

contains only 15 pages. Otto Peters work is given three paragraphs and the work of Bjore Holmberg is only mentioned in passing in the discussion of Moore's theory of transactional distance. The theoretical contributions of people like Terry Evans and Daryl Nation are not mentioned or provided as options for further reading. In the Technologies and Media chapter, computer conferencing is covered in one page and there is no mention of the Internet and the World Wide Web. The authors admit in the preface that the book is "somewhat superficial". They justify this by saying it is an introductory text "intended to give an overview of the field and, quite frankly, to make a complex subject as simple as is appropriate for a first reading about the field." Simple and superficial are not synonyms. The book is designed for graduate students who should be used to dealing with complex concepts. Distance education is not a self-contained discipline with its own concepts and terminology. It draws on other fields such as educational psychology, adult education, and educational technology, fields that most graduate students will already be familiar with. There is no need to "dumb down" an introductory book on distance education simply because it is the readers' first exposure to the subject.

Despite some of its shortcomings, Moore and Kearsley's book is a valuable contribution to the literature on distance education and anybody teaching the subject will find it useful. However, it is not the comprehensive text that one might expect and so it should be used in conjunction with other readings to provide a balanced picture of the field.

REVIEWER

Mark Bullen is a Project Manager in the Distance Education and Technology division of Continuing Studies at the University of British Columbia. He is currently completing a PhD in Adult Education. His research interest is in the area of instructional design and computer-mediated communication.

The Program Evaluation Standards (2nd Edition), The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 1994. ISBN 0-8039-5732-7

Reviewed by Brian D. Kerr

"A standard is a principle mutually agreed to by people engaged in a professional practice, that, if met, will enhance the quality and fairness of that professional practice, for example, evaluation" (p. 2).

The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation has compiled 30 standards, which are based on "...knowledge gained from the professional

literature as well as from years of experience by educators and evaluation specialists." The goal was to develop standards to help ensure useful, feasible, ethical, and sound evaluation of educational programs, projects, and materials.

They have organized their Standards according to what they feel are the four important attributes of any evaluation: utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. The Utility Standards are identified to assist with the planning of an evaluation and cover a range of preliminary steps from stakeholder identification to information selection and scope; Feasibility Standards cover evaluation design and procedures; Propriety Standards concentrate mostly on ethics such as the rights of human subjects, disclosure of findings, responsibilities, conflicts of interest, and things of that nature; and Accuracy Standards focus on the findings of a particular evaluation, and examine the validity of results.

The Joint Committee explains that, these Standards are to be used as guiding principles, and not rules. It is stated in their that the aim of this book is to act as a guide for evaluating educational and training programs, projects, and materials in a variety of settings. Although, the Committee does caution that, "The Standards alone cannot guarantee or ensure the quality of any evaluation. Sound evaluation will require the exercise of professional judgement in order to adequately apply the Standards to a particular evaluation setting" (Preface, xviii).

The intention of this book on Program Evaluation seems to be to help people make decisions concerning evaluations and evaluation methodology. This covers everything from designing evaluations, to judging the findings and recommendations of any evaluation report. But please note, the Standards do not present specific criteria for making judgements. Again, according to the Joint Committee, "...they are intended to stimulate and facilitate thoughtful dialogue among clients, evaluators, and other stakeholders, and, where the evaluation is conducted by an evaluation team, reflection within the team itself (p. 4).

The Joint Committee has developed a systematic public process for establishing and testing their new Standards. The process involved many experts in, and users of, evaluation. It was impressed to thumb through the nearly 10 pages of Appendix which documented all the support groups having input into this project.

The Joint Committee explains that the Standards were developed for use by teachers, administrators, school board members, trainers, evaluators, curriculum specialists, legislators, personnel administrators, counselors, community leaders, business and educational associations, parents, and others. Basically, that means anyone who commissions or conducts an evaluation, or who uses evaluation results to improve education and training. Now that encompasses a pretty large and diverse audience!

The book begins with what is called a "Functional Table of Contents", where all the Standards are reorganized in terms of the major tasks for a program evaluation (i.e., deciding whether to evaluate, designing an evaluation, collecting information, analyzing information, as well as reporting, budgeting, contracting, managing, and staffing an evaluation). The entire book is organized in a similar

fashion. Right from the start a set of general steps are provided as a suggestion to follow/consider when applying the Standards. The book has four sections associated with the earlier-mentioned evaluation attributes (i.e., utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy). Each representative section begins with an overview of the specific attribute and associated Standards, then in smaller sub-sections, each standard is examined in detail beginning with a definition and an overview of intent, followed by guidelines and common errors associated with the application of that standard. For each standard, illustrated case studies are provided (at least one, usually two) that act as an aid to the reader in understanding the practical application of the standard in question. Each case or scenario is laid out to help the reader identify how to best use the standard, while examining the various attributes as related to the case in point. A final analysis is also provided, and of course, every section is followed with references to supporting documentation.

The book is well organized and easy to read. I especially like, and regularly use, the "Functional Table of Contents" which takes the reader right to the information being sought. The book itself is designed for reference with dark tabs on the outer edge of each page to assist the reader when s/he is thumbing through to find information on a particular standard. The black and white typeset throughout the book may not be a feast of colour for the eyes, but the content is still very clear and easy to read. I applaud the page layout and organization of content.

As a bonus, the Joint Committee has also supplied a checklist for applying the Standards, and permission has been given to photocopy this form. In addition, a process is suggested/offered to be used with this checklist to help promote effective evaluation practices and to serve as an audit for any evaluation process.

And, last but not least, a comprehensive glossary of evaluation terms is provided. While not quite as detailed as Michael Scriven's *Evaluation Thesaurus* (4th ed., Sage, 1991), it is a nice addition, and makes this book an ideal desktop companion for evaluators at any level.

The only downside I can see would be for those who are not adequately familiar with evaluation terminology. Such individuals may quickly start to wear a path to the glossary at the back of the book, and this may disrupt the flow of information. Regardless, the book definitely offers a wealth of information for the evaluator, whether new or experienced. I have no hesitation in recommending this book to anyone with an interest in evaluation.

REVIEWER

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- Kenny, Richard F., MacDonald, Colla J., Desjardins, Francois J., *Integrating Information Technologies to Facilitate Learning: Redesigning the Teacher Education Curriculum*, 26(2), 107-124.
- Kowch, Eugene; Schwier, Richard, *Considerations in the Construction of Technology - Based Virtual Learning Communities*, 26(1), 1-12.
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- Schwier, Richard A.; Misanchuk, Earl R., *An Investigation ofthe Perceived Quality ofDigital Media: Research and Research Design Issues*, 26(2), 87-106.
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- Vance, Kathleen; Fitzpatrick, Dale; Sackville, Patrick, *Computer Mediated Communications Inside a Classroom: A Study Us.ing CMT Technology with ELTStudents*, 26(3), 189-192.
- Zazelenchuk, Todd W., *Interactivity in Multimedia: Reconsidering Our Perspective*, 26(2), 75-86.

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The Digital Trip of Wetlands, Reviewed by Dell Franklin, 26(1), 57-60.

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