

Teaching Evaluation to Stakeholders: Utilizing the Student-Teacher Relationship as an Outside Evaluator

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“Teaching of Evaluation”

- TOE TIG – primary focus is teaching in academia, not stakeholders.
- Literature Review turns up many references to *teaching evaluation* in which teaching describes what is being evaluated.
- I want to talk about *teaching as a verb*.
- Several types of evaluation include the assumption of teaching stakeholders about evaluation, but that is rarely the primary focus.

Why am I talking about this topic?

- I'm academically interested in learning.
- I'm housed within the School of Education.
- I evaluate programs in/for schools.
- I was originally trained as a cognitive psychologist.
- As an outside evaluator, I think it is important to find a way to cross the boundary from “outside”, without becoming an insider.

When I teach evaluation classes, I often think...

- that a lot of what happens in the classroom, also happens at meetings with stakeholders.
- that by conducting evaluation under the umbrella of the university, stakeholders think of evaluators as academics (especially in a university town).
- that very few students will actually be acting as professional evaluators (just like stakeholders).

So what kind of evaluation is this?

- Focus on capacity building
- Collaborative, but not in the Fetterman & Wandersman (2005) empowerment evaluation democratic sense. All stakeholders and evaluators probably do not have equal say in what happens.
- Collaborative/participatory in that stakeholders work *with* the evaluators. This work may be done together solely as a means for teaching.

Stakeholders evaluation developmental sequence

1. The Infant/Toddler phase.
 - *Teaching* is the focus.
 - Keep them out of trouble – safe from danger.
 - Build their self confidence.
2. The Kid phase
 - *Participatory/collaborative*
 - Gaining more independence.
 - Still need an authority.
3. The Adolescent/early adult phase.
 - *Empowerment evaluation.*
 - Work as equals more and more.
 - Nearing independence from the authority.
 - Authority is still available for advice.

When is this an appropriate focus for an evaluation?

- When it is clear that sustainability of evaluation practices is important, but funds for long term outside evaluators will not be available.
- When you are working with stakeholders that are completely unfamiliar with evaluation.
- When your project director and/or funder think that it is important for stakeholders to learn about evaluation practices.

How to utilize the role of teacher

- Like a parent, start teaching at the first meeting.
- Don't assume that they know evaluation lingo.
- Listen carefully to questions and comments.
- Make sure you understand questions and if possible, the reason behind the question.
- Provide background information, literature for them.

More ways to utilize the teacher role

- Offer to conduct evaluation workshops.
- Never miss a “teaching moment”.
- Remember that each “student” brings something unique to contribute to the class. Make sure that stakeholders know that is true in evaluation.
- Use good teaching practices.

Good teaching practices

- Don't lecture at inappropriate times.
- Always *come prepared* for every single “class”.
- Use *alternative teaching methods*. Ask stakeholders to discuss possible evaluation problems, etc.
- May even want to use some of the activities in Preskill & Russ-Eft (2005).
- *Collaborate* with stakeholders. Create logic models together, etc. Use their ideas whenever possible.
- **Be available!**

Teaching goals

- You want them to understand evaluation and how it may be beneficial to them.
- One of your goals for them should be to become somewhat independent.
 - Funding for evaluation will probably end sometime.
 - Even if evaluation funding continues, they may want to move up the evaluation developmental sequence.

Benefits of teaching stakeholders about evaluation.

- They see you as an *approachable partner* (not someone who is out to get them).
- You make it “okay” that they don’t really know about evaluation at the beginning.
- They ask you questions when they don’t understand something.
- They attempt to contribute to the evaluation process (show you what they’ve learned).
- They attempt to collect data the “correct” way.

More Benefits

- They have a better understanding of the findings – both how they were obtained and what they mean.
- You can easily maintain the role of very helpful, yet outside evaluator (much like a teacher does), but that boundary is different.
- They are better prepared to sustain evaluation practices after the evaluation money is gone.

Possible problems with being “the teaching evaluator”

- You have to be willing to answer questions that may not be directly related to your evaluation contract.
- It may take you more time, especially at the beginning of your work with a stakeholder.
- Your “students” may not be interested in learning what you have to offer.
- They may not need you anymore.