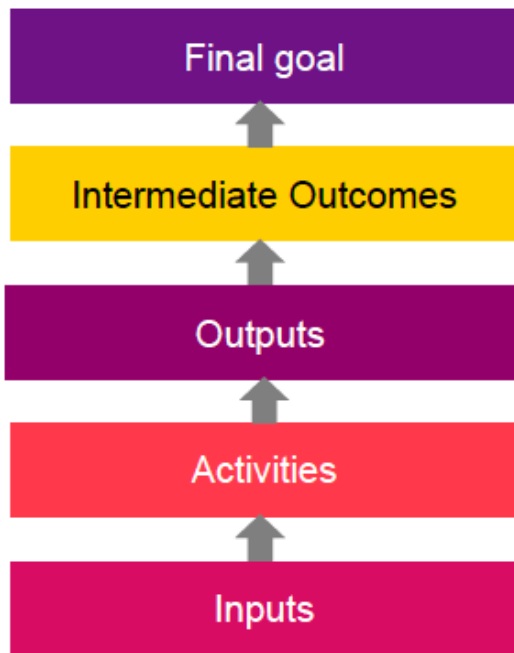
Different terms for describing the approach to evaluation that is based on a
„plausible model of how the program is supposed to work“

Chains of reasoning	Causal chain	Causal map
Intervention framework	Intervention logic	Intervention theory
Outcomes hierarchy	Outcomes line	Impact pathway
Performance framework	Reasoning map	Results chain
Program theory	Program logic	Theory of change

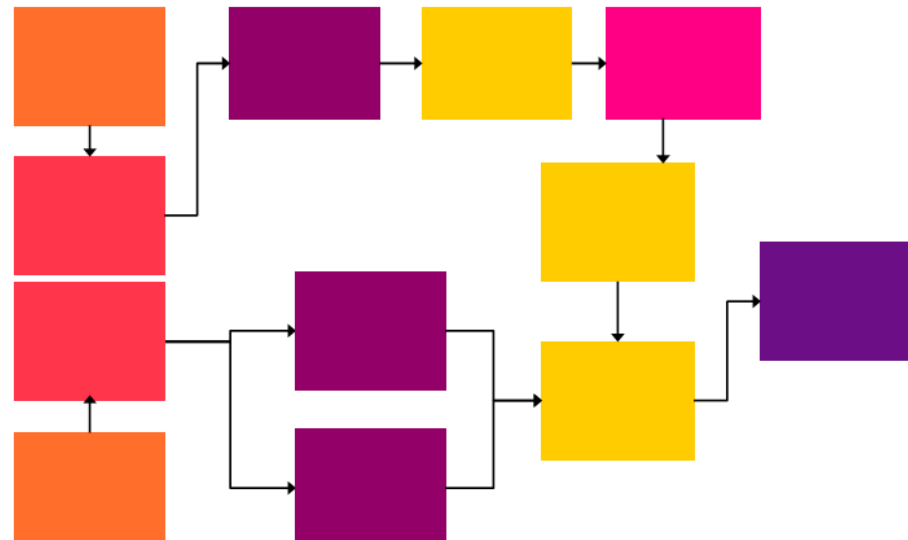


Representing a Programme Theory

(1) Pipeline logic models



(2) Outcomes chain logic models



(3) Narratives

An example of a narrative theory of change/set of assumptions for a housing project:

Context

- We work with people who have been released from custody with housing problems along with a range of needs and a high risk of reoffending behaviour.
- There are numerous causes of offending behaviour. Direct causes include substance misuse, financial problems, lack of positive relationships. Indirect causes include criminal identities and attitudes, lack of understanding of social norms and limited aspirations*.

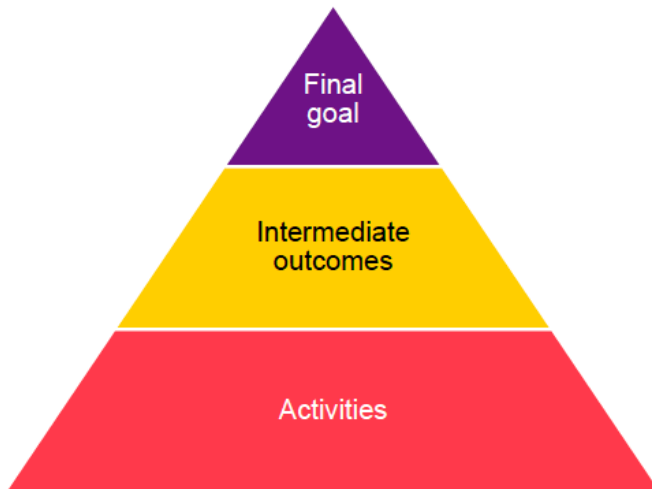
Causal mechanisms

- Providing secure accommodation offers them a stable and controlled environment upon which other activities can be based, thereby enabling us to address multiple needs.
- The relatively small number of units facilitates the development of close social bonds and mutual support within the house. This in-turn helps people to learn and practice positive relationships with people outside the house, including their families and the wider community.

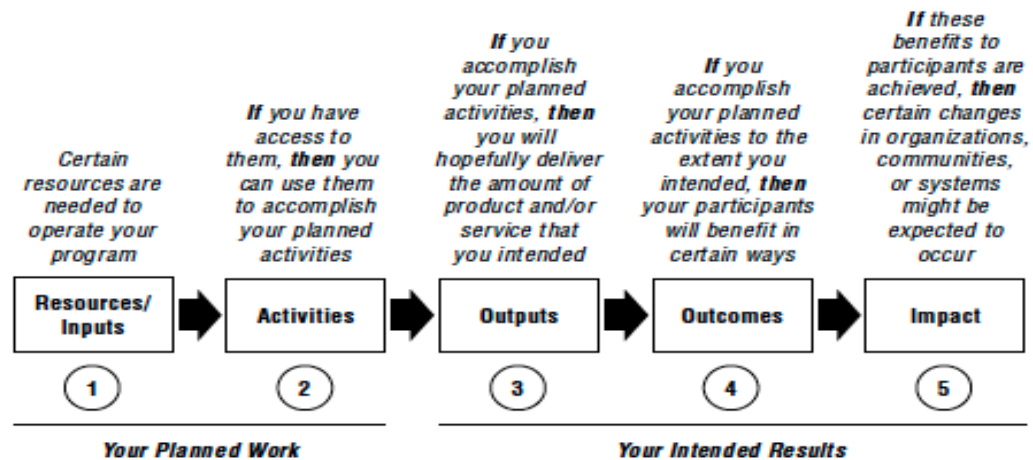
Representing a Programme Theory

(1) Variations of pipeline logic models

- Planning Triangle
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation logic model
- Logical framework matrix



NPC (2017: 13)



W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2004: 3)

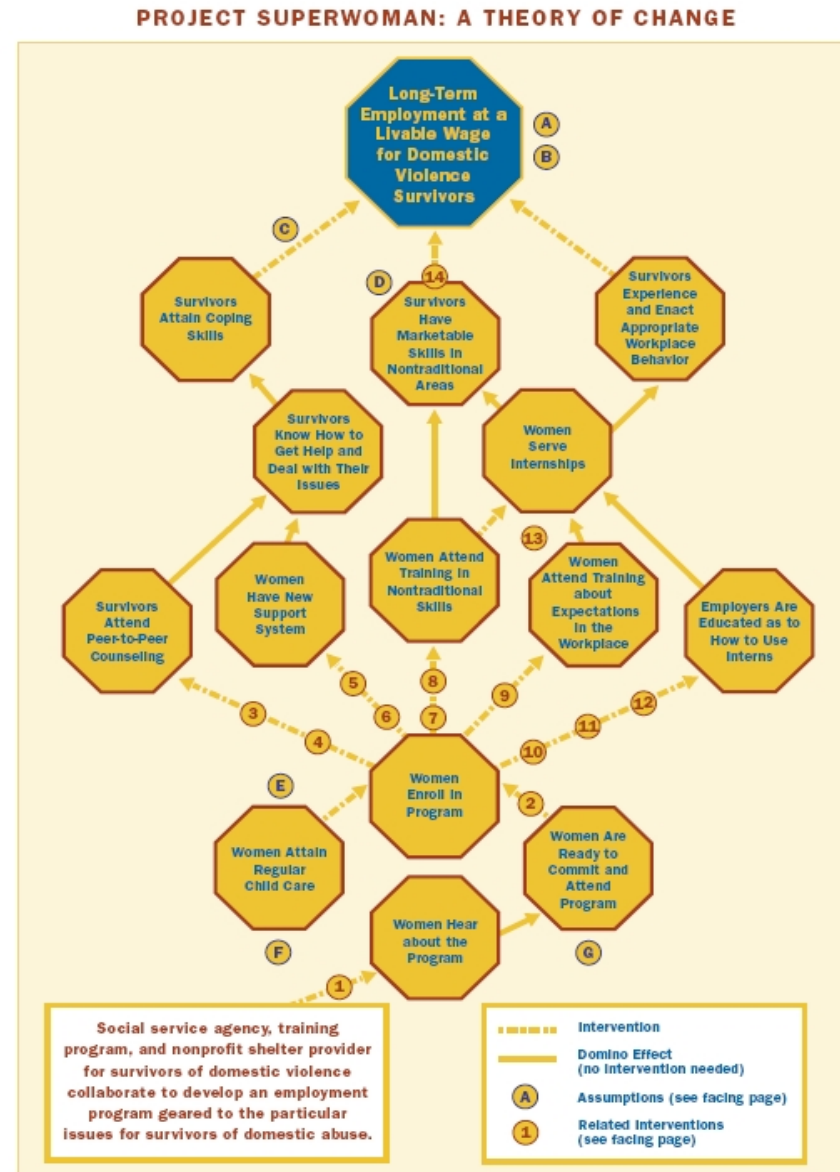
Objectives	Success Measures	Verification	Assumptions
Goal THEN			AND
Purpose (Outcome) IF THEN			AND
Results (Outputs) IF THEN			AND
Activities IF	Inputs	Costs	

<https://www.freshminds.co.uk/minds/consulting-skills-hub/post/2015/01/02/using-a-logical-framework-approach>

Representing a Programme Theory

(1) Variation of an outcomes chain logic model

- ActKnowledge/Aspen Institute Approach to Theory of Change (project SUPERWOMAN)



ActKnowledge and the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change (2003), downloadable at https://www.theoryofchange.org/pdf/Superwomen_Example.pdf

The Role of a Programme Theory in PM&E?

- In short: a PT is a model how the intervention is understood, presents how changes should occur, sets realistic objectives (intended results, changes, impacts)
- Evaluation reflects on this understanding & the immediate outcomes/results that need to be achieved for a programme to work

The Role of a Programme Theory in PM&E?

- Added value 1: **Conceptual framework** for planning, monitoring & evaluation
- Added value 2: Makes **implicit knowledge more explicit** (causal assumptions!)
- Added value 3: **Implementation failure** (management, implementation issues, others) versus **theory failure** (project operates as planned but still no big difference? wrong assumptions?)

Observations from our Practical Experience

- PT is a „blurred concept“
- No „theory“ in programme documents
- „Wishful thinking“ – too imprecise, outcomes unrealistic (example)
- A lot of information / experiences especially from partners available

Observations from our Practical Experience

- No budget /resources
- Quality of one-page diagram
- Lack of knowledge, skills, experience
- Word „theory“ not ideal

Observations from our Practical Experience

Voltaire famously decried the Holy Roman Empire as „not Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire“. *Program theory* could be described similarly as being „**not program or theory**“. If a narrow definition is used, *program theory* can be used for **policies, strategies, funding initiatives, and practices** – in other words, not only for interventions labeled as programs. The „theory“ in program theory can be an **articulation of practice wisdom or of tacit assumptions** – that is, not only a formal, research-based research.

Questions for Discussion

- What are your personal experiences in terms of programme theories?
- Where are you standing now with your organisation developing/using a PT?
- Any suggestions, recommendations regarding programme theories?

Literature

Chen H.T. (1990) *Theory-Driven Evaluations*. New York: Sage

Chen H.T. (2005) *Practical Program Evaluation: Assessing and improving planning, implementation and effectiveness*. USA: Thousand Oakes, California Sage

Coryn, C.L.S., Noakes, L. A., Westine, C.D., Schröter, D.C. (2011) A Systematic Review of Theory-Driven Evaluation Practice from 1999 to 2009, *American Journal of Evaluation* 32(2), pp. 199-226

Funnel, S.C. Rogers, P.J. (2011) *Purposeful Program Theory: Effective Use of Theories of Change and Logic Models*. USA: Jossey-Bass, John Wiley & Sons

NPC (2017) Introduction of Theory of Change Training, London

Weiss C.H. (2010) Theory-based evaluation: Past, present, and future. *Wiley Online Library*, at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/ev.1086>

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide (2004)

Save the date: Workshop on „Creating a Theory of Change“

WHEN: 18. & 19. October 2018 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

WHERE: Seminarzentrum Pallottihaus, Auhofstrasse 10, 1130 Wien

COSTS: €495.- (incl. lunch and documentation) (20% discount for TripleFunds members)
(www.triple-funds.com)

FACILITATORS: Karin Kohlweg (pme Consulting) & Lisa Ringhofer (TripleMinds Consultancy)

The training will help you to:

Understand the big picture: ToC and its role in project/programme planning and evaluation

Embed ToC in relation to other models (logic models, Logframes, results chains)

Develop your own ToC (collecting theory of change data: engaging with stakeholders)

Visualise your ToC and quality check

Avoid common pitfalls

The training will be held in English.

More information on www.triple-minds.com