Evaluation Competencies, Instruction, and Academic Leadership

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Evaluation Competencies, Instruction, and Academic Leadership

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2018 – 2019 Academic Leadership Academy and Instructional Development Grant

Results

Findings from the survey indicate that more than 20% of federal evaluators with a public administration-related degree never had core evaluation coursework. Yet, evaluation competencies were perceived to be important or critical in relation to the five National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration’s competency domains which form the basis for accreditation of public administration graduate programs, namely to lead and manage in public governance; participate in and contribute to the public policy process; analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions; articulate and apply a public service perspective; and communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry. Below figures illustrate the evaluation competencies used by these federal evaluators in their day-to-day practice. As illustrated in the last figure, interpersonal, management, situational, and reflective practice competencies are not typically delivered through formal education.

Background and Context

My primary research interest is on evaluation theory, methodology, practice, and capacity building. In particular, my current research focuses on evaluation competencies among public and nonprofit sector employees. In light of the 2018-2019 Academic Leadership Academy and Instructional Development Grant, this poster revisits findings from a federal evaluator survey and examines:

What evaluation and leadership competencies should be emphasized in the development of public administrators?

Methods

Data presented here were collected in a survey of federal evaluators, exploring what competencies these evaluators perceive to be most critical in mandating, managing, and implementing evaluations of federal programs. There were 130 survey respondents from 30 federal U.S. agencies. Half of the respondents had degrees in public administration-related disciplines and almost all respondents (98%) hold graduate degrees.

Discussion

Findings from the study suggest a need to provide more practical and hands-on experience during formal education. Administrators need to be good consumers of evaluation, understand organizational evaluation capacity, and learn about implementation and use of evaluation findings.

Program evaluation skills are directly linked to leadership competencies. Reflective practice, situational practice, management practice, and interpersonal practice competencies are all needed among effective leaders. Technical evaluation competencies provide added value in identifying and using evaluation data for both formative and summative decision making that supports organizational success. Teaching our students a variety of ways in which evaluation can be conceptualized and carried out will prepare them to make more effective decisions for how to lead effective evaluation efforts in their organizations. Exposing students to evaluation clients and stakeholders during coursework and field experiences will allow them to experience the softer and possibly more intricate skills needed in successful program evaluation. Such experiences may set them up to become effective leaders in their work environments.

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Professional experience is noted as major means to developing leadership competencies. Only technical practice competency stick out in terms of formal education. (N = 47)