JMDE

Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation

Number 3, October 2005

ISSN 1556-8180

Mission

—The news and thinking
of the profession and discipline of evaluation
in the world, for the world—

A peer-reviewed journal published in association with

The Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Evaluation
The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University

Editorial Board

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This is a particularly interesting issue, which is just as well since it's also our longest to date—over 220 pages, and I doubt you can find a way to shorten it without a hundred readers feeling seriously deprived!

Remember that you can arrange to be notified when a new issue comes out by registering at our website (http://evaluation.wmich.edu/jmde/subscribe.html); the next issue will be out in a month or so, with some heavy coverage of the 'causal wars'. And we are now officially registered with an ISSN number—can't be done without two issues on record—so that we're in the scientific journal databases, which gives us more status in scholarly circles. In popular circles, we have over 11,000 hits on the two issues that came out before this one, which suggests (but does not prove) that more people look at our pages (perhaps briefly) than all other evaluation journals put together. Keep that in mind as you're thinking about where to publish!

As usual, we continue our coverage of the international evaluation world, with no less than two reports on evaluation in China, a very interesting one on evaluation in Japan, a new correspondent writing about the scene in Germany, and one on New Zealand (where my co-editor runs a consulting business), plus an update on Canada. Our coverage of journals and events of note includes a report on the First International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry, which almost burst the seams at the

University of Illinois last (northern) spring; and a complete list of all international associations from the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation, about which we expect to have an article in the next issue.

The major articles are by major authors: the architect of evaluation at the World Bank, Robert Picciotto, writes on “The Value of Evaluation Standards”; Paul Brandon, the standards guru, addresses the great problem of high-stakes testing—how do you set the lines between the grades—and there’s a study of evaluation capacity-building in Afghanistan by two who did it there. That paper illustrates our policy of ‘naturalistic editing’—editing that leaves the flavor of the writing intact, at some cost to the grammar of Standard English—and the description of conditions in Afghanistan will bring tears to many eyes.

A serious paper on ethnography for evaluation by Brandon Youker looks at three anthropological models of evaluation, and Chris Coryn, one of our associate editors who did more than anyone to pull this issue together, reviews *Realistic Evaluation.* The latest issues of the major journals are also reported on by our best reporters.

Next issue we switch over to the Canadian software for online free journals, a very nice package paid for by the Canadian government, to whom our thanks. It will improve our operations considerably. And don’t forget: this is an evaluation journal, run by evaluators, so *we like to hear criticism.* Tell us how to improve!

Editorial

The Evaluation of Disasters

Michael Scriven

In the last few years, we have seen some mighty catastrophes on the face of the earth, some wrought by human hands directly and others from great national disasters. Of the latter, the losses from the great tsunami of the Indian Ocean make the others look minor, but to many communities they were a whole world lost. These included huge earthquakes, floods, and wildfires worldwide, and in the U. S. most recently, the hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Where humans were the direct causes, the acts of warmongers and terrorists alike, not too easily distinguished in their impact on the innocent, have altered not just cities but countries forever, and for the worse—usually in the name of improvement. And. Lurking in the wings, are worse possibilities still, widely thought by experts to be inevitable: for example, new epidemics, perhaps as bird flu crosses the species boundary en masse, and mimics or surpasses previous flu epidemics that have killed millions before, perhaps tens or hundreds of millions next time around (because the fast transportation of people, foodstuffs, and other goods make us all neighbors). We are all well aware that global warming, meteor impacts, and black market hydrogen bombs pose great risks of even greater disaster. We must ask, what has evaluation contributed to aiding humankind cope with these events, and what could it contribute that it has not so far provided?

It's clear that these events pose new challenges for most evaluators, since the usual work of the program evaluator covers only parts of great disasters. We know how to evaluate the relief programs, the health services, the educational makeshift arrangements. But evaluation of the conditions that led to, or exacerbated the impact of these events; evaluation of the developments from them that are aimed to reduce the impact of their inevitable successors: these are a different kind of beast. These call for multidisciplinary effort of considerable novelty, and this journal will try to serve its mission of keeping its readers abreast of efforts to develop good methods and tools for doing this kind of evaluation. Meanwhile, there are a few interesting developments that may inspire us to develop improved models for this new task. Perhaps the time has come to develop what might be called the Failure Case Method?

To take one example of developments that are a possibly relevant to disaster evaluation, there are many of us who feel that one of the most interesting emerging trends in evaluation in recent years has been the emphasis on a systems approach, and surely that is one emphasis that disaster evaluation requires, when we start looking evaluatively at the precursor conditions in preparedness studies. Relatedly, one must view epidemiology, a fast-developing science in its own right, as a model worth considering for its focus on finding and fixing causes of trouble, past and future. The same is true of ecobiology, another of the recent additions to the scientific Pantheon. Television has made us increasingly aware of a third player that values the systems approach—forensic pathology, portrayed on the tube as a science far more sophisticated than its actual embodiment in real labs, where DNA matching is still taking a matter of weeks not hours. And engineering has contributed a similar discipline in the form of applied research work of the investigation of the accident investigations of the National Transportation Advisory Board. In all of these cases, as with natural disasters and terrorist strikes, one great methodological lesson stands out: they are all primary cause-hunting sciences and none of them has ever felt unable to go to work even though they've never seen a randomly controlled experiment. So, to pick up a theme that recurs briefly in this issue, there are some important issues in evaluation methodology where we may be able to learn something from a study of the existing disaster-hunting and disaster-prevention disciplines. Our nearest approach to date, and a worthy one it is, though low-profile so far, is evaluation of peace-maintenance efforts, with a small appearance at AEA last year.

But perhaps the most important element in disaster evaluation that is familiar to most evaluators is the 'blame game,' the search for responsibility. It's an integral part of aircraft and rail crash investigations, and it poses no insuperable barrier to reliable conclusions there, or in its courts. We must take it in our stride, though of course it helps to arm oneself with the basic tools of ethical and legal analysis. For the bottom line in all of this is simple enough: a good proportion of the disastrous events themselves, and a larger proportion of their terrible consequences, are avoidable by human action. If we take on disaster evaluation and don't step up to do the ethical analysis, and do it rigorously, the job won't be completely done. Evaluators need to grow into this new aspect of a new task as they have so often grown before. It may be the greatest challenge we'll ever face.

Articles

Using Test Standard-Setting Methods in Educational Program Evaluation: Addressing the Issue of How Good is Good Enough

Paul R. Brandon

School districts in the United States and elsewhere commonly use standard setting to assign value to student test and assessment scores. That is, they set standards to show "how good is good enough." This paper presents a summary of the empirical findings on the most widely-studied test standard-setting method and describes what the conclusions of the summary suggest about the use of test standard-setting in educational program evaluations.

The purpose of setting test or assessment standards is to establish judgmentally the *cutscores* that show the dividing points between levels of student performance such as pass and fail, basic and proficient, proficient and advanced, and so forth. Cutscores are established with methods such as the modified Angoff method, the contrasting-groups method, the bookmark method, and several others (Cizek, 2001). As part of student and school accountability efforts, districts report to students the performance levels at which their scores fall and report to policymakers and to the public the percentages of students achieving at the various performance levels. The U. S. No Child Left Behind Act has enshrined the use of cutscores, in that schools are required to identify and report student proficiency levels and to increase the levels of students who score below proficiency.

Cutscores are set either by making judgments about test items or about examinees' performance on tests or assessments. Methods for making judgments about test items are known as *test-centered methods,* and methods for making judgments about examinee performance are known as *examinee-centered methods* (Jaeger, 1989). The test-centered method that for years was the most frequently used and that remains the most widely studied method is the modified Angoff method (Angoff, 1971), and probably the most frequently studied examinee-centered method is the contrasting-groups method. In preparation for studying how and when to use test standard-setting methods in educational program evaluations, I conducted exhaustive reviews of the literature on these two methods (Brandon, 2002, 2004).

Before districts or states set cutscores, they first must develop *performance standards*. A performance standard is a statement defining and describing the knowledge or skills that students must show at a particular performance level. Performance standards are developed before cutscores are set; cutscores are the operationalized versions of performance standards. Sometimes policy makers specify performance standards and sometimes the panels of judges that set cutscores develop them.

Under what conditions and for what purposes might it be appropriate to conduct standard setting in program evaluations? This topic has been discussed sketchily by some (e.g., Cook, Leviton, & Shadish, 1985; Rossi & Freeman, 1993; Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1991; Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 1997) and somewhat more thoroughly by a few others (e.g., Fink, Kosecoff, & Brook, 1986; Henry, McTaggart, & McMillan, 1992; Patton, 1997; Wholey, 1979). The inattention given to the topic is unfortunate, because the appropriateness of using standard-setting methods in program evaluation has not been thoroughly discussed, and the types of evaluation instances in which using cutscores would be helpful and appropriate have not been well-established.

This article examines the use of test standard setting in educational program evaluations. It begins with a recounting of the primary findings of my review of the literature on the modified Angoff method (Brandon, 2004). I focus on this method because it has been examined empirically more than any other method. However, despite the relative abundance of research on the method, the empirical literature does not provide strong support for the validity of modified Angoff cutscores. Therefore, in this article, I am cautious about applying the method in program evaluation. I argue that it is appropriate under certain testing conditions in formative evaluation studies or when conducting preliminary summative studies of program outcomes. Studies of these types require a lesser degree of validity than summative evaluations used by policymakers to make go/no-go program decisions. Based on the results of the literature review, I discuss flaws in the methods of modified Angoff studies. I then discuss

1. the types of decisions that might be made when interpreting evaluation results in light of cutscores and the strengths of the conclusions made based on test standard setting in evaluations,
2. the program evaluation scenarios in which it is appropriate to use cutscores for interpreting evaluation results, with a focus on the stage of evaluation and the types of evaluation designs, and

3. four criteria that evaluators should address when using cutscores to help interpret evaluation results.

This article is limited by my decision to base conclusions primarily on empirical findings about the modified Angoff research. Some evaluators might wish to know what standard-setting methods other than the modified Angoff method can be used in program evaluations. Psychometricians and researchers are continually developing new standard-setting methods (Cizek, 2001); many such as the bookmark method are proving promising, and evaluators might wish to learn from the research on them. However, the intent of this article is base conclusions on empirical research, and little sound research has been conducted methods other than the modified Angoff. For example, considerable attention has been paid to the contrasting-groups method, which for years probably was used more than any other examinee-centered approach, but little research has been conducted on it (Brandon, 2002). I base my conclusions solely on the research on the modified Angoff method because I have adopted a conservative approach to applying the standard-setting literature to program evaluation. I limit myself to the best research available; the body of modified-Angoff research may be less comprehensive than desirable, but it is broader and goes deeper than the research on other methods.

The article also is limited because it does not suggest how to apply standard setting methods for purposes other than test standard setting in program evaluation. Other than brief comments in the final paragraph of the article, I do not speculate about using the method for other purposes. Very little program evaluation research has been conducted on using standard-setting methods for purposes other than testing. (I have experimented in two evaluations with applying standard-setting methods to judging how well the evaluated programs were implemented, but the success of the efforts was mixed.) There was no research on test standard-setting methods when they were first put into wide use; I do not intend to repeat that scenario by making recommendations about using standard setting in program evaluation for purposes other than tests without an empirical basis for my suggestions. The place for extensive speculation about other uses of standard setting in program evaluation is elsewhere.

The Methodological Soundness of the Modified Angoff Method

To learn about the soundness of test standard-setting, it is useful to discuss the modified Angoff method, not only because it is an exemplar of one of the two primary types of test standard setting, but also because more empirical research has been conducted on it than any other standard-setting method. As this section shows, the evidence for the effectiveness and validity of the method is less convincing than desirable, the literature is narrow, and many of the studies of the standard-setting method are unsound or incomplete.

The modified Angoff method includes three primary steps. The method is called *modified* because some aspects of it were developed after Angoff (1971) first proposed it. The first step is to select and train judges. The second step is to define and describe the performance level that examinees must meet—that is, to establish the performance standard. Judges can conduct this step, but often policymakers or others provide judges with the performance standard. The third step is to make *item estimates*—that is, to establish estimates of the probabilities that examinees will correctly answer the items on the test or assessment at the level of the performance standard. Usually judges conduct two or three rounds of item estimation. Between rounds, the judges review empirical information such as the difficulty level of each item and have discussions about their item estimates; then, if they wish, they revise their estimates in the next round. After the three steps are conducted the cutscore is calculated by summing the item estimates for each judge and averaging the sums across judges.

Researchers and practitioners have studied the modified Angoff method more than any other, but some of the findings on the steps are inconclusive:

Selecting and training judges. Some of the research on selecting and training judges provides conclusive findings, but other research does not. Studies suggest that the appropriate number of judges for modified Angoff studies is 10–20. The conclusions of the small number of empirical studies on this topic (Brandon, 2004) generally were within this range.

Selecting judges for their subject-matter expertise can enhance item estimation, but not all judges need have high levels of expertise. Research on this topic is inconclusive because of some of the studies that I identified had methodological flaws and because other studies examined incomplete versions of modified Angoff standard setting.

Very little research has been conducted on training judges, and no results bear summarizing here.

Defining and describing the performance standard. The findings of a small body of studies support the conclusion that definitions and descriptions of performance standards should be made using a set of prescribed steps and that performance standards should be fully explicated. Research on the topic is inconclusive because about half of the studies on it were simulations of standard-setting that did not include or fully implement all the modified Angoff steps (Brandon, 2004).

Defining and describing performance standards is a difficult step to carry out fully and validly. Developing statements of performance standards for high school graduation tests requires judges to have a full understanding of the knowledge and skills that teenagers must have upon entering the workforce or post-secondary education, and developing performance standards for earlier school grades requires judges to estimate the level of students' knowledge and skills necessary for success in the following grades. In both these standard-setting instances, judges must know what they are setting proficiency scores *for*. That is, they must understand the purpose of the standard setting and the context that students will be in when the students use the knowledge and skills that are addressed in the examination. "To say that adequacy must be defined for some purpose has important implications for validating passing scores as well as validating performance standards. This condition is much more stringent than requiring the passing score to be consistent with the description of performance standards" (Camilli, Cizek, & Lugg, 2001, p. 459). Understanding what scores are set for is not a trivial endeavor; indeed, some would say it is impossible: "Performance standards simply cannot help us decide whether Johnny or PS 19 or Colorado has enough reading skill, because there is no sensible answer to the question, 'Enough reading skill for what?' beyond the trivial level of 'Enough reading skill to answer test question 36 correctly'" (Burton, 1978, p. 270).

There are no well-established developmental theories to guide methods for estimating what students' necessary levels of performance should be upon graduation. What students need to know and be able to do depends upon the educational or vocational paths they will follow upon graduation. The proficiency level necessary for someone to go directly into the workforce is different from level necessary for someone to enter a community college, which in turn varies from the level necessary someone entering a competitive four-year post-secondary educational institution. The minimum levels of knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in these settings, as well as the highest levels of proficiency that can be expected, vary among these settings. Similar issues apply to setting cutscores for elementary and middle school tests and assessments. Kane (2001, pp. 58, 82–83) said,

> There are generally no accepted performance standards for life after high school and no empirical base of information relating performance in history or science in eighth or twelfth grade to success in life (however that might be defined)… Standards seem most arbitrary when the contingencies they are designed to address are very vague and open-ended. The standards set on a high school graduation test are likely to be judgmental, because the level of skill that a graduate will need for work or life will depend on where they work and how they choose to live, and therefore there is no clear focal activity or contingency that can serve as a guide in standard setting. Standard-setting judges must know what students must be proficient for.

A comparison with standard setting in the military is informative. In military settings, training standards are established and applied in personnel decision making. Military training standards address clear external criteria such as the knowledge and skills necessary to operate equipment or perform specialized tasks. This is also more or less the case in standard setting for licensure or certification—a topic addressed in much of the standard-setting literature. It is not the case in K–12 education, where "it is highly unlikely that a teacher will have had experience in the career that his or her students eventually choose to enter. . . . Schools are relatively isolated from the world of work and the consequences of the quality of education they provide, whereas military training centers and operating units are tightly integrated" (Hanser, 1998, p. 82). If traditional K–12 standard-setting methods were used in the military, "the trainers who set the training standards could be quite divorced from field experience" (Hanser, p. 92)—a clearly unacceptable state of affairs. “Standards that are relatively context free are difficult to set and accept” (Hanser, p. 93).

Making item estimates. More research has been conducted on making item estimates than on any other modified-Angoff step. Some of the findings of this research support the conclusion that cutscores are valid, but other findings make us question the strength of that conclusion.

The findings of research on the extent to which item estimates are correlated with item difficulty levels—a relatively common thread of research in the empirical standard-setting literature—suggest that the estimates moderately mirror item difficulty. This finding is an indication of the validity of the estimates.

Other studies have examined the effects of activities between standard-setting rounds, when judges review empirical information about items and discuss this information and their item estimates. The results of these studies suggest that judges’ between-round activities affect the magnitude of cutscores. However, these results are tentative because about a third of the studies on the topic have not confirmed these findings (Brandon, 2004) .

Other results suggest that judges’ between-round activities decrease item estimates’ variability and increase their reliability from round to round (desirable results). However, the results about decreasing variability are inconclusive because of large standard deviations, and the results about increasing reliability are inconclusive because of the number of studies is small and the methods for calculating reliability varied among studies. Hurtz and Auerbach (2003) found that judges’ discussions among themselves reduced the variability of cutscores but that reviewing empirical information did not.

Researchers also have examined the absolute value of the differences between item estimates and empirical *p*-values. Their studies address *item accuracy*. The rationale behind the studies is that there should be small differences between item estimates and the empirical *p*-values of examinees whose scores are deemed to be close to the cutscore. Although some evidence has been found that judges are able to make estimates accurately, the results of several studies suggest that item estimation might be less valid than desirable because judges tend to underestimate the difficulty of hard items and overestimate the difficulty of easy items. Of all the findings about item estimates, these are the most troubling for the validity of modified Angoff cutscores. Indeed, Shepard (1995, p. 151) concluded that findings such as these showed that “judges were unable to maintain a consistent view of the performance they expected” and thus made judgments that were “internally inconsistent and contradictory.”

Conclusions About the Modified Angoff Method and Its Literature

The findings about item accuracy and the findings about the “proficiency for what” issue lead us to be concerned about using cutscores for a wide variety of program evaluation purposes. These are not the only reasons to be cautious about using the method in program evaluations, however. There also are three flaws in the literature that throw doubt on using the method for a broad array of evaluation scenarios.

The first flaw has to do with the breadth of the literature: It is broader than the research on other standard-setting methods, but it is still narrower than desirable. Insufficient empirical research has been conducted on some steps of the modified Angoff method, particularly on selecting judges, the need for judge subject-matter expertise, judge training, and defining and describing the performance standard.

> More research has been conducted on the modified Angoff method than any other standard-setting method, but the findings of the extant research provide only the first few layers of an empirical foundation for making decisions about how to set cutscores. These layers alone cannot serve as the sole basis for deciding about how to go about setting modified Angoff cutscores; clinical guidance by experienced practitioners is also necessary.
>
> (Brandon, 2004, p. 80)

The second flaw has to do with the reporting of studies. Many empirical modified Angoff studies have not reported full descriptions of the standard-setting methods that were used:

> The dearth of complete descriptions obfuscates the interpretation of the body of modified Angoff standard-setting literature. If the studies were described more carefully and thoroughly, patterns of interactions among the variations in methods might be discernible. As the research stands now, these patterns cannot be seen.
>
> (Brandon, 2004, pp. 79–80)

The third flaw is methodological. Many of the findings reported in the empirical standard-setting research are from simulations in which only some of the standard-setting steps have been conducted. Research on the method that omits some of the modified Angoff steps is flawed because it does not examine all the key aspects of standard-setting; such research is akin to studying performance assessments in which students are not given instructions for conducting the assessments. Because of the omission of key steps, the findings of some studies are less generalizable than desirable to the fully implemented modified Angoff method.

The primary effect of these three flaws is that we do not have a full understanding of all of the steps of the modified Angoff method. There are not enough empirical studies to adequately examine all facets of the method, too many of the empirical studies that have been published do not explain how they conducted the steps or else do not conduct some of the steps, and too many studies are analog studies. These flaws, combined with the findings about difficulties in knowing "proficiency for what" and the findings about the difficulty in making estimates for the hardest and for the easiest items, lead me to conclude that it is questionable whether modified-Angoff cutscores are uniformly valid for making summative, high-stakes decisions in program evaluations. Placing great weight on modified Angoff cutscores in high-stakes decisions, as occurs in K–12 education, might be more than their methodological foundation can bear, in part because some of the findings about the method are troubling and in part because the methods and reporting of many modified Angoff studies are flawed.

Evaluation Scenarios Appropriate for Developing and Using Cutscores

Program evaluators might correctly hesitate to use modified Angoff cutscores for high-stakes, summative purposes, but the findings on the validity of cutscores are not so troubling as to refrain from using them in all program evaluations. Evaluators can use them to help interpret student scores for formative-evaluation purposes or to help interpret scores for *suggesting* summative program-evaluation decisions. Cutscores do not have to be interpreted as definitive demarcations of success; "gray areas" about the cutscores can be calculated using the standard error of the mean, resulting in cutbands instead of *cutscores*. This calculation would show a band around the cutscore that would provide an accommodation to the inexactitude of standard setting. Using standard errors in this way, evaluators would have three score bands—one for students who we could reasonably state are below the desired level of performance, one for those who are more or less at the desired level of performance, and one for those who are clearly above the desired level of performance. Using this analysis, evaluators could report with a reasonable level of assurance the percentages of student scores above and below proficiency. Such descriptive reports could help evaluators understand how well programs are helping students achieve program goals without placing undue emphasis on the cutscore itself. The reports could provide program personnel with general guidance about their programs. Formative evaluation findings and findings that are only *suggestive* of summative conclusions are not used to make go/no-go decisions about programs. When cutscores are used in ways such as these, their precision and validity are less critical than when they are used for making conclusive summative decisions about students or schools.

However, because of the limitations in the research and because of concerns about invalidity, I conclude that the modified Angoff method should be used primarily when other approaches are unavailable for interpreting student scores. That is, cutscores should be developed and used only with some kinds of evaluation designs and only in some evaluation stages. Evaluators should consider using test cutscores to help interpret test or assessment program outcome scores when no comparison or control groups are available. This scenario occurs when educational programs are implemented at all program sites, when administrators and faculty at non-program sites are unwilling to let evaluators use their sites for comparison or control groups, or, in the evaluations of small programs, when evaluation funding is too limited to have comparison or control groups. Cutscores developed when no comparison or control groups are available could help evaluators decide the extent to which children are performing at or near the desired level of performance. Cutscores might particularly be useful during the first year of an evaluation, when no year-to-year effect sizes can be calculated. Effect sizes showing annual growth are valuable for year-to-year comparisons, because they can be compared with published effect sizes about similar programs studies (Lipsey, 1990; Lynch, 1987), and because they probably are more defensible than cutscores. The two analyses together might also be useful, of course; cutscores used over several years of an evaluation can interpret how high or low program students are performing, irrespective of the size of year-to-year effect sizes.

As long as they are interpreted with caution, cutscores might also be helpful even when comparison groups are used. They can help interpret mean scores when the differences between program and comparison groups are not statistically significant. Comparing average scores to a cutscore could help evaluators know the general levels of performance of both the program and comparison groups. Furthermore, using cutscores could help evaluators tie the interpretation of evaluation results directly to program goals. If a program's goal is, say, to have students achieve proficiency in reading knowledge or skills, evaluators could use cutscores to show the extent to which the proficiency goal had been achieved. The same kind of analysis could be conducted for other levels of student performance. Such reports are rhetorically more powerful than simply reporting whether the program group out-achieved a comparison group or surpassed a specified percentile of a norm group, because comparisons of average scores with cutscores tie evaluation results directly to descriptions of desired levels of student performance.

Criteria for Using Standard Setting in Program Evaluations

There are at least four criteria that should be addressed if evaluators use the modified Angoff method in program evaluations:

1. Standards should be set for reliable and valid tests.
2. The program for which standards are to be set should be well defined with concrete objectives that clearly show what is expected of program recipients upon completion.
3. The standard-setting judges should understand the program objectives well, know the socioeconomic and educational context of the program, and understand the context in which program recipients will study or work after completing the program.
4. The standard setting should be feasible. The standard-setting method should not require more time and resources than the program can afford.

The necessity of the first condition should go without saying; cutscores cannot be used validly to make decisions about program success unless the test for which they are set adequately measures subject matter and produces sufficiently precise scores to make decisions about programs. The other three conditions, however, need some elaboration.

Well-defined programs. When using standard setting in program evaluations, the programs should have clear sets of concrete objectives. Clear objectives are necessary if well-defined and well-described performance standards are to be developed. Although the empirical literature on setting performance standards is not extensive, a small body of studies strongly suggests that performance standards must be thoroughly described and well understood by judges if cutscores are to be valid. Indeed, it is commonsensical that performance standards must be thoroughly explicated, because judges need to understand what students must be proficient *for*.

The “proficiency for what” issue need not be as deleterious in program evaluation standard setting as it is in K–12 accountability standard setting. K–12 public education provides a wide smorgasbord of educational services to all children. In contrast, many educational programs provide narrow, well-defined services to clearly-demarcated populations. Educational programs typically address a single subject such as reading or science or a narrow topic such as safety, drugs abuse, and so forth. Programs are designed for a single grade level or perhaps two or three grades. They often serve subgroups of students with well-described demographic characteristics. If programs are well-designed, it is likely that their objectives will be clear and the goals more clearly defined the goals typically addressed in K–12 standard setting (i.e., advancing students to the next grade or graduating them from high school). Furthermore, judges in program evaluation standard setting can consider the social and demographic context of the schools that a program serves. Programs often serve smaller populations than entire districts. Judges can define performance standards and set cutscores while keeping in mind the population that the program serves, the wealth and the physical condition of the schools that are served, the typical longevity of teachers serving in the district, and other district demographics that evaluators can gather for judges to consider.

Judges who know the program and its context. Standard-setting judges are more likely to have reasonable expectations about student outcomes in a program if they are intimate with the program’s history, aspirations, administration, line personnel, operations, and so forth. The better they know a program, the more reasonable their expectations about program outcomes will be, and the more likely it will be that they will know the answers to a number of questions, Quoting Smith (1981, p. 266), these questions are

- Has what the program is trying to do ever been done before by anyone? (If not, do not expect too much.)

- Has it ever been done the way the program is trying to do it? (Reasonable expectations are lower for innovations.)
- Is the logic which explains why this program will achieve its desired ends compelling? (The stronger the logic, the more warranted high expectations are.)
- Does the scope of this effort, in terms of time and resources, match the level of effect expected? (Real change usually requires a lot of time and effort.)
- Do contextual factors suggest that this effort might be more or less successful than previous efforts? (Higher expectations are warranted if this program is free of previous contextual constraints.)

It certainly would not be impossible to provide standard-setting judges selected from outside the program with the answers to these questions, but the standard-setting training required to address the questions fully would be onerously lengthy and expensive.

Judges are more likely to develop reasonable expectations if they are familiar with the socioeconomic and educational contexts of a program. Programs in economically disadvantaged communities or in schools lacking good equipment and facilities are less likely to show acceptable levels of performance than are programs in less-disadvantaged communities. Judges should know these contexts because of their effects on student outcomes in the program. Judges can take socioeconomic status and school conditions into account when developing performance standards and setting cutscores. Keeping in mind the mix of schools of varying socioeconomic status and of facilities with varying degrees of maintenance will help ensure that judges' standards are well-informed and reasonable.

The need for familiarity with programs and their social and demographic contexts means that standard-setting judges should be program personnel such as developers or teachers. Others might be insufficiently familiar with the program. For example, parents might not understand program expectations. Also, outside educators such as university personnel might be insufficiently familiar with the conditions of the schools in the program. Program evaluators who are not subject to political pressures can select judges on the basis of how well they know the program and understand the school context, including both the schools themselves and the community in which they reside. It is unlikely that evaluators will find qualified personnel of this sort outside of the program setting.

Having to hire program personnel might mean selecting judges who would be inclined to set lenient program performance standards and low cutscores. Judges might establish erroneously easy performance standards and cutscores because they are loyal to the program, do not wish to see it fail, or believe that they might be under pressure to be easy on the program. This is a source of bias that evaluators should consider when developing program standards. Judges should be trained to establish performance standards that reflect the intent of the program and to set cutscores at levels that match the performance standards.

A colleague and I had teachers serve as standard-setting judges for a state-developed writing assessment that we administered during an elementary-school writing program evaluation (Brandon & Higa, 1998). After pilot-testing the standard setting in another school, all seven fourth-grade teachers in the program school set standards for their students. The teachers addressed the question, “If you instructed your students last year as well as possible, what was the best they could have done?” They answered this question for each of five dimensions of writing—meaning, voice, design, clarity, and conventions (grammar, punctuation, and so forth).

The seven teachers were deemed the only appropriate group to develop standards because other groups had insufficient knowledge about students' achievement and educational background, writing skills, and the context within which they were taught. The school principal did not participate because he might not have known the capabilities of the cohort of assessed students sufficiently well to have set fair standards, and parents did not participate because they knew too little about content-area knowledge or skills or about program context to arrive at fair judgments.

We were concerned that the seven teachers' estimates of how well students could perform might be lenient because they would not want the effects of their instruction to look poor. To address this concern, we examined the differences between the mean estimates for each of the five writing dimensions and the actual performance of students for which the standards were set (Brandon & Higa, 1998). If the cutscores that the teachers set had been far below student averages, it would have suggested that inappropriate methods were used or that teachers had a self-serving bias. The differences between the cutscores and the performance of the program students showed, however, that the cutscores were somewhat above students' performance, suggesting that teachers did not show a self-serving bias. Furthermore, the cutscores were not so high as to suggest inappropriate expectations. These results helped rule out claims of invalid standards.

Feasibility. Program evaluations must be feasible (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). Sufficient time and resources are necessary for program evaluation standard setting because good standard setting can be a labor-intensive, lengthy activity. Evaluation theoreticians and methodologists often overlook feasibility issues, but these must be addressed if practitioners are to use the methods.

In standard setting, both the development of the description of the performance standard and the setting of cutscores require sufficient time and resources. Developing performance standards for a moderately long single-subject test can take half a day (Mills, Melican, & Ahluwalia, 1991; Livingston & Zieky, 1989). Furthermore, setting cutscores is clearly not a brief task, as should be apparent from the description presented earlier of the steps of the modified Angoff method. In modified Angoff standard setting, judges review items, make initial estimates, review empirical information about the items, hold discussions about their initial estimates, revise their estimates, and perhaps repeat the review/discussion/estimation activities for another iteration. These activities can easily last for a full day; in some instances, such as standard setting for the National Assessment of Educational progress, they take two days or more.

When setting standards for the elementary-school writing program (Brandon & Higa, 1998), we eliminated the step of having teachers prepare written descriptions of performance standards; instead, we asked them to estimate the best performance that they reasonably thought children could achieve. We eliminated the step because the rating-scale rubrics described the target level of performance for each rating-scale point. Teachers knew the rubrics well because they had used them to score student papers; they were asked to use the rubrics to substitute for performance standards. When trained in the standard-setting procedures, they simply had to review some of the materials that they had used when doing the assessments. This efficiency contributed to the feasibility of the standard setting. The standard setting method was implemented in a reasonable period of time (less than half a day). The teachers’ comments, made during and immediately following the standard setting, suggested that they understood and fully used the standard-setting methods. Some teachers commented that they were unsure about the percentages to estimate for the scale points, but none resisted participation. None of the comments suggested that teachers found it difficult to apply knowledge of the assessment to the standard-setting task.

Summary and Conclusions

Standard setting, which is widely used by school districts and states to hold students and schools accountable for their educational performance, has not been widely used by program evaluators as a means for helping decide whether a program has performed sufficiently well. Furthermore, the topic has been covered minimally in the program evaluation literature. This is unfortunate, because evaluators could use cutscores to help interpret program outcomes during the first year of an evaluation in which there are no comparison groups. They might even be useful when comparison groups are used, for they help show how high program and comparison groups are performing, irrespective of which group is performing the best.

Standard-setting consists of establishing performance standards, which are statements describing the knowledge and skills that students must attain if they are to perform at a specified performance level (basic, proficient, advanced, and so forth), and it consists of setting cutscores. The modified Angoff method is the most widely studied standard-setting method. As used in the test and assessment standard setting that schools, districts, and states conduct for accountability purposes, the modified Angoff method has three steps. Very little research has been conducted on the first step, which is to select and train the panels of judges who establish performance standards and set cutscores. Other than showing that

10–20 is an adequate range of the number of standard-setting judges, the empirical research literature is of little assistance in identifying the best mix of procedures for this step.

More research has been conducted on the second step, which is to define and describe the performance standard (i.e., the statements describing the level of knowledge and skills that students should attain). The findings are inconclusive but commonsensically suggest that the better that performance standards are defined and explicated, the more valid cutscores are likely to be. Performance standards for educational accountability purposes are murky by nature, however, because it is impossible to know what comprises an adequate level of performance. If a performance standard is defined for graduation, should it be set for students who are going to trade schools, community colleges, state colleges, or private elite universities? What should the performance standard be for students who do not participate in any post-secondary education? If a performance standard for a particular school subject is defined for an elementary- or middle-school grade, what is the developmental or pedagogical basis for deciding what constitutes adequate performance? These questions have not been adequately addressed in the literature, and because of the epistemological complexity of the topic, are unlikely ever to be.

More research has been conducted on the third step of the modified Angoff method than on the other two steps. In this step, judges set estimates of the percentages of students who should pass each item at the level of the performance standard. During this step, judges are given empirical item *p*-values so that they know the difficulty levels of the items they are judging. The empirical research suggests that judges’ discussions make a difference, but the research is not conclusive. Probably the most conclusive research about the third step has to do with the accuracy of item estimates, which is established by examining the absolute value of the differences between judges' item estimates and item *p*-values. This research suggests that judges tend to underestimate the difficulty of hard items and overestimate the difficulty of easy items. That is, the range of judges' item estimates is less than the range of empirical *p*-values.

The research on the three steps of the modified Angoff method has not been conclusive in part because (a) the literature is more narrow than desirable, (b) some of the literature is not reported fully, and (c) the methods of the research have been of low quality. Because of problems with the methods and findings of the empirical research on standard setting, as exemplified by the research on the modified Angoff method—the most-studied of all test and assessment standard-setting methods—it might be concluded that program evaluators should avoid using the method to help make judgments about program success. However, the methods are not so unsound as to preclude their use for formative program evaluation purposes or for making *suggestive* (rather than conclusive) summative evaluation decisions. If cutscores are interpreted with caution and are considered to be suggestive of the success (or lack thereof) of a program, they can help evaluators make conclusions in evaluations that lack comparison groups.

Even though the empirical test and assessment standard-setting literature does not provide convincing evidence about the strength of standard-setting methods, it nevertheless is sufficiently thorough to help us know the conditions that should be present if evaluators use the method in program evaluations. There are at least four of these conditions. The first is that standards should be set only for valid and reliable tests. Evaluators are best advised to set standards for commercially published tests or assessments or for other carefully crafted instruments. Second, cutscores should be set only if program objectives are clearly stated. Otherwise, performance standards will be difficult to develop. Third, judges should be familiar with the program and the context within which it is taught. The task of setting performance standards for a program is conceptually less complex than the task of setting standards for a school district, because programs (at least those that well-developed and well-run) have clear sets of methods and objectives that standard-setting judges can keep in mind when setting cutscores. This assumes that the judges know the program well and eliminates the possibility of having people outside the program serve as judges. Of course, the charge might be made that program faculty, developers, or administrators who serve as standard-setting judges might set lenient standards. However, in a trial application of standard setting in a program evaluation, it was shown that this need not be the case (Brandon & Higa, 1998). The fourth condition is that the standard setting should be feasible. Evaluators should not assume that they can set standards without proper preparation and full understanding of the mechanics and theory of the procedures. In our trial application of standard setting in a program evaluation (Brandon & Higa, 1998), we showed that it was feasible in a small school-level evaluation.

This article shows that standard setting methods have value in evaluations. They can help evaluators make decisions about program success in the first year of an evaluation that has no comparison groups. In this scenario, other means for deciding about program success are unavailable; therefore, standard setting helps address an empty slot in evaluators' methodological toolbox. The fact that there are weaknesses in the argument for using methods such as the modified Angoff method to make high-stakes decisions need not deter evaluators from using the method during programs' early years, when summative decisions are infrequent. Standard-setting methods also can help evaluators make decisions about program success in later years of evaluations that do have comparison groups. In this scenario, cutscores can help determine the extent to which both the program group and the comparison group have achieved at sufficiently high levels. In both these scenarios, cutscores should not be interpreted rigidly; they should be used to arrive at *suggestions* about program success. This use of cutscores helps make up for the procedural weaknesses of the method. As long as (a) cutscores are set for valid and reliable tests, (b) program objectives are clear, (c) program personnel serve as standard-setting judges, and (d) there are sufficient resources to conduct the standard setting well, standard setting can contribute to evaluators' decisions.

As stated at the beginning of this article, standard-setting is a means of answering the question, How good is good enough? The conclusions about standard setting given in this article can serve as suggestions about other methods for addressing the question in evaluation studies. First, the stage of the evaluation should be considered. In the case of developing cutscores in program evaluations, the argument for using standard setting to help make evaluation decisions is the strongest in the first year of an evaluation. Other methods for deciding the quality of a program are appropriate in other phases. By way of contrast, experimental and quasi-experimental methods are appropriate when programs are mature. Second, the method for answering the question depends on the use of evaluation findings. Standard-setting methods used for deciding about program success need not be free of flaws when the decisions are formative or when the findings are used to make suggestions, as opposed to conclusive statements, about program success. Experimental and quasi-experimental approaches to evaluation are appropriate for providing conclusive findings about the quality and effectiveness of a program. Third, the context of the program should be taken into account (Smith, 1999). Evaluators using standard setting methods need to find judges who understand the context of the program, or else cutscores will not be well-informed. The importance of knowledge about context applies to all discussions about how good is good enough. Fourth, the method for answering the question must be feasible. It will not do to require, for example, that all studies use experimental or quasi-experimental designs when the setting or the resources of the evaluation do not allow them. The current push by federal educational research funding agencies to require these designs ignores the feasibility issue—particularly since these same officials do not back up their call for experimental and quasi-experimental designs with funding for expensive evaluations. These four aspects of evaluation should be considered when developing a minimal set of guidelines that evaluators should take into account when establishing the level of performance that a program should show if it is to be considered good enough.

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The Value of Evaluation Standards: A Comparative Assessment

Robert Picciotto

Following an exposition of the ethical dimension, professional role and democratic rationale of standards in the evaluation community, this paper proposes an assessment framework for rating evaluation standards, illustrates its use on a sample of published norms[1] and offers lessons for the participatory elaboration of global evaluation standards.

The Meaning of Standards

Dictionaries do not draw sharp distinctions between principles, guidelines and standards. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a *principle* is a proposition serving as the foundation of belief or action; a guideline is a general rule or piece of advice; and a standard means a thing serving as recognized example or *principle* to which others conform or should conform or by which the accuracy or quality of others is judged.

Thus, the words tend to be used interchangeably although the notion of principles is commonly perceived as aspirational; guidelines are frequently intended as

[1] The sample reviewed in this paper includes Australia/New Zealand, Canada, France, Germany, Switzerland, the United States and the United Kingdom.

recommendations that do not take precedence over the judgment of experienced practitioners[2] while standards is the preferred term for mandatory norms, accompanied by enforcement or certification mechanisms.

Since this paper evaluates the intrinsic value of the norms rather than their application it makes no distinction between principles, guidelines or standards. In any event, since no enforcement or certification mechanism exists within the fledgling evaluation profession, all published evaluation principles, guidelines or standards are predicated on voluntary rather than mandatory compliance[3] so that the difference between the terms is largely stylistic.

The Ethics of Standards

In industry, standards are used to impose uniformity in design characteristics or processes. They are needed to meet the demands of mass production and/or international commerce for goods and services. As a social practice on the other hand, standard making is designed to shape human behavior and interaction[4]. They

[2] For more precise definitions see: American Psychological Association, Board of Educational Affairs, *Developing and Evaluating Standards and Guidelines Related to Education and Training in Psychology, Context, Procedures, Criteria and Format*, Approved by the APA Council on February 20, 2004.

[3] Principles and guidelines can be made mandatory by including them in contractual agreements between commissioners and evaluators.

[4] Using the taxonomy of Marie-Louise Bemelmans-Videc, Ray C. Rist and Evert Vedung, *Carrots, Sticks & Sermons: Policy Instruments and their Evaluation*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick. 1998, guidelines are carrots, standards are sticks and principles are sermons.

help to achieve explicit or implicit policy goals. Intendedly or not, they promote the interests of particular groups and can restrain competition and creativity.

Hence, standard setting is legitimate only if provides for lack of coercion, equal treatment and the informed consent of participants in an open process. By clarifying expectations and setting rules of conduct, professional standards promote accountability, facilitate comparability and enhance the reliability and quality of services provided. They imply shared values, dedication to professional excellence and voluntary compliance with ethical guidelines. In democracies, standards are set in the public sphere and usually involve the civil society.

According to Jurgen Habermas, rational discourse among principled individuals is the only way to generate sound standards for knowledge creation: *"Representations and descriptions are never independent of standards. And the choice of these standards is based on attitudes that require critical consideration by means of arguments, because they cannot be either logically deduced or empirically demonstrated.*[5]*"* This means that standards are context dependent and dependent on the outcome of deliberative processes that are shaped by specific cultural environments.

The Professional Dimension

Whatever their label, all existing evaluation norms have been socially constructed through rational deliberation and context dependent processes. No consensus has

[5] Jurgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Polity Press, 1968

yet been reached within the global evaluation profession as to the desirability of complying with internationally accepted norms. Thus, this paper is only meant as a contribution to an on-going debate about the future of the evaluation profession.

In most societies, principles, guidelines and standards are what distinguish a profession from a mere occupation. For some occupations, formal barriers to entry (e.g. academic degrees; certifications or licenses) help to protect the integrity of the profession. For others, informal criteria (e.g. a period of apprenticeship or a record of competitive achievement) suffice. But invariably the franchise enjoyed by a professional group is grounded on the presumption that its members are committed to live up to rules of conduct that protect the public interest[6].

Such rules underlie the social contract that allows professionals (and the organizations that employ them) to enjoy public trust, practice their craft without undue interference and charge for services rendered. On the supply side, standards enhance the professional stature of those who operate in conformity with them and promote good practices. On the demand side, they facilitate comparisons among providers of services, thus helping customers secure value for money.

Even if the case for evaluation standards is accepted in principle, there are differences of views on their desirable range and scope. Evaluators are still debating whether it is appropriate to set uniform standards to guide or control how evaluation professionals, commissioners, participants and users should behave

[6] According to the Wikepedia Encyclopedia, to conduct oneself as a professional is to act in accordance with specific rules, written or unwritten, pertaining to the standards of a profession. Evaluation being a young profession, it has yet to develop internationally agreed standards.

(ethical norms), what concepts and practices evaluators should use (methods), the benchmarks their products should meet (quality), the outcomes they should achieve (utilization) or the instruments needed to ensure that agreed standards are met and results achieved in the public interest (verification).

Standards as a Democratic Imperative

According to David Marquand[7], democracy is characterized by a public domain where "citizens collectively define what the public interest is through struggle, argument, debate and negotiation." Central to this process is an ethic of public service that "puts public duty and the public interest before market rewards and private interests". In turn, the effective functioning of a pluralistic society requires professionals that operate autonomously, according to ethical standards. In such a system, professionals are motivated not by "patronage, clientism, connection" but by "professional pride, professional duty, professional authority and …professional career paths".

The mandate of evaluation is to assess the merit and worth of public policies and programs on behalf of citizens and with their participation and the credibility of evaluation hinges on proper assurances of quality, objectivity and independence.

Public trust is the critical ingredient. Absent certification and accreditation, evaluators must take it upon themselves to "internalize a set of norms precluding them from abusing their monopoly position and exploiting their clients, and enjoining them to promote the public good".

[7] David Marquand, *Decline of the Public*, Polity, 2004

Evaluation standards in and by themselves do not generate good policy outcomes. Indeed, they may have unintended consequences depending on how they are generated and used. If they are centrally imposed and coercively implemented, they may have a chilling effect on creativity and innovation. They may also be viewed as redundant where the value of the evaluation services provided can be reliably gauged in terms of the impact on the quality of decisions reached (ascertained as an integral part of the evaluation process).

On the other hand, just as one does not judge auditors by the profitability of the companies they serve, it is inappropriate to judge evaluators by the effectiveness of the programs and policies being evaluated. While a byproduct of independent evaluation is to assist policy makers and program managers do a better job (the advisory dimension of the profession), the primary responsibility of the evaluator in a democratic society is to enhance accountability, tell truth to power, illuminate policy options, promote public involvement and contribute to the transparency of decisions taken in the public interest.

Equally, asking the clients of evaluations to rule on their usefulness involves moral hazard. It may lead to "feel-good" evaluations tailored to what program managers want to hear rather than forthright assessments that protect the public interest. Evaluation needs to be responsive to the public interest and to operate without fear or favor. As for the accounting profession, the legitimacy of evaluations carried out by (or on behalf of) program managers requires independent validation against agreed standards.

In other words, for evaluators just as for accountants, the client is not always right. Evaluation needs to be independent of vested interests, including those of sponsors[8]. Irrespective of the funding source, evaluators are ultimately accountable to the public.

While they should give close attention to issues raised by stakeholders, their credibility and integrity hinges on their objectivity and impartiality. This is why evaluation consultants as well as public officials that carry out self-evaluations need independent oversight that attests to the professionalism of their behavior and the validity of their findings.

Do as I Say – Not as I Do?

Ultimately, the case for evaluation standards rests on the golden rule: evaluators should practice what they preach. It would be perverse for evaluators to reject the discipline that they impose on others.

In order to determine the merit, worth and value of an activity, evaluators routinely identify relevant criteria of merit, i.e. they use standards to assess the results of programs and the performance of public officials. Thus, Carol Weiss[9] refers to standards in her definition of evaluation as “the systematic assessment of the operations and/or the outcomes of a program or policy compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards.”

For Evert Vedung[10], “the value component of evaluation presupposes at least one criterion of merit against which public interventions are judged”. In turn, Michael

[8] This is why the notion of collective responsibility in evaluation is inappropriate.

[9] Carol H. Weiss, *Evaluation, Second Edition*, Prentice Hall, Saddle River, 1998

[10] Evert Vedung, *Public Policy and Program Evaluation*, Transaction Publishers, 1999

Scriven[11] observes that: "evaluation has two arms, only one of which is engaged in data gathering. The other arm collects, clarifies and verifies relevant values and standards". With implacable logic, he adds: "anything can be evaluated, including evaluation".

The design and adoption of commonly agreed evaluation standards would help to resolve the dilemma the profession currently faces in managing an exploding demand for evaluation services within an operating environment characterized by widespread unease about the uneven quality of evaluation products and services and the limited utilization of evaluation results. In setting standards, the emerging discipline of evaluation would emulate the experience of its forebears in the social sciences and the accounting profession.

But in order to make progress along the road of common evaluation standards, a paradox must be explored: if the case for evaluation standards is so strong, why has progress in formulating and endorsing evaluation standards been so slow, halting and partial? What are the limits of standards and what risks must be managed while designing and using them?

The Limits of Evaluation Standards

Evaluation determines the merit, worth and value of things[12]. It consists in collecting relevant evidence, identifying suitable evaluative standards and using methods of analysis that are valid and fair. Assuming a stable and predictable

[11] Michael Scriven, *Evaluation Thesaurus: Fourth Edition.* Sage Publications. Newbury Park, London and New Delhi. 1991

[12] Michael Scriven, opus cit.

operating environment and provided the causal links that make up a results chain are known (and all evaluation actors are willing and able to comply with the reciprocal obligations that the agreed rules of the game imply) it should be enough to control the quality of outputs or to verify the ultimate impacts of an intervention to create the incentives needed to achieve the desired results.

In other words, the notion of standards is often associated with a linear conception of society predicated on rational behavior and predictable consequences of public policy actions. But in the real world, unintended consequences prevail, the operating context is unstable and the behavior of social actors is influenced by vested interests. The causal links between policy actions and impacts are subject to a wide range of external influences. Lack of precise knowledge regarding the connections between inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts distorts decisions. This means that evaluation standards must take account of the volatility, complexity and contingency of public service tasks.

Like other social rules and protocols, standards are justified only if they generate social benefits in excess of their costs. Inappropriate standards can cause substantial harm by providing unwarranted assurances. Thus, crude performance indicators, simplistic league tables and performance assessments connected to inappropriate goals can destroy trust and erode the public service ethic. In particular, standards focused on only one stage of the results chain and rigidly applied (e.g. budget controls; quality assurance; inspection; auditing or evaluation) can create perverse incentives.

Conversely, applying and verifying standards at all stages of the results chain can lead to excessive rigidity and prohibitive transaction costs, especially where standards are mandatory and controls are tight. The dogmatic use of standards is evoked by the alternative dictionary definition of standards as “a document accepted by a church as the authoritative statement of its creed”. Concerns about its restrictive implications can also be traced to the original meaning of the term: “a flag or figurehead attached to the upper part of a pole and raised to indicate a rallying point”; the “distinctive ensign of a sovereign, commander, nation”; the “flag of a cavalry regiment as distinct from the colors of an infantry regiment, etc.”

Such martial images have threatening connotations for evaluators committed to freedom of thought, diversity of perspectives and creativity in methods. They evoke the specter of coerced uniformity, mindless orthodoxy, methodological rigidity and bureaucratic interference. Hence, the strong resistance to mandatory norms among “free thinking” professional evaluators who treasure the integrity of their craft and the freedom to select the methods most relevant to the evaluation challenges they face. This also explains the predilection of most professional associations for terms that are less threatening (i.e. charter, guidelines, principles, etc.) than the word standards.

Diverse Doctrines

The potential chilling effect of standards justifies a gradual and participatory approach to their design and adoption. A pluralistic approach, sensitive to cultural differences is fundamental. Special care is needed to avoid favoring one evaluation school over another. Not all evaluators endorse the notion that evaluators have a mandate to judge the performance of public policies and programs[13]. Some

[13] See Michael Scriven, Hard Won Lessons in Program Evaluation, Sage, New Directions Publication No 58.

conceive of evaluation as a tool for understanding social phenomena. Others hold the view that evaluators are not entitled to question the framework of values or objectives pursued by program managers. Still others view evaluation as a tool for facilitating the achievement of consensus among groups.

Given this diversity, it is entirely legitimate for distinct evaluation schools to elicit different criteria of merit. This is why universal agreement for methodological norms has proven elusive. But all evaluation doctrines endorse judicious rules of conduct with respect to the ethical collection and interpretation of evidence, the validity of findings, etc. Thus, no ontological rationale exists for rejecting evaluation standards based on the notion that evaluation doctrines are manifold. On the other hand, due care should be taken to preserve the space that evaluation professionals need to practice their craft in line with their distinctive values and principles.

Beyond a central "core" of evaluation principles endorsed by all, each of the schools that make up the multi-faceted evaluation profession may choose produce its own principles and methods. Indeed, transparency about the methodological standards used in evaluations ought to be encouraged: clarity about the purposes and roles the evaluation methodologies is designed to serve would help users make a reasoned choice among evaluation suppliers, in line with the "truth in labeling" principle.

Lessons from Accounting and Auditing

Standards are "rules of the game". They define roles as well as desirable outcomes. They set the voluntary restraints that govern the behavioral relations among individuals or groups. These must be meaningful but not so strict as to paralyze action or hinder innovation. They can be used to assess the performance of all parties to an evaluation. Whether carried out by individuals or evaluation organizations, they guide the design of evaluation processes.

Since evaluation is to the public sector what accounting and auditing is to the private sector, the lessons gained in the process of developing accounting and auditing standards are instructive. In corporate finance, reporting standards combined with verification and enforcement guarantee consistency and comparability of accounts. The vigorous debate about financial reporting standards between the United States and Europe has centered on the design of standards – not on whether they are needed. Judicious accounting and auditing standards help in the effective and smooth functioning of private markets.

Professional associations of accountants and auditors devote considerable resources to standard setting and certification. They endorse the concept of international accounting standards. Such standards are meant to overcome the problems faced by multinational companies that operate in diverse national jurisdictions. The preparation of reports based on different national principles undermines public trust in corporate accounts since different judgments of financial performance for the same multinational company resulted from inconsistencies in national accounting standards. Thus, the pressure for uniformity in accounting rules rose to protect the credibility, comparability and efficiency of business transactions and facilitate cross border investments.

Similarly, with the internationalization of evaluation under the pressures of globalization, national policies and programs can no longer be held to account without a clear set of benchmarks or without reference to their cross-border implications. A global evaluation community is emerging, peer reviews of national policy performance are becoming routine and a growing international consensus behind new public management principles is fueling a demand for cross border consistency and transparency in public policy and program evaluations.

Thus, the lessons that have emerged in the process of generating universal accounting standards may have relevance for the design of evaluation standards[14]:

- **Ownership**: for legitimacy, standards should gain broad acceptance by professional associations and public authorities at all levels and this in turn requires that they be transparent, enforceable and useful.
- **Tradeoffs between uniformity and relevance**: the advantages of credibility, comparability and efficiency that uniformity delivers may conflict with the quality of the rules and their adaptability to different operating contexts. Principled compromises are needed and, where necessary, second best solutions should be adopted.
- **Need for restraint in prescriptive rules**: Diminishing returns result from efforts to make standards ever more precise and rigorous. Standards should be clear, broad and indicative rather than obscure, detailed and mandatory. They should be as simple as possible but not simpler[15].
- **Independence and competence**: the standard-setting body should be representative, independent and isolated from vested interests. It should have access to expert advisors and have the support of high quality staff. It should include users as well as suppliers of services. Members should be selected

[14] John Flower with Gabi Ebbers, *Global Financial Reporting*, Palgrave, New York, 2002.

[15] From this perspective, Alexander Hamilton's wise words about constitutions are relevant: "(they) should consist only of general provisions: the reason is that they must necessarily be permanent and that they cannot calculate for the possible change of things".

for their technical knowledge, experience and skills operating in their personal capacity rather than as advocates of any national, regional or functional interest.

The Genesis of National Evaluation Standards

For evaluation then, just as for accounting and auditing, standards are part of the social context of the profession. But to a far greater extent, the evaluation profession should adapt its methods to the unique features of individual evaluation assignments. This makes uniform standards for evaluation of public policies and programs far harder to develop than for accounting and auditing. On the other hand, most evaluation practitioners agree that good and bad practices can be distinguished. They accept the judgment of their peers about the quality of their work and they appreciate guidance about the conduct of their work.

In 1994, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation in the United States issued program evaluation standards[16]. Since then, other professional associations have generated their own guidelines, principles or standards. The formulation and publication of standards by professional associations has been welcomed even as their limits have been acknowledged. Thus, the American Evaluation Association was responding to a felt need when it developed *Guiding*

[16] The Joint Committee was created in 1974. It published standards for evaluation of educational programs, projects and materials in 1981 and personnel evaluation standards in 1988. The Joint Committee was accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) to work on program evaluation standards in 1989. Student Evaluation Standards were published in 2003.The Joint Committee Program Evaluation Standards were approved by ANSI in 1994.

Principles for Evaluators (1994) that specify basic criteria for the professional and honorable conduct of evaluations[17].

The principles are very general and cannot be relied upon to provide pointed advice in individual cases. But this does not detract from their usefulness when supplemented by case studies, training and guidance by experienced evaluation managers. Within their limits, they have provided the evaluation profession with a serviceable framework for learning and sharing of experience about the ethical conduct of evaluations.

Similarly, the *Joint Committee (JC) on Standards for Educational Evaluation* published influential standards for the conduct of program evaluations. It deals with ethical, contractual and methodological aspects. The standards were generated through debate among leading exponents of different evaluation persuasions. They were framed in consultation with policy makers and users of evaluation in the education profession. A third edition is under preparation. It is expected to improve attention to cultural diversity issues.

The Swiss Evaluation Society, the German Evaluation Association and the African Evaluation Association have published official standards inspired by the US Joint Committee's work and subsequently streamlined, refined or adapted[18]. By contrast, the UK Evaluation Society's good practice guidelines issued in 2003 address

[17] Peter H. Rossi, Howard E. Freeman, Mark W. Lipsey, *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach*, Sixth Edition, Sage Publishers. Thousand Oaks, 1999

[18] The African Evaluation Association guidelines (not reviewed in this paper) include modifications in thirteen out of thirty US PES standards.

explicitly the distinctive roles of evaluation commissioners, evaluators and participants and they also provide guidance for institutional self-evaluations.

The concise charter issued by the French Evaluation Society in the same year stresses the commonality of obligations of evaluators and evaluands while on-going work by the Australasian Evaluation Society is expected to reach well beyond the rights and responsibilities of commissioners, evaluators and other stakeholders codified in its 2002 *Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations* in order to address more explicitly issues of utilization and integration of evaluation within the policy process.

Criteria of Value for Evaluation Standards

Standard setting in evaluation needs to address social learning as well as individual learning. As Oscar Wilde famously observed, “experience is the name everyone gives to one’s mistakes”. But evaluation helps individuals, groups and organizations learn both from their own mistakes and from the mistakes of others. This is far cheaper and less painful than trial and error. At the level of the individual decision maker, accountability for decisions taken provides incentives for learning while learning improves the quality of decisions and broad based participation helps to protect the public interest[19].

Accordingly, the three main functions of evaluation are (i) to reduce errors in decision-making through knowledge, (ii) to make authority responsible through

[19] The notion that one needs to trade off accountability for learning is mistaken. It reflects a common confusion between the distinctive roles of evaluation consultants (who are loath in their capacity to criticize the performance of their employers and the policies they pursue) and independent evaluators (who face no such constraints).

increased accountability, and (iii) to promote public involvement in public affairs. These three roles (accountability, learning and participation) are inextricably linked. Thus defined they help to determine how the profession should be judged. Specifically, evaluation standards should address three distinct dimensions: (a) collective decision-making; (ii) enhanced accountability; (iii) informed participation.

First, evaluation contributes to effective decision-making by nurturing principled solutions to complex public policy problems. Since neither the state nor private agents have the power to unilaterally define their actions, social decision-making involves bargaining. Evaluation improves the social rewards of the game by providing impartial evidence to all parties and facilitating progress towards agreed solutions. This is where standards of *propriety* come in. They ensure that evaluation is conducted with regard for the welfare of all those involved in the evaluation and affected by its results. Resolving conflicts of value in a constructive way and achieving shared objectives among group members facilitates collective action. Through *transparency*, standards ensure that all parties and the public are adequately informed about evaluation findings.

Second, evaluation levels the playing field of the collective action game by helping to increase the responsibility of authority. By providing objective validation (or censure) of the actions taken by those in authority, it encourages the powerful to behave responsibly and fairly. Evaluation standards add value by discouraging the capture of the process by vested interests. By dispassionately examining the record of past interventions and putting social science disciplines to work, evaluation helps as a counterweight to the prejudices and self-serving opinions of decision makers. This is why *independence* and *integrity* standards are needed to help protect the value of evaluations.

Third, evaluation contributes to public involvement in decisions by reducing information asymmetries and providing advice to the public and to decision makers that can be used to enhance the outcomes of policies and programs. Through participation, evaluation amplifies the influence of those who may not have direct access to decision makers–employees, clients, the poor, etc. Access to relevant information is often too costly to be secured by individual actors. Effective collection and interpretation of the evidence requires *competence*. In this context, standards of *quality* and *comprehensiveness* of guidelines (to cover all stages of the evaluation cycle) provide comfort about the validity, accuracy and objectivity of evaluation findings.

Beyond the seven criteria implied by the three main functions of evaluation (propriety, transparency, independence, integrity, competence, quality and comprehensiveness), the net value added by evaluation is dependent on the *efficiency* of the evaluation process and the *utilization* of evaluation findings. These are only under the partial control of evaluators. Evaluation *governance* factors also intervene.

Getting Results

In learning organizations, evaluation helps to keep transactions low. In rigid, poorly managed, unaccountable organizations, evaluation leads to tense interactions, “cover ups” and even intimidation—so that evaluation ends up raising transaction costs with limited benefits in terms of improved organizational effectiveness. In learning organizations, objective evaluations are used to improve the relevance and impact of interventions and, as a result, unlock enormous benefits at modest cost. Not so in poorly managed organizations where the evaluation process tends to be captured for the personal benefit of those in authority.

This means that, beyond evaluation supply factors (addressing the right issues, conducting evaluations with efficiency, ensuring fairness and professionalism, etc.) the economics of evaluation hinge on demand factors. How commissioners and program managers behave before, during and after the evaluation process is critical to the derivation of social benefits out of the evaluation process. This is why for evaluation standards to improve the functioning of society, it is important for evaluation standards to deal explicitly with the distinctive accountabilities and the reciprocal obligations of evaluators, evaluation commissioners and program managers.

In particular, the roles of the independent evaluator in the construction of results based management systems and other real time monitoring and evaluation processes (that are an integral part of public sector management) would benefit from codification. Not enough attention has been given to this interface in traditional evaluation standards. Nor have the responsibilities of program managers been explicitly considered in the definition of evaluation standards. Conceptually and operationally, this gap has been filled by the "*evaluability*" doctrine[20]. Looking ahead, it should have a place in evaluation standards geared to the achievement of results.

Ideally, evaluation standards should relate good practices to the institutional conditions under which evaluation actually takes place. This means that evaluation

[20] Joseph Wholey, Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation (Chapter 2), Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1994.

governance as well as evaluation practice would benefit from well-conceived standards. Without organizational ethics, the moral hazards of evaluation rise. In poorly managed organizations, evaluation is used punitively to name and shame. In such operating environments, managers use evaluation to censure those who are low on the totem pole. This is why evaluation standards should enhance accountability of authority as well as assist authority through learning from experience.

In other words, evaluation standards do not deliver optimum results unless they focus on the reciprocal obligations of all those involved in an evaluation. Institutions as well as individual evaluators should be guided by evaluation standards. Ethical considerations and technical soundness of quality standards matter but they should be embedded within suitable governance frameworks[21]. Furthermore, it is desirable that the standards be "owned" by the individuals, groups and organizations that use them. Only then are they likely to devote the resources and the skills needed to abide by the standards and make use of evaluation findings.

It follows that the very process of formulating and implementing standards should be viewed as a social learning mechanism (that is subject to evaluation).

[21] According to Donald T. Campbell, "while all nations are engaged in trying out innovative reforms, none of them are yet organized to adequately evaluate the outcome of these innovations". This observation led him to pioneer the concept of the "experimenting society" in which "policy relevant knowledge is created, critically assessed and communicated in real life or natural (not laboratory) settings, with the aim of discovering through policy experimentation, new forms of public action which signify a gain in the problem-solving capacities of society". See William N. Dunn, Ed. *The Experimenting Society, Essays in Honor of Donald T. Campbell*, Policy Studies Review Annual, Volume 11, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 1998

Experience from accounting and other professions suggests that the usefulness of standards hinges on their actual use and, in due course, their independent verification. Effective utilization of standards is facilitated by authoritative accumulation of evidence from adjudicated cases, especially those where the application of agreed standards has been contested.

Finally, tacit norms tend to spread from organizations that are recognized as leaders in their field to the rest of the profession. Thus, sharing of good practice and training programs act as transmission belts between standards and their effective utilization. This is one reason why professional associations have a comparative advantage in the formulation and verification of standards.

A Comparative Assessment

A cursory comparison between national evaluation standards brings out the following common features:

- **Brevity**: the standards in the sample are invariably stated in concise and non-technical terms; they contain 3-6 principles and 11-44 guidelines. The listing of standards varies between one and six pages[22].
- **Scope**: Most guidelines focus on the ethical conduct of public program and policy evaluations while the UK product also addresses institutional self evaluation standards.
- **Multiple audience**: all standards in the sample are directed to the individuals and organizations that commission, prepare, conduct and use

[22] Additional space is often devoted to commentaries about the guidelines.

evaluations as well as to stakeholders affected by the evaluation or who have an interest in the results.

- **Process orientation**: the standards tend to eschew methodological aspects; instead they concentrate on behavioral, contractual and ethical considerations.
- **Asymmetry**: most standards give far greater weight to the responsibilities of evaluators and the rights of other stakeholders than to the obligations of evaluation commissioners and program managers with the notable exception of the UK guidelines.

This said there are substantial differences among the published standards. In order to carry out a comparative assessment among them, based on the considerations elaborated in the above sections of the paper, the ten criteria of merit that were identified above were used by the author as an evaluation template:

- **Propriety**: preservation of the dignity, security and privacy of people; protection of confidential information; prior informed consent of participants.
- **Transparency**: agreed expectations about objectives and methods are disseminated to stakeholders; evaluation reports disclosed to stakeholders and the general public without modification.
- **Independence**: adequate safeguards provided to ensure that vested interests do not influence the evaluation; distinct accountabilities are attributed to evaluation commissioners, program managers and evaluators; full protection is provided against intimidation and interference; adequate funding without strings is provided.

- **Integrity**: disclosure and avoidance of actual or potential conflicts of interest; contestability of evaluation judgments; evaluator’s access to relevant information.
- **Competence:** requirements about the knowledge, skills and experience expected of evaluators.
- **Quality**: guidance about the practices needed to achieve evaluation relevance, credibility, rigor and objectivity; norms for achieving fair and valid evaluation findings and recommendations; practices that generate constructive relationships among participants.
- **Comprehensiveness**: coverage of all phases of the evaluation cycle – from commissioning to dissemination and utilization.
- **Efficiency**: economy in use of skills, funds and administrative resources; limited burden on participants.
- **Utilization**: responsiveness to the public interest and to users’ needs; participation of stakeholders in the evaluation; timely delivery; clarity of presentation.
- **Governance**: clarity of roles between evaluation commissioners, evaluators and participants; appropriate contractual relationships; oversight of self-evaluation by independent evaluation; “evaluability” norms for program and policy design.

Table 1 presents the summary results based on the admittedly subjective judgment of the author. Equal weights were ascribed to each category. Based on a textual analysis of their content, each of the national standards was rated from 1 to 6—where 1 presents a highly unsatisfactory treatment and 6 a highly satisfactory treatment. The exercise was carried out for illustrative purposes only, i.e. to demonstrate that evaluation standards can be valued. No claim is made for their accuracy. And it goes without saying that the process followed does not comply with sound evaluation process norms. Validation of the criteria by an expert panel combined with independent scoring by qualified evaluators would be required to attest to the reliability of the individual ratings.

Table 1. ***Ratings of National Evaluation Standards***

	Australia	**Canada**	**France**	**Germany**	**Switz.**	**UK**	**USA**	**Average**
Propriety	6	5	5	4	5	6	5	**5.1**
Transparency	4	4	4	4	4	6	4	**4.3**
Independence	3	1	3	1	1	4	1	**2.0**
Integrity	2	2	2	2	4	4	2	**2.6**
Competence	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	**5.0**
Quality	5	3	3	6	6	4	6	**4.7**
Comprehensiveness	6	2	3	5	5	5	5	**4.4**
Efficiency	1	4	1	5	5	1	5	**3.1**
Utilization	2	2	2	5	5	6	5	**3.8**
Governance	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	**3.3**
Average	**3.8**	**3.1**	**3.1**	**4.0**	**4.3**	**4.5**	**4.1**	

Most national standards give considerable emphasis to the imperative of doing no harm and stress the rights of evaluation participants and the protection of confidentiality. Some mandate a right of prior informed consent for evaluation participants preferably in writing. In general, the standards give salience to the necessity of ensuring that evaluators have appropriate knowledge and skills. The critical importance of quality standards is also stressed, except for the charters of Canada and France that treat this aspect very lightly.

The lowest ratings are those related to the independence and integrity of the function. Only the United Kingdom achieves a satisfactory rating for independence given the scrupulous balance it strikes between the reciprocal obligations of evaluation commissioners and evaluators in achieving good evaluation outcomes. The Australasian guidelines and the French charter come next—the former because of its strong focus on fair and precise contractual relationships and the latter because it states unambiguously that arm's length relationships between evaluators and program managers ("distanciation") are needed to ensure the credibility of the process.

None of the other national standards address the risks inevitably associated with cases where evaluation commissioners have major executive responsibilities for the programs being evaluated. Integrity ratings are relatively low because conflict of interest problems tend to be treated lightly if at all and contestability procedures are not provided for. Where conflicts of interest are treated it is in terms of requiring their disclosure rather than on automatic disqualification from taking part in the evaluation.

Nevertheless, Switzerland and the UK achieve satisfactory ratings in this category, the former because of its emphasis on neutral reporting, the latter because it makes clear that the commissioners have a responsibility to provide evaluators with access to relevant documentation and data. The lack of reciprocity in the obligations of evaluation commissioners and evaluators is especially striking with respect to information disclosure. Evaluators are invariably instructed to make transparent the evaluative information on which they have based their findings.

On the other hand, the unimpeded access to relevant information (an acid test of independence for evaluators) while encouraged in some cases is not guaranteed by any of the national standards. Nor under the rubric of transparency does the inalienable right of the public to access uncensored evaluation reports figure explicitly in any of the national standards although the UK guidelines discourage the quotation of evaluation results out of context and suggest that the final reports should "normally" be lodged in the public domain.

The Canadian guidelines do not address the disclosure of evaluation reports. Instead they emphasize the responsibility of evaluators to their clients with respect to confidentiality, privacy and ownership of findings and reports. The US guidelines (along with the German and Swiss versions that they have inspired) take a middle and somewhat ambiguous course by requiring that the "results" of the evaluation be made available to all potentially affected persons as well as to all others who have a legitimate claim to receive them.

Similarly, the French charter opines that public dissemination of evaluation results is desirable but reserves actual disclosure modalities to a negotiated outcome at the time of evaluation commissioning. By contrast, the Australasian guidelines are explicit in requiring the consent of the evaluator for any amendments to the final report but they do not compel the commissioners to disclose evaluation reports to the public. Instead, they enjoin commissioners not to breach the integrity of the reports in their pronouncements.

The Road Ahead

The above analysis brings out the following conclusions that may help trace a road map for future work on evaluation standards. Utilization ranks highest for the UK guidelines because they devote a full section to self-evaluation. Concern with utilization is also high in the US standards as well as the German and Swiss standards that they have inspired. Nevertheless, most of the evaluation standards are not oriented to results. They give considerable weight to the contracting phase of the evaluation process, a stage when the commissioners have enormous leverage over the evaluator. They stress early identification of risks and promote good communications between evaluators and commissioners without specific provision for contestability, arbitration mechanisms or independent oversight of the executive branch by the legislature.

Most national standards give far more weight to the obligations of evaluators than to policy makers, program managers and evaluation commissioners. They do not address criteria of program “evaluability” or the measures needed to ensure effective utilization of evaluation results. They do not instruct evaluation commissioners to support evaluators in their evaluative work; provide them with unencumbered access to data; protect their independence; and avoid retribution, intimidation and other means of evaluation capture.

None of the standards makes public officials accountable for the effective use of evaluation results in the public interest. This would require the formulation of standards that address explicitly the institutional prerequisites of organizational learning, e.g. based on the accountability principles of the new public management movement. This would involve codification of the distinctive roles of independent evaluation, self-evaluation, inspection and auditing in various administrative environments.

For evaluation standards to be fully relevant, evaluators, evaluation commissioners and program managers would need specific guidance with respect to results based management systems, quality assurance processes, results based scorecards and selection and use of performance indicators in public service delivery. This is where the current frontier of program evaluation activities lies. Similarly, the regulatory interface between citizens, government, voluntary organizations and the private sector would benefit from judicious guidelines. Other promising areas for standard setting include the design of appropriate linkages between independent evaluation, budget allocation processes and personnel evaluation practices.

National audit offices have often trespassed profitably into the evaluation domain through value for money and comprehensive audits. Conversely, systematic evaluations of the effectiveness of public auditing and inspection processes would have considerable merit and should be encouraged. In most industrial democracies, public officials feel victimized by “inspection overload”, taxpayers feel powerless to influence the quality of public services and performance indicators are widely criticized because they fail to encourage beneficiary involvement and genuine quality assurance. This suggests a need for more systematic evaluations of control functions, including of inspection and auditing…and of evaluation itself.

Towards Global Standards

Finally future work on evaluation standards should take account of the *transnational* features that now characterize the profession. Increasingly, evaluators are called upon to assess public policies and programs that extend beyond national borders. As a result, a global evaluation community is in the making. It is seeking a common language in order to facilitate evaluation assignments across national boundaries. Given this new context, harmonization of evaluation standards across national boundaries would be desirable. Demands for cross border consistency and transparency in evaluation have become more pressing.

But a global approach not grounded in national and regional experience would involve risks of coercion, rigidity and misplaced homogeneity. To achieve credibility and legitimacy, global standards should be grounded in the initiatives of national evaluation associations. Consistent evaluation standards that would respect universal ideals of peace and justice would promote high quality work in evaluation, foster trust in the profession and contribute to the advent of an international evaluation community. There is now a wealth of experience in the design and implementation of national standards. It would be appropriate for such standards to be used as building blocks for a global initiative.

The global standards should be inclusive, embrace new stakeholders, accommodate all evaluation doctrines and focus on institutions rather than the individual evaluator. A comprehensive approach to standards (capturing its ethics, its governance, its methods and its linkages to policy making and resource allocation processes) would be desirable so that the sterile debate between principles based and rule based standards that has plagued the development of universal accounting standards is not repeated and the results based approach that is the hallmark of the evaluation profession is given a chance.

National evaluation societies should take the lead in the design of global evaluation standards. A gradual, organic progress is more likely to yield greater ownership than hasty standardization. To provide credibility to the formulation of evaluation standards, policy makers and representatives of the private and voluntary sectors should have their say and due process, including broad based public consultations, will have to be observed. Last but not least, in order to ensure legitimacy, special efforts should be made to involve evaluators of the developing world where 85% of the world’s peoples live.

About the Author

Robert Picciotto is Visiting Professor at King's College, University of London. He served as Director General, Operations Evaluation in the World Bank Group from 1992 to 2002.

The 2004 Claremont Debate: Lipsey vs. Scriven

Determining Causality in Program Evaluation and Applied Research: Should Experimental Evidence Be the Gold Standard?

Stewart I. Donaldson and Christina A. Christie

Claremont Graduate University

While there is little disagreement about the need for, and value of, program evaluation, there remain major disagreements in the field about best practices (Donaldson & Lipsey, in press). For example, Donaldson and Scriven (2003) invited a diverse group of evaluators to Claremont in 2001 to share their visions for "how we should practice evaluation" in the new millennium. Theorists and practitioners discussed a wide range of views and evaluation approaches, many at odds with one another, on how best to improve evaluation practice (e.g., the experimental paradigm, evaluation as a transdiscipline, results-oriented management, empowerment evaluation, fourth generation evaluation, inclusive evaluation, theory-driven evaluation and the like). In response to some of the heated exchanges, Mark (2003) noted "it seems ironic when evaluators who espouse inclusion, empowerment, and participation would like to exclude, disempower, and see no participation by evaluators who hold different views." He further concluded that whatever peace has been achieved in the so-call quantitative-qualitative paradigm wars remains an uneasy peace.

This uneasy peace seemed to revert back to overt conflict in late 2003, when the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences declared a rather wholesale commitment to privileging experimental and some types of quasi-experimental designs over other methods in evaluation funding competitions. At the 2003 Annual Meeting of the American Evaluation Association (AEA), prominent evaluators discussed this new level of support for experimental designs as a move back to the "Dark Ages" of evaluation. Subsequently, the leadership of the AEA (supported by Michael Scriven among many others) developed a policy statement opposing these efforts to privilege randomized control trials in education evaluation funding competitions:

AEA STATEMENT

November 24, 2003

> Dear Colleagues,
>
> We encourage AEA members to share their views on Scientifically Based Evaluation Methods with the U.S. Department of Education. Up to now a number of members have shared their views with other members on EvalTalk. This discussion has been helpful in clarifying our thoughts and in presenting potential arguments, but NOW it is time for AEA members to share their views directly with the Department of Education.
>
> A statement has been prepared by a team of distinguished evaluators including: Randall Davies, Ernest House, Cheri Levenson, Linda Mabry (chair), Sandra Mathison and Michael Scriven. This team received valuable assistance from: Lois-ellin Datta, Burt Perrin, Katherine Ryan and Bob Williams. We are grateful

to this team for their rapid response to this proposal. This statement has been approved by the current and future Executive Committees of the Board of the American Evaluation Association, including:

Molly Engle, 2002 President

Richard Krueger, 2003 President

Nick Smith, 2004 President

Sharon Rallis, 2005 President

Nanette Keiser, 2002-2003 Treasurer

Kathleen Bolland, 2004 Treasurer

We encourage AEA members to share their thoughts directly to the U.S. Department of Education and possibly with legislative leaders. If you agree with the AEA statement, you might indicate your support of the AEA statement.

OR

If you wish to offer other arguments or points of views, please submit those as well.

Responses are to be sent to:

Margo K. Anderson, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Room 4W333, Washington, DC 20202-5910

Or by internet to: comments@ed.gov and include the term ``Evaluation" in the subject line of your electronic message. Comments must be received on or before December 4th.

Sincerely

Richard Krueger, President

American Evaluation Association

* * * * *

American Evaluation Association Response

To U. S. Department of Education

Notice of proposed priority, Federal Register RIN 1890-ZA00, November 4, 2003

"Scientifically Based Evaluation Methods"

The American Evaluation Association applauds the effort to promote high quality in the U.S. Secretary of Education's proposed priority for evaluating educational programs using scientifically based methods. We, too, have worked to encourage competent practice through our Guiding Principles for Evaluators (1994), Standards for Program Evaluation (1994), professional training, and annual conferences. However, we believe the proposed priority manifests fundamental misunderstandings about (1) the types of studies capable of determining causality, (2) the methods capable of achieving scientific rigor, and (3) the types of studies that support policy and program decisions. We would like to help avoid the political, ethical, and financial disaster that could well attend implementation of the proposed priority.

(1) Studies capable of determining causality. Randomized control group trials (RCTs) are not the only studies capable of generating understandings of causality. In medicine, causality has been conclusively shown in some instances without RCTs, for example, in linking smoking to lung cancer and infested rats to bubonic plague. The secretary's proposal would elevate experimental over quasi-experimental, observational, single-subject, and other designs which are sometimes more feasible and equally valid.

RCTs are not always best for determining causality and can be misleading. RCTs examine a limited number of isolated factors that are neither limited nor isolated in natural settings. The complex nature of causality and the multitude of actual influences on outcomes render RCTs less capable of discovering causality than designs sensitive to local culture and conditions and open to unanticipated causal factors.

RCTs should sometimes be ruled out for reasons of ethics. For example, assigning experimental subjects to educationally inferior or medically unproven treatments, or denying control group subjects access to important instructional opportunities or critical medical intervention, is not ethically acceptable even when RCT results might be enlightening. Such studies would not be approved by Institutional Review Boards overseeing the protection of human subjects in accordance with federal statute.

In some cases, data sources are insufficient for RCTs. Pilot, experimental, and exploratory education, health, and social programs are often small enough in scale to preclude use of RCTs as an evaluation methodology, however important it may be to examine causality prior to wider implementation.

(2) Methods capable of demonstrating scientific rigor. For at least a decade, evaluators publicly debated whether newer inquiry methods were sufficiently rigorous. This issue was settled long ago. Actual practice and many published examples demonstrate that alternative and mixed methods are rigorous and scientific. To discourage a repertoire of methods would force evaluators backward. We strongly disagree that the methodological "benefits of the proposed priority justify the costs."

(3) Studies capable of supporting appropriate policy and program decisions. We also strongly disagree that "this regulatory action does not unduly interfere with State, local, and tribal governments in the exercise of their governmental functions." As provision and support of programs are governmental functions so, too, is determining program effectiveness. Sound policy decisions benefit from data illustrating not only causality but also conditionality. Fettering evaluators with unnecessary and unreasonable constraints would deny information needed by policy-makers.

> While we agree with the intent of ensuring that federally sponsored programs be "evaluated using scientifically based research . . . to determine the effectiveness of a project intervention," we do not agree that "evaluation methods using an experimental design are best for determining project effectiveness." We believe that the constraints in the proposed priority would deny use of other needed, proven, and scientifically credible evaluation methods, resulting in fruitless expenditures on some large contracts while leaving other public programs unevaluated entirely. Statement prepared by: Randall Davies, Ernest House, Cheri Levenson, Linda Mabry (chair), Sandra Mathison and Michael Scriven. This team received valuable assistance from: Lois-ellin Datta, Burt Perrin, Katherine Ryan, and Bob Williams.

Opposition to the AEA Statement

An influential group of senior members of the American Evaluation Association opposed the AEA Statement, and did not feel they were appropriately consulted as active, long-term members of AEA. In response to President Krueger's call for members to share their individual views on this matter, a new statement now referred to as the "NOT AEA STATEMENT" (as seen on Evaltalk) was submitted to the U. S. Department of Education:

NOT THE AEA STATEMENT

Posted on Evaltalk on: 12-3-2003

> AEA members:
>
> The statement below has been sent to the Department of Education in response to its proposal that "scientifically based evaluation methods" for assessing the effectiveness of educational interventions be defined as randomized experiments when they are feasible and as quasi-experimental or single-subject designs when they are not.

This statement is intended to support the Department's definition and associated preference for the use of such designs for outcome evaluation when they are applicable. It is also intended to provide a counterpoint to the statement submitted by the AEA leadership as the Association's position on this matter. The generalized opposition to use of experimental and quasi-experimental methods evinced in the AEA statement is unjustified, speciously argued, and represents neither the methodological norms in the evaluation field nor the views of the large segment of the AEA membership with significant experience conducting experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations of program effects.

We encourage all AEA members to communicate their views on this matter to the Department of Education and invite you to endorse the statement below in that communication if it is more representative of your views than the official AEA statement. [Comments can be sent to the Dept of Ed through Dec. 4 at comments@ed.gov with "Evaluation" in the subject line of the message].

****

This statement is in response to the Secretary's request for comment on the proposed priority on Scientifically Based Evaluation Methods. We offer the following observations in support of this priority.

The proposed priority identifies random assignment experimental designs as the methodological standard for what constitutes scientifically based evaluation methods for determining whether an intervention produces meaningful effects on students, teachers, parents, and others. The priority also recognizes that there are cases when random assignment is not feasible and, in such cases, identifies quasi-experimental designs and single-subject designs as alternatives that may be justified by the circumstances of particular evaluations.

This interpretation of what constitutes scientifically based evaluation strategies for assessing program effects is consistent with the presentations in the major textbooks in evaluation and with widely recognized methodological standards in the social and medical sciences. Randomized controlled trials have been essential to understanding what works, what does not work, and what is harmful among interventions in many other areas of public policy including health and medicine, mental health, criminal justice, employment, and welfare. Furthermore, attempts to draw conclusions about intervention effects based on nonrandomized trials have often led to misleading results in these fields and there is no reason to expect this to be untrue in the social and education fields. This is demonstrated, for example, by the results of randomized trials of facilitated communication for autistic children and prison visits for juvenile offenders, which reversed the conclusions of nonexperimental studies of these interventions.

Randomized trials in the social sector are more frequent and feasible than many critics acknowledge and their number is increasing. The Campbell Collaboration of Social, Psychological, Educational, and Criminological Trials Register includes nearly 13,000 such trials, and the development of this register is still in its youth.

At the same time, we recognize that randomized trials are not feasible or ethical at times. In such circumstances, quasi-experimental or other designs may be appropriate alternatives, as the proposed priority allows. However, it has been possible to configure practical and ethical experimental designs in such complex and sensitive areas of study as pregnancy prevention programs, police handling of domestic violence, and prevention of substance abuse. It is similarly possible to design randomized trials or strong quasi-experiments to be ethical and feasible for many educational programs. In such cases, we believe the Secretary's proposed priority gives proper guidance for attaining high methodological standards and we believe the nation's children deserve to have educational programs of demonstrated effectiveness as determined by the most scientifically credible methods available.

The individuals who have signed below in support of this statement are current or former members of the American Evaluation Association (AEA). Included among us are individuals who have been closely associated with that organization since its inception and who have served as AEA presidents, Board members, and journal editors. We wish to make clear that the statement submitted by AEA in response to this proposed priority does not represent our views and we regret that a statement representing the organization was proffered without prior review and comment by its members. We believe that the proposed priority will dramatically increase the amount of valid information for guiding the improvement of education throughout the nation. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on a matter of this importance and support the Department's initiative.

Signed by:

Leonard Bickman

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The 2004 Claremont Debate

The exchange above about the role of randomized control trials in program evaluation practice in educational settings set the stage for the 2004 Claremont Debate.

The apparent resurgence of issues reminiscent of the well-known quantitative-qualitative paradigm wars in evaluation has the potential to be destructive and to stunt the healthy development of the discipline and profession. In an effort to seek a deeper understanding of the current dispute, and to possibly discover a middle ground or productive resolution, Claremont Graduate University hosted a debate between representatives from both sides. Below, you will find selected excerpts from the opening remarks by Mark W. Lipsey (who plans to publish a more complete version of his thoughts in the near future), followed by excerpts from the response from Michael Scriven.

Selected Excerpts from Mark Lipsey's Opening Comments

"In this context, it seems to me that there are at least three topics that we might discuss."

"One has to do with the way randomized trials appear in government agencies and the legislation and so on, some of which is simplistic and inept, as uncharacteristic as that is of government activity."

"Another thing we might talk about is the little flack in the American Evaluation Association (AEA) that involves the stance that was taken last year opposing an obscure division of the Department of Education to try to bring in some randomized evaluations to some of the projects it was funding. Since this event is being sponsored by an AEA Affiliate, that is a possibility. I'd be happy to explain to you why I think the AEA now has the same relationship to the Field of Evaluation as the Flat Earth Society has to the Field of Geology."

"The third thing we might talk about is the methodological issue and what is actually at stake in these methodological critiques. That is actually what I want to talk about, but if anyone, maybe the audience, or Michael wants to talk about the others, then I'd be happy to do that."

"We really are poorly served by this gold standard terminology. I think that when you use randomized experiments, which I am basically going to defend in this context, they are much like what Winston Churchill once said about democracy. He said, 'It's the worst form of government except for all the others that have been tried from time to time.' I do not think this is the gold standard. I think that for impact assessment randomized experiments are the worst methodology except for some of the others that have been tried from time to time. That is pretty much my theme here."

"Experimental and quasi-experimental designs have been around a long time and have well known properties. What's really new is this broadside against them from certain research communities."

"This issue has evoked mostly a yawn in areas where intervention research and program evaluation is done broadly. So, in mental health, public health, drug prevention, medicine, chronic delinquency evaluations, and a whole range of areas this is not a particularly exciting topic where randomized field trials are well respected, well known, widely used, and understood to be something of the state of the art for doing impact assessments. The reactions I've seen have come predominantly from the education research culture and to a certain extent from one wing of economists that work in this field that have an interesting take on it. I will get to that later on."

"Let me turn now to the non-experimental approaches. This is an area that has fascinated me. Back when flap was going on, methodological pluralism was all over the Evaltalk. I kept asking respondents and finally gave up on what these other methods were that were supposed to be equally valid, and the most interesting list came out: epidemiological methods, observational correlation modeling, realist methods, case studies, qualitative, ethnographic, Glasser and Strauss' grounded theory, and from Michael Scriven the modus operandi technique, forensic analysis, direct observation, all put forth in establishing the effects of programs."

"I have in recent years, every time I see somebody putting forward the argument that qualitative methods could be used to assess program effects, I've been writing them for some examples. Show me a case where this was done convincingly."

"Why is the education research culture so riled up about randomized experiments? Here are a couple of possibilities. In all the politics this year, the Bush Administration, the Department of Education, the No Child Left Behind Act, there's a lot not to like there, okay? They have been pushing for randomized designs, so we may as well not like those too. The biggest factor I think is ideological. The education research culture bought into constructivism and post modernist epistemologies and so on really big time and there is a lot of ideological opposition. Tom Cook calls it science phobia to quantitative methods and experimentation and so on. Third, I think that there is a considerable amount of ignorance, not stupidity, not stupidity, but ignorance."

Selected Excerpts from Michael Scriven's Response

"Well, apart from the character assassination at the end, which I can tell you in the education community there may be people in it about which those things can be said, but the greatest attacks on constructivism are from people within the education community. So, there are plenty of others like us who absolutely reject all of that crap and so, it is certainly not true. Some of my friends are also on the side of the angels over there, like Tom Cook, for the new move. So, no, I don't think that is really a very plausible account of the story."

“I think that if you want to look at reasons why people objected, the three big ones are these. One, the objections were not at all against randomized control trials (RCT), they were against the decision to take all $500 million dollars of their research money and pull it out of anything except randomized control trials. Now, it is quite clear the previous speaker is not identifying himself with this extreme wing, but who is the leader of the extreme wing? It is the guy who is the head of the Institute of Educational Science that has the $500 million, and what does he say? He says there is no scientific way of establishing causation except by randomized and allocated control group trials, etc. etc. There is no such thing as scientific research in the area of human behavior except by means of RCTs, and that is complete bullshit! It happens to be coming from the guy who has all of the money. So, the sad thing is that this is man killing off alternatives”

“Read Tom Cook on problems in practice of running RCTs. So, this is a very tricky procedure. While it has theoretical advantages, the theoretical advantages in validity aspects of it are undeniable. That is not the issue. The issue is not whether or not there is an alternative that has the same theoretical bulletproof-ness. The question is whether there is an alternative that can get you results beyond reasonable doubt, and that is another story all together. Very often, you can get results beyond reasonable doubt in other ways.”

“First, the concessions. We have not used RCTs when we should have many, many times. There have been many occasions when we could have pulled off RCTs, when we could have staffed them with competent people, and this is still the case in the present, and that was the best design around. The arguments around are sloppy arguments including a number of arguments that Professor Lipsey ran into at the Evaltalk discussion. There was a lot of whistling in the dark going on there and ideological crap going on. You have to get down to the logic of the cases and you can’t just pull this off by waving things like constructivism, observational, or etc. So, this is a situation where there is no doubt at all. This is a very powerful tool, and sometimes much the best tool, but it has as the same value as the torque wrench in a good mechanic’s toolbox. For certain tasks, you can’t beat it. After all, this is a quantitative instrument. The torque wrench reads out in inches and meters and so on, so this is very important if you are interested in matching the specs that you are supposed to be matching…a very good instrument. Nothing can match it, but it has a very narrow range of uses. Now, that doesn’t matter if the alternative approaches aren’t very good, but of course there is a lot of them and some of them are very good indeed.”

“Well, there’s a lot more I’d like to say, but perhaps I can just leave it by saying I think I agree strongly with him. A lot of the attacks have been empty and they have lacked specific examples that will work. A lot of the attacks are based on ideological positions, which are logically unsound. All of this is true, but nevertheless, given the difficulties facing RCTs, one has to be very cautious going to any sort of wholesale commitment to them. I hope in the future we can develop a better kind of existence than what we have at the moment.”

Conclusion

Somewhat surprisingly, Lipsey and Scriven agreed that randomized control trials (RCTs) are the best method currently available for assessing program impact (causal effects of a program), and that determining program impact is a main requirement of contemporary program evaluation. However, Scriven argued that there are very few situations where RCTs can be successfully implemented in educational program evaluation, and that there are now good alternative designs for determining program effects. Lipsey disagreed and remained very skeptical of

Scriven's claim that sound alternative methods exist for determining program effects, and challenged Scriven to provide specific examples. Streaming video of the entire Claremont Debate can be viewed at: http://www.cgu.edu/pages/465.asp.

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Evaluation Capacity Building and Humanitarian Organization

Ridde Valéry and Sahibullah Shakir

Abstract

This paper documents a process of evaluation capacity building in a humanitarian organization in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2003. The authors carried out an annual evaluation and they undertook evaluation capacity building activities. The analysis of the empirical data shows that in the context of humanitarian organizations, the capacity building process would be improved if it would i) employ a mix of participative and utilization-focused approach, ii) organize participative workshops and on-the-job training, with the continuity of collaborators ensured, iii) use a myriad of dissemination/advocacy activities for a varied public.

Résumé

Cet article vise à expliciter un processus de renforcement des capacités en évaluation de programme d'une organisation humanitaire en Afghanistan entre 2001 et 2003. Nous avons effectué une évaluation chaque année et certaines activités visaient le renforcement des capacités. L'analyse des données empiriques montre que dans le contexte des organisations humanitaires, le renforcement des capacités gagnerait à i) employer une approche participative et centrée sur l'utilisation des résultats, ii) organiser des ateliers de formation participatifs, former les acteurs sur le terrain et s'appuyer sur des collaborateurs récurrents, iii) user d'une myriade de formes de valorisation des résultats et de plaidoyer en faveur de l'évaluation pour un public varié.

Introduction

The capacity building of humanitarian organizations relates to the multiple functions and activities carried out by these organizations. Literature is rich with articles and chapters depicting poor capacity building practices in these types of organizations, "capacity development has been largely unsuccessful" said ALNAP in the 2003 review of humanitarian action[1]. These are often written in a very negative way. In this paper we wish, to provide a more constructive perspective, as Morgan et al.[2] have done regarding training and education, on the way in which capacity building activities of humanitarian organizations is carried out, while remaining critical and rigorous at the same time. For this purpose, we will present the case of a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) implementing community health programs in Afghanistan. Milstein et al[3] said that "an important distinction might have to be made between the conditions that confer evaluation capacity building to an organization and the strategies used to bring about those conditions and sustain them over time. The former is a theoretical question, the latter an empirical and practical one". This paper deals with the latter case, it does not pretend to provide a theoretical basis, but it exclusively aims to present empirical data concerning the process of capacity building in a particular double context: a country in a transition and a humanitarian NGO. It has been particularly interesting to study a case in this country, as for the past three years, this part of the world has lived upheaval, passing from a situation of war to a situation where democratic elections were organized in a post-conflict country. That being said, we cannot in these few pages review all the capacity building activities of this NGO, particularly those for medical or administrative activities.

This is why this paper will only focus on the evaluation capacity building (ECB) activities of this organization in Afghanistan. ECB is the intentional work to continuously create and sustain overall organizational processes that lead to quality evaluation and its routine use[4]. In this paper we will handle this topic for three essential reasons. First, experts in this field are asking for more empirical case studies to document the range of practices in order to improve their knowledge[3-6], as ECB is “an emergent field of practice”[7]. For example, the topic of ECB was only brought up in the agenda of the Annual American Evaluation Association National Conference in 2000[8]. Second, it should well be recognized that papers on this subject in a context of humanitarian aid are relatively rare. Donors and NGOs are supporting ECB activities for at least three decades[9]. But most of these activities occur in developing countries and not in conflict or post-conflict settings. Third, we believe that what makes this of particular importance is that the evaluator, the author of this paper[23], has carried out three evaluations in continuation in the same country for the same NGO during three years in 2001, 2002 and 2003. This is a rare situation, and we believe contributes to the abundance of knowledge. We thus consider it is important to share this experience,

[23] The first author knows this NGO well since 1996. He has served as its Head of Mission in Afghanistan from 1996 to 1998, then in Mali and Niger in 1999. He has also conducted evaluation work for this NGO in other countries, like Niger (98), East-Timor (99) and Iraq (2003). But we will focus the case study on Afghanistan. In other words, the CBE activities were not only implemented in Afghanistan. In addition it is thought that other evaluation practices undertaken by this consultant and others contributed to the building of the evaluation capacity of this NGO. These endeavours are clearly beyond the scope of this paper.

and our reflections, with the humanitarian community. One of the limitations of this paper is that it focuses more on process than outcome of ECB, even if some indicators of changes that occurred as a result of those activities will be shared. It seems to be the case most of the time in this kind of papers[10]. As this Afghan process is new and recent, outcome based evidence is scarce and its description is considered to be the first stage to climb the evidence-based iceberg.

Context

A thorough description of the context is important as ECB practices are highly "context-dependent"[7] according to the most cited definition. After more than 20 years of conflict and important economic decline[11], chances for development in Afghanistan are impaired by the worsening health condition of the population. Indeed, health indicators, especially maternal and infant mortality rates, are among the worst in the world and some of them are increasing: UNICEF shows a rise from 600 maternal deaths in 1981 to 1,700 deaths in mid-1990. A recent women's mortality survey, conducted in four provinces of Afghanistan, confirms this scenario: the maternal mortality ratio is 1,600 per 100,000 live births. Even more, the maternal mortality rate reported in Badakhshan province is the highest ever reported globally in the world with 6,500 per 100,000 live births[12]. The infant mortality rate is thought to be 165 per 1,000 successful births and the under five mortality rate about 257 per 1,000 live births. The low socio-economic status of women renders them and their children particularly vulnerable[13]. Most of the burden of illnesses stems from infectious diseases, particularly among children, where diarrhea, acute respiratory infections and vaccine-preventable diseases are likely to account for 60% of the children's deaths[14].

According to a recent report done for the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)[15], the health system is adversely affected by major problems: a grossly deficient, and even absent, infrastructure; a top-heavy health system; poorly distributed resources; health care delivered on a 'project' basis by many distinct, relatively uncoordinated service providers; absence of a practical, useful, coordinated information system for management decision-making. In addition, the pre-war in human resource capacity has been eroded and there is scarcity of personnel with managerial and technical skills throughout the country. There is also a lack of training and a lack of public health expertise, for all health staff and doctors are generally not able to deal with the most urgent problems at a community level. Indeed, medical facilities and personnel are very few in number and are primarily found in Kabul; approximately 90% of all trained physicians practice in urban centers, with almost 80% in Kabul itself. In rural areas, NGOs are in charge of the large majority of the health facilities. They have to implement, mostly through a contractual approach[16], the new Basic Package of Health Service defined by the Afghan Government in its new National Health Policy[17]. However, access to health services remains appalling for rural populations because of limited public transport, cultural constraints that limit the access to health care for women, high illiteracy levels with lack of knowledge about health care, few hardtop and rural roads and the absence of telecommunications. Moreover, twenty-three years of war and recent droughts have eroded household assets and many families live in abject poverty[18].

In 2004, Afghanistan is not yet safe and secure; tensions still run high in most parts of the country. Moreover, there are signs of nascent problems, notably harassment of the International Community by Government authorities and the potential return to violence in some areas. Current insecurity and political instability will obviously constrain the pace and geographic scope for extending health services. Intense ethnic rivalries and local conflicts have undermined trust in public and government institutions and will remain a challenge in the years to come.

A French medical NGO founded in 1979, Aide Médicale Internationale (AMI), is acting and working in Afghanistan since the early eighties, undertaking different kinds of activities that focus on the rehabilitation of health care structures and on medical training for health care workers. Initially, all missions were secret ones taking place during the Soviet occupation of the Afghan territory. From 1985 to 1993 AMI ran a training program (Medical Training for Afghans) in Peshawar (Pakistan), and provided the 115 graduated students with medical kits to start their activities inside Afghanistan[19]. This was a huge project in term of medical capacity building for Afghanistan. Unfortunately, AMI do not have much information regarding the current position and profession of those hundred medical trainees. In 1993 AMI started two dispensaries in Kunar Province, and a reference Hospital in Logar Province that was linked to a training centre. In 1995 the NGO started two dispensaries in Laghman Province and took over the provincial hospital of Laghman. From 1995 to 1998, AMI ran ten Mother and Child Health (MCH) clinics in Kabul. Then, in 1997 AMI rehabilitated the Central Reference Laboratory in Kabul and still supports it through supply, training and supervision activities. In April 1998 a medical team went to the Upper Panjshir Valley and opened three Dispensaries.

Since 1996, AMI run a multi-disciplinary health program funded by the European Union and implemented in partnership with the British NGO “Sandy Gall Appeal for Afghanistan”, with AMI acting as a primary agency in the partnership. AMI supported different health facilities in three provinces (Kunar, Logar, and Laghman) in the Eastern Region of Afghanistan. From 2001 to 2003, the name of the program was: “Support to the Health Care system in three provinces, Salamati, a distance-learning magazine for Afghan health workers and The Rehabilitation and Prevention Program for Disabled Afghans in the Eastern Region of Afghanistan”. The general objectives of that program were to improve the quality of services and to improve access to health care for the most vulnerable groups in the target areas of the project, especially women. To reach these objectives, AMI was providing financial, technical and logistical support to implement the following activities in three provincial hospitals and six clinics as well as in the surrounding communities: i) to train the medical and administrative staff; ii) to supply the facilities with necessary medication and equipment to treat the patients; iii) to maintain the buildings in proper conditions and add new constructions where necessary; iv) to train community health workers and organize information meetings in the communities; v) to edit, publish and distribute a quarterly distance-learning magazine.

Evaluation Capacity Building Framework and Practices

Medical and Administrative Capacity Building Activities

As we can see, most of the past and current programs run and supported by AMI have a capacity building component, mostly on the medical and administrative side, like many other organisations in international health development[2]. The training of 115 graduate students during the Mujjahidine times is an earlier one, but in the past years some Afghan employees had the opportunity to reinforce their capacities thanks to three strategies: on-the-job training, formal workshops and courses at the headquarters and formal training abroad. The Afghan responsible for the biology programme spent two months in different hospitals in France in 2000 and he started in the end of 2004 a six-month training program at a French university. The Afghan financial director worked in dyad during three years with some expatriates and followed distance courses in accounting and finances. He was in Paris for a few weeks in 2004 to pass the national (French) accounting exam. The «Salamati» magazine in one of the famous medical capacity building activities done by AMI in Afghanistan. “Salamati” means «health» in Persian. This journal was created in 1994 as a medium to foster continuous education amongst midlevel Health Care Workers in Afghanistan. The Journal is published quarterly with 6,000 copies. It is distributed all over the country, through the outlets of different medical NGO’s and United Nations agencies.

ECB Framework

During the last three years AMI commissioned one program evaluation a year in Afghanistan and, even if it was not explicitly stated, there were important ECB components established in this exercise. This is what we are going to describe in the following pages. We wish to demonstrate that ECB practices and evaluation practices are two faces of the same coin.

In one of the most recent publications on ECB, experts from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) said “One problem is that the evaluation profession as a whole still lacks a well-developed theory and associated indicators for understanding evaluation capacity at an organizational level, particularly its inherent change over time and “ongoingness.”. This is why, first, this paper does not pretend to provide extensive data on ECB outcomes, and second, we will use a broad framework to make the way in which the ECB activities were held in Afghanistan understandable. Using an adaptation of mainstreaming evaluation and key elements of building evaluation capacity according to Duignan[20], we will present in this paper some activities that we implemented during the past three years, in term of i) evaluation model, ii) evaluation skills, and iii) advocacy/dissemination. Even if for some authors[24] mainstreaming and ECB are different[7], the divergence between these two evaluation streams does not appear so big in term of their main components. Although ECB literature is limited[7], these three elements which were chosen from a mainstreaming author to depict the Afghanistan process are usually described as part of the ECB practice. According to Bozzo[21], two of the challenges for ECB in the voluntary/nonprofit sector are evaluation skills and finding the appropriate approaches. The recent conceptual framework and the accompanied extensive review proposed by Cousins et al.[10] regarding the integration of evaluative inquiry into the organizational culture present three key variables of interest in the evaluation dimension: evaluative inquiry, evaluation capacity and evaluation consequences. The first variable corresponds to our evaluation model and approach element, the second to the skills component and the third to the advocacy/dissemination activities. In this paper, the spirit of the use of this last component, according the ECB definition retained[4,7], is that we believe that the aim of ECB practices is not only directed to “the ability to conduct an effective evaluation”, as Milstein and Cotton[8] or Bozzo[21] said, but also in order to increase the utilization of quality evaluation results by NGOs. This is why we consider that advocacy and dissemination activities could contribute, as a component of ECB, to the utilization of conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations of evaluation.

Appropriate Evaluation Model

Between 2001 and 2003, three evaluations in Afghanistan were conducted by the first author of this paper. The second author is responsible for the programme at

[24] Note that if the 2000 Annual American Evaluation Association National Conference was on “Capacity Building”, the 2001 topic was “mainstreaming evaluation”.

the NGO headquarters and he supervises, at distance and a few times per year in the field, the programme in Afghanistan.

We have argued elsewhere[22] that in an international situation of humanitarian aid where the context of the evaluation is an essential element, but impossible to manage, it is best to use a participative approach and to minimize the distance between the evaluator and the participants. This evaluation model could significantly increase the probability of appropriation of the evaluation results and the application/adaptation of the recommendations. Thus, NGOs wishing to organize an evaluation in such a context may find it very useful to collaborate with expert-facilitators (as evaluators) who use the participative approach, and who at the time same know well the specific situation and the organization that implements the program. The expertise in evaluation is not its own self sufficient. For all these reasons, we believe that this specific approach is, in this particular context, one of the most appropriate evaluation models to improve and build the evaluation capacity of NGOs. We also argue that this does not only hold true for development projects, as we have known for a long time[23], but also, as is the case in this paper, it holds true for humanitarian projects run by NGOs in complex settings.

Having said this, we must add that the extent of participation was not the same during the three above mentioned evaluations. Implicitly, we decided to use an evaluation model which employed approaches more and more near the ideal-type of the participative model (practical type and not empowerment type[24]). The goal was to gradually reinforce competences and knowledge of the NGO stakeholders in terms of evaluation and institutionalization of those activities. Although in the context of international development NGOs have been first to mainly apply this type of pluralist approach[22,23], AMI was not truly accustomed to such a process in

Afghanistan. The context of permanent war during more than 20 years, obliged the NGO to work in substitution of the State and without much of participation of the communities in decision making, is one of the explanations to the lack of use of such an approach. It should be noted that the implementation of the participative approach for the first time in 2001 during the first evaluation proceeded in parallel with the will of the NGO to give a wider role to the local populations in the management of health centres. It is as of this time that the first attempts to establish Health Management Communities were tried. Also, the gradual approach with regards to participation is justified by the gradual evolution of the context passing from a situation of war with the presence of Tabebans (2001) to a situation of post-conflict and rebuilding of the State (2003).

Before we show and analyse the depth of the participation, let us summarise in few words the purposes of those three evaluations (see Table 1).

Table 1. ***The Three Evaluations from 2001 to 2003***

Evaluation Component	2001	2002	2003
Context	War, American Invasion	Sporadic conflict, interim government, donors come-back	National health policy, performance-based contract approaches
Evaluation Team	One External Evaluator, two internal data collection supervisor, four internal data collectors	One external evaluator, two internal workshop facilitators, three internal indicators team members	One external evaluator and a team of six internal evaluators
Type	Effectiveness and efficiency	Criterion-focused	Process evaluation
Objectives	Assessment of health care financing mechanisms	Determination of performance indicators for the programs	Analysis of program activities and strategies implemented and development of “lessons learned”
Tools	Household survey, bed census, interviews	Three Regional Workshops with stakeholders, NGO Health Information System, WHO indicators	Evaluation workshop, questionnaires, focus group, interview, documentation, action plan workshop
Data	Mostly quantitative	Mostly qualitative	Mostly qualitative
Duration in the field	One month	Three weeks	Three weeks
Potential Utilization	Change in the user fees schemes	Implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system	Improvement in future programs

In another article where we analyze in depth the 2001 evaluation participative process[22] we proposed, following and adapting Patton[25], to define participative evaluation according to nine criteria gathered in three categories. We will distinguish three categories of participants whose hierarchy is instituted according to their capacity to intervene in the use of the evaluation results since we are using an utilization-focused evaluation approache[25]. Table 2 illustrates the depth of the participation in the three processes and how, gradually, we use the appropriate evaluation model according to the context and the NGO wishes. We will, in the next section, explain in more detail how this progressive practice allowed us to build the evaluation skills of the local staff in order to improve their participation in the process.

The detailed analysis of the elements in Table 2 is beyond the scope of this paper. However, we think that it is useful to give some empirical elements. For that purpose, we are using this table to show how much the degree participation was gradual important from 2001 to 2003. The top of the use of this approach was the evaluation of 2003 which, adapting a method proposed by Aubel[26], allowed the utilization of a model close to the ideal-type of the practical participative evaluation model. The details of this last evaluation are presented elsewhere[27]. We just want to add that to overcome the problem of integration of lessons learned into the program and appropriation of recommendations, it was proposed that the evaluation exercise include a final one-day workshop in which a draft action plan regarding the implementation of recommendations was developed based on the evaluation findings and lessons learned. Then, it was decided to establish an evaluation steering committee in order to organize a participative process to finalize the document of action plan by topic and implement it.

One of the arguments in favour of the utilization of the appropriate evaluation model in order to improve the capacity building activities is that a wrong model will, not only be unable to answer the evaluation question asked by the NGO, but also it would decrease the understanding and the trust of stakeholders regarding the evaluation practice. In others words, as said Bozzo[21], “the efforts undertaken will be sustainable over the long term”. Table 2 is of special interest with regard to this point and it demonstrates that the participative approach, in its ideal-type sense, is maybe not the most appropriate model for an effective evaluation. In fact, if the depth in participation gradually increased it was also due to a pragmatic objective: to increase the appropriation of the evaluation model. In other words we can say that if in 2003 AMI wanted an efficiency evaluation, it could be sure that the depth of participation was not as it was for the process evaluation. This observation is not new for evaluation theorists but with this empirical data we confirm it and show that this was certainly one of the elements of the capacity building process.

Table 2. ***Degree of Participation of Three Categories of Participants According to the Nine Minimal Criteria of a Participative Evaluation***

	On the field: head of mission and medical coordinator **In the headquarters: persons in charge for program and medical**	**Local department responsible, expatriates in the field and directors and staff of clinics/hospitals**	**Population and patients**
Content			
The evaluation process involves participants in learning evaluation logic and skills	+/- + +	+ ++ ++	- +/- -
Participants focus the evaluation process and outcomes they consider important and to which they are committed	++ ++ ++	+/- +/- ++	+/- +/- ++
All aspects of the evaluation, including data, are understandable and meaningful to participants	++ ++ ++	+ ++ ++	- + +
Process			
Participants in the process own the evaluation. They make the major focus and design decisions, they draw and apply conclusion	+ + ++	++ +/- ++	+/- +/- +/-
Participants work together as a group and the evaluation facilitator supports group cohesion and collective inquiry	- ++ -	+/- ++ ++	- + +/-
The evaluator is a facilitator, collaborator, and learning resource; participants are decision makers and evaluators	+ ++ +	++ ++ ++	+/- +/- +/-
Status differences between the evaluation facilitator and participants are minimized	++ ++ ++	++ ++ ++	- +/- +/-
Finalities			
Internal, self-accountability is highly valued	++ + +	+ + ++	- +/- -
The evaluator facilitator recognizes and values participants' perspectives and expertise	++ ++ +	+/- ++ ++	+ + ++

Note. Degree of participation from 2001 (first line) to 2003 (third line) + + = > very intense, + = > intense, +/- = > average; - = > absent.

Developing Evaluation Skills

Since 2001 and throughout the three evaluations, we used every favourable moment to the develop program evaluation skills of the stakeholders engaged in the evaluated projects. Two particular strategies were retained: on-the-job training and workshop training.

On-the-Job Training During the Evaluation Process

Thanks to the fact that the Afghan medical coordinator of the NGO remained in his position during the three years, his presence contributed largely to the NGO capacity building in evaluation. Admittedly, these evaluation exercises were not the only capacity building opportunities, and his work throughout the year with expatriates was as much of an occasion to improve his general knowledge and skills in public health and project management. In the same vein, the three evaluations were particular opportunities for him to learn and use concepts in program evaluation. We use the recommended strategy for adult learners: "learning by doing"[2]. The first evaluation was less participative than the others and more technical, it was also more research oriented. This enabled us to evoke subjects such as the construction of a questionnaire, the constitution of a sample, statistical tests, and concepts like ethics or external validity. This person had also the responsibility for the administration of the questionnaires in villages aided by a team of investigators. This enabled him to become aware of the difficulties on the ground and to assume responsibilities and decisions which could impact on the validity of the evaluation. Since all investigators did not speak English (and we know that ECB is language-dependent[28]), he had to transmit a certain amount of knowledge to his colleagues, which certainly contributed to reinforcing it. As an outcome of the ECB process, the medical coordinator was able at the end of 2001 to design and administer a quick survey when a huge number of displaced people reached the Laghman Province during the Taleban departure after the US-Troops attack. He could also contribute largely in the design and the implementation of a drug use survey in 2003 based on the WHO guidelines.

This being said, we should mention that the most significant moment in term of capacity building for him and one other colleague who is no longer with the NGO, was the second evaluation in 2002. The method employed for this evaluation consisted of drawing up a list of indicators through the carrying out of three regional workshops with all project stakeholders. The medical coordinator acted as a translator for the foreign consultant, but the translation of certain concepts required a real understanding of the training contents. How to explain, for example, the difference between output and outcome, or between objectivity and subjectivity. We thus worked together to find useful examples. It was necessary to adapt examples and exercises to the Afghan public, all the more so since the group members had very diverse backgrounds (which we take pride in), with some illiterate members. Having doctors and farmers (or teacher, community health workers) work on the same project is not customary, in Afghanistan or anywhere else! It was therefore necessary to adapt training tools both before and during the workshops in order to take into account the various reactions of the participants to the examples. For instance, it was very useful to illustrate the concepts of the logical model through concrete examples inspired by everyday life, such as the example of seeds (inputs) to obtain apple trees (outputs) then apples (outcomes) used to feed children and reduce malnutrition (impact). To illustrate the concepts of objectivity and subjectivity, we used the example of a judge who had to hear a case of excessive use of a field by a neighbour who happened to be his brother. Additionally, numerous role-playing sessions, simulation games and practical exercises[29] were used to alternate with useful but austere theoretical and conceptual sessions.

This medical coordinator was also part of the third evaluation (2003), but most of his evaluation (and facilitation) skills were developed through collective action, as well as for a large part of, the second evaluation (2002).

Workshops Training During the Evaluation Process

In 2002, three training/action workshops were carried out over three days in Mazar-e-sharif, Gulbahar and Kabul (three regions where AMI is involved) in the presence of 77 people from local communities, the Ministry of Health and AMI (medical and non-medical staff). The aim of those workshops was to make participants aware of the basic concepts of program evaluation and to teach them a logical model to determine what to expect from projects in their local context[30]. The AMI logical performance model served as a tool for sharing a common vision of projects by identifying the chain of results from input to impact. This method, which aims to create useful and usable indicators of performance through training sessions, appeared somewhat laborious at the time. However, it emphasized the importance of using a participative method. It would have been easier and faster to implement WHO indicators for AMI programs in Afghanistan, but it would have been unnatural and nobody would have actually used this method of performance evaluation. These workshops led to the creation of a list of indicators related to the concerns of local actors. To that list, we added generic indicators usually used on this type of programs and indicators used by AMI. Through the two AMI local experts, a first selection of significant and useful indicators was carried out using criteria of quality and relevance. This work constitutes an answer to the need of tools to facilitate continuous feedback and periodic production of reporting results.

In terms of the outcome of the ECB process and according to the shortened cascade approach in training[2], the medical coordinator was able, a few weeks after those three workshops to organize, on his own, the same workshop in another province (Laghman) with 24 participants. He was also in a better position, knowing the logic model approach, to interact with expatriates and contribute to the formulation of new AMI projects and proposals sent to donors. The annual obligatory presentation of NGO program results in the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) during the National Technical Coordination Committee in front of many stakeholders it was easier to explain the logic of the programmes, performance indicators and the result-based management activities. There were also outcomes for provincial MoPH staff, notably regarding their skills in writing proposals and program planning according to the new health policy (Basic Package of Health Services).

In 2003, the participatory evaluation process started with an evaluation planning workshop held in Kabul. We established an evaluation team composed of six people which was balanced in terms of gender, location and professional status. The purpose of the first workshop was to build consensus around the aim of the evaluation; to refine the scope of work and clarify roles and responsibilities of the evaluation team and facilitator; to review the schedule, logistical arrangements, and agenda; and to train participants in basic data collection and analysis. Assisted by the facilitator, participants identified the evaluation questions they wanted answered. Participants then selected appropriate methods and developed data-gathering instruments and analysis plans needed to answer the questions. Some of the participants already had some knowledge of evaluation and for them this workshop represented a form of revision. In fact four of them and the medical coordinator were participants in the 2002 workshop in one of the three regions where AMI is involved. During this workshop we assessed whether or not the AMI program was ready for evaluation (evaluability assessment[31]). During the assessment, calls for early evaluation were made, in collaboration with people working on the programs, in order to ascertain whether their objectives are adequately defined and their results verifiable. To do this assessment evaluators used the Logical Framework (LF) Approach[32]. The evaluation team first reviewed the current LF of the AMI program. For most of the team, it was the first time that they saw the LF with its activities and objectives. After this, it was necessary for the evaluation team to study the LF of the next program financed by the European Union. Indeed, since we had decided to carry out an evaluation of the implementation process of the program, it was necessary to select the relevant fields of activity to be evaluated. In order to use the lessons learnt to improve the program developed in the following months, it was necessary to choose some common activities. Each evaluation group developed a number of evaluation questions for each topic. A maximum of three questions could be answered during the evaluation but each team could start by choosing more than three. Then, the consultant selected the three most important (or feasible) questions and the evaluation team agreed on the choice. Here the role of the consultant, as in other phases of the evaluation process, was both to structure the task for the group and to actively contribute to the development of evaluation questions based on insights from the fieldwork and on their own experience with other programs.

We used different sources of data collected through quantitative as well as qualitative methods. The following methods were used: interview (22), focus group (16), observation (6), document analysis (2), and questionnaire (3). In addition to the people observed, 205 people (51% of women) had the opportunity to express their views on the implementation of the AMI program in Afghanistan. Once the data was gathered, a participatory approach to analyse and interpret it helped participants to build a common body of knowledge. The consultant allowed the evaluation group to carry out their own analysis but was always present to ensure that the quality of the analysis was of an adequate level. The daily qualitative data analysis process was structured around the interview questions asked of each category of interviewees. A simplified approach to content analysis[26] was used by each group.

So, we can say that this whole evaluation process done by an evaluation team from the organization was a perfect approach to develop their evaluation skills in all the evaluation areas, from the evaluability assessment to the data analysis and action plan formulation phase. It is also clear that skills to participate in the whole process were increased, for some, partly due to the capacity building process done over the past two years. Some of them were able in 2004 to use some evaluation techniques (focus group and bed census) during an assessment of the NGO cost-recovery schemes.

Follow-Up of the Baseline Survey in 2004

In addition to those individual and collective training sessions during the last three evaluations, we had another opportunity to develop the evaluation skills of the NGO staff in 2004. During this year, the European Union grant given to AMI covered four clusters of districts spread out among three provinces of Afghanistan. In accordance with the donor, the realization of a baseline survey on the health status of the population in the targeted clusters need to be done at the beginning and at the end of the project by the cluster supervision teams. AMI recruited an expatriate specifically for this task. She was, not surprisingly, one of the six members of the 2003 participatory evaluation team. This was a good opportunity for her to use some of the knowledge that she had acquired during the previous year. In addition even though she was not part of the 2001 survey using household questionnaires, she was in the hospital, as a physician and not as an evaluator, who serve as an office during the evaluation. For this 2004 baseline survey, a questionnaire was designed and conducted in at least 6 randomly selected villages in each of the districts of the targeted cluster. At the beginning of the project the results of the baseline survey on the health status of the population in the targeted clusters were to be published. These survey results and overall approach need to be readily used to measure the progress at the end of the project, compare the performance of supervisory areas, identify good performers and weak performers and target their resources more effectively.

The expatriate in charge of the survey, asked us to follow the whole process, from a distance in a voluntary and informal capacity. She also solicited our advice and guidance during the evaluation process. As a result many methodological discussions were carried out through e-mail and phone. She decided to adapt the questionnaire that we used in the 2001 evaluation. For some part of the baseline survey, she asked us for some scientific literature (e.g. how to evaluate the quality of health care services) or statistical advice. We also reviewed part of the final report. This 2004 windows was not only an opportunity to develop the staff skills in program evaluation but also to start the building of an infrastructure for data collection, analysis, and presentation that would support program evaluation, in addition to the routine health information system (HIS) which focuses more on input and output than outcome indicators. This infrastructure is now in place and the Afghan collaborators are still in the NGO after the expatriate left. It should be noted that, even though, the expatriate was involved in the design, coordination and analysis of the survey, she was in the field only in one of the four provinces. Therefore in this three other settings, the process was in the hand of the local staff. The medical coordinator delivered 80% of the training for the surveyors in three provinces and 100% in the other. The ECB of the last three years was surely responsible for this outcome.

Advocacy and Dissemination

The third element which helps us to meet the ECB objective for this NGO consists of myriad activities of advocacy in favour of the program evaluation practice and dissemination of results of various evaluations. As we said earlier, the final aim of those advocacy/dissemination activities are to increase the probability of results utilization per se, following the Patton[25] approach.

In terms of advocacy, and in addition to our continual personal interaction in favour of evaluation culture, we produced different papers in order to increase the awareness of the NGO staff regarding different topics in relation to evaluation. These papers, in addition of the evaluation reports, targeted NGO staff directly and more generally the humanitarian community. All these papers carry out a discussion on evaluation in a language that is understood. Some of these papers were published in peer reviewed journals and others in professional reviews or books. The following topics were discussed:

Table 3. ***Publications in French (F) and English (E) Following the Three Evaluation***

Evaluation in	2001	2002	2003
Publication on the results	• Book chapter on Canadian humanitarian aid (F) • Poster and proceeding of an international health care financing conference in France (F)		
Publication on the process or on the general topic	• Article in *Humanitarian Affairs Review* on health financing in a complex emergency context (F, E) • Article in the *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* on usefulness of a participatory evaluation model in an emergency context (F) • Article in *The Journal of Afghanistan Studies* on the results and on the usefulness of a participatory process to explain changes implemented ,results show 2 years after the evaluation (E)	• Book chapter in the *Encyclopedia of Evaluation* on participatory determination of performance indicators and utilization-focused evaluation model (E) • Article in the internal newsletter (*Tam-Tami*) for AMI staff on ethics (F)	• Article in *Développement et Santé*, on basic concepts in evaluation and the usefulness of a participatory evaluation model (F) • Article in *Revue Humanitaire* on usefulness of a participatory evaluation model and lesson learned workshop (F) • Article in the AMI newsletter (*La Chronique*) for donors : advocacy for humanitarian program evaluation (F) • Book chapter in the 25th anniversary book on AMI on the basic concepts in evaluation and the usefulness of a participatory evaluation model (F)

We clearly know that following the different stages of knowledge utilization (from transmission to application), dissemination of results does not mean their utilization. But, we can also say that these dissemination activities through all these papers published for various members of the public and in different forms could contribute to the installation of an evaluation culture in the organization. Moreover, some articles were specifically written, in their languages, to train the readers and explain to them the logic of evaluation and the importance of practicing it (e.g., [33]). We tried to translate one of these articles in the local language and publish it in the Salamati magazine published by this NGO. But unfortunately, the expatriate in charge on this publication in Afghanistan stated that health workers (the readership) are not prepared to read this kind of material. We are not sure this holds to be true and this story illustrates that ECB "is not "power neutral""[6] and how an explicit capacity building policy needs to be established in the organization in order to avoid this kind of personal decision which could counter a whole (implicit) process. Fortunately, it seems that the same publication project for medical staff in East-Asia (Saytaman) will translate and use this introductory paper on programme evaluation.

In addition to these publications, during the past four years we conducted various oral presentations to present some evaluation results and to raise the awareness of the NGO staff on the evaluation practice. In Afghanistan, for example, we presented the 2001 evaluation results on health financing for the whole NGO community in Kabul. The presentation was organized in the NGO coordination body office (ACBAR) and around 30 persons represented various NGOs and the Ministry of Public Health. The Afghan medical coordinator took part in it and contributed to the discussions with the participants. Part of the results were used in some preliminary meeting for the development of the National Health Policy, as this was the first survey done regarding this topic in 10 years in Afghanistan. During the same year, the headquarters asked us to train, during one day, all country projects Head of Mission, about the topic on health care financing. This day was organized in June 2001 in Paris with around 25 people from the field and from the headquarters. In 2002, before starting the criterion-focused evaluation, we spent one day at the NGO headquarters in Paris and organized an oral presentation of the proposal process. This was a window of opportunity to receive feedback and critiques on the proposal and a perfect moment to do some advocacy on evaluation among the staff. In 2003, when the evaluation team presented the results and the recommendations, we started the workshop with a presentation of basic concepts and practices of program evaluation to ensure that the participants had basic notions of evaluation. The same presentation was done in Paris during the monthly board meeting of the NGO where headquarters staff were also present. Most of the people were impressed by the usefulness of the evaluation participatory process and some of them learned some concepts of evaluation.

Last but not least, we took the opportunity of a Canadian bursary program to invite the Afghan medical coordinator, who was present in all evaluations since 2001, to the 2nd International Conference on Local and Regional Health Programmes held in Quebec (Canada) in October 2004. He presented a paper that we co-authored. The topic of this article, then published in the Journal of Afghanistan Studies[34], was health financing and participatory evaluation. In the paper we tried to demonstrate the relevance of a participative approach in program evaluation and the importance of contextual (local) evidence to make program staff aware of user fees schemes in a complex setting. This conference was an opportunity to share our collaborative experiences on health financing evaluation with colleagues from other countries. In addition, it was an important occasion, even if aid donors are still skinflint, to show that Afghanistan is back in the international public health scientific community, as more than forty countries were present in this conference.

The *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* presented this story in its Gallery section in May 2005 (vol. 59). During this meeting, the medical coordinator improved his skills in term of evaluation results dissemination. The presence of this medical doctor in Canada, the first time for him in the "developed" world, was also an empowerment activity and a kind of acknowledgment of his involvement with the NGO for many years, taking into account the turnover problem that NGOs face in the post-conflict settings.

Conclusion

The descriptive elements presented previously clearly show that the implicit step of capacity building was gradual and effective as demonstrated by some of the partial outcomes. Contrary to our definition of ECB which claims that the process need to be intentional, the case shows that a non-intentional process (from the organization point of view) could also have some impact in term of capacity building. The "evaluation capacity building practitioner considers how each study is connected to the development of the organization and to meeting the organization's goals and mission"4. For this reason and to counter the non-intentional process, we (as individual and not as an organization) decided to use all windows of opportunity, or "teachable moments"[3], to act in favour of the ECB for the NGO and its staff. One of the recommendations by Gibbs et al[35] after their study on 61 NGOs in the USA in terms of ECB was to "take advantage of every available opportunity to use existing evaluation data as a resource for program improvement". We have tried to implement this recommendation, and more. This strategy was based on three particular components which, in a concomitant way, allowed us to reach this goal, as shown in Figure 1.

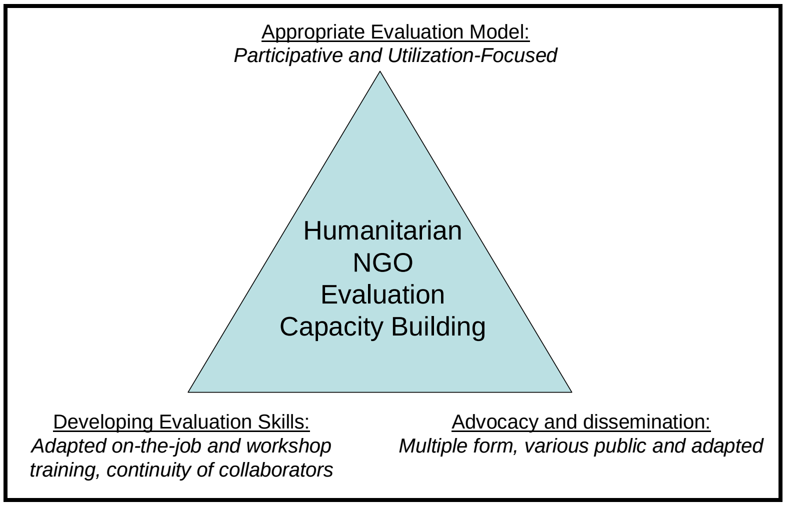
Appropriate Evaluation Model:
Participative and Utilization-Focused
Humanitarian NGO Evaluation Capacity Building
Developing Evaluation Skills:
Adapted on-the-job and workshop training, continuity of collaborators
Advocacy and dissemination:
Multiple form, various public and adapted

Figure 1. ***Evaluation Capacity Building Components***

The implementation and the quality of the baseline survey planned in 2006 will be a good test for these capacity building activities. For the moment, this paper has highlighted some the ECB outcomes, mostly at the individual level for the Afghanistan staff that we previously mentioned: understanding of evaluation concepts and practices, use of evaluation techniques (logic model, data collection and analysis), ability to facilitate training and disseminate results, etc. But at the organization level, two learning organisation indicators lead us to believe that our approach caused that the actors of this NGO to become more attentive to the importance and the necessity of quality program evaluation. First was a request by the president of the AMI board to produce a chapter devoted to the topic of program evaluation in a book to celebrate its 25 year anniversary intended for general public[19]. This testifies the degree of importance granted today to this practice. The second indicator relates to the realization of an evaluation in Thailand another country where this NGO intervenes. The NGO granted a significant amount of money for this evaluation. Then, contrary to the past practice, detailed care was given to the selection procedure of consultants. A detailed term of reference was written and one of the persons in charge (who is based in France but was, by chance, in Afghanistan during the evaluation lesson-learnt workshop in 2003) asked us for some advice on this matter. Moreover, whereas usually one is satisfied with only the resume of the consultant, it was required that the consultant send some pages of an evaluation plan. Also, the practice that we implicitly employed was intentionally institutionalized, which is a good indicator for continuation and organization learning.

Now, it remains for the NGO to pass from a process of non-intentional ECB program level (Afghanistan) to a process at agency level as a whole. This does not mean that there nothing left to be done at the program level in Afghanistan to improve the current evaluation capacity ("building capacity for evaluation never ends", Milstein et al[3]), as there is much that needs to be implemented at the organization level. This Afghanistan case study allows us to draw some lessons in terms of the three ECB components processes. The most significant and useful processes for this purpose can be adapting from some recommendations from the literature[4,21,35,36]. AMI and other NGOs need to consider:

- Designating organizational (independent) evaluation leader at the headquarters and in the field
- Locating those leaders in the organization hierarchy
- Formulating and adopting an evaluation policy (stated for example the preferred evaluation model, the choice for internal or external evaluation, the way for results dissemination and capacity building, etc)
- Producing internal material
- Developing an evaluation consultants network
- Coordinating evaluation activities around projects countries

- Training expatriate and national staff
- Sustaining leadership

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A special thanks to all AMI staff in Paris and Afghanistan, Lara Arjan for her help in the English translation and Ian Christoplos for comments about an earlier version of this paper. This case-study report was commissioned by ODI (UK) for the ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action in 2004 (see http://www.alnap.org).

Ideas to Consider

Ethnography and Evaluation: Their Relationship and Three Anthropological Models of Evaluation

Brandon W. Youker

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between ethnographic research methods and evaluation theory and methodology. It is divided into two main sections: (a) ethnography in evaluation and (b) anthropological models of evaluation. Three levels of the leading anthropological models of evaluation are summarized, which include responsive evaluation, goal-free evaluation, and constructivist evaluation. In conclusion, (a) there is no consensual definition of ethnography; (b) in many circumstances, ethnographic evaluation models may be beneficial; and (c) ethnography can be used in evaluation but requires a high level of analysis to transform ethnographic data into useful information for eliciting an evaluative conclusion.

**The author would like to thank Daniela C. Schröter, Chris L. S. Coryn, and Elizabeth K. Caldwell for editing this paper and for their extremely useful comments and suggestions.*

Introduction

Ethnography[25], an applied qualitative social science research method, is often employed in program evaluation. Ethnography, alone and according to its pure anthropological definition, is not a research method capable of being the sole method implemented in an evaluation. Ethnography may prove advantageous to evaluators as an additional method to be employed or considered. However, sound evaluation typically requires multiple data collection methods and a higher level of analysis than ethnography alone can provide. Evaluation synthesizes the narrative and develops an evaluative conclusion. There are various instances when the implementation of an evaluation model that relies heavily on qualitative methods based in the tradition of anthropological research is beneficial. As an evaluator, at minimum, familiarity with these models should be in one's repertoire.

The paper is divided into two main sections: (1) Ethnography and Evaluation and (2) Anthropological Models of Evaluation. The first section presents a summary definition of ethnography, its theories, concepts, and benefits; and the difference between ethnography and anthropology. The author then provides a brief definition of evaluation and discusses the relationship between ethnography and evaluation. There are three anthropological models of evaluation in which the author summarizes, discusses the strengths and limitations, and reflects on their

[25] AUTHOR'S NOTE: The author of this paper uses the terms “ethnography,” “ethnographic techniques,” and often “qualitative research methods” interchangeably. Additionally, the term “program” is used generically, to refer to the *evaluand**. Ethnography in the context of this paper is primarily in regards to program and policy evaluations. Ethnography may also be used in product, personnel, and performance evaluations.—* *“Evaluand:* That which is being evaluated (e.g., program, policy, project, product, service, organization)” (Davidson, 2005, p. 240).

relationship with ethnography. The paper concludes with a synopsis of the author's main impressions and key points.

Ethnography and Evaluation

Ethnography[26] is an applied research method most often associated with anthropology, where it was developed to study cultural interpretation. Ethnography, also called field research, is the process of describing a culture or way of life from a folk peoples' perspective. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz described the ethnographic method as "thick description." It provides detailed notes and descriptions of everything that occurs without attempting to summarize, generalize, or hypothesize. In fact, with traditional ethnography, as a rule of thumb, for every half hour of observation a researcher writes for two hours. The researcher focuses on factual description to allow for multiple interpretations to later infer cultural meaning. To obtain this description of a population's perception, the principle of 'naturalism'[27] is assumed. Thus, trust and rapport are essential between the researcher and the population being studied.

Ethnographers, if following the constructivist[28] philosophy, believe that pure

[26] Alternative definitions: Ethnography is "a descriptive study of an intact cultural or social group or an individual or individuals within the group based primarily on participant observation and open-ended interviews. Ethnography is based on learning from people as opposed to studying people" (Beebe, n.d.). Ethnographic research "involves the study of groups and people as they go about their everyday lives" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). "Ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 11).

[27] Naturalism: Leave natural phenomenon alone.

[28] Constructivist philosophy maintains that the researcher manufactures knowledge through her interaction in the field and that there is no objective truth to be uncovered (ontological

objectivity is impossible as: (A) ethnography is an interpretive endeavor by fallible human beings; (B) not all field sites are "foreign" for ethnographers in the same way; (C) ethnography is not replicable; and (D) ethnography is not based on a large number of cases. The epistemology of ethnography is typically a model based on a phenomenologically oriented paradigm, which focuses on multiple perspectives and multiple realities of a phenomenon. Phenomenological inquiry seeks to answer the question: "What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?" (Patton, 1990, p. 69). Constructivists take a heuristic[29] approach to answering this phenomenological question. According to Fetterman (1989), most ethnographers subscribe to ideational theory, which suggests that change is the result of mental activity—thoughts or ideas—versus materialists who believe that "material conditions—ecological resources, money modes of production-are the prime movers" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 16). The most popular ideational theory is cognitive theory, which assumes we can infer peoples' thoughts from hearing what they tell us.

While many theories, concepts, and methods (e.g., in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct observation, written documents, triangulation) resulting in narrative description commonly recur in the literature, consensus on any one set of fundamental principles of ethnography cannot be found (Genzuk, 2001; Patton, 1990; Payne, 1994). For example, ethnographic theories, concepts, and data collection techniques are also used in non-ethnographic qualitative research and

relativism) (Maxwell, 1998 in Bickman & Rog, 1998).

[29] Heuristics is a form of phenomenological inquiry focusing on the personal experiences and insights of the researcher—it considers researcher's experience in addition to other observers that experience the phenomenon.

distinctions between ethnography and other qualitative theories, concepts, principles, and methods is not clearly evident. Instead, there are copious combinations of varying concepts considered fundamental to ethnography from researchers and anthropologists alike.

The key in understanding the differences between ethnography and other qualitative social science research methods is to understand the multiple combinations of techniques, concepts, and data collection methodologies encompassed under the term “ethnography.” As with all research methodologies, each philosophical and theoretical decision is located on a spectrum or continuum. Thus, the definition of ethnography and what it entails is idiosyncratic to the ethnographer or researcher depending on her degree of commitment to a hodgepodge of “fundamental” concepts. Past and current literature presents definitions and concepts of ethnography differing by technique, values emphasized, time allotted, data analysis procedures, and commitment to the purist practice of anthropological ethnography. Therefore, ethnographic techniques are qualitative in nature but distinct. Below are a few of the reoccurring concepts specific to ethnography (Fetterman in Bickman and Rog, 1998; Genzuk , 2001; Hall, n.d.):

- ✓ The focus is on culture and cultural interpretation.
- ✓ There is an emphasis on an emic[30] perspective.
- ✓ The holistic perspective is often of greater depth than other qualitative research methods.
- ✓ Sampling measures are conducted over a longer period of time.

[30] Emic perspective is that of the insider and includes the acceptance of multiple realities.

- ✓ The researcher herself is the primary tool for data collection.

In contrast to ethnographic methodology, *evaluation* methodology commonly comprises the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Commonly defined as the systematic determination of something’s merit, worth, or significance (Davidson, 2005; Sanders, 1994; Scriven, 1991). Scriven (1991) claims that evaluation is not only a methodology, but a distinct multi- and transdisciplinary field of study not to be regarded as merely a as a branch of applied social science. As an independent discipline, evaluation may utilize applied social science research methodology, but it is distinct by its unique purpose and methodology (e.g., ranking, grading, and scoring). The determination of merit, worth, and significance of an evaluand requires evaluators to consider the relevant values and to make judgments based on those values. Autonomous subspheres of evaluation are program, policy, product, personnel, performance, and proposal evaluations as well as metaevaluation (i.e., the evaluation of evaluation) and intradisciplinary evaluation. Often but not always, evaluations are based in social science research methods including both qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures. Subcomponents of program evaluations, for example, may include the assessment of context, resources, processes, immediate outcomes (outputs), intermediate and long-term outcomes and impacts considering costs, comparisons to best and worst practices of other programs (Davidson, 2005; Scriven, 1991). Moreover, evaluation may be formative, summative, or ascriptive (Scriven, 2005).

Multiple factors may guide evaluators and researchers alike toward choosing quantitative or qualitative evaluation methodology. In the following, qualitative ethnographic evaluation models will be introduced.

Ethnographic Evaluation Models

Ethnographic evaluation methodologies have been discussed for over thirty-five years and came about as a response to the more traditional evaluation approaches which were overly committed to the scientific paradigm of inquiry. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), an extreme dependence on the methods of science demonstrated some negative results. For example, reliant on primarily quantitative measurement, evaluands were stripped of their context as if they were not entwined in a highly specific one, resulting in irrelevant or non-useful findings (cf. Seafield Research & Development Services). Moreover, scientific truth is non-negotiable, thus all alternative explanations must be in error.

Ethnographic evaluation methods, in contrast, utilize stakeholders' claims and concerns. For example, Guba and Lincoln (1989) insist upon ethnographic methods for determining what information is necessary in an evaluation and provide five reasons:

1. Stakeholders are placed at risk by an evaluation.
2. Evaluation exposes stakeholders to exploitation, disempowerment, and disenfranchisement.
3. Stakeholders represent an "untapped market" for the use of evaluations that are responsive to self-defined needs and interests.
4. Stakeholder input expands the scope and meaningfulness of the evaluation, in addition to contributing to the dialectic process that is necessary in conducting a sound evaluation.
5. All individuals and parties can be mutually educated toward more sophisticated personal constructions and they may gain enhanced

appreciation of the constructs of other individuals or parties.

Other strengths of implementing ethnographic methods in evaluation are exemplified in connecting quantitative data to observed actual outcomes; the flexibility of design; the ‘thick description’ of program impactees; the clarification of processes; the study of participation; and the identification of unintended positive and negative side effects. The weaknesses in utilizing ethnographic methods in evaluation consist of such problems as introducing complex threats to validity; increasing the time and cost demands compared to other methods; raising the potential for impactee reactivity to the evaluator; and limiting the ability to compare the data from different measurement instruments.

There are many considerations that will need resolution before deciding if an ethnographic method is an appropriate method for an evaluation. Considerations include the purpose of the evaluation; whether the evaluation is formative or summative; the amount of time allocated for the evaluation; the financial and other resources available; and the level of expertise and competence of the evaluation team. Prior to adopting a specific methodology or model, all the typical issues regarding methodology, conceptual context, validity, ethics, etc. must be discussed.

Relationship Between Ethnography and Evaluation

In evaluation, ethnography should be viewed on a spectrum. One end of the spectrum consists of the pure anthropologically-defined ethnography and on the opposite end are various ethnographic techniques of data collection and methodologies loosely defined, combined, and flexibly implemented. Many researchers and evaluators implement one or a few qualitative data collection methods and then claim their research to be ethnographic. However, most agree that ethnography is defined by the rigor of the data collection procedures.

Fetterman (1982) identified a study that called itself ethnographic although the researchers were on site for only five days. Deneberg (1969) and Fetterman (1982) claim that these researchers are fickle to scholastic fads and refer to them as "Zeitgeister-Shysters." Zeitgeister-Shysters become involved in research that is a hot topic or trendy and the result is superficial research. Such researchers contribute minimally to the field and often tarnish the reputation and credibility of ethnography. In describing the Zeitgeister-Shysters, Fetterman stated, "rather than conducting ethnographies, they are simply using ethnographic techniques" (Fetterman, 1982, p.2). Wolcott (1980) concluded that "much of what goes on today as educational ethnography is either out and out program evaluation, or, at best, lopsided and undisciplined documentation" (p.39). Fetterman warns that the adoption of random elements of ethnography without emphasis on the whole, results in "the loss of the built-in safeguards of reliability and validity in data collection and analysis" (Fetterman, 1982, p.2). Researchers often use anthropological tools (ethnography) without understanding the values and cosmology underlying the ethnographic techniques. Wolcott (1980) reminds the reader that the purpose of ethnography is cultural interpretation and this requires the researcher to examine the whole trait complex rather than a few single traits. Still many evaluators study single traits and call their evaluation 'ethnographic'.

The importance of ethnographic data sources in the evaluation of social programs and policies is rarely argued (Agar, 2000; Fetterman, 1982; Fetterman, 1984; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Hopson, 2002; Patton, 1997; Posavac & Carey, 1997; Scriven, 1991; Swartzman, 1983; Shadish, Cook, and Leviton, 1995; Stake, 1975; Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer, 2004; Wolcott, 1982; and Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 1997). Hopson (2002), for example, cites a report by Nastasi and Berg (1999) who urge evaluators to "capture views of program participants about their experience of a program, its acceptability, and whether or not they were influenced to modify behavior or thinking" (p. 45). This has always been a consideration for evaluators, as it pertains to, or affects the program's quality, significance, or merit. Experienced evaluators typically employ several qualitative data collection methods in an evaluation in hopes of understanding some of these cultural issues, albeit less in depth than with pure ethnography.

Focusing on context is crucial in all evaluations and the utilization of qualitative methods is fundamental to any good program or educational evaluation; however, the title 'ethnographic evaluator' may be problematic or misleading. Many readers may assume that the term "ethnographic evaluator" implies the use of ethnography in conducting an evaluation. This is false and arguably not possible. Ethnography is a social science research method that emphasizes cultural interpretation. The product of ethnography is a non-judgmental description of context and then a cultural interpretation of the program.

Evaluation is the systematic process of determining the merit, worth, significance or importance of the evaluand. To evaluate something, the relevant values are determined and used to place judgments regarding the overall quality of the program. Ethnography and other qualitative research methods are instrumental in collecting data for determining the most important values to use as criterion for success. Ethnography may uncover unanticipated costs, processes, and outcomes; however, other qualitative methods may reveal similar side-effects but take much less time. There is a point of saturation when a researcher gets the sense that it is unlikely that further study will uncover significant new information that will be important to include in the evaluation. Extended time in the field may not be necessary or feasible for many evaluations.

To summarize, ethnography is a research method and evaluation uses multiple research methods to collect information for determining the merit or worth of a program. As Fetterman (1984) points out, the distinction between ethnography and evaluation is regarding the level of analysis and objective. Evaluators take the ethnographic data to a higher level of analysis by extracting data which is relevant to some standard; comparing it with data from other methods and sources; and judging the program accordingly. Therefore, I conclude that "ethnographic evaluation" is a misnomer or false label for what some evaluators do. Moreover, evaluations claim to use ethnographic methods while in reality, they simply employ varying degrees of qualitative methods. Anthropologically, pure ethnography may serve useful when analyzed further by an evaluator to examine actual processes and outcomes. Anthropological evaluation techniques may be best when conducted independently of the more quantitative research methods, similar to Scriven's (1991) goal-free evaluation. Therefore, in an evaluation which uses multiple research methods, ethnography serves as a way of triangulating these methods. Furthermore, ethnographic data is useful in triangulating data sources adhering to the *principle of critical multiplism* (c.f. see Shadish, 1994). An examination of three evaluation models which are based in anthropology will further illustrate the relationship between ethnography and evaluation.

Anthropological Models of Evaluation

Payne (1994) categorizes 4 evaluation models, the fourth of which contains anthropological approaches (see Figure 1).

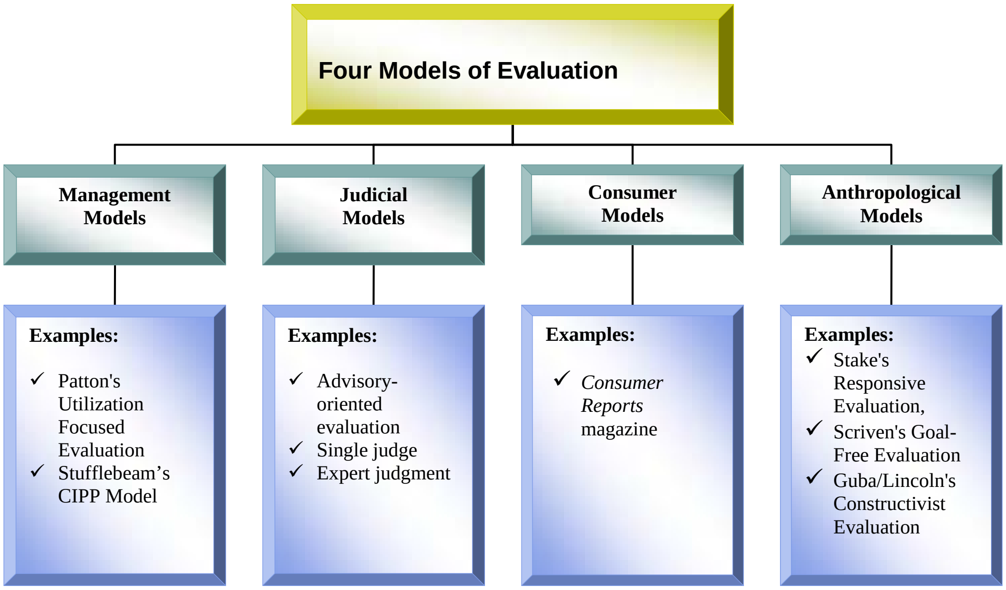
Four Models of Evaluation
Management Models
Judicial Models
Consumer Models
Anthropological Models
Examples:
✓ Patton's Utilization Focused Evaluation
✓ Stufflebeam's CIPP Model
Examples:
✓ Advisory-oriented evaluation
✓ Single judge
✓ Expert judgment
Examples:
✓ *Consumer Reports* magazine
Examples:
✓ Stake's Responsive Evaluation,
✓ Scriven's Goal-Free Evaluation
✓ Guba/Lincoln's Constructivist Evaluation

Figure 1. ***Models of Evaluation*** **(adapted from Payne, 1994)**

The anthropological models of evaluation—responsive evaluation, goal-free evaluation, and constructivist evaluation—have many similarities. They tend to be qualitative, exploratory, highly descriptive, and take an inductive approach to understanding the program under evaluation. Each model was created in the post-positivist value-pluralist perspective, focusing on the question: *whose values and methods should shape or have shaped the evaluation?*

The anthropological models protect against any of the evaluator's personal opinions from being used to determine the values and methods emphasized in the evaluation. However, Scriven separates goal-free evaluation from the other two anthropological models by contending that the stated goals of the client should also not be known or utilized by the evaluator. The three models re-examine the ontology[31] of evaluative interpretations. In both responsive evaluation and constructivist evaluation, the selection of relevant values and the determination of

[31] Ontology: The nature of the real.

the merit of outcome measures are decided by the program impactees and stakeholders. Evaluators are partners with the stakeholders in the creation of data and they orchestrate the consensus building process. By contrast, in goal-free evaluation, program success is decided by examining change relative to the identified needs through a comprehensive needs assessment. Lastly, all three models rely on an evaluator with significant commitment to and experience with ethnographic and qualitative methods.

The remainder of the paper will discuss each anthropological evaluation model and illustrate its relationship to ethnography and the qualitative research paradigm of evaluation.

Responsive Evaluation

Stake (1975) called his approach to evaluation responsive evaluation to stress flexibility and responsiveness to the concerns and issues of the program stakeholders. Responsive evaluation is less reliant on formal communication such as the statement of goals, objective tests, standards of program personnel, and research-type reports. Rather, it focuses on gathering the observations and reactions of the program stakeholders, which as Stake claims, is the way people naturally evaluate things. Stake believes this and other qualitative methods are not frequently employed in evaluation due to “subjectivity.” Responsive evaluation is poorly suited for evaluating formal contracts, and there lies potential to uncover negative side effects or raise embarrassing questions.

Stake suggests examining a program by organizing the evaluation into four components: environment, workspace, output, and support (see Figure 2).

Environment

- Quantity (investigate for quantity including the counting of frequencies, occurrences, products, performances, participants, resources, etc.).
- Diversity (diversity in artistic products, performances and participants).
- Excellence (refers to technique or quality of execution/performance; has a varying threshold of acceptability).
- Originality (separate from quantity and diversity; referring more to creativity and inventiveness; the ability to make someone "catch their breath"; best measured by degree on a variable range).
- Vitality (changeability of physical environment measured over time; encourages regular review of the physical conditions and aesthetics of environment).

Workspace

- Space and content - suitability and accessibility
- Quantity and quality of equipment and supplies

Output

- Measure outputs with careful consideration of the threshold of acceptability
- Incorporate experts in the field

Support

- Within the program and from the community, the school or organization as a whole
- Investigates how outputs are regarded and rewarded

Figure 2. *Four Components of Evaluation: Environment, Workspace, Output, and Support* (adapted from Stake, 1975)

Exemplifying educational evaluation, Stake states,

> [A]n educational evaluation is a *responsive evaluation* if it orients more directly to audience requirements for information; and if the different value-perspectives present are referred to in reporting the success and failure of the program.
>
> (Stake, 1975, p. 14)

It is not critical to be explicit about purpose, scope, or causation in determining worth, according to Stake. In conducting responsive evaluation, the evaluator observes the program to gather narrative and descriptive information from program stakeholders; and negotiates values in which to judge the program. An evaluator should not presume that only the measurable outcomes provide evidence of the program's worth. Outcome evaluations tend to negate the idiosyncratic and unique ways people benefit from involvement with the program and among each other; furthermore, they are not sensitive to changes in program purpose. Stake cites Scriven (1967) and suggests that it may be preferable to evaluate the “intrinsic merit of the experience rather than the more elusive payoff” (p. 27). Stake feels that less emphasis on preconceived notions of success will allow for increased stakeholder flexibility in determining the purposes of the evaluation and criteria by which to measure success. In a responsive evaluation, the evaluator has the ability to respond to emerging issues, rather than sticking to a strict evaluation plan or structure. This ultimately leads to an increase in the evaluation's utility to the program stakeholders. Recurring events in responsive evaluation (Stake 1975):

1. Talking with clients, program staff, and audiences.
2. Identifying program scope.
3. Providing an overview of program activities.
4. Discovering purposes, concerns.
5. Conceptualizing issues, problems.
6. Identifying data needs regarding issues.
7. Selecting observers, judges, and instruments if any.
8. Observing designated antecedents, transactions, and outcomes.
9. Providing a theme; preparing portrayals, case studies.
10. Winnowing, match issues to audiences.
11. Formatting for audience use.
12. Assembling formal reports, if any.

Data is collected through direct personal experience or the second best option, vicarious experience. Observations are not only conducted by the evaluator, but the evaluator enlists program stakeholders according to the issues being studied and the audience being served. Having multiple observations and observers increases data reliability; observations continue to be subjective but through replication random error is reduced. The bias of direct or vicarious experience decreases as repeated observation and diverse points of view are attained. The evaluator produces portrayals typically featuring descriptions of persons, such as a five-minute script, a log, scrapbook, multi-media or audience role-plays. The small number of case studies is often criticized for sampling error, but Stake attests that the error may be minimal and that it is a small price to pay for potentially substantial improvements in communication. Moreover, Stake assumes that case studies of several students are more interesting and representative of a program than a few measurements on all program participants. Therefore, the reader benefits by a more comprehensive understanding of the program.

The evaluation encounters two pluralisms of values: (1) in context, or in Stake’s terms the “antecedent condition in which the program is found” (p. 23) and (2) the personal outcomes or outcomes of the program. The evaluation team should not impose its values on the “actors,” “spectators,” and/or “critics” of the program during the consensus building process. Stake identifies two measures of the value of evaluation: its increment of added experience and its enhancement of responsive alternatives.

Strengths of responsive evaluation include it being flexible, adaptable, and good in providing cultural explanation and recognition of diversity. It may be particularly useful in evaluating programs where the stakeholders generally agree on the intrinsic value rather than the instrumental value of the program. For example, many people will discuss the importance of music and art “because they're good things to do” (ibid, p. 16). Furthermore, in formative evaluations, responsive evaluation is useful in monitoring the program and to identify positive and/or negative side effects. It is helpful in summative evaluations by giving the reader an understanding of the program's activities, its strengths and weaknesses, and by providing a vicarious experience in the evaluation.

Limitations of responsive evaluation include the difficulty in making comparisons to standards; it serves the immediate audience and may not fulfill distant or future needs. In today's world, funding constraints on arts education programs, for example, has led to an increased demand for quantifiable outcomes and results which are not emphasized in responsive evaluation. Moreover, responsive evaluations may be less objective, reliable, and generalizable as compared to traditional evaluations, or as Stake calls them preordinate evaluations. Responsive evaluation is not useful when it is important to measure goal attainment, whether promises were kept, or in cases where predetermined hypotheses are to be examined.

Ethnography, in the more traditional sense, has compatibility problems with responsive evaluation but there may be potential for combining them. A primary distinction is that with responsive evaluation, the evaluator solicits the observation of stakeholders, thus making the stakeholders part of the evaluation team and adding them as additional data collection instruments. Nevertheless, with some concessions on both sides, the two may be combined.

Goal-Free Evaluation

The evaluator, in a goal-free evaluation (Scriven, 1991), intentionally enters the field without being aware of the specific stated goals and objectives of the program. The evaluator learns about the program and its outcomes inductively.

This means that all program materials are screened either by a non goal-free evaluator on the evaluation team, an administrative assistant, or by the client to ensure that none of the stated goals or objectives are described to the goal-free evaluator. The purpose of this is:

> …finding out what the program is actually *doing* without being cued as to what it is *trying* to do. If the program is achieving its stated goals and objectives, then these achievements should show up; if not, it is argued, they are irrelevant.
>
> (Scriven, 1991, p. 180)

Goal-free evaluations can assist in determining whether the objectives are worthwhile; instead of "are the objectives being achieved?" It is similar to the double-blind pharmaceutical study; just like the drug evaluator, the goal-free evaluator does not have to know the direction of the intended effect or the intended extent of the outcomes (Scriven, 1973). The evaluator intends to find the program's actual outcomes and then works backward to determine if the effects were caused by the program. The goal-free evaluator is like the crime scene investigator who tries to eliminate rival explanations which may have led to the outcome under investigation. Information regarding the stated goals of the program is withheld from the evaluator. However the evaluator is able to review some program documents, budgets, schedules, recorded observations, profiles of participants and staff, etc. as long as there is no implication of any stated goal.

A comprehensive, fair, and accurate needs assessment is essential in conducting a goal-free evaluation. Merit is determined by comparing the actual program outcomes to the relevant needs of those impacted, instead of to the program goals or consumer wants or desires. The program is evaluated according to the level of fulfillment of the consumers needs. Scriven believes by keeping the goals vague, a less pure goal-free evaluation still makes finding outcomes difficult and encourages the evaluator to connect program effects to recipients' needs instead of the stated goals of the program. Altschuld and Witkin (2000) state that the needs at the primary level (i.e., recipients of the program) are the most critical concern, and from there the needs assessment can considers the needs of the service deliverers and the program delivery system. They argue that the primary needs are the "raison d'être" or the "rationale for the existence" of the service deliverers and delivery systems (Altschuld & Witkin, 2000, p. 10).

There are also relative degrees to which an evaluation may be goal-free. Goal-free evaluations may be combined, in full or in part with other evaluation methods (e.g., "qualitative versus quantitative, survey versus experiment, multiple perspectives versus one right answer, etc.", Scriven, 1991, p. 182). Additionally, an evaluation may begin goal-free and then become goal-based; the reverse is not possible. It is also suggested that goal-free evaluation can be used as a supplement to a traditional outcomes evaluation conducted by a separate evaluator. The evaluator implementing the goal-free evaluation collects exploratory data to supplement and provide context to another evaluator's goal-oriented data. Goal-free evaluators observe the program in an attempt to understand the culture, meanwhile considering needs, processes, and outcomes. Below, the author provides a simplified illustration of a goal-free evaluation using a physical education and training program.

The evaluator of a physical education and training program enters into the evaluation without any prior knowledge of the program's goals. She would likely be capable of directly observing changes in health-related knowledge, strength, and endurance, which are the program's stated goals. However, the goal-free evaluator might also discover changes in endurance, flexibility, physique, changes in behavior, social status, networking with other students, finding new supportive workout partners, sharing of dietary and nutrition tips, increased self-esteem, etc. all of which were not original goals of the program and would be considered positive, unintended side-effects. They would likely have been missed if the evaluation solely examined the stated or preordained goals.

Arguments for the utilization of goal-free evaluation include (Scriven, 1991):

- It may identify unintended positive and negative side-effects and other context specific information.
- As a supplement to a traditional evaluation, it serves as a form of triangulating both data collection methods and data sources.
- It circumvents the traditional outcome evaluation and the difficulty of identifying true current goals and true original goals, and then defining and weighing them.
- It is less intrusive to the program and potentially less costly to the client.
- It is adaptable to changes in needs or goals.
- By reducing interaction with program staff, it is less susceptible to social, perceptual, and cognitive biases.
- It is reversible; an evaluation may begin goal-free and later become goal-based using the goal-free data for preliminary investigative purposes.
- It is less subject to bias introduced by intentionally or unintentionally trying to satisfy the client because it is not explicit in what the client is attempting to do; it offers fewer opportunities for evaluator bias or corruption because the evaluator is unable to clearly determine ways of cheating.

- For the evaluator, it requires increased effort, identifies incompetence, and enhances the balance of power among the evaluator, the evaluee and client.

Scriven and other users of goal-free evaluations have provided minimal direction regarding operational methodology in conducting the model. The only known attempt to develop an operational methodology for goal-free evaluation was by Evers (1980) in a doctoral dissertation. Evers outlined a goal-free evaluation methodology consisting of six components each of with comprising several sub-categories. The six main components were: (1) Conceptualization of Evaluation; (2) Socio-Political Factors; (3) Contractual/Legal Arrangements; (4) The Technical Design; (5) Management Plan; and (6) Moral/Ethical/Utility Questions. The success of a goal-free evaluation is dependent upon the quality of the needs assessment. If there is not an accurate comprehension of the program participants' needs then the entire evaluation may be at jeopardy.

A goal-free evaluation could feasibly be ethnographic. However, goal-free evaluation focuses on using observation to connect needs to actual program activities, rather than for thick description. Furthermore, traditional ethnography focuses on culture which is always goal-free in nature.

Constructivist Evaluation

Guba and Lincoln's (1989)[32] fourth-generation or constructivist evaluation

[32] The new meaning of constructivist methodology: Truth is determined by consensus building among informed constructors, not of correspondence with an objective reality. Facts are meaningless without a value framework; therefore, no proposition can be objectively assessed. Causes and effects do not exist; accountability is relative and implicates all interacting parties equally (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

approach outlines five generations of evaluation: (1) measurement (e.g., IQ testing); (2) description (e.g. formative evaluation of programs); (3) judgment of merit and worth; (4) *constructivist* (negotiated co-creations of social reality); and (5) meta-evaluation (the evaluation of an evaluation). The constructivist evaluation was created in response to the perceived failure or critical flaws of the first three generations of evaluation. The fourth-generation evaluator may use any of the earlier evaluation techniques as appropriate. Carney (1991, p. 35) reports that the underlying method in fourth-generation evaluation is known by other names:

> British scholars call it ’human inquiry’ (inquiry conducted in human ways for humane ends); Americans scholars call it ‘action research’ (research which aims to produce action on or through it[s] findings, and third world or developmental evaluators call it 'developmental evaluation’ (evaluation which develops the understanding, and resources to respond, of those evaluated). A common generic term for it is ‘collaborative inquiry’ (which simply describes what goes on when you use the method).

In constructivist evaluation, evaluation is:

a. A process that combines data collection and data valuing (interpretation) into one inseparable.
b. A local process.
c. A sociopolitical process.
d. A teaching and learning process.
e. A continuous, recursive and divergent process.
f. An emergent process.
g. A process for sharing accountability.

h. A hermeneutic dialectic relationship.

In collaborative inquiry the people being evaluated participate as informed collaborators rather than research subjects. The purpose of a constructive evaluation is to attain a deeper comprehension of all the issues encountered by all the stakeholders and consumers; while the goals comprise mutual education, improved awareness, and increased motivation to utilize the evaluation results. Most constructivist evaluators are relativist and implement qualitative methods; however, the evaluation is conducted in a disciplined manner and it produces an audit trail to ensure transparency and credibility of its findings. The realities discovered by the constructivist inquiry are the constructions of the reality proposed by the evaluees themselves. They develop into co-constructions and subsequently reconstructions, as both evaluators and evaluees mold them. The constructivist evaluation assumes that evaluators are unable to maintain distance from the evaluees. Therefore, it accepts a hermeneutic dialect. Guba and Lincoln continue by rejecting the positivist assumptions, which they claim are embedded in most evaluation methodology. They use “validity” as an example of a term that evaluators are socialized into accepting as the positivist definition. Furthermore, they feel that the relationship between the evaluator and the program managers is often characterized by disenfranchisement and disempowerment. The constructivist evaluation, in the same vein as Scriven's goal-free evaluation, aims to restore the balance of power.

The process of Constructivist Evaluation can be illustrated in nine steps:

1. Identify all relevant stakeholders.
2. Elicit from each stakeholder group their construction and concerns regarding the issue at hand.

3. Provide a context and methodology which allows for multiple constructions, claims, concerns, and issues that can be comprehended, critiqued, and factored in the evaluation as appropriate.
   - Conduct this methodology within each stakeholder group.
   - Cross fertilize each group with the constructions, claims, concerns, and issues identified by other stakeholder groups, or issues drawn from the literature or other sites. All view points are taken into account as long as they are open to critique and criticism.
4. Generate consensus.
5. Prepare an agenda for negotiation on items where there is little or no consensus.
6. Collect and provide the information requested in the agenda for negotiation.
7. Establish and facilitate a forum of stakeholder representatives where negotiation can occur.
8. Develop a report, or several reports, that communicate any consensus on constructions and resolutions. Additionally, the report should communicate the pertinent issues raised by other stakeholder groups.
9. Recycle the evaluation to continue working on unresolved constructions.

The main limitations of Guba and Lincoln's model is that it minimally acknowledges the fundamental role of evaluation in determining the merit, worth, significance, value, quality, or importance of the program, which are core elements within the definition of evaluation (see for examples Scriven, 1991; Davidson, 2005; and Sanders, 1994). Guba and Lincoln claim to offer a formative evaluation model placing little emphasis on making an evaluative conclusion and more on program improvement through consensus-building; however, to suggest improvement, they must determine deficits in the evaluand, thus they do actually evaluate. A second weakness with the constructivist model is in assuming that stakeholders will always offer the reliable, valid, and honest information. There may be many factors contributing to a stakeholder's knowledge, ability, and candor that must be weighed relative to the observed program impacts in providing a valid evaluative conclusion.

Conclusion

Ethnography is an applied social science research method, while evaluation incorporates various research methods, one of which may be ethnography. The purpose of ethnography is thick description and cultural interpretation; evaluation's aim is to systematically judge a program's merit and develop an evaluative conclusion. The qualitative evaluation approach has demonstrated benefits for evaluators, and three of these approaches are epitomized in the anthropological models of evaluation. Responsive evaluation, goal-free evaluation, and constructivist evaluation have conceptual and methodological similarities. An evaluator should be able to recognize when one of these ethnographic or anthropological models may be feasible and appropriate in evaluating a program. The evaluator should then present the model and its strengths and limitations to the program stakeholders to be considered when selecting the most appropriate evaluation methodology. Sound evaluation typically requires the employment of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Ethnography and the anthropological models of evaluation may be best suited as a supplement to the quantitative components of an evaluation and serve as a way of triangulating data collection methods and data sources. A competent evaluator should be informed of these ethnographic techniques and the anthropological models of evaluation.

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Book Reviews

Revisiting Realistic Evaluation

Chris L. S. Coryn

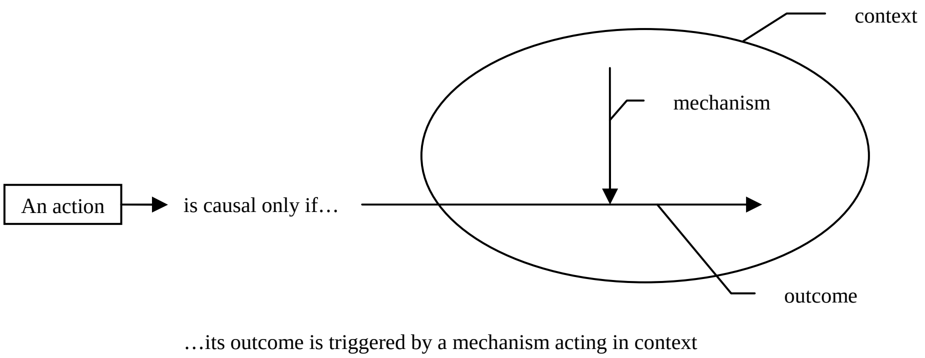
Albeit some might argue that this review is a little late in coming, it is worth revisiting Pawson and Tilley's 1997 book, *Realistic Evaluation* (reprinted in 1998, 2000, 2001, and 2002) as the debate about causation and evidence-based research and evaluation continues to be a topic of debate and concern in the evaluation and research communities (see A Call to Action: The First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry and The Claremont Debate, in this issue of *JMDE*). *Realistic Evaluation* is rooted in the tradition of scientific realism, which is said to be one of the "dominant axes in modern European thinking" (p. 55). In the most general of terms scientific realism concerns "the nature and operation of causal forces" (p. 55). The essential ingredients for assessing these causal forces are C-M-O configurations—where C represents context, M represents mechanisms, and O represents outcomes. Context refers to the "spatial and institutional locations of social situations, together, crucially, with the norms, values, and interrelationships found in them" (p. 216). Mechanisms are the "choices and capacities which lead to regular patterns of social behavior" and the causal mechanisms which generate these patterns of behavior are "deemed 'social problems' and which are the rationale for a program" (p. 216). Outcomes "provide the key evidence for the realist evaluator in any recommendation to mount, monitor, modify, or mothball a program" (p. 217). From the C-M-O configuration, the authors argue that the way in which causation in the "social world should be constructed" and that the "basic realist formula" is "mechanism + context = outcome" (p. xv).

Chapter 1, A History of Evaluation in 28 ½ Pages, presents Pawson and Tilley's version of the history of evaluation. The authors begin this history with the experimental evaluations of the 1960s of the "great social programs of the 'great society' [the U.S.]" (p. 2) brought about by the work of Stanley and Campbell, among others. In short, the experimental paradigm is described as a failure for a variety of reasons, including the lack of external validity (i.e., generalizability) brought about by experiments' inability to reproduce results in the 'real world.' Somewhat out of place, but next in the short history of evaluation are the utilization-focused approaches. These approaches are criticized on the grounds that "he who pays the researcher calls the methodological tune" (p. 14). Finally, the emergence of constructivism in the 1970s is reviewed and also described as a disappointment because of the "inability to grasp those structural and institutional features of society which are in some respects independent of individuals' reasoning and desires" (p. 23). All in all, the authors paint a bleak picture of evaluation's past and contend that if the future is to be brighter then evaluators had better take theory seriously, although the authors also find serious flaws in the various theory-driven approaches of Chen, Weiss, and others. These faults are described as the lack of attention given to context and the emphasis on experimental methods, for example. This 28 ½ page history of evaluation is intended to set the stage and substantiate the authors approach to and purposes for evaluation: determining not only 'if' a program works, but also 'how' and for 'whom.'

Chapter 2, Weaknesses in Experimental Evaluation, presents Pawson and Tilley's expose on the inherent problems with the experimental tradition; namely, the experimentalists' "epistemological assumptions about causation and their lack of fit with the nature of social programs" (p. 30). Essentially, the authors argue that more often than not that change cannot be captured in *OXO* terminology. All in all, it is asserted that "by its very logic, experimental evaluation either ignores these underlying process [causal mechanisms], or treats them incorrectly as inputs, outputs or confounding variables, or deals with them in a *post hoc* and thus arbitrary fashion" (p. 54).

In Chapter 3, In With the New: Scientific Realism, the authors present the principles and practice of scientific realism. As previously mentioned, the realist view (generative) of causation can be described thusly (as illustrated by the explosion of gunpowder):

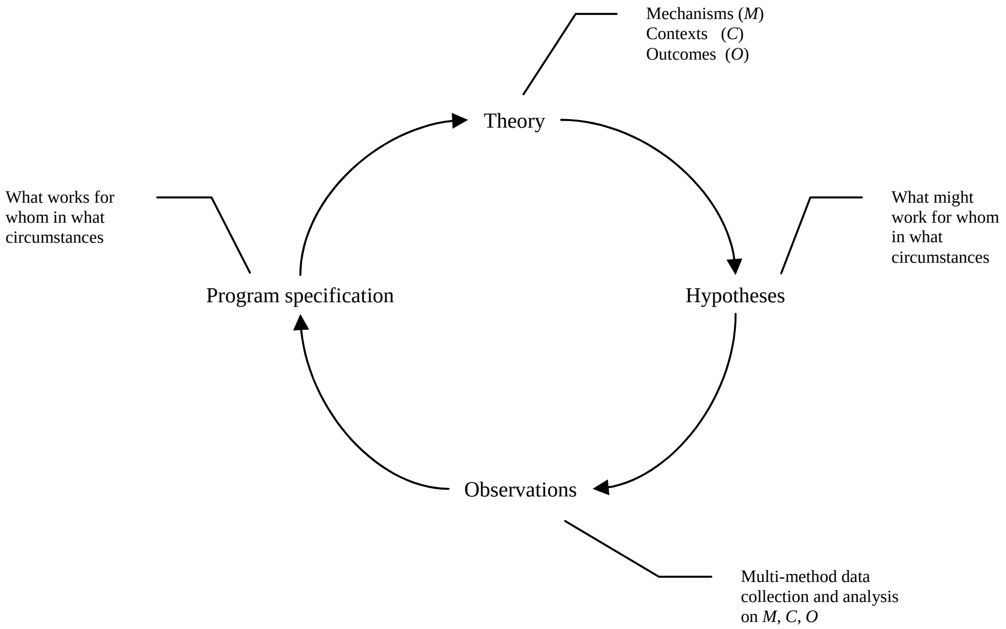
> Our basic concern is still, of course, the *outcome* (the spark causing the explosion). But what does the explanatory work is first of all the *mechanism* (the chemical composition of the substance which allows the reaction), and secondly the *context* (the physical conditions which allow the mechanism to come into operation). This proposition—causal outcomes follow mechanisms acting in contexts—is the axiomatic base upon which all realist explanations build.
>
> (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p. 58)



Source: Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (1997). *Realistic evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Figure 1. ***Generative Causation***

Chapter 4, How to Design a Realistic Evaluation, presents the realist evaluation cycle (see Figure 2) and three case studies which apply realist evaluation principles to varying degrees.


Mechanisms (*M*)
Contexts (*C*)
Outcomes (*O*)
Theory
What works for whom in what circumstances
What might work for whom in what circumstances
Program specification
Hypotheses
Observations
Multi-method data collection and analysis on *M, C, O*

Source: Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (1997). *Realistic evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Figure 2. ***The Realist Evaluation Cycle***

The first case study presented is an evaluation of property marking and described by the authors as *testing theory*, the second is an evaluation of a housing project and described as *theory formation and development*, and the third is an evaluation of a prison-delivered higher education program also described as *theory formation and development*. These case studies are described in some detail and are intended to represent exemplars of realistic evaluation.

I have opted to exclude a review of the remaining chapters (5-9) as these merely focus on collecting realist data and the methodological procedures involved in conducting evaluation as prescribed by Pawson and Tilley.

Despite the book's title, the true underlying premise of Pawson and Tilley's *Realistic Evaluation* is not merely a proposition of how to conduct evaluation, but rather a treatise on the nature of causation and science. While the author's notion of causation (scientific realism) is compelling, I am not entirely convinced that it is the "final solution" to the causation debate. Neither is it a dramatic improvement over either successionist or other traditions. In their haste to prescribe generative explanations they fail to recognize or acknowledge that numerous experimentalists (and non-experimentalists) give considerable attention to context in their accounts of causation (e.g., moderators, mediators, interaction effects), often to a greater degree than the examples provided throughout the book suggest. Moreover, these causal accounts (i.e., realist accounts) seem little more than explanations of program effectiveness for different groups or consumers, which can be accomplished without the use of realist principles.

Prior reviews (Patton, 1999; Rogers, 1999) of *Realistic Evaluation* have been mixed. For example, Rogers (1999) stated that "this is one of those rare books that has the potential to permanently change one's perspective on program evaluation"

(p. 381). Patton (1999), on the other hand, was not entirely convinced of the credibility of Pawson and Tilley's contribution and responded to their criticisms of utilization-focused evaluation (p. 14) thusly:

> I rarely respond to attacks on or distortions of my views, especially when they're based on the twenty-year-old first edition of the book (Patton, 1978) and don't take into account subsequent revisions and elaborations (Patton, 1986, 1997) that I hope have corrected at least some earlier weaknesses, and have benefited from well-deserved and well-meaning critiques. I have learned that responding to a distortion risks reinforcing the very thing I want to correct by calling attention to it. However, the distortions in the opening chapter of Pawson and Tilley, in which they sarcastically and disparagingly review (and bemoan) the history of evaluation, are anything but innocent or trivial. The irony is that, in the introduction, the authors claim the mantle of "detachment," "objectivity," and "scientific evaluation" (p. xiii). Their mocking review of evaluation's history has one primary purpose: positioning themselves as saviors of the profession by redirecting us to be scientists first and foremost.
>
> (Patton, 1999, p. 387)

While *Realistic Evaluation* has spurred serious interest and debate, and even spawned an issue of *New Directions for Evaluation* (Henry, Julnes, & Mark, 1998), the approach has not quite received the attention in North America that it has in the United Kingdom and Europe. A search of the American and Canadian evaluation journals did not turn-up any publications related to the approach (with the exception of Patton and Roger's reviews of the book). While a search of the major European evaluation journal (*Evaluation: The International Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice*) returned 56 articles which focused on, or emphasized, the realistic evaluation approach.

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Global Review: Regions and Events

National and Regional Evaluation Networks

IOCE

The following list of national and regional evaluation networks was obtained from the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) at http://ioce.net. The IOCE is an organization for evaluation networks and societies that is committed to building a worldwide evaluation community.

Evaluation Networks with Websites

- **African Evaluation Association** www.afrea.org/
- **American Evaluation Association** http://www.eval.org/
- **Australasian Evaluation Society** http://www.aes.asn.au/
- **Brazilian Evaluation Association** www.avaliabrasil.org.br
- **Canadian Evaluation Society** http://www.evaluationcanada.ca/
- **Danish Evaluation Society** http://www.danskevalueringsselskab.dk
- **Dutch Evaluation Society** http://www.videnet.nl/
- **European Evaluation Society** http://www.europeanevaluation.org/

- **Finnish Evaluation Society** http://www.finnishevaluationsociety.net/
- **French Evaluation Society** http://www.sfe.asso.fr/
- **German Evaluation Society** http://www.degeval.de/
- **International Program Evaluation Network** (Russia & Newly Independent States) http://ipen21.org/ipen/
- **Israeli Association for Program Evaluation** http://www.iape.org.il
- **Italian Evaluation Society** http://www.valutazioneitaliana.it/
- **Japan Evaluation Society** http://www.idcj.or.jp/jes/index_english.htm
- **Latin American and Caribbean Programme for Strengthening the Regional Capacity for Evaluation of Rural Poverty Alleviation Projects** (PREVAL) http://www.preval.org/
- **Malaysian Evaluation Society** http://www.mes.org.my
- **Niger Network of Monitoring and Evaluation** (ReNSE) www.pnud.ne/rense/
- **Polish Evaluation Society** http://www.pte.org.pl/obszary/enginfo.htm
- **Quebec Society for Program Evaluation** http://www.sqep.ca
- **South African Evaluation Network** (SAENet) www.afrea.org/webs/southafrica/
- **Spanish Evaluation Society** http://www.sociedadevaluacion.org/
- **Swedish Evaluation Society** http://www.svuf.nu
- **Swiss Evaluation Society** http://www.seval.ch/de/index.cfm
- **Uganda Evaluation Association** (UEA) www.ueas.org

- **United Kingdom Evaluation Society** http://www.evaluation.org.uk/
- **Wallonian Society for Evaluation** (Belgium) www.prospeval.org

National and Regional Evaluation Networks without Websites

- **Bangladesh Evaluation Forum**, Syed Tamjid ur Rahman, tamjidr@bangla.net
- **Benin**, Maxime Dahoun, mdahoun@yahoo.fr, or francois-corneille.kedowide@iucn.org
- **Botswana Evaluation Association**, Kathleen Letshabo, letshabo@mopipi.ub.bw
- **Burkina Faso M&E Network**, Marie-Michelle Ouedraogo, mmouedraogo@unicef.org
- **Burundi Evaluation Network**, Deogration Buzingo, buzingdeo@yahoo.com
- **Cameroon Development Evaluation Association** (CaDEA), Debazou Y. Yantio, yantio@hotmail.com
- **Cape Verdi**, Francisco Fernandes Tavares, Francisco.Tavares@ine.gov.cv or chicotavares@yahoo.com.br
- **Central American Evaluation Association**, Johanna Fernandez, johannaf@cariari.ucr.ac.cr
- **China**, Chaoying Chen, chenzhaoying@ncste.org
- **Columbian Network for Monitoring and Evaluation**, Consuelo Ballesteros consocds@colomsat.net.co or Daniel Gomez dgomez@uniandes.edu.co

- **Egyptian Evaluation Society**, Ashraf Bakr, picardm@care.org
- **Eritrean National Evaluation Association**, Bissrat Ghebru, bissratgk@asmara.uoa.edu.er or Woldeyesus Elisa, dolab@eol.com.er
- **Ethiopian Evaluation Association**, Gizachew Bizayehu, medac2@telecom.net.et
- **Ghana Evaluation Network** (GEN), Charles Nornoo, cnornoo@internetghana.com or bds@africanus.com
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- **Indian Evaluation Network**, Suresh Balakrishnan, sbalakrishnan@vsnl.net
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- **Korean Evaluation Association**, Sung Sam Oh, edulove@kkucc.konkuk.ac.kr
- **Madagascar**, Barbara Rakotoniaina, Barbara.Rakotoniaina@caramail.com or Dominique Wendling, Aea.evaluation@netcourrier.com or aea.evaluation@yahoo.fr
- **Malawi Network of Evaluators**, John Kadzandira, csrbasis@malawi.net or csr@malawi.net
- **Mauritanian M&E Network**, Ba Tall Oumoul, oktconsult@yahoo.fr or Mohammeden Fall, mfall@unicef.org
- **Namibia Monitoring Evaluation and Research Network**, Bob Hochobeb, bhochobeb@unam.na
- **Nepal M&E Forum**, Suman Rai, srai@icimod.org.np

- **Nigeria**, Adam Suleiman, adamsuleiman@yahoo.com (interested in establishing a network)
- **Perú Network for Monitoring and Evaluation**, Emma Rotondo, erotondo@terra.com.pe
- **Red de evaluacion de America Latina y el Caribe**. (ReLAC), contacto_relac@yahoo.com
- **Rwanda Network for Monitoring and Evaluation**, James Mugaju, imungaju@unicef.org or Philippe Ngango Gafishi, pgafishi@yahoo.fr
- **Senegalese Network of M&E**, Eric d Muynck, eric.de.muynck@undp.org
- **Spanish Evaluation Society**, Carmen Vélez Méndez, carmenvelez@idr.es or Carlos Román del Río, carlosroman@idr.es
- **Sri Lanka Evaluation Association**, Indra Tudawe, sleva@sltnet.lk or Ira Thabrews, mrthab@dynaweb.lk
- **Thailand Evaluation Network**, Rangsun Wiboonuppatum, rangsun@hotmail.com
- **Zambia Evaluation Association** (ZEA), Greenwell Mukwavi, gmukwavi@zamtel.zm or twizamtc@zamnet.zm
- **Zimbabwe Evaluation Society**, Mufunani Tungu Khosa, mkhosa@mandel.co.zw or emkhosa@ecoweb.co.zw

A Call to Action: The First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry

Chris L. S. Coryn, Daniela C. Schröter, & Michael Scriven

> Around the globe governments are attempting to regulate interpretive inquiry by enforcing biomedical, evidence-based models of research. These regulatory activities raise basic philosophical, epistemological, political and pedagogical issues for scholarship and freedom of speech in the academy. Their effects are interdisciplinary. They cut across the fields of educational and policy research, the humanities, communications, health and social science, social welfare, business and law.
>
> (Denzin, 2005a)

The First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign from May 5-7, 2005, was assembled so that the international community of qualitative researchers could address the implications of attempts by federal funding agencies to "regulate scientific inquiry by defining what is good science" (Denzin, 2005b). The Congress was attended by more than 800 persons from more than 45 nations. More than 160 sessions consisting of more than 650 papers authored by more than 750 persons were presented. The complete Congress program, including session and paper abstracts, complete papers, and other information is available at http://www.qi2005.org/.

JMDE visited the conference to learn more about the ongoing debate regarding evidence-based science and policy and cutting-edge qualitative methodologies. Following are brief overviews of Congress panels and sessions attended.

Opening Keynote Addresses

There were two opening keynote addresses introduced by Norman K. Denzin. The first of these was Janice Morse's "The Politics of Evidence." As Morse (2005) argued "evidence, by definition is definite, hard, indisputable, unchanging" and "yet, what counts as evidence, what we are willing to consider as evidence, and, most importantly, what we are willing to consider constitutes evidence, is fickle, irrational, and arbitrary." She went on to explain that the "criteria for defining evidence and the means by which it is accrued, is selected by passive agreement, often unchallenged, and supported by mainstream academia, policy makers and government" (Morse, 2005). For evidence-based research, the Cochran criterion has long been the standard for what is applicable and acceptable in research, resulting in the exclusion of qualitative research from funding. Morse then explained how the qualitative community responded throughout the years. Key strategies included for example appeals, the development of qualitative meta-analysis, and mixed methods approaches that demonstrate efficacy by using logic and common sense. Furthermore, Morse presented alternative methodologies including: (i) forensic designs for cases in which "near misses" are investigated, that is, the incident under investigation has not yet occurred and outcomes are hypothetical, thus, the converse to statistical significance and devoid of quantitative criteria; (ii) trials of interventions, that is, microanalysis of rare events that are experimental, but where outcomes are unknown; (iii) observations and precise micro-analytic observational descriptions, and (iv) simulations of high risk situations.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith presented the second keynote address, “On Tricky Ground: Researching the Native in the Age of Uncertainty,” in the form of stories from her own and other’s experiences. Smith illustrated the ‘tricky ground’ that fills the spaces “between research methodologies, ethical principles, institutional regulations and human subjects as individuals and as socially organized actors and communities” (Smith, 2005). She further asserted that “this ground is richly nuanced in terms of diverse interests through epistemological challenges to research, to its paradigms, practices and impacts” and “in this context—building on what indigenous communities have struggled for, tried to assert and have achieved—what is possible in the application of indigenous perspectives that examine the intersections of methods, ethics, institutions and communities” (Smith, 2005).

Plenary Sessions

Science, Etc.: From Bicycle Helmets to Dialogue Across Differences

Chair: Elizabeth St. Pierre

Panelists: Michael J. Feuer, Lisa Towne, and Elizabeth St. Pierre

This plenary session was a friendly debate between Michael Feuer of the National Academy of Science (NAS) and Elizabeth St. Pierre of the University of Georgia.

Feuer started out the presentation by providing a brief description of the development and history of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council and then devoted considerable time to defending the NAS and NRC in guiding and informing the federal government in “science policy” and “science-based policy.” Feuer claimed that science is only objective and independent if it is not paid for. Therefore, both the NRC and the NAS are independent of the government and must, if called for advice, be “faithful” to data, to evidence. Interdisciplinary committees are invited to engage in a process of evidence-based consensus building which is to affect federal law and policy decision making. Keys to decision making include appreciation and understanding of standards of evidence as well as the appropriateness of the level of evidence, which if set to high, thwarts decision making.

The diversity of interests considered is reflected in reports published by the National Academy Press (see http://www.nap.edu). One NRC report specifically referred to “Advancing scientific research in education” (see executive summary http://www.nap.edu/execsumm_pdf/11112.pdf) and was build on the report on “Scientific research in education” which defined what “high-quality scientific inquiry” is or should be (see executive summary http://www.nap.edu/execsumm_pdf/11112.pdf).

St. Pierre was introduced as the “extreme postmodernist” and started out by referencing well-known postmodern theorists including Jacque Derrida, Judith Buttler, and Michael Foucoult. St. Pierre found the NRC report offensive and stated that the government is “narrowing science” and “the current definition of science is grounded in positivism.” She also claimed that “science is not the same in all paradigms in terms of ontology, epistemology, and methodology” and that “the rage of causation is nothing more than an attempt at meaning making.” Evidence-based research was not only pointed out to being “dangerous” because it narrows science but because it is based on power, politics, and economy. St. Pierre emphasized that it is essential to consider epistemologies in science to understand the limitations research. For example, science could not capture lived reality; instead it is everywhere, does not have an identity, and is always in the making.

Monsters of Evidence: Qualitative Research and the Globalization of Audit Culture

Chair: Patti Lather

Panelists: Patti Lather, Lis Hojgaard, Dorte Marie Sondergaard, Ian Stronach, Harry Torrance, and Phil Hodkinson

In this session, presenters from Denmark, the United Kingdom, and the United States reflected on evidence-based research under different cultural traditions. The Scandinavian presenters described the arrival of evidence-based research in Scandinavia and called for elaboration and redefinition of the term "evidence." Evidence-based research is perceived as one single method, which not only limits the questions asked but also the answered elucidated, thus leading to a knowledge gap.

Stronach focused on the gap between rules/regulations and reality, leading to circularity and suppressed nucleation of research, the "either/or;" while Torrance discussed the shift in locus of control, questioning who defines and controls research in society. Torrance claimed that the managerial audit culture hurts the quality of research, which is evaluated and judged based on its management rather than on its intrinsic value.

Hodkinson discussed the return of positivism, specifically in the United States with regard to educational research. He pointed out that learning is a contested social construct and that acquisition views dominate learning. However, acquisition perspectives view learning as an outcome, leading to the neglect of the learning process. Moreover, evidence-based research would only view measurable outcomes as significant. The application of post-positivist objectives to learning would result in the following paradox issues: (i) there is no independent variable,

(ii) noise matters, and (iii) objectivity is biased. Evidence-based research would not include the methods that bring truth.

'Scientifically Based Research' and Qualitative Research Methodologies

Chair: Katherine Ryan
Panelists: Yvonna S. Lincoln, Earnest House, Julianne Cheek, Frederick Erickson, Nicholas Burbules, and Ian Stronach

Each of the presentations in this plenary session focused on differing aspects of scientifically based research and qualitative methodologies.

Burbules attempted to look "Beyond Method," and emphasized that researchers need to clarify (i) value propositions, (ii) the field they are from including outspoken critics of that field, and to accept (iii) consequences of their research. This includes an understanding of cultures of inquiry and epistemological virtues. Epistemological virtues involve intellectual and moral qualities. For example, tolerance of alternative methodological and ethical approaches to research are the underlying necessities for objectivity. Fallibalism on the other hand, is the virtue that researchers leave room for failure and admit it when they experience it, thus, fallibalism functions as a change initiator and agent. Questions posted at the end included: where do epistemological questions come from? What good are methods without epistemological virtues? And how do epistemological virtues generate debates?

Katherine Ryan's presentation emphasized the old and new scientism and argued that "evidence is not evident." Moreover, she asserted that the reemergence of positivism can be attributed to the audit culture.

Lincoln discussed qualitative methodology and social justice. She illuminated five recent trends in the social science community: (1) there is more openness regarding social justice, (2) qualitative methods are deployed to collect the construction of marginal groups, (3) there is willingness to utilize opinions of marginal groups to pose research questions, planning, and conducting research, (4) there are active advocates for the poor and other marginal groups, and (5) false neutrality is abandoned. Moreover, Lincoln provided three suggestions regarding the qualitative/quantitative debate: (i) be available to discuss and be tolerant of different and alternative methodologies, (ii) senior staff should team up with junior staff to thwart anxiety of doing qualitative research prior to tenure, and (iii) colonize them.

House provided an overview of 40 years of (policy) evaluation and pointed out developments in the perception of causation, from regularity based causation to complexity of causation. Moreover he constructed an analogy in the current evidence-based debate to the existing neo-fundamentalism prevalent in the United States. The golden standard for causation provides researchers with only one source of truth that is described Campbell and Stanley. Therefore, research is limited in accessibility, prophetic in its vision about the future, and closed to other ideas. Moreover, the fundamentalism is marked by listening to only those who share the same ideas, by rejecting others, and by persuasion through coercion. The methodological fundamentalism would be marked by blacklisting those who can(not) do research, by a shift from the Cochran to the Campbell regime, and by not listening to others.

Special Featured Panels

Why Measurement Fails

Presenters: Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein

Does measurement fail? Gubrium and Holstein suggest that it does. In fact, the presenters argued that (1) measurement can't capture interactions, (2) freezes context, (3) reifies meaning, and (4) requires fixed variables. Grounded in the sociological literature (e.g., Mayhew, Znaniecki, Whyte, Cicourel, and Rose, among others) and exemplified through discourse analysis of court conversations, the authors assert that the issue of measurement's failures needs to be revisited because the concerns have not been resolved, that we live in a "measurement society," in which applied concerns ignore the issue of the seriousness of empirical reality. Their most compelling argument, however, was that measurement fails to account for differing meaning for different groups of persons and does little to account for context, which is defined differently for qualitative and quantitative researchers.

General Sessions

Mixed and Mixed-Up Methods

Chair: Ian E. Baptiste

Presenters: Ian E. Baptistse, Ljiljana Vuletic, Michel Ferrari, Marina Micari, Susanna Calkins, Melissa Luna, Greg Light, and C. Mimi Harvey

Unfortunately, only three of the eight presenters showed-up for this session; Ian E. Baptiste, Marina Micari, and Susanna Calkins. Baptiste's paper titled "Mixed and Mixed-Up Methods: Reconceptualizing Mixed-Methods Design" was an expose on what "constitutes a method." That is, the author argued that a procedure qualifies as a method once it incorporates some strategy or strategies for collecting words or numbers and that words are qualitative whereas numbers are quantitative. Moreover, Baptiste argued that research has four analytic interests, each with corresponding methods. These were:

1. Identify and measures associations—with the corresponding methods being correlational studies and quasi-experiments
2. Explore phenomena—with the corresponding methods being qualitative research methods
3. Establish cause—with the primary methods being experiments and quasi-experiments
4. Describe frequency distributions—with the corresponding method being surveys

Micari and Calkins presented "Achieving Accountability in Education: Phenomenography as Research-Based Evaluation," in which they described an evaluation which employed phenomenography in addition to a variety of other methods to evaluate an education program. Phenomenography was described as "the empirical study of the limited number of qualitatively different ways in which we experience, conceptualize, perceive, or apprehend various phenomena."

IRBs and the Politics of Informed Consent

Chair: Gaile S. Cannella
Presenters: R. Wiles, G. Crow, S. Heath, V. Charles, Stephen J. Sills, Bart W. Miles, Amy E. Blank, Barbara F. Sharf, M. Carolyn Clark, and Marco Marzano

Wiles, Crow, Heath, and Charles presented "Research Ethics and Regulations in the UK: The Case of Informed Consent." The authors conducted research of researchers regarding the increased enforcement of regulated informed consent in the UK, and how their subjects positioned themselves in relation to these issues.

Sills and Miles discussed their study "Investigating Visual Researchers' Experiences with Institutional Review Boards." The authors conducted survey research with qualitative, visual researchers in academic institutions and found that researchers' experiences with IRBs varied widely in terms of perceived quality and satisfaction with the IRB process.

Blank, a doctoral student in a traditionally quantitative department, discussed the process of attaining IRB approval for her dissertation research in "The IRB's Role in Ethnography of Vulnerable Populations: Protection of the Subject or Protection of the Paradigm?"

"The Dark Side of Truth(s): Ethical Quandries in Accessing and Reporting Qualitative Analysis of Life Stories" presented by Sharf and Clark discussed their research in female prison populations. The authors presented a number of difficulties in their research as it related to ethics and IRBs. Primarily, the authors struggled with their research subjects revealing information with the portent for creating ethical dilemmas. Furthermore, the authors argued that IRBs do not meet the needs of qualitative researchers and are stuck in the positivist, medical model frame of mind regarding ethics and research.

Marzano discussed "Towards Ethical Globalization? Freedom of Research and Moral Constraints in Qualitative Research," in which he shared his experiences conducting ethnographic research in a hospital. This research required that the researcher "go undercover," that is, he dressed and acted as a medical professional in order to conduct research on medical professionals.

The Second International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry

The Second International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry is scheduled to take place from May 4-7, 2006 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Additional information is available at http://www.c4qi.org/qi2006.html.

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Evaluation in Canada

Chris L. S. Coryn

The Canadian provinces continue to be a source of evaluation-related activities and events such as Evaluation 2005, Beaulac, Goodine, and Aubry's work on a report card of homelessness in Ottawa, the 2005 International Program for Development Evaluation jointly sponsored by the World Bank Group and Carleton University, and the Canadian Evaluation Society Student Case Competition and Paper Contest, to name but a few. For those interested in detailed information on these and other Canadian evaluation news and events please visit the Canadian Evaluation Society Website.

Evaluation 2005: The Joint American Evaluation Association/Canadian Evaluation Society Conference

By early accounts the upcoming joint conference—Evaluation 2005—sponsored by the American Evaluation Association and the Canadian Evaluation Society to be held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada from October 24-October 30, 2005 promises to be a great success. A recent news release from the Canadian Evaluation Society indicated that

> A total of 1,206 proposals were submitted from representatives of 43 countries. Some 879 proposals were from United States representatives, 200 from Canada and 127 from other countries.

> About 17% of proposals are from Canadians; this compares to about 3% in the past 3 years of proposals to the AEA annual conference (which were not joint conferences with the CES). Overall, there are also 50% more proposals submitted to the 2005 joint conference than there have been in the 3 most recent years of AEA conferences. All of this to say that there will be a lot to select from and that the content of Evaluation 2005 will certainly be of very high caliber.
>
> (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2005a)

The Alliance to End Homelessness

Earlier this year the Centere for Research in Community Services at the University of Ottawa released the Report Card Methodology and Indicators: Development of the Report Card of Homelessness in Ottawa (Beaulac, Goodine, & Aubry, 2004) prepared for the Alliance to End Homelessness in Ottawa. The report is divided into two parts; Part I—A Review of the Literature and Part II—Indicators and Canadian Report Card. Based on a review of relevant literature, this overview of the methodological aspects on the development of report cards was undertaken as the preliminary work for the development of the report card on homelessness in Ottawa. The purpose of this report is to provide a brief overview of the literature on report card methodology, including the history and current status of report cards, the purposes and processes of developing and formulating report cards, the dissemination and translation of report cards, and suggestions for the Ottawa report card on homelessness in light of the findings uncovered in the literature review.

2005 International Program for Development Evaluation

The fifth annual International Program for Development Evaluation: Building Skills to Evaluate Development Interventions is designed to meet the professional development needs of mid-level evaluation and audit professionals working in developed and developing nations, development agencies, and non-government organizations. The program was jointly sponsored by The World Bank Operations Evaluation Department and Carlton University's Faculty of Public Affairs and Management and was held at Carlton University, Ottawa, Canada from June 13 through July 8, 2005. It offered a two-week core course consisting of 80 hours of instruction in essential tools and techniques, current lessons from the field, expert guidance, and practice in developing evaluation plans and designs. The core course curriculum was followed by two-weeks of 26 free-standing workshops on various topics and themes specific to development evaluation. For additional information please visit the International Program for Development Evaluation Training Website. Fees ranged from US $2,132 through US $9,952 and room and board was available (included in some fee schedules).

Canadian Evaluation Society Student Case Competition

The final round of the annual CES Case Competition for 2005 was held on May 14, 2005 at Carleton University. The final round teams were Right Approach Consulting (University of Ottawa, Education), QuickStar Consulting (University of Waterloo, Applied Health Sciences) and Transformations (Georgian College, Research Analyst Program).

The teams had five hours to prepare an evaluation case before presenting it to the judging panel and audience (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2005b). Teams were each given thirty minutes for a presentation, followed by a ten minute question period for the judges. This year's judging panel featured evaluation experts from both the public and private sector who donated their time and effort to adjudicate both rounds of the competition. The 2005 judges were Marc L. Johnson, Consultant, Research and Evaluation; Susan Morris, Chief, Evaluation, Natural

Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada; and Martine Perrault, Consultant Manager, Goss Gilroy Inc (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2005b).

For the first time in the history of the CES Case Competition the judges announced a tie, between QuickStar and Transformations for the 2005 competition.

For additional information on the annual CES Case Competition please see Coryn (2004) or visit the CES Case Competition Website.

Canadian Evaluation Society Student Paper Competition

Each year the CES conducts a student paper contest. The contest is intended to provide exposure to promising Canadian students who study or have an interest in evaluation. Awards are granted for the best paper written by a post-secondary student in the field of evaluation. The winner of the 2005 CES student paper competition was Michelle Anderson-Draper, Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics, University of Alberta. Her paper, titled "Understanding cultural competence by evaluating "Breaking the silence: A project to generate critical knowledge about family violence within immigrant communities," examined

> …the concept of cultural competence for evaluators by presenting the evaluation of "Breaking the silence: A project to generate critical knowledge about family violence within immigrant communities" as a case study. Using data from monthly facilitated discussions, findings indicate participants furthered their knowledge about the issue of family violence and received information to assist them in their work with immigrant families. Constructs from the Social Cognitive theory and the PRECEDE-PROCEED model provide the framework for the planning, implementation and evaluation of this project. Experiences of the internal evaluator in relation to cultural competency are explored.
>
> (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2005c)

The CES 2005 student paper competition honorable mention went to Kelly Skinner, Health Studies and Gerontology, University of Waterloo, for her paper titled “Developing a tool to measure knowledge exchange outcomes.” The paper

> …describes measures to assess outcomes of efforts to encourage use of better practices in chronic disease prevention (CDP). A CDP better practices model (Moyer et al., 2002) consists of knowledge synthesis, knowledge exchange (dissemination / adoption) and evaluation stages. Better practices are required at each stage. No previous knowledge syntheses of tools and models for evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of the dissemination/exchange strategies were found. This project developed a usable model and specific scales to assess knowledge exchange efforts for best practices in type 2 diabetes prevention. The model can be adapted to other areas of population health.
>
> (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2005d)

For additional information on the annual CES Student Paper Competition please see Coryn (2004) or visit the Student Competitions section of the CES Website.

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Evaluation in the People's Republic of China

Xuejin Lu and Donghai Xie

Original evaluation practice in China can be dated back to the ancient time of 2200 B.C when the Chinese used essay examinations to help select civil service employees or to choose the most talented learner to serve in the civic administration (Drummond, 2003). Modern evaluation practice is still mostly succeeding the early practice that government-sponsored evaluation plays a decisive role in evaluating all kinds of national development activities. Evaluation conducted by NGO (non-government organization) has not yet exercised any influence on the current evaluation practice. In the past two decades, China has seen rapid growth of a significant number of government-sponsored evaluation organizations established and a lot of evaluation activities conducted, suggesting that the important role of evaluation in national development has been highly recognized. The evaluation defined as providing information for decision making (Cronbach, 1963; Stufflebeam, et al., 1971) has been well accepted by various evaluation organizations. Deng Nan, vice-minister of the Ministry of Science and Technology (*People's Daily*, November 1, 1999) said that evaluation system can be of great help to the government and can function in the following four aspects: 1) improving the decision making process; 2) enhancing the macro-level management of technology; 3) promoting innovation in the science and technology management system; 4) and reinforcing the authority of the making and implementation of the national science plan. However, according to Bao, Zhang and Li (2002), the conduct of an evaluation and the utilization of evaluation results are governed by principles characteristic of the administration, and also affected by the cultural characteristics. It is not easy to give a comprehensive description of the current evaluation practice in China, for the evaluation organizations are independent of each other and operate their duties closely related to their field respectively. But a brief introduction of some of the evaluation organizations and evaluation activities in recent China can be informative to people working in the evaluation field.

Evaluation Organizations

The National Center for Science and Technology Evaluation of China (NCSTEC) was set up by the Ministry of Science and Technology of China in 1994. According to Bao, Zhang and Li (2002), NCSTEC is a specialized agency with responsibility of the evaluation of government-sponsored Science and Technology (S&T) projects. NCSTEC is the leading organization in the field. It plays an important role in providing objective and impartial evaluation to government departments, enterprises and other investment organizations for decision-making related to S&T development. Since the establishment of the Centre, it has conducted many evaluations of major scientific research programs, large high-tech projects, and ventures in high-tech development zones. The key activities conducted by the Centre include:

- evaluations of government-sponsored S&T projects;
- evaluations of S&T policies;
- performance measurement for government-sponsored research institutes; providing services to enterprises and investment companies in the fields of

S&T project evaluations;

- enhancing relationships with international organizations, government departments and other non-government agencies;
- helping to build the capacity of local S&T evaluation agencies.

NCSTE administers an APEC S&T Evaluation Forum Website http://www.apecevalu.org for evaluation discussions. The Evaluation Forum aims at promoting the evaluation capacity development, sharing the theories and experience, exchanging information interactively and understanding each other effectively. Evaluation Forum includes main columns as following: *What's new*: for the events announcement;

- ✓ *Forums*: for the discussion and sharing the viewpoints, information and knowledge;
- ✓ *Research*: for the collecting and issuing research work both in theory and practice;
- ✓ *Report:* for publication of evaluation reports and so on;
- ✓ *Questionnaire*: for collecting the information and answers to enhance and update the web content continuously.

Higher Education Evaluation Center was established by the Ministry of Education in 2004 (*People's Daily*, October 27, 2004). According to the Ministry of Education, China's economy as well as higher education has developed rapidly in recent years, and higher education must have a professional evaluation system that accords with the economic development. The evaluation center has the following functions.

- The evaluation center will conduct an evaluation of the teaching quality in China's higher education institutions every five years.
- The evaluation center will evaluate the quality of teaching in nearly 2,000 college and universities in the country;
- Rather than ranking universities, the evaluation aims to publicize the teaching process.
- The evaluation center will produce evaluation reports on the evaluated with one of four grades: excellent, good, qualified and unqualified.
- The center will use some traditional appraisal methods, such as measuring graduate employment rate, and will review data on teaching status submitted by each university and overrule any fraudulent data.
- Education departments will join hands with industry associations to evaluate professional education at the universities, adding that the mechanism combining professional evaluation, certification and certificate granting will ensure quality education.
- Apart from improved assessment, the evaluation center also will distinguish itself in terms of capital and evaluation standard and a special fund will be set up to pay for the evaluation process;
- With this large-scale, recurring evaluation practice, China will establish institutionalized evaluation systems to upgrade China’s education level.
- Evaluation of key universities will involve foreign experts.

It is learned that this is the first time China has set up a specialized education evaluation center, although the assessment on the teaching of higher educations was initiated in 1994. By the end of 2003, the Ministry of Education had conducted evaluations on 296 universities, with 16 graded excellent and 192 qualified.

China Information Technology Security Certification Center (CNITSEC; http://www.itsec.gov.cn) was originally established in 1997. It is a Chinese Government's authority designed to fulfill national IT security certification responsibilities. In accordance with China laws of product quality certification and IT security management, CNITSEC operates and maintains National Evaluation and Certification Scheme for IT Security. CNITSEC is China's only authorized information technology security certification organization. It is also the only national certification center in China to adopt the international GB/T 18336 idt ISO 15408 standard to test, evaluate and certify information security products, systems and Web services. CNITSEC has the main functions as follows:

- test, evaluation and certification for infosec product and technology;
- evaluation and certification for information systems security;
- evaluation and certification for qualification of IT security service providers;
- evaluation and certification for information security professionals.

The National Center for Safety Evaluation of Drug (NCSED) was set up in China in June, 2002. (*Xinhua News Agency*, June 21, 2002). NCSED is the first drug safety evaluation center that opens in China. The purpose of the Center is to ensure the safety of medicines and it is intended to meet the requirements of the Good Laboratory Practice for Non-clinical Laboratory Studies. The Center was funded by the Chinese government with equipment and technological assistance provided by the Japanese government and the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Evaluation Activities

China to Establish Intellectual Property Rights Evaluation System (*People's Daily*, April 19, 2000). A senior official of China's State Intellectual Property Rights Bureau said that a complete intellectual property rights evaluation system will help speed up the commercialization of intellectual property in the domestic market. The evaluation of intellectual property rights is a product of the market economy as well as an important aspect in the commercialization of intellectual property rights.

Evaluation System to Improve City Environment (*Xinhua News Agency*, October 23, 2003). The Chinese government will institute an evaluation system for the natural and living environments of its cities and towns in the hope to harmonize the economic and social development in a sustainable way. According to Wang Guangtao, Minister for Construction, the new system would be designed to evaluate the conditions of natural and living environments including water and gas supply, sewage and trash treatment, drainage system, city greenbelt, biological diversity, heating system, energy, public transport and cultural relic protection.

China's Land Evaluation Open to Public Scrutiny (*People's Daily*, May 31, 2004). Information on over 200 real estate appraisal institutions and over 21,000 land appraisers can now be found in an online information system, as a move to clear away under-the-table practice in land transactions, according to the Ministry of Land and Resources (MLR). The land evaluation sector has been a major social concern in recent years along with the country's economic boom and scandals of illegal land transactions in the burgeoning real estate industry have frequented the media reports. "The system marks that China's land evaluation has begun to be conducted fully in the sunlight," said the MLR in a statement.

China GLP Standard Safety Evaluation Center to be Set Up (*People's Daily*, August 6, 2004). GLP means "good laboratory practice". It is special management regulations formulated, specially aiming at the medical safety. Currently, no single GLP laboratory in the country reaches the international standards completely. Under this circumstance, no international "pass" is available when China exports its new medicine. Therefore, it is far from mutual recognition among GLP organizations from China and the other countries. After China's entry into WTO, it is a dispensable foundation for the medicine industry to have a high-level evaluation organization meeting the international standards.

Patent evaluation System designed in Shanghai (*Xinhua News Agency*, May 4, 2004,). A system that can evaluate a patent and give a fair price to it has been designed successfully in Shanghai, and approved by experts. The system, designed by the Shanghai intellectual property right service center and the Shanghai Lixin asset evaluation company, can store numerous data and patent cases and is equipped with special software for evaluation of patents.

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Evaluation in Germany: An Overview

Gerlinde Struhkamp

Historical Perspective

Even though often considered being a "late-starter" concerning evaluation, the beginnings for systematic inquiry into impacts of governmental programs in Germany parallel the developments in the U.S. where evaluation became particularly prominent during the 1960s and from then on. As a modern democracy, too, German government and public administration were concerned with the effects of their actions, be it in the form of laws or programs or other measures of public intervention. So, for example, in 1970 the federal law was passed that there had to be "success controls" ("Erfolgskontrollen") for governmental measures. Indeed, this law caused a leap in the market for such "success control" studies, though for the most part not academics but commercial research and consultancy firms succeeded to produce the lion's share of the evaluation research funding (Wollmann, 1997). The relative absence of the academic world regarding evaluations sustained for another 20 years. That does not mean, however, that research and research findings did not pick up matters of broad public interest. For example, large-scale studies were undertaken to explore the effects of different forms of schooling starting at the end of the 1960s and coming to an end early 1980s (Stockmann, 2004b: 29). However, seldom such studies were called evaluation or program evaluation or evaluation research. The peculiar term, literally translated, meaning "accompanying research" ("wissenschaftliche Begleitung", "Begleitforschung") emerged instead and is widely used till today. To clarify the concept: this term is not meant as action research or any form of incorporating advocative elements into the research task (at least not per se). Using evaluation jargon: such "accompanying research" highlights conceptual use and knowledge gain over instrumental purposes. On the other hand, this idea of research does involve in the field, does connect to practice. So there is the notion of feeding research results back into the ongoing process and by that possibly improving the object of analysis—much like in a formative evaluation. In fact, both terms, "accompanying research" and evaluation, are used in Germany till today, the latter becoming more prominent, though. Sometimes they are used in a way exposing visible differences (e.g., an evaluation generating explicit value judgments), sometimes they are used interchangeably. Then, it can only be fathomed in which ways such an approach to applied research overlaps with evaluation and to what extent. A thorough debate on this is still pending.

So, even though the legal and executive interests in evaluation activities did exist in Germany just as in the U.S., an evaluation *profession* did not evolve until the mid 1990s, at least not under the term 'evaluation', unlike in the U.S. That does not mean government did not involve any measures of control or accountability. For example, the institution of the "Bundesrechnungshof" (self-portrayal: "The Bundesrechnungshof is a supreme federal authority […] an independent body of government auditing"[33]), does conduct regular extensive checks on government spending, or ministries, e.g., the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, did set up a central evaluation department (Stockmann, 2004b, p. 31). Finally, a last sweep towards a broader institutionalization of evaluation came

[33] http://www.bundesrechnungshof.de/en/1024.html

with the introduction of New Public Management also in Germany (Stockmann, 2004b, p. 32).

Therefore, looking at the history of evaluation in Germany, by and large and despite certain ups and downs there has been continuity concerning such tasks as evaluation studies. In contrast to this, though, has been the lack of professionalization towards an evaluation discipline, not only as a field of application (cf. above Wollmann's analysis of consultancies conducting "success control" studies), but also as an academic discipline.

What makes it look like that there had been relatively little interest in evaluation is partly due to the difference in language. The term 'evaluation' (spelled the same in German and pronounced only slightly differently) has become used only, roughly speaking, throughout the last decade. Before that, neither in the academic nor the political world this term really caught on. In fact, you can count almost on one hand the books that carried the term 'evaluation' (or the German adaptation 'Evaluierung', meaning the same) in the title. If so, it occurred mainly in conjunction with close ties to U.S. developments and U.S. authors. For example, as early as in 1972 Wulf published a reader mainly presenting translations of articles by U.S. authors, among them, e.g., Scriven's "Methodology of Evaluation". In a similar vain Hellstern and Wollmann issued an extensive publication in 1984 with chapters by German, but also again a number of U.S. authors. Weiss's "Evaluation Research" from 1972 was published in German language in 1974, and in 1988 Hofmann translated and adapted Rossi/Freeman's "Evaluation: A systematic approach".

Which looks like an impressive list here, was not exciting from the German perspective: literally a handful of books specifically related to evaluation in more than 30 years!

Ties to the U.S. evaluation community have generally been strong. Also Koch/Wittmann (1990) and most recently Stockmann (2000, 2004a) incorporated chapters on U.S. developments and by U.S. authors in their handbooks, Beywl's work (1988) drew on U.S. methodological developments in evaluation. Maybe Wottawa and Thierau's book from 1990 (in the meantime second edition 1998 and third 2003) could be considered a turning point towards a more German-centered evaluation-related body of literature. For example, next to introductions of evaluation concepts stemming largely from U.S. writings, they tried to focus on specific German developments, including, e.g., related concepts of quality assurance like quality management systems. Though, it may be difficult to pinpoint to a certain book since a general development has taken place.

Current Status

Starting from the early 1990s and certainly since the mid and late 1990s the relative scarcity of writings about evaluation in German language simply belongs to the past. Book publications and articles have popped up from all kinds of disciplines, within Germany and the German-speaking countries Austria and Switzerland (German-speaking part), respectively. Fortunately, there is not any “border mentality”—in the contrary: many intellectual and personal exchanges occur between German-language academics, journals and at conferences facilitated by the common language. Noteworthy in this regard is, e.g., that so far evaluators from Austria simply join the German Evaluation Society (DeGEval), while the current DeGEval president is Austrian, and the last annual conference in

November 2004 took place in Vienna. Currently there are considerations underway towards changing the society's name reflecting the German and Austrian membership (but that decision has not been made at the time of this article). Moreover, within the coming years a joint conference of the DeGEval with the Swiss Evaluation Society (SEVAL) is planned. Also, the DeGEval entertains ties with the European Evaluation Society (EES).

Probably the most significant turning point towards the establishment and professionalization of evaluation in Germany meant the foundation of the DeGEval in 1997. Since then, the society has continued to grow and spurred the intensity of intellectual discourse on evaluation-related topics. To date the DeGEval has about 370 individual and more than 50 institutional members, these numbers increasing steadily since its foundation. Unlike, e.g., the American Evaluation Association (AEA) or the UK Evaluation Society (UKES), the DeGEval does not have any regional chapters or regional networks.

The DeGEval's internal structure compares to the AEA's formation in TIGs (Topical Interest Groups). The number of TIGSs (in German called “Arbeitskreis”—”working circle” or “working group”) within the DeGEval has also increased steadily and amounts to 14 as to date. Like in the AEA, the TIGs are mostly centered on a certain field of application, e.g., evaluation in schools, evaluation of developmental aid, environmental evaluation, evaluation in the field of human services, and so on. TIGs are created and may break up again once a task is done and depending on the actuality of a certain topic. For example, in the beginning of the DeGEval a working group was formed to develop German “Standards for Evaluation”. Once accomplished, this group was terminated. As there is a first revision process of the standards in the making, again such a task force has been formed. A few TIGs deal with aspects of broader interest that mainly concern matters of an evaluation profession, e.g., one TIG prepared the DeGEval's "Recommendations for education and training in evaluation" to specify evaluator competencies necessary for sound evaluation practice.

Currently, the 14 TIGs are dealing with:

1) Training and education in evaluation

2) Vocational education

3) Developmental aid

4) Research, technology and innovation

5) Health sector

6) Higher education

7) Media

8) Schools

9) Human services

10) Urban and regional development

11) Structural funds

12) Environment

13) Public administration

14) Corporate sector (in preparation)

Comparable to the AEA, each DeGEval TIG has a chair and vice-chair. The TIGs are largely autonomous in their activities. Some TIGs exist since the foundation of the DeGEval and not only sponsor meetings during the annual conference but also organize meetings (like small conferences or workshops regarding a certain topic) throughout the year. At the two to three days long annual conferences the TIGs sponsor sessions. So far, the chair and vice-chair or TIG members look for appropriate and interesting presenters and invite them. Also, presenters can directly address the TIG and offer a topic they would like to present on. Since there is not a general call-for-papers (only by certain TIGs, if they opt for one), on the one hand, it opens the opportunity for people to be invited who normally would not answer to a call-for-papers by themselves (e.g., when they work at government agencies, foundations, corporations or other institutions with only lose ties to the academic world); on the other hand, it somewhat limits the range of presenters to the perspective of the TIG. The annual conferences sponsored by the DeGEval take place since its establishment in 1997, prior to the conference professional development workshops are offered. The conferences are held in fall (mostly October; this year it will take place at the University of Duisburg-Essen, located in the Ruhr valley, from Oct. 12-14) and in German language. However, visitors with, let's say, a working level of German language proficiency should feel welcome to attend, since there would be also ways to communicate in other languages, foremost English. Even though rarely, but there have been already occasional presentations in English.

Despite the DeGEval's attempts to encompass various disciplines (like the AEA is devoted to “evaluation in all its forms”) and the growing interest in the DeGEval's annual conferences, there are still “parallel universes” where evaluation is dealt with, mainly dominated by the traditional disciplines like education, psychology, and sociology. Their professional associations do pick up evaluation topics, e.g., in the form of own TIGs or working groups, but linkages to the DeGEval are still rather weak and sporadic. Mainly such connections exist in the way that people attend the conferences and engage in both the DeGEval and another association—

like U.S. evaluators may attend both the AERA (American Educational Research Association) as well as the AEA meeting, e.g.. The next years will show how much overlap and integration will be possible to overcome the “disciplinary segmentation” (Stockmann, 2004b, p. 35) in order to develop a common understanding on core elements of evaluation and synthesize scientific debates.

Apart from the foundation of the DeGEval, other developments foster the professionalization of evaluation in Germany. One of the society's founding members, Wolfgang Beywl, set up and administers the German-language mailing list called “forum-evaluation”, which engages several hundred enlisted members in discussions about concepts and ideas, exchanges of references, announcements of events, calls-for-papers, and the like. Similarly beneficial to the field is the first German-language “Journal for Evaluation” (*Zeitschrift für Evaluation*—ZfEv[34]). In its third volume (2005) it incorporates articles on theory, methods and practice of evaluation, book reviews, updates on activities of the DeGEval, and other pertinent information of interest to evaluators, sponsors, and anybody else concerned. International readers: the journal does include English-language abstracts!

Not only have evaluators and others interested in evaluation-related issues found their forums. In addition and appreciably so, as of now there are two German-language postgraduate, one of them master-level, degree programs for evaluation set in place: one in Berne/Switzerland[35], up and running since 2001, the second one in Saarbrücken[36], which had its first cohort fall 2004. In addition, during the last

[34] http://www.zfev.de/

[35] http://www.evaluationsstudium.ch/

[36] http://www.htw-saarland.de/evaluation/

years, professor positions within departments of social sciences and education have been set in place with an emphasis on evaluation, so more and more students will be trained more formally in techniques, methods and context factors concerning evaluation.

The first major product of the DeGEval has been to adopt and as professional association responsible to pass the "Standards for Evaluation", also called the DeGEval-Standards (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluation, 2002). The proximity to the wording used in the "Joint Committee Standards for Educational Evaluation" is no surprise, since the former are closely related to the latter. Like the Swiss Evaluation Society SEVAL had issued its respective evaluation standards in 2001 after a review and revision process, so did the DeGEval finalize its review process in 2001/2002 and prepared a brochure listing and explaining the standards to their members and others being interested. A new review process of the existing standards, based on a survey among DeGEval's members, is currently underway. By and large there have been only slight differences between the Joint Committee, SEVAL and DeGEval Standards, so the latter are based to a large extent on the work and experience of the Joint Committee.

In addition to the Evaluation Standards, in 2004 the DeGEval's TIG "Education and Training in Evaluation" also issued "Recommendations for education and training in evaluation—Required competencies for evaluators" (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluation, 2004). These influenced already the existing academic training programs mentioned above. The latest major recommendation passed by the DeGEval is the adoption of the Evaluation Standards to the special form of self-evaluation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluation, 2005).

Specifics in Germany

In one way, for German evaluators the situation has probably been much like in the U.S. in the 1960s when the profession just started and evolved—had to find its way. But since the English language is only a relatively slight barrier to many, those interested in evaluation indulge in the English-language literature on evaluation and pick up the ideas. As a consequence, an interesting mixture of concepts rooted in American culture and approaches stemming from German traditions of social science, policy-analysis (and every other respective field) merge and emerge.

For example, in the fields of social work and human services, e.g., concerning child and youth services, the approach of “self-evaluation” has become prominent. In fact, it proved to be a “gate-opener” during the mid and late 1990s in introducing evaluation to the field, not only for approaches of self-evaluation but also other “traditional” forms of external evaluation. The DeGEval responded to this in adjusting the DeGEval Evaluation Standards to applications of self-evaluation. A respective paper explaining the specifics of self-evaluation and how the Evaluation Standards respond to them was adopted by the DeGEval members at the general assembly during last year's annual conference.

More as a side note: An interesting discussion, indebted to the terminological differentiation that's made possible by the German language, sparks from time to time, e.g., in the mailing list “forum-evaluation”. There is a dispute regarding the differences between various forms of evaluation that could be distinguished by the attributes of “internal” (German: “intern”) and “external” (“extern”) as well as “self-” (“selbst”) and—well, here there's the German term “fremd”, meaning literally “strange” or more metaphorically “outside”, which is hard to translate into

English. Thomas Widmer, Swiss evaluation researcher, suggested to translate it as "heteronomous" (evaluation), thus, an evaluation in which the evaluees are not in charge of the evaluation, i.e., have a say in the conduct of the evaluation. In contrast, in a self-evaluation they are in charge of both the evaluand and the evaluation (so a prominent, yet not undisputed definition). Also other attempts have been made to provide a German-language glossary of evaluation terminology (even referring to the English corresponding term, if applicable)[37], in its make-up very similar to The Evaluation Center's glossary project[38].

Another topic that has been prevalent and mixed with evaluation debates in some sectors concerns approaches of "quality management" ("Qualitätsmanagement"), e.g., according to the approaches of Total Quality Management (TQM), the European Foundation for Quality Management's model EFQM, or the International Standard Organization's (ISO) norms (being transferred into German language and context by the German Institute for Norming—"Deutsches Institut für Normung", DIN). A debate that has largely been absent from the evaluation community in the U.S., as far as my observation goes. In Germany, however, in some sectors there is a prevalence of quality management terminology whereas in others one of evaluation. And since terminology carries concepts, it has not been easy to pull the two strands apart. Several authors have worked out differences and similarities between these two approaches (Wottawa/Thierau, 1998, pp. 43-45; Beywl, 2001; Stockmann, 2002), but as of now it more looks like another "parallel universe", with a conceptual conciliation still to be worked out.

[37] http://www.univation.org/glossar/index.php

[38] http://ec.wmich.edu/Glossary/glossaryList.htm

These are but two examples from my work context. Others surely could add more, e.g., concerning the fields of developmental aid, European structural funds, evaluation of sustainable development and so on—a list too long to be presented here.

Such disputes over various forms of evaluation and the assisting terminology are not yet settled. It's been taken serious what Michael Scriven suggested in his editorial in JMDE Num. 1: that "one must treat the definition of key existing concepts as an extremely serious matter, not a matter of casual linguistic convenience […]. Conceptual schemes, and the definitions that go with them, are powerful instruments of analysis and hence persuasive support for particular interpretations, not minor precursors to it […]." (2004, pp. 15-16). Indeed, there is this seriousness of—constructive—debate in the German-language evaluation community.

About the Author

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Evaluation—Making it Real in Aotearoa New Zealand: Leading by Example, Leading by Association

Pam Oliver, Kate McKegg, Geoff Stone, and Maggie Jakob-Hoff

The second Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Conference, sponsored by the Auckland Evaluation Group, will be held 18-20 July, 2005 at the Tauhara Centre, Acacia Bay, Taupo.

This year's conference follows on from the very successful 2004 Auckland Evaluation Group Conference, at which evaluators and others from various parts of the country came together and shared their challenges around evaluation practice in New Zealand. In many respects, the theme for this conference builds on that work.

The theme "Evaluation—Making it Real in Aotearoa New Zealand" is about evaluator roles and what we actually do as evaluators. We will explore what is unique about those roles in the New Zealand context, particularly how we work in partnership with Maori and how we work with other cultures like Pacific peoples, Asians and refugees.

"Leading by example" means that as practitioners we are prepared to subject our practice to reflection, and to the scrutiny of others. It is about openly striving to understand, respond, learn and evolve in our work.

"Leading by Association" means that we take active steps together to grow professionally, and to develop our profession. We organise to gather about us critical friends and supportive colleagues, to create a space for sharing skills, mistakes, insights, motivations and possibilities, and we create structures and systems to promote safe professional practice in evaluation.

Key aspects of this theme are evaluation as a profession, accountability, rigour, consciousness and relevance to New Zealand.

Charmaine Pountney and Dr. Te Kani Kingi will be the keynote speakers. Dr. Te Kani Kingi's talk will be entitled "Evaluation and the measurement of cultural outcomes." He will examine the process and practice of evaluation as well as the requirement to measure activities and outcomes that are culturally derived. Charmaine Pountney's address will be entitled "Doing evaluation: From magic marks to vital values." She will provide provocations and challenges on two key themes of the conference—what are the essential features of evaluation work across a range of settings? and what are the necessary attributes of a professional association which will promote effective and ethical evaluation while avoiding the risks of becoming a professional clique?

Further Information

If you have any queries, please feel very welcome to contact any of the organizing committee:

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A Review of the Chinese National Center for Science and Technology Evaluation

Laura Pan Luo

China is now in a transitioning stage from planned economy to market economy. There is a growing interest in China to have a strong evaluation process in place so that planning and decisions can be based on valid and credible information. Evaluation also provides a guide for resource allocation.

The Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) is the highest administrative body responsible for formulating and implementing science and technology (S&T) policies and programs in China. To provide accountability for government funding and improve management practices, in 1997, MOST commissioned an independent entity, the National Center for Science and Technology Evaluation (NCSTE), to conduct evaluations of science and technology policies and programs in China. The goal of NCSTE is to provide an objective peer review of government-funded S&T research programs.

Ms. Deng Nan, former Chinese Vice Minister of the Ministry of Science and Technology, noted that the evaluation system is important in the following four aspects: (1) improving the decision-making process; (2) enhancing the macro-level management of technology; (3) promoting innovation in the science and technology management system; and (4) reinforcing the implementation of the national science plan (People’s Daily, 1999).

Over the last several years, NCSTE has evaluated over 1,000 projects focused on technical, institutional, economic, and financial aspects, ranging from information technology, to health care, environment protection and sustainable development. As the leading evaluation organization, NCSTE aims at providing timely and accurate information for both government agencies and private organizations to assist in their decision-making process. Additionally, it strives to promote dialogues among central and local governments, private sector, and academia.

Mandated by MOST, NCSTE issued China's Science and Evaluation Standards (Standards) in 2001. MOST made the Standards an annex to the government regulation on evaluation management. Since its issuance, the Standards have been well observed in science and technology evaluation in China. It has been selected as the training material on science and technology evaluation. More than 600 people across China have participated in the training workshop on Standards.

NCSTE consists of employees who specialize in areas such as management, system engineering, public policy research and economics. NCSTE also hires consultants to work on various evaluation projects. For example, in 1997, NCSTE conducted evaluations on a number of National Engineering Technology Centers to assess the effectiveness of their management and operations. NSCTE also conducted a policy review and analysis of China's new and high tech industrial development zones, technology transfers in the Sino-Japan computer industry and the role and impact of foreign investment on the development of new technology oriented industries in China.

In recent years, NCSTE has also conducted evaluations of foreign aid. The aid evaluation project teams at NCSTE have studied the relevant OECD development aid policies and the policies on utilization of foreign government loans to China.

As a local partner, NCSTE has conducted joint evaluations with international institutions. For example, NCSTE has evaluated Norwegian Mixed Credits jointly with a Norwegian consulting agency, Institute of Applied Social Science of Norway (FAFO).

NCSTE has had collaborations with many countries in the world, including the US, France, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, UK, Netherlands, Thailand, Korea and India in addition to providing services to the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program and other NGOs. According to Chinese officials, NCSTE has improved management practices at MOST research programs, and the evaluation of science and technology has contributed remarkably to the development of Chinese society by making the policy and decision-making process more objective.

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Evaluation in Japan

Ryo Sasaki

Overview

Two years have passed since the "Government Policy Evaluations Act" (GPEA) became effective in Japan on April 1, 2002. In that time, evaluation has been well accepted as an essential part of the policy management cycle at each ministry of the Japanese government. It is reported that evaluation results have been utilized for budget formulation by governmental ministries, and it is also observed that policies have been prioritized and, conversely, abolished based on the evaluation results. Other merits of introducing evaluation are that the so-called 'policy diagram' has been frequently developed at ministries, and policy goals have become more outcome-oriented with more quantitative measures. Now the Act is under discussion for amendment with some major points proposed for change.

Background to Introduction of the Act

'The Basic Law for the Reorganization of Central Government Ministries and Agencies' came into effect in June 1998, marking the start of serious reform of the Japanese public sector. Though the law comprises almost all the subjects of administrative reform, strengthening of *policy evaluation* is pointed out as one of the major tools for government-wide reform. One thing should be pointed out: the word *policy* is used with a very broad meaning in Japan, and this includes all three levels in the hierarchy of governmental activities, namely, *policy, program and projects*.

Reflecting the concept of this basic law, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication (hereafter the MIC)[39], prepared the 'Standard Guidelines for Policy Evaluation' in 2001, and the MIC encouraged each ministry to test them on

[39] *Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunication* was the formal name in 2002.

their policies, programs and projects. Three approaches were suggested in the guidelines, namely ‘project evaluation,’ ‘performance evaluation’ and ‘comprehensive evaluation.’ These names do not match with the internationally accepted academic norms. Roughly saying, ‘project evaluation’ is a different expression for *ex-ante project-level evaluation*, or simply *appraisal*. ‘Performance evaluation’ is equivalent to *performance measurement*. ‘Comprehensive evaluation’ is almost the same as *program evaluation* as has been developed be evaluators for the long term. (see Box 1)

After a certain period of examination, the GPEA was prepared by the MIC and passed through the Diet in 2001. The law required all governmental ministries to evaluate their policies and report the results to the public. It also asked ministries to reflect evaluation results in policy and budget formulation, albeit not by mandate.

Box 1. ***Summary of Standard Guidelines for Policy Evaluation***

Evaluation Method and Performance Ideas

Based on the following three standard evaluation methods, each government office must select an appropriate evaluation method and carry out evaluation in accordance with the characteristics of its own policy and the need for policy evaluation in each area.

(1)“Project Evaluation” to provide information useful for adoption, rejection, and selection of administrative activities by conducting evaluation beforehand, and carrying out verification during and after the implementation.

(2)“Performance Evaluation” to provide information on the extent of policy achievements. This is accomplished by setting up the goals to be achieved beforehand in the wide-ranging areas of administration, measuring the performance, and evaluating the extent of goal achievements.

(3)“Comprehensive Evaluation” to provide a variety of information useful for solving problems by setting up a specific theme, carrying out comprehensive evaluation by looking at the theme deeply and from various angles, and finding out policy effects

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, *Summary of Standard Guidelines For Policy Evaluation*, 15 January 2001

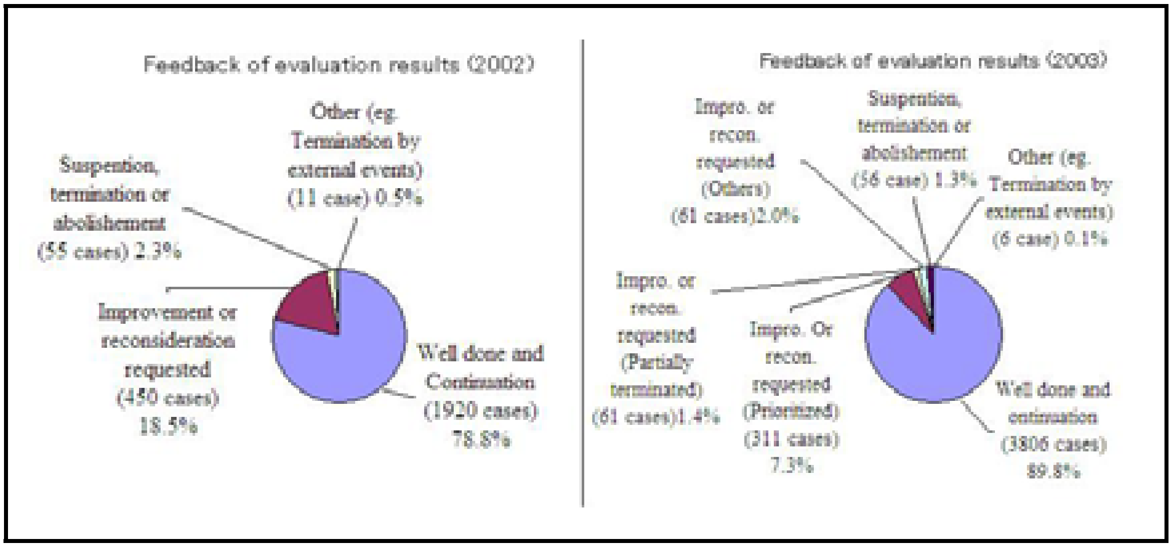
Utilization of Evaluation Results

As has been already mentioned, two years have passed since the Act came into effect. The MIC has conducted survey for each ministry and published a report concerning the extent and degree to which evaluation results are utilized.

Evaluation Results are Well Utilized for Policy and Budget Formulation

In 2002, a total of 2,436 ex-post evaluations were conducted using one of the approaches suggested above. Out of the total, 1,920 cases (78.8%) were evaluated as ‘well done and should be continued as is;’ 450 cases(18.5%) were evaluated as ‘should be improved or reconsidered;’ and 55 cases (2.3%) out were judged as ‘’should be suspended, terminated or abolished,’ which has actually transpired. In 2003, a total of 5,923 ex-post evaluations were conducted and with the breakdown of results as shown in the following figure.

Figure 1. ***Feedback of Evaluation Results (2002, 2003)***



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Implementation Situation of Policy Evaluation and Feedback for Policy Formulation,* 2004 and 2005

Policy Diagrams Have Been Developed at Each Ministry

Along with the introduction of evaluation activities, the so-called policy diagram was developed in more than half of all ministries. A policy diagram is like a hierarchy of policies, programs and projects, or a hierarchy of mission, vision, strategic goals, programs, and associated activities. For instance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has developed a policy diagram consisting of 5 major goals, 12 intermediate goals, 59 policy areas with 142 numerical targets, and associated programs and interventions. This kind of framework was not considered in Japan until the introduction of evaluation activities. It has been unanimously reported that policy diagrams are shared throughout whole organizations and are used as effective internal communication tools.

Policy Goals Have Become More Outcome-Oriented with More Quantitative Measures

It is reported, for example, by the Ministry of Education and Technology, that certain words such as *outcomes* and *performance indicators* were broadly accepted and their concepts were shared by the entire organization. The MIC reported that the ratio of cases where performance targets are set in a quantitative manner has increased from about 30% in 2002 to more than 50% in 2003.

Discussion for Amendment of the GPEA

The GPEA states that the Act shall be amended based on the lessons learned after three years. The professional committee of the MIC, the formal name of which is the *Committee for Policy Evaluation and Independent Administrative Institutions*, published a report entitled ‘Major points for amendment of policy evaluation system’ in December 2004. A summary of the report is given below (see Box 2). Based on these points, discussion will heat up through this year, and it is expected that amendment of the GPEA will be actually proposed to the Diet at the end of fiscal 2005. Professional associations, such as Japan Evaluation Society, are strongly requested to contribute to this discussion and take a lead on the appropriate use of professional terms on evaluation and the diffusion of various evaluation concepts.

Box 2. ***Major Points for Amendment of Policy Evaluation System***

<Feedback of evaluation results for policy formulation>

- More feedback for budget formulation as well as policy formulation should be done
- 'Units' to which evaluation is applied should be set more clearly. For example, 'units' can be recognized by development of an appropriate policy diagram.
- Mindset of staffs should be changed. Concepts of management cycle and results-oriented management should be diffused.

<Promotion of more objective and rigorous evaluation>

- Target setting should become more quantitative.
- Information of *cost* invested for policy implementation should be gathered and cost-effectiveness analysis should be conducted more frequently.
- Knowledge of academic and professional expertise should be utilized more.
- Possibility of re-examination and double check by outside expertise should be maintained.

<Sophistication of evaluation activities>

- Various evaluation activities should be appropriately prioritized and conducted in a more cost-effective way.
- Ex-ante evaluation on introduction and amendment of public regulation should be more sophisticated and amplified.

<Public report of evaluation results>

- Evaluation report should be prepared in a more reader-friendly manner.
- National discussion on evaluation should be stimulated.

<Other issues>

- Cooperation with regional authorities, - Role of the MIC, - Tie-up with related fields

Source: Committee for Policy Evaluation and Independent Administrative Institutions, *Major points for amendment of policy evaluation system*, December 2004

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Global Review: Publications

American Journal of Evaluation

Lori Wingate

Volume 26, number 1 was the first issue of the *American Journal of Evaluation* (Volume 26, Number) with Robin Miller at the helm as Editor. There are 5 articles, plus 1 contribution each in “Forum,” “Methods Notes,” “The Historical Record,” and “Ethical Challenges.”

In the issue’s first article, “An Alternative Route to Policy Influence,” Carol Hirschon Weiss, Erin Murphy-Graham, and Sarah Birkeland identify a type of evaluation influence based on their study of the use of D.A.R.E. evaluations. They posit that this type of influence (or “route to influence”), which they call “imposed use,” is distinct from those commonly discussed in the literature on evaluation use, namely instrumental, conceptual, and political/symbolic. “Imposed use,” they write, “may occur in any field where a higher level of government with funds to disburse demands specific action on lower operation levels, based on evidence” (p. 25). In the case of D.A.R.E., the U.S. Department of Education made instrumental use of evaluation findings by limiting funding to programs that met certain criteria (based on evaluation results). School districts’ response to this mandate (which in most cases was to drop their D.A.R.E. programs) exemplifies imposed use. That is, they were using evaluation findings to make decisions—in fact the authors report the districts had little interest in the evidence. Rather, they were reacting to the federal requirement based on those findings. Weiss, Murphy-Graham, and Birkeland note "imposed use is not something new . . . it is a concept that has not surfaced before in the evaluation literature" (p. 25).

In "Quality, Context, and Use: Issues in Achieving the Goals of Metaevlauation," Leslie Cooksy and Valerie Caracelli report on their metaevaluation of 87 evaluation reports prepared by International Agricultural Research Centers. They highlight how common evaluation issues—particularly quality criteria, political and cultural context, and use—have a "different texture" (p. 40) in metaevaluation contexts. It is crucial to clearly identify the purpose of a metaevaluation—whether for evaluating evaluation quality or identifying evaluations for inclusion in an evaluation synthesis—so that appropriate planning and methodological decisions can be made. The authors use examples from their metaevaluation experience to illustrate these issues.

Laurie Stevahn, Jean King, Gail Ghere, and Jane Minnema's article on "Establishing Essential Competencies for Program Evaluations" present a detailed taxonomy of "essential competencies for program evaluators." They argue that improved training, enhanced reflective practice, advanced research on evaluation, and professionalization of the field are benefits that are likely to result from acceptance and use of such a taxonomy. They identify 61 competencies across 6 domains: professional practice, systematic inquiry, situational analysis, project management, reflective practice, and interpersonal competence. Furthermore, they crosscheck these competencies again the Joint Committee standards, AEA Guiding Principles, and Canadian Evaluation Society Essential Skills Series. Stevahn and her colleagues conclude by identifying two activities that should be undertaken to validate the taxonomy for widespread use: a comprehensive validation study and the construction of rubrics for each competency that specify proficiency levels.

In this issue's fourth article, Melanie Ehren, Frans Leeuw, and Jaap Scheerens demonstrate the use of a "policy scientific approach" to reconstruct the program theory of the Dutch Edcuational Supervision Act. The three steps of this approach are to identify assumptions, validate the reconstruction, and critically evaluate the program theory. After presenting the results of their study, they discuss the benefits of limitations of the approach.

In the final article, ""Multidimensional Implementation Evaluation of a Residential Treatment Program for Adolescent Substance Abuse," Leyla Faw, Aaron Hogue, and Howard Liddle discuss the importance of evaluating a program's implementation and report on their evaluation of the structure and process of a substance abuse treatment program. They conclude that "understanding the effectiveness of treatment for adolescents hinges on the continued development of methods to measure treatment implementation and analyzing these findings in relation to outcomes" (p. 93).

In the Forum section of this issue, Thomas Schwandt discusses "The Centrality of Practice to Evaluation." He analyzes the popular conception of "evidence-based," which he says values evidence over practice, and discusses what implications this view of "evidence-based" has for understanding practice and evaluation. He recommends that evaluators move from thinking of practice as "an objective that needs to be repaired" to a more genuine conceptualization in which practice is a "material and linguistic event in which human dilemmas emerge and are addressed" (p. 100).

In the Methods Notes Section, J. Jackson Barnette and Anne Baber Wallis seek to "close one of the few gaps left in the Campebll-Stanley-Cook-Shadish legacy of research designs" (p. 106). They examine how what happens to an intervention between multiple postobservations (e.g., removal, continuation, changes in intensity) in experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation designs impacts validity, data modeling, and analysis. They argue that designs that take these factors into account will produce better inferences.

Donna Mertens' contribution in the "Historical Record" section provides an account of the "The Inauguration fo the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation" (IOCE). IOCE's mission is "to help legitimate and strengthen evaluation societies, associations or networks so that they can better contribute to good governance, effective decision making, and strengthen the role of civil society" (p. 127). Mertens describes the work done to get the organization off the ground; gives a brief account of the inaugural assembly that took place in Lima, Peru in 2003; and conveys the IOCE's mission, goals, and current priorities. She concludes by dicussing the organization's accomplishments, challenges, and opportunities.

In the "Ethical Challenges" section, Gillian Kerr comments on two analyses of "The Steering Committee" ethical challenge in a previous issue of *AJE*. She did not think these analyses paid sufficient attention to "the role of the steering or advisory committee itself and the extent to which membership of such a committee is associated with genuine power" (p. 132) and explains why in "Reflections of 'The Steering Committee.'"

New Directions for Evaluation

Chris L. S. Coryn

The Spring 2005 issue of *New Directions for Evaluation,* Teaching Evaluation Using the Case Method, edited by Michael Q. Patton and Patricia Patrizi is intended to advance the practice of evaluation teaching using the case method by "providing specially developed cases for teaching and teaching guidelines and discussion points to use in conjunction with the cases" (p. 3). In this issue, chapters 2-4 conclude with "Teaching Guidelines and Questions," which are intended to provide general case teaching guidance by providing case teaching questions and evaluation points to elicit through questioning.

Chapter 1, Case Teaching and Evaluation, by Michael Q. Patton and Patricia Patrizi, outlines the logic and likely benefits of using and applying cases as a teaching method for students of evaluation. The authors argue that case teaching and training, like the longstanding traditions of using cases for teaching law and medicine, will prepare future evaluators for the practical problems that arise in real-world evaluations (e.g., "professional practice does note lend itself to rules and formulas" and "decisions are rarely routine", p. 5). The strategies for case teaching strategies presented by the authors in this chapter include (1) facilitating case discussion to provide experiences in evaluative thinking, situational analysis, and practical problem solving for real-world evaluation, (2) set and model norms of civil interaction, (3) emphasizing advanced preparation, (3) setting expectations and creating a learning frame of mind, (4) starting the questioning process by eliciting the facts of the case, (5) vive la difference [e.g., reconciling opposing points of view], (6) adding hypothetical and incorporating role playing, (7) concluding with takeaways and generalized learning, and (8) supporting active, practice-oriented learning. Patton and Patrizi conclude the chapter by stating that

> Evaluation as a field of professional practice has long way to go to achieve the prestige of fields like law, medicine, and business, but the challenges we face in supporting the development of skilled practitioners who can analyze unique situations, deal with diverse people, and exercise astute judgment bear striking similarities to these professions.
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> (p. 13)

In Chapter 2, Evaluation of the Fighting Back Initiative, by Kay E. Sherwood, presents the case of the Robert Woods Johnson Foundation's Fighting Back initiative, an $88 million dollar investment by the foundation for developing community-generated strategies for reducing use and abuse of alcohol and illegal drugs. This investment included $14 million for an independent evaluation of the foundation's initiative. In the case, Sherwood provides all of the necessary background and contextual information for making the case a usable teaching tool. Also presented in the case are early efforts at evaluating the initiative, beginning in 1990, where the evaluation floundered as the research team was "unable to manage the complexity and comprehensiveness of the design" (p. 23). This team purportedly wasted $4.6 million, 4 years, baseline for future efforts, and credibility for the overall effort. Eventually the evaluation was rescued by a new research team, which conducted the 1994-2000 evaluation of the initiative. All in all, the case of the Fighting Back Initiative provides a rich, complex teaching example.

In Chapter 3, Evaluation of the Central Valley Partnership of the James Irvine Foundation, by Martha S. Campbell, Michael Q. Patton, and Patricia Patrizi, the case presented was initiated by the foundation as a “partnership for citizenship” (p. 39). Thus, the purpose of the Central Valley Partnership (CVP) was to engage low income, immigrant, and disenfranchised residents in civic action. In this example, the authors present a case where the role of the evaluator shifts from pure evaluation to “an organizational development resource” (p. 46). In this sense, the case illustrates the various roles and responsibilities that evaluators are often required or requested to perform. The case concludes with comments from Martha Campbell, now the vice president for programs at the Irvine Foundation, in which she states

> Irvine’s experience with CVP and its other evaluations has reinforced, as well as tempered, its view of the role and potential of evaluation…As such, Irvine currently adopts an approach to evaluation that has a strong focus on improving program delivery and documenting program innovations or practices for the larger field.
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> (p. 54)

Chapter 4, Evaluating Home Visitation: A Case Study of Evaluation at the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, by Kay E. Sherwood, presents a case where the foundation used an evaluation-focused strategy to making grants for child development projects. Through this strategy, the foundation’s evaluation efforts frequently emphasized results-based evidence to support project effectiveness, primarily in the form of experimental designs. Unfortunately, as the case presents, these effects were generally “mixed” or “non-significant” (p. 67). Much of the case involves the publication of these poor, disappointing results and the subsequent fallout generated by them, including efforts for damage control by the foundation and other stakeholders.

In Chapter 5, Evaluation Case Teaching from a Participant Perspective, by John Bare, the author describes the benefits of the case teaching method from the view of a learner. Most interesting in Bare's chapter is the "surfacing of values," wherein the author argues that values are pervasive and shape both program planning and evaluation. Moreover, the author notes that "cases help reveal these" (p. 89).

The issue concludes with Chapter 6, Diverse and Creative Uses of Cases for Teaching, by Michael Q. Patton. In this chapter Patton presents suggestions for using the cases presented in the issue, and other cases, for the "broader context of evaluation teaching and training" (p. 91). First, the author provides issues for exploring cross-case comparisons including (1) connecting parts into a whole, (2) the personal factor, (3) evaluator roles and purposes, (4) complex relationships and institutional arrangements, (5) controversies and politics, and (6) what is missing? Second, Patton explores additional teaching uses for cases. These uses could include (1) insights into evaluator competencies, (2) learning to write executive summaries, (3) practicing qualitative analysis and extracting lessons learned, (4) stakeholder analysis and stakeholder mapping, (5) developing ethical commitments and sensitivities, (6) metaevaluation training, and (7) applying model, theorists, and conceptual distinctions. Patton summarizes the issue by stating that

> This volume on using cases for teaching evaluation aspires to contribute to professional excellence in evaluation by grounding training real-world experiences captured and presented in detailed cases. Case teaching and the additional practice-oriented teaching ideas presented in this chapter seek to bridge the gap between knowing and doing.

(p. 98)

As a student of evaluation I found “Teaching Evaluation Using the Case Method” a compelling, logical approach to teaching and learning evaluation. Each of the cases presented in Chapters 2-4 offer a unique series of problems and possibilities. Furthermore, I found Patton’s presentations of teaching guidelines and questions at the end of these chapters useful and relevant to the cases presented. While I agree with Patton that evaluation teaching and training needs to “bridge the gap between knowing and doing” (p. 98), there are alternatives to cases which should be considered as well. For example, cases may in fact be “real-world,” but the use of the case is still “hypothetical.” That is, learners are not really evaluating the programs or projects presented in the cases. They may be confronted with the complexities and problems of real-world evaluation, but real-world practice should include “real” evaluation as opposed to merely practicing on cases. Although cases are an invaluable teaching tool, I would argue that what many professional programs of study call “field or professional experience” would be the real, real-world equivalent of cases.

References

Patton, M. Q. & Patrizi, P. (Eds.) (2005). Teaching evaluation using the case method. *New Directions for Evaluation, 105*.

Evaluation: The International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice

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> In a time of results-based management and budgeting, the question whether or not the *inputs* have been in line with the policies of donors and partner countries is not longer really relevant. The real question is whether the *results* of our actions are in line with the policies and the problems that these policies tried to address.
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> (van den Berg, p. 35)

The first 2005 issue of *Evaluation* (*Volume 11*(1), January 2005) begins with two contributions to *A Visit to the World of Practice*, both of which focus on results-based evaluation and impact assessment within the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Please visit http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/MDG/-home.do for information on the MDGs.

First, Kusek, Rist, and White discuss how the shift from implementation-focused monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to results-based M&E is taking place in various developed and developing countries, which challenges are being faced in this transition, and what strategies should be considered when introducing results-based M&E, including readiness assessments, political and organizational issues, and potential challenges with implementation, reliable data collection and analysis.

Second, van den Berg discusses some methodological issues in the assessment of development cooperation. Monitoring, for example, would not assess if the right things are done in development, but only whether things are done right. Impact assessments, in contrast to monitoring, would be complicated and expensive, because impacts occurs over long terms, require increased scope of research, and rely on baseline data often unavailable. Moreover, counterfactuals have to be considered to indicate that observed outcomes in fact resulted from the intervention under investigation. Causality as the key to the establishment of impact would be reduced in the social science context to "specific causality", because there are no general laws as in the natural sciences. To proof linkages between outcomes and impact, methods such as lab research, RCTs, and double-blind studies with comparison groups are commonly utilized by social scientist. Van den Berg argues for the methodological inclusion of historical analysis to ascertain causality, utilizing triangulation "par excellence" to insure reliability and reasoning for validity. Current evaluation practice employs triangulation only methodologically. However, using historical triangulation eliminates the need for counterfactuals to establish causality. Moreover, linear causality as established through statistical techniques is often thwarted by societal complexities. Therefore, discussions in social sciences should shift toward "conditionalities" (p. 34). Van den Berg believes "that the development community should move from causality or plausibility to contribution, and from direct linkages to necessary but not sufficient conditions for change" (p. 34).

Four articles follow. First, Saunders, Charlier, and Bonamy discuss how evaluation can be used to support change, exemplified in two international higher education case examples. Second, Kautto and Similä provide an account of evaluating "recently introduced policy instruments (RIPIs)" (p. 55) supported by intervention theories and recommend (1) the utilization of theory-based approaches, (2) the selection of criteria and establishment of causal links between evaluation criteria,

(3) the selection of causal linkages for which information can readily be ascertained, (4) determination of procedures for proceeding with the criteria for which information is not readily available, and (5) consideration of potential for theory failure. Third, Byng, Norman, and Redfern provide a case example within a mental health context, utilizing realistic evaluation as coined by Pawson and Tilley in combination with analytic induction. Fourth, Shadish, Chacón-Moscoso, and Sánchez-Meca describe how meta-analysis and systematic reviews have been developed historically, utilized in Europe, and contributed to policy making and practice.

In the *Review* section of *Evaluation 11*(1), Kushner looks at a current UK Cabinet Publication entitled “Quality in qualitative evaluation: a framework for assessing research and evidence.”

The final section, *News from the Community*, discusses the fifth annual Japanese Evaluation Society (JES) and third annual African Evaluation Association conferences. The section also introduces the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE; also see this issue of JMDE). The final news from the community is the Univation/German Evaluation Society conference, which focused on network evaluation.