

Who and What Are To Be Evaluated?

"The decision is not whether to evaluate or not evaluate, because evaluation is constantly taking place formally or informally. It is, rather, to determine why you are evaluating, what you are evaluating, and whom you are evaluating, then evaluate regularly."

Barbara Hunt

Who and what are to be evaluated? These are prime questions in both evaluation and lay circles. However, these questions may not be directly answerable without consideration of a more basic evaluation question, which is, "why" evaluate? The "who" and "what" of evaluation are derived from the answers to the question, "why" evaluate?

Why do you evaluate? What do you want to know? Do you need answers to questions that arise? Do you want student achievement data to make curriculum decisions or justify expenditures? Do you want to make decisions about staff based on student achievement data? What are your questions? Why are you evaluating a project or program?

Questions are the essence of evaluation. An initial question by an evaluator is "what are the evaluation questions?" The answer to this becomes an immediate entree to the evaluation. Questions needing answers are the planning base of good evaluation. Certainly there are enough questions in education today demanding answers that evaluation has become a necessity.

Why Evaluate?

Why then do you evaluate? The response should be to answer questions natural to any educational project or program. Should you continue the program? Is the program effective? Which program components are effective, in need of change, should be continued? Is the program cost effective? This consideration of natural questions

can create a positive atmosphere in which to conduct an evaluation.

Often the answer to "why" evaluate is because it is required. Such a response creates the most negative attitude toward evaluation for all concerned in the evaluation process. Furthermore, the collection and quality of data suffer through lack of interest and focus, and thus interpretation of data is highly suspect.

Equally denigrating to the process is evaluating because it is the popular thing to do. Evaluation, to be effective, must have a purpose clearly stated and integral to the design. Let's face it, evaluation is being done continually either by design or by default. It is far better that an evaluation should be accomplished on a *planned* basis with checkpoints and discipline than by informal and possibly emotional procedures. Formal methods allow for analysis and reanalysis of data; informal methods seldom provide for the reassembling of pertinent data for rechecking.

An honest answer to why you are evaluating puts "whom" and "what" you evaluate into perspective, relates it to a context, and allows an evaluator to develop an evaluation design that will develop meaningful, usable information.

Figure 1 provides a way of looking at "why" evaluate. After the decision has been made "why" the evaluation is to take place, "what" and "who" to evaluate are brought into focus. The illustration is based primarily on outcome evaluation. Formative evaluation procedures have not been integrated into this particular illustration although formative evaluation concepts may be inherent in several items, such as program design.

What Do You Evaluate?

What do you evaluate? Everything in the context of "why" you are evaluating. For example, do you want to know about program effectiveness? If so, "what" you evaluate is everything that relates to program effectiveness. You look at costs, student impact, adoption procedures, district goals, and objectives, and the regulations, policies, and decisions that contribute to these components.

Commonly, program effectiveness is evaluated by student impact data only. In most instances, student impact data are traced to one or more teachers, and the common assumption is that the teacher is solely responsible for student achievement. In reality this may not be the case; for example, data relating to costs may prove the program is underfunded or understaffed. Data relating to student impact may reveal many problems in the tests and measurement system.¹ Perhaps program adoption procedures were changed or altered sufficiently to change the program from its original design; in which case, you may be evaluating something other than the intended program. Even more importantly, perhaps the goals and objectives of the district do not rein-

force program goals and objectives or there is an incompatibility of goals.

One district, concerned over its poor showing in math skills, found an incompatibility between the tests and the curriculum. In adhering to the curriculum, teachers had not yet taught the skills the test items were developed to measure.

Program effectiveness is only one element to evaluate; however, the concept has assumed gigantic proportions in today's search for effective educational practices. It needs to be evaluated clearly and fairly. Conclusions about program effectiveness can lead to evaluation of program components or any of the interrelated evaluation questions; but in all instances "what" you are evaluating should be kept in mind in connection with "why" you are evaluating and lastly "whom" you are evaluating.

Whom Do You Evaluate?

Whom then do you evaluate? The answer is "everybody"! Everybody who has any relation-

¹ Barbara Hunt. "The Evaluation of Compensatory Education at State Level: The Evaluator's Dilemma," 1977, is on file with the Education Resources Information Center. E.R.I.C. number can be obtained from your local microfiche center.

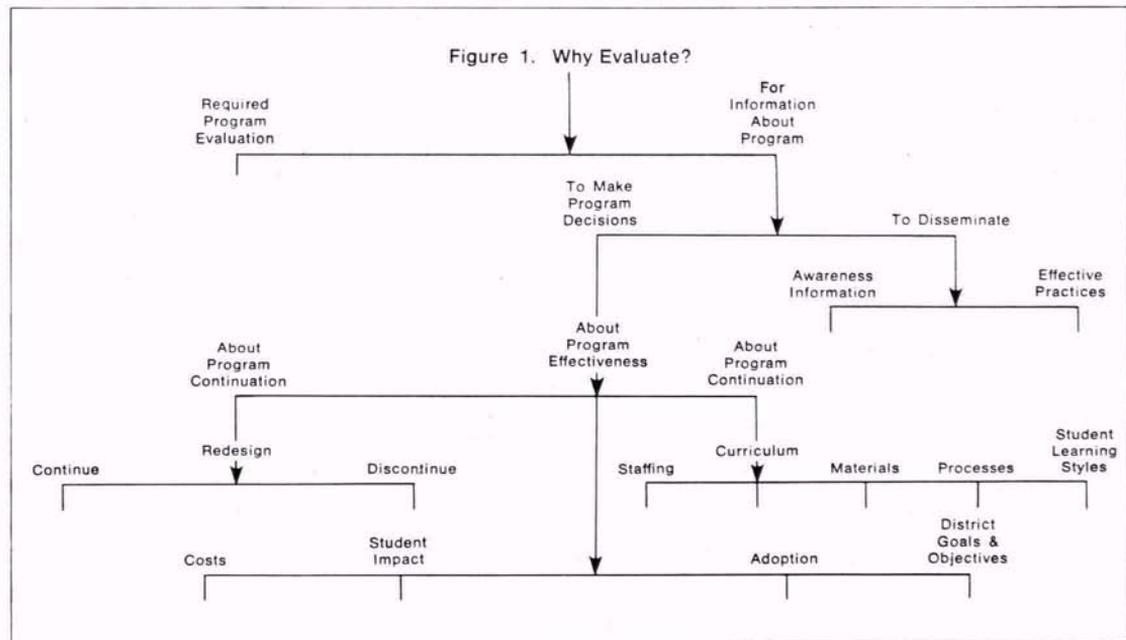
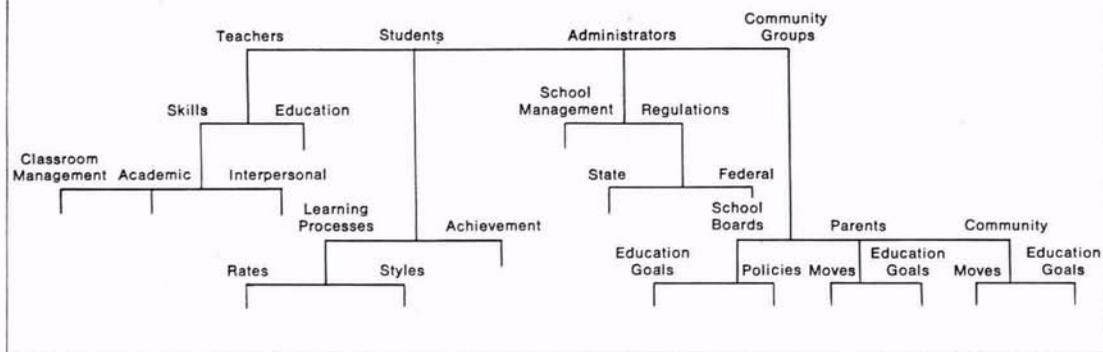


Figure 2. Whom Do You Evaluate?



ship to the project or program. For years educational evaluation has focused on teachers and student achievement. Rarely has evaluation considered those factors that free or constrain the education program. Decisions by school boards or administrators often affect program, as do other factors such as the curriculum, its scope, and sequence; the parents and the community; peer teacher or student pressures; laws and regulations; or textbooks and instructional materials.

An example of parent and community influence on education is provided by the setting of minimum standards for public schools in Oregon. After three years of study and development and 29 public hearings and workshops, Oregon citizens determined that every student in the elementary and secondary schools shall have the opportunity to learn and to function effectively in six life roles: Individual; Learner; Producer; Citizen; Consumer; and Family Member. Each of these goals suggests the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function in these life roles. Further, the Oregon minimum standards say "Each school and its community should establish priorities among the goals to meet local needs. . . ."

Graduation requirements are detailed, "each local district . . . shall implement board-adopted high school graduation requirements . . ." and, "the local board shall adopt and make available to the community minimum competencies it is willing to accept as evidence students are equipped to function in the society in which they live."

Oregon communities and school boards have

a lot to say about Oregon schools. Their impact must be considered in evaluation of any school program. They are part of the "who" in educational evaluation.

Whom you evaluate has developed into the most explosive issue in evaluation. With a widespread grassroots feeling that "a good teacher is a good program," educational evaluation has often focused on the teacher, and this has frequently been carried out through the vagaries of student achievement measurement or through personnel evaluations. Both methodologies are so bursting with inequities that "who" evaluation has turned out to be a threat to job security and is viewed with consternation by teachers and administrators.

At this point it appears necessary to stress that evaluation is a far more pervasive concept than simply student achievement measurements. Critics of student standardized testing write and speak vociferously and tend to subvert the issue of evaluation. Evaluation is a far more comprehensive issue than tests and measurements, which are a part of evaluation, but not the total concept. Tests and measurement are tools, and an evaluator needs both skills and tools to conduct an evaluation.

Whom you evaluate is directly related to "why" and "what" you evaluate. Your evaluation is conducted in relation to *all* those persons who have any impact on the "why" and "what."

This may involve teachers, administrators, the school board, parents and community members or groups, and the students themselves.

These are the persons then who should be evaluated in terms of their relationship to the program. Your concern is not necessarily with what good people they are, but how they impact the program.

Whom then do you evaluate? Everybody who impacts the program, and how they provide this impact in relation to the goals and objectives of the program.

What impacts do you evaluate? Both cognitive and affective impacts, and you measure as effectively as available tools will measure. The adequacy of the tools must be kept in perspective with the apparent impact they seem to measure.

Figure 2 provides a view of the "who" in evaluation and details some of the ways in which they might affect the program.

Conscientious use of this information brings into consideration all the efforts that can be made to optimize human potential. Program improvement should not be a hit-or-miss affair. Such evaluation results can detail specific areas needing attention and provide a sound basis for tailoring program improvement techniques to these specifics.

In-service, as one technique for program improvement, may be directed to develop skills in teachers, or it may focus on the school board and community groups, guiding them to develop contemporary educational goals. Or in-service may be developed for parent groups, giving them skills to develop an effective parent organization, parenting skills, or adult-child tutoring skills.

In-service may even be developed for student groups, teaching them skills of classroom participation, organization, or an endless array of student effectiveness techniques.

Any number of program improvement topics can be considered, but the important thing is that evaluation data allow improvement techniques to be targeted, recorded, evaluated, and reevaluated. Good evaluation ensures baseline data have been recorded with the result that change can be measured, traced, and compared.

With so many "who's" and so much "what" in a comprehensive evaluation, the evaluation design that sorts out all the relationships and interrelationships becomes complex and of prime importance. To avoid this complexity, educators

have tended to dwell on the two dimensions of the program: teachers and student impact. This narrowness has presented problems. Too much complexity can present problems in another direction, that of too much information without proper focus.

Evaluation questions and goals and objectives can guide an evaluator to primary, secondary, and possibly tertiary focus, thus providing manageable information. Also, the complexity of comprehensive evaluation can be solved by designing an evaluation cycle for more than one year (possibly a three- to five-year cycle).

Concern for good evaluation in education is becoming widespread. Nearly all federal education programs require evaluation, and many school districts and educational organizations are hiring evaluators. The U.S. Office of Education recently funded a project to develop evaluation designs for Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Several states have adopted one or more of these evaluation designs to be used statewide and many more states have pilot districts implementing these evaluation designs. Every district spending Title I ESEA funds is involved in some form of evaluation, and this is the majority of school districts in the United States.

Evaluation then must come into its own; it is here to stay, and has an integral role in education whether it is in planning or operating an educational program. The decision is not whether to evaluate or not evaluate, because evaluation is constantly taking place formally or informally. Rather, it is to determine why you are evaluating, what you are evaluating, and whom you are evaluating, then evaluate regularly. \overline{E}



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