Evaluator Skills: What’s Taught vs. What’s Sought

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Key Questions

- What roles, competencies, and skills do employers look for when hiring evaluators?
- Are they in line with what is emphasized in graduate programs in evaluation?
Methods

- Lit Review
  - Comparison of requirement in graduate programs and competency taxonomies
- Pilot Survey for Employers
- Pilot Survey for Job Seekers
- Job Bank Analysis
- AEA/CES Think Tank Discussion
Endless resources on resume writing, interviewing, search strategies, negotiating, and networking

The question “how do evaluators get a job in a specific organization?” is not yet addressed in the literature.

Backgrounds, skills, roles, tasks are multifaceted and not agreed upon within the evaluation community.
### Competencies suggested in the literature and by the IPDE program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators (Stevahn et al, CJE, 2005)</th>
<th>Essential Skills Series in Evaluation (CES)</th>
<th>IDPE Competency Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Practice</td>
<td>Understanding Program Evaluation</td>
<td>Research Methods (Design, Statistics, Qualitative Methods, Measurement, Other)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic Inquiry</td>
<td>Building an Evaluation Framework</td>
<td>Evaluation (eval-specific logic &amp; methodology; theory &amp; models/approaches; social, political, &amp; cultural context; planning, budgeting, contracting, &amp; management; computer &amp; database skills; reporting &amp; utilization; metaevaluation &amp; standards; history &amp; nature of the evaluation profession)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational Analysis</td>
<td>Improving Program Performance</td>
<td>Cognate Expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td>Evaluating for Results</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Competence</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Core Requirements in Evaluation Ph.D. Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Claremont (units)</th>
<th>WMU IPDE (credit hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Courses</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods/Statistics</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognate Area/Electives</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Course Work</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>65-78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey: Employers (n = 27)

44% of respondents from academic institutions

- General evaluation and research design, planning, and methods (n=21)
- Writing skills (n=12)
- Interpersonal skills/teamwork (n=11)
- Data analysis skills (n=9)
How competent are entry-level job candidates?

- Adequately competent: 14%
- Minor gaps: 57%
- Major gaps: 29%
  - “Real world” experience and understanding
  - Interpersonal skills/teamwork

Employers by far cited experience and real world application (n=13) as a “positive”
Job seekers [n=17]

- Academic positions (47%)
- Government (35%)
- Non-profit (35%)
- Independent consulting (29%)
Job Seekers’ Perceived Strengths

- Quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis
- Instrument design
- Evaluation design
Job Seekers’ Perceived Weaknesses

- Industry/content areas
- Academic credentials
- Publications
- Project management experience
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Content Knowledge</th>
<th>Evaluation Expertise</th>
<th>Equally Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Seekers</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AEA Job Bank

205 Jobs on AEA Job Bank analyzed

- For profit (35%)
- Non-profit (27%)
- K-12 education (12%)
- Higher education (11%)
- Government (9%)
Job Bank: Skills Sought

- Quantitative methods and analysis (82%)
- Reporting (81%)
- Interpersonal communication skills (79%)
- Data management (75%)
- Content area skills (66%)
- Supervisory and team management (53%)
- Qualitative methods and analysis (49%)
- Evaluation theory and methods (43%)
Responsibilities

- Analysis (84%)
- Reporting (82%)
- Planning and design (79%)
- Implementation (75%)
- Data collection/field work (69%)
- Instrument development (61%)
- Conceptualization (53%)
- Management/supervision (40%)
Think Tank Thoughts

- “Real world” experience is crucial
- Interpersonal skills/communication skills also essential
  - Those with backgrounds in counseling found their experience beneficial
- Understanding culture of an organization
  - Including organizations that do not understand or value evaluation
Preliminary Hypotheses

- Programs should offer real world experience, esp in project management
- Programs should offer opportunities to learn communication skills
- Results of refined surveys should tell us more!