I think what made it feel like a research paper to me was all the references at the end. Granted, many publications (journal articles, wikis, and book chapters for example) include references, it just seemed like a lot of references and citations. In looking back over the glossary of terms at the end of the paper, I agree that it is a useful reference. Definitions for a variety of education-related terms are included and many of them have links to additional information. Some of the links are a bit tricky to navigate (links are connected so the addresses don't paste nicely into your browser) and others are dead or redirect you (the paper is 15 years old, after all) but there are some good resources linked, if you have a little bit of time to go exploring.

I can't speak for Jonathan, but I don't know that it's so much a need for altering the language, but rather consideration for the plethora of tasks that compete for our time. If I'm using "my own time" to read up on topics related to work, the author will need to grab my attention and hold it or I will think of 300 other work-related things I could be doing instead of reading that article. In this case, there was a lot of good content, but it felt like bait and switch. I thought I was going to get 27 pages worth of introduction to evaluation but what I ended up with was nine pages of appendices, 4 pages on assessment and 2.5 pages on school reform. Take out two more pages for the title page and contents, and there's not a lot left for evaluation. However, I'm a big girl and I know how to skim, so when it comes right down to it, whether or not an author uses up some of my bandwidth on "extraneous information" won't make that much difference to me. I'll take out of it what I want and disregard the rest (unless, of course, it's my EDTECH homework).

I think I should clarify what I believe having "vision" means. Looking up "vision" on the Mirriam-Webster's Online Dictionary Web site, the definition that best fits my idea of vision is "unusual discernment or foresight." For me the key word is unusual. When I think of an evaluator "without vision" I see someone who has discernment and foresight, just not unusual discernment and foresight. In my mind I see a difference between having vision and being a Visionary and it's all a matter of degree. In my view, being vision-challenged will hamper your ability to think outside the box (like discerning unexpected outcomes), but you are still capable of sharing the vision of the program you are evaluating and making choices and decisions based on program goals and intended outcomes. You are still capable of selecting an appropriate evaluation model, implementing the evaluation plan, analyzing data accurately, and reporting findings because the fundamental skills are there to carry out job-related tasks. You can see the big picture (because it's all right there if you look) but you can't imagine what's outside the picture frame. If I were on an evaluation team, I would definitely not be the
Because of our other readings, much of the information wasn’t really new (steps, component parts), but it was applied to a specific type of program (K-12 curriculum) rather than more generally to programs not related to education. Reference to Title I, education reform, as well as the examples listed in “III. Evaluation Framework,” are very education-specific and not covered in our other readings.

The document provides an overview of a variety of topics relevant to the K12 classroom, which may be helpful to those less familiar with K12 education. For experienced teachers, my guess is that several of the topics will be familiar (assessment, standardized testing, portfolios, higher order thinking skills) and other (like the history of Title I) would be of little interest. The program evaluation portions may be both new information and of interest.

I feel there are too many other topics introduced to really do justice to program evaluation. On page 3 of the document we read, “the goals of this document are to introduce teachers to basic concepts within evaluation.” True; basic concepts are introduced, but program evaluation is just one of many: education reform, Title I, program evaluation, assessment, portfolios, and a glossary of many education-related (not necessarily evaluation-related) terms. Readers’ attention is to taken to so many different areas that impact on any one topic will be lessened.

Because the focus of this course is learning how to evaluate programs, I expected “An Introduction to Program Evaluation for Classroom Teachers” to be a guide for classroom teachers who were going to actually evaluate programs. Instead, I found a research-like paper that included a number of topics, only one of which was program evaluation. In Chapter II - Evaluation Process and Plans, the authors state that evaluation will be conducted by an outside evaluator (p. 9). That tells me that this document isn’t intended for classroom teachers to be evaluators. Classroom teachers are, instead, the intended readers of this document, written by a consulting firm - Development Associates (they have since renamed the company Pal-Tech). With all that in mind, the first thing I would do is change the title to something like: “An Introduction to Improving K-12 Education.”

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If the focus is really going to be program evaluation, I would get rid of all the other stuff - Title I, assessment, portfolio, extraneous glossary terms - and expand on what’s left. Even though the focus is education, it is still very general. Like others have suggested, I would add examples to illuminate the main ideas. The Evaluation Framework section, only 1.5 pages, would be good to expand on. This would give those new to program evaluation a better idea of the big picture. Also, Chapter VII - Data Analysis, an area that would benefit from additional content. The document includes a bullet list (with lots of white space) of what would be included in a report but doesn’t actually get into the practical aspects of data analysis. Even though that would likely be outside the scope of an introductory document, it would be nice to see links to related resources.

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**Do you have to have vision to be a successful evaluator?**

I believe a successful evaluator must focus on both the big picture (vision) and its component parts. The evaluator needs to adopt the vision of the program in order to truly understand the program - shared vision among stakeholders is key to the success of any program or program evaluation. But the evaluator’s vision doesn’t stop there. An evaluator needs vision at the onset to develop an intimate understanding of the program. An evaluator needs vision throughout the evaluation process in order to make any needed adjustments. In the final stages, an evaluator needs vision to look beyond stated goals and objectives and see unexpected outcomes as well as new applications and audiences. But all the vision in the world won’t make for a successful evaluator. Unless you have the skills to implement the evaluation plan, collect the data, analyze the data, and present your findings, the evaluation - and evaluator - will not be successful. I think an evaluator without vision will experience relatively greater success than one who lacks fundamental skills, but ideally, teams evaluators will be comprised of individuals whose areas of expertise complement one another.

**How does vision fit with choosing the most appropriate evaluation model for a particular program?**

In choosing the most appropriate evaluation model, one must have a clear vision of the intended outcome of the evaluation. While there are numerous models from which to choose, most have very specific applications. Boulmetis & Dutwin provide a table (p. 92) that links types of models with intended outcomes.

Tags: None