Why outcomes-based evaluation?  
In search of value and impact

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Outcomes-based evaluation > outcomes assessment

Program
- personnel management
- curriculum
- outreach
- student learning
- instruction
- budget
- faculty development
- technology
- materials

Why outcomes?

What are outcomes?

- The effect of program activities and deliverables on target audiences of a program.
- Often described in terms of change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs (→ learning outcomes), program/social policies and conditions.

BOTTOM LINE:
Ultimately, what matters most in education is NOT what is taught, but what is LEARNED
Impact

- Program growth
- Improved curriculum & teaching
- Improved communication
- Better program understanding
- Better collaboration with external organizations
- Demonstrate value of program

Outcomes Evaluation in Government Grant Funded

Call for useful outcomes evaluation

- British Council / Overseas Development Administration Projects (1980’s & 90’s)
  - Beretta (Bangalore Project)
  - Mackay (IELT Project, Indonesia)
  - Alderson & Scott (Brazilian ESP Project)

“Evaluations are... intended to serve practical ends, to inform decision makers as to appropriate courses of action, and, above all, to be useful and to be used. An evaluation that is not used is in some important sense a failure” (Alderson, 1992).

Call for useful outcomes evaluation

- National Research Council of the National Academies official review of Title VI projects (2007):
  “Meaningful evaluations of outcomes and impacts are lacking.”

- 2010 NRC / LRC Grant Applications
Useful outcomes-based evaluation?

Outcomes at work: NRC evaluation project sample

- New, 2-Year Language Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project G: Direct Support for Teaching and Learning LCTLs – Language A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives and Activities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(a) To develop students' language skills in an LCTL up to the intermediate level by offering Language A through the 202 level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) To allow heritage language learners from the Language A community in Hawai‘i and other regions to fulfill the university’s general education language requirement by studying their heritage language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) To allow heritage language speakers from the Language A community in Hawai‘i and other regions to receive recognition and credit for their language skills by allowing them to enroll in a 299 or above course and receive back-credit for lower level language classes.</td>
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<td>(d) To allow students in other disciplines, such as anthropology, etc. to develop Language A skills needed for their research or work by offering opportunities for intermediate and advanced directed reading classes.</td>
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<td>(e) To develop teaching materials, creating more up-to-date materials for Language A instruction.</td>
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<td>(f) To establish a foundation for the further development of the Language A program at UH resulting in the long-term goal of advanced level language study, outreach to the local Language A community, and program funding from UH and other sources.</td>
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Project G: Direct Support for Teaching and Learning LCTLs – Language A

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<th>Objectives and Activities</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Potential Performance and Impact Indicators</th>
<th>Evaluation Methods Available</th>
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<td>b) To allow heritage language learners from the Language A community in Hawaii and other regions to fulfill the university’s general education language requirement by studying their heritage language</td>
<td>Heritage language learners receive credit or back-credit for Language A courses</td>
<td>Number of heritage language speakers receiving credit or back-credit for Language A courses</td>
<td>Student background survey</td>
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Evaluation Impact

**Impact on Organization**
- Clarification / Understanding of program goals and purpose
- Improved communication between collaborators
- Increased sense of involvement and collaboration
- Identification of resource gaps
- Improved planning for a similar program in initial stages
- Improved communication with new instructor for a similar program
- Increased interest in evaluation

**Impact on relationships with external organizations**
- Ability to articulate the purpose and value of the program to external stakeholders
- Able to meet external evaluation demands

Evaluation process

1. Identifying evaluation needs
2. Stating and mapping objectives and outcomes
3. Developing an evaluation plan
4. Developing SLOs
5. Assessing SLOs / Gathering data
6. Interpreting results
7. Reporting
8. Developing an action plan

College FL programs: Accreditation-driven outcomes assessment
Outcomes Assessment Cycle

- Stating outcomes
- Mapping outcomes
- Assessing outcomes
- Situating
- Reflecting
- Planning
- Utilizing
- Implementing

Nation-wide survey on prog eval in US college FL prog
(Watanabe, Norris, Gonzalez-Lloret, 2009)

Formative Purposes:
- Understand and improve program outcomes and functions.

Issues:
- Lack of evaluation use
- Fear for misuse and abuse of evaluation findings

So...what do we do about it?

Call for “useful” outcomes assessment in Higher Ed.

Patton’s utilization-focused evaluation model as an approach to engage people in outcomes assessment, so that programs will use the assessment findings for intended purposes.

Inter-institutional SLO Assessment Project

A 2-year multi-case study of SLO assessment in college FL programs

External Consultant

Univ A
5 language dept/unit

Univ B
3 language dept/unit

Researcher: Me!

Assessment capacity
- Organizational characteristics
- Assessment history
- Perception

High

Limited
**Program A: Context & Assessment Capacity**

- Multi-language (4 languages), large dept (58 faculty)
- Joint decision-making: TT + NTT (In the past: TT only)
- Curriculum coordinators
- Chair: Strong leadership + assessment advocate

**Assessment History**

- One cycle of assessment experience (oral proficiency outcome --> writing )
- Procedures/system, support in place.

**Perception**

- Perceived high assessment capacity
- Strong willingness to engage in assessment work

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**Assessing writing outcomes for the language requirement program**

**Stated degree & level-specific outcomes**

- Promoted speaking skills in class, provided tools (Wimba)
- Oral proficiency outcomes
- Examined practices, created rubrics

**Intended use of assessment**

1. To standardize writing requirements, expectations, & assessment within the program
2. To set and model language requirement outcomes for the institution

**Writing ability outcomes: language requirement program**

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**Impacts, strategies, & factors**

**ORG IMPACT**

- Faculty buy-in
- Common language & knowledge
- Structural change: democratic decision making + communication: TT--NTT + NTT’s curriculum ownership

**EXT ORG IMPACT**

- Profile within the university --> $$$
- Collaboration with other language departments

**ORG & PROG IMPACT**

- Shared practices
- Identification of gaps + modification on outcomes

**Leadership**

- Demonstrating commitment
- Active learning: readings, etc.
- Assessment = opportunity for organizational change
- TT+ NTT = Inclusive WG and sub-committees

**Outreach & advocacy**

- Informing assessment work/effort, advocating value to upper admin.
- Showcasing sessions

**Assessment activity**

- Gathering and alignment of writing rubrics, prompts, etc.
**Program B: Context & Assessment Capacity**

- Multi-language (3 langs), small dept., 14 faculty
- Decision-making: Unsteady in the past
- No coordinators, no curricular discussion/coordination
- Chair turnovers; new chair (1/2 Dean’s office, 1/2 chair)

**Organizational Characteristics**

- Political assessment use
- Rejection of assessment by the chair in the past

**Perception**

- Perceived low assessment capacity
- Some willingness to engage in assessment work

**Stating and Assessing BA Major Outcomes**

- Multiple capacity building meetings
- Solicited individual BA major outcomes
- Consolidated the statements

**Intended use: Reality check**

**ActFL**

Example:

“ Majors are expected to have a solid mastery of the phonetic system and reach an ActFL level of intermediate-high in speaking proficiency”

Assessment Question:
At what level are students exiting the program and how does this match our stated learning outcomes?

**BA major outcomes**

- By the end of the ActFL program, students will be able to:

**Dean + coordinator’s learning point**

**NEGATIVE IMPACT:** Data misuse

**Impacts, factors, and strategies**

**ORG IMPACT:**
- Programmatic thinking
- New curriculum coordinator

**ORG IMPACT:**
- Emphasizing internal use and bottom-up approach
- Time & space: Airing out concerns

**PROG & ASSESSMENT IMPACT**
- Variability in proficiency (HL)
- New assessment focus

Quick & credible evidence

**Discussion about curriculum**
- Entire faculty participation

- Ext Prog. review pressure
- Data report without intended use and ethics
- Non-informed Dean
Strategies for enhancing impact

- Focus on feasibility & prioritization
- Leadership support & commitment
- Managing evaluation: roles, responsibilities, meetings
- Maintain focus on use at all stages

Mahalo!

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