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Evaluation Competencies, Instruction, and Academic Leadership

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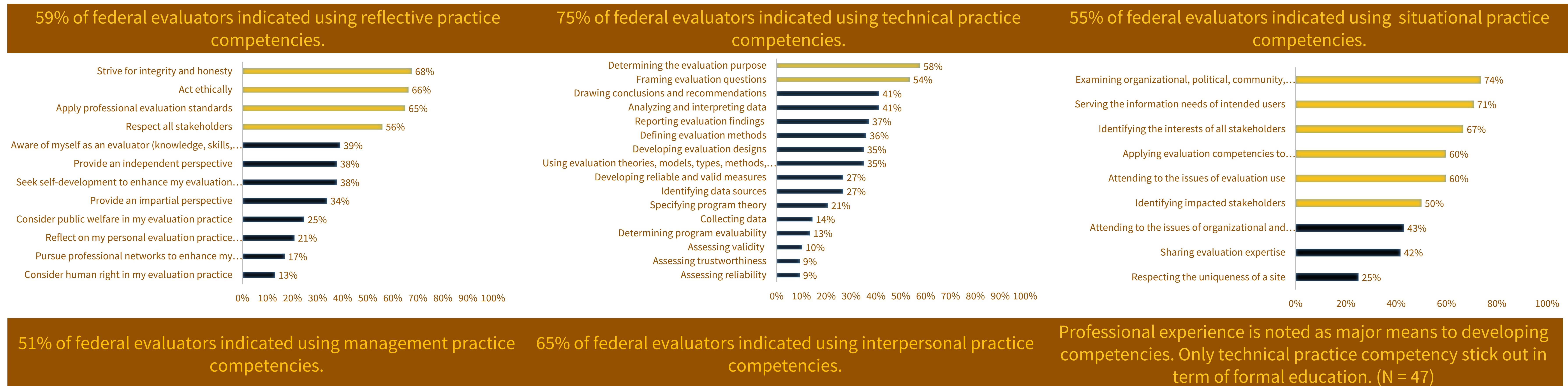
Evaluation Competencies, Instruction, and Academic Leadership

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Results

Findings from the survey indicate that more than 20% of federal evaluators with a public administration related degrees 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.

59% of federal evaluators indicated using reflective practice competencies.

Competency	%
Strive for integrity and honesty	68%
Act ethically	66%
Apply professional evaluation standards	65%
Respect all stakeholders	56%
Aware of myself as an evaluator (knowledge, skills,…	39%
Provide an independent perspective	38%
Seek self-development to enhance my evaluation…	38%
Provide an impartial perspective	34%
Consider public welfare in my evaluation practice	25%
Reflect on my personal evaluation practice…	21%
Pursue professional networks to enhance my…	17%
Consider human right in my evaluation practice	13%

75% of federal evaluators indicated using technical practice competencies.

Competency	%
Determining the evaluation purpose	58%
Framing evaluation questions	54%
Drawing conclusions and recommendations	41%
Analyzing and interpreting data	41%
Reporting evaluation findings	37%
Defining evaluation methods	36%
Developing evaluation designs	35%
Using evaluation theories, models, types, methods,…	35%
Developing reliable and valid measures	27%
Identifying data sources	27%
Specifying program theory	21%
Collecting data	14%
Determining program evaluability	13%
Assessing validity	10%
Assessing trustworthiness	9%
Assessing reliability	9%

55% of federal evaluators indicated using situational practice competencies.

Competency	%
Examining organizational, political, community,…	74%
Serving the information needs of intended users	71%
Identifying the interests of all stakeholders	67%
Applying evaluation competencies to…	60%
Attending to the issues of evaluation use	60%
Identifying impacted stakeholders	50%
Attending to the issues of organizational and…	43%
Sharing evaluation expertise	42%
Respecting the uniqueness of a site	25%

51% of federal evaluators indicated using management practice competencies.

Competency	%
Identifying and mitigating problems/issues	83%
Coordinating and supervising others	65%
Reporting on progress and results	62%
Defining work plans	62%
Attending to issues of evaluation feasibility	58%
Monitoring resources	53%
Identifying required resources	53%
Defining work parameters	35%
Defining work agreements	29%

65% of federal evaluators indicated using interpersonal practice competencies.

Competency	%
Using listening skills	76%
Using written communication skills and technologies	73%
Using verbal communication skills	64%
Using interpersonal skills (individual and team)	60%
Using collaboration/partnering skills	47%
Demonstrating professional credibility	42%
Using facilitation skills	39%
Attending to issues of diversity and culture	31%
Using conflict resolution skills	27%
Using negotiation skills	27%

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

	Informal development	Professional experience	Formal education	Unprepared
Interpersonal Practice	25.5	53.2	21.3	
Management Practice	6.4	61.7	25.5	
Situational Practice	14.9	72.3	12.8	
Technical Practice	4.3	38.3	57.4	
Reflective Practice	31.9	36.2	19.1	

Background and Context

My primary research interests center 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 developments 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 way 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.

Acknowledgements

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