

Redesigning a University-Based Evaluator Education Program for Scholarship and Practice

John LaVelle and David Johnson

University of Minnesota, Minnesota, United States

Abstract: *This paper describes the process that the faculty at the University of Minnesota used to redesign its graduate programs in evaluation. We build from the premise that evaluator education programs undergo periodic review to remain consistent with program goals and maintain alignment with competency taxonomies. With the retirement of a senior faculty member and the addition of a new junior faculty member, we decided the time had come to examine closely the existing MA and PhD curriculum. We describe our process for conceptualizing the program's ultimate goals, examining course content, cross-referencing the courses with the AEA Competencies, and aligning all courses and processes with our revised programmatic goals. The result is a redesigned and streamlined curriculum to support evaluation practice for master's students and both scholarship and practice for doctoral students.*

Keywords: *evaluator education, evaluation practice, evaluation scholarship, evaluator training, research on evaluation*

Résumé : *L'article décrit le processus utilisé par l'Université du Minnesota pour la refonte de ses programmes d'études supérieures en évaluation. Nous partons de la prémisse que les programmes de formation en évaluation doivent être périodiquement révisés pour continuer à répondre aux objectifs du programme et rester conformes aux taxonomies de compétence. Avec le départ à la retraite de membres chevronnés de la Faculté et l'embauche d'un nouveau professeur, nous avons décidé qu'il était temps d'examiner de près le curriculum des programmes de maîtrise et de doctorat. Nous décrivons notre processus de conceptualisation des objectifs ultimes du programme, d'examen du contenu des cours, de comparaison des cours avec les compétences de l'AEA et d'harmonisation de tous les cours et processus avec les objectifs révisés des programmes. Le résultat consiste en des curriculums remaniés et allégés qui appuient la pratique d'évaluation pour les étudiants et étudiantes à la maîtrise ainsi que la pratique et les recherches des doctorants et doctorantes.*

Mots-clés : *éducation en évaluation, pratiques d'évaluation, connaissances en évaluation, formation en évaluation, recherches en évaluation*

Corresponding author: John LaVelle, Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development, College of Education and Human Development, 323 Burton Hall, 178 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN, United States, 55455; jlavelle@umn.edu

The pre-service education and socialization of evaluators are critical issues facing professional evaluation associations and universities across the world (LaVelle & Donaldson, 2021; Stufflebeam, 2001). Recent works (Gullickson et al., 2019; King & Ayoo, 2020) have taken an evaluator's view of evaluator education systems and programs; however, explicit examples of curricular design/redesign are lacking. This reflective paper begins to bridge the gap between prescriptions of how to design evaluation curricula and the steps necessary to implement a redesign, as well as highlight challenging discussions that might come up in the process of aligning educational experiences with the goals of preparing evaluation scholars and practitioners. We begin with a brief summary of the research on evaluator education and present the pre-redesign curriculum. We discuss the varied goals and purposes of graduate education, draw distinctions between scholarship and practice, inquiry methodology and evaluation theory, and discuss the nuances of students' culminating projects. We give the example of how we mapped courses to the AEA Competency framework (AEA, 2018; King & Stevahn, 2020) and how we redesigned course offerings to reflect these distinctions and competencies. We conclude by analyzing the challenges and opportunities of operating an evaluator education program in a higher education context. The process and reflections will be of interest to evaluator educators—of both evaluation-specific programs and professional development tracks—as well as future students who wish to know how their educational experience might align with professional standards and competencies.

Readers should be mindful that, while the paper's presentation and images are linear (e.g., Figure 1), the process was iterative. We backtracked for clarity and agreement as often as we moved to the next step in the process. And while we strove for agreement, the individual faculty may hold different opinions and priorities.

BRIEF REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON EVALUATOR EDUCATION

King and Ayoo (2020, p. 11) suggest that the scholarship on evaluator education be organized topically to address students, faculty, evaluator education programs, curriculum, instructional techniques, assessment of learning, evaluation of instruction, evaluation of faculty, evaluation of evaluator education programs, and evaluation of the evaluation curriculum. They note that most related scholarship in university contexts is descriptive of what is being offered (e.g., Altschuld et al., 1994; Comer et al., 1980; Engle et al., 2006; LaVelle, 2018; May et al., 1986) and does not delve deeply into the goals and purposes of evaluator education programs. This leads us to suspect there may not be general agreement about the goals of evaluator education programs (Engle et al., 2006), differentiation between the goals of different educational experiences and programs (Gullickson et al., 2019), or “common core” across programs and institutions.

PURPOSE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION IN EVALUATION

Scholars hold competing views about the purposes of graduate education (Rhodes, 2001; Schiro, 2008). Pre-service education in many practice-based fields aligns with professionally designated criteria and standards, helping students attain profession-specific educational outcomes (Etzioni, 1969; Pavalko, 1988; Schiro, 2008), while allowing educators to design the educational experiences themselves and maintaining flexibility to respond to both market demands and student and faculty interests. It is not clear that contemporary evaluator education programs have reached agreement about what should be included in their curricula, or if there are overarching purposes toward which all programs should aspire. An inductive reading of contemporary program descriptions (Engle et al., 2006; LaVelle, 2020) suggests two broad goals for evaluator education programs: scholarship and practice, making evaluator education similar to the goals of practice-based fields such as Human Resource Development (AHRD, 2008).

CASE EXAMPLE

Context

The Evaluation Studies (ES) program at the University of Minnesota has operated continuously since the 1970s, making it one of the oldest evaluation-specific programs in the United States (Comer et al., 1980), though it has periodically changed departments and academic homes. It supports more than 25 doctoral students and approximately 15 master's students, and the faculty admit six to eight students yearly to each graduate degree track. Further, a substantial number of students are enrolled in the evaluation minor specialization for their master's ($n\sim 30$) or doctoral ($n\sim 30$) degrees, or in the Certificate of Advanced Study ($n\sim 25$).

The program houses two tenured and one tenure-track faculty members with three main areas of responsibility: teaching courses, both conducting and publishing scholarship, and engaging in service to both local communities and professional organizations. The faculty teach two graduate courses per semester (MA: 5xxx course numbers; PhD: 8xxx), and adjunct faculty are hired as needed. At the beginning of the process, faculty offered courses in-person, online, and blended/hybrid (for discussion of modalities, see McDavid & Shepherd, 2021).¹ The core classes are Introduction to Evaluation (5501), Evaluation Theory (5502/8502), Internship (8596), and Evaluation Problems (8595).

The pre-redesign required course lists reveal both challenges and opportunities in the curriculum (Tables 1 & 2), such as inconsistent requirements across degrees (e.g., internships, the cost-economic analysis course) and unclear conceptual and practical distinctions between doctoral and master's-level courses (e.g., evaluation theory). Further, most courses on design, data collection, and analysis (e.g., statistics, quantitative designs, qualitative studies, case study design, and

Table 1. Contrasting program core courses for old MA and PhD programs

MA (Plan A)	MA (Plan B)	PhD
OLPD 5501: Principles and Methods of Evaluation	OLPD 5501: Principles and Methods of Evaluation	OLPD 5501: Principles and Methods of Evaluation
OLPD 5502: Theories and Models of Evaluation OR OLPD 8502: Program Theories and Models: Quantitative and Qualitative Alternatives	OLPD 5502: Theories and Models of Evaluation OR OLPD 8502: Program Theories and Models: Quantitative and Qualitative Alternatives	OLPD 8502 (Online only): Program Theories and Models: Quantitative and Qualitative Alternatives
	OLPD 5521: Cost and Economic Analysis in Educational Evaluation	OLPD 8595: Evaluation Problems
6 credits qualitative methods	6 credits qualitative methods	OLPD 8596: Evaluation Internship (taken twice) 6 credits quantitative methods 6 credits qualitative methods
6 credits outside ES 3 credits: electives 10 credits: thesis	6–7 credits: electives 3–6 credits: colloquium paper	17 credits: electives 24 credits: thesis

Table 2. Contrasting program core courses for old MA and PhD minor

MA Minor	PhD Minor
OLPD 5501: Principles and Methods of Evaluation	OLPD 5501: Principles and Methods of Evaluation
OLPD 5502: Theories and Models of Evaluation OR OLPD 8502: Program Theories and Models: Quantitative and Qualitative Alternatives	OLPD 8502 (Online only): Program Theories and Models: Quantitative and Qualitative Alternatives
OLPD 8596: Evaluation Internship	OLPD 5521: Cost and Economic Analysis in Educational Evaluation OLPD 8596: Evaluation Internship (taken twice) 3 credits: electives

ethnographic studies) were taught by faculty outside the evaluation studies program, leading to questions about consistency between topic breadth and depth.

To address these challenges, the faculty first worked through philosophical questions about the purpose, goals, and expected outcomes of graduate education in evaluation, and built a common understanding of terms. We then described the

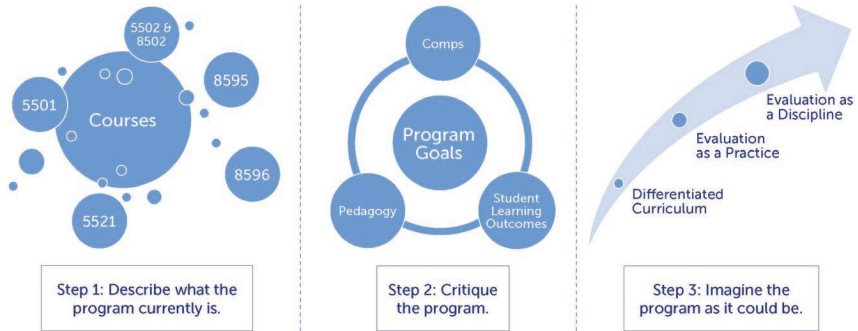


Figure 1. Overview of faculty process

program as it was operating, critiquing it against established competencies (e.g., [AEA, 2018](#)), student learning outcomes, and pedagogies ([LaVelle et al., 2020](#)). We concluded by imagining a possible future for our program with differentiated curricula to address the needs of both our students and the profession (see [Figure 1](#)).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The faculty come from different educational backgrounds and perspectives on evaluation, so a common language was critical. We focused the start of our discussion on defining and differentiating between scholarship and practice, as well as between inquiry methodology and theory.

Scholarship and practice

Differentiating between the “scholarship” and “practice” of evaluation was challenging. Glassick and colleagues describe scholarship by their complementary foci: discovery, integration, application, and teaching ([Glassick et al., 1997](#), pp. 9–10). Here, discovery is closest to the “traditional” vision of inquiry and research—that knowledge is important for its own sake. Scholarship of integration, by contrast, involves reaching across disciplinary boundaries to make connections between and within specific areas of expertise. Discovery and integration reflect traditional perceptions of faculty work, with its focus on “basic” research. Scholarship of application, by contrast, refers to how knowledge gained through discovery and integration is applied to important questions and problems, and how “applied” questions lead to further questions of discovery and integration. Lastly, the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) focuses on generating new and integrated knowledge about teaching and learning in an educational context.

The faculty concluded that the master’s degree would focus on developing evaluation practitioners who could apply scholarship, and the doctoral degree would focus on developing scholar/practitioners who could create new and integrate existing scholarship. This distinction is consistent with [Rhodes’s \(2001\)](#) and [AHRD’s \(2008\)](#) views of the major distinctions between MA and PhD curricula

and enabled us to begin disentangling the programs. It also helped us to better conceptualize practice-based courses for MA students and hone our focus at the doctoral level towards scholarship.

Inquiry methodology and theory

Coming from different educational traditions and foci, we struggled to reach consensus on what constitutes evaluation theory and how theory is different from inquiry methodology. We drew inspiration from works such as Sutton and Staw's *What Theory Is Not* (1995),² Shadish's *Evaluation Theory Is Who We Are* (1998),³ and Donaldson and Lipsey's (2006) typology of theories common in evaluation practice: evaluation, program, and social science.⁴ We now conceptualize and teach inquiry methodology as independent of evaluation theory. Methodology represents the inquiry designs that structure groups and timelines in answering evaluation questions, with a focus on addressing threats to internal validity (quantitative paradigm), consistency and trustworthiness (qualitative paradigm), or triangulation (pragmatic paradigm) (Creswell, 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Shadish et al., 2002; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Similarly, while data-collection techniques (e.g., surveys, tests, interviews, focus groups) are integral to inquiry, they are tools, not theory. Evaluation theory, in contrast, focuses on the values evaluators bring to their work (e.g., LaVelle et al., 2022), the actions they take in practice (Fitzpatrick et al., 2008), the desired and predictable outcomes of such activities (Henry & Mark, 2003; Mark & Henry, 2004; Miller, 2010), and how the process aligns with evaluation's overarching principles and guidelines (Yarborough et al., 2010).

Final project

We largely agreed about the content and scope of MA students' final project—a research thesis or applied project—and about the scope of the dissertation study, but we disagreed about the kinds of topics appropriate to a PhD dissertation, having competing understandings of “evaluation as a tool used in service of other areas” versus “evaluation as a topic of study.” An example of this distinction is illustrated in contrasting a study of how different evaluation approaches lead to different outcomes in a health-care setting (research on evaluation) with a study on the use of a participatory approach to conduct an evaluation in a health-care setting (research on health care using evaluation as an inquiry tool). This is a point of ongoing discussion, though the majority agree that a doctoral dissertation in evaluation must be research *on* evaluation contexts, processes, outcomes, or professional issues (Mark, 2008), or research on evaluators themselves (e.g., LaVelle et al., 2022).

MAPPING CURRICULA TO COMPETENCIES

Having clarified our terms and come to general agreement about the purpose of the degree tracks, we were ready to begin aligning courses and curricula with

program goals. Over the course of a year, master's and doctoral students participated in discussions concerning essential course content and their hopes for the future. They requested several changes: first, a clearer separation between MA and PhD coursework, principally to provide more in-depth and reflective learning experiences aligning with their career goals (practice vs. scholarship), and theory-specific courses supporting these differentiated goals; second, additional, stronger supports to help doctoral students conceptualize and implement research on evaluation studies; third, research design and analysis courses establishing a "common core" from which students could subsequently choose methodological specializations.

We agreed that aligning curricular and course content with the AEA Competencies (AEA 2018; King & Stevahn, 2020) was useful in the planning process, similar to what has been done in other fields (Barr, 1998; Frank et al., 2010; Harris et al., 2010; Kuhlmann, 2009). We mapped our syllabi to the competencies, discussed course alignment, shared teaching philosophies and intended student learning outcomes, and broadly discussed major learning experiences (e.g., LaVelle & Galport, 2020). We also began examining where and the depth to which evaluative concepts and tools were being introduced in the curriculum and applied to practice and scholarship. This was done to get a sense of the program's landscape of topics and ideas, and to use the competencies as a coherent structure guiding program planning. The results⁵ initially suggested that faculty believed that most AEA competencies were being introduced in Introduction to Evaluation Practice (5501) and being applied primarily in Evaluation Internship (8596). We agreed that, before students could be successful in an internship, they needed better preparation for competencies related to Planning and Management (Domain 4) and Interpersonal (Domain 5). We also discussed how the limited faculty in Evaluation Studies could not teach all possible topics across evaluation processes, theory, practice, and inquiry methodology (Domain 3). We also noted how both the master's and doctoral theory courses (5502/8502) theoretically aligned with several "professional practice" and "methodology" competencies but would benefit from clarity about the roles that implicit and explicit theory plays in evaluation practice. Further, we noticed that over the years, the theory courses had become conceptually linked with their teaching faculty's ideas of theory rather than aligned with the recent developments of the field (practice for MA, scholarship for PhD) and so would benefit from clarification about topics and expectations, as well as intentional course sequencing.

We arrived at several important conclusions. The internship course needed redesign, ideally as two sequential courses. The evaluation theory courses needed disentangling to address the goals of their degree designation (practice vs. scholarship). The Evaluation Problems (8595) course needed to align with the goals of producing evaluation scholars and supporting students with their university-required milestones. In terms of course design and delivery, all evaluation doctoral courses would be taught as in-person seminars. Last, the Cost and Economic Analysis course would be removed from the ES core but would become a strongly recommended methodology elective for all graduate students.

OUR REDESIGNED EVALUATOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Our redesigned programs conform to the most recent operational definition of an evaluator education program: *two or more courses with the term “evaluation” in the title that lead to a certificate, master’s, or doctoral degree* (LaVelle, 2020). We assume that the target evaluands are programs, policies, interventions, or evaluation practice itself, and that the anticipated outcomes of such programs are changes in participants’ characteristics, such as their attitudes, affect/emotions, cognition/knowledge, and relationships between individuals and groups (for further discussion, see LaVelle & Dighe, 2020).

Master’s degree, graduate minors, and certificate: Evaluation as a practice

In our new configuration (Figure 2), three courses support the master’s and minor specialization curriculum: Introduction to Evaluation Practice (5501), Evaluation Theory (5502), and Evaluation Internship (8596). These are supported by a range of inquiry methodology and analysis courses offered outside the core ES faculty.

The emphasis in the 5501 course—the first course in the sequence, and a practice-based foundation—is on preparing students to conduct evaluations independently (e.g., Engle et al., 2006) or as a supporting team member, and to engage in an evaluative process to produce a useful assessment of the merit, worth, and significance of the evaluand. Students engage in a service-learning project to develop an evaluation proposal for a community partner, with the goals of providing conceptual support and humanizing the organization, its program, and its participants.

We redesigned the master’s theory course (5502) with a focus on theory-to-practice, working to balance professional (e.g., Shadish, 1998) and theoretical information (e.g., Alkin, 2012; Shadish et al., 1991) with the practical application of theory to real-world evaluations (e.g., Christie 2003, 2006; Fitzpatrick et al., 2008). We augment these readings with works by evaluators from across the theoretical spectrum, including perspectives on valuing, methodology, use, and both social justice and culturally responsive practice. The class culminates with a discussion of basic social science theories focused on cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes in stakeholders that could be attributed to the evaluation itself. As we describe in the syllabus, “the 5501 course was about other peoples’ programs; the 5502 course is about your values and behavior, and how you balance the things you believe are important in evaluation practice.”

Doctoral study: Evaluation as a discipline

We believe the goal of a doctoral-level evaluator education program is to build from the existing practice orientation of the master’s degree, preparing students to conduct original scholarship on evaluation (LaVelle & Donaldson, 2021). This scholarship might take the form of discovery, integration, application, or teaching (Glassick et al., 1997). Examples include seeking to understand new information or hypotheses related to evaluation practice (discovery), the ways in which

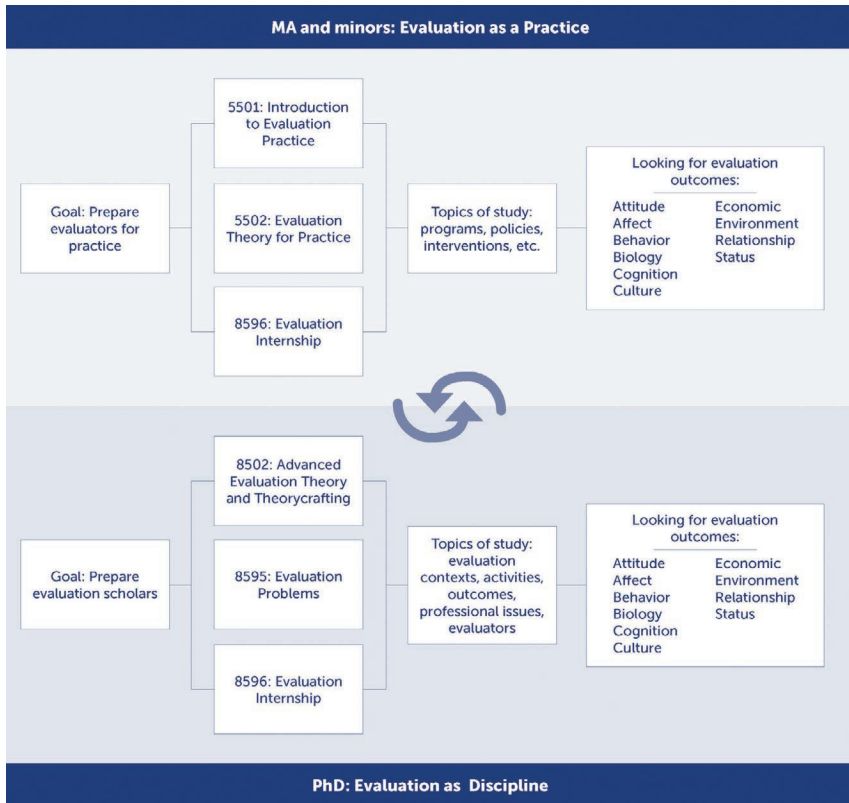


Figure 2. Visualization of new curriculum

social science theory and evaluation theory are mutually reinforcing (synthesis), how evaluation theory is applied to a diversity of contexts (application), or how evaluation educators can teach using empirically supported practices (teaching). The root assumption is that scholars may conceptualize evaluation practice and processes as an individual, organizational, or systems-level interventions worthy of scholarly study and understanding, even though empirically studying such a process is difficult (Christie, 2012; Mark, 2008; Miller, 2010; Shadish et al., 1991). That is, doctoral study in evaluation should aim to contribute to the knowledge base of evaluation by empirically studying evaluation contexts, evaluation activities and changes incurred in stakeholders as attributable to the activities in which the evaluator or evaluation team has engaged, professional issues, and evaluators themselves.

In our new configuration (Figure 2), three courses support the doctoral program's goal of producing evaluation scholars: Advanced Evaluation Theory and Theorycrafting (8502), Research on Evaluation (8595), and Evaluation Internship (8596). We envision these as building on the required master's courses;

Introduction to Evaluation Practice (5501) would be required of students who had not taken it as part of their master's experience, and Comparative Evaluation Theory for Practice (5502) would be strongly recommended for individuals wanting to go into evaluation or consulting practice.

The new Advanced Evaluation Theory and Theorcrafting course (8502) takes students into nuanced dissection of the strengths, limitations, and testability of existing evaluation theory using [Shadish et al.'s \(1991\)](#) taxonomy of evaluation theory, [Miller's \(2010\)](#) standards for evaluation theory, and [Shadish et al.'s \(2002\)](#) validity frameworks. Faculty guide students in developing new evaluation theories by aligning students' values ([Schwartz, 1994](#); [Schwartz et al., 2012](#)) and goals of practice with existing knowledge and models from social and educational science theory. Students develop proposals to describe existing models of theory (e.g., [Dillman, 2013](#)), testing relationships between activities and outcomes in contemporary evaluation practice and the degree to which existing theories lead to the conceptual, individual, and organizational change they claim. Key readings include [Mark's \(2008\)](#) taxonomy of research on evaluation and types of research on evaluation studies, diverse works on theory development and testing (e.g., [Bartunek, 1983](#); [Campbell & Mark, 2014](#); [Fitzpatrick et al., 2010](#); [Miller, 2013](#); [Sutton & Staw, 1995](#)), and articles critiquing and expanding existing taxonomies of evaluation theory ([Christie, 2012](#); [Miller, 2010](#)).

We have reorganized the problems course (8595) into a Research on Evaluation seminar to help doctoral students—and a few intrepid master's students—develop expertise on scholarly topics in evaluation. Students learn to critique and integrate articles, chapters, and books from across disciplines through multiple validity lenses and synthesize them into a scholarly research stream focused on evaluation. Primary emphasis is on helping students conceptualize and rationalize topics of interest for themselves and the field of evaluation, identifying gaps and opportunities, and preparing students for their university-mandated milestones.⁶ The organizing text is [Mark's \(2008\)](#) research on evaluation theory taxonomy, and students must justify how their topic addresses evaluation context, processes/activities, outcomes, professional issues, or research on evaluators.

NEXT STEPS IN COURSE DEVELOPMENT

We are currently looking at redesigning the internship course to better support students in developing the project planning/management skills and interpersonal behaviors that are important for evaluation practice (Domains 4 & 5). A topic for future development is a course on teaching evaluation and/or building evaluation capacity, since the topic is not regularly covered at other universities ([LaVelle, 2020](#)) and the profession needs good educators ([Preskill, 2000](#); [Stufflebeam, 2001](#)) both inside and outside university settings. The second topic for future development is a course on culturally responsive evaluation, which we believe is important given the wide range of communities in which evaluators work; early discussions suggested the need for a broad definition of culture, encompassing race and ethnicity and inclusive of sexual and religious identities.

THE REALITY OF WORKING IN A UNIVERSITY

This process helped us challenge our assumptions about the existing curriculum and discuss whether individual courses were contributing to program goals of scholarship and practice. The final proposed structure and realignment were shared with current master's and doctoral students to overwhelming approval.

This was not the end of our process, however. Our faculty had to take stock of our flexibility to design and sequence essential courses, our capital and capacity to insource or outsource certain courses (e.g., methods and analysis), and ensure we were at a point where we could publicly discuss our assumptions about program and course goals. Faculty in other institutions considering a similar process should ensure that they have both the flexibility to undertake curricular realignment and the support of students and administrators (Bright & Richards, 2001). Further, they should also look at other conceptual and logistical considerations (see Table 3). Working in a university environment can be challenging and politically fraught, and the slow pace of progress can be frustrating for both faculty and students (Bright & Richards, 2001; LaVelle & Donaldson, 2021). Designing a

Table 3. Comparisons between competing models for educating evaluators

Model	Advantages	Challenges
Model 1: Evaluation as a practice	<p>Courses do not necessarily need to be taught regularly or in conjunction with other topical disciplines</p> <p>Inquiry design, methods, and analysis course can be taught in-house or outsourced to other departments</p> <p>Prepares students for evaluation practice</p> <p>Shared vision for the program an advantage but may not an absolute necessity</p>	<p>Students may be challenged to apply the principles from one class to another (e.g., inquiry methods in evaluation, evaluation in educational contexts, etc.)</p> <p>Low-dose interventions (such as a single evaluation course) may not result in long-term change and application.</p> <p>Student research may not contribute to the field of evaluation's knowledge base</p>
Model 2: Evaluation as a discipline	<p>Allows for the in-depth study of evaluation as its own field.</p> <p>Promotion of original research on evaluation.</p> <p>Easier student socialization into the culture of evaluation</p> <p>Prepares students for both practice and academic careers.</p> <p>Greatest demand for faculty planning and curriculum development.</p>	<p>Strong demand for faculty time and planning</p> <p>Courses must be offered regularly and scaffolded.</p> <p>Courses must differentiate between practice and scholarship.</p> <p>Requires faculty to have a shared vision and understanding of the program goals.</p> <p>Requires a critical number of core faculty</p>

new course requires between one-and-a-half and two years and university-level approval, while starting a new curriculum often requires an empirical needs assessment and permission from University Regents. As we progressed through this experience, we uncovered several additional topics for discussion, reconciliation, and planning, including the student advising load—which disproportionately affects women and people of color (Gregory, 2001)—as well as exploring innovative ways of teaching evaluation to undergraduate students (McShane et al., 2015). We need additional conversations with faculty and students about how coursework is only a single component of higher education, about the importance of helping students network with peers and evaluation thought leaders, the value of sharing their work at professional conferences, writing evaluation proposals and grants, and about guiding students through the process of submitting work for peer-reviewed publications. Each task is important and time-consuming but critical for students' future success.

We recognize that the work we did (e.g., the competency taxonomy we referenced, and the degrees we are offering to our students) are rooted in our experience as educators in a US-based university. We believe, however, that educators and other stakeholders alike will find value in the lessons we learned through this process, which may indeed be helpful for framing evaluator education in both the Canadian context and other systems across the world. For example, the process could be used by the university programs (both those that do and those that do not have evaluation-specific tracks) to engage in discussions to help clarify their individual and shared assumptions about the educational programs and the knowledge and skills they desire to help learners develop. There may also be value in engaging local CES chapters in discussions to explore what kinds of topics and experiences are best addressed in a university system, and which kinds are better addressed at a local level. Further, this process of curricular discussion and alignment could be used to help identify organizational gaps in the educational offerings as CES chapters and universities alike strive to prepare learners for the Credentialed Evaluator designation.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

We conclude by suggesting that evaluator education is a vibrant area of inquiry for scholars interested in the overlap between adult education and evaluation scholarship and practice. Indeed, there are many questions still to be explored, and it is exciting for us to imagine how the answers may change as evaluator education programs both drive and respond to the evaluation job market (Nielsen et al., 2018) and the academic job market. Examples of these thesis- and dissertation-worthy topics might include the following:

- To what degree are evaluator education programs explicitly aligned with the competencies identified by the professional evaluation associations?

- To what degree do these competencies reflect the realities of practicing evaluation in a multitude of contexts?
- To what degree can a single course address the evaluator competencies identified by the professional associations?
- What kinds of additional—or different—competencies are necessary for evaluation researchers or educators?
- What do other evaluator educators believe about the theory/practice distinction we've made here?
- To what degree do other evaluator education programs place evaluation as the central topic of interest?
- To what degree do evaluator education programs lead to different—and hopefully better—evaluation practice?

CONCLUSION

Formal evaluation is a relatively young field, and in some ways it is still in the process of organizing its university-based educational programs (Gullickson et al., 2019; LaVelle & Galport, 2020). The program alignment and evaluative process we used to examine our program could be a model for other programs or could support accreditation efforts (e.g., McDavid & Huse, 2015); it will be interesting to hear whether courses and curricula in other programs change over time, and to learn the driving forces for such changes. We found the AEA Competencies framework to be a strong tool in supporting our overarching efforts, but it did not perfectly match our goals for the PhD program; indeed, it appears that most of the evaluator competency taxonomies are focused on developing evaluator practitioners and not necessarily researchers of evaluation. Perhaps educators can develop another framework or adapt one from another field such as educational research, psychology, or a closely related discipline that encompasses both scholarship and practice.

In sum, this process helped us frame difficult conversations about our program, leading us to examine our beliefs and assumptions about the purpose of graduate education in evaluation, the goals of different degree tracks, the need to separate our constructs, and the critical need to discuss the nature and focus of our students' final product. It also helped us, as Shadish put it in 1998, to determine the face we wanted to show both our internal colleagues and the external world. For us, that face is evaluation scholarship and practice.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

John LaVelle is an assistant professor in evaluation studies at the University of Minnesota. His research examines how universities prepare evaluators for applied work, and he has written on the intersection of job markets and university programs, techniques for recruiting evaluators, evaluator competencies, the psychology of evaluators, and how evaluators can use social science theory to inform their practice. He was awarded the American Evaluation Association's Marcia Guttentag Award in 2019.

David Johnson is Birkmaier Professor of Educational Leadership and Coordinator of Evaluation Studies in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development, University of Minnesota. He has written extensively about special education policy, postsecondary education, and the graduation and transition of youth with disabilities.

NOTES

- 1 Before COVID-19, faculty chose their course delivery based on their pedagogical orientation; during COVID-19, the courses are all distance education, though faculty still decide if the course is synchronous or asynchronous. It is unclear what the future will hold in terms of course delivery.
- 2 Sutton and Staw (1995) described how common inquiry tools are often mistaken for theory, including references, data, lists of variables, diagrams, and hypotheses/predictions.
- 3 Shadish (1998) described how theory helps form the evaluator's core identity, including a knowledge base, common terms and understandings, and an identity distinct from other professional groups.
- 4 *Evaluation theory* is a prescription for how and why evaluators should practice their craft (Shadish et al., 1991); *program theory* represents a program's internal logic (Funnel & Rogers, 2011; Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009); *social science theory* is a systematic tool to understand or frame generalizable and verifiable knowledge about the factors that influence social phenomenon (Donaldson & Lipsey, 2006).
- 5 See <https://z.umn.edu/LaVelleJohnsonCrosswalk>.
- 6 For example, the written preliminary exam, the special topics paper, and their dissertation proposal.

REFERENCES

- Academic Standards Committee of the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD). (2008). *Standards for HRD graduate program excellence*. https://www.ahrd.org/page/standards_graduate
- Alkin, M. C. (Ed.). (2012). *Evaluation roots* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Altschuld, J. W., Engle, M., Cullen, C., Kim, I., & Macce, B. R. (1994). The 1994 directory of evaluation training programs. In J. W. Altschuld & M. Engle (Eds.), *The preparation of professional evaluators: Issues, perspectives and programs* (vol. 62, pp. 71–94). New Directions for Program Evaluation. Jossey-Bass.
- American Evaluation Association. (2018). *AEA evaluator competencies*. <https://www.eval.org/About/Competencies-Standards/AEA-Evaluator-Competencies>
- Barr, H. (1998). Competent to collaborate: Towards a competency-based model for inter-professional education. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 12(2), 181–187. <https://doi.org/10.3109/13561829809014104>
- Bartunek, J. M. (1983). How organizational development can develop organizational theory. *Group and Organization Management*, 8(3), 303–318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105960118300800308>

- Bright, D. F., & Richards, M. P. (2001). *The academic deanship: Individual careers and institutional roles*. Jossey-Bass.
- Campbell, B., & Mark, M. M. (2015). How analogue research can advance descriptive evaluation theory: Understanding (and improving) stakeholder dialogue. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 36(2), 204–220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214014532166>
- Christie, C. A. (2003). What guides evaluation? A study of how evaluation practice maps onto evaluation theory. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2003(97), 7–36. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.72>
- Christie, C. A. (2006). The practice-theory relationship in evaluation. *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, 97. Jossey-Bass.
- Christie, C. A. (2012). Advancing empirical scholarship to further develop evaluation theory and practice. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 26(1), 1–18.
- Comer, R. F., Clay, T., & Hill, P. (1980). *Directory of evaluation training*. Pintail Press.
- Creswell, J. (2015). *Educational research planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Pearson.
- Dillman, L. M. (2013). Evaluator skill acquisition: Linking educational experiences to competencies. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 34(2), 270–285. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214012464512>
- Donaldson, S. I., & Lipsey, M. (2006). Roles for theory in contemporary evaluation practice: Developing practical knowledge. In I. F. Shaw, J. C. Greene, & M. M. Mark (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of evaluation* (pp. 56–75). Sage.
- Engle, M., Altschuld, J. W., & Kim, Y.-C. (2006). 2002 survey of evaluation preparation programs in universities: An update of the 1992 American Evaluation Association-sponsored study. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(3), 353–359. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214006288787>
- Etzioni, A. (1969). *The semi-professions and their organization: Teachers, nurses, and social workers*. Free Press.
- Fitzpatrick, J., Christie, C., & Mark, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Evaluation in action: Interviews with expert evaluators*. Sage.
- Fitzpatrick, M. R., Kovalak, A. L., & Weaver, A. (2010). How trainees develop an initial theory of practice: A process model of tentative identifications. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 10(2), 93–102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733141003773790>
- Frank, J. R., Snell, L. S., Cate, O. T., Holmboe, E. S., Carraccio, C., Swing, S. R., . . . Harris, K. A. (2010). Competency-based medical education: Theory to practice. *Medical Teacher*, 32(8), 638–645. <https://doi.org/10.3109/0142159x.2010.501190>. Medline: 20662574
- Funnel, S. C., & Rogers, P. J. (2011). *Purposeful program theory: Effective use of theories of change and logic models*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Glassick, C. E., Huber, M. T., & Maeroff, G. I. (1997). *Scholarship assessed: Evaluation of the professoriate*. Jossey-Bass.
- Gregory, S. T. (2001). Black faculty women in the academy: History, status, and future. *Journal of Negro Education*, 70(3), 124–138. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3211205>

- Gullickson, A. M., King, J. A., LaVelle, J. M., & Clinton, J. M. (2019). The current state of evaluator education: A situation analysis and call to action. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 75, 20–30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2019.02.012>. Medline:31015094
- Harris, P., Snell, L., Talbot, M., & Harden, R. M. (2010). Competency-based medical education: Implications for undergraduate programs. *Medical Teacher*, 32(8), 646–650. <https://doi.org/10.3109/0142159x.2010.500703>. Medline:20662575
- Henry, G. T., & Mark, M. M. (2003). Beyond use: Understanding evaluation's influence on attitudes and actions. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 24(3), 293–314.
- King, J. A., & Ayoo, S. (2020). What do we know about evaluator education? A review of peer-reviewed publications (1978–2018). *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 79, 101785. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2020.101785>. Medline:32086100
- King, J. A., & Stevahn, L. (2020). Presenting the 2018 AEA Evaluator Competencies. In J. A. King (Ed.), *The American Evaluation Association's Program Evaluator Competencies*. New Directions for Evaluation, 2020, 49–61.
- Kuhlmann, E. G. (2009). Competency-based social work education: A thirty-year retrospective on the behavioral objectives movement. *Social Work and Christianity*, 36(1), 70–76.
- LaVelle, J. M. (2018). *2018 Directory of evaluator education programs in the United States*. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing.
- LaVelle, J. M. (2020). Educating evaluators 1976–2017: An expanded analysis of university-based evaluation education programs. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 41(4), 494–509. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214019860914>
- LaVelle, J. M., & Dighe, S. (2020). A transdisciplinary model of program outcomes for enhanced evaluation practice. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 35(1), 20–34. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.61660>
- LaVelle, J. M., & Donaldson, S. I. (2021). Opportunities and challenges ahead for university-based evaluator education programs, faculty, and students. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 42(3), 428–438. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214020937808>
- LaVelle, J. M., & Galport, N. (2020). Using the 2018 AEA evaluator competencies for evaluator education and professional development. In J. A. King (Ed.), *The American Evaluation Association's program evaluator competencies*. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 168, 199–116. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20437>
- LaVelle, J. M., Lovato, C., & Stephenson, C. L. (2020). Pedagogical considerations for the teaching of evaluation. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2020.101786>
- LaVelle, J. M., Stephenson, C. L., Donaldson, S. I., & Hackett, J. D. (2022). Findings from an empirical exploration of evaluators' values. *American Journal of Evaluation*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10982140211046537>
- Mark, M. M. (2008). Building a better evidence base for evaluation theory. In N. Smith & P. Brandon (Eds.), *Fundamental issues in evaluation* (pp. 111–134). Guilford.
- Mark, M. M., & Henry, G. T. (2004). The mechanisms and outcomes of evaluation influence. *Evaluation*, 10(1), 35–57.

- May, R. M., Fleisher, M., Sheirer, C. J., & Cox, G. B. (1986). Directory of evaluation training programs. In B. G. Davis (Ed.), *Teaching of evaluation across the disciplines* (New Directions for Program Evaluation, vol. 29). Jossey-Bass.
- McDavid, J. C., & Huse, I. (2015). How does accreditation fit into the picture? In J. W. Altschuld & M. Engle (Eds.), *Accreditation, certification, and credentialing: Relevant concerns for U.S. evaluators*. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 145, 53–69. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20111>
- McDavid, J. C., & Shepherd, R. (2021). Offering graduate evaluation degrees online: Comparing student engagement in two Canadian programs. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 35(3). <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.69751>
- McShane, K., Katona, N., Leroux, E. J., & Tandon, R. (2015). Inspiring future program evaluators through innovative curriculum for undergraduates. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 30(2), 205–215. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.30.2.215>
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Sage.
- Miller, R. L. (2010). Developing standards for empirical examinations of evaluation theory. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 31(3), 390–399.
- Miller, R. L. (2013). Logic models: A useful way to study theories of evaluation practice? *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 38, 77–80.
- Nielsen, S. B., Lemire, S., & Christie, C. A. (2018). The evaluation marketplace and its industry. In S. B. Nielsen, S. Lemire, & C. A. Christie (Eds.), *The evaluation marketplace: Exploring the evaluation industry* (pp. 13–28). *New Directions for Evaluation*, 160. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20344>
- Pavalko, R. M. (1988). *Sociology of occupations and professions* (2nd ed.). F. E. Peacock.
- Preskill, H. (2000). Coming around again: Renewing our commitment to teaching evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 21(1), 103–104.
- Rhodes, F. T. (2001). *The creation of the future: The role of the american university*. Cornell University Press.
- Russ-Eft, D., & Preskill, H. (2009). *Evaluation in organizations: A systematic approach to enhancing learning, performance, and change* (2nd ed.). Basic Books.
- Schiro, M. S. (2008). *Curriculum theory: Conflicting visions and enduring concerns*. Sage.
- Schwartz, S. H. (1994). Are there universal aspects in the structure and contents of human values? *Journal of Social Issues*, 50(4), 19–45. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1994.tb01196.x>
- Schwartz, S. H., Cieciuch, J., Vecchione, M., Davidov, E., Fischer, R., Beierlein, C., . . . Konty, M. (2012). Refining the theory of basic individual values. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 103(4), 663–688. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029393>. Medline:22823292
- Shadish, W. R. (1998). Evaluation theory is who we are. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 19(1), 1–19. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1098-2140\(99\)80177-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1098-2140(99)80177-5)
- Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2002). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference*. Houghton Mifflin.

- Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Leviton, L. C. (1991). *Foundations of program evaluation: Theories of practice*. Sage.
- Stufflebeam, D. L. (2001). Interdisciplinary Ph.D. programming in evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 22(3), 445–455. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1098-2140\(01\)00155-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1098-2140(01)00155-2)
- Sutton, R. I., & Staw, B. M. (1995). What theory is *not*. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40(3), 371–384. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393788>
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches* (vol. 46). Sage.
- Yarbrough, D. B., Shulha, L. M., Hopson, R. K., & Caruthers, F. A. (2010). *The program evaluation standards: A guide for evaluators and evaluation users*. Sage.