Evaluation in Development Education:
A Submission to GENE and Irish Aid

1. Background and Introduction

The Quality & Impact Working Group of IDEA was formed in 2011 with the dual aims of exploring concepts of evaluation, quality and impact in Development Education (DE), and of supporting IDEA members to share and develop skills in these areas. In late 2011, the IDEA Quality & Impact Working Group published a *Paper on Quality and Measuring Impact of Development Education*[1]. This paper presented some emerging trends regarding measuring the impact of DE, explored evaluation issues in the context of the Irish Aid DE Strategy and Performance Measurement Framework, and provided examples of the evaluation practices of IDEA members.

Four years later, the Irish Aid DE Strategy has run its course and a new Irish Aid strategy currently is being developed for 2016 to 2020. As part of the strategy development process, Irish Aid has engaged the Global Education Network of Europe (GENE) to carry out a peer review, looking at the DE landscape in Ireland and exploring key issues for a range of stakeholders. This position paper is a response to Irish Aid's invitation to the Quality & Impact Working Group to make a submission to the GENE Peer Review Team. The paper follows up on points raised in the 2011 document, highlights current issues and concerns relating to emerging trends in Ireland and further afield, and shares some of the ways in which IDEA members are approaching the challenging task of evaluating DE work. This paper offers a contribution towards shaping issues of evaluation, quality and impact in the GENE report and in the Irish Aid Strategy.

Following this brief introduction, the paper will look at definitions and an overview of current contexts and emerging issues, including monitoring of the new Sustainable Development Goals (Section 2), and then will consider the concept of quality in DE and explore how quality DE is best supported (Section 3). Section 4 sets out the benefits and challenges of applying Results-Based Approaches to DE, and explores some innovative 'blended approaches' that are being used by IDEA members.

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[1] IDEA, *Paper on Quality and Measuring the Impact of Development Education,* (2011).

2. Definitions and overview

2a. Development Education

Development Education (DE) takes place in a wide range of settings, with a great variety of participants. Because of this diversity, there is no universally accepted definition for DE. We see DE as supporting people in understanding, and in acting to transform, the social, cultural, political and economic structures which affect their lives and others at personal, community, national and international levels.

It is not within the scope of this paper to explore the many definitions of DE or to set out the similarities and differences between DE and related educations, such as Education for Sustainable Development, Education for Global Citizenship, Global Education, Human Rights Education etc. IDEA believes that the DE community in Ireland can learn from the monitoring and evaluation practices of related educations. Therefore, this paper draws on research not only from 'DE' sources but from the wider pool of related educations.
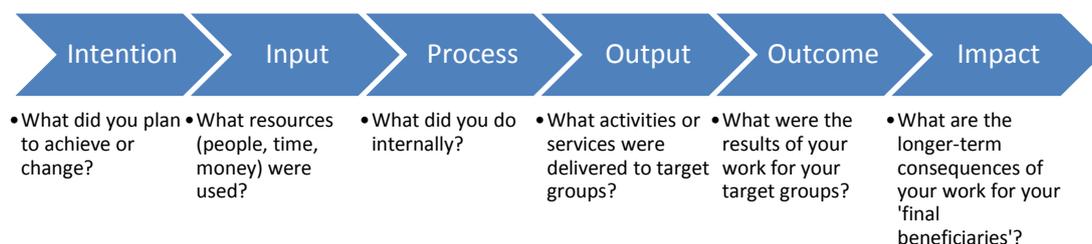
2b. Evaluation

For the purposes of this paper, the evaluation of DE is seen to have two main functions:

1) To develop good practice: to reflect, learn and improve practices on an ongoing basis. The diagram below conceptualises evaluation as part of a cycle of planning, activity and reflection.[2]

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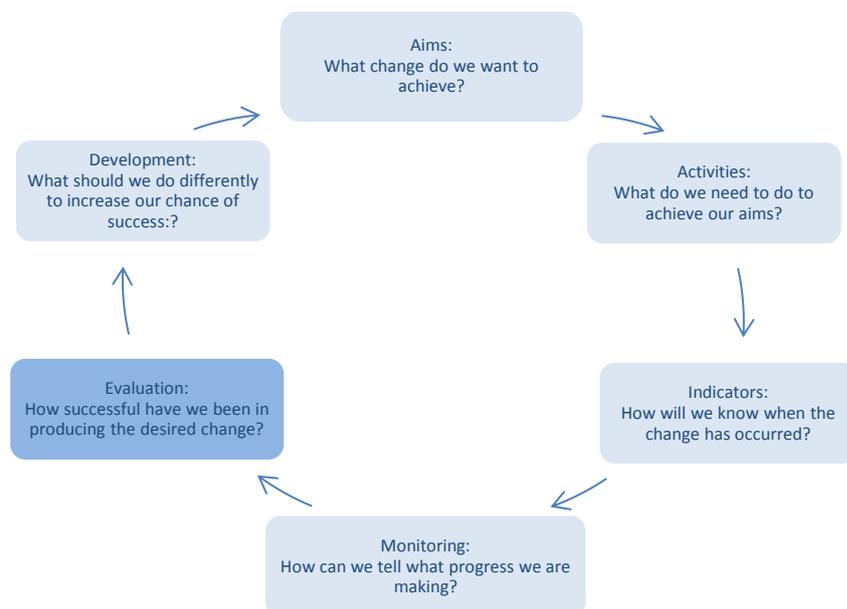
[2] Adapted from Think Global/Charities Evaluation Services, *Evaluating Global Learning Outcomes* (2011), 13.

2) To demonstrate results: to be accountable to donors and other stakeholders, and to gain wider recognition and support for one's work.   Results-based evaluation is usually conceived in a linear mode, as in the 'results chain' illustrated below[3]:

Intention	Input	Process	Output	Outcome	Impact
• What did you plan to achieve or change?	• What resources (people, time, money) were used?	• What did you do internally?	• What activities or services were delivered to target groups?	• What were the results of your work for your target groups?	• What are the longer-term consequences of your work for your 'final beneficiaries'?

These two functions are not mutually exclusive; in fact, nearly all organisations do both types of evaluation. A key challenge is to balance the need to *prove* (i.e. to demonstrate measurable results to funders) with the desire to *improve* (i.e to learn and grow as DE practitioners).

2c. Evaluation of DE in Ireland and internationally: A common framework in the context of the new Sustainable Development Goals?

The DE sector in Ireland today, as represented by members of IDEA, is an extremely diverse community of practice. IDEA members range in size from small civil society organisations to major third level institutions. They deliver DE on a huge range of topics to learners of all ages, across the full spectrum of formal and non-formal education settings. There is also variation in the level of focus for members' programmes; some seek changes at the level of learners, others at the level of educators, others still at institutional or policy level. And, perhaps most significantly, some programmes have goals that are relatively straightforward to measure, and others have goals that are long-term and complex.

Therefore it is not surprising that there is no single 'standard' approach as to how DE is evaluated in Ireland today. All programmes funded by Irish Aid are now obligated to demonstrate the achievement of measurable results, but for the most part, organisations have flexibility around defining their intended results, and in choosing appropriate indicators and tools to measure progress towards these results. Consequently, there appears to be a variety of evaluation approaches and tools employed by IDEA members, depending upon the different types of outcomes sought.

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[3] Adapted from DEEEP, *A Journey to Quality Development Education*, (2012)

Globally, there has been an increasing interest in creating an overall framework for the evaluation of DE-related educations[4]. Perhaps most notably, in the context of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, there has been debate about developing indicators for the proposed target 4.7, on Education for Sustainable Development/Education for Global Citizenship. The proposed target states:

> By 2030, ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.[5]

Kehys, the platform for Finnish NGDOs, has been pro-active in suggesting eight possible indicators of progress towards target 4.7:

Knowledge and skills for sustainable peaceful societies:
  a) *Percentage of girls and boys who acquire skills and values needed for global citizenship and sustainable development (national benchmarks to be developed) by age 14.*
  b) *Percentage of 15 year old students showing proficiency in knowledge of global issues, including knowledge of environmental science, climate change adaptation and mitigation and geoscience.*

Values and attitudes for sustainable peaceful societies:
  a) *Percentage of 13 year old students endorsing values and attitudes promoting equality, trust and participation in governance.*
  b) *Percentage of adults who respond positively to the statement: 'Protecting the environment should be given priority even if it causes slower economic growth and some loss of jobs'.*

Global citizenship education (GCE)
  a) *Percentage of 13 year old students participating in citizenship education (including climate change adaptation and mitigation and peace).*
  b) *Percentage of formal and in-service teacher education includes pedagogical tools to teach global citizenship skills (including climate change adaptation and mitigation and peace).*

Life skills
  a) *Percentage of schools that provide life-skills-based HIV and sexuality education within the previous academic year.*
  b) *Proportion of young people (10 -24) who demonstrate desired level of knowledge and reject major misconceptions about sexual and reproductive health, including HIV and AIDS[6].*

Kehys is to be commended for formulating indicators, sharing them and thus initiating dialogue in this challenging area. It also must be stressed that Kehys is offering these indicators as examples and not as definitive measures[7]. However, what is included, and what *is not*, in the Kehys list highlights the reality that any given set of indicators will not be equally attractive to all stakeholders. For example, Kehys's examples are heavily weighted towards the formal sector, with only two of the eight proposed indicators touching on informal education. Furthermore, there is unequal emphasis on different DE themes; four of the eight Kehys indicators explicitly mention the environment, yet none mention the cultural diversity element which is also an important aspect of Target 4.7. Finally, the Kehys indicators demonstrate how difficult it would be to

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[4] For example, the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has proposed a framework of key competencies for Education for Sustainable Development, see *Learning for the Future* (2012).

[5] Sustainable Development Solutions Network, *Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals,* (2015), 47.

[6] Kehys Finland, *Position Paper on Post 2015 Agenda,* (2015), 20.

[7] Ibid, 6.

take into account the depth, complexity and critical engagement of DE learning; for example, two schools might be recorded as fulfilling 'life-skills based HIV and sexuality education', but in one school this might be a 'tick-box' superficial activity, while in the other it might be fully integrated across the curriculum.

The example from Finland gives some indication of what might occur if Ireland were to attempt to develop national benchmarks. DEEEP's *Monitoring for Education for Global Citizenship: A Contribution to Debate* (2015) sets out the pros and cons of creating a global monitoring and evaluation framework:

> Global monitoring frameworks… can be used as an opportunity to strengthen governmental support for Education for Global Citizenship within national education systems…and can help to clarify the purpose and meaning of Education for Global Citizenship for both practitioners and policy makers, however there is a risk that agreement might be reached around a lowest common denominator approach: focussed on what is relatively easily measurable and, as a result, have a rather narrow focus. This could risk side-lining Education for Global Citizenship's holistic framework and its function in educating critically and socially engaged learners in favour of a general, largely de-personalised and de-politicised sense of global awareness and global belonging.[8]

These advantages and risks would have to be balanced very carefully if Ireland decides to develop national indicators/benchmarks relating to Target 4.7. Indicators would have to be wide enough to allow for the full diversity of DE practice and for multiple types of data collection tools, deep enough to measure real critical engagement, yet tight enough to be useful in assessing the impact of work in line with the agreed goals and targets. Overall, there is a sense amongst many IDEA members that diversity and critical engagement are of paramount importance, and that any common framework would need to respect and allow for the full complexity and depth of DE as it exists in Ireland today.

3. Quality of DE:

What does quality mean for development education? The available literature does not provide a minimum standard definition for quality DE in Ireland today. Indeed, some Irish DE practitioners have stated their objection to any group being established as gatekeepers for quality DE. These objections are both *practical*, in that they are based on the belief that it would be very difficult to set out a quality standard broad enough to encompass all DE activity in Ireland, and *theoretical*, in that they feel the privileging of one group's standard of quality over others may undermine the key DE value of multiple perspectives. An absence of an established quality standard can be challenging, especially to newcomers to the field, but it also represents an opportunity for DE practitioners to develop their own criteria, reflective of their experiences, and to share this with peers so as to enrich the field.

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[8] DEEEP, *Monitoring Education for Global Citizenship: A Contribution to Debate,* (2015), 36.

Good practice guidelines provide a fair and workable approach to describing and promoting quality in DE. IDEA's Formal Education Working Group has produced *Good Practice Guidelines for DE in Schools* (2013) and the Community Sector Working Group has produced *Good Practice Guidelines for DE in Adult and Community Settings* (2014). Other groups have also produced good practice guidelines: Developmenteducation.ie's *Guidelines for Producing DE Resources* (2014), Comhlamh's *Good Practice Guidelines for DE and Volunteering* (2012) and the National Youth Council of Ireland's *Good Practice Guidelines for DE in Youthwork* (2005). All of above guidelines were produced collaboratively and aim to illustrate and share the underlying principles of good practice in their areas of work. These guidelines conceptualise 'good practice' as an evolving multi-actor process, and not as a rigid quality standard against which projects or resources should be judged. Currently, the guidelines promote a culture of quality DE through peer sharing of good practice case studies in the 'DE in Action' section of the developmenteducation.ie website[9]. One further step to promote quality might be the formation of 'good practice communities' that meet regularly to share and reflect upon practice. Another step could be to use the good practice guidelines as the foundation for a voluntary, self-regulating code or framework of good practice (similar to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages).

No matter how we choose to define or measure quality, if evaluation is to advance quality in DE, we need to focus on the *process* of DE as closely as we focus on the *outcome.* Practitioners need to be able to understand why the processes they chose worked well or not-so-well, and to identify what professional development they might need to acquire in order to improve the quality of their work. Practitioners also require time to reflect upon the underlying principles of their work, to revisit why they are working in DE, and to consider how well their everyday practice connects with the higher-level transformative goals of DE. For practitioners, evaluation needs to be a safe space for candid reflection, not a test that they have the possibility of failing. A recent DEEEP study revealed some concerns amongst practitioners that evaluation data can be used in a 'punitive way' by donors.[10] This power dynamic can undermine the learning element in evaluation and discourages honest engagement with issues of quality. Instead we should strive for the environment described by McCollum and Bourn: 'Development educators form a dynamic learning community with a responsibility to contribute to an open and supportive culture that shares experiences, allows mistakes and encourages risk-taking.'[11]

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[9] See http://www.developmenteducation.ie/de-in-action/
[10] DEEEP, *Monitoring Education for Global Citizenship,* (2015), 31.
[11] A. McCollum and D. Bourn, *Evaluating Development Education*, DEA (2001).

4. Measuring Impact of DE

4a. Impact and results-based evaluation Impact has been defined as 'the set of sustainable changes that result from the education activities, and the effects (intended or unintended) that a programme has on the community/target group'.[12] Impact is particularly significant in results-based evaluation, as it is the final stage in the 'results chain' (see diagram on p. 3). To demonstrate impact, it is necessary, at the outset, for a group to define the change that they seek to make, set out how they intend to arrive at this change, and state how they will know if the desired change has taken place.

In projects funded by Irish Aid, this information is set out in the form of a 'results framework'. The following table was included in Irish Aid's 2015 Development Education Annual Grants Application[13]:

PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK All sections of the below table should be completed. Please refer to the Guidelines (section 3.3) for definition of the terms. Note: the applicant must clearly set out in the results framework a results based approach for the Project.					
Overall Project Goal:					
Planned Activities	Desired Outcome/Result	Key Indicators of Progress towards desired results	Baseline (Starting Point, including statistics)	Targets (By end of Project including statistics)	Means of Verification (source and frequency)
a.					
b.					
c.					

Guidance Notes on the table state:

> In the Project Results Framework, applicants will be expected to demonstrate a commitment to a results approach including through the identification of the outcome/s (end of project result/s), objectives and indicators of success, baselines, targets and the means of verification. It is important that the logic between the planned outcomes (results) and the objectives is clear.[14]

4b. Benefits of using results-based approaches in DE evaluation

As is evident in the above table, Irish Aid-funded DE programmes (in common with all Irish Aid-funded work) are obligated to demonstrate the achievement of measurable results. This is part of an evolving trend across

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[12] Development Education Association, *Measuring effectiveness in development education*, (2001), p. 16
[13] Irish Aid, *Annual Grants 2015 Application Form*.
[14] Irish Aid, *Annual Grants 2015 Guidance Note.*

the international development and global education sectors more generally.[15] Institutional donors are attracted to results-based evaluation because it helps to ensure accountability and value for money, as well as providing a clear picture of impact.

There are advantages to be gained from using results-based approaches in evaluating DE work, including: an increased clarity of purpose, a better knowledge of how change happens in one's areas of work, and a more strategic approach to the collection and analysis of evaluation data. Furthermore, if results from DE programmes throughout Ireland were brought together, this could create powerful evidence for the collective impact of DE.

4c. Challenges in using results-based approaches in DE evaluation

Results-based approaches are appropriate for measuring some aspects of DE, such as *programme impacts*; however, some serious challenges emerge when attempting to use results-based evaluation to measure other aspects of DE, such as *learning impacts.* As Van Ongevalle points out:

> Results-based management approaches that follow a linear planning logic, assuming a linear causal link between cause (activity) and effect (outcome or impact), will be less relevant for managing the results of global education interventions. This is because the results of such interventions cannot be treated as problems that can be solved through rigorous analysis, planning and formulation of SMART indicators.[16]

Learning is not linear and can happen at the levels of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or behaviours, in a non-systematic way.[17] Measuring changes in behaviour, attitudes and beliefs requires clarity on what the anticipated changes will be (in knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, understanding, practices and behaviours), and what relationship exists between the learning process and the learning outcomes.[18] Attitudinal learning is particularly hard to recognise and identify in concrete terms, as deep, transformational changes may come to light only if long-term, in-depth, qualitative evaluation systems are in place. Bryan and Bracken point out:

> While quantitative survey instruments are often advocated as a relatively 'doable'....means of assessing attitudinal or behavioural change, the nature of DE is such that uniform, standardised measures are unlikely to adequately capture the real impact of specific DE initiatives.[19]

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[15] Jan Van Ongevalle, *Measuring the effects of global education programmes: Towards a learning centred monitoring and evaluation practice*, (2013).
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Development Education Association, *Measuring effectiveness in development education,* (2001), 18.
[19] Audrey Bryan and Meliosa Bracken, (2010) 'The reflective practitioner model as a means of evaluating development education practice: Post-primary teachers' self-reflections on 'doing' development education', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review,* Vol. 11, Autumn, 22-41.

Learning is a long-term process, and its effects are often not evident in the short term timeframe set out by funding programmes. Further, it is difficult to assess whether the change documented by project staff has directly or indirectly been a consequence of the project's work, or whether it is due to another unrelated variable. Also, any learning process may generate unexpected but nevertheless valuable learning outcomes, which can be overlooked if an evaluation focuses only on pre-determined SMART indicators. As the DEA states:

> The longer-term influence of programmes beyond the individual level is particularly difficult to assess because many factors beyond the programme can influence such changes. They are more open-ended and difficult to define or anticipate, and keeping track of change and gathering feedback from participants after a programme has ended is often not feasible.[20]

4d. Blended approaches

Clearly there are pros and cons to using results-based approaches in DE contexts. Therefore the question arises: Are there 'blended' approaches that can be used to reap the benefits of results-based approaches, whilst still doing justice to the complexity of DE learning outcomes? In trying to fit their DE work into the results-based frameworks required by funders, some IDEA members have developed some very effective 'blended' approaches. The following five examples demonstrate some possible ways forward:

a) ***Use creative tools to gather baseline and follow-up data.*** This approach is well illustrated in the '*How Do We Know It's Working?'* toolkit developed by RISC (Reading International Solidarity Centre)[21] which has been used successfully by a number of IDEA members. The RISC methodology is based on rigorous collection and comparison of baseline and follow-up data, which is a key element of results-based approaches. However, unlike most standardised toolkits, the tools and templates for data collection in the RISC kit are creative and critically engaging. The toolkit also gives guidance on how to analyse and present data so that an evidence-based picture of complex, deep change emerges. This type of toolkit has great potential in school environments[22].

b) ***Work with numerical targets but to flesh them out with 'stories of change'.*** For example, a results framework may state a target of 70% of participants in a teacher education programme changing their teaching practices after participating in programme interventions, but the framework does not specify what the changes will be, or what will be the eventual impact of these changes. Qualitative responses are then collected from participants, describing what changes they made, why these changes are significant[23], and what they hope will be the long-term impact of the changes. An

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[20] Development Education Association, "Measuring effectiveness in development education," (2001), 17.

[21] Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC), *How Do We Know it's Working? A toolkit for measuring attitudinal change,* (2008).

[22] See also WorldWise Global Schools 'Self-Assessment Toolkit', World Wide Schools, 'Self-assessment programme; Facilitators Guide' (2014).

[23] There is potential for bringing in the 'Most Significant Change' technique here; see http://mande.co.uk/special-issues/most-significant-change-msc/

approach such as this maintains a focus on results, whilst not pre-determining or limiting learning outcomes. It also allows the 'voice' of participants to be heard in the evaluation process and provides rich data that can be shared across the community of practice.

c) ***Set a broad standard outcome but use multiple methods of data collection to measure impact across different target groups.*** One IDEA member reports that their organisation sets broad standard outcomes and indicators which are wide enough to be applicable to the range of their target groups, and then employs a very diverse set of appropriate tools (questionnaires, focused discussions, facilitated debates, story stems) to collect evidence against the broad outcome. This multi-method approach allows them to create a rich, multi-dimensional picture of change, accommodating diverse perspectives and approaches.

d) ***Work with the 'Theory of Change' model.*** Many IDEA members have explored the 'Theory of Change'[24] model, which is similar to a results-based approach in that it works along a logical sequence of defining the change you seek to make, setting out how you intend to arrive at this change, and stating how you will know if the desired change has taken place. However, Theory of Change recognises that the change process can be very complex, often happening at different levels (individual, organisational, policy, etc), and that sometimes changes are linked to other changes and sometimes they happen independently. A theory of change diagram has some similarities to a results chain, but instead of being just one straight line, it accommodates multiple processes of change that can run in parallel or interwoven lines.[25] Therefore the over-simplification of cause-and-effect that can sometimes occur in a standard results framework can be avoided.

e) ***Use 'progress markers' in cases in which outcomes are long-term and complex.*** 'Progress markers', used in Outcome Mapping[26], set out a series of hoped-for changes, starting from an early response to outputs, moving on to changes that are more involved, and finally reaching more profound changes in the target audience. Progress markers are developed collaboratively with stakeholders and are not necessarily bound to a pre-determined target or timeframe, which make them especially useful in charting long-term attitudinal change.[27] They provide valuable formative feedback for practitioners and target groups, whilst also providing clear indicators of progress to donors. In cases where the intended outcome of a programme is by nature long-term and/or complex, donors and

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[24] See, for example, Duncan Green, *What is a theory of change and does is actually help?,* http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/what-is-a-theory-of-change-and-does-it-actually-help/

[25] Charities Evaluation Services, *Using a Theory of Change to Develop Planning and Evaluation,* 2011. 14-16.

[26] Sarah Earl, *The Outcome Mapping Facilitation Manual* (2010).

[27] Jan Van Ongevalle, *Measuring the effects of global education programmes: towards a learning centred monitoring and evaluation practice* (2013), 2.

programme managers could agree on a set of progress markers[28], thus avoiding the frustration of having to prematurely measure long-term change.

The above examples are just five of many ways in which a flexible approach to results-based evaluation could balance the needs of practitioners and donors. It is the Quality and Impact Working Group's contention that this type of compromise and innovation will lead to effective evaluation practices, and ultimately, to a stronger DE sector.

6. Conclusion

Drawing from the experiences and insights of IDEA members, this paper explored:
- Definitions, contexts and key issues for the evaluation of DE in Ireland today;
- The advantages and disadvantages of a common framework for the evaluation of DE in reference to the new Sustainable Development Goals;
- Considerations around how best to support quality in DE;
- Benefits and challenges of applying results-based approaches to DE;
- Some possibilities for innovative blended approaches to evaluation.

Three key points emerging from the paper are:
- The DE sector in Ireland is extremely rich and diverse, and this diversity needs to be accommodated in how quality is defined and how impact is measured;
- DE evaluation needs to reflect DE values and take into account the complex, deep and long-term nature of DE learning;
- Blended approaches to evaluation, balancing the need to demonstrate results with the need to grow and learn as a community of practice, should be further explored and refined, as part of an on-going dialogue between practitioners and donors.

A final point to be raised is the investment required to support the rigorous monitoring & evaluation practices described in this paper. Effective evaluation that meets the needs of donors and practitioners requires resourcing of capacity building for evaluation work, and sufficient funding for monitoring & evaluation throughout project cycles.

Overall, it is hoped that this paper will inform the GENE report and Irish Aid's forthcoming strategy, and that it also will encourage long-term and fruitful dialogue on the evaluation of DE.

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[28] Although it is suggested here that some elements of Outcome Mapping could be 'borrowed' for use within a results-based system, it is important to bear in mind that OM and RBA do not have a common theoretical framework or set of values.

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