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AUTHOR Drezek, Stan; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Both smaller and larger school districts allocate 3 percent of total budgets, or $4.00 per pupil, for program evaluation. Of this $4.00, $3.00 is spent on outcome or process evaluation, 60 cents on program planning/needs assessment, and 40 cents on dissemination/utilization. Findings are from an evaluation budget procedures survey of evaluation directors of 55 local education agencies (LEA) and 14 state education agencies (SEA). A majority recommended a 4-8 percent, sliding scale, program cost allocation for evaluation. LEA respondents judged evaluation more important to subsequent program operation than to program funding. Misunderstanding, high costs, political considerations, and poor quality evaluations lower the priority that educational leaders hold for evaluation. It is recommended that evaluators spend more time communicating and encouraging use of evaluation findings. (Author)

Current vs. Ideal Procedures for Determining Educational Program-Evaluation Budgets: A Survey of School Evaluators

Stan Drezek

Educational Service Center, San Antonio, Texas

Paul G. Monkowski

CTB/McGraw-Hill, Lincoln, Nebraska

Paul S. Higgins

Area Health Education Center, University of Minnesota

Paper prepared for use by the American Educational Research Association's Division H (School Evaluation and Program Development) Task Force on Resource Allocation for Program Evaluation, Freda M. Holley, Chair

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Abstract

Both smaller (under 40,000 students) and larger school districts allocate .3% of total budgets for evaluation, or $4.00 per pupil ($2.00 locally funded). Of this $4.00, $3.00 is spent on outcome or process evaluation, $.60 on program-planning/needs-assessment, and $.40 on dissemination/utilization. Findings are from an evaluation-budget-procedures survey of 55 local-education-agency (LEA) and 14 state-education-agency (SEA) evaluation directors. A majority recommended a 4-8%, sliding-scale, program-cost-allocation for evaluation. At present program-cost-allocations for evaluation are 1-5% (.5-3% for some large programs). LEA respondents judged evaluation more important to subsequent program-operation than to program-funding. Misunderstanding, high costs, political considerations, poor-quality evaluations--all lower the priority educational leaders hold for evaluation. Evaluators should allocate more effort to communicating, and encouraging use of, evaluation findings.

Current vs. Ideal Procedures for Determining Educational Program-Evaluation Budgets: A Survey of School Evaluators

The average family probably spends about as much per year to assess the merit of its children's educational programs as it does to buy school lunches for the same children for one week. This conclusion is based on two recent surveys of evaluation activities in U.S. public education.

Lyon, Doscher, McGranahan, and Williams (Note 1) discovered that as of 1978 about half (320) of the 750 U.S. public school districts enrolling 10,000 or more students had departments, offices, or units responsible for evaluation of educational programs. (The proportion of smaller districts having evaluation units was even less.)

Among the 230 districts participating in the Lyon et al. survey, the median 1977-78 per pupil expenditure for program evaluation, testing, and other research activities of the evaluation unit was between $3 and $4 (with a range from $.10 to $90).

Average per pupil expenditures for evaluation in the largest school districts may be somewhat higher than the average for all school districts. The 35 respondents to a 1978 survey by Webster and Stufflebeam (Note 2) of the 60 largest U.S. school districts indicated an average 1977-78 per pupil expenditure for evaluation, testing, and other research activities of the evaluation unit of about $6.00 (SD about $4.00), with a median per pupil expenditure of about $5.00. (These averages may be slight underestimates

since in a small minority of these districts the pupil testing function was carried on outside the evaluation unit.)

Both the Lyon et al. and Webster-Stufflebeam surveys suggest that during 1977-78 U.S. school districts with evaluation units spent about one-third of one percent of total district expenditures on the program evaluation, testing, and other research activities of those units.

Concern about inadequate funding for evaluation of public-education programs--as well as concern about other aspects of educational evaluation--prompted the American Educational Research Association's division on School Evaluation and Program Development (Division H) to organize in 1978 five task forces or committees. Each task force was asked to prepare by 1980 a position paper on a particular issue in evaluation.

The present paper represents part of the work prerequisite to the position paper of the AERA Division H task force on resource allocation and budgeting for public school evaluation. This paper reports results of a 1979 survey of heads of evaluation units in public school districts (hereafter referred to as local education agencies, or LEAs) and state departments of education (state education agencies, or SEAs).

This survey primarily concerned current vs. ideal procedures for determining program evaluation budgets in LEAs; and to a lesser extent, in SEAs. An additional purpose of this survey was to assess perceived reasons for the generally acknowledged, low fiscal priority federal, state, and local educational leaders hold for LEA evaluation activities.

The low priority accorded allocation of resources for LEA evaluation belies the public commitment of many educational administrators and school

boards to program accountability; that is, to assessing the types and degrees of impact of educational programs and expenditures on student development. The meager funding of evaluation activities--and the fact that only half of major U.S. school districts have evaluation units--suggests that the verbal emphasis on LEA accountability pays only lip service to support of LEA evaluation.

Again, one purpose of the present survey is to obtain evaluator's opinions concerning reasons for the poor financing of LEA evaluation and research.

The low priority of LEA evaluation financing may be inherent in the fact that evaluation is a new (but increasingly prevalent) activity, closely correlated with the increase in federal funding for public education. About 85% of the 320 LEA evaluation units in districts of 10,000 or more students were established during or after 1965 (Lyon et al.), the year Congress signaled a massive increase in federal involvement in public education by passing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA); about half of these evaluation units were organized after 1971.

For many LEAs, the need to provide evaluative data concerning student participants in federally funded LEA programs--as a condition of continued funding--may have been the main impetus for organizing an evaluation unit. Local commitment to use of these or other evaluative data has not always been necessary to establishing an LEA evaluation unit.

Metropolitan school districts have the greatest eligibility for federal assistance. These districts also tend to be the ones with evaluation units.

Federal funding for public education largely emphasizes programs targeted at children of the urban poor (e.g., compensatory education, desegregation efforts, bilingual education, etc.)., LEAs can, and must, use part of their federal funds for these programs to gather evaluation data. Hence, Lyon et al. reported that as of 1978 89% of metropolitan LEAs (enrolling over 45,000 students), 59% of "large" LEAs (25,000-44,999), but only 33% of "medium"-sized LEAs (10,000-24,999) had evaluation units.

Perhaps local school administrators see such evaluation data as a federal bureaucratic requirement--a requirement to be met as efficiently and as inexpensively as possible. Perhaps federal, SEA, and LEA administrators have little incentive to apply such evaluation results at the local level to improve these federally funded programs. Perhaps, educational administrators have inadequate experience or training in using evaluation results as a basis for funding or improving programs.

Finally, LEA-produced evaluation efforts may have deficiencies in scope, design, or execution that limit their usefulness in educational planning. LEA evaluation units--like other LEA units and programs--must demonstrate their value and accountability. Any increased share of educational resources for evaluation must be based both on a rationale for such increased budget allocations and also on a reasonable expectation that such increases will lead to improved data for program planning.

Observers of LEA evaluation, both from within and outside the ranks of LEA evaluators (e.g., AERA Division H task forces vs. the National-Institute-of-Education-funded study by Lyon et al.) are now completing the first

"report cards" for LEA evaluation unit activities.

This paper seeks to supplement these critical assessments of LEA evaluation by providing school evaluators' reports of current procedures for determining evaluation budgets; their opinions concerning ideal budget procedures; and their perceived reasons why allocation of resources for LEA program evaluation does not have a higher priority.

Method

A questionnaire was mailed to 204 school evaluators in early 1979.

Subjects

LEA evaluators. A survey mailing list of 157 heads of LEA evaluation units was compiled primarily from the following two sources (avoiding duplications): (a) 123 heads of evaluation units in districts enrolling 10,000 or more students, representing about one-third of the list compiled for the Lyon et al. study; and (b) 32 respondents to the Webster-Stufflebeam survey of heads of evaluation units in the 60 largest U.S. school districts.

The 55 LEA evaluators responding to the questionnaire represent a 35% return rate. Respondents were categorized as representing smaller LEAs (average daily membership of less than 40,000 students in 1977-78; 30 respondents) or larger LEAs (40,000 or more students; n = 25 respondents).

SEA evaluators. A list of 47 evaluation officers representing the evaluation function in the educational agencies of most states and several U.S. territories was obtained from the Committee on Evaluation and Information Systems, formed by the Council of Chief State School Officers.

The 14 SEA respondents represented a 25% return rate.

The geographic representation of LEA and SEA respondents is shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Questionnaire[1]

The survey questionnaire was prepared by one of the authors, with assistance from members of the AERA Division H Task Force on Resource Allocation for Program Evaluation.

Respondents were asked to answer factual items concerning LEA (or SEA) organization for evaluation; enrollment; total agency budget, and budgets for operation and evaluation of specific programs; and then-current procedures (including any percentage-of-program-costs guidelines) for determining budgets for program evaluation. Respondents were also asked to estimate the relative costs of each phase of a "typical" program evaluation.

Additional items asked for descriptions of factors that would make a program evaluation cost more than, or less than, the normal range of percentages of program costs. Assessments of the influence of LEA (or SEA) evaluation reports on subsequent program operation or funding were also requested. Respondents were asked to suggest reasons why allocation of resources for program evaluation does not have a higher priority among federal, state, and local educational leaders.

Finally, respondents were asked to select one of several suggested procedures for determining the total budget of a particular program evaluation.

Results

The first results presented describe the level of support for LEA evaluation, in relation to LEA enrollment and budget. Succeeding Results sections describe types of evaluation-unit organization, methods used to determine overall budgets for program evaluations, levels of funding for evaluation of federally funded LEA programs, percentages of evaluation funds spent on each phase of a typical evaluation, reasons for extraordinarily high or low percentages of program costs being allocated for evaluation, respondents' judgments concerning the influence of their units' evaluation reports, and reasons why program evaluation does not have a higher priority among educational leaders. Presented last are respondents' recommendations concerning ideal procedures, and ideal overall funding levels, for program evaluation.

Enrollments, Budgets, and Overall Level of Support for LEA Evaluation

Insert Table 2 about here

Table 2 shows the range of enrollments among the LEAs represented in this survey was 1,000 to 600,000. The LEA sample included eight districts with enrollments over 100,000. The median enrollment for smaller LEAs was about 18,000; for larger LEAs, about 75,000. Taken together, these LEAs enrolled a total of 3,617,000 students, or nearly 7% of the 1977-78 U.S. school-age population.

The range of total and evaluation budgets for the surveyed districts was also large--from less than $100,000 to two-thirds of $1 billion for total LEA budgets; and from the equivalent of 1 salaried teacher ($16,000)

to over $3 million for LEA evaluation budgets.

Indices of average support for evaluation in smaller vs. larger LEAs were calculated using median evaluation budget figures shown in Table 2. The discrepancies between the mean and median for the two evaluation budget statistics--total 1978-79 LEA evaluation budget, and local funds allocated in 1978-79 to evaluation--reflect the fact that a minority of both the smaller and larger LEAs give the evaluation unit functions in addition to program evaluation. Table 3 suggests these extra functions can include district-wide pupil testing, management information systems, or planning and grantsmanship for new educational programs. Because these extra functions may require substantial funds beyond the basic budget for program evaluation, the median evaluation budget figures were judged more representative than the mean to show average amounts allocated for evaluation in smaller vs. larger school districts.

Insert Table 3 about here

Both smaller and larger LEAs allocated, then, on the average, the same .3% of their total budget for evaluation; or slightly over $4.00 of a mean per pupil expenditure of $1,500 for the smaller LEAs and $1,700 for the larger LEAs.

For both smaller and larger LEAs, about half of the total evaluation budget came from local funds, on the average.

In short, in both smaller and larger LEAs, about $2.00 per pupil was allocated for evaluation from local funds, and another $2.00 per pupil was so allocated from other sources (presumably mostly federal, but also some

state, funds).

Organization of the Evaluation Unit

Insert Tables 4 and 5 about here

Tables 4 and 5 suggest that the most common pattern of organization for evaluation in both smaller and larger LEAs is an evaluation unit headed by a "Director of Evaluation" (or highly similar title), who in turn reports to a supervisor just below the level of superintendent; e.g., an assistant, associate, or deputy superintendent. About one-third to one-fourth of the heads of evaluation units report directly to the LEA superintendent. Tables 4 and 5, however, show that a variety of other organizational forms are used.

Among SEAs represented in the survey, the modal form of organization for evaluation is a unit headed by a Director of Evaluation, who reports to an SEA Deputy Commissioner.

Methods Used to Determine Program Evaluation Budgets

In about half or more of each surveyed group--smaller LEAs, larger LEAs, and SEAs--the total amount budgeted for evaluation of a program is determined by the scope of evaluation work written into the program (see Table 1).

Insert Table 6 about here

When evaluation budget amount is tied to the scope of evaluation work described in the program proposal, the range of percentages of program costs represented by the evaluation budget is bounded by a median low of 1.5% to a median high of about 5.5%.

Four about one-fifth to one-fourth of the LEAs, a roughly fixed percentage (usually about 5%) of program costs is allocated for program evaluation.

In one-fourth of the smaller LEAs, but in apparently very few larger LEAs, the evaluation unit seeks as much money as possible for evaluation of a program, since the unit seldom receives sufficient funding to conduct evaluations. In this situation of inadequate funding, the usual percentages of program costs allocated for evaluation range from a median low of about 1% to a median high of about 3%.

Apparently, about one-third of the LEA units use a combination of methods (e.g., checked more than one method, or wrote "all three" described here, "no fixed rule," etc.), or use other methods (e.g., consider salary levels of staff available to work on the evaluation) in determining a budget for a particular evaluation.

Evaluation Budgets for Federally Funded LEA Programs

Allocations from federally funded LEA programs provide staple and relatively stable, bread-and-butter sustenance for many LEA evaluation units; particularly in urban LEAs, which are often eligible for considerable federal funding.

Insert Table 7 about here

Table 7 suggests that the most important federally funded LEA program--in terms of the number of LEAs having such a program, and in terms of median annual budget--is ESEA, Title I, providing compensatory education for educationally disadvantaged children in low-income areas. Three-fourths of the 55 LEAs had such a program. The median annual budget of $2,400,000 for funded LEA Title I programs was nearly twice that for funded Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) desegregation programs (found in only one-third of the

LEAs). In districts having Title I programs, the median annual evaluation budget for this program was $33,000.

For funded Title I programs, the median percentage of program costs allocated to the evaluation unit for Title I evaluation was about 1.5%. (For each LEA with a funded Title I program, the Title I evaluation funds made available to the evaluation unit were divided by the total Title I program budget. The median of these LEA statistics, rounded to the nearest half percent, is the median percentage of program costs allocated to the evaluation unit.)

One LEA with a Title I program provided no federal funds for Title I evaluation to the evaluation unit. Similarly, Table 7 shows that for each federal program, at least one LEA had the program but allocated no federal funds to the evaluation unit to evaluate the program. In such cases, however, evaluation activities may have been conducted outside the evaluation unit.

Other common federally funded programs--found in about half of both smaller and larger LEAs--were ESEA, Title IV-C, innovative-curriculum development projects; and P.L. 94-142 special education programs.

Title IV-C programs were generally the least expensive federal programs, with median annual budgets for funded programs of $50,000 for smaller LEAs and $250,000 for larger LEAs.

Ironically, these least expensive federal programs were associated with the highest median percentage of program costs allocated to the evaluation unit for evaluation, 5%. The most expensive program, Title I compensatory education, provided one of the lowest median percentage allocations for evaluation, 1.5%. The only lower level of effort for support of LEA federal

program evaluation was that provided by special education programs; namely, .5%.

Percentages of Evaluation Funds Spent During Each Phase of a Typical Evaluation

Respondents were asked to estimate, for a typical program evaluation, the percentages of allocated evaluation monies spent on each of the following four phases: (a) program planning and needs assessment; (b) the gathering of process evaluation or implementation evaluation data; (c) the gathering of product or outcome data; and (d) the dissemination and use of the data.

Insert Table 8 about here

Of every $10 allocated for evaluation of a typical program, slightly over $4 were spent on product or outcome evaluation activities; $3 on process or implementation data gathering; nearly $2 on program planning and needs assessment; and $1 on dissemination and utilization (see Table 8).

These average proportions of funds spent during each evaluation phase were similar for both larger and smaller LEAs.

Represented SEAs apparently spent proportionately less evaluation money, on the average, than LEAs during the product/outcome evaluation phase, and slightly more during the program planning/needs assessment phase.

The variability among LEAs in the proportions of evaluation funds spent on each phase was high, particularly for the product/outcome evaluation and process/implementation evaluation phases. About half the LEAs reported spending 30-50% of evaluation funds during the product/outcome evaluation phase; and about half spent 20-40% during process/implementation evaluation. Only 6% of the LEAs reported spending more than 20% of evaluation funds in

dissemination and use of data.

Factors Leading to a Higher or Lower Than Average Proportion of Program Resources Being Allocated for Evaluation

The 69 LEA and SEA evaluation directors were asked for written responses to two questions: "What are some of the factors which would make a program evaluation cost more than the normal range?" and "What are some of the factors which would make [an] evaluation cost less...?"

Content analysis of these open-ended responses resulted in five categories of such characteristics, or factors occurring during the conduct of an evaluation: measurement and instrumentation factors; other evaluation factors or requirements; personnel factors; other evaluation budget factors; and a miscellaneous category of all other factors and comments.

Associated with each factor was the percentage of 69 respondents nominating this factor as leading to either a higher than average, or lower than average, proportion of program resources being allocated for evaluation.[2]

Presentation of these content-analysis results will be limited to factors nominated by at least 5% of respondents as leading to higher than average evaluation costs; or nominated by at least 5% as leading to lower than average costs.

Factors leading to a higher than average proportion of program resources allocated for evaluation. Measurement and instrumentation factors leading to higher than average costs were field collection of interview and observational data, in addition to collection of paper-and-pencil data (22% of respondents); developing new or original tests or questionnaires (20%); purchasing commercially available tests or questionnaires (9%); and a large

number of different instruments and measures required by the evaluation design (7%).

Other evaluation features or requirements leading to higher than average costs were large program size or complexity (14%); complex evaluation design--e.g., control groups, evaluation audit, etc.--(10%); and heavy data analysis and reporting requirements (10%).

Personnel factors leading to higher costs were availability of well qualified staff, commanding higher salaries (12%); or private consultants or outside research firm conduct the evaluation (10%).

Under miscellaneous factors, data processing costs--e.g., custom programming, time, services, etc.--were nominated by 17% of respondents as a factor leading to higher than average evaluation costs.

Factors leading to a lower than average proportion of program resources allocated for evaluation. Measurement and instrumentation factors leading to more economical evaluation included using already available data, and/or already purchased or developed tests and questionnaires (16%); evaluators and program staff share the work or cost of data collection--including use of diagnostic tests usable for both program operation and evaluation (7%); and a small number of different instruments and measures required (6%).

Other evaluation features or requirements leading to lower costs were light data analysis and reporting requirements (10%); small program size or complexity (6%); and a design that is elegantly simple, or evaluation procedures that are familiar or well standardized (6%).

A total of 13% of respondents did not write a response to either item about cost factors.

Respondents' Judgments Concerning the Influence of Their Units' Evaluation Reports

LEA evaluation reports are apparently more important in determining the way programs are operated in subsequent years than in determining overall program funding in subsequent years.

Insert Table 9 about here

About three-fourths (78%) of the 55 LEA evaluation directors judged their units' evaluation reports to be an important factor in subsequent program operation. About half (45%) judged these reports important in subsequent determinations concerning overall program funding (see Table 9).

Only about a third of the SEA evaluation directors judged their units' evaluation reports as important to either funding or program operation decisions.

Reasons Why Allocating Resources for Program Evaluation Does Not Have Higher Priority Among Educational Leaders

The LEA and SEA evaluator directors were asked, in three questions, to write their perceived reasons why educational leaders do not assign a higher priority to evaluation. The first question asked respondents to "state the two most important reasons why you believe resources for program evaluation might not have a higher priority with federal funding agencies." The highly similar second and third questions asked for reasons why such resources might not have a higher priority with "SEA leadership," or "LEA leadership," respectively.

Content analysis of these written responses led to four major categories

of important reasons why evaluation does not have a higher priority; high cost, budget problems, or competing priorities; usefulness and relevance of evaluation; misunderstanding of evaluation methods or purposes--fear or ignorance; and quality control and staffing problems.[3]

Presentation of this content analysis will be limited to those reasons nominated by at least 5% of respondents as accounting for evaluation not having a higher priority among one or more of the following groups: LEA leaders, SEA leaders, or federal funding agencies.

High cost; budget problems, or competing priorities. The too costly nature of program evaluation (e.g., "tight budgets," "limited revenue," etc.) was offered by 28% of the 69 LEA and SEA evaluation directors as an important reason for evaluation not having a higher priority among LEA leadership; 17% of respondents nominated this as a reason for evaluation not having a higher priority among SEA leadership; and 19%, as a reason for evaluation not having a higher priority among federal funding agencies.

Other cost reasons for evaluation not having a higher priority were less frequently nominated. The fact that direct service to students has a higher priority than evaluation was judged an important consideration for LEA leaders (13% of respondents) and federal funding agencies (7%). Lack of legislative action supporting evaluation was judged an important consideration for SEA leaders (9%). Also relevant for SEA leaders was SEA emphasis on monitoring programs' compliance with regulations rather than evaluating program effectiveness (6%).

Other important reasons suggested were that LEA leaders do not have enough time to study and use evaluation results (6%); and that federal agencies

have other services and pressures with higher priorities than evaluation (6%).

Lack of understanding or misunderstanding of evaluation methods or purposes; and defensiveness. Educational leaders often don't understand the methods or purposes of evaluation, or aren't accustomed to using evaluation results for decision-making. Such statements were offered by about 20-30% of respondents as important reasons preventing a higher priority for evaluation at each level--LEA, SEA, and federal. Individual respondents suggested that educational leaders "don't know how to use results when they get them," have "unrealistic expectations," are "not trained or qualified to use or interpret results," or "don't perceive the value of evaluation in overall program development."

Educational leaders see evaluation as a threat to their jobs or authority, particularly at the LEA and SEA levels (according to 12% and 7% of respondents, respectively).

Federal funding agencies may underestimate the actual use made of evaluation results at the LEA level (7% of respondents).

Usefulness and relevance of evaluation. Proportions of 13-20% of respondents suggested that evaluation results are frequently not seen as useful, or are not used, for improving or funding programs at the LEA, SEA, and federal levels. This lack of usefulness, or use, limits the priority given to evaluation.

Reasons for this lack of use, or usefulness, offered by 7-14% of respondents, include the inconclusiveness of results sent to federal agencies; the federal and LEA planning and funding of programs for primarily political

reasons; and the carrying out of SEA and LEA evaluations independently from program planning and development.

Quality control and staffing problems. The poor quality of some evaluation research may be important in evaluation's lower priority among SEA leaders (according to 10% of respondents).

Problems in finding qualified, competent evaluators may prevent a higher priority for evaluation at the LEA level (according to 14% of respondents).

Evaluation Directors' Policy Recommendations Concerning Allocation of Program Resources to Evaluation

Insert Table 10 about here

A majority of each respondent group--evaluation directors in smaller LEAs, larger LEAs, and SEAs--endorse a sliding scale approach for the allocation of program resources to evaluation (see Table 10).

Respondents were asked to choose among three alternative policies that the Task Force on Resource Allocation might support. Proportions of 52-59% of each group recommended adoption of "a sliding scale with lower percentages as program costs exceed certain levels."

The other two policies--"a fixed percentage of program costs for program evaluation" and "a minimum percentage of program costs for program evaluation"--were each endorsed by nearly 20% of the total LEA respondents.

The fixed percentage policy had more support among the smaller LEAs (28%) than among the larger LEAs (9%).

The minimum-percentage approach had nearly equal support among smaller and larger LEAs (17% and 18%, respectively); 15% of the SEA evaluation

directors also supported the minimum-percentage approach.

A number of respondents--10% of the smaller LEA evaluation directors, 18% of the larger LEA directors, and 31% of the SEA directors--did not recommend Task Force support for one of the three positions here described. Instead, they recommended some combination among these positions, or else specified yet another alternative position.

Evaluation Directors' Recommended Percentages of Program Costs To Be Budgeted for Evaluation

Insert Table 11 about here

Evaluation directors were asked to answer the question, "What percentage of program costs should be budgeted for program evaluation?" by providing a percentage range. The obtained range extended from 0% to 20%. For LEA evaluation directors, the average value given for the lower bound of the range was about 4% (SD = 3%); the average value for the upper bound of the range, about 8% (SD = 5%).

Evaluation directors representing smaller LEAs provided slightly higher mean percentages for this range than did evaluation directors representing larger LEAs (4.5% to 8.1% vs. 3.0% to 7.3%, respectively).

For SEA evaluation directors, the mean lower bound of the recommended range was about 5%; the mean upper bound, about 9%.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper has been to survey school evaluators concerning current procedures for determining evaluation budgets; their opinions concerning ideal evaluation budget amounts and budget allocation procedures; and

their perceived reasons why allocation of resources for LEA program evaluation (as well as SEA and federal educational evaluation) does not have a higher priority.

The statement that LEA program evaluation does not have a high enough priority does, of course, beg the question of what is the appropriate priority for such evaluation activities.

This survey suggests that LEAs with evaluation units now budget about $4.00 per pupil per year ($2.00 of this from local funds) for those units' activities--such as program evaluation, pupil testing, and other research. These results are consistent with average LEA per pupil evaluation expenditures of $3-4 annually found by Lyon et al. and $5-6 found by Webster and Stufflebeam. The present survey also duplicates these investigators' finding that LEAs allocate about .3% of their total district budgets for evaluation.

For educational programs with an evaluation component, the present survey suggests that 1-5% of the total budgets of these programs are ordinarily allocated for evaluation. For some of the largest federally funded programs (e.g., Title I and special education) these evaluation allocations average .5-3%. For federally funded (e.g., Title IV-C) and nonfederal programs emphasizing innovative approaches to education--where documentation of program acceptance and effectiveness may be more strongly emphasized--the percentages of program costs allocated for evaluation seem to average 4-5%.

Returning to the question of what is an appropriate priority for educational program evaluation--it seems unlikely that the percentage of

printer's ink allocated in the educational press to educational leaders' concern for accountability and program effectiveness is consistent with an average LEA allocation for evaluation of .3% of the total LEA budget.

The results of the present survey, of course, do not resolve the question of what fiscal priority evaluation activities should occupy. Further research specifically targeted at this question is needed. Such studies should address the current and potential quality, usefulness, and benefits vs. costs of evaluation.

Evaluation unit activities could come to have a higher priority among all LEA activities if LEAs more frequently adopt an empirical, research-based approach to all aspects of school administration--beyond the use of evaluation results for management of individual, experimental instructional programs.

For example, the evaluation unit might become a useful resource for LEAs wishing to develop more rational bases for personnel selection and promotion; for comparing the cost-effectiveness of alternative methods and materials for instruction; or even for planning school closings, school energy-conservation efforts, or changes in the school-lunch program.

The primary concern of the present survey, however, is with the priority of evaluation within particular educational programs, more than with the priority of evaluation within LEAs generally.

The present survey shows that a nationwide sample of heads of LEA evaluation units recommends a range of percentages of program costs for evaluation--from 4-8%, on the average--that exceeds the currently available average percentage-of-program-costs allocations for evaluation.

A majority of these LEA evaluation directors (as well as a majority of the SEA evaluation directors represented) recommends a sliding scale approach to determining allocations of program costs for evaluation, with lower percentages as program costs exceed certain levels. A majority of the evaluation units represented currently use such a sliding scale approach, with the evaluation budget determined by the scope of evaluation work required. The current average range of percentages of program costs for evaluation when such sliding scales are used is only about 1.5-5.5%.

The surveyed evaluation directors gave mixed reviews of the influence their own units' program evaluation reports had on program operation and program funding in subsequent years. Apparently, LEA evaluation reports are more influential than SEA reports; and LEA reports are more important in determining the way programs are operated in subsequent years than in determining overall program funding in subsequent years.

Whether or not LEA evaluation reports were perceived as important influences on program funding or operation was not highly correlated with district size (LEA enrollment). (See Table 9. Also, appropriate point-biserial correlations between these variables were near zero.)

However, there were modest point-biserial correlations between percentage of total LEA budget allocated for evaluation and (a) influence of evaluation reports on subsequent funding (r = .21, p = .07, 1-tailed) and (b) influence of evaluation reports on subsequent program operation (r = .24, p = .04, 1-tailed). Thus there is some reason to believe that LEA level of effort for evaluation is related to the usefulness of evaluation activities

in decisions concerning program funding and program revision.

Overall, about three-fourths of the LEA evaluation directors judged their units' evaluation reports to be an important factor in subsequent program operation; and about half judged these reports important to subsequent decisions concerning program funding.

Comments of these evaluators suggest possible reasons why evaluation does not have a higher importance in program funding and operation; or, more generally, why evaluation does not have a higher priority among LEA, SEA, and federal educational leadership. According to these respondents, program evaluation is often seen as too costly; educational leaders have little training or experience in using evaluation results; political factors often intrude into program funding and operation decisions; and some LEAs may not have enough qualified staff to conduct high quality evaluation.

Program evaluation is certainly a costly enterprise--particularly when it involves direct observation of program participants; purchase or construction of special tests or questionnaires; and employment of trained, experienced evaluators.

Until evaluation leaders have more consistent experience, incentives, or training to use evaluation results for management decisions, there will probably continue to be high variability in the budget levels, and budgeting procedure used, for program evaluation. If current conditions persist, percentages of program costs allocated for evaluation will often be lower than the allocations evaluators need to do adequate evaluation.

Educational evaluators may wish to consider the desirability of allocating increased effort to communicating evaluation results and encouraging educational leaders to use these results. The present survey suggests that of every $10 allocated for evaluation of a typical program, about $7 are spent on collection and analysis of data, but only about $1 on direct efforts to disseminate research results and encourage their use.

In short, evaluators may need to assume more leadership in convincing other educators of the usefulness of evaluation results. Improved communications skills among evaluators may be necessary to improved allocation of program resources for evaluation--and to an improved priority of evaluation unit activities within the LEA.

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2. Webster, W.J., & Stufflebeam, D.L. The state of theory and practice in educational evaluation in large urban school districts. Invited address presented at annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, Ontario, March 1978.

Footnotes

This paper was originally prepared for discussion and use by the American Educational Research Association Division H (School Evaluation and Program Development) Task Force on Resource Allocation for Program Evaluation. This Task Force will complete a final report and position paper during 1980. The three authors each assumed an equal portion of the work required for the present paper; hence, the listed order of authors is arbitrary. The authors wish to thank Freda Holley, Chair, and other members of the Task Force for useful comments and support during conduct of this research. Requests for reprints should be mailed to Paul Higgins, University of Minnesota, Area Health Education Center, 2929 University Avenue S.E., Suite 344, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414.

[1]Available from Paul Higgins at the address given for reprint requests.

[2]A table showing the complete content analysis is available as per Footnote 1.

[3]Complete content analysis available as per Footnote 1.

Table 1

Geographic Distribution of Survey Respondents

LEA evaluation directors representing--		"SEA" evaluation directors, representing educational agencies in 13 states and 1 U.S. territory
30 Smaller LEAs (less than 40,000 students[1])	25 Larger LEAs (40,000 or more students[1])	
Phoenix, Arizona	Fresno, California	Alaska
Corona, California	Los Angeles, California	Delaware
Folsum, California	Lakewood, Colorado	Kentucky
Irvine, California	Wilmington, Delaware	Maryland
Ventura, California	Jacksonville, Florida	Mississippi
Hartford, Connecticut	Atlanta, Georgia	New Jersey
Wheaton, Illinois	Honolulu, Hawaii	New York
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	Chicago, Illinois	New Hampshire
Chalmette, Louisiana	Wichita, Kansas	North Carolina
Frederick, Maryland	Louisville, Kentucky	South Dakota
Brockton, Massachusetts	New Orleans, Louisiana	Texas
Ann Arbor, Michigan	Annapolis, Maryland	Virginia
Benton Harbor, Michigan	Boston, Massachusetts	Wisconsin
Niles, Michigan	Kansas City, Missouri	Puerto Rico
Waterford, Michigan	Albuquerque, New Mexico	
Ferguson, Missouri	Akron, Ohio	
St. Louis, Missouri	Columbus, Ohio	
Lincoln, Nebraska	Oklahoma City (District 89), Oklahoma	
Wood Ridge, New Jersey	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	
Dayton, Ohio	Memphis, Tennessee	
Oklahoma City (Putnam City), Oklahoma	Nashville, Tennessee	
Beaverton, Oregon	Austin, Texas	
Eugene, Oregon	Dallas, Texas	
Troutdale, Oregon	El Paso, Texas	
Providence, Rhode Island	Fort Worth, Texas	
Corpus Christi, Texas		
Pasadena, Texas		
Ogden, Utah		
Yakima, Washington		
1 additional district of 1,000 students, location unspecified		

Note. The terms LEA and SEA represent local education agency (i.e., public school district) and state education agency (i.e., department of education or public instruction), respectively.

Some place names (e.g., Phoenix, St. Louis) represent smaller LEAs serving only one part of the named major city. Other place names (e.g., Lakewood, Colorado; Honolulu) indicate the center of a larger (regional) LEA extending beyond the named municipality.

[1]Based on respondents' self-reported estimate of 1977-78 average daily membership of LEA.

Table 2

Selected Characteristics of LEAs

Characteristic	Smaller LEAs (n=30) M	SD	Mdn	Larger LEAs (n=25) M	SD	Mdn	Total LEAs (n=55) M	SD	Mdn
Approximate 1977-78 average daily pupil membership, in thousands	18.3	9.1	18.2	122.7	134.6	74.8	65.8	104.2	36.0
Number of years (including 1978-79) program evaluation effort has been organized in LEA	5.9 yrs.	3.6 yrs.	5.7 yrs.	10.0 yrs.	7.8 yrs.	9.3 yrs.	7.7 yrs.	6.2 yrs.	6.3 yrs.
Total 1978-79 budget of LEA (including local, state, federal funds), in thousands	$29,590[1]	$23,487[1]	$27,996[1]	$163,025	$127,561	$124,167	$91,365[2]	$140,318[2]	$45,309[2]
Total 1978-79 LEA evaluation budget (including local, state, federal funds), in thousands	$128[1]	$189	$76[1]	$685	$887	$312	$386[2]	$674[2]	$126[2]
Local funds allocated in 1978-79 to evaluation, in thousands	$60[1]	$61[1]	$42[1]	$355	$481	$151	$196[2]	$359[2]	$83[2]

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation, Mdn = median.

[1] n = 29.

[2] n = 54.

Table 3

Title Given to Evaluation Unit
Within LEA or SEA

Functional words included in title	Smaller LEAs (n=30)	Larger LEAs (n=25)	SEAs (n=14)
Research and/or evaluation only	13	14	4
Research and/or evaluation, plus testing and/or assessment	3	2	2
Research and/or evaluation, plus planning	1	5	4
Research and/or evaluation, plus information systems or services	0	2	0
Other words or combinations[1]	6	1	1
No response	7	1	3

[1]Includes such titles as Research and Special Projects, Management Information Services, Program Assessment Branch, Research and Development.

Table 4

Title Given to Head of Evaluation Unit

Title	Smaller LEAs (n=30)	Larger LEAs (n=25)	SEAs (n=14)
Director	9	12	6
Coordinator	3	1	2
Supervisor	4	1	0
Assistant Superintendent	0	4	0
Other[1]	5	4	2
No response	9	3	4

[1]Includes such titles as Assistant Director, Manager, Bureau Chief, Specialist, Administrator, Administrative Assistant.

Table 5

Person Supervising Head of Evaluation Unit

Supervisor of Evaluation Head	Smaller LEAs (n=30)	Larger LEAs (n=25)	SEAs (n=14)
Superintendent of Schools	10	6	0
Assistant Superintendent	8	5	2
Associate Superintendent	1	3	1
Deputy Superintendent	2	4	0
A director	4	4	0
Deputy Commissioner	0	0	6
Other[1]	0	2	2
No response	5	1	3

[1]Includes such titles as Head of Research and Planning, Senior Management Officer, and Assistant Secretary for Planning.

Table 6

Methods Used to Determine Program Evaluation Budget in Each Type of Agency

Method	Smaller LEAs (n = 28) % using method	Larger LEAs (n = 24) % using method	Total, LEAs only (n = 52) % using method	Total, LEAs only (n = 52) Actual %, or range of %s, used			SEAs (n = 11) % using method	SEAs (n = 11) Actual %, or range of %s, used		Total, LEAs and SEAs (n = 63) % using method	Total, LEAs and SEAs (n = 63) Actual %, or range of %s used		
				M	SD	Mdn		Value			M	SD	Mdn
A roughly fixed percentage of program costs is used (give estimate--___%)	25	21	23	4.8	2.8	4.9	9	2		21	4.5	2.8	4.8
An amount is determined by the scope of evaluation work (give estimate of range of percentages of program costs-- ___% to ___%)	54	58	56	Lo Mdn 1.5		Hi Mdn 5.4	46	Lo Mdn 2.0	Hi Mdn 5.0	54	Lo Mdn 1.5		Hi Mdn 5.3
As much as possible, since sufficient amount is seldom received (give estimate of range of percentages-- ___% to ___%)	25	4	15	Lo Mdn .8		Hi Mdn 3.2	36	Lo Mdn 1.3	Hi Mdn 3.0	19	Lo Mdn 1.0		Hi Mdn 3.1
Other method (specify). Examples included "all three of the above," "no fixed rule," need to consider salary levels of available staff.	21	21	21				27			22			

Note. Some respondents indicated using more than one method. The number of people indicating they used a particular method was usually slightly larger than the number who went on to report the actual %, or range of %s, used.

Table 7

Amounts LEAs Budgeted for Evaluation of Federally Funded Programs, as Proportions of Total LEA Budgets For These Programs, 1978-79

Federally funded program	Smaller LEAs (n = 30)							Larger LEAs (n = 25)							Total LEAs (n = 55)						
	n having program	Program budget (thous. $) Lo	Mdn	Hi	Evaluation budget (thous. $) Lo	Mdn	Hi	% program budgeted for eval. Mdn	n having program	Program budget (thous. $) Lo	Mdn	Hi	Evaluation budget (thous. $) Lo	Mdn	Hi	% program budgeted for eval. Mdn	n having program	Program budget (thous. $) Lo	Mdn	Hi	Evaluation budget (thous. $) Lo	Mdn	Hi	% program budgeted for eval. Mdn
ESEA, Title I, for disadvantaged students	21	104	700	3,234	0	13	92	1.5%	21	1,078	4,770	52,000	17	100	935	2%	42	104	2,400	52,000	0	33	935	1.5%
ESEA, Title I, for migrant students	6	46	150	423	0	3	6	1%	4	48	290	798	3	7	41	4.5%	10	46	200	798	0	4	41	3%
ESEA, Title IV-C, innovative curricula	13	10	50	315	0	10	100	7%	16	5	250	2,112	0	17	66	4%	29	5	87	2,112	0	11	100	5%
ESEA, Title VII, bilingual programs	6	85	230	440	0	5	26	1.5%	13	107	390	7,372	0	18	150	3%	19	85	380	7,372	0	16	150	3%
ESAA, Emergency School Aid Act programs for desegregating LEAs	4	140	520	4,354	5	8	31	1.5%	15	350	1,410	9,400	0	37	231	3%	19	140	1,300	9,400	0	31	231	2.5%
P.L. 94-142, special education programs	13	50	110	600	0	3	43	2%	12	110	510	10,254	0	2	299	.5%	25	50	240	10,254	0	3	299	.5%

Note. Lo and Hi designate the lowest and highest values, respectively, reported for each budget item by each LEA category. For each LEA having a particular federal program, the percentage of program budget allocated for evaluation was computed. Entered in this table are the medians of these percentages budgeted for evaluation.

Table 8

Percentages of Evaluation Funds Spent on Each Evaluation Phase for "Typical" Evaluations

Question: Estimate the % of total program evaluation monies spent on each phase of program evaluation for a "typical" program evaluation:	Smaller LEAs (n = 26) M	SD	Mdn	Larger LEAs (n = 23) M	SD	Mdn	Total, LEAs only (n = 49) M	SD	Mdn	SEAs (n = 8) M	SD	Mdn	Total, LEAs and SEAs (n = 57) M	SD	Mdn
Program planning/needs assessment	18	14	16	15	9	10	16	12	10	24	13	21	18	12	15
Process/implementation data	27	23	20	32	17	31	30	20	27	28	16	23	29	20	27
Product/outcome data	43	25	36	43	19	45	43	22	40	33	21	28	41	22	40
Dissemination/use of data	12	10	10	10	5	10	11	8	10	15	13	10	12	9	10

Table 9

Evaluation Directors' Judgments Concerning the Importance of Evaluation Reports

Question: Do you judge your unit's evaluation reports are an important factor--	Smaller LEAs (n = 30) %		Larger LEAs (n = 25) %		Total, LEAs only (n = 55) %		SEAs (n = 14) %		Total LEAs and SEAs (n = 69) %	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
In determining level of overall program funding in subsequent years?	43	50	48	44	45	47	29	57	42	49
In the way the program is operated in subsequent years?	87	7	68	16	78	11	36	29	70	15

Note. The response options were "Yes" and "No." The difference for each group and each question between 100%, and the sum of the Yes and No response %s, represents the % not answering.

Table 10

Evaluation Directors' Policy Recommendations
Concerning Allocation of Program Resources to Evaluation

Question: What position do you recommend this Task Force support?	Smaller LEAs (n = 29) %	Larger LEAs (n = 22) %	Total, LEAs only (n = 51) %	SEAs (n = 13) %	Total LEAs and SEAs (n = 64) %
Support a fixed % of program costs for program evaluation	27.6	9.1	19.6	0	15.6
Support a minimum % of program costs for program evaluation	17.2	18.2	17.6	15.4	17.2
Adopt a sliding scale with lower percentages as program costs exceed certain levels	51.7	59.1	54.9	53.8	54.7
Other (Specify)	10.3	18.2	13.7	30.8	17.2

Note. Some respondents made more than one recommendation.

Table 11

Evaluation Directors' Recommended Percentages of Program Costs To Be Budgeted For Evaluation

Question: What % of program costs should be budgeted for program evaluation?--___% to ___%	Smaller LEAs (n = 25)	Larger LEAs (n = 21)	Total, LEAs only (n = 46)	SEAs (n = 11)	Total, LEAs and SEAs (n = 57)
Lower end of % range					
Lowest % value	0	1	0	3	0
Mean low % value	4.5	3.0	3.8	4.9	4.0
Median low % value	4.3	2.3	3.1	4.7	3.8
Standard deviation of low % values	3.9	1.9	3.2	1.9	3.0
Higher end of % range					
Highest % value	20	15	20	12	20
Mean high % value	8.1	7.3	7.7	9.2	8.0
Median high % value	7.3	8.0	7.5	9.7	9.6
Standard deviation of high % values	5.4	3.6	4.6	2.0	4.3