![NERUPI network — Evaluating & Researching University Participation Interventions](logo)

The **NERUPI** Approach to Evaluation

Thursday 6 February 2025

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Session Overview

1. **Overview of changes to the members Toolkit**

   - Basics

   - Reflexive cycle toolkit (strategic analysis, planning, evaluation learning)

2. **NERUPI approach to evaluation**

   - People-process-context-consequences (PPCC)

NERUPI *Network*
### Evaluating & Researching University Participation Interventions

THE REFLEXIVE CYCLE TOOLKIT

Basics ∨   Strategic Context ∨   Planning ∨   Evaluation ∨   Learning ∨

Welcome to the NERUPI Members' Area

This area of the site is exclusively for you, staff based at our NERUPI member organisations. As well as news and events for members, it provides a wide range of resources for designing, delivering, evaluating and researching widening participation and equity initiatives in higher education.

But this website is more than simply a collection of resources. It is a toolkit, bringing together practice and theory and structured around a reflexive cycle of context analysis, planning, evaluation and learning for access and participation interventions: the NERUPI Reflexive Cycle Toolkit. Click on Basics in the menu for an introduction to the Toolkit and the different elements of the reflexive cycle.

News and events for members

[Working Groups](#)
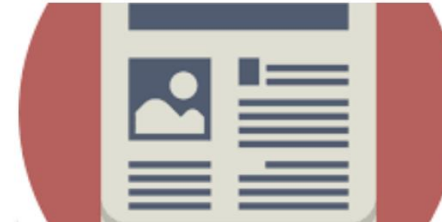
[NERUPI News](#)

[The NERUPI Framework](#)
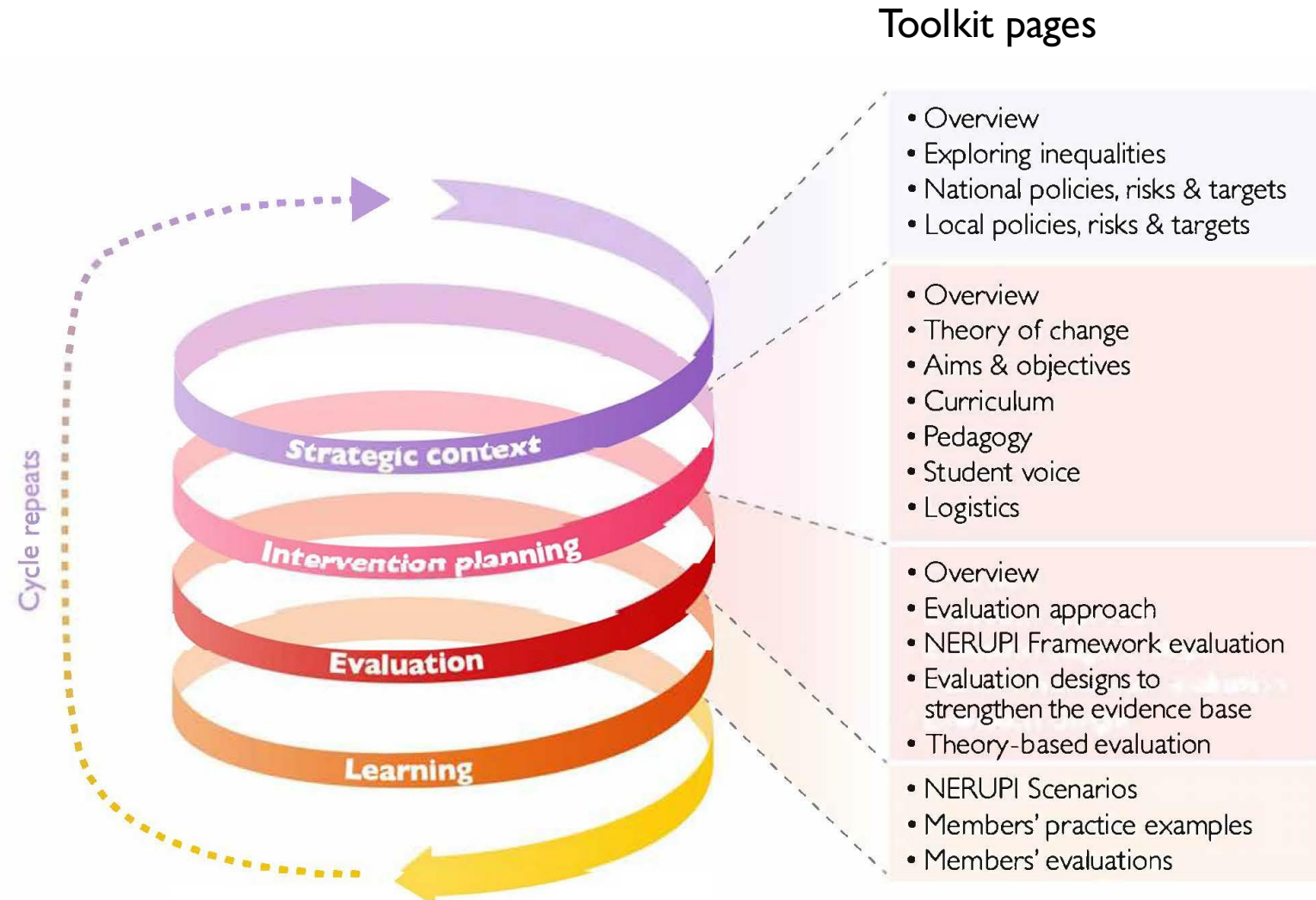

[ALL PAST AND UPCOMING EVENTS](#)

Basics

Overview

Widening Participation

The Theories

The NERUPI Framework

Praxis Teams & Stakeholders

Toolkit pages

Cycle repeats

Strategic context

Intervention planning

Evaluation

Learning

- Overview
- Exploring inequalities
- National policies, risks & targets
- Local policies, risks & targets

- Overview
- Theory of change
- Aims & objectives
- Curriculum
- Pedagogy
- Student voice
- Logistics

- Overview
- Evaluation approach
- NERUPI Framework evaluation
- Evaluation designs to strengthen the evidence base
- Theory-based evaluation

- NERUPI Scenarios
- Members' practice examples
- Members' evaluations

Basics

Overview

Widening Participation

The Theories

The NERUPI Framework

Praxis Teams & Stakeholders

Widening Participation

The term 'widening participation' started to appear in the UK in the late 1990s when it became clear that, despite free courses and maintenance grants, certain groups were not progressing to higher education. In response, a number of initiatives were developed to support educational progression.

Basics

The Theories

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

Capability theory >

Ecological Systems Theory >

Capitals, habitus and field >

Praxis >

Possible Selves >

Pedagogy, curriculum and engagement >

Reflexivity >

Basics

Praxis

Praxis is at the heart of NERUPI: in its aims as an organisation, its approach to evaluation and its perspective on learning and teaching NERUPI values the insights of practitioners working in widening participation and equity as well as educational theory.

- NERUPI provides a space for members to share and develop their ideas and strategies to tackle inequalities through Events and Working Groups
- NERUPI values student and stakeholder voices
- NERUPI fosters collaboration between organisations and through collaborative research such as Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales
- NERUPI Framework aims and objectives were tried, tested and amended by practitioners actively engaged in access, participation and progression interventions

- NERUPI encourages the creation of Praxis Teams to ensure that insights, knowledge and experience from across organisations is used to inform strategy, deliver and evaluation of access, success and progression initiatives

Basics

Capitals, habitus and the NERUPI Framework.

Capitals and habitus informed the development of the aims in the NERUPI Framework, underpinning the capabilities which under-represented groups may not have had the opportunity to develop due to structural inequalities. They link

- social and academic capital to knowledge of accessing higher education

- skills capital to identfy the study skills required

- intellectual (subject capital) to subject knowledge
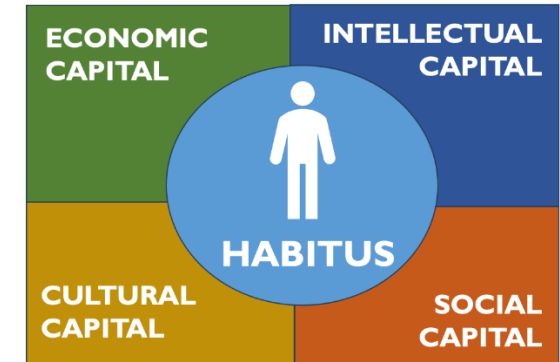
SOCIAL & ACADEMIC CAPITAL		HABITUS	SKILLS CAPITAL	INTELLECTUAL & SUBJECT CAPITAL	ECONOMIC CAPITAL
PROGRESSION CURRICULUM		STUDENT IDENTITIES	SKILLS CURRICULUM	KNOWLEDGE CURRICULUM	ECONOMIC RESOURCES CURRICULUM
KNOW	CHOOSE	BECOME	PRACTISE	UNDERSTAND	SUSTAIN

The NERUPI Framework

| SOCIAL & ACADEMIC CAPITAL		HABITUS	SKILLS CAPITAL	INTELLECTUAL & SUBJECT CAPITAL	ECONOMIC CAPITAL
PROGRESSION CURRICULUM		STUDENT IDENTITIES	SKILLS CURRICULUM	KNOWLEDGE CURRICULUM	ECONOMIC RESOURCES CURRICULUM
KNOW	CHOOSE	BECOME	PRACTISE	UNDERSTAND	SUSTAIN
Develop students' knowledge & awareness of the benefits of higher education & graduate employment	Develop students' capacity to navigate Higher Education sector & make informed choices	Develop students' confidence & resilience to negotiate the challenges of university life	Develop students' study skills & capacity for academic attainment	Develop students' understanding by contextualising subject knowledge	Develop students' capacity for critically informed financial decision making & managing financial resources

NERUPI and ecological systems theory

Ecological systems theory has been important in developing our thinking about two particular areas:

informing our approach NERUPI evaluation approach based on a the relationship between:

- people - processes - context - consequences

identifying where change is needed to overcome inequalities, in particular within higher education providers

- culture & structures - staffing - student support - curricula & pedagogy - resources
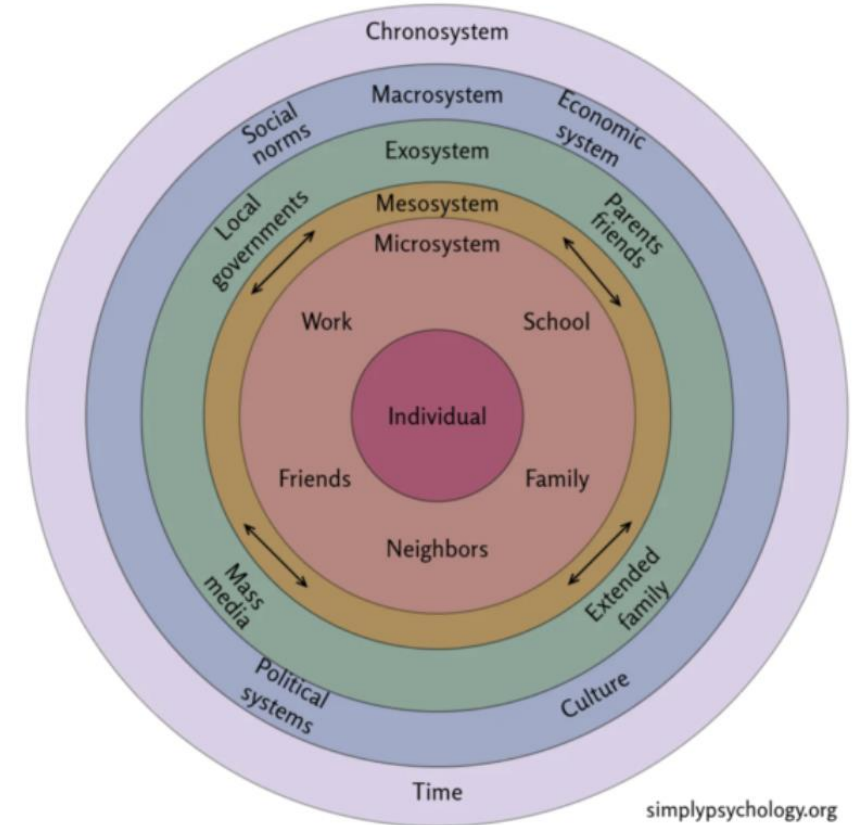
simplypsychology.org

CULTURE & STRUCTURES	STAFFING	CURRICULA & PEDAGOGY	STUDENT SUPPORT	ECONOMIC CAPITAL
ENACT	ACTIVATE	EMPOWER	ENABLE	SUSTAIN

Organisational Aims

NERUPI *network*
Evaluating & Researching University
Participation Interventions

CULTURE & STRUCTURES	STAFFING	CURRICULA & PEDAGOGY	STUDENT SUPPORT	ECONOMIC CAPITAL
ENACT	ACTIVATE	EMPOWER	ENABLE	SUSTAIN
Develop a culture and ethos, backed up by policies, procedures, and resource mechanisms internally, which promote inclusivity, supportive values and behaviour, and promote participation and engagement for all	Embed staffing and professional development arrangements, support and rewards, which build the capacity, awareness and skills of staff members to support and promote equity	Support and extend approaches to curricula and pedagogy which ensure inclusivity, and promote innovation, co-creation and partnership arrangements	Identify and operationalise types and mechanisms of financial, academic and pastoral student support to enable full participation and engagement of diverse student groups and individuals	Develop students' capacity for critically informed financial decision-making and managing financial resources

LEVEL 2

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Evaluating & Researching University
Participation Interventions

Progression Curriculum

Activity focus: Discover, understand and explore....

KNOW				CHOOSE		
Academic & social benefits of HE	Economic benefits of HE & graduate careers	Personal development & enrichment benefits of HE	Study & research opportunities in HE	Different types of HE institutions	Types of HE courses & their entry requirements	HE subject areas & range of study opportunities

Short-term Benefits: Exploration of academic, social, economic and personal benefits of progressing to higher education; Exploration of differences between higher education Institutions and study opportunities within subject areas

Subject Knowledge Curriculum

Activity focus: Experience and develop competence in...

UNDERSTAND							
Subject knowledge & applications	The GCSE curriculum	How GCSE subject knowledge applies to other settings	Educational projects which extend & conceptualise learning	Application & development of GCSE knowledge at degree level	Relationship of GCSE curriculum to HE subject areas	Critical thinking, perspective taking & creative engagement with subject	Attainment-raising interventions

Short-term Benefits: Development of study skills through educational projects which encourage active learning; Broader understanding of subject knowledge and its wider applications; Understanding of how GCSE subject knowledge links to university subject areas

Skills Curriculum

Activity focus: Develop and apply...

PRACTISE							
Problem solving applying existing knowledge	Communication & presentation skills using different mediums	Interpersonal & group work skills	Analytical skills and critical and innovative thinking	Research skills	Project planning skills	Team-working & leadership skills	Revision techniques & skills

Short-term Benefits: Enhanced study skills and capacity for academic attainment and successful graduate progression

Organisational Culture and Ethos, structures, policies and procedures

Activity focus: Understanding, building and embedding....

ENACT						
Support for linkages at all stages of education	Partnerships with schools & communities	Reflection & action cycles that promote learning/improvement	Student recruitment & admissions processes that support diversity	Accountability procedures that support diversity	Use of data & evidence to target outreach activities	Effective decision-making structures

Short-term Benefits: Commitment to access is shared across the institution; Policies and strategies are in place, and resourced appropriately, which maximise access, participation and success of Access and Participation target groups; Data and evidence are used effectively to generate continual improvement.

Staffing (including student staff members such as ambassadors and mentors)

Activity focus: Embedding understanding & support for equity objectives into...

ACTIVATE				
Continuing professional development & training	Development of praxis team(s)	Structures for sharing information & best practices	Incentives & rewards for staff delivering outreach	Staff diversity & representation

Short-term Benefits: Human resourcing supports access, participation and success

Curricula & Pedagogy

Activity focus: Understanding, skills and resources to deliver...

EMPOWER				
Relevance to current learning	Relevance to contemporary issues & concerns	Sensitivity to students' prior learning & life experiences	Active learning, creative thinking, problem solving & collaborative learning	Inclusive practices & language

Short-term Benefits: Principles of outreach design and implementation support equality of access, participation and success

Mechanisms for student support

Activity focus: Understanding, skills and resources to deliver effective...

ENABLE		
Academic support materials & resources	Careers IAG materials and resources	Interventions with key stakeholder and influencers

Short-term Benefits: Student support mechanisms and the materials/resources underpinning them promote success and progression in education

Economic resources (SUSTAIN)

Understand potential local & national student financial support systems

Reflect on the costs and benefits of HE

Identify and practise the skills they need to live independently

Understand student employment opportunities

Understanding of financial implications of HE and of HE sector and HEI financial support system

Student identities (BECOME)

Familiarity with HE setting(s) and teaching approaches

Positive association with HE and HE community

Relationships with students and mutual support networks

Confidence in potential to progress in and through HE

*Increased confidence in their capacity to progress onto higher education*

Basics

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a process where researchers are considering their own assumptions about the research topic, and unpick how their personal beliefs and assumptions shape the research work they undertake. Nicole Brown, [Reflexivity and Positionality in Research](#)

The NERUPI Framework & Reflexivity

The NERUPI focus on planning, delivery and evaluation of interventions with a focus on short term benefits is designed to promote learning and reflexivity within Praxis Teams and organisations to improve understanding of inequalities and how to address them.
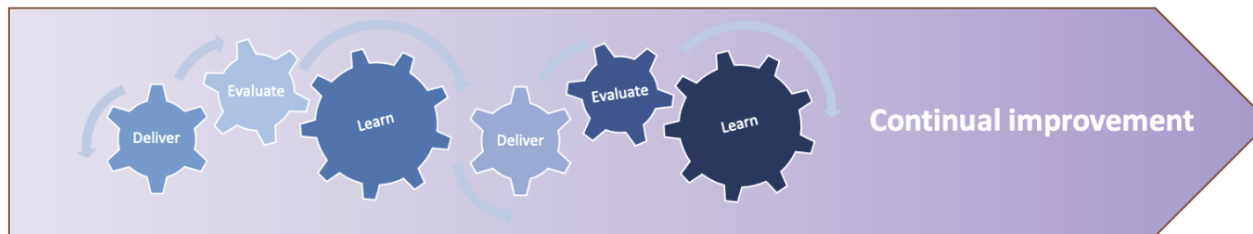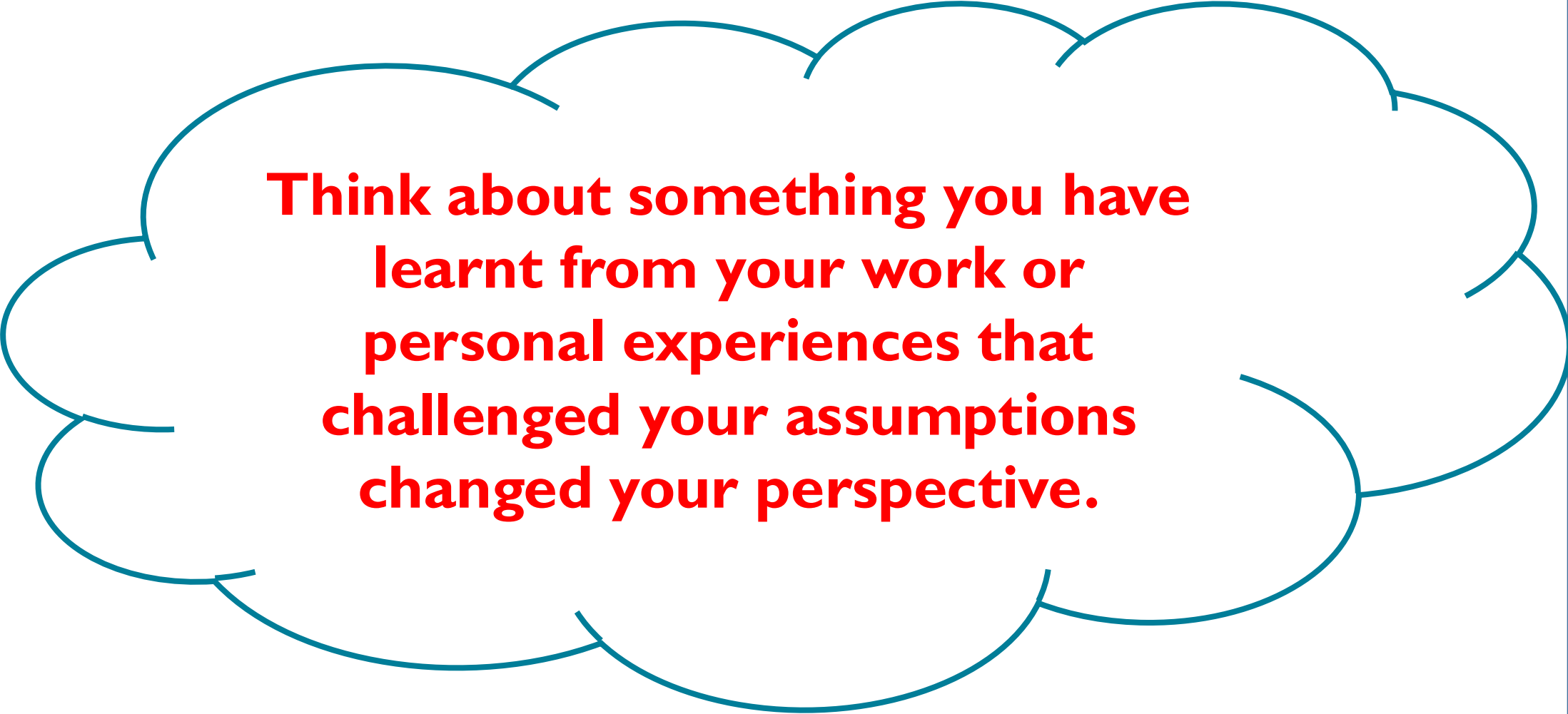
While we cannot change our backgrounds we can become more reflexive and question 'taken for granted' ideas and practices in a particular setting or field such as higher education. We can do this by:

- interrogating our own positions,
- recognising that others may have different standpoints
- exploring the perspectives of others.

Reflexivity

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Evaluating & Researching University
Participation Interventions

Think about something you have learnt from your work or personal experiences that challenged your assumptions changed your perspective.

The Reflexive cycle

Steps & stages

Key Tasks

Potential challenges

Sign-posting to NERUPI tools and resources

Main steps/stages
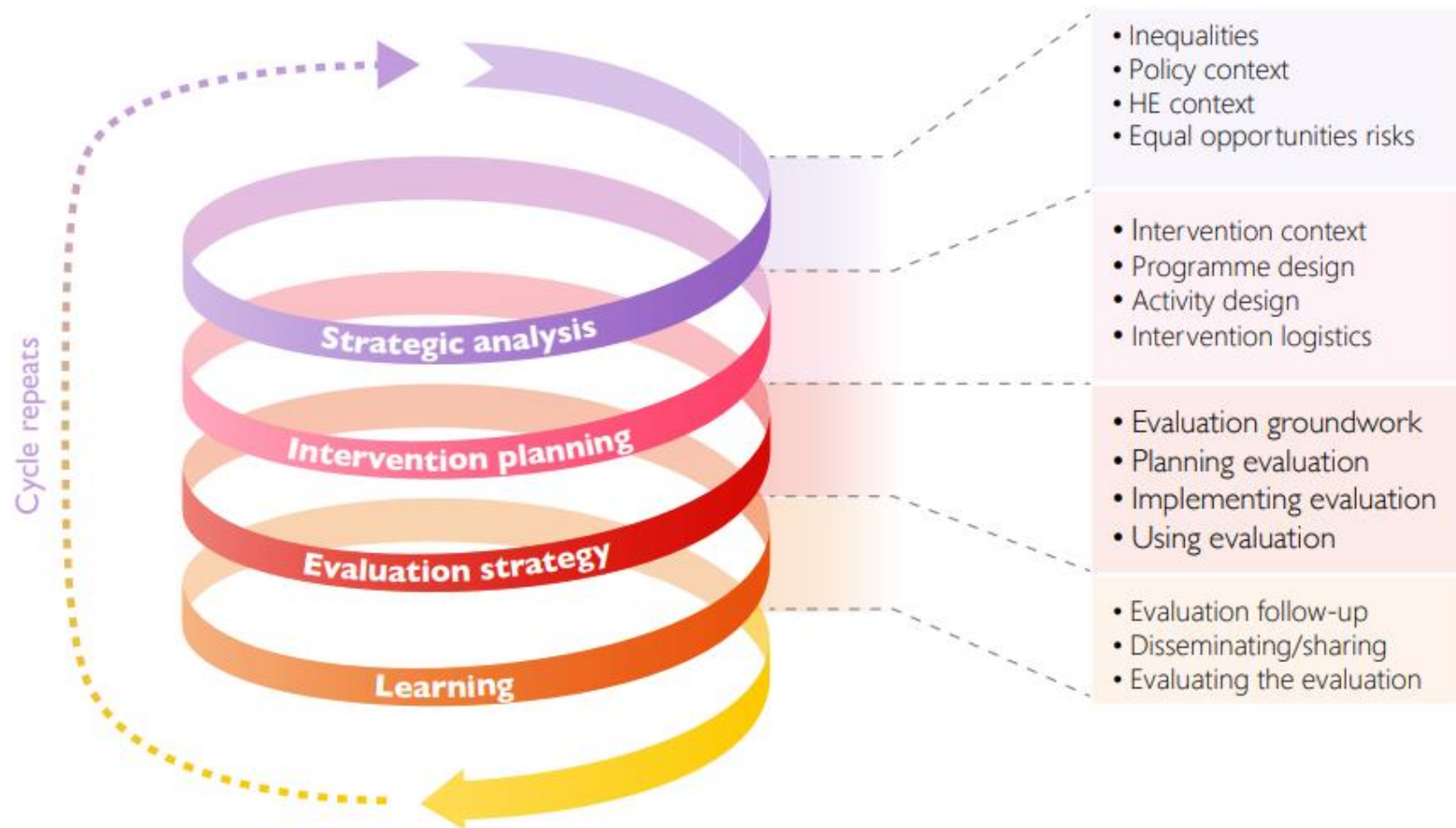
Strategic analysis

Intervention planning

Evaluation strategy

Learning

Cycle repeats

- Inequalities
- Policy context
- HE context
- Equal opportunities risks

- Intervention context
- Programme design
- Activity design
- Intervention logistics

- Evaluation groundwork
- Planning evaluation
- Implementing evaluation
- Using evaluation

- Evaluation follow-up
- Disseminating/sharing
- Evaluating the evaluation

Strategic context

Overview

Exploring Inequalities

National Policies, Risks & Targets

Policies & Targets the Local Context

Planning

5. Intervention context

6. Evidence base

7. Programme Design (TOC)

8. Activity Design

9. Intervention logistics
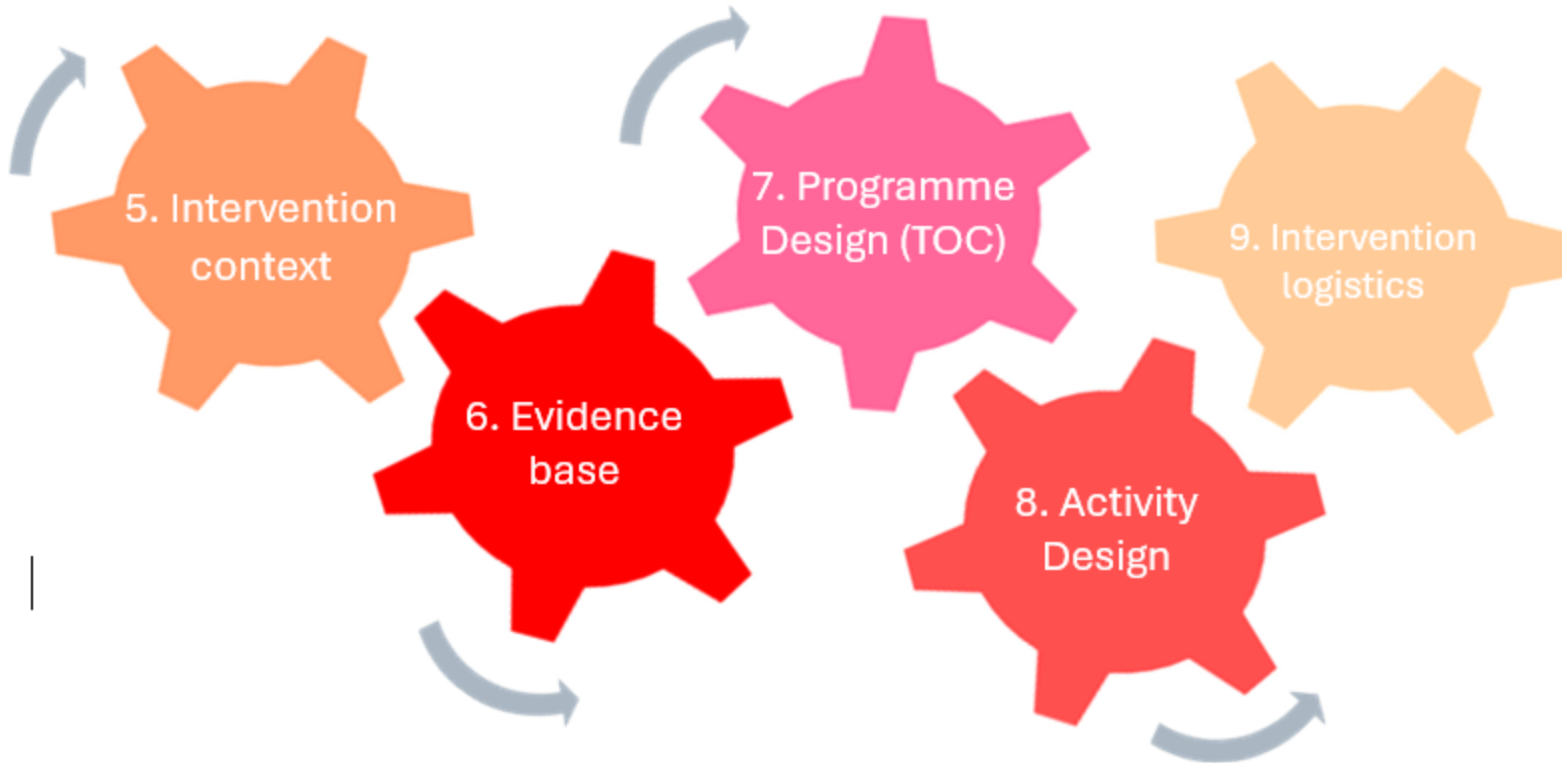
Planning for learning

Overview

Theory of change

Aims & objectives

Curriculum

Pedagogy

Student voice

Logistics

Evaluation

Overview

Evaluation approach

Evaluation stages & steps

NERUPI Framework evaluation

Evaluation designs to strengthen the evidence base

Learning

14. Evaluation Follow-up with users

15. Disseminating /sharing

16. Evaluating the evaluation

Cycle Repeats
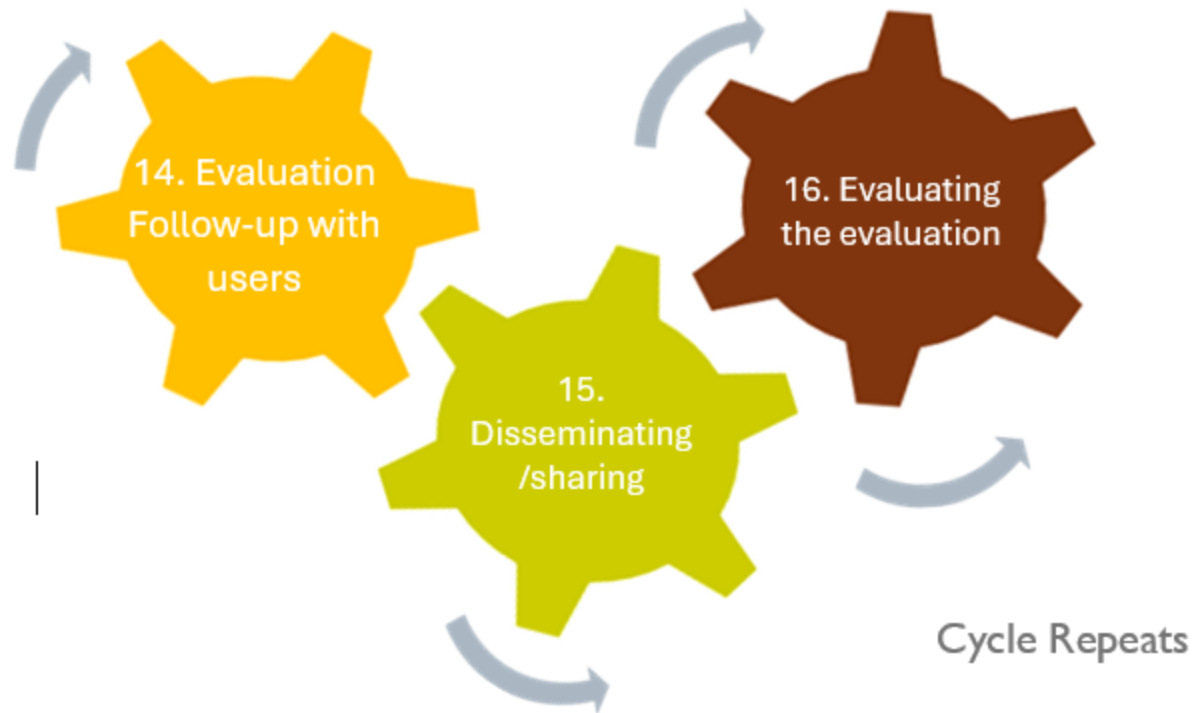
Learning

Overview

Scenario based examples

Members' practice examples

Submit your evaluation to the NERUPI resource bank

Website Reorganisation/Signposting

Step 4) Understanding the Equal Opportunities Risks

Rationale: HE providers are required to ensure equal opportunities but some groups remain under-represented, are misrecognised and experience different outcomes in class of degree and employment. In England, the OfS has adopted a risk based approach.

Key tasks

Potential challenges

NERUPI tools and resources

NERUPI Evaluation Approach: Background

- critical realist
- ongoing cycles of praxis
- needs, effectiveness & outcomes
- iterative, incremental & action research
- formative & summative

Key sources

NERUPI approach to evaluation

Research and outcome/impact evaluations

Skills and knowledge from practice

Research Findings

Practice Expertise

Policies
Reporting
requirements

Views and perspectives of stakeholders especially target groups

Lived Experiences

Education Theory

Frameworks for effectiveness

PPCC approach
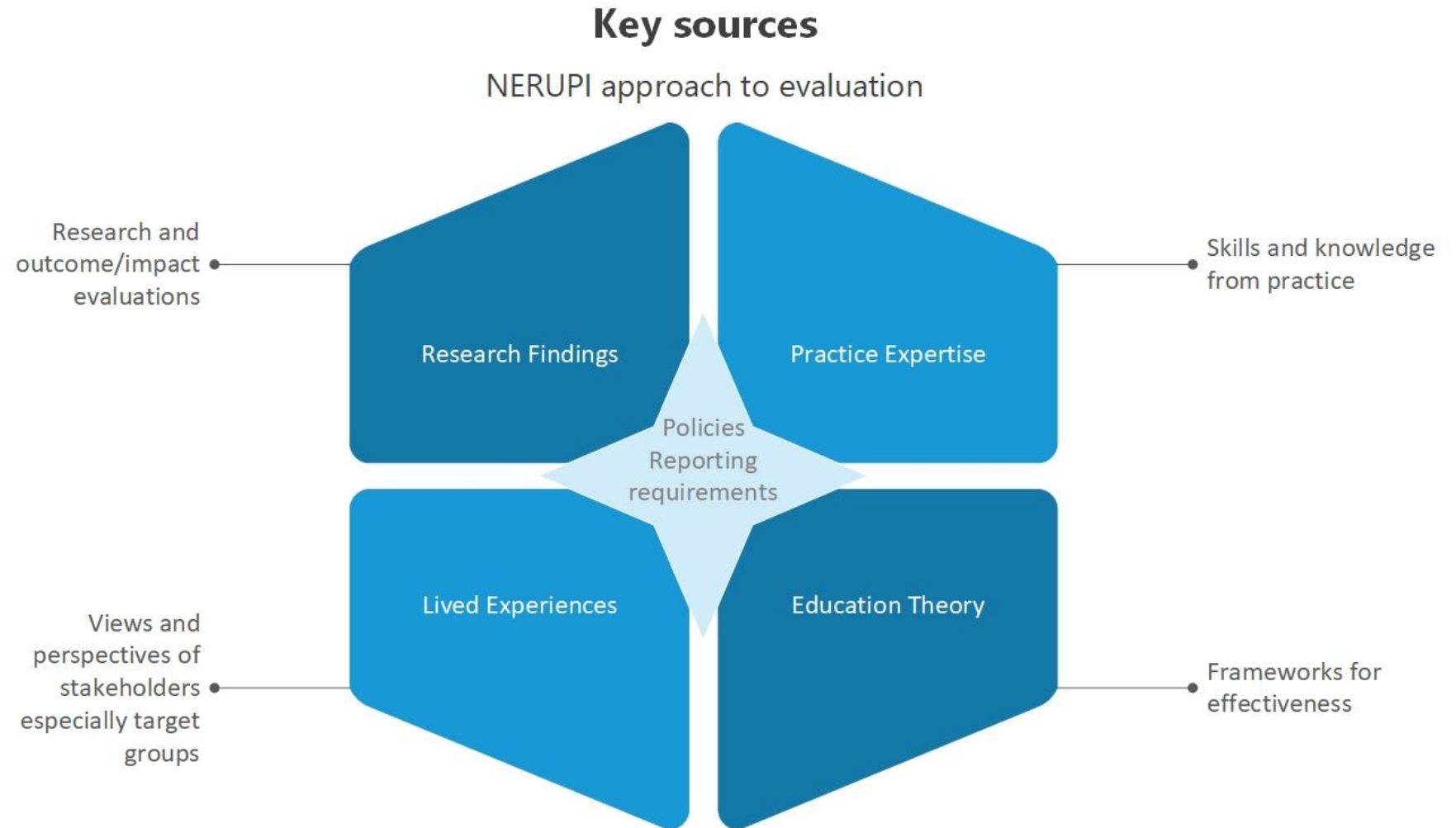
Assumptions

Nothing works for everyone

Context makes a real difference to programme outcomes

Observation is subjective - shaped and filtered through the human brain

Outcomes are the result of interactions within and across systems

Whether mechanisms 'fire' depends on the context

People	Process	Context	Consequences

Four dimensions

People

Targeting, characteristics of the participants, issues, background, environment

Context for delivery

Institutional priorities and strategies, Stakeholders, enablers, constraints, Widening Participation policies

APP interventions

Process

Design and delivery of activities, curricula and pedagogy, implementation, engagement, feedback

Consequences

Organisational learning and improvement of interventions, benefits and impacts over time, longer term impacts, effectiveness and attributions

Example – awarding gaps

People

Stereotype threat
Time poverty
Community/inter-
generational
experience of
education
Expectations/
Asiprations gap

Context for delivery

Structural factors:
historical, political,
cultural
Institutional factors:
education content
and pedagogies,
stigma, othering

Institutional strategy: awarding gaps

Process

Culturally diverse
spaces
Capability approach
Cultural inteligence
Accessibility
Pathways/methods
that benefit all
students
Lecturer impartiality

Consequences

Improvement in
interpersonal
interactions and
removal of micro-
aggressions
Student satisfaction
scores increase
Attainment improves

Evaluation as a stepped process

GROUNDWORK

- Organise approach to praxis & learning from evaluation
- Assess resources & capacity to undertake evaluation
- Identify & asess the Theory of Change
- Ensure fundamental requirements are being met

People

Characteristics of the target group, needs, problems, background environment.

Context

Characteristics of the context, stakeholders involved, strategies, enablers and constraints.

Access, Participation & Success Interventions

USE

- Interpret the evaluation evidence
- Agree the evaluation output(s)
- Follow-up with the praxis team and evaluation users
- Disseminate key findings and recommendations
- Evaluate the evaluation

DESIGN

- Identify evaluation purpose(s) and uses
- Identify and prioritise focused evaluation questions
- Define the evaluation design based on the questions
- Select indicators and measures

Process

Actions taken, activities delivered, curricula & pedagogy, implementation, engagement, feedback.

Consequences

Benefits and outcomes over time, longer term impacts, effectiveness and attribution.

IMPLEMENT

- Choose appropriate methods that fit the purpose
- Address ethical and legal issues
- Agree the evaluation action plan and communicate the evaluation
- Manage the collection and collation of data (with attention to use)
- Analyse the data to answer the evaluation questions

Theory-based approach

Groundwork
- Understand the theory
- Understand the programme
- Clarify the relationship between programme actions and results
- Understand what evaluation users want to know

Design
- Understand what questions to ask to test the theory
- Use theory to guide the evaluation design

Implementation
- Theory guided evaluation planning and implementation
- Theory guided construct measurement

Using
- Establish how the programme is working
- Describe the causal mechanisms
- Present a causal explanation
- Identify conditions needed to make a difference

Evaluation Groundwork

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Evaluating & Researching University Participation Interventions

- Approach to praxis and learning from evaluation

- Resources and capability to undertake evaluation

- Identify and assess the programme theory of change (TOC)

- Ensure fundamental requirements are being met

Related resources

NERUPI *network* — Assessing the theory of change (TOC)

ffice for udents — OfS evaluation self-assessment tool

NERUPI *network* — Forming a praxis team

Evaluation Groundwork

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Evaluating & Researching University
Participation Interventions

People	Identify participants' needs and circumstances consider the extent to which the programme and the activities engage and target participants.
Process	Understand and assess project strategies (curriculum, pedagogy) and procedural strategies designed to meet goals and objectives
Context	Assess the setting for the programme and what's needed to make it work (inputs, resources, linkages, relationships)
Consequences	Identify the intended learning goals, benefits, outcomes and impacts

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

Linking theory of change to evaluation >

Evaluating process >
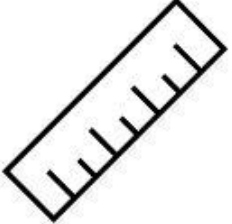
Evaluating the outcomes >

Evaluating the context >

Evaluating the people dimension >

Ecological Systems Theory >

https://www.nerupi.co.uk/members/resources/groundwork

Evaluation Groundwork

- **Using PPCC to reflect on the TOC**

	People	Process	Context	Consequences
Rationale: is the 'why' clear?	?	?	?	?
Relevance: is the benefit clear?	?	?	?	?
Completeness: are all relevant aspects captured?	?	?	?	?
Assumptions: are the assumptions explicit?	?	?	?	?
Evidence: what's the existing evidence for it?	?	?	?	?
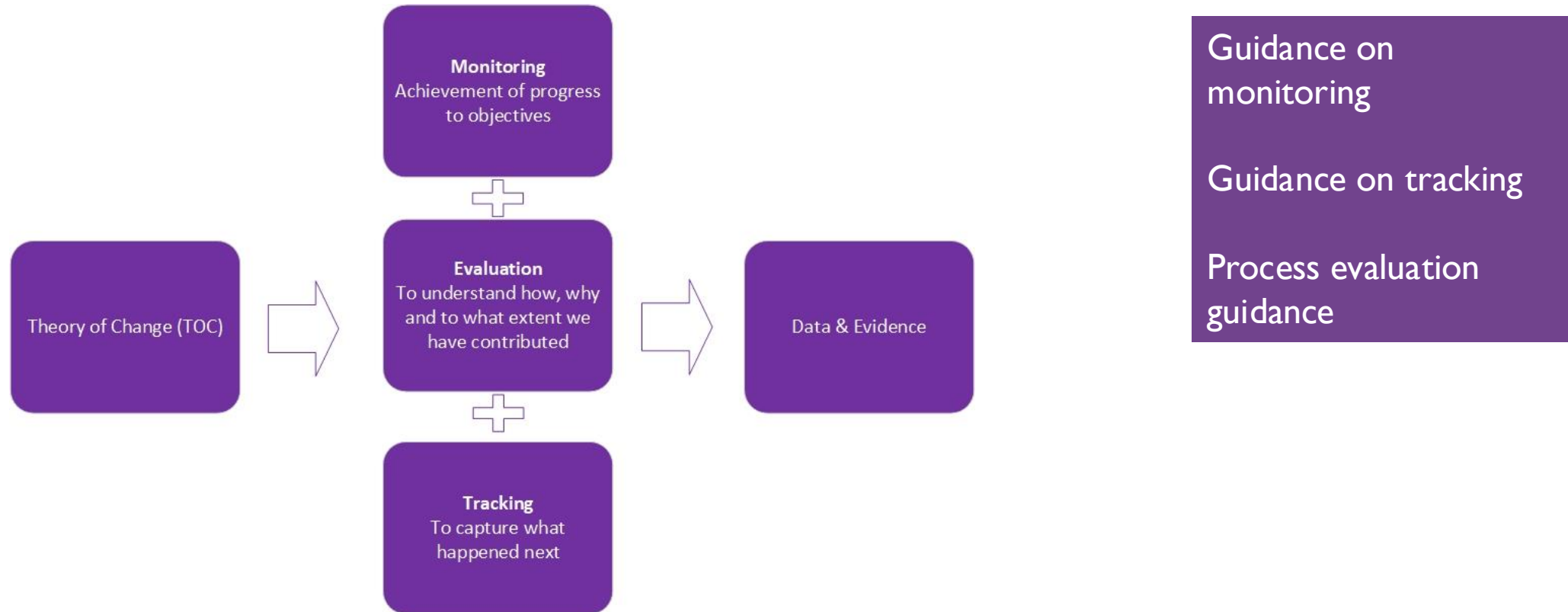
https://www.nerupi.co.uk/members/resources/evaluability-of-the-theory-of-change-toc

Evaluation Groundwork

- **Ensure fundamental requirements are being met**

Theory of Change (TOC)

Monitoring
Achievement of progress to objectives

Evaluation
To understand how, why and to what extent we have contributed

Tracking
To capture what happened next

Data & Evidence

Guidance on monitoring

Guidance on tracking

Process evaluation guidance

https://www.nerupi.co.uk/members/resources/groundwork

Designing Evaluation

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Participation Interventions

- Identify evaluation purpose(s) and uses
- Identify and prioritise focused evaluation questions
- Define the evaluation design
- Select the indicators and measures

Related resources

NERUPI *network* — Evaluating the outcomes

NERUPI *network* — Evaluating process

NERUPI *network* — Indicators and measures

https://www.nerupi.co.uk/members/resources/designing-evaluation

Designing Evaluation

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Evaluating & Researching University
Participation Interventions

People	Take account of people factors and understand what's important to the participants
Process	Identify how effectiveness of delivery of activities should be monitored and assessed
Context	Specify what and how the inputs and contextual factors will be analysed and judged.
Consequences	Specify how intended outcomes will be analysed and judged.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

Linking theory of change to evaluation ›

Evaluating process ›

Evaluating the outcomes ›

Evaluating the context ›

Evaluating the people dimension ›

Ecological Systems Theory ›

https://www.nerupi.co.uk/members/toolkit/evaluation/types-of-evaluation
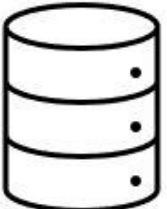
Adaptive to purposes of evaluation

Measurement	Listening	Judgement
Empowerment	Accountability	Comparing
Understanding	Developing	Documenting

Potential uses

➢ **Outcome evaluation**
 - Understand how interventions influence the observed outcomes
 - Test the programme theory in context

➢ **Comparative evaluation**
 - Focus on the proximal processes (delivery aspects)
 - Compare between (at least one) relevant person characteristic (so at least two categories)
 - At least one relevant aspect of context (at least two categories)
 - Study over time (longitudinal) and be situated in time (the historical context)

➢ **Continual improvement**
 - Testing ideas, mechanisms and assumptions in the TOC
 - Action research

Consequences

Attainment Raising Example

	Immediate (post activity)	Intermediate	Longer term
Timing:	Immediate (post activity)	Intermediate	Longer term
Tool:	NERUPI Question Bank	TASO survey scales for validation	HEAT Tracking
Research question:	Did the activity generate the desired benefit(s) that aligns with the activity learning outcomes?	Was there a shift in participants' prospects linked to factors correlated with improved attainment?	Can we identify improvement in attainment above what might be expected?
Constructs:	Engagement in learning New expertise/knowledge Application of knowledge Social capital Imagined futures Self-belief	Academic self-efficacy Sense of belonging (pre and post-entry) Cognitive strategies Critical thinking HE knowledge (Perceptions) HE aspirations	Key stage attainment results against matched or constructed comparison group

Implementing Evaluation

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Participation Interventions

- Specify appropriate methods that fit with the purpose of the evaluation

- Address the ethical and legal issues

- Agree the plan and launch the evaluation

- Manage the collection of evidence (with attention to use)

Related resources

NERUPI *network*
Different methodologies for data collection

NERUPI *network*
Triangulation

NERUPI *network*
Evaluation work planning

https://www.nerupi.co.uk/members/resources/implementing-evaluation

Implementing Evaluation

NERUPI *network*
Evaluating & Researching University
Participation Interventions

People	Capture evidence that provides participants with a strong voice in evaluating experiences Capture (or control for) the effect of personal factors and circumstances on engagement, participation and results.
Process	Monitor project's process and potential procedural barriers and identify needs for project adjustments.
Context	Capture organisation, stakeholder and community arrangements. Capture the effect of external context on engagement, participation and results.
Consequences	Measure whether specified results are being met, and any unintended consequences

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

Linking theory of change to evaluation ›

Evaluating process ›

Evaluating the outcomes ›

Evaluating the context ›

Evaluating the people dimension ›

Ecological Systems Theory ›

https://www.nerupi.co.uk/members/toolkit/evaluation/types-of-evaluation

Non-prescriptive designs/methods

- **Comprehensiveness**
(i.e. enough data to ensure findings are reliable);

- **Abductive reasoning**
(i.e. sufficient insight to be able to develop hypotheses)

- **Confirmation**
(i.e. being able to confirm the hypothesis through observations in the data)
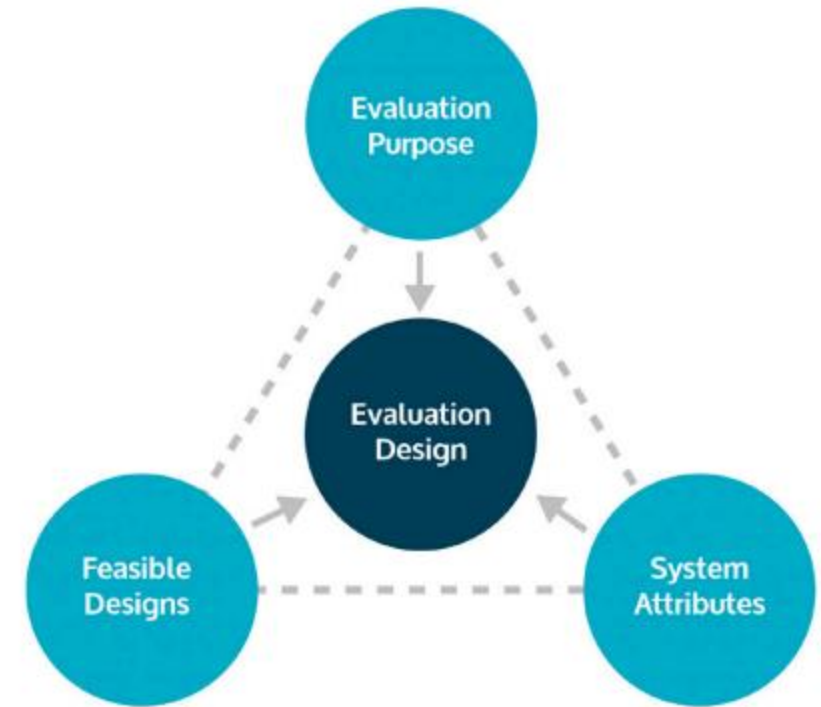
Evaluation Triangle, CECAN (2020)

Examples of methods

People	Data analysis, literature reviews, surveys, interviews, feedback, student voice
Process	Monitoring, observation, interviews, questionnaire, surveys rating scales, record analysis, case studies, focus groups, self-reflection, reflective logs
Context	Data analysis. stakeholder analysis, participant and stakeholder feedback, organisations and systems analysis
Consequences	Post-programme quantitative assessments of outcomes and impact, Behavioural measures (tracking data and follow-up) and self-reported measures (surveys, interviews, logs/diaries, focus groups, creative methods, case studies), stakeholder feedback, formal assessment measures

https://www.nerupi.co.uk/admin/entries/resources/5405-research-and-evaluation-methods

Mixed Methods Research

- Need for embedded transformative mixed methods designs
  - Could be concurrent parallel design, sequential or multi-phase
  - Datasets analysed separately but then the findings are integrated from different strands
- Framing of evaluation in an evolving context
  - An iterative approach with the intention of being open to possible changes in perspective as the research progresses
- Rationale:
  - Qualitative or quantitative data insufficient to explain phenomenon
  - Enhance strengths and minimise weakness of each approach

QUAL or QUANT qual or quant → Integrated to produce more complex picture → Findings

Using Evaluation

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Participation Interventions

Analyse the evaluation evidence

Interpret the evaluation evidence

Agree an evaluation output

Related resources

More on Dissemination

Using evaluation results

The evaluation report: issues to consider

https://www.nerupi.co.uk/members/resources/using-evaluation

Using Evaluation

People	Formatively and summatively assess whether the programme met the target and the needs
Process	Formatively and summatively assess whether the programme was delivered appropriately and effectively in a way which maximised the results. Identify implications for future interventions
Context	Identify programme, stakeholder and community aspects which support or inhibit success. Identify implications for future interventions
Consequences	Interpret, and judge project outcomes, and interpret their merit, worth/significance and probity.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

Linking theory of change to evaluation ›

Evaluating process ›

Evaluating the outcomes ›

Evaluating the context ›

Evaluating the people dimension ›

Ecological Systems Theory ›

https://www.nerupi.co.uk/members/toolkit/evaluation/types-of-evaluation

Drawing conclusions

1. **Look at the data/evidence**
    Set out what is known about the situation and it's consequences (empirical observations).

2. **Develop the Narrative**
    Create a set of narratives about the participants/results (could involve bringing information together from different sources).

3. **Contextualise**
    Identify the embodied institutional and social structures and relationships.

4. **Identify the patterns**
    Draw out how structures are experienced by participants (and how participants influence structures) and synthesise the patterns (by looking at what is known about each participant and their relationship with the structures) (abduction).

5. **Make inferences**
    Make inferences which explain the contribution made and underlying causal mechanisms (retroduction).

6. **Check the conclusions**
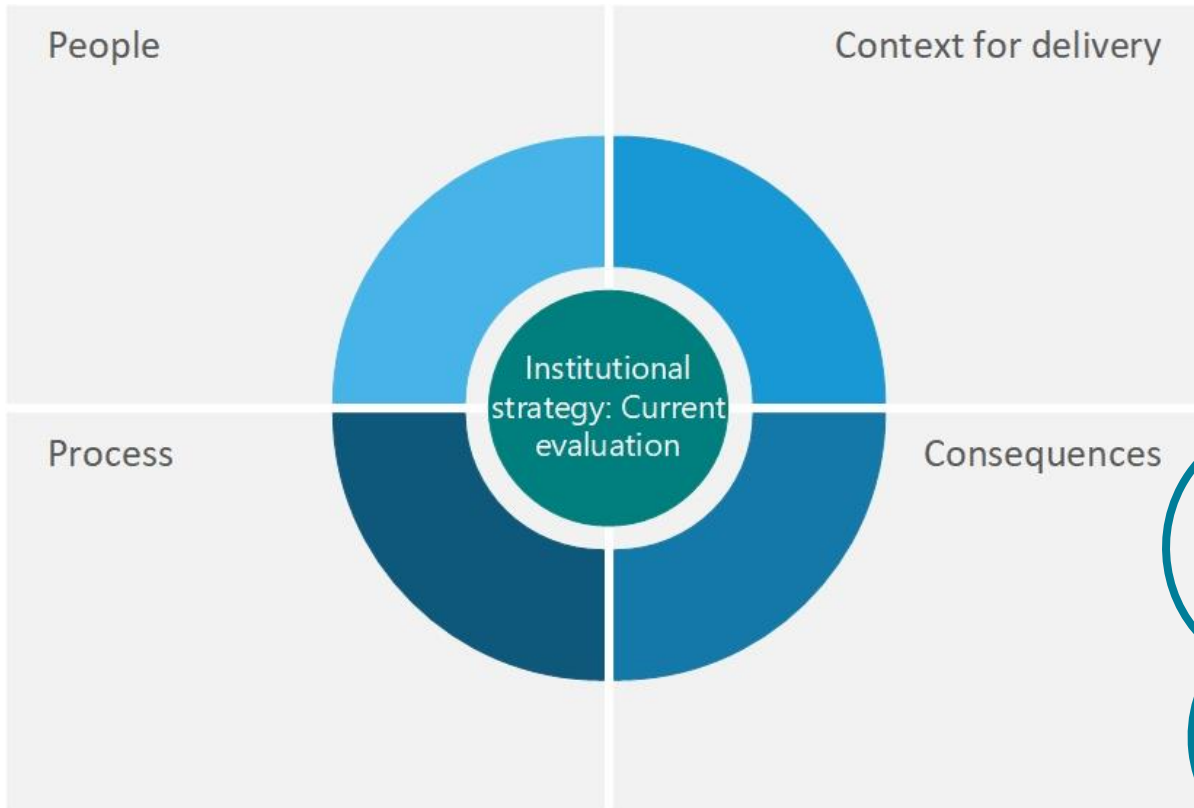   Check the plausibility of the conclusions and consider between alternative explanations.

Learning
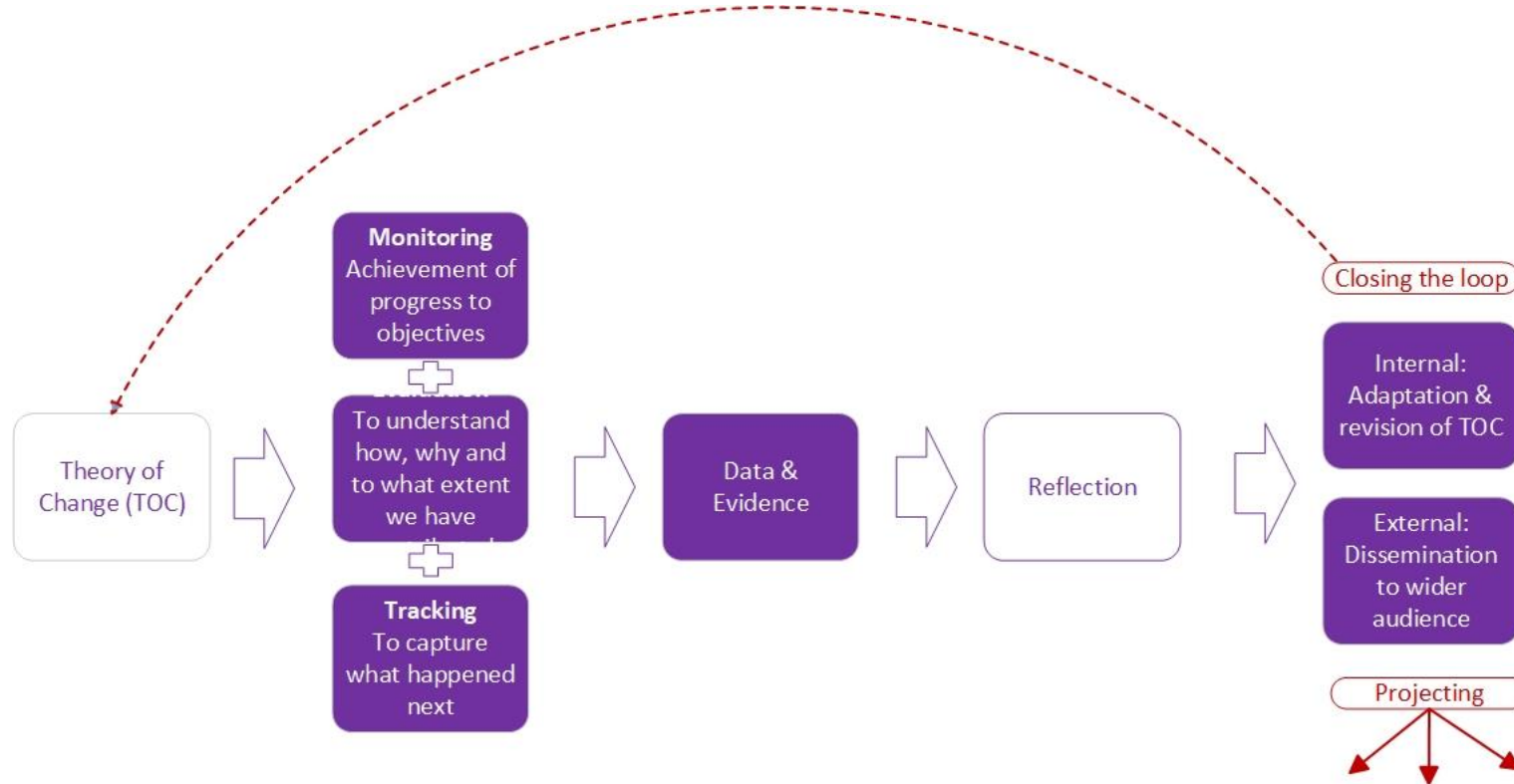
Evaluation follow up with users

Dissemination to a wider audience

Evaluate the evaluation

https://www.nerupi.co.uk/members/toolkit/action-2