

Program evaluation in co-operative education: A dearth of standards?

LEIGH DEVES¹

Sydney, Australia

In reviewing the application of program evaluation in the field of co-operative education, this paper identifies basic deficiencies in research studies indicative of a misconception about the nature of evaluation – specifically the failure to apply standards and criteria. After discussing concept of evaluation, the paper explicates several ideas, approaches and models fundamental to evaluative practices, with particular attention to program evaluation in the context of co-operative education. The intention of this, and a subsequent paper that draws upon these models, is to assist practitioners substantiate claims of benefit attributed to cooperative education. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2011, 12(3), 149-162)

Key Words: evaluation, program evaluation, responsive evaluation, utilisation

A significant, if understated, criticism that can be levelled at co-operative education as a body of practice, is the relative lack of well designed and conducted evaluative studies to substantiate claims of benefit, and to guide practice (Deves, 1996). As noted by Ryan, Toohey and Hughes (1996) cooperative programs are “...widely accepted as a valuable and successful component of professional education, [however] the lack of good quality research makes it difficult to draw unequivocal conclusions” (p. 335). Reasons given for this apparent deficiency range from a lack of skill, resources and measurement instruments, compounded by a reticence to expose programs to criticism (Hayden, Dowell & Saenger, 2001; Walo, 2001). It may be that such studies *are* conducted but limited to local consumption – the provision of formative feedback to local stakeholders taking precedence over a more general research ambition.

A review of studies in cooperative education claiming to be evaluative is, however, suggestive of a more fundamental issue – there may be a lack of understanding of the concept of evaluation in a research context. Many studies offer important insights into specific co-operative education programs, but from largely exploratory or descriptive viewpoints. Exploratory and descriptive research is valuable in terms of their respective purposes, and also as critical precursors to evaluation research, but they fall short of meeting the demands of evaluation.

This paper provides an overview of the nature and conduct of evaluation research in the context of programs, such as co-operative education programs. In so doing, it draws upon the conceptual literature comprising program development and evaluation, blending illustrative examples, where possible, from studies of co-operative education. This paper will be followed by another explicating the nature,

¹ Formerly: Professor of Management, Charles Darwin University; Director, Graduate School of Management, University of Western Sydney; Director, International Programs, Sydney Graduate School of Management. Address correspondence to: ldeves@bigpond.net.au

conduct and results of a major evaluation study of a co-operative education program involving the development of management competence in the Australian banking industry. The purpose of both papers is to encourage researchers to apply more critically the principles and templates of evaluation research to their specific program interests to achieve the ambition that "...research in the area [goes] beyond justifying its existence to demonstrating its true experiential learning and value" (Haddara & Skanes, 2007, p. 67).

ON EVALUATION

There being "...no single, universally accepted philosophy of evaluation..." (Worthen & Sanders, 1987, p. 46), considerable diversity is readily apparent in evaluation methods, particularly with respect to program evaluation. Within this diverse enterprise, however, there is general agreement that evaluation serves a particular purpose that, conceptually, differentiates it from other research types, such as exploratory and descriptive research. Exploratory and descriptive research offer vital information about the existence and nature of phenomenon. Descriptive research is often associated with defining characteristics to enable differentiation between groups - it therefore, forms the basis of classification. For example, descriptive research by Coll and Chapman (2000a) identifies and contrasts important perceptual differences between host employers and program coordinators in relation to service quality. Exploratory research informs contextual significance. One might rely on exploratory research to articulate significant aspects of the strategic antecedents (or history) leading to implementation of cooperative education as a preferred development strategy - for example, establishing the a priori expectations of prospective learning outcomes held by the various parties to creative initiatives.

Evaluation, however, is characterised by a purpose that moves beyond descriptions of empirical observations or facts to make *judgments* about *value* or *worth*. The question of whether the effort involved in creating or participating in cooperative education is worthwhile is one that necessitates judgements that extend beyond the logical limitations of both exploratory and descriptive research. As Cochran (1978) comments, evaluation "...refers specifically to the process of collecting and analysing indices of the impact of social interventions for the purpose of making judgements" (p. 334); for example, determining the worthiness of social interventions, such as educational programs, designed and implemented to overcome deficiency or, stated positively, to enhance human capability (Rossi & Freeman, 1989; Chen, 1990; Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991).

Judgements about programs per se and their evaluation are not determined within a social void. Rather, they are influenced - wittingly and unwittingly - by a host of contextual factors of contemporary and historical significance that characterise 'dynamic action settings' (Weiss, 1972). Factors that have shaped, for example, the values underpinning the rationale of a program which, in turn,

manifest in the standards and criteria employed to judge the benefits, or otherwise, of programs. It would, for example, be surprising to learn that all stakeholders – hosts, students, coordinators, sponsors – hold the same values with equanimity. The perceptual differences reported by Coll and Chapman (2000a) for example, imply different values and expectations amongst stakeholders.

The evaluative process is, therefore, pregnant with circumstantial issues requiring explication *in situ*, given their influence on the nature and conduct of an evaluative study. Indeed, the ability of the researcher to formulate and justify the standards expected or anticipated, and the criteria and methods by which those standards can be (or have been) measured are qualities essential to any evaluative study. By making explicit those issues and criteria underpinning the judgemental process, evaluation can not only be differentiated from other types of research, it also can build upon foundations established through, for example, descriptive studies. Arguably, the absence of declared and justifiable standards and criteria renders studies vacuous and misleading from an evaluative stance. This is because the composition and basis of comments about programs – such as ‘beneficial’, ‘effective’ or ‘desirable’ – is either absent or ambiguous.

For example, Richards (1975) asserts benefits accruing to employers in terms of access to ‘better employees’ and the nexus between academe and industry, but laments the lack of effective tripartite communications – assertions based on unspecified ‘personal encounters,’ presumably involving observation. Based on a random sample of students involved in cooperative programs over several years, Reiss (1997) asserts a positive relationship between the number of placements completed by students and their assessment of several job-related factors (e.g. challenge, variety, skill utilisation, learning). In their study of service quality, Coll and Chapman (2000a) identify important concerns expressed by employers (e.g. placement support) and perceptual differences between employers and course coordinators across a range of program factors. Aleisa and Alabduhfez (2002) report on the experiences of various stakeholders to conclude “the introduction of co-operative education has worked in this environment” (p. 4). Based on a preliminary evaluation, Cullen (2005) reports frequencies to draw conclusions about the employment related benefits derived from a program designed for environmental science students. Deves and Yeow (1993) offer simple frequencies to underpin their conclusion about the achievement of program objectives associated with a management development program. In each example, the results are encouraging and have undoubtedly yielded data important to strategic and operational aspects of each program and, equally importantly, the political context. But the point to be made about each study, and similar studies into co-operative education, is that the reviewer is left in a logical quandary principally due to the absence of critical information concerning the benchmarks upon which the conclusions and often, concomitant advocacy, are based. They, therefore, fall short of the demands of evaluation. Consequently, an observation that a majority of

program participants respond 'positively' to a program should be treated with a healthy dose of scepticism until justified standards are imposed to enable determinations of worthiness. Relative to what? is a question largely left unanswered.

On occasions, standards might be stated as ideal or theoretical constructs, such as the statistical significance of observations – that is, without, in any sense, devaluing descriptive data, testing the significance of observed differences provides a more substantive base to support inferences of benefit. For example, Rainsbury, Hodges, Burchell and Lay (2002) test the significance of differences in the importance of soft and hard competencies reported by business students completing a cooperative program against those who had not. In noting a significant difference between the two groups, they draw several substantive conclusions concerning the benefits of cooperative programs, including implications to assist others to tailor programs around skill development. On other occasions, the standards might reflect more prosaic determinations indicative of the expectations of program stakeholders, particularly sponsors, to achieve specified outcomes; for example, retention and completion rates; or, knowledge and skills (however defined and measured) needing to improve across a prescribed range rather than being haphazard in development.

To leave the benchmarks implicit, or believe they are axiomatic, is to miss a fundamental step in the evaluative process, thereby limiting the conceptual and applied value of the research. In this sense, studies that are exploratory and/or descriptive in nature may be important precursors to an evaluation study, but they are not substitutes.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

An important measure of the effectiveness of an evaluation is *utilisation* or the influence on program stakeholders, particularly those sponsoring and managing programs, since program evaluations are undertaken to "...inform decisions, clarify options, reduce uncertainties and provide information...within the boundaries of time, place, values and politics" (Patton, 1986, p. 14). Utilisation, at least in part, is a function of the quality of ideas (or theories) and methods driving the research – that is, conceptual and methodological soundness enhance the prospect of utilisation. Soundness is, however, contextually dependent and therefore program theory (and subsequent evaluation methods) require adaptation to the idiosyncrasies of the specific research setting, as Worthen and Sanders (1987) acknowledge:

The purist view [of research] that looks noble in print yields to practical pressures demanding that the evaluator use appropriate methods based on an epistemology that is right for that evaluation, or even multiple methods based on alternative epistemologies within the same evaluation. (p. 49)

A common example of the need for alternative methods is when an evaluation seeks to involve multiple stakeholders who hold different views, priorities and expectations (sometimes conflicting) about the rationale, delivery and outcomes of a program. The decision to employ a unitary standard either through consultative processes to resolve differences or by imposition that acknowledges primacy, or, to adopt multiple standards that embrace pluralism, reflects the contextual dependency of evaluation. Whatever the decision, the researcher cannot shirk responsibility for the derivation and justification of robust standards and the application of those standards with intellectual integrity.

In developing their notion of 'prosaic theory' to drive evaluation, Chen and Rossi (1983) advocate the need for theories "...that construct plausible and defensible models of how programs can be expected to work before evaluating them" (p. 285). Elaboration is provided in the seminal work of Shadish, Cook and Leviton (1991) who argue that, notwithstanding contextual idiosyncrasy, program evaluations need to attend to several 'theories of practice'. The theories encourage the researcher develop coherent and justifiable understandings of program development; the construction of knowledge; stakeholder values; the use of information; and research practice. Inter-relationships between the theories add to the complexity of conducting a program evaluation – for example, multiple stakeholders with different but legitimate interests and values may result in the drive for different types of knowledge and measures to meet their respective interests. To achieve this, evaluation methodology necessarily embraces a broad repertoire of approaches with varying degrees of flexibility to facilitate adaptation to specific research contexts.

Pursuing the idea of prosaic theory opens several conceptual models of programs and evaluation to guide a study towards soundness.

By definition, programs are not capricious in nature, design or intent. To be 'purposeful and organised' (Chen, 1990) implies that:

...programs are the product of conscious and systematic efforts directed at obtaining knowledge of a deficiency or problem (i.e. type, degree, frequency) and developing strategies and intervening practices to ameliorate – if not eliminate – the problem and its effects. (Deves, 1997, p. 77).

Co-operative educational programs, for example, represent deliberate efforts to infuse traditional tertiary courses with opportunities to develop knowledge and skills relevant to the contemporary workplace in vivo, thereby enhancing student capabilities beyond the limitations generally associated with traditional class-based practice.

As purposeful interventions, programs characteristically proceed through developmental stages (Pancher & Westhues, 1989) culminating in a design

embodying several constituent elements that, in turn, provide the classic foci of an evaluation. These elements include:

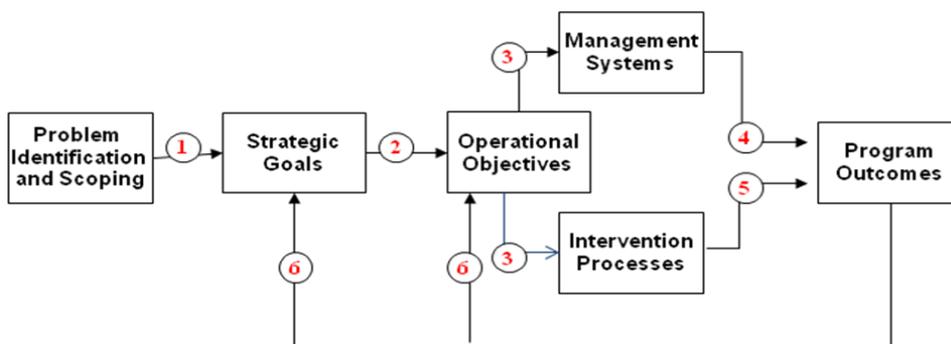
- *Problem formulation*: embracing those diagnostic activities eliciting knowledge of the problem (e.g. nature, causality, distribution) and relevant contextual factors (e.g. history, priority, target population);
- *Goal statements*: indicating the future state desired by sponsors and functionally oriented objectives;
- *Delivery systems*: involving resource allocations and the specific intervention to deliver the desired outcome; and
- *Program outcomes*: associated with the goals and objectives.

One implication, critical to the conduct of a rigorous evaluation, is the need for the researcher to explore issues associated with each element to discover aspects that may not be obvious initially, but may be important drivers of programs and evaluation studies. For example, a program may have formally stated goals and objectives acknowledged by all stakeholders, but they may also be driven by informally held views that warrant attention in an evaluation. Hence, the need for the researcher to invest in examining salient aspects with not only proponents but also dissidents who may question, for example, the assumed causes of problems, resourcing constraints, and the benefits assumed to be associated with outcomes. Extracting views from a wide range of formal and informal sources allows the researcher to pose legitimate research questions that enhance the utility of an evaluation. Taylor (2003), for example, examines administrative and management roles in a newly established unit responsible for program delivery. In hypothetical terms, if the diverse responsibilities of the position were a source of role ambiguity, it may be a significant factor inhibiting the efficient delivery of a program.

Around these common elements, Perkins (1977) has shaped a heuristic model depicting the several points of intervention to help focus program evaluation. In practice, the clarity of differentiation between these focal points tends to blur due to the linkages between elements and the broad nature of research questions which tend to encompass several elements. It would, for example, be difficult to evaluate the performance of a program without knowing the degree of congruence between objectives and goals (compliance evaluation) and the appropriateness of the strategic goals to the identification and scope of the problem (strategic evaluation) targeted by a program. In relation to co-operative education, there is an apparent bias towards impact or summative evaluation, to the detriment of both design and management evaluation. Perhaps this is understandable in the context of the politics of resource decisions and the need to certify utility. However, gaining an appreciation of implementation issues faced by program administrators, how they were dealt with and the consequences, as a program cycle unfolds yields practical information useful to others (Brekke, 1987). To do otherwise, deprives institutions,

including host organisations, of a vital source of learning (Forss, Cracknel & Samset, 1994). For example, using a strategy to penetrate a target population that proves inadequate begs questions beyond that strategy. It may illuminate concerns about the design, goals and objectives, and the problem identification and scoping phase that are worthy of consideration in an evaluation study. What, for example, are the consequences of broadening or narrowing selection criteria? Scriven (1967) includes these types of concerns in formative evaluations conducted during the program cycle to enable administrators to refine aspects of the program in a timely manner. As Worthen and Sanders (1987) comment:

...both formative and summative evaluation is essential because decisions are needed during the developmental stages of a program to improve and strengthen it, and again, when it is stabilized, to judge its final worth or determine its future. (p. 35)



Key:

- 1 Strategic evaluation
- 2 Compliance evaluation
- 3 Design evaluation
- 4 Management & control evaluation
- 5 Intervention effect evaluation
- 6 Program impact evaluation

Source: adapted from Perkins (1977, p 642).

FIGURE 1:
Intervention points for program evaluation

Deves (1996) included measures of various ancillary corporate and academic processes in an evaluation to assist steering of the implementation of a co-operative program.

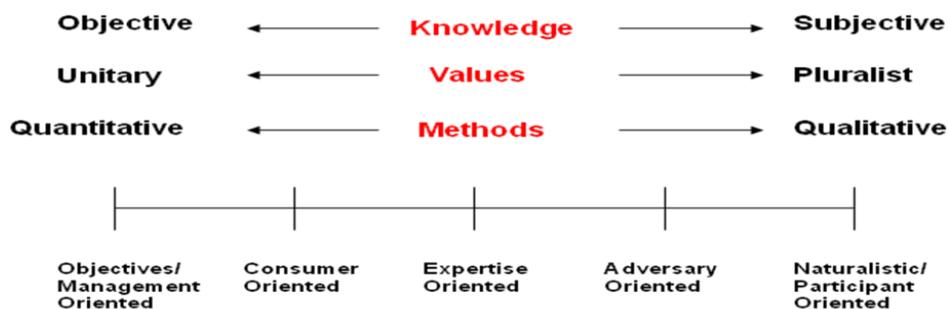
TYPES OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

Contextual dependency may curtail replication of research and thus deny the field of program evaluation widely accepted and precise taxonomies. Indeed, theorists continue to debate a broad range of issues (Rossi & Wright, 1977; Alkin, 1990), not least of which, for example, is the use of evaluation studies. Some researchers support instrumentalism which places advocacy in the hands of the researcher; others hold a more limited position to focus on the de-mystification of programs that discourages advocacy – the implications of this debate for the role of evaluators are profound (Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991). Other evaluation theorists (e.g. Williams, 1989) point out that the differences lie more at the conceptual level than in terms of evaluation practice. That is, there are common threads that enable ‘patterns of practice’ (Shadish & Epstein, 1987) to be derived.

In their effort to impose a general shape over the field, Worthen and Sanders (1987) outline several approaches to program evaluation that emerge from three dimensions labelled objectivist-subjectivist epistemology, unitary-pluralist values and quantitative-qualitative techniques. These dimensions, they argue, reflect “...different philosophical assumptions about knowledge and values [that] give rise to different evaluation methods” (p. 49). That is, methodological differences are artefacts of the stance taken to questions of knowledge and values. Although not addressing evaluation specifically, Coll and Chapman (2000b) provide an excellent overview of the principal philosophical issues that discriminate between these dimensions. Each dimension is viewed as a continuum indicative of degrees of commitment to the ideas espoused, and not as mutually exclusive dichotomies – that is, within an evaluation, some questions may be addressed more effectively by using objectivist constructs and quantitative principles, whereas others are more conducive to the constructs and principles associated with subjectivist and qualitative research. At a practical level, the difference might be viewed in terms of the breadth and depth of the research – breadth favouring quantitative analysis and depth favouring qualitative analysis (Coll & Chapman, 2000b). The combination of approaches to research questions – termed critical multiplism (Shadish & Epstein, 1987) - can yield complementary data sets to confirm ideas that may otherwise remain tentative. For example, qualitative techniques are often used to amplify quantitative analysis, such as when greater detail (or depth) is required to understand notions of attribution.

The types of program evaluation derived are depicted in Figure 2. At one extreme, the characteristics of objective, unitary and quantitative research are used in objectives oriented approaches that focus on the extent to which specified goals and objectives have been achieved; and management oriented approaches where “...the central concern is on identifying and meeting the informational needs of managerial decision-makers” (Worthen & Sanders, 1987, p. 60). A combination of these approaches was employed by Deves (1996) in reporting preliminary findings about

the worth of a co-operative management education program. The primary objective of this study was "...to generate useful empirical data to overcome an acknowledged void in management information...thereby promoting rational discussion and future decision making about the [program] within the sponsoring organisation" (Deves, 1997, p. 140).



Source: adapted from Worthen and Sanders (1987)

FIGURE 2:
Types of program evaluation

At the other extreme, naturalistic and participant oriented approaches are underpinned by subjective, pluralistic and qualitative assumptions that focus on emergent constructs and understandings through idiographic means. These approaches attempt to "...portray the different values and needs of all individuals and groups served by the program, weighing up and balancing this plurality of judgements and criteria in a largely intuitive fashion" (Worthen & Sanders, 1987, p. 128). Coll and Chapman (2000b) state qualitative research is rarely reported in cooperative education – if so, the field is missing the opportunity to enrich and deepen understandings of the subjective experiences of stakeholders. In an example of the construction of case studies based on participative methods, such as interviews, to highlight or contrast experiential complexity, Wilson (1979) uses several individual case studies to "...deal with information in a complex, holistic, process oriented and participative way that mirrors the reality of life" (p. 456). More generally, Yin (1984) outlines the advantages of participative case studies to understand causal factors and processes associated with experiential change.

The assumption of linearity in Figure 2 provides for more eclectic interpretations, with the 'consumer', 'expertise' and 'adversarial' orientations being differentiable by the degree of commitment to either extreme. Consumer based evaluation tends to use predetermined and standardized variables to measure satisfaction – for example, Radhakrishna (2000) reports on satisfaction levels pertaining to the accuracy, usefulness, relevance and ease of understanding of information available to students prior to undertaking a cooperative unit. Importantly, this study was benchmarked institutional results against two other US institutions. Expert evaluations rely on professional judgements made by subject experts. This approach features prominently in the conduct of meta-evaluations and tends to focus on questions of policy, funding and quality assurance – for example, Baumgart (1994) evaluated a cooperative education scheme involving several programs to determine the implications for public funding models. Adversarial approaches, perhaps the most controversial and least popular approach, seek to capture diversity of opinion by deliberately creating opposing viewpoints to argue before an impartial adjudicator. Protagonists are required to agree on the issues and data requirements for an evaluation prior to constructing and presenting their interpretations that include rigorous examination of the opposition case. Proponents (Owen & Hiscox, 1977; Thurston, 1978; Wolf, 1979) claim this approach maximises accountability in evaluation and it is said to be helpful in comparative studies (Greene, Doughty, Marquat, Ray and Roberts, 1988). However, the conditions and resources required render this approach cumbersome. Similar results might be achieved more efficiently by using a steering committee that assumes the role of devil's advocate.

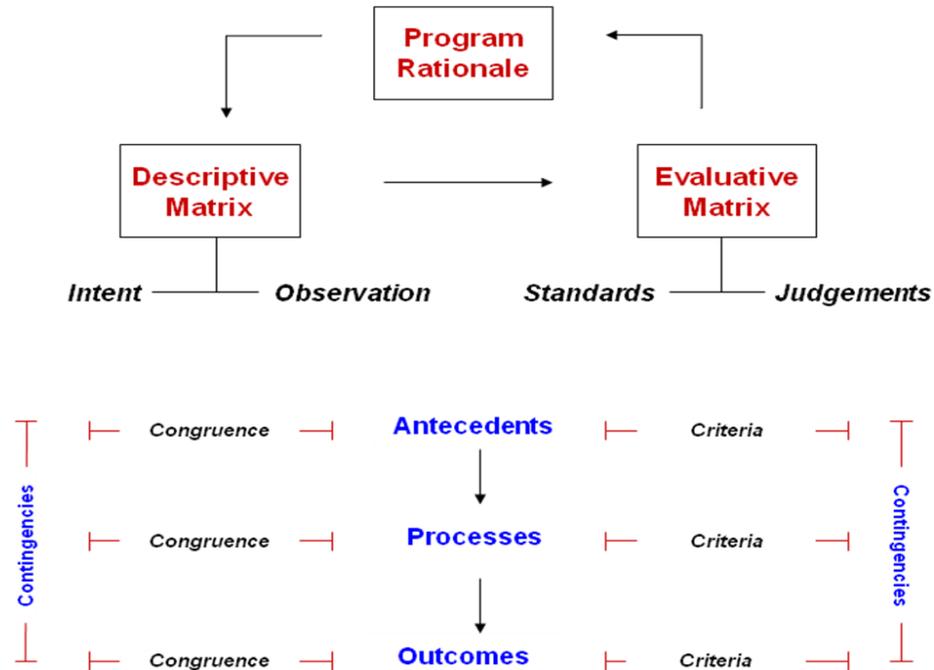
Although these approaches differ markedly, they share a commitment to the use of standards and criteria that enables judgements of worthiness to be made on justifiable grounds.

A MODEL OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

One general model of program evaluation that captures many of the issues discussed emerges from the work of Stake (1980) under the notion of responsive evaluation. This model, depicted in Figure 3, underpinned the empirical study of co-operative management education conducted by Deves (1996) and, due to its coherence and flexibility, is offered as a guide to assist practitioners to shape evaluation studies.

From this model, a program is seen in terms of three contingent concepts – antecedents, processes and outcomes - that can be married to those offered earlier by Perkins (1977). That is, antecedents equate to problem identification and scoping, and goals and objectives; and processes relate to management systems and interventions, etc. Evaluation is portrayed as a cycle with three stages – the evaluation matrix flows from the descriptive matrix which, in turn, flows from matters associated with the rationale of the program. Data gained from the

evaluative matrix must be related, ultimately, to the rationale. Both the descriptive and evaluative matrices are applied to each aspect of the program, but importantly, from different perspectives.



Adapted from Stake, 1980

FIGURE 3:
Responsive evaluation

The descriptive matrix addresses the degree of congruence or fit between the planned intent and the observations of the researcher – for example, Do the goals and objectives of the program capture the essence of the problem identified that gave rise to the rationale? How comprehensive and coherent is the scoping analysis? Is the intended outcome achievable? Is the implementation of the program’s structures and processes consistent with the planning? Do the outcomes observed accurately mirror the goals? What are the unintended outcomes? Undoubtedly, descriptive data gained during this phase is vital to stakeholders and an important precursor to the imposition of the evaluative matrix. But these data will not satisfy the ambition of evaluation since observations about intentions do

not address notions of value or worth. Hence, studies that base claims on description alone fall short of the mark.

The evaluation matrix involves the application of standards to observations of antecedents, processes and outcomes to determine judgements of worthiness about the program which are often expressed in terms of the beneficial or adverse consequences for various stakeholders, including program participants. To operate effectively, standards require not only measures of a quantitative and/or qualitative nature, but importantly, criteria that allow observations to be held against the relevant standards with clarity. Hence, the interest of evaluation theorists in the nature and basis of the standards imposed in a study, particularly in terms of explication and justification. Do the outcomes observed meet, exceed or fall short of expected standards? and Whose standards are employed to arrive at that judgement? are legitimate questions frequently left begging in many studies claiming to be evaluative. For example, Deves and Yeow (1993) observed improvements in a range of competencies ascribed to management based on self report measures. Whilst adequate as an observation (or description) of an outcome, the authors fail to declare or apply any standard, at least explicitly, that facilitates a judgement about the outcomes. Whether, or not, the results observed met the expectations (or standards) of stakeholders is unknown. From a pluralistic perspective, it may be that the program participants reporting improvements had their personal expectations met, but the sponsors considered the improvement reported to be short of the corporate standard, or, vice versa. Furthermore, meeting the personal expectations of participants might be indicative of benefit, but perhaps not if offset by the failure of participants to realise their work-related objectives having completed the management program. Herein lays the benefit of adopting pluralism in evaluation to gain not only diversity amongst legitimate stakeholders but also differences within a particular group through the use of multiple measures.

CONCLUSION

A key feature of the constructive development of any disciplined practice is the conduct of rigorous research that is informed by theories and models appropriate to the context of endeavour. Arguably, the development of cooperative education would be advantaged by research that adheres to the demands of evaluation theory and practice more closely than is currently evident. Hopefully, this paper will encourage greater deliberation on the concepts and principles integral to the evaluative process prior to execution thereby assisting the substantiation of claims of value and benefit.

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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative education (APJCE) arose from a desire to produce an international forum for discussion of cooperative education, or work integrated learning (WIL), issues for practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region and is intended to provide a mechanism for the dissemination of research, best practice and innovation in work-integrated learning. The journal maintains close links to the biennial Asia-Pacific regional conferences conducted by the World Association for Cooperative Education. In recognition of international trends in information technology, APJCE is produced solely in electronic form. Published papers are available as PDF files from the website, and manuscript submission, reviewing and publication is electronically based. In 2010, Australian Research Council (ARC), which administers the Excellence in Research (ERA) ranking system, awarded APJCE a 'B' ERA ranking (top 10-20%).

Cooperative education/WIL in the journal is taken to be work-based learning in which the time spent in the workplace forms an integrated part of an academic program of study. More specifically, cooperative education/WIL can be described as a strategy of applied learning which is a structured program, developed and supervised either by an educational institution in collaboration with an employer or industry grouping, or by an employer or industry grouping in collaboration with an educational institution. An essential feature is that relevant, productive work is conducted as an integral part of a student's regular program, and the final assessment contains a work-based component. Cooperative education/WIL programs are commonly highly structured and possess formal (academic and employer) supervision and assessment. The work is productive, in that the student undertakes meaningful work that has economic value or definable benefit to the employer. The work should have clear linkages with, or add to, the knowledge and skill base of the academic program.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The editorial board welcomes contributions from authors with an interest in cooperative education/WIL. Manuscripts should comprise reports of relevant research, or essays that discuss innovative programs, reviews of literature, or other matters of interest to researchers or practitioners. Manuscripts should be written in a formal, scholarly manner and avoid the use of sexist or other terminology that reinforces stereotypes. The excessive use of abbreviations and acronyms should be avoided. All manuscripts are reviewed by two members of the editorial board. APJCE is produced in web-only form and published articles are available as PDF files accessible from the website <http://www.apjce.org>.

Research reports should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry, a description and justification for the methodology employed, a description of the research findings-tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance for practitioners, and a conclusion preferably incorporating suggestions for further research. Essays should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to, and discussion of, relevant literature, and a discussion of the importance of the topic for other researchers and practitioners. The final manuscript for both research reports and essay articles should include an abstract (word limit 300 words), and a list of keywords, one of which should be the national context for the study.

Manuscripts and cover sheets (available from the website) should be forwarded electronically to the Editor-in-Chief. In order to ensure integrity of the review process authors' names should not appear on manuscripts. Manuscripts should be between 3,000 and 5,000 words, include pagination, be double-spaced with ample margins in times new-roman 12-point font and follow the style of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association in citations, referencing, tables and figures (see also, <http://www.apa.org/journals/faq.html>). The intended location of figures and diagrams, provided separately as high-quality files (e.g., JPG, TIFF or PICT), should be indicated in the manuscript. Figure and table captions, listed on a separate page at the end of the document, should be clear and concise and be understood without reference to the text.



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