
AN INTERACTIVE MATRIX FOR EVALUATING PROGRAM PROCEDURES

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Program evaluation has changed. Where early efforts looked for inputs which influenced outcomes, recent models give equal or greater emphasis to processes and contexts. Thus, an important goal of program evaluation is describing and, over time, redefining goals of program evaluation.

The teaching of writing too has changed; we now emphasize written language that is specific to a community of users, and language learning that occurs within contexts of specific communities of users, with masters teaching apprentices. In at least some universities, the teaching of writing has moved from English Departments into the many departments whose members constitute different language-using communities. The newly ordained writing instructor is the master physicist, historian, or engineer. Changes in university writing programs require new approaches to program evaluation. To describe the processes and contexts of a program which involves writing instruction in many disciplines, today's evaluator must study the processes and contexts of each discipline.

Experience with the University of Hawaii at Manoa's Writing Program suggests that diffuse evaluation can be aided by an interactive matrix. The matrix involves three program processes: collecting, analyzing, and disseminating. It also involves three program components: ideology, goals, and personnel. Most importantly, it

recognizes interactions of components with processes (e.g., collecting involves ideology), of process with process (e.g., to collect is also to disseminate), and of component with component. This matrix has guided our decisions on placement examinations, on teacher training, and on course guidelines.

Our experience with program evaluation guided by this matrix leads to several observations for writing-program evaluators:

1. Decisions are best guided by ongoing, systematic, internal evaluation.
2. Effective internal evaluation involves multiple stakeholders and multiple managers as program investigators.
3. Description requires attention to commonalities and differences across disciplines, with study of situational constraints
4. Use of the interactive matrix will yield information which would otherwise be unlikely to guide decision-making.