Evaluation: The International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice (2003-2004)

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Evaluation is a quarterly, European-based journal that in addition to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary peer-reviewed articles occasionally provides *Special Issues, Visits to the World of Practice, News from the Community, Book Reviews, Speeches and Addresses,* and *Debates, Notes, and Queries.* The publisher highlights the journal's interdisciplinarity (across fields of research), interconnectivity (across fields of practice), and internationality (across countries and continents). The journal appears quarterly and can be purchased for £51 per individual (approximately $92) and £372 for institutions (approximately $671) per annual subscription.

In the following, the most recent four issues of *Evaluation*–Volumes 9(4), 2003 to 10(3), 2004–are analyzed in terms of theory-specific, research-specific, and practice-related articles published and themes from the *News from the Community* and *Speeches and Addresses*.

Articles reflecting theory-orientation illuminate general or abstract principles of the nature or practice of evaluation. There will not be a distinction here between theory and meta-theory.

Contributions categorized as research are those that discus mainly methodological issues or evaluation tools and how they are employed in specific contexts. It is believed that this methodological approach best summarizes the core of research, that is, "disciplined investigation" (Scriven 1991, p. 312).

Practice-reports are those that describe a specific evaluation project. While some of those articles may attempt to build evaluation theory or contribute to methodology, specific evaluation projects are the core of discussion.

Overall, there were 22 articles from contributors of 11 countries published within the last year. Of these contributions, 6 are theory-oriented, 8 are research/methodology-oriented, and 8 are accounts of practice (see Figure 1).
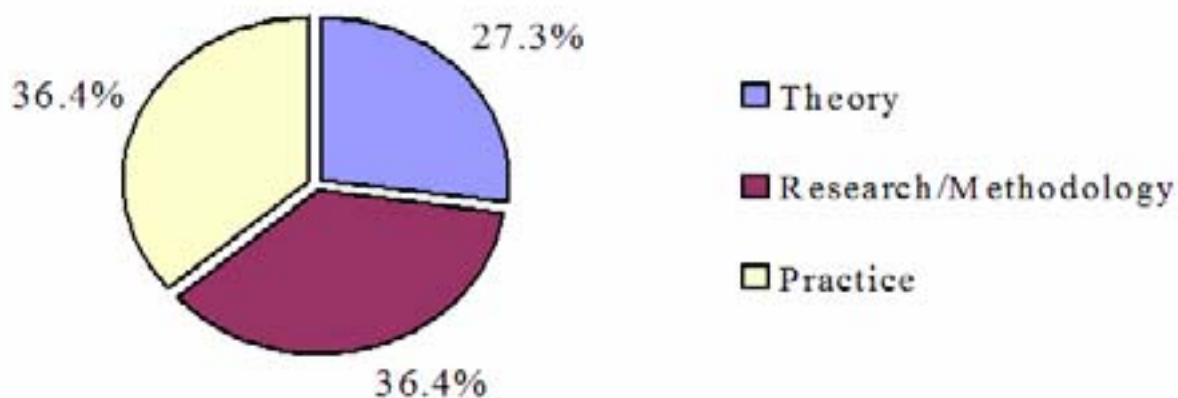

Figure 1: Distribution of articles

Theory

All six theoretical articles were published in a Special Issue of *Evaluation* (Vol. 10(1)), which contains a selection of papers presented at the European Evaluation Society's 5th biennial conference entitled *Learning, Theory, Evidence: Three Movements in Contemporary Evaluation*. The first of these articles is Stern's

(2004) personal reflection on "What Shapes European Evaluation?" Stern generalizes features of the European culture and infers tasks for policy and practice of the European community of evaluators. The second contribution, "Theory-Based Evaluation and Learning: Possibilities and Challenges" (Van der Knaap, 2004) attempts to overcome the split between positivist and constructivist paradigms through theory-driven evaluation in public policy which also considers the complexity of society thus providing learning opportunities to governments. Mark and Henry (2004) present a framework of evaluation influence and the underlying mechanisms to be considered. Stame (2004) revises theory-driven evaluation and provides ideas for coping with complexities in hierarchical governmental programs. Virtanen and Uusikylä (2004) try to re-conceptualize the traditional logic of cause and effect under consideration of "ontological premises, conceptions of causality, and relationships to rational theories of action of different program evaluation paradigms (p.77)." The last article in this category is Rieper's (2004) discussion of Popper's significance to and influence in evaluation by illustrating his impact on two opposite figures in evaluation, Campbell and Lindblom.

Research/Methodology

There are eight articles within the last year across the four issues that contain research and methodology-oriented contributions to *Evaluation*. Seven articles provide frameworks, approaches, or tools for evaluation in specific contexts such as public policy, social programs, training, and aid (Ling, 2003; Thurston & Potvin, 2003; Brousselle, 2004; Crawford et al, 2004; Bulgarelli & Gori, 2004; Johnson et al, 2004; Saunders & Heflinger, 2004). Davies (2004) provides a methodological approach to representing theories of organizational change to evaluate impacts of international aid agencies. This article is especially interesting

because it provides other approaches to depicting program theory in addition to the traditional logic model. Davies (2004) argues that some theories may have to be represented in their complexity through networks rather than directional simplifications. While his contribution focuses on international aid agencies, it may be useful to other contexts; programs of all types are initiated through organizations, none of which are simple, unidirectional entities. Overall, the research/methodological contributions embrace the interdisciplinary nature of the journal.

Practice

The practice-oriented contributions to the last four issues of *Evaluation* contain specific examples of evaluation in policy, health, environment, welfare, and crime prevention evaluation among others. These are of specific use for those readers who have an interest or are active in the specific areas, but also provide ideas for evaluation work in other contexts. As such these contributions reflect the interconnectivity feature of the journal.

News from the Community

Each issue within the last year included *News from the Community* containing special evaluation-specific developments in individual countries (e.g., developments in France in autumn 2003, in Vol. 9,4), announcements of conferences and awards to be distributed, calls for papers (e.g., to the 6th biennial EES conference, Vol. 10,1), references to specific research (e.g., the IOCE initiative to conduct a survey, Vol. 10, 2), recommendations for and announcements of training, seminars, or workshops; and special honors in evaluation. Overall, *News from the Community* is not limited to the European community but embraces the evaluation community internationally.

Speeches and Addresses

This component of the journal includes addresses and speeches that were presented at evaluation events and are to be disseminated to a wider audience—the readers of Evaluation (see Sage). Within the last year there have been three speeches and addresses. Issue 9(4) includes two contributions: Pawson (2003) and Stek (2003). Pawson's address is based on a presentation given at the 5th biennial EES conference and discusses tasks for developing theory in evaluation, which include: (1) developing a theory-driven approach to systematic review of existing evaluations, (2) improving the transferability of findings in program evaluation to other programs, and (3) elucidating program complexity. Stek's (2003) contribution "Evaluation at the World Bank and Implications for Bilateral Donors" was presented at the "25th anniversary of the IOB, the evaluation body of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Development Co-operation" (p.491).

The next contribution followed in issue 10(3), a "keynote address to the 9th UK Evaluation Society Annual Conference" (p. 366), in which Sanderson (2004) presented "perspectives on rationality" while arguing for "a more 'practical' conception of rationality as a basis for an appropriate institutional framework for 'getting evidence into practice,' serving the emphasis the UK government puts on "evidence-based policy making (p.366)."

References

Stern, Elliot (Ed.), (2003). Evaluation: The International Journal of Evaluation Theory, Research and Practice, 9(4)-10(3).

Stern, Elliot (2004). What shapes European evaluation: A personal reflection. In: Evaluation: The International Journal of Evaluation Theory, Research and Practice, 10(1): 7-15.

Appendix I Summary of classifications

Theory
Vol. 10(1)

Stern, E.: *What shapes European Evaluation? A Personal Reflection*

Van der Knaap, P.: *Theory-Based Evaluation and Learning: Possibilities and Challenges*

Mark, M.M. and Henry, G.T.: *The Mechanisms and Outcomes of Evaluation Influence*

Stame, N.: *Theory-Based Evaluation and Types of Complexity*

Virtanen, P. and Uusikylä, P.: *Exploring the Missing Links between Cause and Effect: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Micro–Macro Conversions in Programme Evaluation*

Rieper, O.: *Exploring Popper's Relevance for the Evaluation Community*

Research and Methodology
Vol. 9(4)

Ling, T.: *Ex Ante Evaluation and the Changing Public Audit Function: The Scenario Planning Approach*

Thurston, W.E. and Potvin, L.: *Evaluability Assessment: A Tool for Incorporating Evaluation in Social Change Programmes*

Vol. 10(1)

Davies, R.: *Scale, Complexity and the Representation of Theories of Change*

Vol. 10(2)

Brousselle, A.: *What Counts is not Falling... but Landing: Strategic Analysis: An Adapted Model for Implementation Evaluation*

Crawford, P.; Perryman, J. and Petocz, P.: *Synthetic Indices: A Method for Evaluating Aid Project Effectiveness*

Bulgarelli, A. and Gori, E.*: Information Systems for the Evaluation of the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Vocational Training Programmes*

Vol. 10(3)

Johnsen, A.; Robertsen, K.; and Äsland, D.Y.: *Contracting Out Municipal Auditing: Conceptual Framework and Assessment*

Saunders, R.C. and Heflinger, C.A.: *Integrating Data from Multiple Public Sources: Opportunities and Challenges for Evaluators*

Practice

Vol. 9(4)

Bustelo, M: *Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming: Ideas from a Meta-Evaluation Study*

Alexander, H.: *Health-Service Evaluations: Should We Expect the Results to Change Practice?*

Mickwitz, P.: *A Framework for Evaluating Environmental Policy Instruments: Context and Key Concepts*

Vol. 10(2)

Skinner, D.: *Primary and Secondary Barriers to the Evaluation of Change: Evidence from Two Public Sector Organizations*

Ashworth, K.; Cebulla, A.; Greenberg, D. and Walker, R.: *Meta-Evaluation: Discovering What Works Best in Welfare Provision*

Vol. 10(3)

Marra, M.: *The Contribution of Evaluation to Socialization and Externalization of Tacit Knowledge: The Case of the World Bank*

Halliday, J.; Asthana, S.M.N. and Richardson, S: *Evaluating Partnership: The Role of Formal Assessment Tools*

Johnson, S.D.; Bowers, K.J.; Jordan, P.; Mallender, J.; Davidson, N. and Hirschfield, A.F.G.: *Evaluating Crime Prevention Scheme Success: Estimating 'Outcomes' or How Many Crimes Were Prevented*