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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 Metaevaluation,” 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 against 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 Educational 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 Campbell-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 not 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.

(p. 13)

In Chapter 2, *Evaluation of the Fighting Back Initiative*, by Kay E. Sherwood, presents the case of the Robert Wood 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.

(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

Daniela C. Schröter

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.

(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 (RIPs)” (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.